



Singapore Management University (SMU)

Singapore

Part I – Monthly Activity Log

January 2022

In spite of having travelled overseas few times and participated in some exchange programmes, they only lasted for short periods of time and organized by family or schools. This was my first time studying abroad in an unfamiliar country – Singapore with my newly met schoolmates. SMU required me to arrive in Singapore and finish quarantine by 2nd January 2022, after celebrating New Year's Day with my family, I headed to Hong Kong airport and got on a plane. Once I finished quarantine and reached to yo:HA Hostel @ Pearl's Hill, the staff was friendly in helping me to pull my luggage up the staircases and introducing surroundings with a welcome lunch. Soon, I met all my roommates – Gigi, Cristina and Haley. Unlike other exchange students who simply needed to complete Student's Pass Formalities at SMU and joined virtual orientation, I was no longer just a business student ambassador in HKUST, but also on behalf of HKUST and Hong Kong to promote our positives to SMU students, and I made a local friend from sharing session. Although I have represented university for several times, I had never been the only representative across the border. There were multiple societies holding welcome events, I joined some cultural clubs, including but not limited to SMU Japanese Cultural Club, SMU Truly Malaysia, SMU Al Khaleej, SMU Myanmar Community. In the meanwhile, I met my mentor, Bryan LUM. He brought me around SMU campus and the surroundings, especially when I still have not gotten my student card to access some buildings.



February 2022

With learning some concepts from courses, I started to work with other SMU students in group projects. In the course of MGMT330 The Design of Business, which is a business capstone module, I worked in a team which was dedicated to offer a perfect synergy for our client. Our professor Yong Hsin Ning not only acted as a mentor to guide us closely professionally, but also became our friend chatting in a casual setting. Moreover, in the course of OBHR201 Human Capital Management, this gave a taste of being involved in a business debate. Before the presentation of our arguments, we kept discussing with each other and encountered technical problems. Besides, since we forgot to switch off message notifications, there were messages popping up at the end of the presentation, which unexpectedly made the class get energized. Apart from academics, despite I am not a sporty person, I tried to skate, but I still moved like a penguin. Furthermore, my roommate Cristina invited me to have rhythmic cycling.

It was tiring, yet I found it interesting. Therefore, we decided to join a similar class in the following month. Hopefully, we could still walk properly.



March 2022

During COVID-19 pandemic situation, even Malaysia is located next to Singapore, I did not want to take risk to go across border, so I understood more about Malaysian culture via joining SMU Truly Malaysia activities. In January, I participated in Malaysian traditional games, such as Batu Seremban and Gasing. This month, to explore Malaysian cuisines, I followed some Malaysian students to have food hunt: Jalan Jalan Cari Makan, we tried a lot of dishes, including bak kut teh (Malaysian's), nasi lemak, cendol etc. My food hunt was not restricted to Malaysian food, my friends (both locals and international students) searched for diverse cuisines in Singapore.



April 2022

Throughout my whole exchange programme, Bryan and my roommate's mentor Caleb took care of me, promoted Singapore and guided me a lot on academics. We built friendship via lunch or dinner meetings, as well as joining activities arranged by SMU International Connections, such as The Escape Artist and River Wonders. At the same time, my client HFT's Chin Siong invited me to take some publicity photos and videos for his company. Last but not least, it was my honour to be a student representative for all first batch exchange students to SMU, in which I shared my journey in SMU with fellow exchange students and was interviewed by the largest Singaporean Chinese-language newspaper – Lianhe Zaobao.



Part II – General Exchange Information

Visa Procedures

During the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the visa process of a Student's Pass (STP) was lengthy, in which the application procedures and processing may change or become suspended depending on Singapore Government's policies without advance notice. It is highly recommended students to be resourceful in the visa preparations and process, as well as immediately apply for a visa upon receiving the necessary documents. From the view of Singapore's Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, international exchange students are holding International Passports. Visa fees included processing fee (SGD30) and student pass issuance fee (SGD60).

Visa requirements:

- Student's Pass application number shown in the registration acknowledgement letter (i.e. acceptance letter) from Singapore Management University
- New applications for a Student's Pass must be submitted at least 1 month and not more than 2 months before the commencement of the ISEP

Required documents:

- Passport/ travel document (e.g. HKSAR Passport)
- Recent passport-sized colour photograph (taken within the last three months)
- Form 16/ eForm 16 (i.e. Application for Student's Pass [Regulation 14(2)])

Orientation Activities/ Welcome Programmes

In late October 2021, SMU International Office sent us an email about orientation sessions and activities organized by SMU.

Activities & Programmes	Dates
Virtual Orientation Briefing (Compulsory): Understand more about living in Singapore and learning at SMU	6 th January 2022
Singapore City Tour (Optional): Take a coach tour and visit to a few local attractions	6 th / 7 th / 8 th January 2022 (Approximately 3 hours)

International Services & Activities

No matter before, during or after the ISEP, the exchange office kept posting the latest announcements and reminders via email and a Facebook Group – especially for SMU international exchange students (Spring 2022). Students were required to send a request to join the group by providing their full names and home university. Moreover, SMU International Connections (ICON) under the Student Success Centre (SSC) organized 2 welcome programmes which would last throughout the whole ISEP. First is SMU Buddy Programme, it paired each exchange student with a SMU senior to promote cultural sharing and understanding in the SMU community. Second is SMU Host Programme, it assigned exchange students to SMU alumni to get insights about life in Singapore and widen our network of friends. Additionally, plenty of student-led societies were holding regular and one-off cultural and personal enrichment activities for both local and exchange students.

Accommodations

Since SMU does not offer accommodation for international exchange students, it provided useful tips when sourcing or renting our accommodations, including a list of suggested accommodation options from private hostel operators and rental websites. SMU offered 2 campus housing for students to apply on our own, but only yo:HA Hostel @ Pearl's Hill accepts semester stay (i.e. 1st January 2022 to 30th April 2022) application, it offered 2 types of accommodations, such that one-bedroom twin sharing apartments and two-bedroom quadruple sharing apartments. Although there would not provide any meal plan, the room rates were affordable. Based on first-come-first-served, students were allowed to apply together with friends and would to be assigned to the same apartment, so I applied for a one-bedroom twin sharing apartment with my friend and other SMU students arranged by yo:HA Hostel @ Pearl's Hill. The application procedures were straightforward, students needed to fill in personal details, room preferences, special needs, and upload a passport photo to the system. Remember to use the email when applying for the ISEP because exchange students have not matriculated at that time.

Courses Registration

The course registration is complicated and requires students to do research and calculations before bidding. In contrast to HKUST's time sensitive course registration system, SMU uses Bidding Online System (BOSS), students are required to make choices by considering the demand and supply of the courses as well as our academic study plan. Don't forget to check and ask for course credit transfer approval before bidding and enrolling in courses. SMU offered several materials for students to master BOSS in late November. It not only involved the documents about the BOSS guide for exchange students and useful tips when planning and bidding our courses, but also a BOSS demo video clip. Remember to go through the detailed course syllabus from the SMU course catalogue and consult the respective professors if there is any course prerequisites before the course registration. Students are given e\$100 to enrol courses (minimum number of courses is 3, but students can request for enrolling

up to 5 courses) and can start bidding from a separate round – Round 1C, which opens exclusively for exchange and visiting students. It is suggested to analyse the previous bidding records and enrol in the courses immediately to prevent high bids in the following rounds that open to all students.

Teaching & Assessment Methods

For most of the courses at SMU, each course lasts for 13 weeks, it includes two 3-hour lectures in a small class size, some courses even have guest speaker sharing sessions and consultations. SMU modules are more interactive, there are discussions, role plays, Kahoot quizzes, project consultations, and a lot of chances for students to express our opinions. My professors always linked the concepts to the reality and taught us hands-on skills to help us understand more effectively and efficiently. Outside the classroom, students need to obtain course materials and do readings, watch pre-recorded videos, and complete assignments on an in-house online learning platform – eLearn. Since I am taking some SMU-X courses, which aims at addressing real client's problems with plausible recommendations. In the way of achieving our goals, we were having endless project meetings. There is no doubt that these modules had heavy workload, but they were rewarding that our clients and we could grow simultaneously. Kindly note that there will be scheduled final exam timeslots shown during the course registration, students may enrol courses that allow us to have enough revision time.

Sports & Recreation Facilities

There are several places for students to do sports, including gym room, swimming pool, and multi-purpose sports hall etc. Or as what I did, students can skate outside the School of Computing and Information System, also enjoy the fantastic sunset and skyline when doing yoga at the School of Law rooftop. Recently, SMU is cooperating with ASCEND Fitness Studio at Orchard Road, there are some promotions of having rhythmic cycling classes and Exergame classes. Students are allowed to use Learning Labs in Li Ka Shing Library to participate in workshops. There are many study rooms around the campus and students can book online, but we must have at least one student to confirm your bookings online to avoid monopolizing a room.

Finance & Banking

The currency between Singapore dollars and Hong Kong dollars is SGD1 \approx HKD5.5 – 5.8. For my expenses throughout the ISEP, even I always either cooked meals or bought meals from hawker centres and SMU, also I did not purchase much expensive items, I spent much far than the referenced budget sheet provided by HKUST. Most of the expenditures were from COVID-19 health and safety measures (i.e. pre-departure COVID-19 PCR tests, SHN hotel in Singapore, serology test/ COVID antibody test, quarantine hotel in Hong Kong). I did not set up a local bank account in Singapore, however I took lot of cash and activated my Citibank overseas bank account with both debit and credit cards, where no transaction fee would be charged.

Social Clubs & Networking Opportunities

There were abundant social clubs, and I joined over 40 SMU activities in the first 3 months. From cultural societies, I learnt Malaysian, Malay, Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean cultures etc. In terms of growth and developmental activities, I obtained more business and sustainability knowledge, as well as doing sports and helping my client to take some publicity photos and videos for his company. But, in the last month of ISEP, I sacrificed broadening my social circle with making new friends and I decided to spend very limited time with several Singaporean and international friends instead.

Health & Safety

SMU provides free clinic services and paid COVID-19 PCR tests, the clinic is near Bras Basah MRT. Compared to Hong Kong's COVID-19 situation, Singapore's was more serious, but people there were less tensed and more relaxed. In April 2022, it was no longer required safe-distancing and no group size limit, it was optional to wear masks in outdoor settings, but encouraged people to do when crowded in Singapore. Other than COVID-19 safety measures, Singapore is generally a safe and hygienic country, except the hygiene conditions in some hawker centres need to be improved.

Food

The food in Singapore is more or less similar to Hong Kong's, but there are much more low-priced food options. Hawker centres are widely located all over Singapore, there are 4 hawker centres are surrounding my hostel, in which People's Park Food Centre is the nearest one, so I bought food and beverages there. Otherwise, I bought reasonable priced food from SMU or ingredients from Sheng Siong Supermarket and cooked simple meals in the hostel. Yet, I usually dined in restaurants when exploring Singapore on holidays.

Transportation

Singapore has a well-established transportation system, students can purchase ezlink card (similar to Octopus card in Hong Kong) to take public transport. To go to SMU campus, students can get off Bencoolen MRT station or Bras Basah MRT station, also students from yo:HA Hostel @ Pearl's Hill can take bus 33, 61, 124, 147, 166, 190, and 851 etc. Not simply SMU, most of the places are highly accessible, there is only around 1-hour distance between one end and another end of the whole Singapore. Under COVID-19 pandemic situation, despite having less frequent flights between Hong Kong and Singapore, students can register a student account in Singapore Airlines to get discounted airline tickets with a total of 40kg baggage allowance.

Climate

Singapore is hot and humid all the time, no matter it is sunny or rainy. It is recommended to have similar attire as it is in Hong Kong summer season, students may bring long-sleeved jackets when going to air-conditioned places. Students are encouraged to drink more water, wear light-coloured clothes, bring umbrellas, as well as use sunscreen and mosquito repellent if needed.

Communication

As there is no time difference between Hong Kong and Singapore, I communicated with family and friends conveniently via WhatsApp phone or video calls and Zoom. To prevent from getting a new phone number in Singapore, I bought 2 phones, one is for obtaining a Singapore phone number for administrative uses, another one was for maintaining communication with my familiars and connecting with new friends in Singapore. There was only 1 mobile phone provider selling SIM card at the Changi Airport when I arrived, which is Singtel. During the ISEP, I used both data roaming and local data plans. Singaporeans mainly use English to communicate, many of them know Mandarin, but they would not use except the hawkers in Chinatown. At SMU, the official communication platform is Outlook email and eLearn which is like HKUST'S Canvas system. There would be at least a Telegram group for each course, one is hosted by the professor and teaching assistant, the additional one is created by groupmates unless there is no group project. In daily conversation, Singaporeans would like to use Singlish, which is a mix of English and other languages such as Mandarin and Malay etc. However, professors in lessons would use English.

Part III – Items to Bring

Laptop & chargers	Que cards (for presentation)	Adaptors & extension socket
Phone & chargers & wires	Folders	Mirror (optional)
Masks	Tissue papers	Eyeglasses (optional)
Clothes (summer attire)	Skincare products	Lip balm
Sunscreen & umbrella & hat	Hair accessories	Hand cream
Mosquito repellent	Earphones (for online lessons)	Stationeries
Slipper (use in hostel)	Water boiler (if not provided)	eFrom 16
Alcohol (for cleaning)	Ironing machine (if not provided)	Passport
Hong Kong Identity Card	Passport-sized photos	COVID-19 PCR test result
Vaccination record	Student's pass payment proof	SHN hotel booking prove
Hostel booking prove	SMU acceptance letter	IPA letter

Part IV – Useful Links and Contacts

Apply for Student's Pass (Immigration & Checkpoints Authority)

<https://eservices.ica.gov.sg/solar/index.xhtml>

yo:HA Hostel @ Pearl's Hill (SMU)

<https://www.smu.edu.sg/campus-life/facilities-leasing/student-facilities/campus-housing/yoha-hostel-pearls-hill>

OASIS (Online Access to Student Information System) (SMU)

<https://oasis.smu.edu.sg/>

SMU Course Catalogue (SMU Integrated Student Information System)

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

eLearn (SMU)

<https://elearn.smu.edu.sg/>

Facilities Booking System (SMU)

<https://fbs.intranet.smu.edu.sg>

MRT First Train/ Last Train (SBS Transit)

<https://www.sbstransit.com.sg/first-train-last-train>

Bus Service Information (Transit Link)

https://www.transitlink.com.sg/eservice/eguide/service_idx.php