

# SEP Report

## 1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	ENG/ISE
Host University	Tecnologico de Monterrey, Campus Santa Fe
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange	AY15/16 Semester 2

## 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

Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM), also known as Tecnológico de Monterrey, is a private multi-campus university in Mexico. ITESM adopts an innovative educational model that provides challenging and interactive educational experiences along with state-of-the-art technology, as well as flexibility in the teaching-learning process. ITESM promotes the use of teaching techniques such as collaborative learning, problem-based learning, project-oriented learning and research-based learning. Team projects, oral presentations and active student participation are all commonplace in ITESM's educational framework.

The majority of the courses undertaken at ITESM encompass 48 hours of face-to-face classroom time (3 hours a week). Homework and assignments are assigned on a regular basis and a typical course has 2 midterm exams and 1 final exam. In order to pass a class, 80% classroom attendance is required and the passing grade is typically 70 points or higher out of a total score of 100. Most classes are conducted in tutorial format, and the teaching language is either Spanish or English depending on what classes you sign up for.

Tecnológico de Monterrey places a high emphasis on developing an entrepreneurial spirit in its students and as a result, their students have very confident and outspoken personalities. Compared to other universities in the region, Tecnológico de Monterrey ranks amongst the highest in terms of its fresh graduates engaging in their own start-up companies and being granted patents for their products and services. Probably as a result of their hospitable culture, the local students do not keep their distance from their professors, instead forging an informal relationship with them.

There were relatively few issues with module mapping and registration. The PU's website provides a whole list of modules that one can take, divided into several categories such as semester of study, campus, faculty and teaching language. However, some of the information may not be updated so it is better to wait for the director of international programmes to email the official list of modules available. As for registration, as it is based on a first-come-first-serve basis, some of the modules that you might've originally mapped to may have reached maximum capacity, but you can appeal face-to-face with the module facilitator to obtain your desired module.

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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
AD2011	Innovation, Markets & Technological Development	5	IE3xxx	ISE Exchange Elective	4
H1018	Ethics, Self & Society	5	EG2401	Engineering Professionalism	4
NI2018	Analysis & Management of the Value Chain	5	IE3xxx	ISE Exchange Elective	4
RH1000	Organizational Behaviour & Human Talent Development	5	MT2001	Experiencing Engineering Leadership	4
RI2034	Negotiation & Conflict Management	5	PS2237	Introduction to International Relations	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?

Availability of on-campus accommodation depends on which campus you attend. Campus Santa Fe currently does not offer on-campus accommodation but they do provide information on off-campus accommodation. Below is a hyperlink for accommodations for rent which are nearby to the school. A fellow Singaporean and I rented a double bedroom in a 3-storey house with full amenities and private bathroom that cost 8,000 pesos, equivalent to roughly S\$600 per month. Laundry and meal services were not inclusive although my landlady does provide these services for an additional cost. However, food prices are relatively cheap in Mexico and laundromat services are plentiful and relatively inexpensive as well. I would recommend this sort of housing option if you prefer more privacy and proximity to the school but hostel options are available as well, although probably significantly further from the campus. Some campuses also offer the host family program, so be sure to find out which campuses offer such programs if you are interested in looking for an opportunity to experience the Mexican culture around-the-clock.

<http://www2.csf.itesm.mx/Informatec/anuncios/clasificados/clasificados.html?Name=Value>

## 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?

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As an exchange student at Tecnológico de Monterrey Campus Santa Fe, I was invited to participate in activities organized by the International Student Association (ISA). The ISA organizes day trips to interesting local attractions such as a hike up Nevado de Toluca, an extinct volcano located about 80 kilometres west of Mexico City.

There is a decent selection of co-curricular activities you can partake in whilst doing your exchange, such as sports and the performing arts. However, not all instructors are English-speaking but I am sure the local students there will be more than happy to translate instructions for you as long as you are willing to put in the effort.

## 4. Cost of Living

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

**Please list travel expenses separately.**

Accommodation: S\$600 per month for double bedroom (S\$300 per person)

Food: S\$250 to S\$300 per month, taking into account weekday school cafeteria meal, grocery shopping and weekend restaurant meals (eating out is incredibly affordable and recommended to try local cuisine)

Transport: S\$15 to S\$20 per month (for taking buses and the subway within the city)

Travel & Entertainment: S\$5000 (Including a one-month vacation travelling around Mexico)

Total expenditure for entire SEP stint (5 + 1 months): S\$9000

## 5. Challenges

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

Upon successful enrolment into campus Santa Fe, students are given an option to open a student bank account with one of their affiliated banks. After opening my personal bank account, I went on to perform an international wire transfer to my Mexican bank account. However, due to some miscommunication, I was unaware that the bank account would take a few days to be activated as the bank would need to verify that the bank account will not be used for illegal money laundering. As such, my wire transfer failed to proceed and in the process I lost a few hundred dollars due to the poor exchange rate and the wire transfer fee.

Language is definitely a problem here as well since many of the locals have a limited grasp of the English

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language. I was able to get by with simple conversations as I had taken basic Spanish lessons in NUS. However, it was still quite a challenge as Spanish speakers tend to speak very fast, coupled with the fact that Spanish grammar is markedly different from English. In order to improve, I made a point to converse as much as possible in Spanish with locals to enhance my listening and speaking skills.

## 6. Overall SEP Experience

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

This was an experience that I would not have traded for anything else in the world. Many misconceptions were cleared after having stayed here for the past six months. Feared by many to be a third world country filled with violence and corruption, Mexico actually has much to offer, with its rich and diverse culture, scenic landscapes and amazing nature and wildlife. The exposure and integration into a culture that is markedly different from ours was exhilarating, as were the opportunities to travel and discover a region that many Singaporeans would never have ever dreamt of exploring.

## 7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

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

To be able to fully immerse and enjoy your SEP in Mexico or any Latin American country for that matter, it is advisable to pick up basic Spanish as Spanish is still primarily the main language of communication. Some of the more rural areas have poor internet connectivity so relying on Google Maps and Google Translate to find your way around or asking locals for help will be difficult.

Unlike in Singapore, taking public transportation can be confusing and frustrating at first if one is not accustomed to it. When deciding to travel outside of Mexico City or other major cities, most of the public transportation options are privately operated. As such, it is common to see mini-buses or vans as the main mode of transportation. For non-locals, taking public transportation can be confusing as few areas have designated bus stops. Instead, the driver will pick up passengers along the road when it is flagged and only certain key locations are scribbled on the windshield of the vehicle which give a vague idea of the route the vehicle will take. Therefore, it is advisable to ask the driver first before boarding whether he will pass by the place you wish to go.

## 8. Report Submission

Please submit your report (including photos\*) at <https://share.nus.edu.sg/goabroad/Lists/SEPReport/AllItems.aspx>. Please note that you can only upload one document. As such, please **zip your**

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**report and photos into one file** and name the file in this format 'Host University\_Full Name ' (eg. **Waseda University\_Tan Mei Ling**).

\*Photo submission:

- 1 image of you with host university landmarks in the background
- 2 images of you with your exchange friends or local students
- Submit the photos in JPEG format. Good quality photos between 2MB and 5MB are preferred.
- Please name all photos in this format '**Host University\_Full Name\_Caption**' (eg. Waseda University\_Tan Mei Ling\_Visit to Mt Fuji with exchange friends).

Kindly note that we may share your report on the NUS/IRO website and relevant information at SEP information sessions and/or in publicity collaterals.