

Exchange Report



New York University, USA

Hiroki Yamamoto

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BSc Economics and Finance



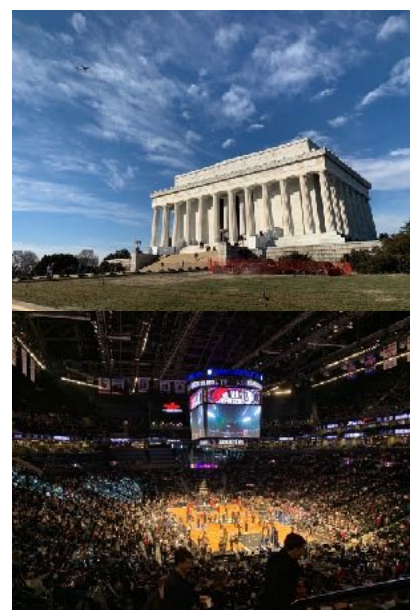
PART 1: Monthly Activity Log

January:

This was the month that I moved-in to New York. I flew from Istanbul, Turkey, since I spent my winter break there with my family. It took me about 11+ hours to get to New York. Before my arrival, I booked a shuttle bus provided by NYU. This was a mistake as I had to wait 30 minutes at the airport, move from one terminal to another to pick-up other students, and in the end, it took me 2-3 hours from JFK to my dorm (Gramercy Green). I should have used a taxi or Uber/Lyft. The first day of school was fine, but I was only allowed to check-in to the dorm the day before the first day of school, so I was totally exhausted and jet lagged. Nonetheless, it was amazing to be in a class taught by my personal superstar Aswath Damodaran.

February:

The first thing I did was to go watch a musical, “Chicago.” I am a big fan of musicals, so watching a live musical was one of the best experiences that I have ever had. I cannot watch this play in any other place in the world, so this was 100% unique experience. There was also the Super Bowl, which was broadcasted at my dorm. I went to watch only the Halftime Show with many others from the hall. Although the performance was not beyond my expectations, it was nice to watch in real time as I love the Halftime Show and I always thought of it like an iconic American thing—a nice cultural experience to have. For a 3-day weekend, I went to D.C. It was my first time there, and it was interesting to see and feel how D.C. is different from NY even though they are only 4 hours apart by bus. I went to lots of touristy places such as the White House, Congress, and museums which were really lovely as I was able to know more about American culture and history. Right before mid-terms started, I went to see an NBA match with other exchange students. It was an excellent cultural experience to have and outstanding time to hang out with other exchange students.



March:

The month of midterms! Because I had no idea how hard exams were going to be, I studied too much. It turned out, compared to UST, professors gave more hints and practice exams. So, actual exams were not as hard as I expected (no surprises or “We didn’t do this in class” moment). After all the midterms, Spring Break came by. I decided to stay in NY for a couple of days before heading to Boston. I went to watch “Kinky Boots”—it was literally the best entertainment experience I’ve ever had. Then, I went to Boston. Boston was even more beautiful than NYC because it is a smaller city, and every buildings are well-designed. I went to Harvard and MIT. Harvard was so humongous that I got lost a couple times: very different from UST campus for sure. While there were no students, it was pleasing to feel a different kind of educational atmosphere: unlike UST which has a more modern building, everything at Harvard was old and historical. I also went to Fenway Park, a very famous ballpark in the US. Since it was my dream to visit this ballpark, it was just wonderful; I actually learned a lot about Boston, baseball and Red Sox in the tour that I attended. My short trip to Boston was really splendid since I got to know more about the culture of different states and the history of baseball.



April:

Yet another month of midterms! I got the hang of midterms in March, so I was able to allocate my time effectively. I went to the UN Headquarters with other IBEX students. Since I am into international politics, it was actually really cool to see the room where the Security Council, General Assembly, and all other UN bodies meet. It was such an excellent event organized by NYU. I also went to see a New York Yankees game. This is the baseball team that I support since I was small, so it was a dream-come-true moment. It was very different from going to a baseball game in Japan, so it was a pleasant cultural experience. Over the second last weekend, I met with my friends from my high school in Indonesia. One studies at NYU, another one studies at Persons in NYC, and the other

two somehow happened to be in NY for a vacation. It was outstanding to catch up with them, walk around New York with them and talk for like 5 hours non-stop. On the last week of April, my family visited NY, so we went to see a music performance “STOMP” and a New York Mets baseball game with them. It was a delightful experience to be in the US with my family since it was kind of exciting to discover an unfamiliar culture/place together.



May:

Unfortunately, this was my last month at NYU. First, I went to see perhaps the most popular musical, “Dear Evan Hansen”. I just loved it, and it was just amazing. I don't know how I can express it in words. Then, there came a lot of assignments and exams. As I mention later, the exam schedule was a bit different from HKUST, so it was really intense for me. I will remember this exchange forever!

[PART 2: General Exchange Information](#)

1) Visa Procedures

In early October, I submitted my passport copy, personal information, and photos to NYU. They processed that information and sent a document called DS-2019 in late October/early November. Then I filled out an online form on the US consulate general website, paid necessary fees (USD180 for SEVIS and HKD1280 for the US consulate general fee) and booked an appointment for an interview at the end of November. I had my J1 visa by early December. The whole process took me 1-2 months, but I went through the same process in May 2018 for my summer exchange at UPenn, so I knew how things work. Booking an interview appointment can be difficult, especially in December. Apparently, the US government shutdown had some effects on visa processing (I was not affected by it), so it's always better to get visa things done early.

2) Orientation Activities

There were two mandatory orientation activities. One was IBEX orientation done by an office which looked after us, exchange students. This orientation was held on the second day of school. I was able to meet with other exchange students on the same program and also Stern students who would go on an exchange in next semester. There was also an information session during the orientation—mostly about academics and visa. I found

this orientation useful, but I also felt like they could have done this perhaps day before the first day of school since they explained a lot of important stuffs that we needed before the first day of school such as NYU student ID (I had to pick up my ID before the first day of school at the security office, so that I was able to get into buildings). Another mandatory orientation was related to visa. Many of the contents overlapped to the one from IBEX orientation, but I found it useful to know some more details of visa.

3) International Services & Activities

IBEX office organized a few interesting/useful services and activities. In terms of services, they matched incoming exchange students with IBEX student ambassadors who have already gone to exchange or will be going on exchange. This was helpful, as these “buddies” knew a lot about NYU and NYC. One thing that I found helpful was a tax information session organized for a non-US resident. I had to file a tax form since I was in the US in the prior year for UPenn exchange. I had no idea how to file a tax, so I found this tax information session extremely helpful. Since exchange students have to file a tax document next fiscal year, it might be helpful to attend one before they leave the US. In terms of activities, they organized food events, NBA game visit, and UN HQ visit as I mentioned in the monthly activity log. I really liked their activities since these were things that I could not do in Hong Kong.

4) Accommodations

I applied for NYU on-campus housing in early October. I was offered a place in the mid-November, but the room assignment was not revealed until the mid-January (2 weeks before the departure). I stayed at Gramercy Green. People say this is one of the nicest dorms at NYU (beautiful view for sure), but it is pretty far away from NYU (25-minute walk). The room has basic stuffs (desk, bed, microwave, dishwasher, refrigerator, oven, cooker, and so on). For sure, they had more kitchen items than HKUST dorm has. The room had a huge heater, but I found it cold when I was sleeping so I would recommend bringing a thick blanket and proper sleeping clothes. The hall has a proper gym, and there was a study room. The problem with the study room was that it only has eight rooms and four desks, so they can be filled up quickly. Since my room was pretty dark, I always studied on campus. I believe every dorm has some kind of supermarket nearby, so finding food and water, even in the midnight, is definitely not a problem. One crucial, surprising thing is that at the end of the semester, I had to check out really quickly. After my last final exam, I had to check out within 24 hours! So, those who live in one of the dorms, I strongly recommend to make sure you figure out the final exam schedule early and arrange a flight accordingly.

5) Courses Registration

The course registration process started in October. In the mid to end of October, IBEX office sent me a course catalog (Link at the end). Then I had to choose what courses I

wanted to take. I was allowed to take 2 Stern courses and 2 non-Stern courses. The key thing here is that many of economics and finance courses do not have a link to syllabus, so you have to google and find it out or email to IBEX office and ask them to figure out. This could take some time, and since the syllabus is essential when applying for course equivalence assessment at HKUST, I would recommend doing this process early. Then, in the mid-November, I filled out a form with a list of courses that I wanted to take and back-up courses in case I was not able to get into first-priority courses. I had to make sure there was not time conflict. Plus, I had to make sure I meet credit requirements at HKUST. These two things are pretty tedious, so I again recommend to do this process in advance. To my surprise, NYU was pretty strict about prerequisites (universities that I have gone to for an exchange in the past were pretty lenient about prerequisites). So, I recommend you to have syllabus from courses you have taken in the past ready in case if they ask you to prove that you have taken prerequisites. In the end of November to the beginning of December, I received a confirmation email. After I arrived at NYU, just like HKUST, I had 2 weeks to change courses. I made no changes. If I wanted to change it, I could not do it through Albert, an equivalent of Student Center; I had to email IBEX office. Overall, this process was well-organized. IBEX office knows what they are doing, so this was not a problem for me at all.

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods

Very similar to HKUST. Mid-terms (usually two), quizzes, group projects, and finals. Stern classes are apparently easier to get good grades due to 'Stern curve,' and CAS classes (Economics) are quite easy to fail since they give out a lot of Cs. Most of my professors uploaded lecture notes on NYU Classes (equivalent of Canvas). My Stern courses were all recorded so I could watch it online. CAS courses were not recorded. Teaching and Assessment methods were not that different. One potential big difference maybe discussion/participation for Stern classes, but my courses were not demanding in that regard, so it was all okay. One thing I found challenging about assessment methods is the final exam schedule. Unlike HKUST where we have a week off after the last day of class, at NYU, I had ONE day to study. Then there was a bunch of exams. This was really surprising to me because all of my exams were cumulative, and there was a bunch of assignments right until the last day of class. I strongly recommend to manage your time and schedule well ahead.

7) Sports & Recreation Facilities

I know there are two sports facilities in Manhattan, very close to campus. Because I did not use both I am not sure about details. I think every dorm has one gym. In terms of recreation facilities, there were some at my dorm (TV room, for example), but I do not think there was anything like that on campus. Since I did not use sports or recreation facilities, I do not have details on these.

8) Finance & Banking (including currency/expenses)

I had a Bank of America account that I opened when I was in the US during Summer 2018. I know that there is a lot of bank branches near campus (5-minute walk from campus to a Bank of America, Wells Fargo, HSBC, or Chase branch). In terms of expenses, to plan my budget, I just multiplied the price I usually pay in Hong Kong by 2~3. For example, food costs around \$10, and subway costs \$2.75 per trip. Yes, I did use a lot of money and I had to bring a lot of money in when I came (note: if you bring more than \$10000 equivalent to the US, it is going to be problematic since you have to file a document at the airport). I used around HKD7000 per month, excluding food expenses (I had to buy a meal plan, so I ate mostly on campus; more details later).

9) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

I joined Finance club and Investment club. But I did not have to pay for club fee. I just had to go to an event that I found interesting. So I was able to go to a club meeting that I did not even register for! NYU clubs are really good in the sense that they can invite a lot of alumni from Wall Street and ask them to give an interesting talk. Management club invited former CEO of P&G, and his talk was really interesting. Pretty much every day, there is a club meeting so I was able to network with professionals easily.

10) Health & Safety

I got sick once in February, but I did not go to the clinic since I heard that it could be quite expensive. I bought medicines for cold at CVS/Walgreens (there's a lot and they are affordable). I know that NYU has a big hospital, so there's nothing to worry about the medical treatment you would receive (only the cost that you have to be careful). There's a phone number you can call 24 hours to talk to a nurse or counsellor in case of any emergency or mental breakdown. In terms of safety, the campus is safe (lots of security officers). There are free shuttle buses that run every 30 minutes and connect the campus with the main dorms. I used this everyday since it was free, clean and safe.

11) Food

Because I lived on-campus, I had to buy a meal plan, so on weekdays, I mainly ate food at the campus cafeteria. A meal plan was expensive \$2000 for a semester, but there was a lot of options and varieties that I barely understood; maybe I could have saved some money. Food on campus was okay (let's say it was better than the food I can find at UST). So I really did not have a problem finding 'edible' food. On weekends, I went to eat a lot of things: Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, and so on. It's NYC so I was able to find pretty much anything. Lunch is around \$10-15.

12) Transportation

From my dorm to campus, I mainly used subway and NYU free shuttle bus. To travel

around New York, I mostly used subway or bus, but I found it easy to use subway because bus can be sometimes tricky. \$2.75 per trip for subway and bus.

13) Climate

It was really cold until mid-March and from mid-March till mid-April, the climate is similar to Hong Kong winter. From around the end of March, on some days, it can be really warm (25-26°C). But I mainly needed really warm clothes (it can be -15 °C) and some summer clothes.

14) Communication

I have iPhone XS and this has eSIM feature. Because I wanted to have 4G when I got to the US, I set up eSIM using T-mobile before I landed in the US (Link at the end). This was easy and simple. It cost \$40 a month for unlimited domestic calls and texts, plus 10GB of data. It turned out it was expensive to make international calls (I had to top-up \$40 to make a call) but I seldom made an international call so I was able to live with it.

15) Cautionary measures

Touristy places (like Times Square) can be dangerous. Don't respond to people who try to sell you something. If you respond, they can harass you and make you uncomfortable.

PART 3: Items to Bring

Items to Bring	
✓	Blankets (Especially, if you are staying at NYU dorm)
✓	Pillow (Especially, if you are staying at NYU dorm)
✓	Bed Sheets (Especially, if you are staying at NYU dorm)
✓	Adaptors (plug type is the same as the one in Japan)
✓	Really, really, really warm cloths
✓	Proper shoes (shoes that function in a severe snowy weather)
✓	Medicine/cream that can deal with seriously dry weather

PART 4: Useful Links and Contacts

Course Catalog: http://albert.nyu.edu/albert_index.html (Click 'Public Course Search')

NYU IBEX Exchange Program Website: <https://pages.e2ma.net/pages/1789092/10515>

NYU Health Center Contact: (212) 443-1000

T-mobile eSim: <https://support.t-mobile.com/docs/DOC-39202>