

# SEP Report

## 1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Faculty of Science/Bachelor of Environmental Studies
Host University	University of Ottawa
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY15/16 Semester 1

## 2. Study at Host University

Please provide information on the academics at your host university:

- Studying or learning culture at your host university. How were classes conducted?
- What did you like most or dislike most about the academics at your host University?
- Advice on module registration and module mapping

The studying and learning culture overall was very similar to NUS in the sense that it was a lecture and tutorial style. The classes I took were overall very large so lectures were in lecture theatres and tutorials were conducted in smaller groups (it ranged from as small as 16 to as large as 40).

The largest difference in learning culture will be that labs (for the science courses) were lacking. In NUS, most science courses would have a lab session or some field trips to provide hands on experience for working in the field or for the honours year. However, in the host university, labs were taken as a separate course by itself. This definitely has its own pros and cons. For one, it makes the workload a lot easier to manage since reports for the labwork is not necessary (and such reports are often time consuming). On the other hand, it does deprive students from having some experience in the field before stepping into the final year project. So perhaps in this matter, NUS does provide students with an added skill, even if we decide not to enter the research field in the future.

One thing I enjoyed about the academics at my host university was that module selection was not affected by examination dates. Students did not have to worry about being unable to take modules due to examination clashes as the school would arrange the examination dates after all students have secured their modules. However, I understand that this would come at an inconvenience for the administrative staff as well as certain students who are unable to plan holidays or internships until such dates are released.

Module registration in my host university was relatively simple and straightforward as the academic staff were all very helpful and prompt in communicating with us about module selection. Module mapping however can be a challenge as module syllabus is not readily provided on the website like in NUS. I had to email the professors themselves to get the syllabus to be able to complete my module mapping and in some instances when the professors did not reply, I had to email the department. Also, they do not list modules available according to semesters and the schedule for modules comes out only close start of the semester which can be a confusion in terms of module mapping and registration during the planing stages as we have to be ready to change our plans due to the modules not being offered.

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Please list the courses that you took during SEP. (Please take note that the list of modules available to exchange students at the host university are subject to change. This table merely serves as reference.)

Host University			NUS Equivalent		
Module code	Course title	ECTS Credit	Module code	Course title	Modular credit
GEG3320	Geography of Tourism	3	GE2218	Geography of Tourism	4
GEG2301	Geomorphology	3	GE2741	Department Exchange Module	4
PHY1300	The Big Bang and Beyond	3	SX1991	Department Exchange Module	4
BIO3302	Animal Physiology II	3	LSM3262	Environmental Animal Physiology	4
BIO3176	Animal Behaviour	3	LSM3267	Behavioural Biology	4

## 2. Accommodation

**What kind of accommodation did you stay in during your exchange (eg. on campus / off campus)?**

**Would you recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students?**

**Do you have any other suggestions?**

I stayed off campus in an apartment during my exchange. I would highly recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students as it is a lot cheaper than staying on campus for one and sharing an apartment with local students helped me better integrate into the country. On-campus accommodation for my host university was about \$300 more expensive/month and as we were not full time students, we do not get priority in choosing the type of housing available. Hence, what was left was a hostel that was about a 15 minute walk from school. The apartment I stayed in was about a 10 minutes walk hence it is comparable to the hostel I would have gotten. Additionally, I was able to have my own room whilst still sharing an apartment and being able to stay with local students provided me with the opportunity to interact with them to make new friends as well as integrate into the school system.

There are plenty of housing options available to exchange students that are easily accessible. One thing to note would be to start looking for housing early as the start of the semester is also the peak time for house hunting. My host university has a Facebook page for international students which allows students looking for housemates to post housing ads and other news or even to just connect with one another. I would say that that is a good place to start since the page is moderated by the international office. The officers and other international students are able to provide advice on housing, academics, visa etc. via that page and it is definitely a good place to look for advice or help if needed.

## 3. Activities during SEP

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**Were there any activities organized by school/student group/external organizations at your host university which you would like to recommend to other students?**

There were a lot of activities hosted by various organizations at my host university which cater to all sorts of interests. One in particular was organized by the Gee-Gees which is the sport services in the university. As Canada is a country with many natural wonders, exchange students would definitely want to take advantage of the opportunity whilst they are there. However, such places can be very difficult to get to without a car to a guide. Hence they have weekend trips to various places such as the Niagra Falls, whale watching, cave explorations and even dog sledging depending on the seasons. Such trips are also provided at a subsidized cost and is a good way to meet other students (both local and international) while being able to take part in activities that perhaps we were unable to arrange by ourselves.

Student services in the host university also provided a lot of campus activities to allow students to relax during the semester. Events such as picnic by the lawn, free concerts, yoga sessions and food truck festivals are all free and happen very often on campus. Registration is not needed hence it is very convenient for students to just pop in and enjoy the activities with friends without having to worry about looking for information.

Another great activity I would recommend is to join a Canadian family for thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. The international office will help partner interested international students with Canadian families to allow students to experience the local way of celebration and it allows us to better understand the culture through an intimate setting.

## 4. Cost of Living

**Please provide an estimation of how much money you spent during your SEP?**

**Please list travel expenses separately.**

I spent an estimate of \$5500 excluding airfare and travelling the country after SEP. My travel expenses (airfare and after-SEP travel) were about \$3000.

## 5. Challenges

**Did you face any challenging issues during your SEP stint? How did you overcome it/them?**

One challenging issue I faced during SEP was culture shock. I remember joining the freshmen orientation program during the first week of school and was overwhelmed by the culture. However, I learnt that choosing the right activities to participate in was the best way to avoid any uncomfortable situations. Also, it helps to have an open mind and to know yourself. By understanding what makes yourself comfortable, you would be able to participate in the correct activities that would allow you to enjoy yourself. Making like minded friends would also help.

## 6. Overall SEP Experience

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**Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience and attach some photos that represent your exchange experience.**

I think SEP was definitely an experience that I treasured very much. I knew going into this that it was going to be a challenge as I decided to choose a university that was different from all my friends. However, looking back it was probably one of the best decisions I made. Being alone and away from all my friends and family forced me to be more independent and aware of my surroundings. Also, I had to come out of my shell to meet new people and make new friends. These would not be possible without SEP as being in an environment that I was comfortable in would not have pushed me to open my mind to all these new experiences. Hence, I am very thankful for SEP as without it, I would never had the chance or courage to take that big step forward.

## 7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

**Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.**

The key to having a fruitful SEP experience is definitely the willingness to put yourself out of your comfort zone. It is a good way to learn more about yourself and to meet new and interesting people along the way. Although having an open mind is important, another equally important thing would be to be prepared. The SEP process will be difficult at times. From being in a new environment, to the tedious planning process. Such challenges would often throw you off. Hence, it is important to always be prepared for such challenges. For instance, having back up plans in terms of module selection during and after SEP and making sure that all relevant documents (visas, liscence etc.) are prepared well before time. This will ensure a smooth experience.