

**Exchange Report**  
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Before leaving Taiwan, the university sent the list of MBA courses that were going to be offered in the Spring term. Out of those courses I wanted to take marketing courses so I decided to take:

Assigned course: Customer Relationship Management

Assigned course: Marketing Metrics and

Assigned course: Applied Market Research

Dropped course: Supply Chain Management

**Customer Relationship Management:** It is a light course with one reading and a group case every week. The topics are quite interesting if the student is interested in the services field such as hotels, airlines, banks, cell phones, etc where CRM has become very popular. The course also covers the common mistakes that several companies make when implementing CRM and how different tools could be designed for different needs. I liked the course a lot because it is focused on “treating different customers differently”. I liked a lot that the professor invited two guest speakers about how Social Media has revolutionized the CRM tools and how these platforms could be used in order to analyze the customers’ needs and purchasing patterns. The first speaker was from a company that is focused on Social Media and the second one was from a company offering an integrated software that allows the company keep a very efficient communication between its different levels with the purpose of serving the customer in a very fast way. Both speakers were very interesting and handled the topic quite good. There was no midterm and the Final project was an individual business plan implementing CRM on your previous job, a startup or a company that you might have enough information to make a reasonable 20 page report.

**Marketing Metrics:** I had my doubts about taking this course because it was scheduled on Saturday afternoons but I really liked this course. This was by far the most demanding course of the three courses taken, with 2 – 3 readings from Marketing Journals and a group case every week this course gives the student a very good view about the different marketing metrics that could be used to measure marketing performance. The professor, graduated from the University of Chicago knows a lot about the topic and even though sometimes it turns a little bit too scientific, using BQM tools, or different matrix to forecast customer recency, etc. I definitely recommend taking this course mainly because of the quality of the cases (Harvard and Stanford ones) that usually have an excel worksheet to give an answer with number support, and the topics covered that start from Balance Scorecard and goes on with product, price, distribution, salesforce and promotion metrics. The midterm was very tough, with 5 small cases that required to use the tools given in class, but because he is from one of the best universities in US, he usually give relative grades which means that even though your answer is not precise or exact, if the logic is quite good he doesn’t subtract that many points. He also compares your performance with the other students in class so he usually tells you in which areas you are not absorbing the topics as well as your classmates. The final exam was as tough as the midterm.

**Applied Market Research:** Of the three courses this is the one that I enjoyed the most. I felt that I learned so much from this course. The professor with plenty of experience in Nielsen, specifically in Marketing Research, could answer every question of the students in such a comprehensive and easy to understand way. I valued a lot that the cases were not Harvard, IVEY or Stanford ones, because his cases had real data of real products such as Post Cereals, Ariel, Milo, etc. This data was given by the professor from his past experience in handling these products at Nielsen. I didn't learn how to make a questionnaire, interview, etc. which is something that a student usually expect of this course because in the professor's words those kind of skills could be gained by reading a book, and there are many of them in the market that he recommended, but analyzing data to structure successful strategies are skills that should be gained in the MBA program. I enjoyed the course that much that I was expecting to be Thursday to learn more about the topic and I felt strongly interested in looking at Nielsen for internships or job opportunities because that was a field that I previously didn't pay attention at all but after this course I liked it a lot. The course didn't have a midterm exam, it basically had a final exam with almost all the lessons covered. If the student paid a lot of attention in class, participated and read the lectures very carefully, the exam requires reasoning by using what was learned in the course. The course had 7 cases and the class was divided in 7 groups. Every group had to do one case and the rest (6) had to be submitted individually with the purpose of debating the group strategy based on your individual reasoning. I liked it a lot.

**Supply Chain Management:** (Dropped Course). I was very interested in this topic because I had no idea of Supply Chain Management, and I went to the first and second classes before the dropping period. The professor is a very recognized one with more than 25 years with experience in Supply Chain Management in companies such as HP and she is a judge in the Angel's Gate TV Show that supports or rejects entrepreneur projects in Singapore based on their business plans. The content of the Syllabus was quite demanding and very good in my point of view. However on the second class I could see that the class was going to be a book-based one, so I decided to drop it. After two months of dropping the course I had conversations with several regular students that decided to keep studying the topic and what I felt was absolutely right. In their words the cases were long but the midterm and final was book-based. They think that the professor knows a lot about the topic but they felt she was unable to transmit her expertise and knowledge to the students.

### Life in Singapore

I enjoyed life in Singapore very much. The city is so perfect. When I left Taiwan it was rainy and cold. When I arrived Singapore it was sunny and hot, but the weather is better than Taipei's because even though it is also humid and very hot, the country doesn't have mountains, so the wind from the sea is running in the city giving a refreshing experience when you are walking outside, that's the difference. Taxis are more expensive, from the airport to the University it was around 25 Singapore Dollars (575NTD).

The dorms at the University are awesome! Especially in University Town. It is a dorm complex with restaurants, shops, 5 buildings of dorms, 24 hour starbucks, computer centers, reading areas, etc. so convenient and it is easy to take a bus to the nearest MRT station from the back side of the buildings. The dorm fees are very high, for example if you break the electronic key of



the room (which is very fragile by the way) the student should pay 60 dollars to replace it. The rooms were quite comfortable with a bathroom and common areas that were cleaned every week by the dorm personnel. Students cannot make any noise that might disturb other students after 11PM which was very good.

At the university there are several convenience stores that provide a lot of products. 5 minutes away in a bus there is a supermarket (Fair Price) which has the same items and much more but 15 to 20% cheaper than in the campus.

In the classroom the atmosphere is kind of different. In my batch we usually chat a lot before classes and in the breaks and sometimes organized activities to share with the classmates on weekends. However in NUS students only chat at the break. In the break time the university offer dinner (noodles, chicken, bakery, fruits, coffee, tea) so in class day it won't be necessary to have dinner at the dorm. These kind of students are more focused on finding a job, internship than making a good relationship or friendship with foreign students. They are friendly but they don't hang out that much. The university organized certain activities to mix the exchange students with fulltime and part time ones, most of the times the fulltime students and exchange students are the ones that participate in those activities. There is a dinner with alumni and all the students are invited, including exchange students. There are also recruitment talks by different companies in which exchange students can also join. The MBA job fair is held on August and even if it is held in Spring, it is exclusively for Regular students. The administrative personnel is very friendly and easy to contact. They are always willing to help the exchange students a lot. As well as in NCCU campus, there are busses to drive you to different stations inside the campus. If the student is interested in having sports in the campus there is a Graduate Gym and a Graduate Pool that is available for exchange students at 45 Singapore Dollars a month (1000NTD) but based on the facilities provided and that it is next to the Business School building it worth it.

Singapore is a very small country so basically you will have plenty of time to really know everything in the country. As well as in Taipei, the buses and MRT finish services at 2330 and taxis become more expensive after that hour. The food is simply AWESOME, I enjoyed the different flavors the country offer. Vietnamese, Indian, Singaporean, Malay, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Western, all kind of food is available in such a small country with the ingredients that satisfy any taste. No one could say there is nothing new or good to try because it is not true. The desserts are also awesome, they are very sweet and students can find ice cream from different brands such as Nestle, Magnum etc. In general Singapore has a way more variety of food products than Taipei, I miss that a lot. In a supermarket I even found a Sauce made of Cheese with the label written in Spanish imported from Mexico. I loved it!! The taste was so western.

However the food is more expensive than in Taipei. Outside the campus one dish normally costs between 8 to 10 Singapore Dollars which is 200NTD on average. Inside the campus the food is cheaper (5 Singapore Dollars in average 115 NTD). The transportation is also more expensive than in Taipei, around 70 – 100% more expensive depending on the route. The buses fee depends on the number of kilometers and not on a established fare like in Taipei.

Overall people are not that friendly though. I loved Taipei because Taiwanese people are very friendly, polite and kind. In Singapore people is not that friendly, maybe because there is a huge mix of nationalities that makes it very difficult to have a common way of expressing ideas, say hello or non verbal language, but still it is something that anyone could handle, it's not that big deal.

Attractions are very expensive. Sentosa is a place that any person should visit. The rides are on average 20 Singapore Dollars, be careful with the money because there are so many good attractions that as soon as you notice you might have spent 100 Singapore Dollars in one afternoon. There are attraction combos that make you save money but they pick the attractions for you. Universal Studios in Singapore was a place that I wanted to visit but because of bad weather and timing constraints at the end of the exchange period, I couldn't make it. Nightlife in Singapore is very diverse, maybe more than in Taipei. In Singapore there is a place named Clark Quay full of restaurants and bars that at night are full of foreigners and locals. They are all very expensive but it is an experience any visitor should have. Beers from 15 Singapore Dollars (345NTD), food from 25 Singapore Dollars (575NTD) are the common denominator in this area. There is a bridge between Clark Quay and Boat Quay which is very famous because a lot of young people, foreigners, backpacker tourists and exchange students usually go there, buy beers at a nearby 7-11 and start drinking and eating over there. In one night you will find a lot of people doing that, it is a cheaper way to have lots of fun. There are also bars in several hotels. The one that I recommend is called Attitude, which has an amazing view from the City or New Asia Bar that is in the top of Swissotel in Raffles Place with a nice view too. A cheaper one is called Level 33 which is designed to relax and chat, no music or dance floor here. It has balcony to have a view from Singapore, it is really great.

Near Raffles Place there is another place which originally was a church and now it is adapted to have restaurants and bars. Its name is Chijmes and it is cheaper than Clark Quay.

Singapore has a lot of shopping malls and In Chinese New Year a lot of department stores have very good offers. It is the right place and time to buy clothes.

For people that enjoy risk and adrenaline, Singapore has the reverse Bungee with a discounted price for students. It is such a great thing to do at night because you see all the lights when you are coming back to earth. You can purchase a video or a picture, but for me a 30 Singapore Dollars picture (700NTD) doesn't worth it.

### **Recommendations to Students going to NUS from NCCU.**

- Have fun!
- Have Credit card with you, you will need it to pay several fees. (Dorm reservation 200 SGD refundable when you check in and pay the entire semester accommodation fare, the Immigration Student Card application, etc).
- When selecting your dorm at school website make sure you select University Town as your first choice with Air conditioner and PGP graduate residence (the MOST expensive one) with AirCon as your second choice. PGP residences that are not the most expensive ones are not comfortable according to other MBA exchange students that picked those rooms. (Temperature in Spring semester is not that high so if you don't get AirCon, the fan would be enough).
- There are 2 periods for university accommodation. In the first period you might be rejected as in my case, but do APPLY for the second period which results are usually posted 3 weeks before the exchange program begins. It is very difficult to find short term accommodation outside the campus and it is usually more expensive and less comfortable so I recommend you to take this opportunity to live on campus.
- Try to find out if there is a group on Facebook of exchange students going to NUS on your same term, because in case you need to find an apartment it is a very good way of finding roommate. It also helps to know when and where people are going to party, trips (that are quite common in Singapore because it is very cheap to fly almost everywhere in Asia), etc.
- Try to book a flight in the morning to be at Singapore in the afternoon. Check in at the university Dorm takes more time at night where a lot of flights from Europe arrive at Singapore. Additionally, you will have to go immediately to the nearest supermarket to buy a pillow, bed sheets, internet cable for your dorm (be careful to buy the right category of cable), electricity adaptor for your laptop and other devices and other stuff to equip your room.
- Keep the key of your room in a safe place, because it is easy to break and you will have to pay 60SGD to replace it, a lot of students had to pay for it.
- Bring formal clothes (long sheet shirt, a casual pants, casual pair of shoes to the MBA dinners with Alumni, farewell, etc)
- Be careful paying with Credit Cards, in my country my bank sent me an email with a notice that Singapore is a country with a high number of fraud and copying credit cards in the world.
- Don't miss classes, at NUS they do care about you going to class every time, on time.
- Join the NUS MBA activities such as dinners, BBQ, trips, etc. because it is an easy way to meet students, especially the welcome trip and dinner, so try to ask the date in advance to book your tickets a day before.

- In case you are going to stay more days than the ones stated on the semester you should notify on advance to have your room ready. The same applies if you decide to leave later.
- If possible bring gifts from your country, you will need them.
- Be aware about the deadlines!! Immigration forms, Immigration registration, etc.