



Spring Term 2021-22 Exchange Report

Singapore Management University (Singapore)

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Generally, Singapore and Hong Kong have been mentioned together for its similarity. For example, they are both an international place for cultural diversity, a shopping paradise for international brands, a place for international food hunting. Therefore, this is a valuable opportunity for me to see how similar and different Hong Kong and Singapore are.

Part 1 Monthly Log

January 2022

After attending some classes in SMU, regarding the languages and culture, my biggest opinion is that the cultural diversity in Singapore is higher than that in Hong Kong. Singaporeans are mainly made up of Chinese, Malaysian and Indian, speaking languages like Mandarin, Hokkien, Indian, Malaysian and Tamil, while Hongkongers are mainly made up of mainland Chinese and locals (according to Wikipedia). I can really feel the 'mix' between different races. For example, in SMU classes, the number of non-Chinese students is much higher than that in the classes in HKUST. I enjoyed having classes with such cultural diversity.

February 2022

Singaporeans speak English, so do I, but I get lost often. When they speak, I usually had difficulty understanding them. I could catch their first sentence but then get lost in their second sentence. I don't know why too.

March 2022

I had been doing my mid terms and projects with my classmates. Each of the course I took had project work. I felt like SMU emphasized on team work and soft skills a lot. I have also established some relationships. For example, I was getting along with my roommates, mentors, teammates and other classmates that I met outside classes. I had never met so many new people within such a short time. I felt great.

April 2022

Final exams were approaching. Some were very difficult and some were quite easy for me. For example, ethics course was quite hard while psychology course was quite easy. Luckily I could transfer credits for exchange.

In short, I had a great time studying at SMU. I had a lot of fun and learned a lot from it. This exchange experience was unforgettable.



2. General Information

1) Visa Procedures

Before the start of the exchange program, I started handling the visa procedures. Indeed, I did not have to worry about it too much because SMU was very nice and they informed me when I had to start applying for the relevant issue. The visa application was called Student Pass. The process was quite simple and I only had to follow the steps provided by SMU. Visa fee was SGD60 plus SGD90.

2) Orientation Activities

Before the semester started, I joined their orientation activity. They had an orientation Zoom meeting that we had to attend, or else we would not be able to continue our exchange program anymore, which I did not understand because they could just record the meeting and share the link. Anyway, during the meeting, SMU staff and students mainly introduced their facilities and the student clubs. I had a brief idea of how was SMU.

3) International Services & Activities

The exchange office did not provide many personal services like pick-up service. However, they answered my queries punctually.

4) Accommodations

SMU did not provide any residentials for exchange students. However, they had 2 hostels that they cooperated with and charged a discount price. I applied together with another UST student for one of the hostels, which was 2 MRT stations away from SMU. However, after living there for a few months, I realized that I could have stayed in a better place for the same price. If you ask me to make the decision again, I would very likely search for more information online and live somewhere else.

5) Courses Registration

There were a large variety of courses provided by the school. In particular, they offered a kind of course called SMU-X, in which the students will work as small teams on a project that provides solutions for companies. I really liked it. However, the enrolment procedure was a bit tricky. They adopted a BOSS bidding system for courses, instead of putting courses in your shopping cart and enrolling in them as soon as possible. Given a fixed amount of e-money, it was quite hard to enroll in more courses as I wanted because I would have less e-money for bidding on a course. Another tricky point was that the course catalogue keep changing even when the bidding process started. I enrolled in some less-wanted courses and then catalogue was updated. I found some courses that I wanted to study more after then. I feel so struggled and frustrated because I didn't know if I should risk giving up the course I have enrolled in and bid for the new courses.

6) Teaching & Assessment Methods • Class format, size etc.

I also started attending classes at SMU soon. SMU adopts a seminar-style classroom with a class quota of 45 students per class, which is very different from HKUST. I like this class style because I feel more encouraged to speak up in class and focus on classmates' opinions. Also, communication with local people was very impressive. The students' quality was very high, especially their communication skills. Maybe because of the reason that those students who enrolled in Singapore Management University are aiming to manage businesses, I found that they think fast, think logically, are creative, and are very capable of expressing themselves. I was impressed and I really did learn a lot from my classmates.

7) Finance & Banking • Currency, expenses, best way to handle money matters

1SGD was around HKD5.8. It is suggested to keep an eye on the exchange rate and change some SG money when the ratio is good. I did not have to keep much cash because it was common to use card in Singapore, especially in shopping malls and public transports.

8) Climate

Climate in Singapore was very adaptable. Four seasons in Singapore are just like the summer in Hong Kong. Hot and humid, sometimes rainy. When I arrived Singapore, it was there monsoon season and it was quite rainy but less hot.

9) Health & Safety • Availability and usage of health center, safety matters

I only encountered safety issue once, and that was me leaving my bag in the campus, and I approached the counter in campus and I found it immediately. Singapore is known to be safe so there was not much to worry about.

10) Food • Eateries – cooking, restaurants, food

Hawker centers were the places that I went for food for most of the time. These hawker centers were also one of the most precious heritages of Singapore. The price was very cheap, even cheaper than in Hong Kong, but the quality is unbelievably good. I hardly cook in my residence because the food in hawker centers were too cheap and good. Others(e.g. restaurants in shopping malls) are expensive.

11) Transportation • Most common ways to commute, fare information, travel card, rail pass, airline tickets

Most common ways to commute between SMU and my residence were MRT and bus. Bus fare and MRT fare are similar, around HKD5 for 2 MRT stations distance. We could use bank card or EZ link card for paying the fares.

12) Communication • How to stay connected with friends and family, communication with local people; SIM card, data plan, internet service etc.

Singaporeans use Telegram the most. The second frequently used channel is Whatsapp. Seems younger generation use Telegram more and older ones use Whatsapp more. For academic meetings, we either booked seminar rooms in the campus, or had Zoom meetings.

13) Sports & Recreation Facilities • Facilities available, usage information

There were gym rooms and swimming pools provided in the campus, but I never used them. However, I heard from my roommates that quota was very limited and they had to fight for the quota online.

14) Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities • Opportunity of joining social and networking activities

In the four months, I had been actively joining many activities held by SMU student clubs, such as the Myanmar sharing meeting and the Chinese Lantern Festival gathering, sports societies, such as skating and badminton, as well as academic societies, such as accounting campaigns. The most impressive part is the school's support and resources for extracurricular activities. Every time I join their activities, even if it was just a short meeting and even if I was not their member, I could get a rich goodie bag. The school also always holds a lot of activities that encourage everyone to take part in, with attractive prizes like laptops and phones.

15) Cautionary measures • Things that need to be caution about (e.g. language, customs, clothing etc.)

Overall, Singapore and Hong Kong are quite similar, except that Singapore is more culturally diverse in terms of races. I need to be more aware of it.

3.

Items to Bring

To be very honest, I did not have to bring many stuff, not even adaptors. What you can find in Hong Kong, you can also find in Singapore.

- sunscreen
- summer outfits
- umbrella
- medicine
- COVID test kit
- charger
- notebook
- HK snacks if you want

4.

Useful links and contacts

- SMU official website
 - <https://www.smu.edu.sg/>
- visa website for Singapore
 - https://www.ica.gov.sg/enter-transit-depart/entering-singapore/visa_requirements
- YOHA (my residence)
 - <https://yoha.com.sg/>