

EXPERIENCE REPORT

ASIA TERM AT THE SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

GENERAL REMARKS

The following report is about my experience during my exchange semester in fall 2015 at the Singapore Management University. I start by reiterating the most significant impressions I had of the Asia Term, followed by some information about the campus life and finally provide some information about the courses I took at the SMU. If you have any questions after reading this report or need some advice, feel free to contact me via the email above.

Overall, I had a great experience in Singapore. There are three impressions which stand out and are quite representative for the Asia Term as a whole.

THE COUNTRY AND ITS CULTURE

Singapore is an exceptional country with an even more exceptional culture. If you want to get an impression of different cultures in Asia, Singapore is the place to be. You will find and socialize with many different people of different origins living in Singapore. Through a semester abroad I wanted to gain an insight into Asian countries. But since all of them differed so much from each other it was tough to decide for one specific country. Singapore, however, through its multicultural society provided me with exactly that: An insight into the various Asian cultures.

Besides, the country gave me a rare glimpse into the future of Asia. Singapore is an incredible success story. Many other Asian countries are taking Singapore as their role model while implementing different policies. One can therefore assume to see more Asian cities like Singapore in the future. With that in mind, an exchange semester in Singapore

provided me with a forward-looking perspective on Asia rather than a backward-looking perspective. By understanding the features which make Singapore stand out from other Asian countries at present, I am now able to better anticipate future developments in Asia which might come handy in the future.

THE COURSE CONTENT

The curriculum at the SMU is very diverse. Since the SMU follows the American academic system, the focus in the courses is always to establish a balance between pure theory and practical application. Each class at the SMU lasts 3.5 hours in total. While 1.5 hours are spent on theoretical aspects, the rest of the class is often covered by discussions, case studies or presentations. At the SMU you will also find many courses which offer „study missions“, where one travels with the entire class to a different country and gets to experience first hand the things taught in class.

ADMINISTRATIVE EASE

Planning an exchange semester is a lot of work and bound to a huge amount of uncertainty. The Asia term, being administrated by the University of St. Gallen, comes with almost no administrative burden. The best part is that almost all courses you choose will be accredited to you, unlike with other universities where this issue can create a lot of trouble. Especially if you are an economics (VWL) student, this point is worth a great amount of consideration. Besides, the Asia Institute in Singapore will take over most of the administrative communication with the SMU for you e.g. choosing your courses: While other exchange students at the SMU have to bid for their courses (similar to the HSG), you as part of the Asia Term directly get placed into the course of your choice.

CAMPUS LIFE

LOCATION

The SMU campus is located directly in the heart of Singapore in the “Bras Basah” district and is well-connected. Almost all major locations such as the financial district “raffles place”, the high-end shopping lane “orchard road”, “Bugis” or Clarke Quay (the party district) are a 10 minutes walk away from the SMU. Moreover, an MRT (metro) station directly underneath the university allows almost instantaneous transport to any place in Singapore. In terms of location I have never seen such a central and well-connected university campus before.

SCHOOLS

Besides its proximity to the city center, the SMU campus has a lot more to offer. The campus is divided into different schools such as the School of Business (SoB), the School of Economics (SoE), the School of Information Systems (SoI), etc. Economics courses will take place at SoE only and Business courses at SoB only, etc. As an exchange student it is therefore important to find your way around the campus in the different schools.

LIBRARY

Aside from being a localization of different courses, I find the individual schools do not play a big role for exchange students. The library, in contrast, will play a greater role for you. The Li Ka Shing Library is the place where students spend a great amount of time. Luckily the library is extremely well-equipped and has got plenty of space. There are many places and group rooms so that you will find almost certainly always a place to study.

CLUBS

Besides academics, campus life at SMU is strongly characterized by extracurricular activities. Similar to St. Gallen, one has the opportunity to join several extracurricular clubs, the equivalent of "Vereine", at the SMU.

What is unique at the SMU, however, is that every local student is committed so social work for 1-2 months parallel to his/her studies. This social work is meant to enhance responsibility taking by members of the society for other, underprivileged, members of the society such as elderly people or people with disabilities. The Asia Term gives you an opportunity to have the same experience, which is indeed a very unique one.

EVENTS

A very special aspect of the Asia Term is that the University of St. Gallen organizes a lot of events for the incoming students from St. Gallen. But also the SMU offers a great variety of events specially for exchange students. I recommend everyone to take part in either of the buddy program or the mentoring program of the SMU where you will be assigned an alumni or current local student who will be your buddy for the rest of the term. Together with your buddy you can explore Singapore and connect with new people.

COURSES

BUSINESS CONSULTING

Credits: 6

Lecturer: Prof. Morkötter

Grading: 10% Attendance and class participation, 10% Progress report, 30% Midterm presentation, 50% Final presentation

Probably the most time consuming course in the Asia term, but definitely worth every hour you put into it. Throughout the term you will work in a group of 4-5 students on a real-life consulting project for a real-life client. The course is complemented by very interesting guest lectures, which provide a unique insight into the consulting industry. In my opinion the blend of having this very deep insight into consulting through the guest lectures in combination with the real-life project make this course stand out from all the other.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN ASIA

Credits: 3 ECTS

Lecturer: Dr. Michael Hilb

Grading: 30% Country or case presentation, 40% Business development pitch, 30% Learning summary

Business Development was a three day long course, right before the regular semester started. It is comparable to a break course at HSG and only consists of Asia Term students. This course gave a great insight into the business environment in Asia and teaches you how to conduct business in Asia. The course also puts a strong focus on entrepreneurship, which is a nice variation from other courses.

FINANCE

Credits: 6 ECTS

Lecturer: Prof. Morkötter

Grading: 100% Final exam

Finance in Singapore is very similar to the HSG course. What is exciting, however, is the strong emphasis on Private Equity (due to Prof. Morkötter's field of expertise) and M&A. Therefore, if you are interested in Investment Banking and Financial Advisory, then completing Finance in Singapore is definitely beneficial to you.

INTERNATIONAL ECONOMICS A

Credits: 6 ECTS

Lecturer: Prof. Swee Liang Tan

Grading: 10% Midterm, 10% Multiple Choice, 30% Group Project, 10% Class participation, 40% Final exam

The course is not very technical. Anyone who has completed Micro 2 and Macro 2 will be able to manage through this course. It focuses on international trade and international finance. However, the assignments and the group projects are a lot of work. But through the various assignments and group works you get to know many locals very quickly and

learn to work with new people (not always HSG students), If you want to opt for this course, consider choosing a group (cohort) with not many exchange students. This will strongly enhance your interaction with locals.

MANDARIN

Credits: 6 ECTS

Lecturer: Dr. Shy Wang

Grading: 10% Attendance and class participation, 20% Assessment 1, 10% Group work, 20% Assessment 2, 40% Final exam

If you have completed Chinese Niveau 1 at the HSG, following along should not be too hard. The vocabulary of the first 30-40% of the class should then be familiar to you. However, the focus in this class is to learn how to correctly write "Hanzi" (the traditional Chinese script) and the correct pronunciation in Chinese. You will also find many exchange students in this class (about 70%), so this is a great opportunity to get to know other exchange students as well. The classes are very much fun and with regular practice very good grades are easily achievable.