

2013-14

University Attended: The University of Hong Kong

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

Optional, involves as much as you want it to. Lots of integration activities which all the exchange students do so it makes it super easy to meet people. It runs during the first week so no classes run during that period allowing you to have time to get all your paperwork done i.e. get student card, gym card, apply for Octopus, HK ID Card & get to learn bus routes. There are faculty specific orientations too which are good to meet people on your course. Make sure you have all your paperwork prepared before coming here for example passport photos, copies of your passport and HKU also require your MBS transcript for 1st and 2nd year so get this sorted ahead of time. You will need to get a HKID card which I recommend sorting sooner rather than later, the exchange orientation will help you with this.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The academic standard is easier than MBS but the work load is much more intense and demanding. Lots of group work and deadlines, achievable but you just need to keep on top of it. Teachers are very helpful and want to help you. Access to the courses is done in add/drop period, this was hyped up more than it needed to be. If you can't get onto a course then email the professor explaining. Local students are actually reluctant to be in your groups because they have a negative image of exchange students' work ethic. Assessment is continual and broken down, the exams at HKU are more like first year multiple choice mid-terms at MBS – they are usually worth about 20% and are not too challenging. The varied assessment is good and takes the pressure off. There are a lot of presentations which you have to wear formal dress for and usually be competent without cue cards – but don't worry this is so helpful for coming back to MBS in final year and the mark scheme is predominately based on presentation style rather than academic content. Most courses are participation intensive like seminars at MBS but usually in class sizes of around 40. The workload at HKU compared to the other universities in HK seems to be high, but I wouldn't let this put you off as it is manageable and puts you in good stead for coming back to MBS. Courses vary with some being very monotonous others really interesting, I would advise you to ask the students who went to HKU this year for guidance. I also took Mandarin classes which were approved by MBS, this was very difficult but fun and really enhances your experience. In addition I was even able to do a course in which I am in the business development team of a start up and I plan to stay on in HK to launch the company at the end of term. If the opportunity is available, I highly recommend the "Social Venture Management".

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Sue and Andy are fantastic, super helpful and attentive. It has become obvious that MBS are far more efficient and helpful than most other universities as many of my friends were left without any guidance at all from their home universities.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

The second year meetings are informative and generic. It's up to you to get the most out of them by doing your own research and asking questions. The most helpful would probably be the session where you can meet the exchange students who went to HKU the previous year. MBS provide you with everything you need and you need to take time to read everything they give you.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

Not a patch on MBS, very slow and reluctant to help exchange students but if you are persistent then nothing will be a problem.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

MBS provided us with a good insurance policy and I have not incurred any additional costs for insurance purposes. Once you have your HKID card you get any medical care free. The university health service is excellent and free. I fell unwell in 1st semester needing an ultra sound, but the university took care of all of this meaning I didn't need to claim on insurance. The complementary health care here is better than the private health care in the UK. Even malaria tablets and travel injections can be done through the university and are very cheap.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

No additional costs incurred. You might want to consider a Caxton FX card. You can get one for any country ,it's basically a card with no international transaction or withdrawal charges, high security and you link it to your English bank account and just load however much you want.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

Biggest advice is don't worry about accommodation. Exchanges are always put in the same place and its very rare you get your first choice. Its standard here to share a bedroom but that has never been an issue. I would not recommend the university "halls" as they are very strict, isolating and require huge participation in hall life. However if you want nice accommodation (the closest thing to the standard in MCR) Residential colleges are very popular with exchange students and there are locals too so you can immerse yourself if you want to. I was put in Pokfield Road Residences which I was initially disappointed with and the building is very run down, however in hindsight it is one of the best options as it's very lax with security so you can party or sunbathe on the roof, it's next door to the gym and outdoor pool (all free!) and you get your own kitchen, bathroom and washing machine. It is only 3 minutes from the main bus terminus and just down the road from university. All accommodation is around the same price, roughly £1000 for the year.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

The quality of life for exchange students is insane. Cheap transport , cheap local food, lots of parties – rooftop parties with infinity pools with free flowing drinks to sailing around the South China Sea on the largest sailing boat in HK to beach BBQs. Hikes to deserted beaches, lunch on the promenade, endless opportunities to go travelling anywhere in Asia. (cheap flights with AirAsia, also sign up for Cathay pacific fan fairs). HK is an incredible multicultural city with so much opportunity for you to excel both personally and academically. The links you create here will be invaluable to your future. Utilize the Manchester Alumni! They offer you so many incredible opportunities on a plate.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

The best decision I ever made.

FEEDBACK 2

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

Orientation took about a month from what I remember, there were activities even before I arrived (I arrived pretty early, 26th August), especially for hall bonding. Their orientation camps for halls are something similar to a boot camp, and involve rough hours and a lot of physical exercise. There are also activities organized by CEDARS and the International Society, which are less stressful, and more about knowing your surroundings, and I strongly recommend joining these as they will give you a first insight around the HKU area.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support

Classes were very, very different to Manchester. They rely a lot on group work and group presentations, so I strongly suggest you to be careful when picking your teams, and discuss with your possible group members what type of person you are in an academic environment before you go jumping into that. Most of the teachers and TAs especially are really helpful and reply to queries rapidly, but I cannot say the same for the administrative tasks. But I'm pretty sure that's due to communication issues, so you should keep your requests at a basic level and keep your sentences short and very clear.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Great support by them, helped me with the few e-mails I've sent, I'm glad I wasn't too much of a burden and didn't have that many issues to request help from their side.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

More practical advice from the students. For me personally, more information about the prices of day to day life as well as travel expenses.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Level of support, additional information that could be useful for future students

Nothing really to add here, as I only came in contact to them through their brochures and newsletters.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Please include any information relating to the purchase of compulsory health insurance ie costs etc. or whether this was waived by having the University of Manchester Insurance Policy

UoM sorted everything out for this, so you don't have to worry!

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

This should be information on any extra fees that the University charged but should not include accommodation, books, transport, visa etc.

Only thing worth mentioning is, if you lose your student card, it costs 150 HKD to get a new one, and it takes around 2 weeks. Yes, I did that.

ACCOMMODATION

As much information as possible on what accommodation is recommended or not recommended.

Definitely recommend Residential Colleges. Best experience in terms of both international and local students. I first lived in Starr Hall in a shared room, but no other exchange students on my floor. My roommate was great, very helpful and friendly, but all the floor activities were conducted in Cantonese. I switched to RC in October and I don't regret it for a bit. I still get to hang out with my ex roommate, and enjoy the international environment in the residential colleges, so that's been great!

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Transport, travel, social life, integration with local students, student activity groups

Local transport is phenomenal, although you might have troubles communicating with bus/taxi drivers. MTR system is great and really useful. Social life, well, everyone's going to mention that, so I'll just say it's as good as you'd expect it to be. The hardest would probably be integrating with local students, but if you are able to do that, that probably is one of the best thing you can do while you stay here. Their experiences and way of thinking is so different and will make you question your own views on life.

FEEDBACK 3

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

What did this involve, how long did it last, was it useful?

My orientation included an introductory presentation for all exchange students, followed by "orientation week". Orientation week offered tours around campus and Hong Kong which I attended, as well as various activities which unfortunately were booked up when I got my login to the site. The tour around campus was very useful as the campus here is very disorientating.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

The teaching style at HKU I feel is better than Manchester, the classes are smaller in general and the tutorials are taught by either the lecturer or a teaching assistant instead of a PhD student which generates higher quality on questions and answers for tutorials.

The choice of courses here is wide, but since you are not guaranteed any courses here (this is determined in the add/drop period by one person, very bad solution) the course application process is very complicated and stressful.

A larger emphasis on group work is conducted here, which is both good and bad. Working with students from other cultures has been interesting, with both very good and horrific experiences. Exams are used to a smaller extent compared to Manchester and essays with tight deadlines replace them (which is great since this reflects reality to a larger degree than being locked into a room with 600 other people and asked to perform without references, spell-check and access to internet).

Teachers support is to a large degree better here than in Manchester, since the classes are smaller it's easier to get to know the teachers. Email's and responses works better (quicker) here.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Impeccable! For the entire application process they supported me, providing all the documents required and answers to my questions. Since nothing has gone wrong that has required their help, it is hard to give feedback on "responses" regarding this, but I am very pleased with their performance.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

More information about accommodation in Hong Kong would have been useful, since HKU doesn't provide a "fair" perspective on halls and feedback online is very limited some guidelines on where to live to have the best exchange year would have been preferred. *MBS comment: It is not possible for the MBS Team to give guidance on accommodation at every destination. What suits one person may not suit another. Students should be guided by websites, feedback from previous students or from talking to returning students.*

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

CEDARS (HKU international office) is not very competent, they lack answers and can usually not deliver what they promise. Big problems with language barriers and understanding issues, so in most cases other students provide better answers than them.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

Not used my insurance.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

No hidden fees

ACCOMMODATION

I could write a dissertation on my opinions about the accommodation here, but I'll try to keep it brief and to the point.

First of all is location of all halls. A map showing where the halls are would have been very useful, since this is very hard to know. Elevation changes should be displayed on this map (not a joke, walking from sea levels to campus is almost 100 height meters which is a proper workout!). Some halls would require you to take the bus (Sassoon, Residential Colleges) which complicates getting around.

Secondly, a distribution of local, mainland and exchange student distribution would be very helpful, since this varies greatly amongst the halls, and the current information is out-dated. My hall (Starr Hall) is advertised as an international hall, something I claim is wrong with regards to there only being three exchange students (myself included) living here.

Thirdly, some sort of guidelines regarding "strictness" of halls would have been very useful since this varies greatly from Manchester. What I am referring to is: ability to have friends to stay over while in Hong Kong, tolerance of noise, traditions (in form of dinners, mandatory activities, organizations/societies/clubs), ability to have visitors (my hall is limited to 8 visitors/day between 7 am – 11pm). All this is controlled by a guard (24 hours) and is hence impossible to avoid. I am not sure how to put this in an academically correct way, but tolerance of alcohol and the frequency of alcohol related activities would also have been useful (large correlation with exchange students, hence that statistic could possibly be sufficient).

Finally, amenities available; my floor (24 students) share two cooking plates, one refrigerator and one microwave, and is hence highly limited to cook in. Other halls lacks e.g. laundry facilities. Availability of near-by restaurants would have been very useful as well.

Recommended: Best place to live is in Residential Colleges if you can get a single room. Double rooms are ok if you can get a decent room-mate, but several of my friends have had to lie on their transfer applications for single rooms because of cultural differences/disagreements with local roommates. Worth saying is that my local roommate has taught me a lot about the culture, language and lifestyle in Hong Kong, so it's necessarily not bad but I would not recommend it (it is a huge gamble)! Live with as many exchange students as possible, the best places are post graduate accommodations; this varies from year to year depending on where the "fun" people live. This year it was 1. On Hing, 2. Pokfield residencies, 3. Sassoon road Campus.

Avoid the most traditional halls (Starr Hall, Swire, K.Y. Lee) as there are loads of activities in Cantonese that are rather pointless for exchange students to sit through.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Travel in Hong Kong is cheap and easy, make sure to check out hikes, Stanley (St. Stephens beach for barbecues), markets and Lan Kwai Fong!

Travel in the area is amazing, cheap and very accessible for both weekends, reading weeks or holidays. To maximize travelling choose courses without examinations (finish prior to revision, i.e. another month to travel over Christmas!). Make sure to join a sports team, and try to attempt the local traditions (everyone speaks English even though they don't like doing it, but if you pay an interest in what they are doing they are happy to explain it and let you join in which sometimes can be fun).

The lifestyle as a student in Hong Kong means spending a lot of time on campus, but this is because everything you need is there (food, friends, coffee, entertainment etc.). Napping is almost encouraged in the library (locals sleep 50% at home and 50% in the library) making it very busy!

Best travel experiences for me was 1. Gili Islands (outside Bali, Indonesia), 2. Brisbane – Sydney (Australia, visiting exchange students from Manchester in both locations) and 3. Boracay, Philippines (sailing competition with a Hong Kong based team).

I interned in Shanghai before going to Hong Kong, which has become one of my favourite cities! (preferred it over Hong Kong). Travel in China is amazing, cheap and nearby, but some knowledge of Mandarin is almost necessary since 99/100 can't speak any English.

My places to avoid/not worth going to: 1. "Koh" Islands in Thailand (if you just want to get drunk/meet girls you might as well stay in Manchester, this is the same in a slightly nicer climate). 2. Kuala Lumpur (friend got robbed, not very nice city).

Be advised that a tourist lifestyle isn't always appreciated in Muslim countries (Malaysia, Indonesia).

Make sure to visit friends from Manchester (or elsewhere) who are on exchange as well! Cheap flights can be found by AirAsia, on skyscanner.net and on FanFares by Cathay (8am, every Tuesday).

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

"Incredibly awesome unforgettable experience!"