

SEP Report

1. Student Information

| | |
|---|------------------------|
| Faculty/Major | FASS/Political Science |
| Host University | University of Oslo |
| 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

The general learning/studying culture at University of Oslo (UIO) is a bit more relaxed compared to NUS, with the average workload being three modules (this maps back to 20 MCs in FASS, but not necessarily in other faculties). There are also very few components in terms of grading; most classes (for arts modules) required one essay and had one exam. The average length of the exams is three hours, giving students more than enough time to answer the questions; UIO's structure allows students time to write the best answer possible.

Most of the classes at UIO are traditionally lectures-only but some faculties/majors seem to be moving towards a lecture-tutorial system. As such, out of my three classes only one had tutorials. Lectures are conducted similarly to NUS, though the quality of the lectures still depends on the lecturer. Two of my classes did not have one fixed lecturer but different guest lecturers who specialised in the topic of the week would be invited by the prof in charge of the class to speak. Tutorials may consist of topic discussions or class presentations, but they are generally quite informal and there is hardly any sense of hierarchy between students and teachers. Norwegian students may seem shy at first but some are quite vocal during class discussions, despite the fact that there are no marks given for class participation. Tutorials might also be used to discuss each individual's essay, and there seems to be a practice of allowing each person to present a draft (not just an outline but actual paragraphs, the more complete the better) to the class so that feedback can be given before the actual submission of the essay. There was a separate tutorial for this where smaller groups of 3-5 students would present their essays to the tutor and each other and also give each other feedback. I found it to be very useful and not intimidating at all.

Most of the academics and administrative staff I encountered were very nice and were willing to take the time to talk to students. They would even go out of their way to help us with administrative issues if we encountered any.

There is quite a wide range of English modules that are available for international students and quite a few of them would be taken by Norwegian students as well, which might give you the opportunity to make some Norwegian friends. Be sure to check that you meet the pre-requisites and that you watch out for the deadlines for registering of classes, which is normally done even before you go to Norway, though your modules may not actually be officially confirmed until after orientation week. Attend the orientation talks as they will give you very important information about module registration etc. Make

SEP Report

sure that you get mapping approval from your department in NUS as well and submit your credit approval forms as soon as possible upon return. Finally, it might be fun to study Norwegian just so you can understand a bit more of what you hear and see around you.

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 |
| STV2310 | Politics and Development | 10 | PS3263 | Comparative Study of Development | 4 |
| KOR1502 | Korea: Philosophy and Religion | 10 | | Dummy code | 4 |
| NORINT0500 | Norwegian Life and Society | 10 | EU1101E | Making of Modern Europe | 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?

UiO does not have on-campus accommodation but there are various student hostels provided all around Oslo. Kringsja where I stayed and Sogn are the two largest student accommodation villages and are generally recommended for international students. Kringsja is 6 or 7 train stops from school (the train stop is right in front of the hostel), depending on whether you alight at Blindern or Forskningsparken. Sogn, located near Ullevål Stadion is only two stops away from school and therefore nearer to the city center as compared to Kringsja. There are also more options for grocery shopping/general shopping.

Rooms in both accommodation villages are very clean. It's important to keep your room clean as there are steep fines for even a slight damage of property or unclean rooms when you check out.

Although Sogn may be a bit more convenient, I really liked Kringsja because there is a really nice lake called Sognsvann just 5-10 minute away. We would often stroll/jog around the lake or go there to watch the sunset. You can even go swimming in summer. Sognsvann is also the starting point for quite a few cross-country ski trails and you will see tons of Norwegians skiing here all through the winter. You can also go for a ski course provided by UiO where they teach you the basics or you can simply rent skis from Sio (same organization in charge of housing) and try it out yourself. There are also quite a few hiking trails right behind the Kringsja and there is a really nice viewpoint over Oslo called Vetakollen that is about a 45- 60 min hike. Trails are also very clearly marked out so you won't get lost.

SEP Report

Other than abundant nature, there are quite a few accommodation options in Kringsja. I stayed in a single furnished room with shared toilet with one other person. (You can select your rooms when you arrive so you can choose to buddy up with a friend if you want). I shared my kitchen with seven others and I really enjoyed it because you immediately have a group of people you can make friends with and get close to. My housemates were very nice and respectful and we really had a lot of fun chatting and cooking together in our kitchen, as well as exploring Oslo together. Our kitchen was also reasonably big and had a lot of utensils/kitchenware and even condiments that were left by previous tenants. This may not always be the case though, but a quick run to Kiwi (in Kringsja itself), Gronland (Asian markets), or Ikea can easily solve that. I definitely recommend sharing a kitchen with 7 others rather than with one other person (which is a more expensive option if I'm not wrong) because the kitchen space for only two people is incredibly small (only 1 person can be in the kitchen at one time) and is a lot less conducive for dinner parties with friends.

Also, if you have any guests during your exchange stay, there is a thin mattress on top of the thick mattress that you can put on the floor for your friends to sleep on. Relatively cheap blankets, pillow cases, bedsheets and blankets can be bought from Ikea as well (these are not provided so you must bring your own or buy). If there are any outgoing exchangers, see if they can sell/give you any of these things or other stuff like lamps (the lighting in Kringsja is not that sufficient for studying so a table lamp is necessary, especially at night or during winter when the sun sets very early) or rice cookers. Another important plus point about Kringja is that the toilet floor is heated and heating in the rooms is generally very good, which we were all very grateful for during winter.

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?

I would really recommend attending the orientation activities with your buddy group at the least for the first few days so that you can meet friends and maybe even find people to attend class together with. Most if not all of my closest friends that I made during exchange were people I met during orientation week, and many stayed in Kringsja or Sogn, making it easy for us to go over to each other's places for meals and even sleepovers.

Some orientation events I really enjoyed were ice skating as well as a bus tour around key attractions in Oslo. There was also a talk about "How to be Norwegian" where the speaker deconstructed Norwegian culture and social habits/norms in a hilarious way so that foreigners like us could better understand and integrate into society. I would also recommend the ski course if you go during winter, but be sure to sign up quickly because there are limited slots. I did not get to do this because of poor skiing conditions and lack of skis so try to rent your skis early too. Other than orientation activities, there is a special events programme where students can sign up for tours of various attractions or island hopping throughout the semester. These events can be found on the university website so keep a look out for those! There are also ESN tours for students to places like Iceland or Finland which are pretty reasonably priced and relieve the burden of planning all your travels.

SEP Report

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

Expenses + Travelling: \$3500
Housing: \$3000
Airfare: \$1480

5. Challenges

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

I had one module where the requirements for our essay draft (basically instead of an outline it had to be as complete as possible, and this was a 3000 word essay) were only clarified for us two weeks before the deadline and I had already made travel plans in between so it was quite a stressful period of juggling both things. Although I ended up having to write my essay draft in one day, such time pressure is not unlike what we experience in NUS and it is important to stay calm and focus on giving your best. Although I submitted a half-written essay for my draft, it was actually a lot more than other students wrote, and there was even one student who came to class without a clear idea of what she wanted to write about. This student was not penalized at all since this was not graded, and we ended up spending the time helping her to brainstorm for ideas and helping her frame her question (tutor included). Essentially, I think it is important to submit good work as it represents both yourself and NUS well. Nevertheless, remember that you're on exchange to do more than study, and that the expectations in the partner university may be different as well.

It might also be challenging sometimes to focus and study, which a lot of us experienced during exam period because exchange life is full of excitement and it does require some discipline to sit down and study when necessary. Nevertheless, it helped that I was genuinely interested in what I was studying and I attended most of my classes.

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

My exchange experience has definitely been one of the most fun and special experiences of my life so far, and if I could sum it up in one word, it would be that of growth. Exchange throws you into a new environment filled with new opportunities and sometimes challenges, but it will really feel like the world is your oyster.

SEP Report

Each of us goes for exchange with our own personal objectives, and its important to stay true to that and make the exchange experience your own. For me, travelling was a huge part of why I chose to go to Europe, and I am incredibly grateful for the countless memories that I have, exploring new places and being in awe of the scenery that surrounded me. Another goal was to make friends with people from other parts of the world, and I cannot stress how this was the key to making exchange such an incredible experience. I met some of the nicest people while on exchange, and it is really quite amazing how you can meet someone who lives in a completely different part of the world and yet be able to connect with them on such a deep level. Your friends really become your home and support base while overseas, and some of my best memories involve just sitting around the dinner table chatting with these people. Having international friends also broadens your horizons as they encourage you to see things in a different light, or understand issues in their countries which you may have never otherwise known. I would really encourage outgoing exchangers to take the time to get to know people and talk to them, because there is so much you can learn from each other.

Finally, I think exchange provided me with the opportunity of personal growth. Given how school is less taxing, there was really a lot of time for reflection and pondering, which can be very helpful in figuring out what is important to you and your direction in life. Being thrust into a new environment also helped me to learn some new things about myself, and it is also an opportunity to challenge yourself to improve. Although I'm more of an introvert, I really made the effort to be more friendly and outgoing, which really served me well as it allowed me to make many friendships which I will treasure for a long time to come. Overall, I would say that exchange was a good break from my usual life in Singapore and it was truly a wonderful time of experiencing new things and meeting people, as well as growing as a person.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Go with an open mind and just have fun!

Some useful apps for Oslo would be RuterReise (t-bane aka mrt app) that will help you navigate around as well as mattilbud which tells you the discounted groceries in the major convenience stores. Other useful maps for travelling/navigating would be google maps or CityMaps2Go which is an offline map in case wifi is not available. Norwegians are incredibly fluent in English so there should be no problem with communication.