

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Material Science and Engineering
Host University	Pohang University of Science and Technology (POSTECH)
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

At first, I did not expect the fact that students from POSTECH could draw such a big response from the locals. They were very impressed and full of praises. It was then I found out that it is these social norms that turn the school environment extremely competitive and stressful. Students here, specially in POSTECH, were hardworking and diligent. The teaching style in POSTECH focused more on presentation. They believed that listening in class and doing regular assignments were not enough. Able to apply what student have learnt in class and present these ideas to others is a better way of showing understanding. Therefore, all of my 5 modules include individual and/or team presentation. All the assignments were graded and most required further research to complete. This shows that they emphasized on self-learning and independence. Nevertheless, I still enjoy my study experience in POSTECH as they gave more insights to my field of study – material science and engineering (nanotechnology and biomedical material). Furthermore, I discovered my new style of learning and gain deeper understanding about myself such as my personally required consistent “push” to work effectively, and in this case the “push” refers to the constant graded assignments. However, I was not used to the use of black board in the classroom. Frankly speaking, some Korean professors were not very fluent in speaking English and I experienced some difficulties understanding the lessons. I had also encountered some issues getting modules initally as some professors refused to teach their module in English. However, it was all resolved in the end because I prepared extra modules that I had already got them approved by the respective departments in NUS. That is why my advice is “always prepare for plan B”. Try to get a few more modules approved before heading to a university where their first language is not English. Language barrier can be a very serious problem. Another piece of advice is that please do not miss the orientation as I think that it is extremely important to attend in order to survive in SEP. Furthermore, it is very important to meet up with your advising professor as they will give helpful advices and endorse your module registration.

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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
CHEB410	Chemical Materials Analysis for Engineer	3	MLE4201	Advanced Materials Characterisation	4
CITE241	Introduction to Biomedical Engineering	3	MLE4203	Polymeric Biomedical Materials	4
AMSE522	Inorganic Material for Optoelectronics and Applications	3	EE4401	Optoelectronics	4
AMSE742E	Nanoelectronic materials and devices	3	MLE4206	Current Topics on Nanomaterials	4
CHEB463	Introduction to Nanoscience & Nanoengineering	3	EE4411	Silicon Processing 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 the on campus dormitory called the "DICE – Dormitory for International Cultural Exchange". It is a mixed dormitory for mainly international students. There were a few Koreans staying with us and they are usually the committee of DICE who organized activities and events for DICE residents. It was quite spacious and they have what you need. The location were excellent. For instance, a well equipped gym and sports stadium were just behind the dormitories. There were a small food hut for gathering at night and 2 canteen in just 5 minutes away. I would recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students as there were many opportunities to know more international friends in DICE such as weekly sharing session about our hometown. I would suggest to be proactive and participate in all the activities and events organized by the DICE committee and I would guaranteed a memorable experience in DICE and POSTECH.

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 were numerous activities organized by the International Relations Office (ISSS) and my advice is do participate as many as possible. I did not managed to participate in all of the activities as I have to

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cope with 5 core modules and an additional Korean class organized by the POSLEC Korean Language program which I will elaborate later. My most memorable field trip is the daegu hillcrest day trip with all the international students and local student volunteers. We went on a trip out of Pohang together and had great interact with the other international students, local student volunteers and even the international relation's staff. The beauty of Daegu also attracted us to go for another day trip with our new international friends. I also participated in iPub which is supported by the International Relations Office. Together with DICE, we organizes a booth in May during POSTECH Sunrise festival, where international residents present their country's food and culture. A group of 3 singaporeans, including me, decided to share our local delicacy to the Koreans – Hokkien Mee. I strongly recommend international students to participate in this event as it is really fun to learn to cook Singapore food and manage a food stall. We had so much fun during the Sunrise festival where Ailee, a popular Korean Singer, came to POSTECH for a mini concert. You can even feel how much pride the student in POSTECH have in their university when the students bodies went on stage to lead everyone in the school song. Everyone start to sing and dance together when the school song was played. Lastly, I would like to recommend students to take the free Korean courses organized by POSLEC. Not only you get to learn basic Korean, you get learn more about Korea culture from the teacher and build stronger bonds with other international students through various activities during the class. I strongly encouraged students to take part in all the activities whenever it is possible. You will not regret.

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

Approximately \$7000
Domitory fee ~\$500
Prepaid card ~\$30 per month
Transportation~\$50 per month (excluding transport out of Pohang which is usually \$20-30 per trip)
Food ~\$4-6 per meal (in school)

5. Challenges

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

One of the greatest challenge was getting all my planned modules in the first round. As mentioned previously, some professors refused to teach in English even though it was stated clearly in their webpage that they will teach the module in English. Therefore, when I went to their first lesson, I was forced to listen to a 2 hours lecture in Korean. Luckily, after dealing with some clashes of timetable, i got all my modules approved by my advising professor. It was then I know that it is really important to try to mapped more modules and get those modules approved by NUS before coming for SEP. Students have to prepare for clashes in time schedule.

Another challenge faced was getting sick in POSTECH. As my body was unable to adapt to the transition period from winter to spring, I fell terribly sick. I was thankful that I managed to make a number of international friends during orientation (that is why I stressed the importance of

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orientation camp) and they showered me with lots of care and concern. I feel that the international students became more bonded, regardless of nationality and religion, as we feel for each other in a foreign country. Moreover, I think that international students should stay open and not to be afraid to seek help from the International Relations Office.

Last challenge was that it was difficult to mix with the locals. I learned from my Korean class that Koreans were generally more shy in character. Therefore, I learned to take the first steps to start a conversation with the locals during group discussions. I was glad that my team mates, who are all Koreans, welcomed me and tried to continue the conversations even if their English proficiency were not as good. I was thankful that we managed to process to further conversations out of the class. Therefore, it is very important to take the first step when you are determined to know the locals.

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

Overall, I really treasure this student exchange experience and I must say I gained a lot during this spring semester. These experiences made me step out of my comfort zone and learnt to be more independent. Initially, I had a hard time adjusting to this new environment due to language barrier. I encountered many difficulties and lonely. This might be due to the fact that I am usually the only foreigner in the class and that I felt pressured as the professor had to teach in English for me. However, I learned to be positive-minded and make use of in class group discussion to interact with the local students. I was grateful that they were helpful and willing to make friends with me. My attitude changed and I realized Koreans were actually very friendly and helpful. We may have language barrier, but our friendship will not be broken by that. Furthermore, the international students were all very bonded as a family as most of us stay in the same dormitory and that we attended activities that bonded us strongly together. Lastly, I realized that I actually started to appreciate little things that Singaporeans might take for granted during SEP especially after many sharing sessions with other international students. For instance, I learned to appreciate Singapore's bilingual system and multicultural society which allow us to respect other cultures. In conclusion, this SEP is definitely a memorable one.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

As mentioned, I would like to stress the importance of mapping more modules and get them approved by NUS before embarking on SEP especially to a country whose English is not their first language. Moreover, it is very important to participate in orientation and all the activities organized by the international relation office to experience the full SEP journey. Stay positive and open to making more friends regardless of nationality and religion. Understand the differences of each nationalities and accept those differences.

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