

Destination: Nanyang technological university
Exchange period: VT2019

Choice of the destination and courses:

I read about all the destinations in the central agreement and thought that Singapore sounded interesting. I also know a few people who already had been there on an exchange and they had almost only positive things to say about it. I wanted to go somewhere warm and outside of Europe and there was a lot of options in Asia. They also have a well recognised school which was also a factor. It was pretty easy to find suitable courses, though they have a add/drop period the first two weeks which was kind of stressful since you do not have any guarantee spots on these courses before the school starts. Every day you had to apply for the courses you would like to take. Most courses was given at multiple occasions (group index) so you had to match your own schedule so there were no course overlaps. Every day at 10 pm the school uploaded the daily results from the applicants. And if you did not get the courses you wanted, you either applied the next day or searched for another course which might be easier to get (lower number of applicants). So there was a bit stressful the first two weeks before I manage to finalised my schedule.

Describe shortly the preparation process before the departure:

You yourself did not have to apply for a visa to study in Singapore. The school managed this for you. After about 3 weeks of school you can pick up your student visa and travel around as you like. The school supplied you with all the information you needed and also informed about all the preparations you had to complete before the school started. We (me and 4 more) did not apply for a dorm at the school, we instead contacted an residential agent in Singapore before we left and rented an apartment outside of the school. And since we did not know what courses we would take before the first two weeks of school we did only book a one way ticket to Singapore.

Contact with receiving institution:

We did not have any problems accessing information. The school sends out all the information about what you need to do before your exchange.

Support from Umea University:

We did get all the information we needed. International office supplied us with the necessary information we needed.

Arrival information:

Singapore have a international "buddy program". Not like here in Umeå but they had an orientation at the start with information and you were given a buddy group if you wanted. Though my group was not that active and we only met a few times. The "buddy program" also had a couple of larger events during the semester which every international student was invited to.

Accommodation arrangements:

We did not apply for the accommodations the school offered. We contacted a residential agent in Singapore on our own before we went to Singapore and rented an apartment together. It did cost a little bit more but we lived 6 persons in a three bedroom apartment. The rent per person was pretty much the same as we pay here in Umeå.

Transportation:

Singapore have metro trains/subway that goes through almost the entire country. The waiting time was never more than 4 min between trains and it was a very easy and cheap way to get around. The cost depended on how far you traveled but it did not cost much. Singapore also have a Uber system called "Grab". This also did not cost much, specially if you shared the car with someone else. They are always available. Regular taxis are cheaper in Singapore than they are here in Sweden. Also they have a lot of busses but we did not take the bus that much since the metro could take us where we wanted to go. There are free shuttle buses going from the metro station (close to the university) to the university.

Budget:

Singapore is more expensive than Sweden, almost everything except taxis and food from food courts is more expensive in Singapore. So if you are planning to go to Singapore it is good to save up some money before you go.

Social activities:

The "Buddy program" did have a couple organized activities which you could apply for. Some activities have a limited number of spots so you might have to be very fast to sign up. Other activities were for everyone and you only had to show up if you were interested. Outside of the school there is a lot you can do in Singapore. I went there with a couple of classmates and we planned and did most of the activities alone or with other friends we met in Singapore.

Recommendation :

Absolutely. A good university and the teachers I had were also good.

Practical things to think about:

Save up some cash before. Since Singapore has a large airport which offers a wide variety of destinations, I would recommend future exchange students to take the opportunity to visit the countries around Singapore and experience other cultures.

General information about academia:

Here in Umeå I usually study one or two courses at a time. In Singapore you read all your courses parallel and have all the exams in the end of the semester. The grading system is a bit different. They have a scale of A, B, C, D, (not sure about E), and F. You can pass the course with grade A to D, and F is failed. Usually the final exam does not account for more than 50% of the final grade, which is different from the courses I have taken here at Umeå. During the semester you can have assignments, quizzes, presentations etc that will account for the rest of your final grade. Also all the exams I took have a time limit of 2 hours (instead of 4 and 6 hours here at umu) and the exams not that much smaller than here at umu. So you do need to be well prepared if you are going to solve all the tasks in 2 hours.

Courses attended

Course 1:

Leadership in the 21st century. This course applied a method of group learning. You were divided into different groups, and had this specific group the entire course. The course consisted of lectures and pre seminars you completed online before the lectures. During the lectures the teacher went through slides and created group discussions about the current topics. The course had individual as well as group quizzes and two individual home assignments (no final exam). This course was not that difficult but you had to put in time to go through the pre seminar material in order to handle the quiz. So a bit time consuming but not that difficult to pass.

Course 2:

Introduction to databases. This course consisted of lectures, two quizzes, 4 computer labs and a final exam. The lectures were recorded so you could watch them online. They also had lecture were they went through different tasks and how to solve them. This course to some time, you had to complete labs and also you had to prepare for the two quizzes and the final exam. For this course I studied almost as much as I regularly do in a computer course here at umu.

Course 3:

Artificial intelligence. This was an introduction course to AI. Same as in databases we had labs and a final exam. We did not have any quizzes. This course is almost comparable to databases in study time. A bit less but you still needed time to prepare for the final exam.

Course 4:

Financial modelling. This course included most of the calculations we did in the Financial Management 30,0 hp 2FE144 here at umu. But instead of doing it by hand we solve everything in excel. For this course they assumed that you had taken financial courses before. The course had one group report and presentation of that report, one quiz and a final exam. For the quiz and exam you solved the tasks in excel. This course was also time consuming, the teacher had prepared excel sheets which you were supposed to solve during the lecture. There was a lot (a lot) of sheets to complete. The preparations before the exam thereby to a lot of time since the exam could include almost all the parts of the course.

Course 5:

Soccer. This was a course in football. The course consisted of group practices, one group task and presentation, one exam on the rules of the game, one coaching session were you instructed and conducted a couple of exercises and one skill test. I took this course to meet other students and because i like football. The course included much more tasks then I was expecting, so it took some time to prepare for the different tasks. But this course was not as time consuming as the rest of the courses i took. It was a fun way to meet other students.

Additional Courses:

Did the university provide language courses? Could you receive ECTS points for them? What was your experience of such course?

I did not take any language courses.

Name: Robin Nordström

E-mail address: robin_nordstrom@hotmail.com

Possibility of future contact: Yes