

EXCHANGE REPORT

Singapore Management University



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Major in Information System and Economics

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Monthly Activity Log

To be very honest I totally forgot about the monthly log, but I will try my best to recall what happen the past few months. I arrived Singapore on 8 of August, one day before the Singapore national day. I decided to arrive in early August because there is an orientation that is held around that time, and I am required to attend it else my student exchange will risk being suspended. National day is a day where Singaporean celebrate the country's independence, and it is the country's 54th birthday this year. What really makes this year's national day special is that this is also their bicentennial year, which marks 200 years when Singapore is found by a British voyager. It is a joyful event where special sales, shows and activities are held through that period. The highlight of the day is definitely the national day parade in the evening, where it is held at the Marina Bay Floating Platform. Dance, uniformed parade and songs were performed till the night, where the parade will end with a firework show. This pretty much sums up the highlight of August other than beginning lessons at SMU and slowly trying to adapt to the new environment.

For September, I slowly got a hang of the teaching style in SMU and decided to speak up more during lesson. Although, it might seem rather boring but I think the highlight of the month for me will be the in-class presentation. My group for the Exploring Asian Identities class I took was selected to be the first to present during the weekly in-class presentation. It was enriching to interact with the local students, and they had inspire me throughout the project. We ended up presenting in the form of news broadcasting, and it was very well received. We presented about the situation in China and Hong Kong, and it drew a lot of interest from the classmates, especially due to the recent situation at home. I love how while I learnt a lot during the process, but also had tons of fun.

October is more happening, because there was a week of school break, a public holiday and Halloween. During the one week school break, I went for a 4 days trip to Shanghai with my family. I had a wonderful time there, spending quality time with my family and was just mesmerised by how develop the city is. The public holiday is Deepavali, also known as the festival of light, it is a day where most of the Indian celebrate. I don't remember doing much on that day, but there was a makeup class due to this holiday. I was invited to a party for Halloween, and I had a blast. It was my first Halloween party, and I didn't know till then that it can be so much just dressing up with a bunch of people.

Nothing much happen during November, the semester was coming to end and I had to start preparing for the finals. The semester ended with a presentation for my Interactive design and prototyping class, where my group presented our mobile application idea. I learnt a lot from that class, as the class focus more on the process of developing the mobile application (without coding). It gave me a lot of new insight and knowledge on how application should be develop. Just as I am typing this report, I realized I also went on a trip to the Singapore National Gallery with my Exploring Asian Identities class. We were there to learn more about the Asian art history and we had to write a reflection essay after. The National Gallery is a beautiful place, transformed from an old court house with modern interior design. One funny thing about that place is that, more visitor seem to be there for photoshoot instead of appreciating artworks.

The start of December welcomes me with a few final examination. I studied for the exam even though I am supposed to only be looking for a pass, as I was afraid that if I don't I might not even pull through. I guess the Singaporean spirit of "Kiasu" has affected me somehow, "Kiasu" is the Hokkien word for scare to lose. The exam was rather tough, I wasn't able to finish some of the papers in time. After about 3 weeks, the results are release and I did better than expected.

General Exchange Information

For the Visa Procedure, SMU will send a couple of email with detail instructions, so no need to be worry about that part. I did not apply for the Visa as I do not need to, and I am also too lazy to dig up the useful links, but just as I mentioned earlier, the details are not hard to find.

As for the school orientation, it was just a 2 hour session at a lecture hall where they did some simple introduction of SMU, activities and facilities available. They also went through some administrative instruction, and ice breaking games. The orientation ended with a buffet where exchange students can get together.

On international services and activities, the International Office will organise activities through the semester from time to time, so just need to keep a lookout for the email or social media. Students may also approach them for any student exchange service if required.

SMU does provide halls but they are off campus, so for students just need to keep a lookout for the emails during matriculation. If not students may also share a place with fellow exchange students, who will post request for sharing accommodations on the SMU student exchange Facebook page. I have no idea about the cost for renting the accommodation or staying at the university hall, as I just stayed at my relative's place.

One of the most interesting part about SMU is their course registration system. Unlike in UST where it is first come first serve and student just queue online to enrol into course. SMU run by a bidding system where students are given a certain amount of digital credit, to be used for bidding courses. There will be a very detail instruction email sent to all student, but I will just try to list out some of the main idea here. At a given time slot, student may submit their propose amount of credit for their chosen course into the system. For example, at between 10th to 12th August, student A decided to use 20% of his or her credit to bid for the marketing course. As it is not a first come first serve system, there are no incentive for submitting the bid early. Students' bid will be evaluated after the bid submission period, and the top 20 bidders (assuming class size is 20) will be enrolled into the courses. Students may also refer to the "market price" of courses from past semester, so to help them decide on how much to bid for.

Another distinction from UST, SMU's teaching and assessment method emphasize a lot on class participation. Class participation may account for 15 – 20 % of the course grade, so students are often encourage to speak up in class. I am someone who seldom speak up or ask question in class, so this experience does sort of forced me out of my comfort zone. I paid attention more in class, and sometimes I just try to answer question even though I am pretty sure I am wrong. Class participation in SMU is such an important part that in each classroom, there are even a space on the table for students to put their name card. And, yes, everyone need to make a name card to be displayed during lesson, so the lecturer knows who participated.

Even though SMU is located in the city, there are still a number of sports and recreation facilities around the campus. For example, gym, swimming pool, indoor basketball court and dace rooms. There are also quite a number of study rooms around the campus and they can all be book online. But if I am not wrong, another student have to confirm your booking online, so to make the booking successfully. I think this is to prevent situations where only one student is using a room. Other than studying, there are also many tables and places for student to study or to use around the campus.

To be honest, I didn't quite plan much for the finance or even keep track of my spending. The exchange is usually around 0.15 to 0.18. Food is quite affordable at the food court, the average price is 4 SGD, but a decent restaurant may hit up to 10+ SGD.

For social clubs and networking opportunities, from what I observe from the club and society fair, I am sure SMU have more social clubs than UST. Clubs ranges from the typical sports team, to social clubs like volunteering society, to performance club like dance, to interest groups like investment society. In fact, I joined 2 of the very interesting interest group, which are the Business intelligent and analytics club and the Blockchain club. The club names are pretty self-

explanatory, and they are not clubs that required a lot of commitments. They just held a few workshops and events that allow me to gain knowledge that is outside the curriculum.

During the orientation, I was told that the insurance covers every exchange student, and it allow us to visit the on-campus clinic for free. The clinic very accessible and appointments can be made through a mobile application, which will be mention during the orientation. Fortunately, I did not fell into any serious illness, hence I never visited the clinic in SMU. But I will assume it provides decent service, since even some of the professor visit that place. On safety wise, from what I heard from the locals, I think Singapore is relatively safe. Most of them are not worried about travelling home alone at night.

Every time when someone ask me what is my favourite thing about Singapore, I will always answer food. With Singapore's multi-ethnic society and hawker culture, people in Singapore have the opportunity to taste a myriad of gourmet with affordable prices. From the familiar Chinese cuisine that I am very used to at home, to the savoury halal dishes, to some cultural fusion food, everyone will be able to find something they love. Keeping up with the health conscious trend, Singapore do provide many food option that cater to different dietary needs, for example, vegan, vegetarian, halal and lactose intolerance. The food delivery service is also very well established in Singapore, many of the local cuisines can be delivered to your door step, through mobile application like Deliveroo, Foodpanda and Grab. If I must recommend one dish, I think everyone should give Hainanese Chicken Rice a try. It is a simple dish, served with chopped boiled chicken, rice cooked with chicken oil, a few slices of cucumber and a small of chicken soup. It is a savoury dish that is available at almost every corner of Singapore. Although, their taste might differ but it is usually very affordable, with price ranging from 2.5 SGD to 5 SGD. In addition, is safe to consume the tap water in Singapore.

Most places in Singapore is very accessible through public transport, one can travel from one end to another in about an hour. Other than the typical public transport like trains and buses, the city also offers ride-hailing service, such as Grab and Go Jek. The train service has been reliable as I have only heard of a delay once, during my stay there. There is also an electric car renting service named, BlueSG, I have never tried it before, but I heard it can be rather expensive.

The climate in Singapore is usually hot and humid, but I find it cooler than the summer in Hong Kong where it is also stuffy. I am comfortable most of the time with my short sleeve clothing, but it is still advisable to bring along some long sleeve clothing for air-conditioned places. Many location are also air-conditioned or sheltered, so I did not have to face the sun for long most of the time. An umbrella will be essential during November and December, as it is the monsoon season in Singapore where it will almost every other day.

Although the national language of Singapore is Malay, most people in Singapore communicate in English. To be more specific, they usually speak Singlish, which is short for Singapore English. Singlish is a build on the basis of English with a combination of mandarin, chinses dialects, Bahasa Melayu and some other language. For example, instead of saying "Where shall we have our dinner later?" , Singlish will be "Ay later where we makan for dinner?". I would say that Singlish does share some similarities with Konglish, but there is no need to worry not about the language barrier, as lesson are conducted in proper English. Other than English, Mandarin are also spoken for the ethnically Chinese people, but they tend to include many English terms when communicating using Mandarin. In addition, some of them actually understand Cantonese, as it is spoken by their elder at home.

With regards to cautionary measures, is hard to really think of any, but I will list some of the more special laws in Singapore. It is prohibited to boozing in public places and retail sales of alcohol across Singapore between 10.30pm and 7am daily. Sales of chewing gum is also prohibited, but consuming is fine, so be sure to bring many chewing gum over from Hong Kong if needed. As for smokers, just need to be careful before smoking, as many places prohibits smoking. Singapore is known for being a "fine" city, other than being a fine city to stay in, it is also infamous for its harsh fine system. So do be cautious, for those visiting the city, and be mindful of some of the rules and regulation.

Items to Bring

1. Hard-Disk & Thumb-Drive
2. LAN Cable & Router
3. Travel Adaptor & Extension Cord
4. Photocopies of Important Documents
5. Cash (2000-3000 SGD) and Cards
7. Small Sling Bags, Dummy Wallet or Money Belt
8. Condiments Pack
9. Moisturiser
10. Mini Rice Cooker
13. A few pairs of bottoms
14. Both summer and winter tops
15. Formal wear
16. Jackets
17. Undergarments
18. Hanger pegs
19. Hangers
20. Casual shoes
21. Formal shoes
22. Towel
23. Stationery, Calculator
24. Files
25. Toiletries
26. Sunblock
27. Umbrella
28. Ziplock bags
29. Chargers and Power Bank
30. Passport and identification document
31. Swimwear, goggles
32. Laptop
33. Nail Clippers

34. Lip Balm

35. Medication

36. Hat

Useful Links and Contacts

Blog by other exchange student

<https://daydreamingtravels.com/exchange-student-in-singapore/>

SMU website for exchange student

<https://www.smu.edu.sg/global/global-programmes/international-exchange/incoming-exchange-students>

Local and regional events and promotions

<https://thesmartlocal.com/>

Food site

<https://eatbook.sg/>

Travel deals

<https://www.klook.com/en-SG/>

Best Practices of Host University

I think one of the best practice of SMU is their emphasis on class participation, although it seems forced but I think it helps the students to learn and also it makes the class more interesting. Students get to interact with the lecturer more and also with fellow classmates.

Another practice that is great is that the clubs and society in SMU often send mass email to SMU students to join their club activities. For example, a Malaysia Club invited everyone for a one day trip to Johor Bahru, a Foodie Club invited everyone for a baking class, and a sport club invited everyone for to do some recreational training with them. UST does have some clubs that does that but not often.

That also leads to my next best practice, as I have previously mentioned earlier in the report, SMU have a lot of clubs and society even those very niche or specialise interest groups and clubs. For example, just dance alone, they are split into 4 clubs for difference dance styles. Other special interest clubs such as Data Analytics and Blockchain clubs are also unheard of in UST. I hope UST will continue to encourage students and staffs to form similar club.