

Final Report

Tsinghua University, located in Beijing, China, is one of Asia's most prestigious institutions, consistently ranked among the top universities globally. Founded in 1911, it is renowned for its rigorous academic standards, cutting-edge research, and strong emphasis on innovation and leadership. The university's School of Economics and Management (SEM) is widely recognized for cultivating global business leaders and providing a world-class education that bridges theory and practice. With a diverse student body and a vibrant campus culture, Tsinghua offers an ideal environment for international exchange and academic excellence. One of its flagship international programs is the Tsinghua Global MBA (GMBA), offered in collaboration with the MIT Sloan School of Management. The GMBA program is designed to equip aspiring business leaders with a deep understanding of global management practices and the Chinese economic environment. Taught in English and attracting students from around the world, the program emphasizes innovation, leadership, and entrepreneurship.

From February to June 2025, I was privileged to spend one semester as an exchange student at Tsinghua University's School of Economics and Management, one of the top universities in Asia. The university's motto, "Self-Discipline and Social Commitment," truly lived up to expectations, shaping the content and spirit of every lecture I attended. This report summarizes my entire exchange experience, covering my academic and cultural journey, along with suggestions for future students planning to go on exchange to Tsinghua University.

Academic Experience

My academic experience at Tsinghua University significantly enriched both my intellectual growth and personal development. During my time at one of China's most prestigious institutions, I had the opportunity to take several well-structured courses that not only broadened my academic knowledge but also deepened my understanding of China's technological and business landscape.

I enrolled in the following four courses:

- Digital Transformation
- Marketing Research
- China Roots Seminar
- Business History of the World and China

In addition, I also participated in multiple seminars and workshops, including one on negotiation skills that proved to be particularly valuable.

The Digital Transformation course was particularly eye-opening. It examined how technological advancements are reshaping industries across the globe, focusing on key technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain, the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics. Taught by Professor Ting Li, an expert in digital business, the two-week intensive course was rich in interactive discussions and real-time reflections on emerging technologies. I appreciated the way she encouraged us to think critically about how we should adapt to these changes and use technology more effectively in both work and life. What made this course even more impactful was its emphasis on real-world applications, especially within the Chinese market. Through case studies and guest lectures, I gained a clear understanding of how these technologies are integrated into business operations in China.

The Business History of the World and China course expanded my global perspective by tracing the evolution of enterprise systems and trade networks across different cultures and historical periods. Taught by Professor David Pan whose knowledge and passion for the subject made each session engaging, we explored case studies of both Western and Eastern enterprises. This comparative approach helped me better understand how historical contexts continue to shape modern business practices. I came to realize that many contemporary challenges are deeply rooted in history, and recognizing this connection is crucial for analyzing today's global economy.

The China Roots Seminar aimed to provide a comprehensive and updated overview of China's current landscape across economic, social, political, and financial domains. Each week, the class featured expert speakers, including professors, policymakers, and business leaders who shared valuable insights. I especially appreciated the course's balanced approach in presenting both the strengths and the challenges China faces today. It gave me a more nuanced understanding of the country's development, which is essential for anyone who wishes to work with or in China.

Finally, the course that had the most significant impact on me was Marketing Research. We studied key methodologies used for market analysis and applied them in a hands-on group project that simulated a real-world business challenge. One of the most exciting components was the use of R Studio, an integrated development environment for the R programming language, commonly used in data analytics and visualization. R Studio, which functions

similarly to Python, enabled us to collect, clean, and analyze social media engagement data for a marketing campaign. This practical experience strengthened my analytical skills and enhanced my understanding of how data can inform marketing strategies. Learning to use R Studio was particularly meaningful, as it's a valuable skill that many companies now seek in marketing and research roles. I believe this experience will give me an advantage in my future career, and it's certainly a strong addition to my resume.

Regarding the overall class setting, I found the classes to be very helpful, as most of them were designed for open discussion. We were not only learning from the lectures, but also from the diverse student body and even invited guest speakers. I believe this teaching method greatly enhanced the overall learning experience, as it allowed us to gain valuable insights from different perspectives.



Beyond the classroom, Tsinghua University offered many enriching extracurricular academic opportunities, including seminars, company visits, and workshops. One workshop that stood out was the Negotiation Skills Workshop, delivered by Professor Emily Jones, a distinguished negotiation expert from the University of Oxford. In this workshop, we practiced real-life negotiation scenarios and learned how to build a strategic approach to negotiation. I learned about different negotiation styles, the importance of preparation, and how to structure a win-win strategy. One of the most insightful lessons was the concept of identifying the interests behind each party's position, which can lead to more effective solutions and long-term

collaboration. I believe the skills I developed in this workshop will be incredibly useful in my future career, especially in cross-cultural business settings.



Overall, my academic journey at Tsinghua University was a period of intensive learning, growth, and inspiration. It not only sharpened my analytical and research skills but also helped me develop a more global and interdisciplinary perspective. I left the program feeling more confident, not only in my academic abilities but also in my understanding of the rapidly evolving business world, especially within the context of China's economic development.

Cultural Experience

As a Chinese-Indonesian who grew up with deeply rooted Chinese culture, I didn't experience significant culture shock during my exchange in China, as most aspects felt familiar to me as an Asian. I have always felt a connection to Chinese culture. However, this exchange experience allowed me to truly live within and understand the culture beyond the surface, especially in the context of its historical and social values.

One of the most remarkable aspects of living in Beijing was the combination of the modern and the traditional. While the city is a global hub for technology, innovation, and business, it still preserves a rich historical and cultural identity. During my exchange, I had the opportunity to visit places such as the Forbidden City, Tiananmen Square, the National Museum of China, and the Great Wall. These experiences gave me a deeper appreciation for Chinese history and heritage. The attention to detail, architectural symbolism, and strong respect for ancestors left a lasting impression on me.

On campus, the cultural atmosphere was equally vibrant. Tsinghua University places a strong emphasis on community and tradition. For example, the beautiful campus buildings with traditional Chinese elements—like red pillars and curved roofs—serve as a daily reminder of

the university's cultural roots. The main gate of Tsinghua, a famous landmark, represents pride and identity among students and alumni. There's even a belief that walking through the main gate before graduation may bring bad luck, which shows how seriously students value tradition.



What impressed me most was how Chinese students express respect and humility in both academic and social settings. There is a clear sense of collectivism and harmony, which contrasts with the more individualistic culture I'm used to. People rarely interrupt others in conversation, and group consensus is often prioritized. At first, I found this communication style quite subtle, but over time, I came to appreciate its thoughtfulness. It also taught me to be more mindful of how I express my ideas, especially in group projects or when navigating sensitive topics.

Another unique aspect of my cultural experience was observing how food plays such a central role in Chinese society. In Beijing, every meal felt like a social event. From street food stalls to traditional hot pot restaurants, dining was rarely rushed or solitary. Meals are usually shared, and dishes are placed in the center for everyone to enjoy together. This culture of sharing builds a strong sense of unity and belonging. I also appreciated the diversity in cuisine from Beijing roast duck to handmade dumplings, the variety was endless.

While I enjoyed trying local dishes, I also had to adapt to certain dietary changes. As someone with acid reflux and a cholesterol condition, I had to be careful with oily and spicy food. It was a challenge at first because many dishes in Beijing are rich and heavily seasoned. However, I learned to manage it by choosing milder options, drinking warm tea after meals, and asking restaurants to reduce the oil in their cooking. This adaptation process became part of my cultural learning as well, teaching me how to be flexible and proactive in a different environment.

Another cultural aspect that impressed me was the efficiency and convenience of digital services in daily life. Platforms like Meituan and Taobao are incredibly fast, user-friendly, and well-integrated into everyday routines. With just a few clicks, I could order food, groceries, or book services and often delivered within 30 minutes to an hour, or even less. Taobao, in particular, amazed me with its wide range of affordable products and smooth logistics, making online shopping incredibly convenient. These digital tools reflect China's rapid technological development and its ability to create systems that are both scalable and highly user-centric. As someone interested in business and innovation, I found this ecosystem fascinating and inspiring.

In addition, I was impressed by how immersive and integrated digital payment systems are in China. With just one smartphone, I could handle almost everything from paying at restaurants and vending machines to splitting bills and accessing public transport. Apps like Alipay and WeChat Pay are widely accepted and supported by strong cybersecurity protocols, which made transactions feel both seamless and secure. Traveling around Beijing also felt very safe. Surveillance systems, such as widespread CCTV coverage, help maintain public order and offer a strong sense of security especially for solo travelers. This level of digital integration and public safety reflects China's advancement in building a smart and secure urban environment.

Language was another important part of my cultural immersion. Although I'm a B2-level Chinese learner, living in Beijing pushed me to use Mandarin every day, especially outside the university. Ordering food, shopping at markets, and asking for directions all became learning moments. Locals were generally patient and encouraging, and some were curious to know more about my background. This constant language practice improved not just my speaking skills, but also my confidence and cultural sensitivity.

One cultural difference I found particularly interesting was how people in China view time and efficiency. In academic settings and public services, punctuality and speed are highly valued. For instance, trains and public transport almost always arrive on-time, and service in restaurants and stores is noticeably fast. However, when it comes to building relationships, things move more slowly and organically. Trust and familiarity take time, and it's common to have several rounds of casual conversation before diving into serious matters. This contrast between professional efficiency and personal patience is something I truly admired.

In conclusion, my cultural exchange at Tsinghua University was incredibly valuable. It allowed me to reconnect with my roots, step outside my comfort zone, and gain a more nuanced

understanding of Chinese society. From historical exploration to everyday interactions, I learned to view the world through a more empathetic and open-minded lens. This journey not only broadened my cultural horizons but also strengthened my sense of identity and purpose.

Notices for Future Students

Based on my exchange experience at Tsinghua University in Beijing, here are some practical tips and suggestions that may help you better prepare for your journey, both academically and culturally.

1. Prepare for the Academic Environment

Tsinghua is well-known for its academic excellence and demanding coursework. So, make sure to carefully plan your course selection during the application process and stay in touch with your coordinator and the Tsinghua exchange office. Some courses may have limited enrollment and may require early registration or even bidding points to secure a spot. I think reading the full syllabus and checking the class schedule in advance is the most strategic way to plan everything. Be prepared for class discussions, group activities, and presentations. At Tsinghua, time management is crucial, as some courses are intensive and may require weekly assignments or case readings.

2. Improve Chinese Language Skills

Although many exchange students take English-taught courses, basic Mandarin skills are very helpful for daily life. Even simple phrases like ordering food, asking for directions, or greeting locals in Mandarin can go a long way, as many locals primarily rely on Mandarin and may not speak much English. Before coming, I recommend learning some survival Chinese and continuing to practice while in Beijing. Tsinghua also offers Chinese language courses, which are a great way to improve your fluency and meet other international students.

3. Understand Local Food

The food culture in Beijing is diverse and exciting, but it can be oily or spicy depending on your tolerance. If you have any dietary restrictions or medical conditions like acid reflux or cholesterol issues, be proactive in communicating your needs. You can ask restaurants to reduce oil (“少油”), avoid spicy (“不要辣”), or choose simpler dishes like steamed vegetables and soup noodles.

4. Download Essential Apps Before Arrival

China's digital ecosystem is very different from other countries. Most services run through apps like WeChat, Alipay, Didi, Meituan, and Taobao. Set up your accounts early, and try to link an international card to your Alipay or WeChat Pay. Some features may require real-name verification or a Chinese bank account, so it's helpful to have support from a local buddy or university staff if needed. VPN is also necessary for accessing certain Western websites (e.g., Google, Instagram, WhatsApp), so install a reliable VPN before arriving in China.

5. Health and Safety

China is generally safe, and Tsinghua's campus is very secure. However, Beijing's air quality can sometimes be poor, and the weather tends to change drastically from day to day, often accompanied by strong winds. It's important to bring any necessary medications from home and be prepared for dry conditions, which may cause issues like dry skin or nosebleeds. A small air humidifier for your dorm room can be very helpful. Also, consider wearing a mask on days with heavy pollution and stay updated with local air quality reports.

Lastly, enjoy every moment. The exchange experience is not only about academics but also about personal growth, cultural understanding, and forming lifelong connections.