

Exchange Report

National University of Singapore (NUS)



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BSc (ECOF)

Fall 2019-20

Part I – Monthly Activity Log

July 2019

I arrived Singapore on 28th July, as there are some orientation events on 29th July, one of which is an orientation briefing for international students. That orientation is almost a MUST-GO for exchange students going to NUS, as in the orientation talk officials in NUS will talk about the registration part 2 procedures (part 1 is done online before taking your flight to Singapore), visa stuffs, courses registrations procedures and timeline, and different clubs and societies that that enrich your exchange life.

That sounds important right? However, that orientation event, most importantly, brought me the first time to meet my fellow exchange-mate. Everyone there were so eager to get to know other exchange students, and no matter where they came from, they were so willing to mingle with everyone they happen to come across, which makes a perfect opportunity for me to start my exchange life. I was so surprised with the openness and caring that everyone had in that particular moment, and when I told them I came from Hong Kong, they really care about the ongoing situations here. I was so lucky enough that I met LOTS OF nice and outgoing buddies, and we formed a WhatsApp group just in the first orientation event, had lunch and even dinner together.



August 2019

The first 2 weeks in August was free time for me to get to know better of my new buddies and friends. School starts in 12 Aug, so I have had a great time to travel around Singapore with friends and strengthen your bonding with extensive travelling and playing. I went to lots of places, such as hiking and Sentosa water park, and they were some of the best means to get familiar with new friends. Although the two weeks are supposed to be just fun, there are also crucial things that need to be done. The first is collecting the STUDENT VISA. Collecting visa was an easy step, but it was crucial for the exchange, as the social visit pass that I obtained when I first entered Singapore is just

valid for 2 weeks after arrival. The second was registering courses, which was a quite frightening part as it determined how many credits I can take in the semester.

September 2019

School started for few weeks, and the atmosphere also started to get intense with hardworking Singaporean stuffing the central library 24/7. The complicated NUS campus also made me lost in the campus for many times. There were free shuttle bus carrying students everywhere in the campus, but they were fully packed as well. Luckily, my courses didn't need lots of work done, so I started to go on trips outside the country. I went on a weekend trip to Malaysia, and a week-long trip to Thailand during recess week. James Bond island, railway market, you name it. After that, mid-term exams came up. Mid terms were not as difficult as expected, but as Singaporeans are very hardworking, I didn't dare to take the risk to get into the exam hall without knowing anything. Marks came out to be much higher than I expected.



October 2019

Mid terms' over, and academic work was not so demanding for now. I went to a place that normally people may neglect – Indonesia. It is just right in the south of Singapore, and it is a mysterious place that Hong Kong people seldom think of when thinking about South East Asia. I also went to visit my previous domestic worker in the trip, which was really an amazing journey with the fact that I got to know the real life of Indonesians. After visiting her in central Java island, me and my friends went to Surabaya, and we visited Mount Bromo, one of the volcanoes with best sunrises in Indonesia. It was another weekend trip.



November 2019

It was 4 months since I first arrived Singapore, and the semester was beginning to draw to a close. Lots of projects deadline and presentations came up in late October to early November, and those were the times that I saw how Singaporean work and study, while I also got to know more about them personally. Finals were coming as well, but there was a study week right before the start of exam. There were also some events held by NUS, such as one that brings both current exchange students and prospective NUS exchange-out

students. Farewell party was also held, but few joined. I went to trips again after I had finished my revision.

December 2019

Exams finished, and the semester ended. During the revision period, every library was fully packed with people, many even chose to revise in canteens. After final exams, the campus became quiet again without the hectic students going to classes and the crowds inside shuttles and canteens. I went on solo trips before heading back to Hong Kong.



Part II – General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

After receiving offer from NUS, NUS will send an email containing the procedures and documents needed for applying student visa in Singapore. Exchange students will need to apply through SOLAR system in the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA), submitting a form called eForm 16, a digital photograph of yourself, Singapore address and contact details, and pay SGD30 processing fee. Issuance fee and multiple-entry visa fee are also needed upon approval of student visa. All these should be completed as soon as possible. After that, exchange students will need to print out a social visit pass which acts as a proxy-visa for them to enter Singapore in the first place. The procedure of the collection of visa will be stated in the registration package distributed by NUS and talked in the international students orientation event.

Orientation Activities

There is a major orientation activity 2 weeks before start of the semester, which is the international student orientation. In the orientation, visa collection procedures, academic stuffs will be discussed in DETAIL so make sure not to miss it. There are also other orientation activities, such as coffee catch-up in Starbucks, shopping trips in Clementi, Around the school tour and a welcome party. Everyone going to these orientation activities is ready to make friends with one another, so taking the initiative to break the ice will lead you to potentially fruitful and long lasting friendship and supporting buddies during the exchange life.

International Services & Activities

There are occasionally cultural or services activities hosted by NUS global relations office or other societies. Joining the societies may be useful if exchange students would like to participate in the various activities that are not hosted by NUS.

Accommodations

Once received the offer letter from NUS, NUS will also send another email covering the accommodation arrangement and application procedures. It is easy to follow, but I unfortunately didn't get an accommodation offer without any reason, together with another business school student. We finally rent a room elsewhere by ourselves. For NUS halls, most of them have meal plans and exchange students can't opt out of them (while the food quality is...), so I do not recommend those halls if you would like to try out more local hawker stalls or restaurants outside of campus. I strongly recommend University Town, and also Prince George's Park. NUS will also provide assistance if hall offer is not offered, but it is generally a good idea to find places to rent by yourself instead.

Course Registration

Course registration in NUS is different from that in UST. It is not in a first come first serve basis. Students will first need to apply up to 8 subjects ranked by their preferences before going to exchange, and wait for the approval from NUS. If some courses are not approved, they will need to use a system called MyEduRec upon finishing registration part 2 in NUS to apply for the courses they wanted. One course can only be requested (to study) at one time, and you can only add another course only when the result of the previous request is out. The decision-making process is not transparent.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

In general they focus on tutorials more than lectures. Sometimes tutor and lecturer may be the same person, so in a small class the lecturer may recognise everyone in the class. For Econ courses, the tutorials mostly consist of pre-tutorial questions, and tutors expect everyone to finish the questions before attending the tutorials. There are mid-term and final exams, as well as projects, which is similar to UST.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

NUS has a full-sized football court, several tennis, basketball courts, and also 2 swimming pools and non-AC indoor badminton courts. There is also a rock-climbing facility in the campus, and a huge grass field for Ultimate and other recreation purposes.

Finance and Banking

The main currency used in Singapore is Singapore Dollar (SGD). HKD to SGD is roughly 1 to 5.8. I will recommend applying debit card as it will be easier to pay for food inside campus. Most of the local students there use QR code to pay for whatever expenses inside NUS. Major banks in Singapore include DBS, OCBC, UOB. The overall expense will depend on how much a student travels during exchange.

Social Clubs and Networking Opportunities

I didn't join a lot of clubs during my exchange, but there is certainly a handful of them for exchange students to choose. Living in NUS halls will certainly provide you with more networking opportunities as well.

Health and Safety

NUS Hospital is located inside NUS. There are also general medical clinic and dental clinic. Consultation fee is a bit expensive. Generally, Singapore's safety is among the top in the world, and they have strict rules and laws. Do obey them and you will be free from any trouble. Tap water is drinkable everywhere in Singapore.

Food

Food and beverage in general is quite cheap comparing to Hong Kong, especially in hawker centres which are everywhere in Singapore. Some of the best food can also be found in those hawker centres. Inside campus, there are several canteens located in University Town, which I love going there during my time in NUS. There are also other canteens located in different parts of the campus, but most of them close in early evening, except for University Town canteens.

Transportation

To get around NUS, the most convenient way is taking the shuttle bus. There are in total 7 routes to choose, and during school time they are usually packed with people. Off-campus, MRT and buses are equally efficient and fast to get to your destination. Transportation fee is much cheaper than that in Hong Kong, such as taking MRT from city centre to Changi airport is just around S\$2 (equivalent to around HK\$12). Going out of the country is also very convenient as there are 2 ports connecting Singapore to Malaysia, and Changi airport is one of the best airports in the world.

Climate

There are only 2 seasons in Singapore: Rain or dry. It is hot throughout the year, but with the green city measures taken by the government, it is not as hot as its neighbouring countries (e.g. Indonesia, Malaysia). It's not as humid as Hong Kong even during summer. At night the weather is cool, quite a contrast to day time. Jackets maybe needed when lecture halls are too cold or you travel to high altitude places.

Communication

Everyone has at least one mobile phone in hand. They mostly used Telegram to communicate. Informally Singaporeans will use Singlish, which is a local 'language' that consists of mostly English, but mixed with some malay, hokkien and mandarin.

Cautionary Measures

Umbrella should be brought. It will be used whether it rains or not. Sunscreen should also be prepared as the sun can be burning. Do respect different cultures in Singapore, although Chinese is majority, Indians and Malays also make up quite a portion in the society. Racial issues can sometimes be problematic for Singapore.

Other Notes

Don't attempt to violate Singapore laws. It is not a funny thing to do and there will be severe consequences.

Part III – Items to Bring

Checklist

Blankets	Bed sheets
Camera	Charger
Summer clothes	Medicine
Notebook	USB
Sunscreen	Water
Umbrella	Required documents

Part IV – Useful Links and Contacts

Course Catalog

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

NUS exchange website

<http://www.nus.edu.sg/gro/student-exchange.php>

Transportation

https://www.lta.gov.sg/content/ltagov/en/getting_around.html#public_transport

Emergency contact

<https://uci.nus.edu.sg/ocs/contact-us/> (24 hours campus security)

If more information is needed, feel free to get my contact from SBM Exchange Team by emailing at bmugexch@ust.hk