

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Engineering Faculty/ Material Science and Engineering
Host University	Technische Universität Darmstadt
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 in Technische Universität Darmstadt (TUD) is very much like studying in NUS. Lecturers conduct lessons where they explain the content of the modules. Most of the lecture slides are available for download on TUD student portal (also known as TUCaN). However the lecture slides provided the bare minimum details regarding the lecture topic and should be supplemented with additional notes provided by the lecturers. Classes were conducted in English, as are all other Masters-level modules offered in TUD. Of course this also means I was treated as a student pursuing his Masters Degree. This sounded challenging at first but the professors were more than willing to help me with any doubts I had about the modules. There were no tutorials, homework or mid-terms for the modules. The final examinations accounted for 100% of my grade and were conducted in two formats, oral examinations or written examinations. Written examinations were the ones I am used to, having done so many during my education in Singapore. Oral examinations were something new and the fact that they accounted for 100% of my grade made it even more nerve-wrecking. That said, with proper preparation, it is possible to do well.

Module mapping can be slightly tricky. In TUD, tutorials or lab sessions are listed under a similar but separate module code from the lecture module code. Hence it is important to check if the module has any tutorial or lab sessions as those might have to be mapped together with the equivalent NUS module. This can be done by emailing the respective professors in TUD for more information regarding their modules.

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
11-01-2008-vl	Graphen and Carbon Nanotubes – from fundamentals to applications	3	EX2000	Exchange UEM	4
11-01-8411-vl	Properties of Ferroelectrics	3	MLE 4209	Magnetic and Microelectronic Material	4

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11-01-7070-vl	Micromechanics and Nanostructured Materials	3	MLE 4204	Synthesis and Growth of Nanostructures	4
11-01-8401-vl	Fundamentals and Technology of Solar Cells	3	MLE4208	Photovoltaic Materials	4
11-01-2004vl	Thin Film Fabrication & Surface Techniques	3	PC4253	Thin Film Technology	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 an off-campus student dormitories managed by Studierendenwerk Darmstadt. At around €260 a month it is one of the cheapest dormitories available. Located at Nieder-Ramstädter St. 191 A, it is just a 20 minutes walk to TU Lichtwiese, the second campus of TUD as well as where most engineering module lessons are conducted. My dormitory is also just a short tram ride away from the main TUD campus and the city square, where grocery shopping can be done. The room I was provided with is clean and properly maintained. Furniture provided includes a bed with mattress, a table, a chair and a wardrobe. There is also a sink in my room, which was quite useful. The room has a gas heater, which is essential during the cold months of March and April, but there is no fan or air-conditioner to cool the room down during the summer. No curtains are provided but there are metal shutters that can be drawn or let down for privacy (or future outgoing students can purchase a translucent plastic film from the euro shop and paste it on the window). Pillow, blankets and bedsheet are not provided as well (this is common throughout all dormitories in Germany). Included in the rent is 80Gb of internet data, which can be accessed from a LAN port in my room (LAN cable not provided). I shared a common toilet (which has two shower cubicles) and a common kitchen (which has fridges and cabinets). All in all I would definitely recommend this accommodation as it is really good value for money.

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 the start of SEP in TUD, I was organized into a orientation group which was led by student volunteers. Like all orientation activities, it gave me the opportunity to interact with other international students and to make new friends. The student volunteers organised activities such as the Town Rally in Darmstadt, which brought us to iconic places of Darmstadt as well as gave a short history of the city, and a tour in Frankfurt. The most memorable event organized by them would be the Heidelberg tour, where we explored the city of Heidelberg and Heidelberg castle before going to the wine festival at night and got our first German festival experience. While these activities were not

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compulsory, I highly recommend them as they were great opportunities to learn more about the Darmstadt and Germany, as well as to make new friends from all over the world.

4. Cost of Living

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

Excluding personal travel expenses, I spent around SGD\$8000. Please note that this is just a rough estimate that includes departure and return flight tickets between Singapore and Germany (around SGD\$2500), rental for accommodations (SGD\$400/month), monthly groceries and essential miscellaneous expenses (SGD\$300/month), compulsory German student insurance (SGD\$120/month) and one time payment of semester ticket which allowed unlimited usage of public transport in Darmstadt and in certain parts of the Hessen State (SGD\$320).

5. Challenges

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

The most challenging issue I faced during my SEP was problems regarding my student visa. Due to certain unfortunate circumstances, I was not able to obtain my student visa before flying off to Germany. Hence, I was only allowed to legally stay in Germany for 90 days with on a tourist visa. It was only after running back and forth between the foreign office in Darmstadt and the SEP coordinator in TUD did I manage to obtain a permit to stay in Germany beyond the 90 days.

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

Going for this exchange is perhaps one of the best experience I ever had. Not only was it my first time studying overseas, it was also the first time that I embarked on an adventure of such scale. My friends who have already been on overseas exchange always said that you will find yourself during SEP. After going through SEP, I cannot help but agree with them. Thrusted in a foreign environment with unfamiliar faces, I found myself going out of my comfort zone to overcome language barriers, and to travel on my own. It was during those moments outside my comfort zone did I found out more about myself.

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Through this exchange, I was able to hear life stories of people of different nationalities, the struggles that some faced, their ambitions and dreams, as well as the lesser known traditions of their countries. Such knowledge cannot be obtained from textbooks. I am glad to have crossed paths with people of other nationalities during my exchange in TUD, many of whom become good friends that I will treasure in the years to come.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Be courageous! Be the one who takes the initiative to start a conversation with other exchange students from other countries. Try not to find comfort in familiarity and just stick to other Singaporeans. Dare to try new and weird things. Dare to travel alone. Do not be so fixated on taking the perfect photo for the perfect Instagram post, just take the time to appreciate the moment. Do not be so focused on travelling to as many countries/cities. I found more satisfaction learning more in depth about the people, the history and the culture, but that is just my personal opinion. Most importantly is to have fun and make meaningful connections with other people!