

# Exchange Report

## Monash University, Australia

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Spring 2023



## Monthly Activity Log

### February

I arrived in Melbourne mid-February for both the exchange student orientation and the university wide orientation week. I was still exploring the different course options and was studying the credit transfer methods (there weren't a lot of existing finance course mapping in the course equivalent system). I was able to reach out to the University's student support office called Monash Connect where I received academic consultation and was given details and professor contact information for a lot of the courses that I was interested in. I also took the

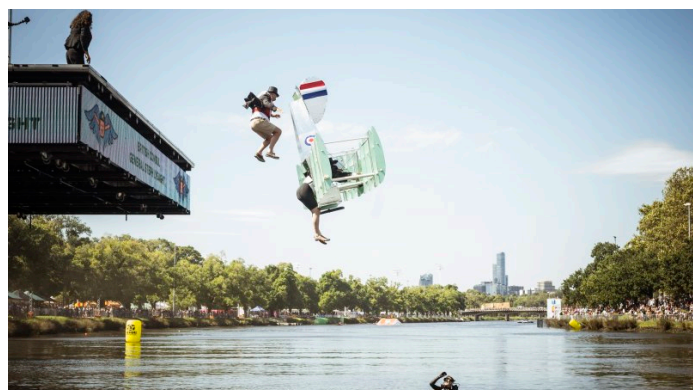


opportunity to learn about the different clubs and societies at Monash where I was able to connect with a bunch of Hong Kong student and finance students who ended being classmates for some of the courses I took. The university also took orientation very seriously and had provided funding for facilities such as food trucks, merry-go-rounds and bumper car. They also invited famous Australian DJ singer Tones and I for the block party at the end of the orientation week. It was my first music festival experience and I had an amazing time at the event.



### March

I basically started classes in March, I spent some time adapting to my new environment, navigating the different academic system, classroom styles and electronic systems. Monash uses a system called Moodle which is similar to canvas, except there isn't an app for it, which means





we have to log in every single time which is very inconvenient to do so from a mobile device.



Besides academics, I also spent some more time exploring the city, visiting the tourist spots. I also went to the annual Moomba Festival with my friends from Monash where we spent time on the rides and watched the famous Birdman Rally where contestants build gliders and jump off from a platform into the Yarra River.

Another highlight for me in March is joining a local University Church group. As a person who studied in a religious school all my life, the church group is unlike anything I have ever seen. It is led by a group of young people who try to make Christianity more catering to

younger generations. They compose their own hymns in a rock or “clubbing music” style to make church meetings more fun and enjoyable. Although I was startled at first, I do find the style very unique and I can see how it attracts younger people and make the religion become something that teenagers or young adults will genuinely enjoy, rather than a boring obligation to complete.

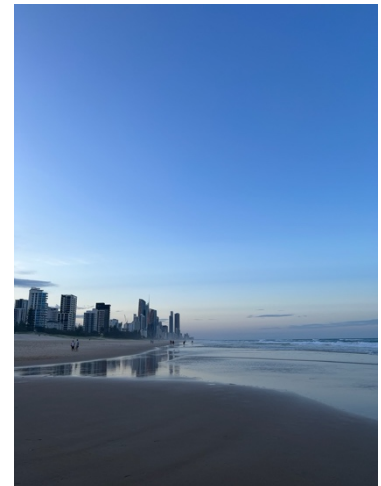
## April

I have my mid-term assessments and Easter holiday in April. For the holiday, I visited Gold Coast, Sydney and Adelaide with other Hong Kong exchange students. The cities are very different and have completely different vibes. Sydney is a metropolitan city and feels somewhat similar to Hong Kong. Adelaide gives off retirement vibes, everyone



there is very laid back. Gold Coast is my favourite among the three places, the

beaches are very nice with very comfortable and clean sand. The water quality is also extremely nice and clear. It is the perfect place for holiday after the mid-terms.





May

I had my final assessments in May and unfortunately have to leave to prepare for my Summer internship in Hong Kong. I did spend time with some of my Malaysian friends I met in class and we went on a short two day road trip to a wildlife reserve. We also visited the famous Great Ocean Road, a winery and Mount Donna Buang.



### Positive aspects

- Fully independent situation for the first time, had to deal with bank account opening, expense management, laundry, meals and everything on my own
- The opportunity to meet new people – Melbourne is one of the most popular destination for immigration, everywhere including campus has a very diverse culture, and I was able to meet and interact with people with all sorts of background all the time
- Have the time and flexibility to try out courses that are quite unique and not offered at UST, I took criminology at Monash University. The course has a heavy workload with lots of lengthy essays to write. The course dives very deep into the different aspects and concepts of criminology. My final essay was on the measurement of the “dark figures of crime” which basically refers to the uncaptured number of crimes uncaptured in official reports due to different reasons.
  - o It was very interesting to touch on an area that I have never looked into, studying this course in Australia also allowed me to explore the legal system and structure of legal databases of a different country. I noticed that the type of crime are quite different from that in Hong Kong and was an eye opening experience for me
- Attended a church group. I was invited to attend a youth church group in Melbourne organised by Youth, mostly university students. The church group targets young people, they composed new hymns and prayers from scratch to make Christianity more catering to the younger generation and to deliver the message that Christianity is never about fixed, dull and boring prayers but is about the belief itself. I also notices that a lot of international students were able to build their network in Australia through active engagement with the church group.

### Challenges

- Learn how to get around as the campus is quite far away from city centre and Melbourne’s public transport system isn’t as extensive as it is in Hong Kong and stops operations very early
- Navigating the Monash study system and credit calculation system which is very different from that of UST
- Trying to find a place to live at the beginning, the rent are pretty expensive. Most of them, especially those close to the campus have minimum stay length requirement.
  - o I was also unfamiliar with the city, the distance, the transportation system and facilities
  - o I was able to find a place at a reasonable price in the end, but I wasn’t aware of the fact that residential areas in Melbourne are very dark with few street lights since most people commute by car. It was a bit scary to walk around my place at night

## 1. Visa application

- The visa application is done online through the Australia Immigration xxx
- Apply online, need to purchase OSHC to accept offer, the University will grant a xxxx which is required when applying for the visa
- Need to visit the office in Hong Kong for fingerprint collection
- The entry grant is usually offered immediately as exchange students apply for a short period grant
- Note: if you want the grant to be offered earlier, try to provide evidence that you need to return to Hong Kong at a specific time to show that you will not overstay in the country (e.g. I used my signed internship contract)

## 2. Orientation activities

- There is an exchange student orientation and a university wide orientation program. We met the exchange office people where they delivered session on living in Melbourne, campus service, exchange student academic options and how to switch between courses during add drop period. I met exchange students from other universities in Hong Kong and also all around the world. We are assigned to different groups where we met and interacted with different people, some of them are undergrad and some of them are post grad
- There are multiple Monash campuses in Melbourne, I attended the main campus and the Caulfield campus orientation activities
  - The university orientation activities are all organised by students, there are campus tours, clubs & societies introduction, courses and faculty introduction
  - There are also merchandise and vanity fair components, there was a merry go round and food trucks
- I had some questions about the courses that I was taking and was able to reach the academic advisor (Monash connect) for help

## 3. International services and activities

- International student service to answer questions on visa

## 4. Accommodations

- Melbourne has 2 of the most renowned universities in Australia, the city is filled with international students, a lot of them are Chinese. A few weeks before the semester commences, the Chinese government announced the end of its travel restrictions and announced that Chinese students studying abroad must be physically overseas in order to have their qualifications recognised in China. The sudden announcement caused a huge amount of Chinese students pouring into the country and caused a shortage in rental supply. The rent

increase significantly and I had a hard time finding an apartment that accepts short term stay

- A lot of the rental services online including domain requires the person applying for the tenant agreement to provide wealth proof (Australian bank account balance) to the landlord and the platform which is very inconvenient for international students

#### 5. Courses registration

- Most courses at Monash are made available to international exchange students, the university also has an online handbook that explains every single course they offer which allows exchange student to do research prior to joining the university

#### 6. Teaching and assessment methods

- Similar to UST, Monash University has mid-term assessment and final assessment, some courses require students to write essays or complete group projects

#### 7. Finance and Banking

- Pretty easy to open a bank account in Melbourne, especially with Hong Kong passport, just need to make sure you have an Australian number and bring with you all the required identification documents

#### 8. Climate

- The city in general is very dry, it rains a lot and can get very cold in winter (May to August for Australia) that is snows

#### 9. Health & safety

- All international students have to purchase OSHC (overseas student health coverage). Although I didn't personally use the service myself, I am aware that the insurance covers most of the medical expense incurred
- Public transport is less convenient in Melbourne compared to that in Hong Kong and the residential town house areas have very few street lights and it can be unsafe to wander around the streets in sub-urban areas. In the city, it is also not entirely safe to walk alone at night as there are a lot of homeless people

#### 10. Food

- I cooked a lot because all the restaurants are 10 minutes away from where I live and it would be too dark to walk home on my own if I have dinner at a restaurant
- I lectures and classes are usually in the afternoon so I would have lunch at home

- I do have lunch with my friends from class before our lessons or when we meet at school for group project or study sessions
- I went out to the city a lot for meals when I hang out with friends that owns a car and drive. Melbourne is a multi- culture city with a lot of immigrants, therefore there are all sorts of cuisine and probably more Asian restaurants than western food
- Australia is famous for their seafood, I particularly enjoyed their cheap and extremely fresh oysters from seafood markets

#### 11. Transportation

- No public transport after midnight

#### 12. Communications

- Pretty convenient and flexible mobile data plans, can cancel anytime and no contract required

#### 13. Sports & recreational facilities

- All campuses have sports facilities within the Monash Sports programme but the programme fee is a bit expensive

#### 14. Social clubs and Networking opportunities

- Similar to the States, the finance industry in Australia puts a lot of emphasis on networking, I personally attended two student led networking events where there were large companies guest participants such as Morgan Stanley and JP Morgan. Interacting with them shed light on the finance landscape in Australia

#### 15. Cautionary measures

- I tried not to walk on the street on my own in the evening. There is little street light in the sub urban areas and it can be quite scary in the evening. Whilst in the city, there are a lot of homeless people and some of them drink on the streets and behave abnormally which can also be dangerous to encounter

#### 16. Other notes

- Australia is an agricultural country, so they are very careful about what people bring in or out of the country, especially food and seed related stuff, so make sure you pay attention when visiting or leaving the country



### Checklist

- Driver's license if you have one as it is definitely way more convenient to get around with a car in Australia
- Small size luggage as you would be travelling a lot to different cities in Australia
- Both winter and summer clothing, Australia in summer is very sunny and hot during the day but can get very chilly and windy in the evening, so always bring a jacket around
- Umbrella, the weather changes drastically within a day so always carry around an umbrella

### Useful links

- <https://handbook.monash.edu/> (for course information)
- <https://www.monash.edu/about/our-locations/transport-parking/shuttle-bus>