

Exchange Report - Our studies abroad at the National University of Singapore



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Application Phase & Preparation

Once TUMSOMex has referred you to the National University of Singapore, you will receive an invitation from them to submit an online application. We received this email on 31. August, containing all the necessary information on how to apply. The portal is easy to use and easy to navigate. In addition to some basic information you need to fill out, you also give your module preferences at NUS. You are given a list of modules that are available for exchange students. In total you need to apply for 8 courses and rank them from most to least interested. Some courses require you to prove that you have the necessary prerequisites. For this you will need to hand in an additional document, where you match the courses you completed at TUM to the prerequisites of the module you want to take at NUS. We recommend looking on NUSmods ([https://nusmods.com/modules?sem\[0\]=1&sem\[1\]=2&sem\[2\]=3&sem\[3\]=4](https://nusmods.com/modules?sem[0]=1&sem[1]=2&sem[2]=3&sem[3]=4)), a website where you can look up a course you're interested in, to see the day of the week that course is held, if there is an exam to be written and so forth. This helped us schedule our week and get a good idea of what to expect for each course. Once the application for the courses is over, you will be assigned to 3 courses. This is also the minimum amount of workload you need to do at NUS and at TUM. We recommend keeping it at 3 courses since the workload during the semester tend to be more than that of TUM and you want to have enough time off to discover Singapore and other countries. Do not worry if you don't get the courses you hoped for. There is an add/drop exercise one week before the semester begins where you can try and get the courses you really want. If you decide to recognize the courses in the Electives part of the curriculum, the conversion is rather smooth (as it is not 1-1 conversion).

The official acceptance letters were then emailed in the second week of November. In this email they give you all necessary information about next steps. Even though you might be a little pressed with time, leaving at the beginning of January, do not worry. There was also an info event held on zoom where the representatives for incoming exchange students at NUS answered all our questions.

Afterwards, there are two more important steps before you can relax and enjoy your time on exchange. Always check the emails (including your spam box) sent by NUS in a timely manner so you can complete the requirements as soon as possible.

The first step is to apply for your Student Visa. There is a step-by-step explanation of this procedure written in an email sent by NUS. Once applied you will receive an In Principal Approval (IPA) letter. For us, it was issued in 1-2 weeks. This grants you entrance into Singapore as a long-term pass holder. Once there you finalize the visa application by picking up your physical student pass. To pick up your physical student pass, you have two options: You can either go to ISA or pick it up on campus. To go to ISA, you have to book an appointment through the link in the email. To pick it up on campus, you also need to make an appointment using a link and detailed instructions given by the university. Make sure to have all your documents ready and in printed form, a checklist of the required documents will be available in the instruction email.

The second step is accommodation. There are 3 options for on-campus housing. The first are the U-Town residences. These are the nicest and located immediately in U-town, the main hub and life of NUS. Therefore, these are demanded the most and are difficult to get. The 2nd option is the Prince George's Park Residence. This is where we both personally stayed. Each student has their own room, and it is very comfortable, however for type C rooms, the bathroom is shared with your floormates. However, there are different types of rooms. Ones with AC and ones without as well as newly refurbished rooms and older ones. The last option are the student halls, but only very few exchange students get a spot here.

The application for accommodation takes place on a separate portal. Here you have to give 3 preferences and rank them from best to worst. Don't worry if you don't get accommodation at the beginning.

There are multiple rounds as well as an appeal process where you can give reasons for why you deserve accommodation. Most students, including ourselves, got a room at PGPR after the appeal process. Only very few didn't get on-campus housing at all and are left alone to find some place themselves.

Arrival (Support, Contact, Accommodation)

We recommend to fly to Singapore earlier than the start date of the semester, so that you have more time to settle and meet new people.

The business school as well as your accommodation take good care of you. They set up several events especially at the beginning of the semester and help you meet new exchange and local students. The Prince George's Park Residence organizes their own events such as kayaking or yoga on a regular basis. The NUS has all types of contact persons for any matter, so if you feel you need help with something specific there is always someone to help.

On arrival the massive campus and all information can seem like a lot. But don't worry, you will find your way around very quickly and feel like a local very quickly. We would recommend having a stroll around campus before the semester starts to know your way a little. Navigate through the bus system and find your lecture halls in good time.

Studies (course choice, teaching, exams)

The NUS's course portal is called "Luminus" and once you have been enrolled into your courses they will pop up on this website. This is where the professors upload all relevant information, the content for the upcoming lecture and so on. Everything is found on here. Submissions and quiz results are located on this portal too. We both took the same courses: Investment Analysis and Portfolio Management, New Venture Creation and Financial Markets. We would both highly recommend the first two but not so much Financial Markets. Even though the content is very interesting and real-life examples are discussed, many students had difficulties and complaints with the professor's teaching style and the way they set up the exam. If you want a very hands-on approach to teaching, then New Venture Creation is perfect. The course is very interactive and requires your team to come up with and develop a new venture. Investment Analysis and Portfolio Management is demanding and a bit too theoretical but the professor does a very good job at teaching interesting financial concepts.

The modules generally involve a lot of group work, submissions and class participation.

The general consensus is that the difficulty of NUS is at par with the TUM. The exams are of equal difficulty however the teaching style is very different. The exams mostly only make up 20-30% of the final grade, that includes a mid-term test for most courses.

The rest is made up of group work, where you have to submit an essay/project as a group and sometimes also class participation. However, we both enjoyed the change to the classic lecture-exam format from the TUM. It does require you to stay in the loop but does relieve some of the work for the exam preparation.

Student life/cultural experience (facilities, food, cost of living, cultural events...)

The NUS campus is full of exiting stuff and you will never get bored. In U-Town alone there are 2 food courts as well as restaurants. Additionally, they have a supermarket and a hairdresser.

PGPR also has its own facilities. They have 2 food courts, one of which is airconditioned and the other not. Supersnacks is also available, a little takeout spot open until late in the evening. Lastly, PGPR has an AI supermarket that is open 24/7 where you can buy little things.

Sports facilities are countless around the campus. NUS has 2 competitive length swimming pools as well as an infinity pool in U-Town. There are a total of 3 gyms on campus, the one at U-Town being the largest but busiest. Tennis courts are also available as well as a running track, squash courts, a rock-climbing wall and bouldering.

Things you need to know

Hawker centers are by far the cheapest and most delicious way of eating throughout your semester. You can expect to have a large meal for up to 5 Singapore Dollars. Your accommodation does however have a shared kitchen you can use. The 2 hawker centers on campus at U-Town were our go-to lunch and dinner spots.

The people in Singapore are extremely friendly and polite. They speak Singlish, a slight difference to English with a few uncommon words.

The NUS campus is outside of the city center, roughly 30-40mins away. The nearest MRT station is Kent Ridge, which is on the yellow line. However, finding your way to the city center is super simple. The journey to Harbourfront is luckily very close, where you will get off to enjoy Singapore's resort Island "Sentosa".

The app to get you around Campus is "NUS next bus". This app shows you all bus stops around the campus, when the buses arrive and can also give you directions. Busses are completely free, all you need is to show your student ID.

Covid (online teaching/exams)

At the beginning of the exchange, many strict COVID rules were in place. We couldn't meet in groups larger than 5 people for the bulk of the semester and needed to wear masks outdoors even we were alone. Around April, the government relaxed the rules and we were able to meet with groups of 10 and the requirement to wear masks outdoors was lifted. To our knowledge, Singapore doesn't impose any rules on personal meetings anymore.

NUS Business School was in favor of face-to-face teaching and thus – for most of our classes – it was required to go to the lecture hall. Recordings/Live streams were also made available due to the high number of people getting COVID and not being able to attend the classes, however this wasn't exactly preferred by the lecturers, especially if the module depended heavily on class participation (e.g. such as New Venture Creation).

At NUS, the official exams are conducted in the reading week. Our modules didn't have any official exams that took place in this week, but instead we had quizzes or final assignments. The advantage of having the quizzes/assignment instead of the exams is that they are usually over a couple of weeks before the reading week, so that there is more time to travel.

We had both online and in-person exams. The online ones were either conducted over Luminus, where we had to upload our assignment, or on Exemplify -similar to TUMexam.

Travelling

Apart from the educational excellence of the NUS, the other reason to do your exchange in Singapore is to travel. It is located right in the center of Southeast Asia and therefore the perfect starting point for your travels. If you can manage to cram your courses in a few days, you could even travel during your semester and go for little weekend trips. Otherwise, the reading week before the mid-term tests is the perfect occasion. Once the semester is over in mid/end of April you can set off straight away and leave for Bali, Cambodia, Thailand or Vietnam. Those are just to name a few. Towards the end of the semester most students start forming groups and plan their trip. We recommend you to leave enough time to travel at the end of your semester, as Southeast Asia has a lot to offer and it would be the experience of a lifetime.

Pictures



U-Town night & day





View from Marina Barrage on Marina Bay Sands & Financial District



Cambodia – Siem Reap – Angkor Wat



Kelingking Beach – Nusa Penida - Bali