

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Science/Environmental Studies (Biology)
Host University	Monash University
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

Studying/learning culture

I liked the school culture at Monash University. The modules I took all offered a good mix of individual work and group projects, which provided a good challenge of various attributes like creativity, teamwork and independence. I was pleasantly surprised at how welcoming and helpful the local students were, as I had previously heard stories about local students being less accommodating towards exchange students as they only had to pass and were thus viewed as slackers. Of course, I did my best to debunk that myth. However, the thing I enjoyed the most about the school culture was the informal, relaxed relationship the lecturers and tutors had with the students. We called them all by their first name, and they would be more than willing to have a chat and joke around with us before, after or even during lessons. It all made learning extremely fun. I think such a culture would do the education system in Singapore a world of good.

Like/dislike most about academics

Like: The informal student-teacher relationship as mentioned earlier.

Dislike: I wish they would have allowed us to take 5 modules instead of 4, because now I have to overload. Also, releasing the exam timetable earlier than week 9 would have been nice.

Advice on module registration/mapping

I did not encounter problems with module mapping on the host university's side. Just make sure to read all module descriptions carefully to ensure they are indeed offered during the semester you wish to take them.

SEP Report

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
BIO3052	Animal Behaviour	6	LSM3267	Behavioural Biology	4
BIO3082	Global Change Biology	6	LSM3272	Global Change Biology	4
BIO3132	Biology of Australian Vertebrates	6	ENV3991	Exchange Enrichment	4
ATS1317	Renaissance Europe	6	HY2991	Exchange Enrichment	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 in a shared apartment with 3 other housemates whom I had not previously met. It was off campus but just across the road from the school. I would recommend such an accommodation to people like me who want their living quarters to be quieter and who value their own space and time a lot. It also allows for a deeper friendship to form between you and your housemates through things like dinner time conversation – I had a lot of those with my Iranian housemate, sharing our cultures, our dreams and our hobbies, and I'll certainly miss his guidance and advice. However, for a full experience of overseas college life and to make more friends (especially locals), I would advise you to stay on campus. It costs more but will allow for a fuller, more fun time.

If you stay off campus, I would suggest using flatmates.com to find accommodation. Do not sign any contract before reading it extremely thoroughly (though you probably know this already), and clarify with your landlord/landlady if things like water/electricity bills/Internet are paid for, so you get a more accurate estimate of your accommodation expenditure.

Learn to cook. You will cook a lot.

SEP Report

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?

There is a society called MOVE which caters to exchange students and they provide lots of opportunities to meet other foreign students, and also tours to cool places in Melbourne such as the Yarra Valley wineries or Phillip Island where you can hike and watch the cute little penguins coming back to shore at sunset. Also do join the Singapore Association of Monash (SAM), mostly run by the Singaporeans studying full-time at the university, for a chance to meet fellow Singaporeans (cliché as it sounds, it's really comforting to hear Singlish 6000km away from home) and get advice from them on surviving and living in Melbourne. Signing up with SAM also entitles you to various perks like free barbeque sessions or discounted food at occasional Singapore/Malaysia food carnivals held around Melbourne.

4. Cost of Living

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

Accommodation: \$3500
Return trip to/from Melbourne: \$750
Travel (Adelaide, Tasmania, Uluru): \$2000
Others (food, road trips, transport): \$6750

Total: ~\$13000

5. Challenges

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

The most challenging issue was probably not knowing how to cook or generally operate in the kitchen, so I got advice from my friends and housemates, and also googled recipes and watched cooking videos. Essentially I suppose it boiled down to being sociable and knowing when to ask for help, as this would come in handy for many things and not just cooking.

SEP Report

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

Overall, my exchange went as smoothly as I could have imagined. I made friends with my housemates of different nationalities, I got close to the other Singapore students on exchange, got to know their friends as well, and I got to travel within and out of Melbourne to see all the amazing natural sights and endemic wildlife Australia had to offer. Most importantly I got to try things I'd never done before, like skydiving, driving overseas, and even simple things like sitting by a fire, drinking wine and playing board games in a cozy Airbnb apartment with friends old and new. I even had the chance to bring my mother and girlfriend around Melbourne, and show them bits and pieces of the city I'd grown to like so much. While Singapore will always be home and I'm glad to be back, this exchange gave me so many experiences I wanted and needed, and I wouldn't trade them for anything.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Always check the weather forecast before going out and be prepared for blazing sun and freezing wind and rain within the same hour. Download the PTV public transport app and check it diligently before going out and when you're outside – planning ahead is crucial in a city where buses can come 1 hour apart and the last bus comes at 9.30 on Sundays. Train doors require you to press a button/open manually so don't stand there like an idiot waiting for the door to open automatically. Food and transport in Melbourne is expensive so if you have time and energy, try to find a part time job (minimum wage is \$17/hr). If not, sign up for school econs experiments on the MONLEE website because they pay pretty handsomely too. Be prepared to see a lot of Chinese people, and for non-Chinese people to ask if you are from China (no offense if you actually are). Learn to cook. Learn to drive.