

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Science/Life Science
Host University	University of Copenhagen
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**

Classes run on a block system in which a semester is divided into 2 blocks with 2 courses (15 ECTS in total) to be taken in each block typically. With just 2 courses on hand at any one time instead of the usual 5 modules that are taken over the course of a semester in NUS, I found it easier to focus and devote more time to each course that I am taking. Most lectures are conducted in blocks of 3 to 4 hours with regular breaks in between every 45mins which make the long lectures slightly more bearable. Most lecture content follows that of the accompanying reading (usually a textbook) quite closely and lecturers would normally upload a detailed course schedule containing the dates, time and chapters of the textbook to be covered during the lecture. It is therefore highly advisable to do some reading before class as I find that lectures are conducted with the assumption that students have done their pre-lecture reading before class. Most students also purchase the accompanying textbooks for their studying purposes but as this is often more costly, a more economical alternative would be to source for these readings online.

The courses (Principles of Pharmacology, Cellular Neuroscience, Immunology) I took are conducted on either a lecture-tutorial-lab or seminar system. It is quite common for students to interrupt during lecture to ask questions or clarify any concepts and the lecturer welcomes and even encourages it. It is also perfectly alright for students to address their professors by their first name (in fact, it is the culture here to do that!). Besides the informal student-teacher relationship, it is also not surprising to see lecturers dressing casually for classes. Interestingly and fortunately as well, there is no need for students to dress up formally for presentations (even for oral examinations), usually a smart-casual dress code will be fine because the professors dress up likewise!

The Danes are also highly motivated and eager students when it comes to learning and I am highly impressed by it. They would voluntarily offer their answers spontaneously during tutorials and seek clarification on any doubts they have without hesitation and I like how the classes are made much more interactive and stimulating at the same time because of that. Unsurprisingly of course, they would diligently do all their required readings and preparation before classes. Henceforth, in order to get the most out of each class (as they did), it is once again highly advisable to do likewise – preparing before lessons that is!

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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
SLVKBO351U	Principles of Pharmacology	7,5	LSM3211	Fundamental Pharmacology	4
SMOB14001U	Cellular Neuroscience	7,5	LSM3215	Neuronal Signaling and Memory Mechanisms	4
NBIB14019U	Immunology	15	LSM3223	Immunology	4
-	Danish Language Course Beginners Level 1	0	LAX1741	Department Exchange Module	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 room in one of the residential halls provided by the UCPH housing foundation. This is a private foundation independent of the university but they work closely together to assist international students in finding accommodation. Most if not all of the accommodations are therefore located off campus but there are quite a number that are situated within walking distance/ a short biking distance from the campus. It is therefore strongly advisable that students look up and take into consideration the location of their campus (where most of their classes will be conducted in) and that of their desired accommodation before deciding on the final accommodation.

Fortunately for me, I managed to get a hall (Tåsingegade Kollegiet) that is located relatively near to my campus at the faculty of health and medical sciences which made attending early classes slightly more bearable! Though the hall is slightly old, I would say it is still relatively well furnished, at least comfortably sufficient to meet my daily needs. All the rooms have already been equipped with basic housing supplies such as tables, chairs, cooking pots and cooking and eating utensils, shelves and wardrobe cupboard so there is almost no need for us to purchase many additional household items to furnish the room except for the usual use-able items such as detergents and toilet papers. In addition, we were also provided with a set of bed linen, duvet (extremely helpful in keeping you warm as you sleep through the cold night!), duvet cover, a couple of towels and cloths and that greatly saved us the panic and worry of having to rush to a furniture shop to purchase all these essential items upon arrival. The quantity and quality of equipments may vary from room to room as some earlier student tenants may purchase additional items during their stay which are left there. That being said, it is possible too to purchase additional furnitures for the room if you would like.

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The room I stayed in also has a private bathroom and kitchenette (a small cooking area with stove and a sink) and a small fridge attached with it which is very convenient. Although some of the other rooms in the same hall have the luxury of owning a microwave oven, mine did not. Nonetheless, it also not too much trouble if students would like to use additional cooking facilities such as the microwave oven and oven for they also have them in the common room, free for all student residents of the hall to use! Of course, staying in a shared room has its own share of benefits and dis-benefits. The good thing is that the cost of the accommodation is shared (my monthly rent is about ~\$500 SGD compared to \$1000 if I had rented a private room) and I got the opportunity to live with and befriend another international student on a much more personal level. Nevertheless, a shared room also comes with shared responsibility of having to clean the room and in many cases learning to respect and be accommodating towards each other's living habits which can be difficult at times. Communication is thus important here in a shared living.

Personally for me I had a good stay at the kollegiet and would definitely recommend this to future exchange students (especially science students!) who want to budget a little and would not mind the little hassles that accompany a shared room accommodation (which is also part of the experience).

There are also other housing options provided by the foundation such as private rooms and shared apartments. Otherwise, there are also private housing options, which may be cheaper sometimes as well, outside the foundation that students can look into. However, as there have been many cases of housing scams around, students should be very cautious when considering these options.

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?

Unlike NUS, the student activities here are not as varied and coupled with the language barrier, it may be difficult sometimes to get involved in activities conducted by local organisations. I once tried to apply to join as a volunteer at the local Red Cross but soon found it incredibly difficult to participate as proficiency in Danish language was required in many aspects. Nonetheless, I believe there are other organisations or activities out there that are not too restricted to locals only that international students can get themselves involved in if they like.

USG, a non profit students sports organization is perhaps the most prominent club activity that the university has to offer. The sports organization provides classes for over 80 different sports ranging from entry to expert level. This is however a paid session in which students have to pay a membership fee to participate in the classes .

That aside, the university itself has a mentor programme which I applied for. The programme assigned a senior student from my faculty to me and he was very helpful and kind in answering my pre-trip queries. The mentor programme also has a slew of activities lined up for both the mentors and mentees and some of those activities that my programme had include a mentor-mentee meetup, a sightseeing trip around Copenhagen guided by the mentors, visits to pubs, cabin trip, Christmas dinner and such which

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mentees can participate in. Strongly encourage future exchangers to sign up for this programme!

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

Expenses (1DKK = 0.21SGD)

	DKK	SGD
Accommodation	22800	4788
Food	6300	1323
Transport	1365	286.65
Leisure/Entertainment	3900	819.42
Misc (Printing, Laundry, SIM Card)	900	189
Travel	15940	3347.4
Residence Permit	3382	710.22
Travel Insurance	3343	702.03
Air tickets	8116	1704.36
Total	66046	13869.66

5. Challenges

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

Fortunately for me, there were not many major challenging issues that I can recall. I am glad that I managed to get decent, affordable housing - one of the biggest worries faced by many international students here in Denmark (made worse with the prevalence of housing scams). I would say that most of the challenges or perhaps the more "difficult times" happened during the initial transitional phase when I was still new and unfamiliar to this then- foreign land and had to adapt to new living habits all over again. One of it was perhaps familiarizing myself with the routes around the city on a bike since that is the main mode of transport for majority of the locals and also students. Google map therefore became the all important application that I depended and relied on heavily to navigate my way around town!

Homesickness was also another "challenge" that I had to deal with since this was the first time that I was living away from my family for such a long time. But things will and do get better with time. Making regular calls/skype back home to keep in touch helped in easing my uneasiness/homesickness. Who would have known that even a simple call back home can be so therapeutic and overwhelming at times.

Although most if not all of the Danes are proficient in English, the lack of proficiency in the local language (Danish) can still be a hindrance on many occasions as Danish is the working language seen - in menus, in grocery shops/supermarkets, newspapers, in mailbox letters and sometimes even in lecture notes and heard everywhere - not only on the streets but also the announcements made in buses and trains! And this can be quite frustrating at times especially when it is an important message that is

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of/you think is of concern to you. Taking some language course can be of some use in these cases as it did for me although many a times one would still have to turn to google translate or simply asking a local for translation due to the still limited language ability but it is still better than not knowing any Danish!

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

It has been a really great and eye opening learning experience for me - going into a foreign land, adapting to a new lifestyle, establishing new friendships and experiencing many things, small and big, for the first time. Some of which I would never ever have imagined myself doing or thought I would be capable of doing in my life! And even now it feels surreal to think that I have done them as I look back. Going on this SEP has certainly taught me many things beyond just academics and I am very thankful for having had this wonderful opportunity to discover and learn not just a little more about the world outside but also importantly, a little more about myself.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Beyond all the personal expectations and goals, go with an open mind and heart and be surprised by what you can get out of it!

There is also no need to feel pressured to follow or keep up with the pace of other exchangees because every exchange experience is unique and personal to every exchangee. So just do what you think will make for a happy and fulfilling SEP for you!