

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Geography
Host University	University of British Columbia
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY16/17 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

At the University of British Columbia (UBC), classes and workloads were very similar to NUS. My introductory class on Religious Studies followed a lecture-tutorial style. Whereas the other four classes I took were mainly lectures with discussion time. One significant difference was the methods of assessment. Apart from essays and examinations, the class instructors employed various creative methods. For a level 400 Geography class, we were largely assessed on a creative project that could take any form from posters to videos. My group eventually created an online interactive game. For another class, the instructor provided us with study sheets so that we would be more prepared for the mid-term as well as the final examination. Weekly quizzes as well as weekly assignment questions contributed to our final grade.

For the most part, module registration was fairly easy and straightforward as UBC follows an Add/Drop system that is a lot less stressful than bidding at NUS. For the initial stage, exchange students would submit their preferences directly to the UBC GoGlobal department, who then helped with the registration. After that, I was able to easily Add or Drop classes (those without pre-requisites) through an online portal. Instructors were also to directly Add students to their classes as well. Nonetheless, this is dependent on your major and the respective departments. I had no problems with Geography and Religious Studies courses, however, other peers seemed to have problems with Economics, Political Science and Engineering courses.

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
RELG101	Introduction to Western (Abrahamic) Religion: Judaism, Christianity and Islam	3	HY1701	History Exchange Module	4
RELG201	Near Eastern and Biblical Mythology	3	HY2224	History Exchange Module	4

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GEOG327	Creating Canada	3	GE3237	Geographies of Migration	4
GEOG353	Geographies of Migration and Settlement	3	GE3701	Geography Exchange Module	4
GEOG498	Geographies of the Middle East	3	GE4751	Geography Exchange Module	5

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 on campus at the Walter Gage Apartments block. I chose to apply for a studio apartment as this was going to be my only chance of living alone in a fully-equipped space. I have also been living in a 6-room suite at Tembusu College in my first two years of university, and hence, I wanted to try something different. Apart from the higher cost, I absolutely enjoyed my experience. Learning to juggle between planning meals and budgeting with studies and recreation provided a realistic experience of independent living. In terms of transport accessibility, Walter Gage is located right next to the bus loop at UBC and gives you access to all the buses that reach campus within a few minutes. The only disadvantage of living in the Gage Apartment block is the lack of community and the reduced opportunities to mingle with other residences, due to the absence of common spaces.

3. Activities during SEP

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

At UBC, there are so many clubs, societies and activities to choose from, you will be spoilt for choice! Definitely attend as many of the orientation activities as possible, namely Imagine Day (for term 1 students) – the first day of school dedicated to orientating all the students from freshmen to exchange students. Another direct avenue for exchange students is the Exchange Students Club who consistently plan activities as well as nights out. Their events are always in high demand (due to the large number of exchange students) and hence, it may be difficult to purchase tickets. Personally, I found community through the International Friendship Group by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship. This community was a lot smaller, and hence more closely knit. It also included locals as well as international students, allowing me to interact more with the local community.

Other clubs that I was a part of included Parks Canada UBC and UBC Varsity Outdoor Club. These organized trips allow you to enjoy Canada's beauty with new friends. However, as spaces are dependent on drivers, these activities are also always in high demand.

Lastly, UBC has many traditions and exciting events that every UBC student should experience at least

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once. For term 1 students, it would be the Day of the Longboat. Another such event is Storm the Wall that takes place in the first half of the year.

4. Cost of Living

**Please provide an estimation of how much money you spent during your SEP?
Please list travel expenses separately.**

Without taking into consideration shopping and purchasing non-essential items, I spent about \$600 each month on groceries and basic household items.

Travelling:

- Public transport: U-Pass \$39.90 per month
- Air Tickets: About \$1500 for return tickets (Korean Air)

On-Campus Accommodation: About \$5000

5. Challenges

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

In all honesty, UBC and Vancouver was very easy to adapt to, with English being the main language of communication, as well as the abundance of Asians and Asian food. One of the biggest adjustments I had to make was mostly probably the decreasing daylight hours, where the sun would only rise at 8am and it would start getting dark at about 4pm. On the bright side, the shorter daylight hours helped me to treasure my daytime a lot more!

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

Overall, my exchange experience at UBC has been liberating and life-changing. My goal was to live in Vancouver, unlike many of my friends who chose to travel as much as they could. I found satisfaction in budgeting well, and found joy in cooking and cooking for others – something that I once thought was a waste of time. I also enjoyed interacting with the locals, and learning that everyone has such a distinct story and takes a unique path. This greatly broadened my mindset towards the pursuit of education, and assured me that taking the unconventional path is not unconventional at all. My favourite part of Vancouver is the fact that you have the mountains, the sea, the beaches and the parks all within a stone's throw away. I absolutely loved hiking during summer, and skiing during winter. Vancouver also has a public transport culture that I wish I could bring to Singapore. Before alighting from the bus, it is customary to shout out "Thank You" before getting off. Although less people do it nowadays (according

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to a friend), most still do, and it is amazing how such a simple act immediately increases the respect and value given to bus drives.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

I found it a waste that a lot of the household items (e.g. pots, pans, dishware, kitchen tools, bedding, pillows, cleaning equipment, etc...) I had bought for my studio apartment had to be thrown or given away. This was the case for most of my friends as on campus housing does not come equipped with any of these items. Even the exchange students on the same term as me who tried to sell their things on the Facebook group did not seem to have much luck. However, if you are around and wait till the next term begins, the incoming exchange students will be highly interested to buy your items then!

Also, you can buy used textbooks cheaply from UBC Facebook groups (e.g. 'UBC Textbooks 4 sale' & 'Buy and Sell – UBC textbooks').