**Introduction**

I will never forget my time at the Chinese University in Hong Kong. If you ever have the opportunity to go on an exchange at SFU, take it, because it is a once in a lifetime opportunity where you can experience academics in another country, make friends all over the world and expand your perspective and wisdom. Hong Kong is a vibrant, bustling city where the fast paced lifestyle never stops. It is an exciting place to learn, grow, and experience a metropolitan city that defies definition. In my report, I will go over details you should know if you choose to embark on an exchange to CUHK in Hong Kong.
Pre-Departure

If you want to study in Hong Kong at CUHK during the summer, you will need to apply for a student visa which will take approximately 6 weeks to process and arrive at your household address. You can apply for a student visa through CUHK’s online application portal where you must fill in credentials for them to deliver your student visa documents to you.

Researching and finding out which courses you want to take at CUHK is simple. Most if not all the courses will be shown on CUHK’s International Summer School website where course descriptions and syllabi will be available. Please remember that SFU requires you to take a full course load of two courses (worth 3 credits totaling 6 credits) if you are studying at CUHK.

Hong Kong is extremely hot and humid in the summer where the humidity ranges between 70-80% and the temperature varies from 28-32 degrees Celsius. Because of the hot weather, be prepared to pack accordingly and carefully make sure that you have everything you need beforehand. Despite the fact that there is a grocery store available on campus at CUHK, it is better to have most of what you need before arriving in Hong Kong so that you are more at ease during your stay in the city and at the university. Be sure to have t-shirts, shorts, a hat, sunglasses, sandals, and breathable shoes/sneakers as your summer wear for Hong Kong. Jeans and pants are also a must for outings with your exchange friends in the city. Sunscreen is mandatory to protect yourself from the sun in Hong Kong and also any necessary toiletries you may need. Bring your own towel since they are not provided at CUHK and shower slippers. Finally, to be extra prepared in Hong Kong, bring a plug adaptor from 220 volts to 120 volts since Hong Kong uses a different socket than Canada. At CUHK, you only have classes from Tuesday to Thursday. Some exchange students choose to take advantage of the four day weekend to travel since Hong Kong is a great central location to see other East Asian countries such as Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Taiwan, Singapore, etc. If you are interested in doing this it is a good idea to bring a duffle bag, or a small carry on luggage on top of your check-in luggage for your weekend trips. Lastly, because there is a farewell dinner at the end of the exchange at a nice hotel, you may choose to pack some formal.smart casual clothing for this occasion.

If you want to have data or voice service in Hong Kong, you can purchase a SIM card that will last you the majority of your exchange at any 7-Eleven or China Mobile store. Be sure to
follow the instructions on the SIM Card packet and activate the card properly as the activation process can be a little confusing.

**Transportation/Transit Around Hong Kong**

Getting around Hong Kong is extremely efficient and simple thanks to the MTR (Mass Transit Railway) and multitude of bus services in the city. When you arrive at the airport, it is paramount that you purchase Hong Kong’s transit card called the Octopus card. The Octopus card allows you to access the MTR, various bus services and the card can also be used at 7-Elevens and various other shops. After that is completed, getting to CUHK can be done via MTR or for a cheaper option, taking a bus then transferring to the MTR. The fastest but most expensive way to get to the university is by taking a taxi, which costs approximately over $30 CAD. Once at the university, you can take a shuttle bus to Lee Woo Sing which will be your student hostel for the duration of your studies.

**Finance**

You will want to bring a significant amount of cash for your daily use in Hong Kong since many restaurants and shops in the city do not take card. Approximately $6000 HKD give or take will suffice for your 5 week stay in Hong Kong depending on how much you decide to spend on food or transportation. At your hostel Lee Woo Sing, you there is a Hang Seng Bank ATM where you can take out money from your debit or credit card from your home country. It is not recommended to open a bank account during your exchange in Hong Kong since it will require 3 weeks to process. Dining in Hong Kong is cheaper than eating out in Vancouver with most meals costing less than $10 CAD. There are also plenty of canteens and food options on campus at CUHK.
Accommodation and Campus Life

The Chinese University of Hong Kong is a beautiful campus that is similar to SFU’s Burnaby campus in that it is also situated on a mountain. During your stay, you will be staying at Lee Woo Sing College with a roommate. Your dorm room is decent in size for two people. There are twin beds, a mini-fridge, a desk for doing homework or miscellaneous tasks and of course, air conditioning to survive the humid nights in the Hong Kong summer. Showers/washrooms at Lee Woo Sing are shared but they are cleaned everyday and are on each floor in the hallway. As mentioned before, there are plenty of food options on campus since there are various canteens. Conveniently, there is a canteen just below the hostel where you can have breakfast before your morning class (if you have class in the morning).

Once you have settled into Lee Woo Sing, there are student-led orientations where you will be given a tour around the campus facilities and buildings; where your classes are located etc. There will be an official orientation with all the exchange students in the CUHK Summer Program where you will be given a brief overview of the city of Hong Kong, and some rules to keep in mind during your exchange.

Academics

During my stay at CUHK I found that the academic life was very similar to SFU. All courses run three hours long from 9:30am-12:30pm or 2:30pm-5:30pm depending if your class is in the morning or afternoon. Because I took a Chinese Cinema class (China On Screen) at CUHK, I found that the lecture format was nearly identical to SFU’s. Continuing, grading may be done on a curve-system but that depends on your class. The grading for my class was done entirely on assignments and participation percentages. At CUHK, there are more than
enough places to find somewhere to study. There is a common room in the Wu Ho Man Yeun Building with plenty of computers and tables. Additionally in the Yasumoto International Park, there is a bookstore in the building with a small coffee shop stand with tables to do work. Moreover, CUHK’s Library is vast in size and incredibly beautiful. If you need a place with quiet to focus on your work, the CUHK Library is the place to go.

**Experiencing Hong Kong**

Hong Kong is a fast paced, metropolitan and enigmatic city with British colonial influence. In the summer, the weather will be arduous to manage but eventually you can get used to the heat. My personal favorite activities to do in Hong Kong are to visit Victoria Peak where you can see breathtaking views of the skyline, the bustling streets of MongKok, taking the Star Ferry from the Kowloon Peninsula to Hong Kong Island which is magnificent at nighttime, or eating the endless amounts of delicious Chinese food in the city. Hong Kong isn’t just an urban city however as there are plenty of nature activities to do such as hikes with stunning views, excursions to more remote places with beaches and cliff jumping, and parks around the city to take a rest from the hustle and bustle. As you are on exchange, it is critical to maximize your time abroad and experience the city as much as you can while managing your coursework.

In Hong Kong most of the nightlife is centered in one district called Lan Kwai Fong which is in Central on Hong Kong Island. In Lan Kwai Fong there are a multitude of pubs, bars, and clubs all clustered together in close proximity. Going to LKF from campus takes about 45 minutes. Whenever you head out to a bar or club, make sure to always go with multiple friends and never go by yourself. Be sure to have a good time while you are out with your
exchange friends but always act responsibly and remain in control because you are representing SFU and also your home country. At midnight, the MTR starts to shut down and you will have to find alternative methods of going back to campus if you are out late at night. You may choose to take a taxi back to CUHK and split the cost with friends. It is important to know that the shuttle bus stops running at 11:30pm so plan accordingly.

**Post-Exchange Reflection**

Going to Hong Kong to study at the Chinese University of Hong Kong was an unforgettable experience. Travelling to Hong Kong alone taught me a lot about myself, my own desires for my life and how one spends his/her time is extremely important. I have gained an even more global perspective because of meeting friends from across the world and solidified my values because travelling alone to somewhere you are not fully familiar with reflects your personality back towards you. Studying abroad is a once in a lifetime experience that should not be overlooked. My advice for those thinking of going on an exchange, is to be courageous. Any fears you may have of embarking on an exchange, or traveling alone, is not as bad as you think it will be. An exchange is a chance to create memories and experiences with the exchange friends you’ll meet at your host university and have adventures in a new country taking in new cultures and perspectives. You won’t regret it.