

# SEP Report

## 1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Arts and Social Sciences, Political Science
Host University	Peking University
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	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

Studying culture:

Students at PKU are among the brightest in the country, each of them being top students from their respective high schools and home provinces. Naturally, the courses are rigorous in content, and one can expect to learn a lot from the teacher and the hardworking and intelligent students. Most of them are friendly and approachable so one would not need to worry too much about not fitting in.

What I liked:

- I liked the diverse pool of students at the School of International Studies, studying alongside Europeans, Africans, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, Thais, Malaysians, fellow Singaporeans and many others.
- I liked being challenged and linguistically stretched from the Chinese language of instruction, whether from class lectures and presentations, reading academic papers, or writing my own 10000 word essay.

What I did not liked:

- Some of the class sizes for the modules can be rather big, resulting in the class consisting of only 3-hour weekly lectures, without much room for class discussion like our tutorial classes in NUS. Nonetheless, some of the professors are much more proactive in soliciting views from the students, even in large classes.

Module registration and mapping:

My advice is to research on the modules available for each semester early found in the course catalogue URL below. It is usually updated about a month or two before the start of each semester. If it is not yet refreshed, you can refer to the course catalogue of the past few semesters for a reference.

<http://dean.pku.edu.cn/pkudean/course/kcb.php?xnxq=16-17-1>

Module registration only takes place when students report to the International Relations Office at PKU, so do not worry about that too early on. Students will be brought to a computer lab with a student assistant to guide them through the bidding and registration process. Students are allowed to register for 6 to 20 credits of modules (equivalent to 8 to about 24MCs of NUS credits, but one would have to check with one's own NUS faculty requirements on credit transfer).

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

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03231300	Modern Chinese Political Thoughts	3	PS31PT	Level 3000 Dummy Module for PT	4
002430140	Foreign Relations of People's Republic of China	3	PS32IR	Level 3000 Dummy Module for IR	4
03230790	History of Western Political Thoughts	3	PS32PT	Level 3000 Dummy Module for PT	4
02430300	Politics, Economy and Foreign Affairs of Southeast-Asian Countries	3	PS21IR	Level 2000 Dummy Module for IR	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 the Global Village of Peking University 北京大学中观新园, the hostel cluster reserved for international students studying at PKU.

Located just across the road at the southeast gate of the main campus, the hostel is in close proximity to the school, requiring about 10 to 15min walk to reach some of the common classroom blocks. This would be much better compared to the Wanliu hostel (15min bus ride) or off-campus options.

Students at the global village have the choice of single rooms, double rooms, or 2 to 3 room suites with an attached bathroom. Accommodation fees range from 70 to 90 yuan, adding up to about SGD2000-3000 for a semester. All rooms come with air-conditioning and heater (during winter), and are pretty well furnished in my opinion.

Me and one of my NUS peer, out of 4 students on exchange to PKU, also enjoyed a scholarship which waived our accommodation fees, and we got to stay at block 5 where the other scholarship holders were (together with some of the other full-time Singaporean students there), even though it was unclear why only the 2 of us was awarded the scholarship. We were informed about this on our exchange acceptance letter. Therefore, it would still be wise to budget for accommodation in case no scholarship is awarded. In my opinion, Global village would still be the best accommodation option for students on exchange; Wanliu student hostel is relatively far away and off-campus options would not be as convenient. In addition, most of the full-time Singaporean students are staying at the global village and they could help orientate and befriend exchangers. I myself got to share a room with one of them and he provided me with a lot of advice and great company.

## 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 are many avenues for students to participate in extra-curricular activities.

First, I would recommend joining student clubs and societies organized by the local students. On the second or

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third week of the semester, hundreds of student clubs will vie for your attention at a student life fair 百团大战. The wide selection of student bodies will cater to one's interests better, and more importantly in my opinion, allow one to better interact and befriend local students. A non-exhaustive list of student clubs is attached here. <http://attach3.bdwm.net/attach/boards/Job/M.1457188889.A/%E5%8C%97%E4%BA%AC%E5%A4%A7%E5%AD%A6%E5%AD%A6%E7%94%9F%E7%A4%BE%E5%9B%A2%E4%B8%80%E8%A7%88%E8%A1%A8.pdf>

For me, I joined one the three major student club at PKU 三大社团, the Cycling Association of Peking University (the other 2 being 山鹰社 the mountaineering club, and 爱心社 the community service club. The cycling club provided me with plenty of opportunity to participate in activities together with the locals. Activities include weekly physical trainings on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, weekend cycling trips to the outskirts of Beijing, lunch sessions, bike repair workshops, and sub-committee work. One would get to forge different kinds of relationship with one another, including a teacher-student relationship if one is successful in finding a “Master” 师父, who would impart you skills on bicycle repair, first aid, cycling tips etc. If you are consistent in your participation in the association's activities, and pass a number of selection tests, you will also be able to take part in the month long summer cycling expedition where one would be able to experience a different face of China and build strong lifelong friendships with your teammates.

Secondly, I would recommend getting in touch with the full-time Singaporean student community in PKU and Beijing. For a start, the Singapore Student's Association (Beijing) organizes a number of activities for Singaporean students in Beijing to participate in and befriend one another. Some of the activities I took part include dinner sessions (where Singaporean food is served!), Student Asean Games where I got to “represent” our nation in various sporting events with fellow Singaporeans. Besides the activities organized by the student association, different Singaporean students also organizes and participates in different events which short term exchangers like us can also join in. For example, I volunteered at a school in Beijing with some Singaporean and Malaysian students where we taught some simple English to primary school students weekly. Other activities organized by fellow Singaporeans include acapella sessions, or Model United Nations and other conferences.

In short, do not be hesitant to network and tag along, and be eager to go out of your comfort zone and get to know more students, Singaporean, local, and international alike.

## 4. Cost of Living

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

**Please list travel expenses separately.**

In total, I spent about SGD7000. Items below all listed in SGD. Expenses vary significantly with lifestyle.

Daily living expenses (food, transport etc):

- \$3000+ in total (6 months)
- Food: \$300 monthly (Vary with lifestyle, e.g. eating canteen food for 10RMB vs ordering delivery 20-30RMB)
- Water: \$10-\$20 monthly
- Transport: \$10-\$20 monthly
- Books, stationery, photocopying: \$30-50
- Global internet access: \$0-\$15 monthly (60 hours free to unlimited access)

Accommodation:

- \$2500-\$3000 worth of accommodation waived by scholarship

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Travel expenses (including food, transport, tourism, accommodation expenditure):

- \$2000 (Harbin, Shenyang, and Beijing before school starts, Shanghai, Inner Mongolia after school starts, and Shanxi during the summer holidays)

Cycling Association activities:

- \$300+ for a mountain bike and other miscellaneous items
- \$1500 for summer cycling expedition (including another mountain bike, food, accommodation for a month)

## 5. Challenges

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

Studying in Chinese was a challenge initially and it took me some time to get used to understanding concepts in Chinese, thinking in Chinese, expressing myself in Chinese in an academic setting. It would help to be extra attentive in class and to strike a balance between writing and typing one's notes in class.

If one feels homesick, one can always be more active in student activities organized by fellow Singaporeans. Being able to hear and speak Singlish, enjoy Singapore food together can be a really pleasant experience living overseas!

## 6. Overall SEP Experience

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

I embarked on my exchange wanting to meet more people, see and experience more things, and immerse myself in different cultures. Hence I made it a point to take some time off to participate in activities with both locals and Singaporeans, the former allowing me to forge precious friendships and understand the Chinese better, while the latter allowed me to appreciate being an overseas Singaporean and stay in touch with home. In class, my modules on western political thought and modern Chinese political thought gave me a good overview on the western and eastern traditions in political philosophy, my southeast Asian class allowed me to learn about my home region and the Chinese and southeast Asian perspective on it, and my Chinese foreign relations class gave me a good introduction to China and its relations with its neighbours. Hence whether in class, or out of class, my learning and experiences crossed cultures and national divides, giving me a truly rich student exchange experience.

It is also through the effort and contributions of many people that I was able to receive this wonderful exchange experience, including Mr Hoong Yik Luen who supported me financially through the NUS in Asia SEP Award, as well as the people I have met and friends I have made along the way, both Singaporean and local. Because of the support I have received, I am now able to better appreciate the education ecosystem I am in and more motivated to give back and help others to make their exchange experience enriching as well. The friendships I have made and the networks established would also be something I would cherish and regularly maintained in the years to come.

## 7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

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

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Come to China with an open mindset and be keen to mingle with both locals and Singaporeans to get a more well-rounded experience. Living in China can be really convenient, with a very well developed E-commerce and app market to deliver a slew of goods and services to consumers, so it would be wise to exercise some financial discipline and watch one's spending while enjoying these conveniences.