During my 2019 spring semester, I participated in the exchange program at the National University of Singapore. As the NUS semester is a week behind the SFU semester, I was in Singapore between January 7th to May 1st. For your reference, I am in my 3rd year in the faculty of business and I only took business courses while abroad.

**Preparation for Exchange**

I had found most of the preparation done before arriving in Singapore to be relatively straightforward. Course selection during the formal application to NUS was simple as there is a lot of reference on the course planning database provided by Beedie. Additionally, I was allotted most of the courses I had requested during that application process. Unfortunately, the challenging portion of the process occurred after arriving in country. Students were required to acquire their students’ pass which would serve as their Visa during their stay. In order to do so, NUS invited government workers to come to campus on a specific day to review our application. We were required to submit a physical passport sized photo for them to print on our student pass cards once they were approved. Other than the student pass process, I found the courses selection to be rather confusing. After arriving, I realized I was only enrolled in one course despite being enrolled in 4 after the formal application process. I found this was due to the fact that courses sometimes don’t run and NUS automatically places you in some courses to get your temporary student’s pass approved to allow your entry to the country. The real course selection process takes place during the “add/drop period” which was about a week after I had arrived. This process required you to research which courses were being offered during the semester and choose different courses than you had thought you could take. This process caused
quite a bit of stress as I was being overwhelmed with a completely new environment with limited access to resources I was used to.

Regarding financial details, I found Singapore to be quite reliant on cash. Singapore has a very prominent hawker culture, so most food stalls only accept cash. However, stores that sell regular goods often take VISA. Despite the cash culture in Singapore, I did not open a bank account and accepted the foreign withdrawal fee at the ATMs as I did not need to take out cash that often.

Travel is quite strenuous as the flight takes around 16 hours. However, local transportation in Singapore is very convenient. Students have access to a couple ride-sharing apps such as Grab and Gojek and the local subway system (MRT) is also relatively fast. To use the MRT, I acquired an EZ-link card (similar to Compass) which is available for purchase at most 7-11 or Cheers.

Make sure to pack shorts and t-shirts. The weather in Singapore is around 31 degrees on average. Sometimes there will be flash tropical storms, but I found an umbrella to be unnecessary as you will always be able to find cover quickly. In my business courses, I found bringing a dress shirt and dress pants to be extremely useful as many courses had class presentations which required formal wear.

**During Exchange**

There are many orientations available to students after they arrive in Singapore. I found it very helpful to attend as many as I could. The faculty of Business orientation was the most helpful, however the Utown orientation and course registration orientation was also insightful.

While in Singapore, I stayed in the south tower of Utown Residence. The room itself was quite plain, however all rooms in the Utown Residences are in an apartment format. Each apartment will have 4 to 6 rooms which share a common area, shower, bathroom, sink and kitchen area which includes a
fridge and microwave oven. I found the room to be a bit dirty when I arrived, but on the 18th floor, there were no bugs at all in my room during the duration of my exchange.

In regard to academics, the lectures and grading are very similar to SFU. I found the professors at NUS to be highly qualified and well spoken. A slight difference in academics I found at NUS would be a heavy focus on group activities. I took mainly upper division business courses and three of these courses did not have a final as the majority of the evaluation was done during the semester in the form of group assignments and presentation.

Singapore has many attractions which are definitely worth a visit. My personal favourites were Sentosa Beach (mainly Palawan Beach), Haji Lane and Chijmes. If you have the opportunity, the pool at Marina Bay Sands is an iconic views.

Many students often choose to travel to other South-East Asian countries during the semester since Singapore is very close to places such as Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia. Personally, I travelled to Indonesia on a weekend and Hong Kong over Chinese New Year. I would highly suggest travelling during study abroad.
Reflections After Exchange

Exchange has taught me a lot about experiencing new cultures. The Singaporean culture is very different from the Canadian culture and being exposed to a foreign country for four months has taught me to appreciate the differences between. In addition, exchange has given me the opportunity to study at a top-ranked university, meet students from all over the world and eat cheap, delicious food for a full semester. There have been many challenges along the way, but I found that maintaining your composure while you break down the problem will lead to you easily solving an issue that seems insurmountable when you are overwhelmed. Finally, travelling around the world and meeting students from various walks of life has opened my eyes to various opportunities that I can pursue in the future. I’m very thankful to SFU and NUS for giving me a chance to broaden my horizons. My final word of advice for students considering exchange would be to just go for it. The experience seems daunting but I can guarantee that if you try to make the most of it, you will have an amazing time. For those who are looking forward to their exchange, I would highly suggest making friends. Being able to connect over mutual struggles will help alleviate your own nervousness and ease your worries. In conclusion, exchange is an amazing opportunity that not many students have. I’m very glad to have participated in this experience and I would encourage everyone who is able to, to just go!