

Leung Yan Ting's Exchange Report

I went to the National University of Singapore from August – December 2018. The following is my exchange report.

Monthly Activity Log

Before flying out (July)

After the announcement of the exchange result, unlucky like me, I didn't get the on-campus accommodation and needed to find my own. I tried to email all suggested hostels from the university. However, some only accept boys, and some didn't reply. I only got one reply that can be my choice and they refused to tell me about how many vacancies left. As I only had less than 3 weeks to decide, I was too scared and paid the non-refundable deposit immediately. The twist was that after I paid the money, the school told me that they had vacancy again. I was reluctant to give up the huge amount of deposit. However, the total fee for the outside hostel was still 40% higher than that of the on-campus accommodation fee. At the same time, I must share the room with other. Furthermore, I must spend around 1 hour to travel from my dorm.

August

This is the first month that I arrived in Singapore. The school commenced on 6 August. But the class started at around 13 August. I joined the shopping trip organised by the student societies for exchange students. We went to Clementi and the local students recommended some stores for cheap necessity. Later, we completed the registration and student visa application as well as the orientation of my faculty. The planning of the orientation talk held by the school was worse as it clashed the time of making of the student visa. Then, I skipped the orientation talk on how to add modules. Luckily, I used the group chat on Facebook and many kind students answered my query. All Add and Drop of modules were done in this month. Therefore, this was quite chaotic for us exchangers to handle the add and drop with limited and not real-time updated information. Moreover, different school have different systems which made us harder on managing the situation. When everything was settled, I had the first lecture in NUS and involved in the NUSSU Student Life Fair 2018 in UTown. I won the GongCha Coupon there too. At the fair, I joined the dancing club welcome tea. In this orientation event, over 200 people learnt to dance a choreography which was very fun, and I met many friends who also enjoyed dancing there. Then I joined the foundation class held by this club and was a paid class with the tutor being an alumna of NUS.

September

I went to the signature amazement park in Singapore which is the Universal Studio. I had so much fun in that park and I bought the seasonal pass which just costed SGD\$12 more on top of the normal ticket price (\$76). USS is very close to NUS, which only takes half an hour to travel there. I also joined the RUNNUS 2018. I ran 5 km in NUS campus. It started at 8:00 and the weather was just good and breezy enough for marathon. From this large

event, I noticed the energy of this school. As I have saw a lot of old buildings in NUS and I thought that this school would be quite nostalgic and historical. Now I could see another face of NUS. There was a fun fair right after the marathon too. I took some instant photos there with the logo of the event. 22th that week was the recess week of NUS and I travelled to Bangkok, Thailand. It was an unforgettable trip with the friends I just met for a month. One thing I would like to complain was that the unpredictable weather in South East Asia. As Thailand and Singapore are both tropical cities that have frequent rainfall. However, the rain can be like pouring suddenly without any symptoms. We were trapped in the market and used the plastic bags to make some temporary shoes cover to walk on the road which was full of puddles. From this I always got some reflections on how well the road and drainage system in Hong Kong were planned compared to other cities like Thailand.

October

I went to Johor Bahru (JB) in Malaysia. This is the closest city of Malaysia from Singapore. Many local students recommended us to go there in weekends and it only takes 5 mins to travel from Singapore to JB by train. However, I was too naïve not to buy train ticket in advance. Therefore, the only transportation I could take was the public buses when train tickets were sold out at weekend. Unluckily, I spent 3 hours for the immigration. And I starved from 7am till 2pm when I finally arrived JB. I tried the food that were completely different from the taste of the same dishes in Singapore. For example, the Bak Kut Teh in Singapore taste more heavily in pepper and that in Malaysia taste more heavily in Chinese herb. However, the one I tried was also sweet. Even so, I love both. The interesting fact is that the culture of Bak Kut Teh allows us to refill the soup unlimited time. That's surprised me as we all know that from the business perspective, it costs for free offerings. I went to the LegoLand there too. Legoland was an art gallery to me because every lego architecture were art! The mini London, Thailand, China are so detailed. They were all made by legos. This was a month full of midterms, assignments and essays. Therefore, I spent a lot of time in the library. This is difficult to find studying places like LC at night in NUS as many things will close after 10pm. Library closed at 10:30pm.

November

I tried to ride the bicycle at night before dawn to Merlion Park and watch the dawn. However, the weather was moody, and it rained when we arrive there. Also, the dawn was blocked by the cloud. Luckily, I took so much photos when the sky was half bright. I also went hiking in MacRitchie Reservoir and walked along the treetop. Maybe November in Singapore is the season of rain, so we caught in the rain again and I tripped over on the muddy road. Later we spent the week before final exam in Kuala Lumpur and Penang in Malaysia. That is really close to Singapore with just 1 hour and something flight. I visited the Batu Caves and KL tower there. The Dark Cave let me know the beauty of nature and experience the natural 100% darkness. We discovered one interesting fact which is the cheap price of the taxi service. I am not mentioning the real taxi services but the car-hailing apps like uber -- Grab. In Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, with the acquisition of Uber, Grab is the monopolist app available. However, it offers very low rate for Thailand and Malaysia region. I think it is considering the salary gap of both places. I heard from the local driver talks about the low salaries and the low price-level of the locals. And the flat price is just 10% of that in Hong Kong. Therefore, it is surely the reason for cheap Grab. We literally took Grab to everywhere as we have 5 person and we would spend less on Grab than on the very complicated public transports.

December

This was the month of examination, so I studied overnight with my friends in the 24/7 Starbucks in UTown. It was a very unforgettable experience as we didn't expect to have so many students studying overnight together. The interesting thing is that we saw a TA reviewing the exam papers in Starbucks. Why we knew that those were exam papers? That's because those papers are in the cover of the exam papers which are in blue and stabled like a booklet. After the exams, I went to Garden by the Bay with the decorations of Christmas. I also went to Orchard Road with Christmas decorations. This was an interesting experience for me to take Christmas photos but wearing short sleeves, shorts and slippers.

General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

The school will send email to us and tell us the procedures. We need to apply online first. It will be done in the online website of Singaporean ICA (<https://www.ica.gov.sg/>). The system name is SOLAR (Student's Pass Online Application & Registration). You must pay online too. Be careful of the fee you are required to pay as not only the application fee, but the insurance fee and multi-entry visa fee are listed there. Then, you have to wait the approval of application online. Some people wait for more than a month but some like me got approval in just a few days. Don't worry, you still can pass the immigration even though this application is in pending stage.

After the application stage, you will need to wait until your arrival to NUS registration day and got some paper documents including your student card and do another online registration. The paper documents included a time for meeting the authority of ICA with required documents like photo on campus. Then, you need to wait for 2 weeks to pick up your real visa card.

Orientation Activities

Not all orientation activities were compulsory and most of them needs application and enrolment. These activities were competitive like the amazing race which got tons of people staying outside of the gathering place hoping to replace the absentee. Therefore, once receiving the email, please apply all of them as I think they were accepting people on first come first served basis.

For the activities I joined, that were welcoming party in Utown and shopping in Clementi. They allow us to mingle with the exchange students. However, the events were pretty short and boring, so you have to interact with others proactively.

International Services & Activities

I used the international SOS services once when I was sick and had fever. I consulted about the general fee of clinics and hospital.

Accommodations

It was totally a mess for me. I didn't get the on campus accommodation at first and was warned to find the accommodation on my own immediately. That's only 3 weeks till I arrived Singapore and I sent 10 emails out asking for vacancies but only got one reply, so I have no choice but to pay the deposit for the securing the bed. It was a non-refundable deposit. When this thing was settled, the school suddenly notified me that there was vacancy in PGPR. I didn't want to lose my SGD\$1000 deposit so I didn't accept that.

There was a list of recommended hostels from NUS and I found mine on that list. That was not bad but the traveling time was a huge factor that affect the normal activities and school day. The estimated travelling time from the hostel are not accurate. I took more than an hour sometimes to get to the campus from the dorm.

One thing to notice is that the non-AC room is not that hot. The fan can make a few of friend getting a cold and sick.

Courses Registration

Another mess. Different school got different systems. The instruction of adding modules in business school were supposed to be announced in an orientation event. However, the event was clashed with the registration and application process of student visa, so I missed it. Moreover, all tutorials of social science courses were required exchange student registered manually so I had to queue outside the room for an hour to get the timeslot I wanted. And again, there was time clash between two courses tutorial registration procedure. Therefore, I was compelled to enrol in an 8am class. And right! They have 8am class.

For the real course registration, there are different systems under different schools. As I have courses in faculty of Art and Social Science and Business school. Therefore, I have experienced the chaos of both sides. As there is no schedule and quota update in real time like our websites, you can only rely on the information from email about quota left.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

The teaching method was quite like that in HKUST. However, they demanded more on readings. Almost all the lectures were based on the readings and the cases (around 30 pages per case). We were supposed to do the analysis on ourselves first. Therefore, the workload was be expectedly heavy. Also, most of the lectures are 3 hours class and 1 hour tutorial. The assessments were similar to UST. They have midterms, finals, projects, reports, presentations.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There were facilities like gym room, courts in the sports hall, UTown and most of the residential halls. There were two swimming pools in UTown and Sports Hall. We needed to bring along our rackets and balls as there was no renting services like UST. There were some activities rooms like mirror rooms in the student union buildings which are in YIH.

Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

We can open an account there. Most of the students open DBS account as there is a branch in campus and they could then use the PayLah electronic wallet provided by DBS. They use Singaporean Dollars which is around HKD\$5.8 = SGD\$1. The money exchange store is available in Kent Ridge station which is the nearest MRT station to NUS.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There is a student fair in September and you can join the local student clubs. Some of them are charged but some are not.

Health & Safety

There is health centre on campus but we need to pay SGD\$18+ for each prescription. There is a hospital -- NUH nearby and this is the university hospital. If you go out to visit clinics, that is around \$SGD40-50 from my experience. Remember to keep the receipt for claiming the insurance.

Food

They have various food choices and cuisines. The hawker centres included cheapest food which were still delicious. There are many cafeterias on campus in each school. I recommend the Deck in Faculty of Art and Social Science.

Transportation

There is MRT, bus, taxi and grab in Singapore. There are internal shuttle buses on campus. We can take them to the nearest MRT station

Climate

In the tropical city, the temperature is stable at around 23 Degree. September to December is the raining season. At night without sunshine, the breezy weather can be cold.

Communication

They used Singlish and English in general. The Chinese they say is quite different from what we expect to hear.

Cautionary measures

Singapore is a safe place but still, there can be crazy people on street. Therefore, be alert when being in public.

Other notes (if applicable)

Please stand on the left side on the escalator. This is opposite to the practice in Hong Kong.

Items to Bring

Item	remarks
Backpack	for travelling as backpackers
Clothes	around 1-2 weeks amount of shorts and sleeveless with jackets
sandals/slippers	very useful when caught in the rain
Glasses	bring spare contact lens or glasses
sun cream	the UV there is stronger than Hong Kong
medicines	/
mosquitos spray	/
tissues papers	you may find the packing of tissue papers different there
extension socket	/
umbrella	/
bed sheets and pillow	the dorm may not offer pillow.

Useful link:

IVLE is the canvas of UST.

<https://ivle.nus.edu.sg/default.aspx>

EduRec upload the grades. It is similar to our student centre.

<https://myisis.nus.edu.sg/psp/cs90prd/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG&>

Website for asking about the accommodation issues.

<https://www.hosteladmission.nus.edu.sg/>

Application for on campus accommodation

<https://uhms.nus.edu.sg/Pre-Matstudents/Default.aspx?Params=L9ezxPcQnQukDDhuxAMbDfw%2bGJVhXDGOMo6vEQxlEOE%3d>

Student Visa application

<https://solar.ica.gov.sg/solar/index.xhtml>




First part of the registration is done online before arrival:

<http://www.nus.edu.sg/registrar/info/ng/NG-Registration-Guide.pdf>

Modules add/drop and enrollment

<https://myaces.nus.edu.sg/PRXIA/Student/Login>

Some apps that are very useful for surviving in SG and NUS:

 <p>IVLE mobile version</p>	 <p>[NUS NextBus] real-time internal shuttle bus schedule</p>
 <p>[MyTransport] for real-time bus schedule and MRT map</p>	<p>For Grab healing (like Uber)</p> 