

A low-angle photograph of the Tsinghua University Gate, a grand neoclassical archway with four white columns. The archway is set against a clear blue sky. The Chinese characters '清華大學' (Tsinghua University) are inscribed on the arch, along with the date '宣統辛亥' (Xuantong Xinhai).

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EXCHANGE REPORT

TSINGHUA UNIVERSITY

BEIJING, CHINA

FALL 2018-19



1. MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG	2
1.1 14 SEPTEMBER – 14 OCTOBER 2018.....	2
1.2 14 OCTOBER – 14 NOVEMBER 2018.....	2
1.3 14 NOVEMBER – 14 DECEMBER 2018.....	3
1.4 14 DECEMBER 2018 – 23 JANUARY 2019	3
2. GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION	4
2.1 VISA PROCEDURES.....	4
2.2 ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES + INTERNATIONAL SERVICES & ACTIVITIES.....	4
2.3 ACCOMMODATIONS.....	4
2.4 COURSES REGISTRATION.....	5
2.5 TEACHING & ASSESSMENT METHODS.....	5
2.6 SPORTS & RECREATION FACILITIES.....	6
2.7 FINANCE & BANKING.....	6
2.8 SOCIAL CLUBS & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES.....	6
2.9 HEALTH & SAFETY.....	6
2.10 FOOD.....	6
2.11 TRANSPORTATION.....	7
2.12 CLIMATE.....	7
2.13 COMMUNICATION + INTERNET CONNECTION.....	7
2.14 CAUTIONARY MEASURES.....	7
3. ITEMS TO BRING	8
4. USEFUL LINKS	8
5. USEFUL APPS	8



1. MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG

I am not going to specify all the activities in this report. Only the major activities each month will be mentioned in the report.

1.1 14 SEPTEMBER – 14 OCTOBER 2018

I attended the orientation activities and toured around the campus with my exchange buddy and roommates. Besides, they organized a visit to 校史馆, which is a museum introducing the history and story of Tsinghua University.

Through these activities, I was able to meet new friends who are also exchange students from Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. In addition, I got the chance to get closer with my exchange buddy, who is a local student, and get familiar with the campus.

During this period, in order to get closer with my roommates, we visited some of the major tourist spots in Beijing together. This included the Old Summer Palace (圆明园) which is next to Tsinghua, 景山公园, 北海公园, and 南锣鼓巷.

Since all the classes were conducted in Mandarin instead of English, it was a challenge for me to understand the materials initially. However, I quickly got adapted to it after a week and quite enjoyed the classes in Mandarin.



1.2 14 OCTOBER – 14 NOVEMBER 2018

The campus was full of Autumn atmosphere with Golden and Red Leaves. It was a really beautiful scene. Don't miss that!

One of the most exciting events during this period was the '京港大學校長峰會'. Apart from knowing more about innovation and entrepreneurship, I was able to meet the new President of the HKUST – Prof Wei Shyy.



Another exciting activity was the visit to 4 firms at Tianjin organized by this exchange program organizers – 空客大飞机, 海鸥手表, 超算中心, 康师傅体验馆. It was an incredible experience, and I got the chance to meet students from Tianjin and know more about the technological development of China. I feel so proud of my country!



During this period, one of the memorable restaurants was 海底捞 concept restaurant. It was newly opened in November, and has a lot of robots machine automated for handling food delivery and kitchen work. It was truly astonishing!



1.3 14 NOVEMBER – 14 DECEMBER 2018

The exchange program organizers organized a visit to 故宫 and 国家博物馆. In the past, whenever I went to 故宫, I did not really know how to walk since it is extremely big. This time, a tour guide was guiding us and brought us to the most important spots and told us the story behind each part of the building. We spotted a lovely cat during our visit. It was a famous 'Internet Cat'. However, we received a sad news 2 weeks later – it was found dead at 故宫.

Later, we went to 国家博物馆 to visit the exhibition on the 40th anniversary of Reform and Opening up of China. It was a truly amazing exhibition, in which we were able to know more about our motherland and the prosperous development of China. Again, I feel so proud of my country! For the lunch, we went to a Xinjiang restaurant. The food was very tasteful surprisingly. Most of us had not tried Xinjiang food before.

During this period, another memorable activity was hiking at 百望山 with my Taiwan friends. The walk was not difficult, and we could enjoy a panoramic view of Beijing. The weather was exceptionally great on that day.



1.4 14 DECEMBER 2018 – 23 JANUARY 2019



During the last few weeks of December, there were a lot of assignments, projects, and examinations. Most students and I were quite busy during that period.

Even though I was very busy, I managed to go to 什刹海 with my Beijing friends to walk on the frozen lake. Walking on the frozen lake was quite amazing and unforgettable. Besides, I went to the concert organized by the military musical band at Tsinghua. My exchange buddy is one of the members. The students at Tsinghua really have very diverse expertise and all-rounded development.

On 1 January 2019, I went to Tiananmen Square to attend the Flag Raising Ceremony in the morning to celebrate the first day of 2019. I feel that, as a Chinese, I must have the responsibility to contribute to the development of China in the future.



On the last week, both the local and exchange students were leaving one-by-one, I felt quite sad when I said goodbye to everyone since I was the last one to leave the school. On the second to last day, I went to Peking University with my Beijing friend.



On 23 January 2019, it's finally my turn to leave Tsinghua. The exchange program was truly an unforgettable and meaningful experience!



2. GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION

This exchange program is specially made for Chinese citizens* who are studying in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. For students from other countries, they will have another international exchange program which is not applicable in this report. (*Chinese citizens are people holding Chinese nationality, including citizens from the Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan.)

The information about pre-arrival, airport pickup and course registration will be provided before the exchange entirely via email. Please check your email frequently.

2.1 VISA PROCEDURES

No Visa procedures are required for Chinese citizens who are permanent residents in Hong Kong. Only a Home Return Permit (回鄉證/港澳居民來往內地通行證) valid for the entire exchange period is needed.

2.2 ORIENTATION ACTIVITIES + INTERNATIONAL SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

An 'Exchange Buddy', who was a current Tsinghua student, was assigned to each exchange student.



The organizer gathered all the Chinese exchange students from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan at the airport. They arranged a school coach to take us from the airport to Tsinghua University. After arriving at Tsinghua, they assisted us to handle with the registration procedures, open bank account, and purchase SIM card.

One day after the arrival date, they organized a 3-hour orientation activity to briefly introduce the history of Tsinghua and tour around the campus.

As stated in the Monthly Activity Log, they organized 3 activities for the exchange students.

- (a) September: Visit to 校史馆
- (b) October: Visit to Tianjin
- (c) November: Visit to 故宫 and 国家博物馆

All these activities served as good chances for me to get to network with students from other regions of China and Exchange Buddies from Tsinghua.

2.3 ACCOMMODATIONS

The exchange students were assigned to live in the local dormitory with the Mainland students. The female students were assigned to live in the Zijing Student Dormitory, in which the bathroom contains no doors or walls, i.e., an open bathroom. However, the male students were assigned to live in the newest Student Dormitory with the Mainland students, in which the bathroom contains doors and walls. The room is quite tidy and clean, and each room holds 4 exchange students.





Each floor contains 2 washing machines, the odd-numbered floor contains a drying machine, the even-numbered floor contains a drinking machine, and the ground floor contains a printer and vending machines. Overall, the dormitory is quite well-equipped.



Please note that:

- (a) All the toilets in the dormitory are 'squat toilets'.
- (b) Electricity, including lighting, of each room will be cut from 11pm to 6am.
- (c) Warm water is available only (a) from 7am to 9am; (b) from 5pm to 11pm.
- (d) Free limited electricity will be provided. You are required to pay to top up the amount.
- (e) Beware of the maximum electric power. Usually, the electric power of a hairdryer and iron would exceed the maximum value, and the electricity will be cut for 15 minutes immediately when using an electrical appliance that exceeds the maximum value.
- (f) You need to pay to take shower and get water from the drinking machine with your student card. So, you are expected to add value to your student card regularly.
- (g) For any assistance, you may contact the 楼长, who is very friendly to the students.

2.4 COURSES REGISTRATION

The course registration for Fall term will be performed in June, 3 months before the school starts. An email containing the course catalogue will be sent to instruct the exchange students how to register the courses beforehand.

There will be an 'Add/Drop Period' in September, but most of the courses will be full already.

Make sure you handle the credit transfer application for new courses not in the course equivalence database before the course registration.

2.5 TEACHING & ASSESSMENT METHODS

Most of the courses for the Chinese local and exchange students are conducted in Mandarin Chinese. I remember there are few English courses for Chinese, but I didn't take them. All my 5 courses were conducted in Mandarin, with 1 course having bilingual learning and assessment materials. For writing, it is fine to use Simplified Chinese or Traditional Chinese.

The teaching and assessment methods are similar to that at the HKUST, with lectures, in-class discussions, written examinations, group projects and presentations. Please be prepared that the gradings are stricter than all the universities in Hong Kong. Many of my friends didn't get very good results for most of the courses.



*We are not allowed to take English courses specially-designed for international students.



2.6 SPORTS & RECREATION FACILITIES

There are a lot of sports and recreation facilities of standard size. Most facilities are not free, but very cheap. It is strongly recommended to visit the facilities and do sports regularly since they are really cool and it serves as a good chance to know more local students.

2.7 FINANCE & BANKING

The maximum cash you can bring to Mainland China is 20,000RMB. A bank account in Mainland is required for WeChat Pay or Alipay. You may open an account beforehand or handle it at the Bank of China inside the campus. For your reference, I spent around 20,000RMB during my exchange.

2.8 SOCIAL CLUBS & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Tsinghua has a lot of student clubs and societies. At the beginning of the semester, they will set up counters and recruit members. Some are entirely free, and some require little membership fee. If you miss that recruitment activity, you can still contact them and join via their WeChat accounts.



Most clubs have activities once per week. It is a great chance to meet more local students.

Besides, there are some career activities at Tsinghua. You may attend the activities to know more about the company and meet the staff.

2.9 HEALTH & SAFETY

The HKUST will help each student to buy medical insurance beforehand, which will cover the entire exchange period. There is a hospital inside Tsinghua.

Every student is required to conduct a body check and chest x-ray beforehand.

2.10 FOOD

There are a lot of school canteens inside Tsinghua. It is recommended to explore all of them during your exchange. Each meal is very cheap and costs less than 10RMB. You must pay with your student card. Besides, cooking is not allowed in the dormitory.

Right now, Beijing is quite an international place. It is strongly recommended to tour around Beijing and try different restaurants with different types of cuisines.





2.11 TRANSPORTATION

It is common for students to ride inside campus. You can either buy a bike or use the 'shared bike' if you want to ride. You can also take the school coach inside the campus. For me, I prefer walking inside the campus since the air is very clean and the road is mostly flat, unlike the steep roads at Hong Kong.

For areas outside campus, you can either take public transport, like bus, subway, or call for private car/taxi using platforms like Didi Chuxing (滴滴出行).



*Uber does not operate in Mainland China since it was acquired by Didi Chuxing in 2016.

2.12 CLIMATE

Regarding humidity, Beijing is extremely dry. You are strongly recommended to use skincare products.

Regarding temperature, the temperature is quite nice from September to November, around 10-20°C. Starting from December till the end of the exchange in mid-January, the temperature usually goes below 0°C. But dormitory and indoor facilities inside and outside Tsinghua usually have warm air, so you do not need to worry about the coldness.

Regarding the air quality, it was not that bad during my exchange. Only around 5 days contained severely bad air quality, and I had used 3 masks only. Other days contained extremely good air quality with blue clean sky.



2.13 COMMUNICATION + INTERNET CONNECTION

During the exchange, I usually communicated with the Chinese local and exchange students using Mandarin Chinese. For communication with the international students, I usually talked in English. All students communicate using WeChat. It is recommended to use Simplified Chinese for messaging.

Free wireless network at Tsinghua of 25GB Data per month is given to student. You may pay to top up.

For wireless connection inside the dormitory, connection to western messaging and social media platforms, like WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and Google, is allowed with limited speed. For more accurate information and smoother connection, it is recommended to use VPN to connect to them.

For searching information in Chinese, I usually use Baidu and Bing, which are not required to use VPN.

2.14 CAUTIONARY MEASURES

It is important to pay attention to occasional smog in Beijing and wear mask when required. You can buy the mask at the supermarkets in Tsinghua.



3. ITEMS TO BRING

Most of the things for daily life can be bought at the campus. You may consider bringing your own skincare products, medicine, notebook, camera, adapters and jackets.

Besides, you are reminded to bring your Home Return Permit, acceptance letter, a passport photo, insurance certificate and body check report.

4. USEFUL LINKS

Does not require connection to Tsinghua VPN:

- (a) Connection to Tsinghua VPN: <https://sslvpn.tsinghua.edu.cn>
- (b) Email: <http://mails.tsinghua.edu.cn>
- (c) Course Platform (similar to Canvas): <http://learn.tsinghua.edu.cn>

Requires connection to Tsinghua VPN:

- (d) Intranet: <http://info.tsinghua.edu.cn>
- (e) Academic Information (Course Registration & Grade): <http://academic.tsinghua.edu.cn>

For usage inside Tsinghua:

- (f) Login to use WiFi: <https://net.tsinghua.edu.cn/>
- (g) Pay online to top up WiFi, electricity and water charges: <http://myhome.tsinghua.edu.cn>

5. USEFUL APPS

All apps require SMS verification and mobile payments. That means you must have a local bank account and phone number. You can download them when you arrive in Beijing.

- (a) Messaging/Mobile Payment: 微信
- (b) Mobile Payment: 支付宝
- (c) Searching for Tourist Spots and Restaurants: 大众点评
- (d) Browser: 百度 / QQ 浏览器
- (e) Map: 高德地图 / 百度地图
- (f) Food Ordering & Delivery: 美团 / 饿了么 / 麦当劳 / 肯德基
- (g) Taxi/Private Car Hailing: 滴滴出行 / 神州专车
- (h) Online shopping: 淘宝 / 京东



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