

## EXCHANGE REPORT FORM

Name: Roei Shahmoon Program: Finance and Accounting

Host University: Singapore Management University Host Country: Singapore

Semester: Fall Year: 2019

**SECTION 1 – CHOOSING YOUR HOST** Please provide information here for students who are thinking about applying to your host institution, or who have been accepted and are preparing for their time abroad.

1. Why did you choose your host institution and country? Please list the pros and cons of your choice.

I chose SMU because it had a wide variety of business courses that fit my major requirements. It is also one of the best universities in Asia and is located in the only 1st world in the region, Singapore. Singapore is the best place to go on exchange because the weather is always hot, it is close to many other countries which you can travel for cheap weekend getaways and the food variety is great.

2. What were the semester dates at your host institution? How are the semesters called and split? What are the main holidays and breaks?

August 19 - December 6 (including final exam period). There was 1 week break on the week of October 7th for fall reading week. There was only 1 main holiday which fell on a Monday, Deepavali (Hindu), we did not have school that day. There are mainly 3 semesters like Concordia, fall, winter and summer. Fall starts earlier and winter starts around the same time as us.

3. What facilities were available at the school (library, gym etc), and did you pay any extra fees to be able to use them?

There was everything a student needs: free gym, library, various study areas around school, variety of eateries including a subsidized lunch center in school and much more. What I really liked was that students were required their student cards in order to enter most areas on campus so that strangers and homeless people could not enter, like they do in Concordia.

4. How easy/difficult was it to match courses with your Concordia courses? Do you have any specific suggestions for future students?

The only problem was that the original courses listed, were not all available at the bidding stage which was frustrating and made me switch all the classes I had previously chosen. I think students should come there with many options before registering so that this surprise can be avoided. Also the bidding system itself is pretty brutal as you are bidding with 100 virtual coins for spots in class which are bid against other international students. This was stressful as even 50 coins for 1 class were sometimes not sufficient to secure a spot.

5. What can students expect out of the classes they will be attending? How difficult were the courses? What was the grading/evaluation system like?

Students can expect a lot of required participation (10+ % of total grade) which is recorded by a sit-in-class teacher assistant. The courses were not too difficult as I came with the right finance background but I know from other students that there were some very tough courses offered. I would suggest to take classes that you are interested in as usual and then the material should not be too difficult as you enjoy what you are learning. Other breakdown of grades was mostly a 25-40% final exam, ~25% midterm, 5% quizzes (x3) and the usual group project (in every class). I also had a class which had weekly case reports to be submitted with a group so it was a little tougher.

6. What were the immigration procedures and requirements for your host country? Did you need a visa (please mention your citizenship)? How much did the visa cost? Are there any special options available to Canadians/Quebecers?

As a Canadian Citizen, you do not need a visa to enter Singapore but you do need a student pass which acts as a student visa so that you can stay there for 4 months (study period). The process was pretty simple and just requires following simple steps that were provided by the host University. I think the Visa was less than 100\$ but I cannot remember the exact amount.

7. How much (approximately) should students budget monthly for the following: housing, local transportation, food, health insurance, going out, travel to and from the host country as well as within?

Housing is the most expensive aspect in Singapore unless you stay in a student hostile (crowded and uncomfortable, for me at least). It usually should cost around 1000\$ for a 6 person apartment (6k total) which is the biggest expense you will incur each month. Transportation can be as little as 1.66\$/day (both ways by bus/metro) and depending on whether you eat in school or buy to cook at home, cost of food can be around 30\$/week (I bought from supermarket and cooked). Going out is expensive as public transit stops at 12:30 so a grab (uber) is required (17\$) and bars would be expensive as drinks are heavily taxed in Singapore. Health insurance I do not know since my dad had me under his plan. Travelling around the country is cheap (could be as little as 50\$ per 1 way flight ticket) which was very convenient if you are looking to travel out of the country.

## SECTION 2 – HOUSING

1. Where did you live while you were on exchange (i.e. on your own or in a student residence)? Were you happy with your decision?

Rented own apartment with strangers from SMU facebook group. I liked 3/5 other roommates (2 Italians and French) while the other 2 (Hungarians) were a little distant and cold to the other roommates. I was very happy with this decision even though it is a little pricier.

2. How difficult was it to find housing? Did the host school assist you with the housing process?

Not too difficult if you know the right people. I recommend Priyanka with Cityscape apartments for your rentals, she was an honest and fair landlady which is not common in Singapore. We found her from the French roommate's friend who went on exchange the previous semester.

3. Do you have any suggestions on good places (i.e. websites) for students to look for housing? Do you have any suggestions for locations in the city students might want to live?

I would recommend Priyanka, just ask on the school facebook group and people will connect you. Location is great and fair price. It was 15 minutes bus ride from school which had a stop right near the apartment.

**SECTION 3 – SETTLING IN** In this section please provide details for what students can expect in their first few days in their new home and during their exchange.

1. What orientation activities were there for incoming exchange students? If possible, please provide a brief summary of what your first week was like.

SMU provided several activities for us in the first week. First we received our student pass and card (government and school). We had a short seminar for all the exchange students with lunch provided afterwards. A tour of the school as well as an optional, 5\$ tour of the city (worth it).

2. Are there any non-academic related formalities to be taken care of upon arrival?

Not that I remember.

3. What are the school related formalities to be taken care of upon arrival?

The student pass and card which was on August 13th, required payment and a passport sized photo ID.

4. Where and how did you set up a bank account? How did you go about activating a cell phone?

I went to OCBC which had a branch in school. Just needed a passport to set it up. Cellphone was activated with starhub (I recommend Singtel instead) at a local shopping mall.

5. Do you have any travel tips, information about must-see places, or tips on places to go out for students attending your host school?

See the Merlion, gardens by the bay and botanical gardens in Singapore. Travel with other exchange students but make sure you don't fall behind on school work/group projects. Local bars/clubs = marquis, bar rouge, rooftop on marina bay sands and more.

6. Did you encounter much culture shock during your exchange? Is there anything that Concordia students studying in your host country should be aware of?

Vegetarians will have a tough time here as most is meat. Their singlish accent can be tough to understand but other than that no! Amazing place for exchange.

SECTION 4 – FINAL THOUGHTS Now that your exchange has come to an end, take a bit of time to reflect on your experience.

1. How has your exchange affected you in your academic and personal life?

In many ways. First I would say that independence is a key factor here as I had to do everything by myself - bank account, cooking, travel, etc. Second, the schooling there was much different and I learned a lot about Finance from an ASEAN perspective. Third, culturally, I am much more knowledgeable about the different religions and practices in Asia which is a great benefit to my life. I think this is an experience that every person should undergo in their lifetime as it truly changed me and made me into a better person/more mature. Also the various international connections I now have is incredible and exciting.

2. Do you have any further advice for future exchange students or any other comments you would like to add?

Participate in everything you can, whether from school or event-related, just go for it. Every time I did this, I benefitted and did not regret the time or energy spent for these. For example, I volunteered in several school activities, joined the taekwondo club and went out several weeks which allowed me to strengthen my connections with many people. I was even the honorary taekwondo member and received a prestigious gift on the last training day. This was truly amazing for me and I recommend every student to do the same and more! This is really the way to enjoy the exchange to its fullest.