Preparations for exchange

- Visa
I had to get a student visa at the Korean embassy. Since I have a Singaporean passport, I applied for my student visa at the Korean embassy in Singapore. It took about a week to get the visa ready. It may vary depending on where you are applying. Just be prepared and make sure you have all the documents needed to apply for the visa by checking the Korean embassy website.

- Accommodation
I initially wanted to apply for on-campus accommodation but I changed my mind because I felt that living off-campus at a goshiwon near Anam station would be better for me. Firstly, application for on-campus accommodation is quite competitive. Secondly, goshiwons have more privacy as you will have your own individual toilet and mini fridge. I highly recommend looking for off-campus accommodations like goshiwons or guest houses because the dormitory in KU is located on top of a hill and it is very exhausting to walk up everyday.

- Course registration and course
The course registration process is quite straightforward and KU will provide you with detailed instructions. It is first come first serve basis where all students will register for courses at the same time. So you should definitely choose to register for the course you really want first. I initially only managed to get 3 out of 5 courses that I wanted to take so I was quite worried as we needed to enrol in at least 4 courses (12 units). But during the add/drop period, I managed to get all my courses so it turned out fine. Just be prepared with a list of alternative courses to take. Classes in KU are generally easier than SFU and there are quite a lot of courses taught in English, especially business courses.

During

- Transport
Once I arrived at Incheon Airport, I took a limousine bus to Korea University. However, the bus did not stop right outside the university, but rather at an area that was in close vicinity to the university. Initially, I wanted to take the train to go to my accommodation which was a 5-minute walk from the university. However, since I could not see a train station nearby, and I did not have data or wifi to search the area, I decided to flag a cab to take me to my accommodation. It is a very far and hilly walk to KU from the bus drop off point. I would highly recommend future exchange students to follow KUBA with their airport pick up service as it will save you a lot of effort and money.

- Orientation, KUBA
It is mandatory to attend KU’s 2-day orientation and I would highly recommend it. The orientation will help you familiarize yourself with the school, as well as help you to apply for a bank account and teach you how to apply for your Alien Registration card. You will also be introduced to your KUBA group as well as KUBA buddy. Your KUBA buddy will be responsible for around 8 exchange students, and each KUBA group has about 6-7 KUBA Buddies. They are really helpful if you have any questions. Through KUBA, I managed to meet so many other exchange students and Korean students. KUBA is a really well organized group. They would make sure that there will be events and meet ups to go to every week. Typically, they would organize 3 events a week: lunch, dinner/drinks, and an outing every Saturday.
Korea University, South Korea
Business Major (Accounting and MIS)
Term of exchange: Spring 2019

- KUBC
In Korea, I was looking for a way to do some physical exercises so I don’t gain weight from eating all the Korean food. As a badminton player myself, I decided to join Korea University Badminton Club (KUBC) and it was the best decision I made. Through KUBC, I managed to meet a lot of Korean students who have the same passion as me in badminton. I was lucky there were international students in KUBC that helped me out as my Korean was not very good. There were a couple of Korean students that were good in English, while others were not very good. However, I still managed to connect with them through badminton. After badminton, we would usually go out for supper and drinks. I made the most hilarious and memorable memories from there. In addition, KUBC also holds competitions and friendly matches with other schools, which helped me to meet more friends from outside of KU. As such, I would highly suggest future exchange students to join a couple of clubs that you are interested in and see which one would be a good fit for you. It’s a great way to mix with more local students and make your experience all the more enriching. Even to this day, I still keep in touch with a lot of friends that I made through KUBC.

- Places to visit (tour08)
While I was doing my exchange research, I stumbled across this website on Facebook that arranges 2 days 1 night weekend trips to cities outside of Seoul. This company focuses on providing Korean experiences to foreigners currently residing in Korea. I was really amazed to find out that they offered their services for a really affordable price because they are able to get subsidies and discounts from the cities they visited. For just 20000 won ($20USD) they provided a tour guide, transportation, meals, accommodation and experience fees for 2 days and 1 night. Throughout my whole exchange semester, I managed to go for 3 trips outside of Seoul with this tour company, and I really enjoyed it as I learnt a lot of Korean traditions and culture. I also managed to meet a lot of interesting people, such as surgeons from China who worked at KU.
https://www.facebook.com/tour08foreignertours/

- LTE
There is a language exchange program offered in KU, where if you decide to sign up for it, KU will partner you with a local student, and you can teach each other languages. I was partnered up with a Korean student who wanted to speak better English as she was going for exchange next semester to Scotland. On the other hand, I wanted to speak better Korean. We met up once or twice a week depending on our schedules. We would have formal and informal sessions. The more formal session would include going to cafes to ask questions about the language, while informal sessions would be doing activities together, and we would only talk in either Korean or English for the whole day. Some activities we did were going to escape rooms and watching a baseball match. What I really liked about this program is that KU gives us the flexibility to plan how we want to teach other. Hence, I was able to improve my Korean, yet at the same time enjoy learning it in a comfortable and fun environment.
Reflection

• Be open minded
Being in a new country, you will experience quite a few culture shocks. I remember I was really shocked that the public shower rooms don’t have individual stalls, and so you would have to shower with others. I was really uncomfortable with the lack of privacy but it turned out to be quite an interesting experience. So learn to be open-minded and don’t stay in your comfort zone!

• Learn Korean
I think it is a really good idea to familiarise yourself with a couple of frequently used Korean phrases. If you have the time, try to also learn how to read Korean. It is actually very easy and will help you a lot while exploring Korea, as well as help you to learn Korean faster.

• 4 months flies really fast
4 months seems like a really long time. But it will actually fly past really fast and before you know it, it will be the end of your great time on exchange. Don’t delay your trips thinking you would have time to do it later. I ended up missing some experiences because of this and it was quite regretful.

Ipseleenti: KU’s Music Festival in the Spring
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Having a picnic at Han River where we ordered fried chicken delivery

One of the traditional experience: Making Korean rice cake (injeolmi)
One of our weekend trips to Muan where we experienced mudflats. We caught small crabs, octopus and eels.

Jeju Island: Highly recommend going for nature lovers.
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KU Badminton Club: At one of our badminton competitions