

Experience report

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Application phase

Application at TUM and at host university

The application phase consisted of three parts that had to be completed in order to successfully enroll at an exchange semester at Peking University (PKU). The first part of this procedure was the general application at TUM for the TUM SOMex exchange program. After being nominated to study at PKU in the fall semester of 2023 by TUM, we received an email stating the acceptance of our nomination and also detailing the next steps to be completed in our application process from our PKU coordinator in the beginning of April. Those steps consisted of an online application directly at PKU, for which a rather lengthy application form had to be filled out, which included personal information, including passport information, educational history, work history, as well as other information related to the exchange. For any questions we encountered during the application process and while filling out the form, we could simply contact our coordinator at PKU (Ms Sherry Gai), who would quickly help us resolve any problems we encountered.

After completing the first step, the second step was to directly apply at PKU's business faculty, which is called Guanghua School of Management. Here you need to provide the university with the following documents, which have to be uploaded through a provided link and have to be brought to China in their original form for orientation:

- Printed application form of PKU
 - Filled out already during the PKU application.
- Resume
- Photocopy of bachelor's degree certificate (for Master and MBA Student only)
- Official academic transcripts (Unofficial transcript will NOT be accepted; Master and MBA students will only need to provide the transcript of your current program)
 - Get an approved transcript through TUM.
- Official nomination letter from the international office of your home school

- Photocopy of the information page of your passport
- ID photo within 6 months. This photo will be used for your Peking University campus ID card after admission to the program.
- A 1-page letter of motivation highlighting your academic and personal reasons for your exchange.
 - You can just modify the motivation letter you used during your TUM SOMex application.

The deadline for both the application steps at PKU and Guanghai was April 15 for the first round and May 15 for the second round. While it is possible to apply during both of these cycles, we highly recommend adhering to the first deadline to avoid any complications or possible delays in your further preparation.

Preparation

Planning, selection of the country and the Host University, organization, application to the home and host university, support from home university, language courses

The visa preparation for your exchange at Peking University is quite simple as there is a Chinese consulate in Munich. You will need to prepare all relevant documents for an X1 visa. Be sure to not make an appointment before you receive the official offer letter from Peking University which will be sent via mail for you to pick up at TUM. Once you have all the relevant documents make an appointment on the website for the consulate and there are usually very short wait times for an appointment. After your appointment the consulate takes a very short time to process exchange requests. Both of our applications were approved in less than 2 weeks.

It is also important to consider your health before heading to China. Consult your physician regarding all required vaccinations for China and make sure to bring proof of these vaccinations in case you are asked for them. You will be required to bring originals of all the forms that have previously been mentioned in the application phase to China for registration. Other considerations include booking your flight and getting to know common apps that are being used in China, but you will also be introduced to such things during your welcome week.

It cannot be stressed enough that you should improve your Chinese as much as possible before your arrival in China. Even though English is enough to get around on campus it is not widely spoken when you leave school grounds. Additionally, some apps will not have English functionality so Chinese is a must. If you cannot speak Chinese, it is advised that you ask your buddy for help when you arrive for things such as opening a bank account or getting a sim card. TUM offers some language courses and also some tandem services that could help one improve their Chinese abilities. Peking University also offers language courses for exchange

students but be aware that they may not be sufficient to get around with thus a strong foundation is recommended before you leave.

Arrival

Welcome event/support, contact person, accommodation.

You will arrive at one of Beijing's two airports: Capital or Daxing airport. Once you arrive it is advised that you make your way to your accommodation via taxi since getting around Beijing public transport with large luggage can be difficult since the university is quite far from the airports. However, if you are able to carry your luggage there are also public transport options. Upon arrival you will either check in to Global Village the on-campus housing option (advised) or personal accommodation outside of campus. As per Chinese law you need to register yourself with the police in your district. If you are living on campus, they have an office that is connected to the dorms and registration is done immediately upon check-in. If you choose to live outside your landlord will most likely take you to register with the relevant authorities. Please note that if you have on-campus accommodation you may not be able to check-in on arrival if it is not yet the check-in period. Please check carefully and show up after the check-in period has started.

Before your arrival, the Peking University Exchange office will inform you of the welcome events. This will consist of a registration and welcome day. It is advised that you show up early to the registration day as they may not be able to process everyone on the first day and you will be forced to return the following day to finish registration processes. There is also a welcome event that is held by the school of management where you will receive the most important information regarding your stay at Peking University. There will also be optional additional events such as trips to the great wall and more. You will also be assigned 1 or 2 buddies from the school of management that will be available for questions and may give you a tour of the campus from a student's perspective. It is also advised that you keep in contact with your buddy as they will know about events and more that is happening around campus. It is also your opportunity to make your first local friend! If there are any problems, you should contact your exchange coordinator (Sherry Gai) as mentioned above.

Studies

Course choice, teaching, exams

The course selection system for Peking University differs depending on whether you are an undergraduate or graduate student. Undergraduate students have a lottery system followed by first-come-first-served. During the first-round students have 100 points to allocate to courses that they would like to take. A raffle is then conducted using the point allocation and you are then

notified of the courses that you have been selected for. After the first round the second round is opened on a first-come-first-served basis. Another round is possible during the add/drop period which is the first two weeks of lectures. During this period, you should keep a keen eye on spots

that have opened up since spots are quickly filled. For graduate students the only difference is that the first round is done by a bidding system where those who bid more are preferred for classes.

As both of us this semester were undergraduate students here are some of the business courses that we took:

- Economic History
- Chinese Economy
- Chinese Law and Economic Reform
- Development Economics
- HSK 3
- Venture Capital
- Risk Management

You are also able to enroll in courses from other departments though spots are limited as you are considered a business major. Some courses that we took include international development policy and introduction to international public policy.

The teaching at Peking University is very different from the teaching style at TUM. The first main difference is that attendance is required for most courses. Class sizes are also smaller with most classes consisting of 25-80 students. Most of the classes that exchange students will be taking are specifically aimed at international students and cover topics specifically pertaining to China. While there are some local students in these courses, most of the enrolled students will be exchange students and double degree program students at Guanghua School of Management. There are advantages to this as most of these courses have English as the language of instruction you will be able to understand most of the content that is being presented. The disadvantage is that you may not come into much contact with local students. If you want to take the courses that are predominantly local students, you will need to have a great command of Chinese as most of those courses are offered in Chinese. There were also some English options that are predominantly aimed at local students such as development economics. You will still need to put in significant efforts to connect with local students inside the classroom. In this regard we recommend you make local connections through non-academic settings such as student clubs and activities covered in the student life section.

A lot of the English courses at Peking University will be electives, thus, there may be no exams as part of the evaluation. Most courses have more than one mode of evaluation such as group projects, presentations and individual papers. Though some courses still require examination they are usually worth less than 40% of the final grade. It is important to keep up with deadlines as they come and if it is possible, you should stagger the dates for things such as

presentations and group projects so that you are not overwhelmed towards the end. This is possible since for most group projects and presentations you are able to identify what week you would like to present. However, as most courses have multiple assignments and graded elements you can still pass whilst not performing as well on one or more of the components.

Student life

Facilities, food, cost of living, cultural events

Living in Beijing was relatively inexpensive compared to living in Munich. Apart from housing, other expenses like food or transportation are way below European or German standards and make Beijing a rather affordable option compared to other Asian Metropolises like Tokyo, Singapore and even Hong Kong. However, it has to be noted that while being cheaper than Germany, prices in Beijing are still considered expensive in China. Especially if you are not able to secure one of the limited on-campus accommodation options, housing prices will vary greatly and reach Munich levels if you still seek an apartment close to the university.

One aspect of Beijing we were hardly able to grasp was the city's enormous scale. However, despite its size and an accompanying cold atmosphere one might suspect from it, we were made to feel right at home by the welcoming people in and around the university. Apart from meeting exceptionally smart classmates from all over the world and engaging in highly interesting lectures, one part of university life we enjoyed the most was related to the sports and cultural clubs we joined right after arriving in China. Apart from being able to stay active during our time in China, we really appreciated meeting likeminded people that also have similar hobbies and later turned into some of the best people we were able to meet in China. Joining those clubs also served as a great opportunity to meet and connect with local students, which otherwise might be more difficult, as meeting points with Chinese students are limited.

Apart from this sense of community, the sport facilities and professional training sessions, as well as the general standard of teaching buildings and equipment deeply impressed us. Not only were the classrooms very modern and up to par with new technology which enhanced the learning experience, but the general campus was unlike anything in Germany both in terms of size and the number of possible activities one could engage in. Those possible activities ranged from playing badminton and table tennis to running, swimming and even ice skating in the winter. Apart from self-organized sports activities, the university offered a wide range of club activities (as mentioned above) that covered all kinds of cultural and active interests. Speaking of the great university facilities, we have to highlight the different canteens on campus. With over 10 different canteens offering all kinds of Chinese and western food, there was little left to be desired. The food was not only very good in terms of quality and was freshly made every day but was also very affordable and rarely exceeded 20 RMB (~3 EUR). This made eating on campus a very viable option compared to outside alternatives which often lack the quality of food offered by the university. Despite the potential lack of quality, there still are a lot of great food options around the campus and in Beijing in general. In particular ordering food to your home, dorm or even to the campus was very convenient, fast, as well as cheap especially when compared to Germany.

Intercultural Seminars at TUM before mobility

Did you join a seminar before mobility? If yes, was it helpful? In which cases did it help you during your stay

abroad?

We did not partake in an intercultural seminar at TUM before our mobility.

Conclusion

e.g. best and worst experience

An exchange at Peking University is an opportunity to immerse yourself in Chinese culture. Living in Beijing, the heart of China, surrounded by years of history both on campus and around the city. The ability to explore the world's most populous nation, witness rapid development and understand the culture that drives Chinese society is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity. If you are looking for a transforming experience in a remarkable country, Peking University is the right destination for your exchange.