

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Arts and Social Sciences/ History
Host University	Victoria University of Wellington
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY 14/15 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

1. The classes and module content were structured very similar to the NUS curriculum. Advanced undergraduate modules were conducted in seminar style classes, where students are encouraged to have their own self-directed learning and discussions are facilitated.
2. I had expected undergraduate students from the university to be more vocal than Singaporean students. However, they are as quiet and shy. Tutors and lecturers had a hard time making some of us speak. I think this is a problem for many universities and not a unique NUS problem.
3. Module assessment is 100% assignment based and there was no exam. Students were encouraged to conduct research and write on topics, which interest them the most but within the confine of the syllabus. It encourages students to be much more creative in their work and tutors assist whenever possible. Exam stress is not very conducive for deep and valuable discussions.
4. Class representatives are appointed or elected for each module. For complaints and feedbacks, class representatives will take the matter to the lecturer or the student union. Improvements can then be made.
5. The power relationship between lecturer/tutor is more equitable. The academics prefer to be treated as friends or peers to facilitate a more comfortable setting for learning. Use of first names are strongly encouraged.
6. Academics in the partner universities are friendly and offer precious guidance to all students. They set aside designated times during office hours for students to consult them in any matter. They are passionate in what they teach and their passion can be seen from the way they conduct lectures and tutorials. Life-long learning is emphasised by associating the content with current issues. Experimentation with various mediums of learning is the norm.
7. Registration and research on modules should be done proper before the start of the exchange programme. The International Relations Office at the partner university is helpful and efficient with assisting students with this. Module mapping is easy for humanities core modules there are similar to the ones in NUS.

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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
HIST 310	Special Topic: The End of the British Empire: Decolonisation and its Anxieties	20	HY3242	Modern Imperialism	20/3
HIST 321	International History: The Cold War World, 1945-1991	20	HY3209	Cold War in Europe, 1945-1991	20/3
HIST 339	History on Film/Film on History	20	HY3000 equivalent	HY 3000 equivalent	20/3

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?

1. I stayed in private accommodation outside of campus.
2. Most private accommodation is within the city centre and has a mix of students and non-student tenants. My accommodation, Taranaki 217 is 30 minutes away from the campus. It is better maintained, more respectful of privacy and more spacious rooms than accommodation on campus. I would recommend the accommodation, although rent and internet cost is a little bit more pricier than the ones provided by the university. According to my personal calculations, the cost difference is no more than 100 dollars a month.
3. My suggestion is to instruct outgoing students to apply for accommodation immediately after getting the internal offer from NUS and not wait for the P/U to reply with confirmation. I was not able to get the university accommodation, which had very limited reserved units for international students, as I decided to wait for a letter of confirmation from the P/U. The letter from the P/U came over a month after the application deadline for the campus accommodation and by then, there was a long waiting list. This was the reason I decided to seek private accommodation. Perhaps NUS IRO could coordinate with P/U to seek a more reasonable campus accommodation application process.

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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?

1. The IRO over at the host university organises social activities every fortnight or triweekly for international students. It is a great way to meet other international students as well as local students who have been on exchange. There are various kinds of activities, from bowling to quiz night in order to suit various interests.
2. There are plenty of student groups to join though I recommend joining informally as many student groups have heavy commitments and are competitive activities.
3. There are lectures or varying topics organised by the host university and student groups. For example, the student groups such as Amnesty International on-campus, International Socialist Organisation and Generation Zero (Climate Change), do organise political lectures on-campus which can be interesting, something that may be foreign in Singapore. Political and student issues are discussed openly there, sometimes during lunch time with an open microphone.

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

All costs in NZD (was about equal to SGD during my SEP)

Total Monthly Expenses: \$1100-\$1200 a month. Breakdown listed below.

Accommodation: \$880 (\$220/week. Internet costs are separate, pay per use)

Food: \$60- \$70/ week (groceries only. Does not include dining out and take-away)

Dining Out: \$40-\$50/ week (dining out twice or thrice weekly)

Transport: \$20/ month (almost all destinations in Wellington is within walking distance)

Travel expenses out of Wellington:

Approximately \$1500-\$2500 for 4 trips to various destinations at different times.

5. Challenges

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

1. Not staying on-campus, I was not able to attend the various hall activities other NUS exchange students staying on-campus can attend. However, there are many activities still open to all organised by host university IRO which I participated in.
2. Local students in my classes are friendly but difficult to be friends with as they are senior students and have their own social groups. Regardless, some would have an occasional lunch with me if I was willing to ask.

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3. Living in private accommodation, I was separated from the other NUS students and did not have much opportunity to meet with them. This was fine as I was pushed to make other friends besides NUS students only.
4. Travelling is very costly and the cost of living there is much higher than it is back in Singapore. I budgeted and did my best to visit places of interest to me, although having to sacrifice the opportunity to visit a few sites.

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

My exchange experience is valuable. Firstly, it was not easy to make friends, even with my fellow Singaporean exchange students. Although local students are friendly, they tend to see you as a temporary acquaintance. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the friendly interactions I had with my classmates and it was refreshing to discover their perspectives on society and life and how they differ from mine. Secondly, living alone was also an important experience for me as I valued the comfort of my own space and had plenty of time to engage in personal projects of my own. I learnt how to look after myself and enjoyed the ownership of deciding what to do, what to eat, daily. Lastly, my experiences travelling made me realise how small Singapore is and how wide the world is in comparison. People's interactions consisted of different contents and their environment, social and ecological, differed tremendously. There were somethings I grew appreciative when I thought of Singapore and at the same time, wished more for home. In the end, I realise while there was plenty of hype surrounding the idea of an exchange programme with regards to travelling and socializing, I think that the greatest prize I took from exchange is more personal: it is the confidence to depend on myself, being respectful of another society's values and cognizant of theirs and our own shortfalls, and above all, with these take-aways, I wished for a greater maturity of myself upon returning home.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

1. Plan early, for both your visa application as well as your accommodation plans. For the latter, do not wait for a letter of confirmation from your PU before making arrangements. Also look for alternative accommodation outside of school as they may offer better facilities and a greater value for money than university accommodation.
2. Opening a local temporary bank account might be helpful for your expenses, such as tenancy payments.
3. The PU academic staff and IRO are very helpful. Do not be shy to ask for any form of assistance should you require any.
4. Although I don't recommend only making friends with Singaporean exchange students, it would be good if you keep in contact with at least one of them in the event of an emergency.
5. Should you find it fruitful to do so, it is a good time to spend time alone as a moment to think and

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reflect about yourself, for it is a lengthy break from all your commitments in Singapore.

6. Make travel plans early. Ask your classmates about when and where to travel.