

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	FASS History
Host University	University of Sheffield
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**

As a history student, I enjoyed the classes very much as Sheffield used a completely different method for studying history. The focus was very much on great historiographical trends and we would look at things like the 1857 revolt in India based on the major schools of thought and the major scholars. There was also much more diversity in the types of history we read and wrote about, instead of just political history, we looked at social history, feminism, the Annales school, and I felt this augmented my understanding and skills as a history student. I would definitely recommend HST202 Historians and History as it presented an overarching view of the major historiographical trends through the 19th and 20th century.

Lectures and seminars were conducted in 50 minutes. There was just one lecture and one seminar per module. Lectures are conducted very similarly to those in NUS, except you will find that students prefer to write everything down rather than use their laptops! Seminars are a little bit different, it does depend on your tutor and how they would like to conduct the seminar - for instance, one of my tutors decided that halfway through the semester, we would form groups and conduct the seminar for the rest of the students. For most of my seminars though, it was similar to the NUS' style of doing the readings and then discussing some questions in class. Students really did the readings and I really engaged with them in deep discussions. So you will have to prepare readings well if you want to participate and be included in the discussions which are often very interesting. The readings were always significantly shorter than our usual 40-80 page readings in FASS so you will definitely be more than able to handle the readings and engage in class discussion in Sheffield. Students are generally more willing to speak up but sometimes you get the same kind of awkwardness that happens in NUS tutorials when no one wants to get the ball rolling and say something first. That all goes away after someone starts and the rest chime in.

I found that the students were sometimes (not always) unwilling to really communicate with the exchange students. For the level 2 modules which I was taking, a lot of the students already had friends and were not willing to get out of their cliques to talk to someone else. If you make the effort to initiate contact, usually your classmates will reciprocate. I have had some very interesting conversations about the education system and culture with British students, for example how the Leftist and feminist movements have been really taking off in the UK - something we don't quite experience in Singapore. I would encourage you to step out of your comfort zone and speak to others, rather than fall into the easy trap of hanging out with just your fellow exchange students from Singapore.

International Relations Office (IRO)

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Since I did the autumn semester exchange, I had to request for December finish so that I could come home in time for the new NUS semester. This basically meant that I had to find another way to do my exams as the students do their exams in late January/February. Luckily, December finish is supported by the Department of History at Sheffield. Therefore, it was relatively easy to get December finish after consultation with Sheffield's professors. My professors were very willing to help and support me through the December finish exam essay process. However, the administrative processes could be complicated as the University takes their exam procedures seriously. So everything had to go through the History exams department. The December finish option will vary according to your modules and department, but be prepared to do long essays (e.g. maybe two 5,000 words essays to replace the sit-down exam).

Module registration was very easy. There will basically be a day during the registration week when you go down to the sports centre for module registration. All the departments will be there, and a group of professors from each department will be around. You basically go there and sign up for the modules you want to take. Be sure to inform the professors that you need to do December finish if you are attending during the autumn semester.

I would recommend going to Sheffield in the Spring semester as it is much more convenient to do the sit-down exams rather than have to go through the process of settling December finish and negotiating an alternative assessment that is equivalent to the students' exams.

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
HST265	The Making of Modern India	20	HY3XXX		
HST202	Historians and History	20	HY2XXX		
HST237	Slavery and Abolition in the United States	20	HY3XXX		

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 decided to stay at an off-campus hall residence. It was considered private but was still affiliated to the university, and was essentially the same as the University's residence in terms of facilities, rooms, except it was privately handled and run. I felt that the room was very nice, everything was very new and

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well-taken care of. However, I would not recommend staying at Sheffield 3. Twice during the semester, the hot water boilers were broken which meant that ice cold water was coming out of the taps and showers and this was in the colder autumn/winter months. The second time it happened, the hot water was down for 4 days. The reception was rather unhelpful and could sometimes be a little bit rude. Do not take this as reason not to go to Sheffield at all though. Everywhere you go there will be people who are bias and a little bit racist but not everyone is like that.

I would suggest staying either in the University's hall residence or finding a shared house, which is what most of the local students did. You can go to the University of Sheffield's Erasmus and exchange students facebook page, and there you can either make a post asking if anyone would like to share a house with you, or you can choose from those who have already made postings looking for housemates. I think this is a good idea as most of the houses have washing machines already, and you get a homely feel. I had to pay £3.90 every time I wanted to do my laundry and this added up quite a fair bit.

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?

Do read the weekly emails sent out by the University. They basically outline the events that will be happening weekly, so you can read through and choose which you would like to attend. The events provide great platforms to meet new friends, especially international students as Sheffield has a huge international student community. Again, I would recommend going for things alone and talking to other people rather than sticking to the Singapore Society and the exchange students from Singapore. You will learn so much about other cultures and people. The student union has a huge range of activities that are very interesting, for example walks in the Peak District, baking classes, movie screenings, language classes, so at the beginning of the semester, get your hands on the "Give it A Go" booklet which lists all the events and activities of the semester which you can participate.

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

Accommodation - £2,000 (this is the cost of renting a private accommodation, studio flat)

Food - £20 per week (as a vegetarian, it was much cheaper for me. I also did not eat out much, and preferred to cook myself. The supermarkets have a huge and interesting range of fruits, vegetables, canned food, frozen food, so you won't get bored of eating at home)

Transport - £9 per week (I usually walked to the university or city centre as it is really very small, you can walk everywhere, but sometimes I took the tram when it was raining or when there was very strong wind)

Laundry - £3.90 per week

Pillows, blanket, 1 plate, 1 bowl, 1 cup, a set of cutlery and cooking ware - approximately £50 in total.

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Get your pillows, blankets and plates from places like Primark, Wilko, Tesco. It is much cheaper.

5. Challenges

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

The greatest challenge was learning to manage situations in which you're at the receiving end of a rude remark or aggressive treatment. This happened on a few isolated occasions, but still, you have to learn to handle situations such that you keep your cool and don't end up retaliating or making the situation worse. When these situations happen, you have to remember that the culture of the host country is different. People can be a bit more aggressive and hostile. You have to remember not to take things personally, understand that things operate differently, and you will come out of it having learnt how to deal with difficult people in difficult situations. My advice is to keep your calm, listen to what the other person is saying even if they are shouting or being irrational, and respond in a calm way. Explain what you did and why you did it, apologize if necessary, but do not feel the need to apologize immediately to diffuse the situation. It is difficult to be treated poorly or to be shouted at, but you have to stand your ground when you feel it is fair and right.

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

It was definitely an interesting experience. As it was only one semester, it was difficult to forge friendships that were extremely close - everyone is busy with their work, and you will be too. You will probably do a fair bit of travelling and participating in activities. But this does not mean you cannot get meaningful conversations and insights from students of the host country, or fellow exchange students from foreign universities. It has been extremely fulfilling to learn about the government, education systems, movements in different countries from the locals and I would say that they have taught me the most while on exchange. Getting to witness a completely different physical environment of rolling hills, animals, 13th century churches and buildings has been a real treat for the eyes as well.

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7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Be prepared for a different culture, it may or may not be shocking to you, but you will definitely be put in situations you've never been in before and you have to keep your composure. And don't fall into the trap of hanging out with other exchange students from Singapore! This happens to all exchange students, understandably so because it can feel demoralizing and scary to be in such a foreign environment with natives who might not readily approach you. But you will get so much more out of the experience if you simply step out of your comfort zone and talk to people who are different.