

EXCHANGE REPORT: SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (ADYTIA REUBEN HALDER, 2019)

PART I: MONTHLY LOG

August 2019

Landing in Singapore, I was buzzing with excitement and brimming with potential. Heading into SMU was nerve-racking at first, because I knew no one in my classes. Because of the class participation component being a big part of the grade, I spoke up often. All my classes had group projects in them, and I was happy to have people to talk to. My friend in Hong Kong has a friend in Singapore, so I had met her and a friendship was about to blossom. Although I had enrolled in only three classes, so I had time to roam around and explore Singapore, as well as hang out with my younger cousins at my uncle's house.



September 2019

As the semester started off, I got along with all my groups. We had a good time whenever we hung out, which I am very grateful for. My class for Exploring Asian Identities went for a field trip to the National Gallery of Singapore, and we had a really good time bonding there. My Advertising class Group also came up with our team name: Mambo Number 5. We too, were growing in camaraderie. I also did a lot of baby-sitting with my cousins, and we had tonnes of fun.



October 2019

My friendships strengthened with all my group mates. I made a friend outside of my classes too, and we had gone rollerblading. My birthday was in October, which happened to correspond with the one-week break. I decided to visit my girlfriend in Vancouver, and then stopped by Hong Kong on my birthday to spend time with my family. I was overjoyed to be reunited with them, and also for a change of scenery. Schoolwork was managed in a timely way, and I enjoyed the content of my social studies courses quite a lot.



November 2019

This month was a whirlwind of emotions. Presentations and group projects were due, exams were soon arriving, but also it was nearing my time in SMU to be over. My groups were working very hard, and it was very stressful. My dad came to Singapore on business, so it was refreshing to meet him then. For the Advertising class final presentation, I had to eat an Oreo and chilli sauce, which is the 2nd picture shown. It was weird but we got a good mark in the end. I felt really close with all my group mates. We had really become good friends, and working with them was a joy. Tutoring my cousins and being with them is something I will always cherish as well.



December 2019

I only stayed till December 6th. I hung out with all the friends I had made there for one last time. It was bittersweet, but overall a good experience. I even felt sad to finish the courses I was taking, because I had enjoyed them very much. I even miss my professors. My time in SMU is an unforgettable one. I hope to visit again and reconnect!



PART II: GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION

Visa Procedures

The process was quite straightforward, with the assistance from SMU being very cohesive and catalysing the whole process. I hold an Indian passport, so I always expect a long and arduous process, but the Online system for a Singaporean visa was quite straightforward, with no difficulties in completion at all. The supporting documentation needed was personal identification, an application to be filled out with your passport photo uploaded. Other easy-to-retrieve supplementary documents were also asked for, like a student ID card. SMU will provide you a registration number in the SMU email, so it's very important to always be notified.

Orientation Activities

The orientation activities were very comprehensive. We were given a briefing on SMU by a student-led presentation, and then there is an optional tour of SMU. However, be sure to sign up before all the time-slots are filled up.

International Services & Activities

There was a Buddy System wherein you could be paired up with a local SMU student. However, spaces in this activity are very limited, hence I couldn't experience it. However, in the aforementioned orientation, all the general services and clubs were explained to us very substantially.

Accommodations

The international student accommodation was a bit too out of my financial range. I was going to stay in a furnished AirBnb, but then my uncle was kind enough to sublet me a room at his house in Singapore. It was an hour away from SMU, but I didn't mind too much.

Courses Registration

The course registration was tricky, as SMU employs a bidding credit system as opposed to HKUST's time-sensitive registration system. It's very difficult, as you as an exchange student are unfamiliar with the nuances of the course sections, what professors are good etc. SMU provides the historical data for all the prior bidding activities, but it is still difficult to navigate. I almost didn't get one of my courses due to underbidding. SMU has a service to help exchange students understand the system, but it is quite limited.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

I enjoyed the teaching a lot at SMU. My professors were very insightful and facilitated by learning in a big way. The assessment methods are similar to HKUST, but with an emphasis on class participation. This incentivised me to be more vocal in class, and thus absorb more knowledge.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

Although I didn't personally use the sports and recreation facilities, I saw their gymnasium during the orientation tour, and it was world-class. Anyone who enjoys working out would love their gym.

Finance & Banking (including currency / expenses)

There is so much to do so it is easy to let spending get away from you. I would recommend a good budget and to research some good deals available to limit spending. 1 Singaporean Dollar is 5 Hong Kong Dollars, but the value of basic groceries and snacks is similar. I spent around 125 Singaporean dollars a week for transportation, food, and outings. However, there were weeks where this was exceeded.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

I personally didn't join such social clubs, but they were abundant at SMU. Mostly tailored for the non-exchange students, but with initiative I'm sure such clubs would've been beneficial. I took a business course, however, and surprisingly through the guest speakers and professor, a bunch of networking opportunities took shape, and I was exposed to many influential people.

Health & Safety

I think Singapore in general is quite safe and hygienic. The University has a robust clinic and mental health facility. I attended a few therapy sessions there, and their effect was invaluable in my mental health development.

Food

SMU has a myriad of food options, which are all convenient for the students. Even the surrounding off-campus food places allow for a "student discount", which is very much appreciated. All types of cuisine is served: Western, Thai, Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese etc. There was no shortage of choice; I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Transportation

Although I lived an hour away from the University, the transportation system was very efficient, with a direct bus going to the University. Also, because it's in the city, going to chic and interesting places from SMU was very easy and accessible. Just make sure to buy an MRT card, which is like an Octopus card, for convenience.

Climate

Singapore has two seasons: Summer season and monsoon season. During the time I was there, it was mostly sunny, with a few weeks of incessant showers. Light clothes and shorts are the recommended attire as it is like Hong Kong in July, but a lot of the time.

Communication

Most of the communication occurs over the SMU Email, and eLearn which is comparable to HKUST's Canvas system. eLearn is very intuitive, and I didn't have a hard time using it. Just make sure to check your email regularly. Most of the locals use the app Telegram, so make sure to download it.

Cautionary measures

Singapore's reputation precedes itself, wherein one hears of how strict it can be. Once there, I didn't really feel much of its weight, but that's because they are quite common sense measures. Examples include: No gum, no durian on the MRT (the trains), no vaping etc. It's good to look up the regulations of the country before going so you aren't caught on the wrong side of the law.

PART III: ITEMS TO BRING

Cap and/or Sunglasses

USB

Laptop/Tablet

Short Pants + T-Shirts

Umbrella

Notebooks + Stationary

Toiletries

Slippers

Mosquito Repellant

IPA Letter from Visa Application Website

Bedsheets + Pillowcase + Blanket

Deodorant/Anti-perspirant

Others:

PART IV: USEFUL LINKS AND CONTACTS

Course Catalogue Website:

https://publicservices.smu.edu.sg/psc/ps/EMPLOYEE/HRMS/c/SIS_CR.SIS_CLASS_SEARCH.GBL

SMU University Exchange Program Website:

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

SMU Helpline Website:

<http://studentservices.smu.edu.sg/>

Transportation Information:

<https://www.lta.gov.sg/content/ltagov/en/map/train.html>

<https://www.lta.gov.sg/content/ltagov/en/map/bus.html>

<https://transit.navitime.com/en/sg/>

Emergency Contact

(24 hour Campus Security)

68280343

Samaritans of Singapore

1 800 221 4444