

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	FASS/Psychology
Host University	University of Edinburgh
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**

During my stay in the University of Edinburgh, I took modules that are more major-centric (Psychology and History) and pitched at higher levels of undergraduate study (Year 3 and 4 modules).

For these modules, I find that the University focuses heavily on self-directed learning and research as the main learning objectives. Lecture time was reduced considerably in Psychology modules, compared to that of NUS. We only have five 2-hour lectures for every psychology module, which is grossly insufficient for modules of such depth. Compared to NUS, however, the reading list for each module is significantly more substantial, and feature more recent research papers. This means that students here are required to spend a lot more time reading papers to catch up with the modules in exchange for the flexibility of having less compulsory lectures.

Individual work and presentations feature more heavily in Edinburgh's coursework as well. While I find NUS' grading system more centered on on-the-spot examinations, Edinburgh encourages a lot of essay writing as part of their coursework. Students are asked to write a lot more during the term, but do not face the stress of studying for examinations or tests. More importantly, critical evaluation of existing ideas, generation of unique ideas and research skills are evaluated over accuracy of content from memory. Professors are actually willing to allow take-in notes, or even allow examination papers to be done at home, as long as these exams reflect a deep level of thinking and evaluation. Professors also like to set very open-ended essay questions that allow students to explore their preferred subjects, so long as the papers address key understandings behind the module(s).

Coupled with the fact that it is extremely hard to get a First-Class Honours grade (70 and above) in any paper, I say that students will have to be prepared to study A LOT on their own and be comfortable with writing essays. Psychology students must note that chances of a multiple-choice question in Edinburgh are extremely low across all modules, and there will also be no fixed textbooks assigned to almost all modules. Grades are more reflective of research effort, insofar as extensive readings are done across the entire semester. If you are comfortable with reading while travelling, this will help ease the amount of work you have to do over the semester.

All in all, I have 90 readings (books and texts) for a Year 3 History module (over 1 semester) and between 20 to 56 readings for a Year 3 or 4 Psychology module (over ½ semester). Yep, Edinburgh may not be very suited for Psychology and/or (especially) History students who don't like reading on their

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own. Self-motivated learning and studying is really the determinant of performance in Edinburgh.

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
HIST10361	Machiavelli and His World	10	HY3xxx	Machiavelli and His World	8
PSYL10111	Thinking and Reasoning	5	PL3XXX	Thinking and Reasoning	3
PSYL10121	Cognitive Development in Children	5	PL37XX	Cognitive Development in Children	3
PSYL10122	Clinical Psychological Problems in Context	5	PL3257	Introduction to Clinical Psychology	3
PSYL10123	Class – The Psychology of Wealth, Poverty and Social Rank	5	PL37XX	Class – The Psychology of Wealth, Poverty and Social Rank	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?

As the University of Edinburgh is a city campus, all offered accommodation (you will be guaranteed school accommodation on SEP) are, by definition, on campus. For me, I was allocated to East Newington Place, a small flat 15 minutes away from the main campus.

East Newington Place (ENP) is a small and homely accommodation that is perfectly comfortable for individuals who are more independent and like their own space. Even though you have to cook, the kitchen is well-equipped with hobs, an oven, a microwave and a refrigerator. Comfortable sofas are provided in all accommodations as well, and the area is generally spacious. As long as you are decent at cooking (if you can't, learn!) you will find ENP a good place to stay.

Given that this is the cheapest accommodation, it is one of the best possible places to choose if you are studying near the main George Square campus. More expensive accommodations will provide you with better furnishing and a more beautiful lobby space (e.g. with table-tennis and billiards area, bigger recreation rooms). Always make sure to align your accommodation choices with your study campus, because it reduces a lot of potential transport problems. FASS and School of Computing students will find it comfortable to stay in any accommodation choices, but Faculty of Science students should consider southward accommodations such as East Newington Place, Sciennes and any place in the Newington area.

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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?

There is an Activities fair amongst other crazy stuff during the Fresher's week, which will allow all students to sign up for any activities or clubs that they may wish to join. This is a MUST GO event for anyone that wishes to be even remotely involved in school, though one can simply Facebook search the specific clubs to join.

Most sports clubs are generally very enthusiastic and active, so students can expect all sorts of crazy action during the semester. There is a heavy drinking culture across all activity clubs, though they are not pushy about drinking. Equipment rental and car rental may pile up costs over the semester, so anyone that intends to be heavily involved in a club should prepare substantially more money! Most Week 1 taster sessions are free.

I joined the Hillwalkers' Club, which provides excellent opportunities to visit different munros across Scotland (there's 283 of them!). Given the sheer experience of the trip leaders and committee (most of whom are Year 3s and 4s), trips are often quite well-organised even with a lot less red tape. The only downside is that, although many trips are organized over the semester (about 7 to 10), slots often run out really fast and queues to get on the trips are insanely long. This is, however, a good experience for students who want to have a taste of actual hillwalking (beyond Bukit Timah). It's not very tough, but requires a certain level of fortitude.

Finally, if you are planning to not join any activities/clubs and just wish to explore Scotland, the International Student Centre (ISC) organizes trips to the Highlands and other Scottish landmarks every 1 to 2 weeks for an affordable price. Meet new international students there and have a good time!

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

Total Cost – Approximately 10,500 SGD

Costs in Edinburgh (no travelling) – 7.3k SGD

Air Ticket (Edinburgh and back) – 1.6k SGD

Accommodation – 3.4k SGD (Cheapest option)

Groceries and eating out – 1.6k SGD

Clothes, Necessities – 600 SGD

Activities (under school) - 100 SGD

Travelling (during Term) – 1.1k SGD

Travelling (after Exams) – 2.1k SGD for 3 weeks (EU)

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5. Challenges

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

SEP was overall a very enriching and eye-opening experience, with very little problems. People here are very supportive of exchange students, and your fellow SEP friends will provide you with the necessary support as well. Just make sure to be friendly and ask for help when you need it – someone is always there!

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

SEP is, literally, living in a different country; they do things differently there, and you will need to adapt to the community. It may be a daunting task to live alone in an entirely new setting, but the cultural experience will definitely broaden your horizon. My experience in SEP has been nothing but positive, with an inclusive community of friends and a whole host of new things to try. SEP teaches you that the world is a much larger place, with many different philosophies, methods and basically different lifestyles – a truly knowledgeable individual should learn to appreciate and celebrate the diversity of the world.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Please get to know your fellow SEP friends going to the same University - they will definitely be a great pillar of strength, and great companions!

Go in with an open mindset and be accommodating to anyone you see. You will realise that people are much nicer than you may assume them to be.

Do not go to SEP with the mindset of 'pass can already', for underestimating your module may actually make you FAIL your module. If anything, drop the worry about grades and just try your best in a new academic system. Beyond getting better grades, you may actually learn something completely different

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here that you are not likely to learn in NUS, or get a unique perspective only in whichever university you may be on exchange in.