

Sungkyunkwan University fall 2015, Xinyi Zhu

General Information

I studied at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, South Korea, from September 2015 until December 2015.

Preparation

Similar as the preparation for every exchange, you need to write a motivation letter to show your interest in the program itself and the universities you want to go to. Also you should include the preferences of the universities in your letter, such that the staff could make selection process based on it. Furthermore, your grade list and CV are also relevant in your application. After you are selected for the university, you should look up at their official website and get the list you need to prepare. For the application at SKKU you need fill in three forms. The first one is the application for your dormitory on campus. Since the university provides only limited spots for their dormitory, you need to apply this in time and what room you get is just based on luck. The second form is the agreement you have to fill in, to accept the conditions as an exchange student at their university. The last one is not compulsory, since it is the application for the Korean language courses. For this one you also need to write a short motivation letter and a recommendation letter. After these three forms, you need to apply for your courses. This application is the most difficult one, since you have to compete with the locals as well. The spots for the courses are limited, so you need to have more than four courses, in case that one may be full already, you can always apply for the other. You have to take into account that the time of application is in the middle of the night, since it is according to the Korean timezone. Basically four courses will contain 24 ECTS, one course has three credits, and each credit is two ECTS. You can also take more courses, if you are interested in more areas. For the visa application the needed documents will be sent by SKKU, and you should go the Korean Embassy in The Hague and pay them by cash.

Arrival

There is an airport pickup service to your dormitory, but I won't recommend you to apply for this. It is too expensive, and there are different other ways to go to the university. You can take the subway, train or bus. It is much cheaper and the duration is pretty much the same. After you arrived at your place, if you are living in the dorm, you need go to the guard and get the key to your room and sign a contract. My room was shared with one Dutch girl, they selected the roommates based on the nationality. I lived in I-house, which is the closest to the campus, only by five minutes walking. I had to share the kitchen with the whole building, but the kitchen is big enough and eating out is quite cheap. I didn't use the kitchen the entire period, which means I eat a lot of their street foods and local food. The building has six floors, the first until the fourth floor are meant to exchange students. The other two floors are for professors who teach at the university. You will be assigned to a buddy, who can help you with different

issues related to school or daily life. Besides there will be a orientation day when you can get to know your fellow exchange students. Also Korean students as well who work as volunteers to help exchange students. Be aware that the English of most Korean people is not good as ours, so I would recommend you to learn some Korean words for daily life. After you confirmed that you are a student from SKKU, you have to also to confirm the courses you are going to take. This period will last two weeks, you need to go to the professors and get their signatures for approval of allowing you doing the course. This is the most time consuming period, because you need go to the lectures and there may be time overlapping as well.

Courses

Below are the courses I took at SKKU.

Game theory

Game theory belongs to one of my major courses. It is quite similar to the game theory we offer here at the Erasmus University. There is much mathematics involved. You can not miss more than two times the lectures. Otherwise you will get a fail for this course. Also there is a midterm involved, which counts 30% of your total grade. Weekly assignments are also a part of your total grade. You need to hand them in, and these will be graded by the teacher assistant. I would recommend you to make notes during the lectures for this course, since the lecturer doesn't post his slides online. Also for the preparation of the exams, I would recommend you to make the weekly assignments. Since the exam questions are quite similar to them.

Health economics

Health economics is also one of my major courses. It is a new course at SKKU. It is only based on learning theories. And several surveys are conducted for proving some of these theories. Besides, you need to do a presentation for this course. Which also counts for your final grade. The presentation is done with five students, the teacher will divide you into groups with only Korean students. There were five exchange students who took this course, so we were all divided into different groups. Be prepared that the English of Korean students may be not good enough to communicate, so sometimes it will be hard to prepare together for the presentation. There is also a midterm for this course, which contains the first part of the course materials.

Investments

This is a minor course, which contains same amount of credits as a major course. This belongs to the business faculty. This course is quite similar to the course I had in the second year, Finance. There were only exchange students who took this course. The materials were not comparable to what we learnt at Erasmus university. Both the midterm and final exams were quite comparable to each other. For this course we need also to hand in assignments weekly, but these are much easier compared to the ones we need to hand for Game Theory.

Korean Language Program

This is my favorite course at SKKU. We were in a class of approximately ten exchange students. We started with the basic Korean alphabets. We learnt to write, speak and had a lot of interactions during the classes. For this course, we had several tests. The teacher will provide you materials you need to prepare. This course is easy to pass, and also is the most interesting one. I would recommend you to register for this course, since you can learn the basic words to communicate with the locals and learn the culture better.

Finances

Exchange does cost you a lot of money, especially in a big city like Seoul. Seoul has a lot of tourists. Basically I spent a lot of money on travelling and food. The public transport doesn't cost a lot. I ate every time outdoors, so cost for that is quite a lot. During my exchange period, I went abroad several times. So the expenditure on flight tickets and accommodations is a lot too.

Daily life

I went to the university from Monday to Thursday; I had Friday the whole day off. So I went travelling a lot during these days. Besides, there were a lot of other things to do, Korean people spend a lot of time on clubbing. So their nightlife was not boring at all. They drink a lot of soju, this is one of their favorite drinks. There are also several tastes of soju. People love to sing as well in Korea, so I went to karaoke several times when I was in Korea. Shopping districts are open until late at night. This holds also for several restaurants. The taste of Korean food is quite spicy, and they eat a lot of Kimchi as side dishes. At the school canteen they provide a lot of cheap menus for students. It is really convenient to get food at the campus, because the buildings are built on hills, so I would recommend you to lunch at the campus and go get dinner at somewhere else. Your buddy will also arrange of activities for you to get to know the Korean culture better and meet new people. You will never be bored; there is always something to do. This exchange experience is the best time I have ever had in my life. Never regretted to go abroad.