



EXCHANGE REPORT – SPRING 2018
STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, SWEDEN
SO Kwok Wai, Ben

Part I - Monthly Activity Log

January

I arrived Stockholm one day before the orientation day. This month was basically used to walk around the city, for example I visited the Vasa Museum and the Nordic Museum. In the meantime, I was getting more adapted to the new environment, such as the cold weather and the short daytime. Nevertheless, everything I saw was new to me and I started to enjoy the exploration.

February

I visited Copenhagen, the capital city of Denmark. The weather was still very cold, but the friendliness of Danish people surprised me. I have no wonder why Denmark was ranked the happiest country in the world.



March

I visited Iceland in the beginning of March. Iceland is a country with amazing spectacle, and I was lucky enough to see the aurora. After the trip, most of the time was spent on studying for the exam. I visited Budapest during the study break. The night view along the river Danube was fascinating.



April and May

The weather was getting warmer, which was a good season to have a short trip to Gothenburg, the second largest city of Sweden. Different from Stockholm, the pace of life there was a bit slower and more relaxing. Before the examinations in the second period, I went to Belgium, Netherland and Germany. These countries were lovely and people there had very different living styles, so I recommend visiting them.

June

This was a very busy month. I had my examinations, prepared for the return and had my last trip to Norway. The landscape in Norway was eye-opening, and I observed that the Norwegians had very close relationship with nature. They respected the nature, while they made use of the natural resources. I would say that they were living in the nature, despite of the very high price level.



Part 2 – General Exchange Information

1. Visa Procedure

It is recommended to start the visa application as soon as possible, since it might take more than two months' time. You have to submit the application online first, and then visit the Consulate General of Sweden in Hong Kong upon notification. You can prepare for all the necessary documents before getting the acceptance letter from SSE, including the insurance certificate from the SFAO.

2. Orientation Activities

There will be an orientation day upon exchange students' arrival. You will receive important information and have a walkabout around the campus. You will also get your access card on that day. The access card is needed to access the main campus and the computer labs. There will also be a welcome banquet for exchange students, which is a great opportunity to meet new friends. A buddy will be assigned to each incoming exchange student, they are all friendly and helpful, and you can ask questions to them during your stay.

3. International Services & Activities

The exchange committee will organize several activities for exchange students, including banquets, parties and trips. Information would be posted on the Facebook group for exchange students.

4. Accommodation

I lived in Saltis, which is just next to the campus. It takes only 5 minutes' walk to classrooms. Moreover, you can use the eduroam wifi in your room. Saltis is located in the city center and you can walk within the city, so living in Saltis can also save transportation expense. There will be a mini-kitchen and private bathroom in each room. Some tenants may have a fridge in their rooms, otherwise they have to share the fridge in corridor with other tenants. You can state your preference on single room or double room in the application, but it is not guaranteed to receive offer of your first choice. Lappis is far away from SSE and you would need to take bus or metro to get to SSE. Lappis is shared with students from other universities. I would recommend living in Saltis for its convenient location. If you arrive outside the Housing Office's office hours, you can try to ask your buddy for the keys pick up.

5. Course Registration

For spring term, course registration is done in November. Usually you would be able to register for some of the Master courses. You will receive emails with more

information. If you want to add course afterward, you have to contact the course administrator. You can always drop your course on the SSE portal until two weeks after the period starts. A list of courses offered can be found on SSE website. Each semester is divided into two periods, and in each period you can register for two courses. You may take Swedish course as the third course. It is possible to have clashes in the class schedule, you have to notify by yourselves and choose courses with least clashes. You have to be aware of the credit transfer issue. Students who are not from economics or finance program may face limited choices.

6. Teaching & Assessment Methods

In general, the teaching method in SSE is quite similar to in HKUST. There are assigned readings every week, and students are expected to finish it before going to class. The final grade is usually based on participation, homework/report and examinations. Some courses may require passing the exam in addition to get an overall passing score. It is possible to have examination clash, you can contact the Examination Office two to three weeks before the exam day to make special arrangement and sit for both exams on the same day. There are two rounds of examination, if you fail in the main exam, you can take the make-up exam. However, the make-up exam for the second period in spring term would be in August.

7. Sports & Recreation Facilities

There is no gym room in SSE, but you can find one in Stockholm easily. You may also join the sport team and go to their regular practices, which you can get more information in the orientation day.

8. Finance & Banking

The currency used in Sweden is Swedish Krona (SEK). Almost every store in Sweden accepts credit cards (VISA or Master, AMEX is kind of unpopular in Sweden and in Europe). Some stores accept only cards but not cash. It is quite inconvenient that you have to pay the rent in banks by cash with a fee of 50 SEK per transaction, but you can contact the Housing Office to make arrangement and pay by a lump sum at the beginning of the semester. Union pay is not accepted here (and in some countries in Europe), if you would like to withdraw cash, you should get a card with a Plus or Cirrus logo. On the other hand, some shops or ticketing machines may only accept credit cards with PIN code, it works with my code used for ATM (e.g. used for cash advance function), but I am not sure if this works to everyone. You may contact your card issuing banks for details. Most shops in Stockholm accept signing on the receipt upon presenting your passport

Expenses (in HKD):

Visa	1000
Flight ticket	6000
Accommodation	32800
Transportation	1000
Food (2500 per month)	12500
Travel	40000
Clothing	1000
Total	94300

9. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

SSE is well-recognized by many companies worldwide. The fund of SSE's Student Association (SASSE) is mainly from the sponsorship of firms, so various companies would come to SSE and promote themselves to students throughout the semester. You may join some of the career talks if you are interested, these activities are usually open to all students in SSE.

10. Health & Safety

Sweden is pretty much a safe place to live, so there should not be much concern on safety. However, when you are travelling in other countries, you may need to be careful. I did not get sick during my stay, but I have heard that the queue for seeing a doctor in hospital could be quite long. You may go to pharmacies to get some medication instead, and you can easily find one nearby.

11. Food

Dining out could be an expensive option in Stockholm, so most of the time I cooked by myself. You can get ingredients at low cost from Lidl or ICA. Coop is a little bit more expensive but offers higher variety of products. There are Asian supermarkets selling Asian ingredients, which are quite expensive. Life would be much easier if you can get a rice cooker with you.

12. Transportation

When you arrive at the airport, you can take the Arlanda express (140SEK for students) or airport coach (99SEK if purchase ticket online) to the city center. There you can take the metro to your accommodation. Students can buy a 30-days pass at reduced price, but from my point of view it is not necessary to have one if you are living in Saltis.

13. Climate

The temperature from January to March is very low, so remember to bring your down coat and gloves with you. The temperature gets warmer in May and June, so it is recommended to bring some summer clothes also. The daytime in winter is very short, but the daytime in summer is very long.

14. IT Environment and Communication

Most Swedes can speak fluent English, and they are all very friendly, so if you encounter any difficulties, asking people nearby would help you. The eduroam wifi is basically the same as in HKUST. You can access with either your UST account or credentials that can be found on 'SSE portal-Tools'. Usually on the orientation day, you will be given a SIM card without any plan. You can buy data plan (called 'surf' in Sweden) with this card at the respective network provider's stores. Some network providers (for example I had tried Vodafone) offer data plan with EU-roaming, you may look for one if you are planning to travel a lot.

15. Others

If you would like to check for the locations of classrooms, you may check on 'SSE portal-Support'. Some classes may take place in other universities, you should be aware of this.

Part 3 – Checklists

Items to bring

Clothing:

- Down coat, winter jackets, sweater, heattech, gloves, scarf, boots
- Summer clothing
- Formal suits and shoes (for banquets and events)

Personal Items:

- Passport and ID card
- Resident permit
- Credit cards and cash (for at least the first month's rent and expense)
- Copies of documents (passport, ID card, acceptance letter etc.)
- Common medicine
- Hand warmer

Electronics:

- Camera
- Laptop and calculator
- Universal adaptor and chargers
- A small rice cooker

Part 4 – Useful links

Information for incoming exchange students (course list, practical matters etc.):

<https://www.hhs.se/en/education/study-at-sse/global-opportunities/student-exchange/incoming-exchange-students/>

Housing: <https://www.hhs.se/en/education/study-at-sse/housing/>

Swedish Migration Board: <http://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals.html>

Conclusion

Studying in Sweden is absolutely a pleasant experience. The 'lagom' (meaning 'just enough', 'in moderation') attitude to life, the acceptance toward new culture while at the same time being proud of traditional culture and the pursuit toward equality, these are the values that we can learn from Swedes. Of course, people from different background have different character, going on exchange is a good chance to meet and understand people from all over the world. In the meantime, you can surely know more about yourselves.

If you would like to know more of my experience, you are welcome to ask for my email from bmugexch@ust.hk. Wish you have a wonderful semester!