

2013-2014

University Attended: National University of Singapore

FEEDBACK 1

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

The introduction programme included a welcoming event, which was organized very early (10 days before the beginning of the actual semester). Therefore, not many exchange students managed to attend it. It was useful as they explained a lot about the class structure, grading system (bell-curve system), and IVLE (essentially NUS's Blackboard). Moreover, they provided us with useful links to parts of their website for reading on subjects and course structure, constructing our timetable, etc. In general, the orientation event was nice and not too long. The best part was that you get to meet a lot of exchange students and make your first friends in Singapore. Also, there is a separate introduction event organized by NUS Business School for all business exchange students. As the Business School has a different system for selecting modules, they explained that and gave out useful handouts. Moreover, they organized a really entertaining event (a scavenger hunt) which lasted a whole day and aimed at showing us the best tourist attractions of Singapore.

Other orientation events included talk about Singapore's history and another one aimed at travelling safely in South East Asia. I attended only the latter one, and it was ok, not very useful as most of the things they said were more or less common knowledge.

There was also a language class, where you can learn useful phrases in Malay/Chinese, which are 2 of the official languages in Singapore.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

Classes in Singapore are very different from the ones in Manchester. Most of the classes are really small (around 25-50 people). Attendance is taken in some of them, and most often you have a participation grade (around 10-15% of your final grade).

The style of teaching is very interactive. Lecturers insist on student participation and would often single out students to answer questions. Interactive games, talks from industry experts and managers often feature the classes. Lecturers are really good in their field. They often provide a lot of extra materials and some of them require you to read through everything and comment.

In terms of assessment, the final grade comprises various grades which you have received in presentations, individual and group assignments, essays, mid-term and final exams throughout the class. The final exam would rarely be worth more than 40%. This type of assessment is meant to encourage continuous studying, and even if you want to avoid it, you will find yourself reading more often during the semester than back in Manchester. Some modules do not have final exam, but these usually make up for it with more projects, essays and group work. Group work usually comprises up to 40-50% of the final grade and teachers are very strict about it. Usually you can choose your group, but sometimes the lecturers put you in random groups so be prepared to work with people who you might not know.

NUS has developed their own e-learning website called IVLE (something like our Blackboard), where students can see messages from professors and course materials and submit their essays/ assignments. NUS offers great range of modules which you can choose from (much greater than the one at University of Manchester). It offers very specific subjects such as Asian Marketing, Product and Brand Management, Purchasing Management, etc.

Overall, the quality of teaching is high and students are required to constantly keep up with work. As the classes are bell-curved, you are assessed based on how other students in the class would perform. And given that usually around 70-80% of the class comprises of Singaporeans, who are very studious and competitive, getting a high grade is often challenging and requires good amount of work throughout the semester. My recommendations: group with Singaporeans for the group work to understand how the dynamics of the groups here work, participate in class (lecturers love discussing British and European economics, businesses, and overall difference these have with Singapore), and try to read consistently so that you don't find things piling up. In terms of business subjects, the most difficult ones are financial ones as Singaporean are very good at them (average grades in these range between 85-95%!!!), so when you take financial modules, be cautious with the number of them you're taking and the level they are (level 3000 and above require a lot of outside reading).

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

MBS international team offers great support any step of the way. Any questions I have had regarding my exchange year and National University of Singapore have been answered by Sue, Andy and Antony. The procedure for application was clear and straightforward. I received quick and thorough information from Andy who was responsible for processing my application and for the main communication with NUS.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

The second year meetings were a great way of understanding more about the exchange programme and different partner institution. Although the first presentations felt a bit general at times, I believe it gave us a general view of the exchange year and motivated us to research better the universities which we target for our exchange and narrow down our choices. Out of the three meetings, I believe the one where we met students who have been previously exchanges in the partner institutions was most valuable as we got first-hand information from them. Moreover, the meeting where we were separated in smaller groups with the students who have visited the same partner university, which we were to go on exchange on, was very helpful as we got to ask the exact questions which concern us. Do not miss these meetings. Although you might find that you know some of the things presented, you will definitely get better idea of what your exchange year would be like.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

I was provided with great support by the NUS Business School International team. Clarisse and Jessie, who are the main people you will meet in the International Office, are there for exchange students any time.

Usually you meet them a lot at beginning of semesters when you're selecting modules or trying to change the ones allocated to you. As this procedure is a bit burdensome, you find yourself going to the international office quite often to figure your semester timetable. Jessie and Clarisse are really attentive and make sure you get the courses and timetable you want (at most cases), so no much worries there. The International Team is the team you turn to if you need any documents required for internships, visa applications for certain countries, etc. The team is very efficient and would provide the necessary documents and help very fast.

INSURANCE, HEALTH COVER

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

NUS requires students to pay 'Health and Student Services Fee' which is around £45 for the whole year. There is a health centre on campus which is very cheap for students. It requires you to pay your expenses and then you can reclaim them from your insurance. Moreover, National University Hospital, the biggest hospital in Singapore, is next to NUS campus, which is convenient in case of any ore serious health problems.

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.

Apart from the £45 mentioned above, I do not think there were any other fees payable.

ACCOMMODATION

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

Regarding accommodation, there is only one place – Utown (University Town). Utown is the most recently built accommodation on campus, with its own gym and swimming pool which you can use for free. Moreover, it has a lot of shops, canteens offering variety of Asian meals, fast-food (Subway, Wendy's) and coffee places (Starbucks); a lot of study areas and computer rooms. It is completely self-sufficient, so you might find yourself doing everything at Utown (shopping, eating, sports, studying). Utown offers two options for you – accommodation without meal plan (in Utown Residences) and accommodation with meal plan (in the colleges – Peter and Alice Tan, Timbusu, etc.). I was in Utown Residences, without meal plan, and I feel this is the best option as you do not need to go back in at certain times for breakfast and dinner, plus you have greater variety offered in the Utown canteens. Only problem with Utown is that it does not offer cooking facilities, but that is a minor issue as there is cheap and yummy food all around the Utown canteens.

During my first semester, I was in Prince George Park Residence (PGPR), before changing to Utown in second semester. It is the second best accommodation, but there are fewer exchange students and many Chinese students living there, who seems quite reluctant to socialize with exchanges. It has a few benefits compared to Utown: it is within a walking distance from the closest subway station and the Business School and it offers cooking facilities. However, everyone who I know who has been allocated/and has chosen PGPR has regretted their choice and has changed/attempted to change to Utown.

Third type of accommodations and the halls where primarily local students live. You can engage in many sports and inter-hall games. However, halls are the oldest accommodation on campus and do not offer good facilities.

So I would definitely recommend Utown Residences without meal plan – it provides the best facilities, great opportunity to socialize with other exchange students and locals, flexibility and convenience.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

Singapore is a great place for exchange. It is an interesting mix of Eastern and Western culture. It offers the convenience of a Western country, but also a great opportunity to explore different cultures and style of living. Apart from the 3 main cultures – Chinese, Indian and Malay, you will meet people from all around the world (exchange students, ex pats, etc.).

Transport: Singapore is a very small island country which has well-developed transport. The MTR (Singaporean subway) is the most widely used means of transport. It is fast and connects almost all points of Singapore. Subway and buses are very cheap (up to £1 depending on the distance of travel). It is highly recommended that you purchase an EzLink card when you arrive to Singapore – it is a card which you charge with money and can use to pay for the MRT, buses, some taxis, printing on campus, etc. Taxi fares would range between £10 (from the city centre to NUS) and £18 (from the airport to NUS).

Travel: As Singapore is quite a small country, it can be easily explored in a week. Therefore, many exchange students who choose Singapore choose it for its strategic location in South East Asia, which allows easy and cheap trips to nearby countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, Laos, etc. Cheap airline companies include: TigerAir, Scoot Air, Air Asia, JetStar and some other local carriers. I recommend you signing up for their promotional emails where they sent good deals for return tickets to some of the best destinations around (Cambodia, Bali, H Chi Minh, Thailand, etc.) starting from prices as low as £20! Exploring Malaysia is extremely easy and you don't even need to take a flight. Cheap and very comfortable day and night buses operate frequently between Singapore and the most visited places in Malaysia.

There are numerous travelling opportunities: during e-learning week in the first semester (week of broadcasted lectures only), recess weeks (in the mid of each semester), and reading weeks (the week before exam session starts). Moreover, if you are a travel enthusiast, you can try to put your classes in two or three days of the week (e.g. Monday and Tuesday) and have a good 5-day 'weekend', which you can use to travel around. Some of my favourite destinations, which I strongly recommend, are: Bagan in Myanmar, Siem Reap in Cambodia, Krabi in Thailand, Vietnam, Boracay and Bohol in Philippines, Hong Kong and Bali.

Social life: Singapore offers great opportunity for going out. There are various restaurants, cultural shows, night clubs and bars. I recommend you go for the roof-top bars (my favourite: One Altitude), as they offer amazing views of Singapore, and even views of Indonesia and Malaysia! Night clubs in Singapore might be quite expensive, especially for guys (there are many clubs where girls would enter for free and get free drinks). Alcoholic drinks in clubs and bars are quite expensive, ranging between £5 to £15. Drinks from convenience stores and supermarkets are cheaper, but still generally expensive for Asian (and even European) standards.

I recommend you follow news on the NUS Facebook groups created for exchange students and the events websites of Singapore to find out about interesting events which are organized – such as festivals, traditional celebrations, sports competitions, comedy shows, concerts, etc.

Integration with local students: Often integration with local students might be a bit challenging. Although locals are generally friendly and open-minded, they would rarely be seen hanging out with exchange students. Of course, if you put effort into meeting locals and going out with them, you can make friends with them. However, my observations are that there are usually huge differences in locals and exchange students' interests. While local students would be extremely focused on studying and participating in extracurricular activities, exchange students often focus on exploring the country and the region, travelling, going out, engaging in new activities and having fun.

Student activity groups: NUS offers a wide variety of societies and clubs, different sports and activities which you can sign up for. There is a special event where the clubs which are happy to accept exchange students will showcase the activities they organize so that you can choose which ones to join.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD:

Definitely the BEST year of my life – travelling around Asia, experiencing different cultures, trying things which I've never even imagined doing, seeing the world from a different angle, learning a lot and growing as a person, and most importantly of all, meeting amazing people and making friends with students from all over the world!!!

FEEDBACK 2

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

I missed the orientation during first semester, but I caught the one during second semester. It is fairly informative and people are open to talk to you and explain to you certain things. The tour on campus was extremely helpful and informative. Although they didn't cover the whole campus, which they should. Also I believe it would be extremely helpful if they do tours within the different schools, because the school is extremely confusing in terms of venues and getting to the different rooms. The university is build of a hill and the levels are messed up, which would mean that in the same building level four and level one are at the same place.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

The classes are small, up to 30 people, 3 hour lectures in the business school. The language courses are 2 hours, twice a week + one 2 hour tutorial. I extremely recommend taking up an asian language course. It is challenging, but rewarding. It is not easy to access a course and the only reason the University gives behind it is

competitiveness. Methods of assessment are class attendance, projects, midterms and exams. There is a constant communication with the teachers. The teachers are very willing to help.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

Level of support from MBS was great. I was not mentally prepared for the cultural shock and maybe an emphasis should be put on that as well.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

I don't think so.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

No. They were extremely helpful with everything I asked of them.

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

Only emergency insurance was covered.

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.

ACCOMMODATION

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

Utown Residence is recommended. PGP is not, unless you want to study all the time and get good grades. The place is not as new as Utown and it does not have as many perks. It is cheaper and closer to the Business School and MRT (better location than Utown), but in the long-run it's not worth it. In Utown you can't cook, you have only a microwave. In PGP you can. The food is cheaper as well. Utown is overpriced in terms of food. Beds are better in Utown, there is a pool, great gym, dance and music rooms. All free!

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

All of the above is of high quality and to the maximum! People should definitely try to interact with locals. It is challenging considering the massive culture gap, but you can learn a lot from them. Especially when it comes to perseverance.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

Shocking, mind-blowing, inspirational and eye-opening – it is a new and different world and I am so glad I got to experience it!

FEEDBACK 3

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

- There was a morning induction at the business school, where you meet with the very friendly international exchange team. Here they look to familiarise you with the way in which NUS runs and some of the systems you have to get used to - all very easy and well explained, so not to worry! Then there is a tour around the business schools (BIZ1 & BIZ2) and finally a buffet lunch where you get to mix with other exchange students and also meet with your 'buddy'.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

- In the business school there were two styles of teaching. First being the normal approach we're used at Manchester (2hrs Lecture followed by a 1-2hrs seminar). The other style was a 3hrs seminar, with the focus being on class discussion - so you're recommended to read material beforehand in preparation for the class. Personally I preferred these 3hrs classes as they were more engaging and had the added bonus of no final exams (in most cases).
- As an exchange student you apply for courses that you'd like to take for the semester and submit them to the international office. If you don't get all your choices (which is quite common) you then have two further attempts to submit for the available courses left. If there is a course you'd really like to take, you can also fill in an appeals form for that course and almost certainly you will be allowed to take part in the particular course.
- At NUS there's a lot more frequent assessments, particularly group presentations. There is also: individual and group reports, mid-term assessments, topic specific tests (in finance) as well as final examinations. As long as you're keeping up-to-date with whats happening in your courses it's not an overload of work, so don't stress! Although if you pick a finance module be prepared to put in extra time to cover the material, as they get through a lot.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

- The MBS international team, provided amazing support and information for me to prepare for the move to NUS.
- Meeting previous students who had completed their year abroad in Singapore was also really useful as it gave me an insight into what to expect when living and going to University in Singapore.
- Try and go to all meetings associated with your host university!

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

- Personally I found the level of support and information provided by the meetings was brilliant and if you had any further information you could approach a member of the team after a meeting or via email at anytime.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

- The international exchange team at NUS were very helpful whenever you needed to solve an issue regarding modules. If you can't make a seminar or an examination you have to deal with the course coordinator rather than a member of the international exchange team.
- Any problems regarding your timetable or modules you should go to the international office and they will help resolve the 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

- You will have to pay by CASH unless you have a 'nets' card, when you go to the university clinic, so always make sure you have cash available if you plan to make a doctor's appointment!
- Keep hold of your receipts so you can claim your insurance through Manchester
- If you ever need to go to NUH (National University Hospital), there is an upfront fee of \$100SGD before you go into the waiting room. Then additional costs for any medication prescribed by the doctor.
- Travelling insurance is not covered by the university so best to get it with the airline you fly with (such as Tigerair).

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.

- There were no further fees other than the noted above.

ACCOMMODATION

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

- DEFINITELY recommend UTOWN where I stayed for both semesters in the Graduate residence. All the accommodation there is great, and is the best location for everything, it's the place to be for exchange students. If you're wondering whether or not to apply for just a fan or air-conditioning room, try your best to get air conditioning!

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

- Transport around Singapore is very easy, the MRT system is great - just remember not to eat or drink (even water!) on the trains.

- Buy an Ez-Link card (available at any MRT station i.e. Kent Ridge) for travelling on the MRT and buses (as well as for printing at the University)

- Buses are also a great way to travel around Singapore so try your best to figure it out!

- Unfortunately local students don't like to drink and party as much as we're used to at Manchester! But fortunately the majority of exchange students are there to have a good time too, so try to integrate with as many people from different backgrounds as possible and there will always be something happening on a Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. But don't worry if it takes you time to meet people, as you continuously make new friends throughout the whole time being in Singapore, even up to the last couple of weeks.

- Do also make an effort with the Singaporeans you meet, all of which I worked with or befriended were incredibly friendly and caring.

- Make the most of your travelling opportunities whilst you're out there in Singapore. Flights are cheap and given its location, you're in the heart of Asia so anywhere you want to visit is a stone's throw away!

- Do all of the normal travel destinations are they really are worth a visit! But remember if you have time at the end of your year, you can organise a month or so of travelling through Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam all in one go as they are next to each other. Try and make your long-haul travels in the reading weeks and e-learning week to places like: Japan, Taiwan (highly recommend!), Australia, Hong Kong (can be done over a 3/4 day weekend), Sri-Lanka etc.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

A journey of amazing experiences, and massively widening my cultural understanding of so many wonderful places in the East.

FEEDBACK 4

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

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

There was mainly one big event during the week prior to the start of the lectures which involved campus tour, NUS business school tour, training how to work on the IVLE (that's how they call the online system blackboard), lecture how to pick up and change courses, welcoming tea party. The event was useful since it gives general awareness about the place and how the system works. More importantly, it is a very nice opportunity to meet the other exchange students in the business school for a very first time and establish some initial contacts.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

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

The teaching style depends on the lecturer and on the course format. Some courses are comprising a couple of hundred students and are taught in massive lecture theatres with small group tutorials on a weekly basis – identical to what we do in Manchester. However, other courses are taught in small classes of 30 – 50 people, 3 hours long class, once in a week without tutorials or any seminar classes. The second type of course style requires

a lot of class participation since it is forming some part of the final course grade. The methods of assessments are written exam (open and MC questions), group report and group presentation.

Initially it was not that easy to take all the courses you want since the demand is extremely high. The most important thing to do is to speak as often as possible to the administration office and emphasise your need of the courses. Be patient, sometime the module allocation is finalized even in week 4.

Lecturers and assistants are extremely helpful and responsive to any types of requests. Really informal and easy style of communication between the students and the professors.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

Level of support, additional information that could have been useful

The MBS international team was extremely supportive during the whole exchange year. They were constantly sending reminder emails for all the deadlines and bureaucratic issues. Full support will be provided if you face any difficulty with the administration in the host university.

MBS SECOND YEAR MEETINGS

Any additional information that you feel could have been provided

The meetings were really informative and useful.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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

The two ladies in the exchange students office were really competent and helpful. However, the process of selecting and changing courses is a bit chaotic and you may be left with the impression they do not react immediately to your request. Despite that, you can expect full level of support from the host administration.

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

For NUS it wasn't compulsory to purchase additional insurance, the one UoM makes for you is enough.

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 any extra fees applying to the above mentioned description.

ACCOMMODATION

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

I would recommend accommodation in the University town – part of the NUS main campus. This is the best part of the campus with the most cutting-edge facilities. Most of the exchange students live here. On the other hand, for people who prefer more silent places where there are better studying conditions and more opportunities to socialise with locals, it is more recommendable to stay in Prince George Park Residences.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

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

Local students were not that open initially, you need to be the proactive side, otherwise do not expect any interest towards you on the part of the locals. Most of the exchange students stick together. Transport is really

convenient in Singapore, but a bit expensive, especially taxis. Singapore is the best place in terms of opportunities for travelling, since there are many countries around to explore. Affordable plane tickets, cheap accommodation and food everywhere in South East Asia. Sometimes it is required to obtain a visa so make sure you check that when planning trips.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

Trivial but true – the best year in my life – exploring the world, meeting diverse people, enjoying a great deal of adventures and activities.

FEEDBACK 5

INDUCTION/ORIENTATION PROGRAMME

It was one week long.

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Style of teaching, courses, ease of access to courses, methods of assessment, teaching support
The teaching style differs from class to class. However it consists of relatively small number of students in relation to our lectures in Manchester, I have not attended any classes of more than 50 students. Moreover we have a huge variety of classes and options to study.

MBS INTERNATIONAL TEAM

I had not really asked for much support but whenever I e-mailed they responded promptly.

HOST INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Very friendly and helpful staff that will be glad to help during the stressful period of add/drop classes after you don't receive the classes you want.

INFORMATION ON ANY ADDITIONAL COSTS

Nothing particular about any additional costs apart from the usual as having to pay for printing and so on which is normal. There is also the possibility of extending stay for some time during the vacations and or store your luggage for extra cost.

ACCOMMODATION

UTown is highly recommended as most exchange students will be there and you can therefore make friends easily it also has many great facilities like their gym, pool, study rooms... However PGP is closer to the MRT and the food there is much nicer.

DESTINATION INFORMATION AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

The transportation in Singapore is very simple as there is an MRT that can take you throughout the country and if that is closed all of the taxis are quite safe and available however these are not as familiar with the location of NUS UTown as you would expect. It is a hub for travel with budget airlines flying to all countries in Asia, great social life and night life however it can be expensive. Integration with local students can be hard if you stick with exchange students but if you actually try to make friends with them it is a great way to have a distinct experience, there are many activities for students to participate in. I personally was into Ultimate Frisbee.

DESCRIBE IN ONE SENTENCE YOUR YEAR ABROAD

An opportunity to meet new people travel to wonderful places and broaden your horizons.