



Exchange Reports

National University of Singapore (NUS) Singapore

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Teaching and Learning Environment

- While studying at the NUS I enrolled in three course - Comparative Evidence in International Arbitration (4 credits), Foundations of Public Regulatory Law (5 credits) and International Dispute Settlement (5 credits). These courses were back-heavy, with 80%+ evaluated through a final-take home exam of 4-6 hours. In each course, participation was worth 10%-15%. The course selection process is itself is tedious. I submitted a form outlining a request for courses. Approximately two weeks later I heard news as to whether or not I was admitted to the courses I selected. Following this, a second round of requests was permitted, followed by a third round.
There is an add/drop period at the beginning of the semester which permits you to add or drop your courses. However, once having successfully dropped a course there is no guarantee you will be able to pick up a different course, which could leave you short of credits.
Most professors are international professors teaching for a semester or two at the NUS.
- I took three courses: one intensive course that lasted for three weeks in August, and two courses that were both taught by Professor Simon Tay Seong Chee (Prof Tay). If possible, I would highly recommend taking any courses with Professor Tay. I chose to select courses that did not have a final exam (all my courses were paper based) which was also great because it meant that once my final assignments were in, I could relax and continue to travel around Asia without having to stress about the December exam period.
- I took a total of 3 courses, each worth 5 credits. All of the courses offered were taught in English. The style and quality of instruction was unexpected since a Law Degree at Singapore is

an undergraduate degree. I found that the courses were more theoretical. The courses that I took had no examinations and were assessed via final papers and short presentations.

Quality of Administrative Support for Students

- The course selection process at NUS is probably the worst thing about it: I found the whole process to be very micromanaged (you could only change so many courses at a time, you had to wait for the next add/drop session before you could change any additional courses, classes fill up quickly.) With regards to housing, I personally didn't have any issues applying for and living in residence, but keep in mind that they are very strict about deadlines; if you're late for any kind of payment date or mandatory session/survey, they tell you that they'll kick you out of residence without a refund. I'm not sure if that's true or not, but I just followed all the deadlines to be safe.

Campus Facilities

- UTown Residence is where you want to be. UTown is effectively a campus of its own. It has its own food courts, its own gym, library, and a swimming pool. Though do be warned that all gyms at the NUS are sub-par. The law school has a library specific to law students. The law school also has a food court. No matter where you are on campus, you will need to take the shuttle bus to get to the law school. There is also a library in the center of the campus. It should be noted that the university campus is enormous. From one end of campus to the other is a 20-minute bus ride. These buses are free and run approximately every 20-30 minutes.
- The gym is pretty sparse, but there is an outdoor infinity pool on the roof of the gym which was definitely a nice touch. One downside to NUS is that their residences are all very far from the law building, and there's really only one bus that will take you there (though it runs fairly frequently); however, I made the point of trying to schedule all my classes for one or two days of the week, so it wasn't a huge issue.
- The facilities were great. There was plenty of space to study, an infinity pool, a gym and other forms of support and facilities on campus.

Student Accommodation and Food

- UTown Residence (AC Room). The University will not provide you with blankets, pillows, towels, sheets etc. You may choose to pack these things. If you do not, Clementi Mall is a 20-minute walk away. Alternatively, you could ride the MRT 1 station, though the MRT station (Dover) is a 15 minute in and of itself. TIP: Upon your arrival, visit the common room in UTown. Former exchange students often leave small things (lamps etc.) for you to pick up.
- I stayed at UTown Residence, which I would recommend as it's definitely one of the nicer residences and there are many food options that are very close by. Food is also extremely cheap

in Singapore if you eat at food halls/Hawker centers - you can get a really good meal for \$3 or \$4. However, dietary restrictions aren't really a thing that is well understood; if you have any severe food allergies I would not recommend Singapore (and many other places in Asia), as peanut products are often used and it's possible you may not be able to tell by the appearance of the dish itself (ie: many things are cooked with peanut oil).

- My accommodation was on campus, and it was very useful. I would highly recommend staying on campus for housing it allows you to socialize and meet with students more often and easily. Food was great and cheap! Would highly recommend going off campus every once in a while, to experience the food outside the cafeteria (though the Cafe food is also fantastic).

Travel to Downtown and Environs

- If able, opt for UTown Residence. UTown residence is located near Dover MRT. This provides access on the Green Line. You can walk to the nearby Clementi Mall for essentials. Changi airport has cheap flight options with AirAsia and other budget airlines. You can take the MRT to and from Changi Airport via Dover MRT (if you are located at UTown). Tips: Attempt to book an immigration appointment ahead of time. Upon your initial arrival, you will be permitted entry to Singapore with your letter of acceptance or immigration number. The university will give you this information. However, after having entered the country, you will need to retrieve an immigration card. This card lets you enter and leave the country freely. You should be able to book an appointment prior to arrival in order to receive for your immigration cards. These appointments occur in person at the Immigration Office at (Lavender MRT). If you are unable to book an appointment ahead of time, I would encourage you to go to the Immigration Office early in the morning (like 7am). This will put you near the front of the line for a drop-in appointment and will save you hours in the long run. I believe drop-in appointments are not available on weekends, though this is worth checking. Do note * if you already have an appointment booked, the Immigration Office will not let you drop-in.
- Campus is not close to downtown. I would definitely recommend getting a subway card, as it's really easy to travel around Singapore through the public transit system. Also, some of the food stalls on campus will accept money from your subway card (they call it a NETS card) as payment, in the event that you have no cash. However, even though the transit system is really good, if you have a group of people that you're going out with, I recommend just ordering a Grab and splitting it between you (Grab is Asia's equivalent of Uber - which is actually illegal in Singapore). I found Grab to be the easiest way to travel in most places in Asia (with the exception of Laos), as it often did not cost much and is probably the best way to ensure you're not getting ripped off for transport, as the prices are set by the app and charges are made directly through the app to your credit card (like Uber). Also, if you're travelling with a group, it's often a cheaper option than public transit - I travelled to Kuala Lumpur with a group of 4 other people and it was still cheaper for us as a group of 5 to order Grabs everywhere instead of figuring out and taking the public transit system.
Singapore is a wonderful place to act as a "home base", but it is not representative of Asia at large. Get out there and explore everything Asia has to offer! It is truly a magnificent place and

flights are cheap. Check out "scoot" airlines, which is Singapore's budget airline, as they often have really great deals. Other airlines to watch for are Jetstar, AirAsia, and TigerAir. Bring a backpacker's backpack with you because these airlines do not include checked luggage (you have to pay extra for that).

City Life Highlights

- Your most expensive cost is housing. Housing will cost roughly \$800-\$1100/month. The cost of living in Singapore itself ranges from reasonable to extravagant. If you eat at Hawker Centers, your meals will be approximately \$3. Try Carrot Cake!

The MRT costs approximately \$2.50 a ride (distance dependent). Some contactless Canadian credit cards will work on this. Others will not. You can buy an MRT card loaded with money from a 7/11 and in some stations.

If you are attending the NUS for a semester, you will not be able to get a monthly cell phone plan. You must get a pay as you go plan. For monthly cell phone plans in Singapore, you are required to stay at least six months. This is less than the length of time on your immigration card, and, thus, you will not be able to get a monthly plan. Pay as you go plans range between \$8-\$25/month. For coffee, visit Bacha Coffee in Ion Orchard Shopping Center.
- Food in restaurants is expensive, but I would recommend going to and eating exclusively at hawker centres. The food is often delicious, and it is rarely more than \$5 for a meal. Some of them are even less than that (ie: "carrot cake", which is a Singaporean dish with radishes and egg is often only \$3). I personally did not cook while I was living in Singapore because, 1) my residence did not have a kitchen, but more importantly, 2) food was so cheap that cooking was almost not justified.

Downtown Singapore is expensive, but there are a few bars that are worth hitting up while you're there if only for the experience of it such as Ce La Vie (the bar on top of Marina Bay Sands), Manhattan Bar (Asia's #1 bar for a few years in a row) and Atlas (a gin bar which I personally never went to but heard great things about). But if you're looking for a cheap outing with friends, I would recommend Idle - it's what they call a "liquid buffet", and it's an all you can drink bar, which varies in price depending on the day of the week, but never costs more than \$20/person. Also, in Singapore every Wednesday is "ladies night", which means that women drink for free and most low to mid-range bars participate in it.

There are two main phone providers in Singapore: Starhub and Singtel, both of which are run by the Singapore government. You will need either your passport or your government issued student ID to set up your phone plan. I went with Starhub and had no issues, but I imagine Singtel would work just as fine. However, I would still recommend using Whatsapp and Facebook when contacting friends/family from back home.
- I would recommend not going out TOO often in Singapore, pretty much everything but the food is relatively expensive. Setting up a cellphone is relatively easy. I set mine up as soon as I got off the plane. I used a pre-paid card and there are various providers. I would do some research ahead of time, but everyone there is extremely helpful, and all speak English.

Student Life

- I would encourage you to take a first section intensive. This concentrates a course in your first three weeks. This will get you familiar with the campus, introduce you to other exchange students and get a course out of the way early on.
- The nice thing about exchange is that it's really easy to meet other people who want to travel. Get to know people in your classes and during orientation events and before you know it, you'll have a nice little travel group for exploring Asia!

Additional Comments

- Singapore is a great jumping off point for travelling Asia. You'll have a blast!
- I don't know if things changed recently or if there was some confusion about how the whole student visa process works, but you CAN leave Singapore before you're issued your formal student visa. You will need to have your IPA letter and your passport with you, and you'll have to go through the long line at immigration rather than through the automated immigration, but it is possible and you shouldn't let that stop you from travelling if that's what you want!
A note on the student visa: unless you attend orientation in late July NUS will NOT make an appointment for you at immigration to get a student visa, so you either have to make one yourself or show up for a same-day appointment. I recommend making one for yourself over the summer well in advance before you leave, as spots fill up quickly at the beginning of the school term. However, if that is not an option, I recommend you get to the immigration building (the ICA building) very very early in the morning. When they let people in the building, people will start running, and you should run too because otherwise you will be in for a very long day. Get to the front of the line as fast as possible (don't bother with the machines because they won't work if you don't have an appointment), and then do not leave until your number is called. You should be able to get your student pass the same day, but if you're seen later in the afternoon, they may tell you to come back the next business day. Bring snacks, bring a book, bring water. There's also a hawker centre right across the street if you manage to zip out for a bit. Also: most places in Singapore (and in Asia) are cash-only. Bring cash.