

Study program: IBA
Exchange semester: Fall
Academic year: 2018-2019
Host University: Singapore Management University
Country: Singapore

I GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

To start of Singapore is a very vivid city, at every corner of the street you can find food courts, shops or a bar. It also is a country that is very new, it just exists 53 years right now, which means that almost everything is fairly new and this gives the city a very modern feel. The Singapore management university is located right in the city center, in contrast to the other two universities in Singapore. Within 10 minutes walking you are at the Marina bay and many other nice spots. The campus of SMU is very green even though it is in the middle of the city. There are several buildings, every school has their own building, and they are connected by an underground network of tunnels, who are also connected to the MRT. The university is quite new, since it is founded in 2000, this means that it is not the biggest university numbers wise, but I think that there are around 9000 students. Actually a lot of the students are exchange students, I think that around 10-15% are exchange students. This might not sound like a lot but you will see a lot of exchange students that are having the same problems in the first week as you, that way you can help each other out at the start!

II PRACTICAL INFORMATION

The pre-arrival information from the university was sent to me about four months before the start of the semester, so well on time. In this information I received the information for applying for a visa, but also how I should find the subjects that I could follow and how to apply for them.

Applying for the visa was not particularly hard, but it just took a good amount of effort. You needed to send in a lot of information about yourself in a lot of different steps, and in total it costs about 65 euros, so that is not to bad. At the arrival day of the university you had to pick up your visa and students pass, this was all quite good organized and did not gave to much problems, the only problem I had was that the background of my picture was not white enough, but they had their own photobooth to fix that.

This day was basically the only real 'introduction' day, you also got a presentation of 2 hours about the university and possible side activities like sports. Also there was one afternoon where all the extra activities were displayed at all the different booths, this way you get to know more about for instance the football team or the diving team.

The housing you have to fix by yourself, there are some options that SMU offers, but I have heard from other exchange students that those options are not really good and quite expensive for what you get. The best way to find a good accommodation is to find a group of 4-6 people and search together for an apartment. You can do this by contacting different housing agency that are specialized in housing for exchange students, there are actually a lot of agencies that are into this so you have enough options. I would book your accommodation before leaving, because this will save you a lot of stress when you arrive.

It is not particularly cheap to live in Singapore, but you have to bear in mind that you are living right in the center of Singapore, which means that all the attractions and bars are nearby.

I was actually satisfied with my apartment, it was the newest apartment possible but it was very spacious. We were living with 6 people, 4 Dutch guys and 2 German guys, and we had three bedrooms, a living room, a kitchen, three bathrooms and a view of the city. Two other nice features of the apartment complex was that there was a huge swimming pool of 40 by 25 meters and a small gym. A swimming pool is actually quite normal in Singapore, because throughout the whole year it is about 30-35 degrees, so a swimming pool is kind of necessary.

The arrival date for me was the 13th of August, so the semester starts quite early, but the nice part about this is that the semester also ends early in the first week of December. This means that after the semester you will have a lot of time, to travel around. In the middle of the semester there also was a mid-term break of a week, this week is before possible midterms, but I did not have any in the semester.

There was some sort of international office that was called ISEP inbound, this office also sends out all the mails to you that you need to have for applying for visa and applying for subjects. The information the office send was quite clear, however they tend to re send every email about 10 times, which meant that you get a lot of mails about the same.

Sometimes there were some big differences between the culture in Singapore and the culture back in the Netherlands, but none of these differences were so significant that it was annoying. They are different in the way they study in comparison with Dutch students, they are more motivated, so you will see them sitting in the university library for 4 straight days without going home. But also with food there are some big differences, they eat hot food for every meal and they do not cook at home but always in foodcourts and such. Furthermore, there also are some differences when doing group projects with local students, since local students tend to avoid confrontations, while Dutch students are mostly not afraid to get into a discussion. At the start this will feel a bit weird, but you will get used to this quite fast. When traveling to other countries you could really feel how diverse Asia is. Since Singapore is quite modern, you will quickly go to a less developed country which can feel a bit out of your comfort zone. For instance, I went to Cambodia with a couple of other exchange students and here the life is 180 degrees different from Singapore. Everything is cheap, but the inhabitants are really poor in contrast to Singapore, but I think that this will put you more into the real reality and you will learn a lot from these differences.

I think that because of my exchange I have become more open to different cultures and lifestyles, you get used to changing your behavior to other social norms and rules. I think companies later will also appreciate that you will have international experience in another country, it also shows that you are not afraid to go 'away' on your own and you are ready to take on an adventure. Just keep in mind that it probably will be the best half year of your study life and enjoy every second of it to make the best memories.

III ACADEMIC INFORMATION

All courses that you can follow at SMU will be in English, this mainly because English is the main language in Singapore. You will have the choice between Accounting, finance, management and economic courses, there are a lot of courses that you can choose from so there will always be a course you like.

You will have to take four courses at SMU to get to the 30 ECTS, this because every course at SMU is worth 7.5 ECTS. Every course has one lecture every week of 3 hours straight, this sometimes can get a bit boring and long but you do know that after those 3 hours you don't have any class of that course until next week. So every week you will have in total 12 hours of classes. I would say that the course at SMU are slightly easier than the courses at Tilburg university, this is mainly because of the way the exams are, in Tilburg we are used to more applying the course material to real life situation, while at SMU they ask more factual questions so you need to know it more by hard, but it is easier to get high grades because you just need to remember it instead of applying it. Every class will be with around 40-45 students in a small lecture room, so it is more like a tutorial at Tilburg. I really liked this way of class, because it is more interactive which means it will be not as stale as normal.

Every course had a big group project of mostly 40% of the total grade and an exam of about 40% of the total grade. The other 20% was about your participation in classes, this way it is very easy to get a high grade that already counts for 20%, if you just participate in the classes.

Course	Prerequisites	Exam	Ects	comments
Economics of ageing	-	written	7.5	horrible
International Business	Micro/macro economics	written	7.5	
Global supply chains	-	written	7.5	Very interesting
Portfolio management	Finance	written	7.5	

I would definitely recommend an exchange period in general, and I would especially recommend an exchange period to SMU! Singapore is a world city with all kind of cultures and things to do and SMU is right in the center of the city, which means you can make use of all of these features easily.