

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Engineering/Industrial & Systems Engineering
Host University	Technical University of Munich
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

While many lecture-styled modules are very similar to those in NUS, some other classes really impressed me and inspired me. In one of the modules, where students had to go through a real-life business case and propose a solution to the stated problem, our Professor referred to his own experiences and examples from the time when he was still working as a consultant instead of referring to textbook theories and solutions. Having experts as teachers at the Technical University of Munich is not something uncommon. For an institution where students are in need of technical skills that are relevant to the current industry's needs, teachers with strong practical background like them are really important.

Students are also in many ways more active in class. Many would simply raise their hands during lectures and ask questions inside the lecture theater while lecture is ongoing. This phenomenon is something that I rarely see in my lectures in NUS Engineering, especially when class participation is not required (or graded). I am inspired by the German students' openness and courage to ask and raise their opinions, even in a fully-packed lecture theater.

At the Technical University of Munich, students are also allowed to register for all the modules that they think they would like to take and then have the possibility to drop them as the semester progresses without any penalty. Therefore there is a greater flexibility in the student's semester, as we can still make changes halfway, depending on our workload or interests. Personally, I am more comfortable with this system as I was not sure whether I could map some of the modules back at NUS. For exchange students, this system is certainly preferable.

What could be improved would be the contact time with some of the professors. As many of them are still experts and leaders in their respective companies in different industries, they might have a busy schedule and as a result, for a case module which I took, I did not receive any feedback for the case report. This happened despite the fact that the feedback was promised at the start of the course.

My advise for future exchange students would be to immediately find out whether the modules they intend to map are still offered at the time they reach Munich. More than half of the modules I intended to take and map back, based on a preliminary research online at the TUM website, were not offered. To overcome this problem, I did a new mapping form, based on the most updated list. It would be wise to know and register for the modules that you can map early.

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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
WIB19970	Topics in Operations and Supply Chain Management II: Cases in Lean Production	6	IE4xxx	Exchange Elective	4
WI100967	Designing and Scheduling Lean Manufacturing Systems	6	IE4xxx	Exchange Elective	4
0000002771	Intercultural Communication	3		USP Humanities & Social Science	4
WI001057_1	Cost Accounting	6	IE4242	Cost Analysis and Management	4
0000003236	Ethics in Science and Technology – Introduction to Applied Ethics	3	EG2401	Engineering Professionalism	3
220000DE10	Deutsch als Fremdsprache B1.1 plus B1.2	9			
220000DE30	Deutsch als Fremdsprache B2.1	6			

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 fantastic accommodation, which I would definitely recommend to any future exchange students at the Technical University of Munich (TUM). The complex used to be the Olympic village for the athletes competing in the Munich Olympics in 1972. The Olympic village is about 20 minutes train ride away from the main campus of TUM. What a privilege to occupy the space where the athletes used to stay in! I stayed in a bungalow unit, which is a private unit with two storeys. Inside the first storey were the kitchen, the wardrobe, the bathroom, and a living space. The carpeted second storey was both the bedroom and reading room, with sufficient furniture to store my books and my other belongings. The large amount of space made it perfect for me who had suitcases and camera equipments. The bedroom is connected with a spacious balcony which allows students to simply hang around with their friends over a glass of beer. Yes, each bungalow unit is dedicated to one student. Amazing!

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Near the bungalow units students can find almost everything they need. The supermarket and drink market (Tengelmann brand) is located just 3 minutes away from the bungalow units. In the vicinity, one could also find a vegetable market, Asian restaurants, Kebab stall (which is considered to be the fast food in Germany), as well as a barbershop. One could also buy Munich souvenirs such as postcards in the nearby stationary shop and send it directly to his loved ones through the post office right across it!

Not only just for lifestyle, the Olympic village also contains facility for school life. At the office management building, students are able to use the silent reading hall to do their work or to prepare for their examinations. Books are also available for borrowing.

The best part to the Olympic village is perhaps the Bierstube. You might guess from the name. It is a student bar which sells local German food and of course, beer. It is the best place to hang out with your friends within the Olympic village. Also catch the big football matches of Bayern Munich and of course Germany (when international tournaments start); Bierstube has two large TV screens to cater to the football fans. The atmosphere in the Bierstube during a football match is always euphoric, and is always something to look forward to.

All in all, the Olympic village of Munich is **the** best accommodation an exchange student could ask for.

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?

The Technical University of Munich has done a great job in taking care of the exchange students. This is done especially through the events organised by their international office, TUM International. The events include Stammtisch, which is a biweekly gathering at different bars across Munich for exchange students to simply come over, have a drink and chat with fellow students about anything. Another activity that is memorable to me is the Language Café (they call it TalkTUMi) where tables are allocated for different languages, and students can join any table and practice the language spoken on that table. As someone who is eager to improve my German, the activity greatly helped my conversational skills in German. I even found a hiking friend in Munich through this activity.

Besides events inside Munich, the university also organizes trips to outside the city. On one occasion, we were brought to a beer brewery just one hour train ride outside Munich. It was recorded as the oldest brewery in the world. Students were able to observe the beer making process and also tried various sorts of beer produced in the brewery. Such opportunities are rare.

I would like to recommend the various activities organised by TUM International. Plenty of events are available for exchange students to experience different things and to mingle with other exchange students as well.

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4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

Living expenses:

- Accomodation: 335 Euros * 4 months = 1340 Euros
- Insurance: 82.5 * 4 months = 330 Euros
- Monthly expenditure = 400 * 4 months = 1600 Euros
- Student transport card = 160 Euros

Total living expenses = 3430 Euros

Travelling expenses = 1200 Euros

Total money spent = 4630 Euros

5. Challenges

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

Perhaps the only downside about Germany is the lack of efficiency of its administration. Most of the things are done via snail mail. One example is the opening of a bank account, which requires outgoing students to take a form from the embassy, fill it, and mail it to Germany. During the application process, there is no feedback from the bank as to what is the current status of the application. Students are also unable to tell whether the money has been transferred into the account or not. The problem continues in Munich. Executing bank transfer requires 1-2 days before the amount is actually transferred out. Moreover, students are limited to withdrawing only 600 Euros per month.

Registration of the students into the state record of Munich could be a hassle as well. A friend who went to the registration office during the day waited for about 4 hours in the office before he could register himself. Unfortunately, there are more people than usual who want to register themselves and stay in Munich in this period.

Knowing the possible hassle, be it from hearing my friends' stories or from my personal experience, I realised that planning is important. In order to submit a payment that is due in the next few days, I made sure that I give a 2 day buffer so that the payment would not be not late. In managing administrative matters at the registration office, I also came right at the opening hour, so as to avoid the crowd that would come later during the day. Friends also advised me to unblock my account, so as to not be limited in the cash withdrawal limit.

In a nutshell, there are ways to overcome the administrative hassle in Munich, as long as you keep your ears open to the stories of your friends and other people that have experienced the problem, and of course to plan ahead what you need to do. Do so, and your exchange programme in Munich would be a smooth ride.

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6. Overall SEP Experience

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

My exchange experience with the Technical University of Munich has been nothing short of amazing. In Munich, I experience a completely rejuvenating student lifestyle. The classes have been refreshing – never before lessons are so inspiring and engaging, allowing me to learn and absorb as much knowledge as I could without much pressure. Outside the class, the numerous activities organised by the international office allows me to meet other students and enjoy the unique sides of Munich without the hassle of organising the events myself. In addition, with mountains, lakes and parks all around Munich, the city is nothing short of adventure. Be it hiking, swimming, or simply sunbathing in the parks, Munich is the perfect place to be one with nature, on those sunny days of course. Perhaps going to Munich is one of the best decisions that I have ever made in life. Among all the exchange destination choices, it is hard to think of an exchange destination that is better than Munich.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

I would start with advice on the technicality of the exchange programme in TUM. As I mentioned, opening of the bank account could be a hassle. Therefore it is best to go to the embassy early and open the bank account as early as possible. Apply for the student visa early too, to avoid the stream of outgoing students applying for an exchange visa for Germany. Start about 4 months earlier when possible, to allow a relaxed last few days before embarking on your exchange programme.

In Munich be open minded and enjoy the culture. During the Summer Semester you can enjoy the Frühlingsfest (Spring Festival) and during the Winter Semester you can enjoy the Oktoberfest. Both are the signature festivals in Munich. People will dress up in the Bavarian traditional costumes (Lederhose and Dirndl) and go to Theresienwiese, where a carnival ground awaits. In the festival ground you can of course find beer halls, ferris wheel, small roller coaster and other rides. It is where the people of Munich gather and simply take a sip of beer and a bite of pretzel, and enjoy the atmosphere with their loved ones. You might be shocked how the people of Munich can drink so much and how much they love their traditional costume, but this uniqueness is the true color of Munich that cannot be found elsewhere.

In addition, as I have repeated several times in the previous pointers, join the activities organised by TUM international. They are highly diverse and so you can pick those you are interested in and you do not need to worry of missing out. Some events are even carried out twice if the demand from students are there. The events and activities are well organised and so do not miss out on the opportunity to explore the sides of Munich that the local students want to show to you.