

Exchange Report

Uppsala University, Sweden



**UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET**

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Part I Monthly Activity Log

January

I remember when I got off from the flight to the land of Sweden, my feeling was complicated – both excitement and worries. I was excited to enjoy the view of the white city, Uppsala, seeing how the snow trying to cover its beauty. However, I could not help feeling worried, wondering if I would be able to surmount all the challenges and pursue my goals of this oversea exchange program within these five months – to embrace a new culture, to improve my confidence and to broaden my horizons. The schedule of the first day was hectic. After the long flight, despite my fatigue, I had to immediately start my preparation for my studies in the University of Uppsala (e.g. to open a student portal account, to gather with other exchange students, to get a temporary student card, etc.), and living (e.g. to go to Ikea and buy some necessities at least for the first week.) I had brought shampoo and shower gel from Hong Kong but I still had to purchase a pillow and quilt. It seemed an easy task. Nevertheless, the fact is that the weather in January in Uppsala was extremely cold (about negative 10 degree Celsius at night), the night came early at around 4pm and the transport in Sweden was far more inconvenient than in Hong Kong. Although the first week was tiring, after the adaptation period, the enjoyable life in Uppsala, Sweden, began.



February

I had had many new experience in Uppsala in this month. I joined Campus1477, which is a gym for university students and I started to embrace a healthy lifestyle here. I met some new friends from Sweden, Brazil, France and Mainland China from my residence and school buddy program. We went skiing and had dinner together in Stockholm. The city view in Stockholm was much different from that in Uppsala. Stockholm was a big and modern city that was similar with Hong Kong. For example, they had MTR in Stockholm while in Uppsala, the main transport was buses and bicycles. In February, everything was still in white. A Swedish girl said the snow in Winter has made the city more beautiful although it

was freezing. However, the view in Spring in Uppsala was much fascinating when everything is in green.



March

The weather was even colder in this month because of a sudden cold spell in Europe. I travelled to the UK during this period and experienced the rarely seen snow in London. The weather was really suffocating and I did not even want to go outdoor for the trip. The cold spell broke when I returned to Sweden. I felt home and warm because the weather was much acceptable (but still cold) and people are more friendly and polite in Sweden. I felt a strong sense of belonging to Sweden at that time. In the UK, people are more separate, coldhearted and busy. However, in Sweden, everyone was patient, helpful and talkative. Thanks to the top-notch education system in Sweden, people know the importance of respect and friendliness to the society. People do not hesitate to give a helping hand without asking for returns and they always kept a smiling face to others. It is so important to build up a warm and friendly society. Although I appreciated Sweden and its people, Hong Kong was always my home and I wanted to share this attitude and happiness with my home.



April

Attending lessons and doing homework are important. However, the school gave students freedom to manage themselves and have more self study, instead of pushing limits, boosting competition and pursuing good grades. Teachers want students to study spontaneously and reflect more after reading. In lessons, the master students there are hardworking and passionate to learn, taking the initiative to lead discussion and boost brainstorming. People enjoy the freedom of doing anything they like in abundant leisure time after work as they

said, “work hard, play hard.” Therefore, not only was I able to study with less stress and more freedom, but I could also learn from the Swedish students about their positive attitude towards studying. Besides, talking about different cultures, Swedish people attach much importance to equality and democracy. In group discussion, making a decision requires the agreement of all the group members. This is less efficient in work but more harmonious.



May

In this month, they had a big festival at the beginning of May to kick-start the coming of Summer in Sweden. People will celebrate the day by doing barbeque and picnicking with family or friends. The sunset comes late and sunrise comes early every day starting from now. I cannot see any snow here now and the temperature is really comfortable for doing sports. If I were capable of running, I would have joined the 10km marathon. The semester ends, holiday starts and summer comes. May is the favorite month of the year as one of my Swedish friends said. I go picnicking with my friends from mainland China, Brazil, France, Sweden, and many more countries. I become more open to different cultures and talkative because in front of foreigners, I am very eager to share everything about Hong Kong. I broaden my horizons as I have learnt a lot of new things and had different new experiences. I became more independent and mature as I am used to taking care of myself and manage everything on my own. I am proud to say I have gained a lot and grown up to be a more mature person to overcome more challenges in life. Most importantly, I have found my source of happiness from ordinary and simple life and strengthen my belief to seek happiness in life instead of being materialistic.



Part II General Exchange Information

1. Visa Procedures

Students who wish to study in Sweden for more than three months must apply for a residence permit before traveling to Sweden. To register the application, please visit

<https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Studying-in-Sweden.html> and

create a new account. The application fee costs 1000 SEK paid online. You have to enclose the following documents for the first time online application:

1. Copies of your passport
2. Notice of admission from an institution of learning in Sweden (The acceptance letter)
3. Copy of comprehensive health insurance in Sweden (if you are admitted to studies for less than one year)
4. Bank statement showing that you have the means to support yourself.
or
5. Documents of scholarship or similar funds, including information about the monthly amount and the period

After the application, the Migration Agency would start work on it. The processing time depends on the details of your enclosed documents.

You may have to visit the Swedish embassy or consulate-general to have your picture and your fingerprints taken for an entire visa (a residence permit card).

Once your application is approved, you would receive an email. You have to contact the embassy or consulate-general and book an appointment. Remember to bring your passport when you get the decision.

It is important to apply the VISA as soon as possible once you get all the supporting document because the application takes time before your departure.

2.Orientation Activities

In Uppsala University, they have an international committee. The local students would contact you before your arrival and give you all the details you need. The buddies would guide you to apply for a student account, connect to the school wifi, check-in your residence, get a campus card, etc. On the first few weeks, you do not have to over worry about the adaptation because the Swedish people are very welcome to help. "Receveckorna" means the Uppsalaekonomernas welcoming weeks for bachelor students in the first week. Many fun events (e.g. pub crawls) would be held to welcome all the new students.

3.International Services & Activities

As mentioned, they have an international committee which aim to arrange events for international out-coming students to interact with each other. By joining the nations, you would have some chances to go skiing or a day trip to Stockholm, which are to connect exchange-in students with locals and help out-comers adapt to the new culture and meet new friends there. Student discount would be given to students who join the nations.

4.Accommodations

Uppsala University offers (but not guarantees) accommodation to formal exchange students for a maximum of two semesters per student. You have to apply for housing through the receiving department at the university or the International Office. The coordinator at Uppsala University would send a link to an online application before your arrival. There are different choices for you. Basic furniture, electricity, heating and water are included in the rent for all rooms. Internet connection is provided but you have to bring your own router (buying there is expensive). I live in Rackarbergsgatan where is close to city center, economic building and all the student nations. A supermarket ICA is just nearby. Therefore, it is very convenient and good for budgeted students because the rental price is reasonable and transportation cost can be saved. The place is quite old yet clean.

For students who are eligible to apply for accommodation at Uppsala University Housing Office, you can visit <http://housingoffice.se> for more detail.

For other housing options in Uppsala, you are recommended to visit Studentboet for more information.

5. Courses Registration

All the course information, including the syllabus and requirements are available on <http://fek.uu.se/student-en/incoming-exchange-students/courses/>. At least 15 credits have to be chosen. No add-drop period is offered so a careful selection before the deadline is very important. You can see if the courses are equivalent with the courses in HKUST so that you can transfer the credits back. Students have to fill in the Exchange Student Course Application Form which would be attached by the coordinator. It is recommended to choose reserve courses as first choice is not guaranteed.

6. Teaching & Assessment Methods

The courses offered by the University of Uppsala that are equivalent to that of HKUST are for master students. Each course requires students to prepare for presentation with several reading materials every week. Students are expected to have both group (project) and individual work(reflection).

They have voluntary lectures and mandatory seminars. Teachers teach some important concepts and knowledge in lectures while in seminars, students take the initiative to lead discussion and do presentation. The weekly reading materials provided are the heaviest workload because not only do students need to read through all the articles, but also need to understand, reflect and argue for the ideas by the writers.

7. Sports & Recreation Facilities

In Uppsala, there is not much entertainment except sports. I joined a gym called Campus1477 to enrich my life and kick-start my healthy lifestyle. They offered relatively reasonable price and comprehensive facilities.

Besides gym, people go cycling in both Winter and Summer. In Winter, skiing is the most common activity for locals there while in Summer, the skating rink becomes a large football field.

8. Finance & Banking

The exchange rate of SEK to Hong Kong dollars(HKD) is 1:0.88.

The expense in Uppsala is surprisingly lower than expected. The main cost is for the accommodation which is around 4000 SEK. To dine in local restaurants costs around 120 SEK per meal including a drink. Therefore, to cook is the more economical choice for

budgeted students which costs around 500 SEK per week. Transportation cost is high there which costs 25 SEK per trip by bus. The bus company (UL) offers monthly unlimited trips package for 500 SEK which is highly recommended to students who live in distant area to the university. I did not purchase the package because the main academic building between my accommodation is in 5-minute distance and the city center is in 20-minute walkable distance. In Sweden, to create a bank account requires a personal number of a citizen which is only given to those staying for more than one year. Therefore, as a student who only stays for half a year is not eligible to open a bank account in Sweden. It is highly recommended to bring enough cash to there and bring an automatic teller card with the Cirrus or Plus network so that you can withdraw SEK from the banks there. Of course, you can use Visa card there but you have to pay for the extra fee for this.

9. Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

As mentioned, the International Committee would organize events for incoming students to learn more about the Swedish culture, meet new friends from different countries and adapt to a new environment. Students are welcome and recommended to join different nations as those nations are also good places to join different activities and meet different people. By joining the nations, students can also have chances to work in the café, enjoy discount of brunch or lunch buffet, join pub night in Spring, etc. In the accommodation, you can also interact with the flat-mates and share different food in the kitchen. Of course, during lessons, you can meet friends while working on projects. There are many chances to socialize with people as long as you do not hesitate to talk and share life with people with different cultural backgrounds and languages.

10. Health & Safety

The Uppsala University has set up the Student Health center which is responsible for providing health aids with students. There are also regular healthcare centers or pharmacies around the city. It is important to read your health insurance guidelines as they vary depending on your country of citizenship.

11. Food

Talking about Sweden, Ikea and its meatballs pops out of mind immediately. However, there are other special and delicious local food there, such as marinated salmon with dill potatoes, chives with sour cream, knäckebröd (crisp bread), etc. Compared with Hong Kong, the food in Sweden is healthier but frankly, less various and more expensive. However, they are all worth a try.

12. Transportation

In Uppsala, people bike or walk instead of taking public transportation to save money. You can rent a bicycle for around 350 SEK per month. To go to farther areas, people can take bus for 25 SEK per single trip. To travel to another city, train is the only choice which costs differently depending on the time and destination.

13. Climate

In winter between January and March, the climate is extremely cold and dry. It is snowing every day. The temperature ranges from negative 10 degrees Celsius at night to 0 degree Celsius. In April, the climate is still cold at around 0 degrees Celsius (the lowest) to 10 degrees Celsius (the warmest). From May to August, Summer starts and everything turns green in this month. The weather ranges between 10 degrees Celsius to 20 degrees Celsius. People like picnicking and having barbeque in Summer.

14. Communication

Swedish people speak Swedish as their mother tongue but they can also speak fluent English. However, most notice boards or packages are in Swedish. You can ask people for simple translation and they are very welcome to help.

15. Cautionary measures

It is important to read all the guideline and follow all the deadlines given by the coordinator before your departure. It is very important to stay indoor at midnight especially in winter not only because it is extremely cold, but also due to your personal safety. Please stay with or contact familiar people when you do not feel safe. +46 77 114 14 00 is the Uppsala police station phone number in case of emergency.

Part III Items to Bring

	Checklist
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	Cold weather clothing (sweater, jacket, socks, heat-tech clothing, coat...)
	Undergarments
	Router for the wireless Internet
	USB
	Blowdryer/straightener
	Anti-skid anti-slip shoes/workout shoes
	Pillows
	Notebook
	stationary
	A camera
	Chargers and adapter
	Skincare products
	Medicines
	Toothbrush/toothpaste
	Bath towels
	Backpack for traveling
	Contact lenses
	A small security bag/holder for important documents (passport, visa, cash, plane tickets, etc)
	Some identity photos in case of emergency
	Others

Part IV Useful links and contacts

Migration Agency

<https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Studying-in-Sweden.html>

Uppsala University Housing Office

<http://housingoffice.se>

Course Catalog

<http://fek.uu.se/student-en/incoming-exchange-students/courses/>

Transportation in Uppsala:

Bus: UL

<https://www.ul.se/en>

Train: SJ

<https://www.sj.se/#/>

Emergency Contact

Tel: +46 77 114 14 00 (Police station in Uppsala)

International Mobility Office

Incoming exchange: incoming@fek.uu.se

Phone: +46(0)18-471 1407 (EU, EES) *or*

+46(0)18-4716801 (Non-EU)

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