

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	FASS/ Psychology
Host University	Case Western Reserve University
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**

Seminar style classes were mainly conducted for higher level psychology courses. I took 2 seminar style courses which required a large amount of readings (average of 5 research papers), a reflective paper to be turned in each week and a lot of engagement in discussion and group work. These classes are conducted in smaller groups of no more than 18 people.

The other style in which classes were conducted in was the conventional style, where the teachers would lecture and pass down information. This was for lower level classes (like introductory modules) and classes like anatomy.

Overall, the studying or learning culture at Case Western Reserve University can be described as practical. The professors seem less concerned about how much material/ information we can absorb, but placed more emphasis on real-life problems/ issues/ research techniques/ understanding overarching concepts or techniques. This was what I liked most about the classes. It was vastly different from what I am used to in NUS. I liked the fact that the professors were also not held back in giving high and good grades if we worked hard for it. In addition, I liked that the professors were engaged in the discussion and the seminar style classes really opened the floor to talk widely from research techniques to implications.

Unlike what other people rumour US schools to be like, the students (at CWRU, at least) do study very hard. Furthermore exchange students should note that not all classes are curved and the grade profile is very different. To get an A, one needs to get above 90 marks. To pass the class, one needs to get at least 70 marks. That came as quite a shock to me as I struggled with my philosophy class.

Other miscellaneous information: They do not separate tutorial classes from lectures for non-seminar style classes, and not all classes are webcasted (especially psychology courses; engineering maybe) .

Module registration and mapping was quite straightforward for me. It was a first come first serve basis, and I just had to sign up for whichever classes interested me the most. Just like NUS, not all classes that have been listed will be available for the semester, so one needs to be quite open to choices. However, because Case has a wide variety of disciplines, I would recommend that exchange students be courageous and daring to take up subjects that they would not be able to 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
PSCL357	Cognitive Psychology	3	PL3233	Cognitive Psychology	4
PSCL389	Emotion and Emotion Regulation	3	PL3253	Psychobiological Perspectives on Emotion	4
PSCL390	Seminars in Psychology (Warrior Psychology)	3	PL37XX	Dummy Code	4
PHIL101	Introduction to Philosophy	3	PH1102E	Life, the Universe and Everything	4
COSI325	Anatomy and Physiology of Speech and Hearing Mechanism	3	EL3XXX	Dummy Code	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 off campus during my exchange. I recommend staying on-campus but not subscribing to the meal plan (as it is not compulsory). Staying off campus was challenging because of the following reasons:

1. Much fewer opportunities to interact with other students. However, I was still able to achieve this by joining the Quidditch team and the school's Interschool group.
2. The school does provide rides from campus to a 2 mile radius around school so I was able to get back safely even when it got dark (it gets dark around 5pm in the winter and it is VERY dark and not well-lit) but they do take a long time to come because of the high demand.
3. Public transportation is not that good in Cleveland. While the buses do come, they take very long (waiting time averages an hour).

However, my friends from the school recommend people to not subscribe to the meal plan because it would average out to \$12 a meal and it would be cheaper if you bought food yourself/ cooked.

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?

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Most activities are concentrated around the start and end of the semester with a lot of food, drinks and activities like free photobooths and what not. Even if they are ticketed, they are very cheap (\$7). The main method of getting information about these activities is via Facebook. They sometimes give out free tee-shirts and jumpers too!

The main organizing committee of these “fun” activities is the University Program Board (UPB), so one should pay attention to their e-mails. They also have free food Tuesdays, where they will give out free food (like pizzas, bubble tea) on Tuesday at noon at one of the school buildings. They also have cheap tickets to things like skydiving and bus plus accommodation to montreal etc.

Overall, I think that people should look out for events on Facebook (you need to be friends with students from Case so that they can invite you to it) and actively go for them 😊

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

Currency: SGD

Accommodation, utilities: \$5000

Food/ Groceries: \$8000

School books and materials: \$800 (Textbooks, even when rented, are VERY expensive.)

- On that note, I would recommend the student purchase e-books/ second hand books from Amazon instead. In some courses, such as cognitive psychology (the rental of the textbook is \$90!!!), the textbook is not needed at all. This links back to what I would say below- I think it would be very beneficial for outgoing exchange students to be connected with those who have completed their exchange in the same university.

Tickets/ Entertainment/ Events: \$500

Travel (I travelled to a total of 8 cities): \$3000

5. Challenges

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

One of the challenges that I faced during my exchange program was adapting to the new style of learning in school. Being very used to the teach-and-memorize rigor that I have been exposed to in NUS, being asked to speak up in class was very daunting. But with very encouraging classmates and professors, I gained more experience speaking up and actively engaging in class activities. That helped in my learning and sparked off a genuine interest in the subject matter.

Another challenge would be the difficulty in making friends because people pretty much go to class and then go back to their dorms/ already have friends they went out with often, making it difficult to break into their circle. I tried to overcome this by joining school groups such as Intervarsity and the Quidditch team. It was a somewhat successful strategy and I did make new friends, and picked up new skills. I also actively sought out friendship programs/ activities, and one of them was a buddy system that CWRU had, which paired an American student/ alumni of Case with an international student. It was there and then that I met Lisa, a 48 year old African American lady who was a great source of help and

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information, and above all, a great friend that I made during my time in Cleveland.

In sum, I think all of the problems that I faced/ one may potentially face on exchange can be overcome by being more proactive because there are indeed many solutions and resources out there that can be tapped upon.

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

My exchange experience was a valuable one not only because I got the chance to see the world, but I also got the chance to know the world. There are many ways that one can view this opportunity - I chose not to let it simply be a springboard for me to see the wonders of the United States, but also to really immerse myself in the life and culture of the people living there. I constantly ask myself and fellow friends, "What makes an American American?" I pushed myself to be very proactive during my time in Cleveland, and that allowed me to meet new people, but also have some lifechanging conversations and experiences that I would not otherwise have. The second major theme is of independence- not so much of learning how to live and take good care of myself, a skill that I had already picked up in hall life- but also not allowing my circumstances (such as having a companion to travel with) to dictate what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go, and learning important life skills of protecting myself and being aware. Overall, my experience can be summed into the words of a friend that I met during my travels, "Just do whatever you want to do, don't look back and regret".

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

I would really suggest that outgoing students get connected with previous seniors who have gone to the same partner university in previous semesters. I actually wonder what happens to all these reports, because as someone who is writing it now, I think it would have been EXTREMELY useful to have read all the reports of the seniors who had gone before me, and also be connected with locals there that could really help with settling in.