

# SEP Report

## 1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Biomedical Engineering
Host University	Korea 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

The studying culture in Korea University was much akin to that of NUS, if not more intense, as Korean students are really hardworking. In most of my Engineering classes, the students did not readily speak up in class unless prompted by the professor to ask questions. However, in a business class that I managed to take, more students—especially foreign ones and Koreans that were educated well in English, or perhaps brought up in America, spoke up.

Thankfully for us exchange students, there were plenty of classes taught in English. Korea University's website has an updated list of modules that are taught in English. This list is only updated at the beginning of each semester.

All of my lessons had no tutorials, and only lectures.

In my Engineering classes, the setting was largely classroom based, where a maximum of approximately 70 to 80 students attended lessons, as most of the Engineering modules I took had less than 100 people attending.

For business modules, it was similar to NUS, where a seminar styled lecture was employed.

In Korea University, there is a heavy emphasis on attendance. Although this depends on professor, in general you can only miss lessons without a valid reason 3 times before the module is dropped or voided for you.

Students do make use of the facilities in school such as the libraries and study rooms. Students also could opt to study in cafes strewn all around the campus, which allow students to simply purchase a drink and study there. Cafes are equipped with power plugs. Some cafes are even specially set up for studying, coming equipped with study lights, more power plugs and a quiet ambience. Some cafes are even 24 hours. These cafes were extremely full during mid-terms and the final examination period, as Korean students flood them in order to study.

Professors were generally receptive to exchange students and translated whatever they spoke in Korean to English if they did so.

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Having said that Koreans are hardworking, the atmosphere of competitiveness between students is markedly less than what I observe in NUS, which is a nice respite. Regarding the level of difficulty of the modules here, it depends on the code (similar to NUS). I felt that the modules did teach relevant content but the level of difficulty seemed to be a little lower compared to modules I have taken in NUS. This may be partially credited to the fewer hours invested in lesson time in school as tutorials are omitted, and lectures are normally twice a week, 90 minutes each, for the modules I have taken.

Korea University has one of the most extensive list of English-taught modules that exchange students can take, compared to some of the Universities that I have considered in the past. They usually update the list a few weeks before the semester begins, so prospective students should attempt to first map their desired modules with the previous year's list.

Korea University has also one of the most extensive exchange student integration programmes. I was actually not expecting such in-depth help, as they aided us in troublesome tasks such as creating a local bank account (Hana Bank), foreign ID card (Alien Registration Card), module and wifi registration, in addition to the KUBA (Korea University Buddy Assistants) programme, which paired all of us with a Korean student in order to integrate us into the community.

**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
BMED313	Biomaterials	3	BN3301	Biomaterials	4
BMED409	Micro & Nanotechnology	3	BN4109	Special Topics in Bioengineering	4
BMED305	Electronic Circuits	3	BN3401	Biomedical Electronics & Systems	4
BUSS311	Organizational Behavior	3	HR2002	Human Resource Management	2
CHBE207	Physical Chemistry	3	BN3501	Equilibrium and Kinetic Bioprocesses	4
IFLS240	Korean Speaking for Beginners	2	-	Not mapped	-

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## 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?**

After a few weeks of consideration, I had chosen to stay in a Goshitel, which is a small room with or without a personal toilet (mine had one), that was the cheaper alternative to staying on campus. Furthermore, the Goshitel that I had lived in – Newgen Goshitel, was nearer to the campus that I had to frequently visit. The condition of the room was acceptable, and it came equipped with basic items such as a mini fridge, airconditioning unit, television set and a few cupboards. The manager did speak English, but just barely enough to get through short conversations. The cost of this accommodation was 370,000 won per month, which translated to approximately SGD\$15 per night. Newgen goshitel also provided a communal washing machine and kitchen, which had free rice, if you intend to make your own meals. However, the state of the kitchen is rather dirty in general, with slightly grimy floors and sinks that always had food remnants from the previous person who cooked there. In essence, I had only cooked a grand total of two meals there.

In addition, Newgen has two floors. The 4<sup>th</sup> storey of the building is a mixed gender level, while the 5<sup>th</sup> is a female-only level. The electronic lock on the 4<sup>th</sup> storey is no longer in working condition, but the 5<sup>th</sup> one is. Regarding safety and security, I would not recommend this place to prospective students as there were cases where my friends living on the 5<sup>th</sup> level encountered random strangers on the corridor. They have also reported strangers passing out on the corridor. Furthermore, a friend of mine also reported cases of stolen clothes that she had left on the drying rack in the balcony. After consulting the manager at Newgen to check with the CCTVs installed, we were given a lackluster response that the CCTVs did not provide any helpful insight, which led us to the conclusion that the CCTVs were actually not in working condition. This actually happened a few times, with the manager not being able to give us an acceptable explanation.

Having said this, there are many other Goshitels in the area—known as Chamsari to the Koreans, near Korea University, where a lot of the fabled drinking activities take place. Despite being noisy at night sometimes (especially on weekends), it is a very convenient and nice environment to live in as it allows you to soak in the Korean culture. The other Goshitels that my friends lived in were known as One-room-tel and Rachel Livingtel, with Rachel being the more well-known accommodation.

Rachel Livingtel had a much cleaner environment compared to Newgen. The managers there are an elderly couple, who pride themselves on security, as they closely monitor the numerous CCTVs installed within the living premises. Students who live there also have to add them to Kakao Talk messenger. Here, the rooms come equipped with the same necessities in Newgen, only cleaner. Furthermore, the kitchen also provides free eggs, albeit on a first-come-first-served basis. Rachel Livingtel is located just a two minute walk away down the street from Newgen. It is recommended that prospective students choose Rachel's over Newgen if they prioritise safety and cleanliness. The price of a room in Rachel's is slightly more expensive compared to Newgen, however.

For on campus accommodation, exchange students are allocated the residence known as CJ International House, which is both high in cleanliness and security. However, this was not the option

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that most of the exchange students from Singapore selected as it was located on the top of a hill, which required 15 to 20 minutes to ascend. Additionally, it also cost more compared to the Goshitels. CJ International House is very strict with guests and gender issues, so much so that they have a curfew for guest visits, as well as a gender segregated elevator system. For those who intend to stay up late at night with friends (and of different genders), you may wish to reconsider your choice of accommodation.

## 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?**

As I have mentioned earlier, the KUBA system which Korea University has is an excellent method to integrate yourself into the local community. KUBA assigns you a buddy, who will make first contact with you even before you fly to Korea! They will be your main pillars of information and support when you need help, as most of them can speak English. KUBA also has many weekly activities planned out in advance that will take you to the different attractions within Korea, as well as drinking sessions every weekend, where you will learn how to appreciate Soju (Korean spirit) and make new international and local friends.

When you first arrive, KUBA (along with the school), will organize an orientation event where you familiarize yourself with the school's system. They will also help you in making your local bank account, creating your debit card, making your foreign ID card and register for modules. Depending on which semester you embark on your SEP to KU, you may experience either IPSELENTI, a massive Korean concert which various K-pop idols perform, which involves a lot of cheering, or the Ko-Yeon Games, an intense sports festival between Korea University and Yonsei University (supposedly our rival). There will also be an International Students Fair, where you will get to exhibit your own country's culture as well as experience others'.

As the semester draws to a close, KUBA will organize a farewell event to mark the end of the semester and say their goodbyes to all the foreign students.

In addition to all these major events, Korea University itself has a vibrant school life, as the campus is always riddled with many ongoing events and exhibitions, such as CCA fairs, live e-gaming booths/competitions and pop-up concerts.

I had the wonderful opportunity to be a part of the KU choir, also known as KUGC (Korea University Glee Club), and made bunch of really friendly and warm friends. Coming from the NUS choir myself, experiencing the choir here broadened my perspectives of both culture and music. As I was the only exchange student that joined, I had the rare opportunity to interact with everyone on an individual basis and learnt many things about living as a Korean, and their culture. Thankfully, they had sufficient proficiency in the English language to interact with me. After all the activities and concerts that we have been through together, I can safely say that joining the choir was the best choice I made during my time in KU, as it really brings you much closer to the locals. As such, I highly encourage students to join in on a CCA to really experience life in Korea as a local student, as well as to meet new friends

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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.**

Approximately around the range of SGD10,000+, inclusive of accommodation. This was because I had chosen to eat out almost every day and had decided to try out many new things, which costed quite a bit.

## 5. Challenges

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

Thanks to the help that KUBA and the school provided, I had little difficulty during my SEP stint. A useful advice would be to always keep your belongings safe as losing them (bank card, passport, keys and foreign ID card) would prove to be tremendously troublesome. Safety was also not an issue as Korea is relatively safe and nightlife is common in the university areas.

The only challenge I can think of would be the first attempt at trying to fit in and mingle with the local students, as opposed to sticking with your Singaporean friends. This is really important as the SEP stint provides you with the rare opportunity to do so as a student, for one semester. Overall, you can expect your SEP to Korea University to be smooth sailing, if you are mindful of your own actions and priorities.

## 6. Overall SEP Experience

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

My SEP to Korea University has been nothing short of life-changing, as I got the chance to experience so much I didn't before, and meet new friends both local and international. The journey was truly once in a lifetime.

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## 7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

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

Please learn Korean before you go to Korea! If time constraints are present, make sure you know enough to get yourself around. It is important to be able to enjoy your stay here to the fullest, as well as make lasting friendship with the locals here.