

SEP Report

1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	FASS/ Geography
Host University	University of Washington (UW)
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 classes were conducted pretty similar to those in NUS; through lectures and tutorial sessions. The difference I would say is that the instructors/lecturers seem to have exercised greater freedom in shifting the classes and also grading requirements etc.

I really enjoyed one of my classes on East Asia, where I got to see what views Westerners have towards East Asia as a region. The contrast at the start and end of the course was really intriguing, in the sense that some of their geographical imaginations of East Asia have changed drastically as compared to the start while some have, for better or worse, had theirs reinforced.

My advice on module mapping would be to really consider the number of credits to be mapped back due to the credit limit UW places on exchange students (beyond that, you have to pay). Hence, much planning ahead is needed, for example whether to take summer classes or overload classes back in NUS to make up for the difference. Also, if unsure about the "bidding" process over there, it will be wise to get in touch with the international relations officers or even the professors/ T.As themselves. They have proven to be extremely helpful throughout my time in UW.

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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
ARCH 150	APPRECIATION OF ARCHITECTURE I	3	DUMMY (ARCHITECTURE)	-	4
ASTR 150	THE PLANETS	5	DUMMY (PHYSICS)	-	4
GEOG 375	GEOPOLITICS	5	GE2222	POLITICS & SPACE	4
GEOG 438	CITIES OF EAST ASIA	5	GE3209	EAST ASIA	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 in an apartment of an old friend who studies in UW full-time. Hence, my gauge on the rates would only reflect that of off-campus accommodation. I do not know the legal paperwork and procedures needed to apply for off-campus housing but the rates can range from as low as US\$680 to over US\$1000 per month for a fully-furnished apartment (kitchen, bathroom, bedroom/living room).

I do not think it will be that easy getting off-campus housing unless you already have contacts there. Nevertheless, there are reasonable housing options on campus. I have friends who stayed at some of the cheaper halls (e.g Haggett Hall) which cost around US\$2000 for the whole quarter. The catch to them is a compulsory meal plan which increases the cost. Also, the meal plan works differently from NUS' halls as it is simply crediting funds into the student card for you to purchase meals at participating outlets. While it is more flexible this way, it also means a huge sum of money being locked up in that one card (if I remember correctly, it can go over US\$3000).

Hence, I would recommend staying off campus but help might be needed from the international relations office in UW to link you up with possible roommates .

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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?

FIUTS, UW's international student body, organizes many activities for students to join. While targeted at international students, I have seen various local students in the several events that I have attended. They were also the body that organized the homestay program before the academic quarter started. While I did not enroll in that program, I've heard rave reviews from my friends who said that they really felt the warmth from their host families and that it was an excellent way to witness and experience how the locals live. Besides intra-school organisations, there are several arts, charitable and religious groups that host numerous activities throughout the year.

I would say the most convenient way would be to join the FIUTS events at the start to see how things go from there and also network and from there, find out more about other activities/ groups in Seattle.

4. Cost of Living

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

Please list travel expenses separately.

I spent around SG\$14000
Breakdown:
\$1200 (accommodation)
\$3000 (food)
\$7000 (travelling)
\$1500 (gifts and novelty)
\$1000 (miscellaneous; international student fees, household items etc.)

5. Challenges

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

I felt the challenge was to be engaged in project groups. As some students are aware that as an exchange student, I just needed to pass the classes for credit, they were a little apprehensive towards getting me as their group mate. However, I prepared some ideas beforehand as to what direction the project(s) could take and they became more receptive towards accepting me as a group member, as well as my contributions. Hence, I would say it is important to show your sincerity in wanting to contribute.

6. Overall SEP Experience

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

I must say that this exchange has helped me gain several important life lessons. Firstly, being grateful for what I have. Seeing the huge contrast in social polarity in the various cities I've travelled to, I learned to be grateful for being able to live a comparatively worryless and comfortable life. Also, I have come to appreciate the commendable effort the NUS staff have put in to establish such a well-functioning

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educational system. Also, this exchange experience has made me truly understand what they mean by 'grades are not everything'. On the practical side, many employers (including those huge companies like Amazon and Microsoft in Seattle) these days look beyond grades, instead placing huge emphasis on character and extra-curricular achievements. Also, my several encounters with some hugely successful individuals who decided to let go of all their wealth, achievements etc. and go live their dreams, doing what they like both as a job and way of life, have made me totally change my view on how one should not value his or her life achievements purely on the grades they achieve and the amount of money they earn.

I would also like to use this opportunity to thank Mr. Loh Boon Chye and family for the kind donation through the SEP award that they set up with NUS Office of Financial Aid. The generous amount of financial aid provided through the award allowed me to be able to enjoy both my academic and leisure life during my exchange. Besides the fact that it helped me deal with the daily expenses of studying and living in the U.S for an extended period of time, the award also presented me with the chance to explore the U.S more and most rewarding of all, see things I have learnt about the U.S really 'come to life'. From the natural landscapes and landforms to city layout and transport systems, they were invaluable opportunities, for a Geographer, to witness these spaces and places first-hand. My family and I are extremely thankful for Mr. Loh and his family's magnanimity and we wish them the best.

7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.

Don't be afraid of uncertainty and go with the flow.
Be daring, be sincere, be adventurous.
Most importantly, have fun!