

# Sungkyunkwan University

Exchange report 2015-2016



For my exchange I went to Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul, South Korea during the fall semester, from 31 August until 18 December 2015.

## **Preparation**

Before leaving to Korea, there were many things I had to take care of such as arranging a visa, accommodation, insurance etc. After I was selected to study at Sungkyunkwan University, I had to submit my application before 15<sup>th</sup> of May.

For the visa, it takes quite a lot of time in order to get all the needed documents. The following documents are required for a D-2 student visa application:

- Letter of Acceptance from your Korean University
- Certificate of Admission from your Korean University
- Certificate of Business registration from your Korean University
- Certificate of Admission from Erasmus University
- Visa application form and application fee of 54 euro
- Passport with remaining validity for more than 6 months
- Recent bank statement proving your financial ability to support yourself during your stay (more than \$3,000) worth of saving.

For the visa you should go to the embassy in The Hague and submit all your papers and passport, which you can pick up again after 1 week.

Most exchange students stay in the dormitories, which I did as well. You should apply as soon as possible when application for dormitories open, because it is on a first come first served basis. I was lucky enough to get into the I-House (International House), which is the closest dormitory to Sungkyunkwan University. After you are accepted for a dormitory, you should get an email indicating which dormitory you have and a payment request, which requires you to pay the full amount of the dormitory at once. If you are going to stay in the dormitories, it is required to submit the results report that you are free of tuberculosis when you check in. Therefore you should get a tuberculosis test in advance.

There are no vaccinations required for Korea, however it is still recommended. It is also required to have a health insurance. You can call your local health insurance and let them know you are going to study abroad. The insurance will also give you a statement that you are insured during your stay in South Korea. You should also submit this when applying for Sungkyunkwan University as this is a requirement.

## **Arrival**

Sungkyunkwan University provided a "Survival-kit" which showed how to get from Incheon airport to the dormitories. Sungkyunkwan University also provided a "buddy pick-up service" to guide you to the dormitories. This cost 50000 KRW (40 euro) and you have to apply for it in advance. However, I did not apply for the buddy pick up service as it was expensive in my opinion, and with the survival kit it was quite easy to get to the I House. The survival kit recommended to get either option 1, the KTX (express airport train) and then transfer to the subway, or option 2, the airport limousine bus. I recommend the airport limousine bus. It costs only 10 000 KRW, which is around 7,50 euro and it is the most comfortable option as you do not have to transfer at crowded subway station with so much luggage. After you arrived at the bus stop you should follow the directions on the map of the survival kit. I arrived at the check-in day of the dormitories, which should keep in mind when booking your flight ticket. Otherwise if you are arriving earlier than the check-in day, there are many (cheap) options for accommodations, for example hostels, guesthouses etc. that are in the neighborhood.

After submitting my tuberculosis test, I could check in the dormitories. My roommate was also from the Netherlands as the dormitories at Sungkyunkwan University puts exchange students according to their nationalities.

Before the courses started there was an orientation day hosted by Sungkyunkwan University for all exchange students. The exchange students were split up in groups which were according to your designated "buddy" (Korean student from Sungkyunkwan University). Before arriving in Korea, they will send application forms to apply for a Korean Buddy. At the orientation day, there was a campus tour and a welcoming party. At the orientation day they also gave us a 'to do list' so that we would know what we had to take care of, such as printing and submitting your final course list. It was also required to go to the Immigration Office to apply for an alien registration card, those are needed for individuals who are staying more than 90 days in Korea.

## **Courses**

Sungkyunkwan University uses different programs that are required to be downloaded in order to register and evaluate courses. You should sign up for courses right away when it opens, because it is really competitive due to the limited amount of seats. It is on a first come first served basis, and it starts in the morning in Korea, which is around 3 AM in the Netherlands. I have managed to register for some courses through the online application, but when I arrived at Sungkyunkwan University, I heard from many other exchange students that they could not manage to do so. They had to register for courses at the first week of the semester through an application form. If professors sign this form, you are able to take the course. However this offline application for courses can be quite problematic, as some classes might be full already or some professors do not want to sign the form. During the first weeks you can add courses and drop some courses. So I would recommend you to apply for more courses than you need, in case you realize that a course is not what you expected to be or because of the fact that some courses will be given in Korean even though it says English. When I registered for the course Financial derivatives, I got an email from the professor in which he said that half of the class will be given in Korean. Therefore I registered for another course.

At Sungkyunkwan University I took four courses in total, each of them were worth 3 SKKU credits. So in total I had 12 SKKU credits, which would be transferred as 24 ECTS at EUR. I used these courses to incorporate them into my elective space.

- **Game theory**

This course aims to teach students about economic theories that are related to asymmetric and incomplete information and uncertainty. This course studies applications of game theory in economics such as oligopoly, monopolistic competition etc. For this course there were eight weekly homework assignments that accounted for 20% of the final grade. In addition there was compulsory attendance (10%), a mid-term (30%) and a final exam (40%). The professor of this course unfortunately did not upload his slides on I-campus (same as Blackboard), which was a bit inconvenient. Overall I thought this course was quite difficult, so I would recommend it to students who are looking for challenging courses.

- **Health Economics**

This course is also available at EUR and I believe the courses at both universities would be quite similar. This course was about economics applied at the health sector. There was compulsory attendance (10%), group presentation (20%), mid-term (30%) and a final exam

(40%).

- **Contemporary Korean society and culture**

SKKU offered some courses that were only available to exchange students. I registered for contemporary Korean society and culture, which explores the cultural, economic, political, and social changes of contemporary Korean society since 1945. Because of this course, I learned more about the Korean society. For this course we needed to write four papers (20%), each about a Korean film, public figure, firm and a NGO. Moreover there was compulsory attendance (10%), mid-term (30%) and a final exam (40%), that consisted of several essay questions.

- **Korean Language Program**

SKKU offered Korean language programs to exchange students too. There were two types, one for beginners and the other was more advanced, which had classes every day. I choose the first type which had classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This course is intensive and the tempo is quite fast too. After attending this course you will be able to speak, write and read at beginner level, which is really helpful during your stay in Korea. There were two pop-up quizzes, compulsory attendance, mid-term, final exam and a speaking test. I personally really liked this course, as I enjoy learning languages. In my opinion, the course was quite easy.

## **Finances**

For my flight ticket from Amsterdam to Seoul, I have paid 560 euro with a transfer in London. As mentioned earlier, I already paid the rent for the dormitories, around 1300 euro for the whole semester so I did not have to worry about the monthly payment for the dorm, which was quite convenient. The food in Korea is relatively cheap if you eat out compared to the Netherlands. However, groceries are relatively expensive, such as fruit or vegetables. It is actually cheaper to eat out than to cook for yourself, which is why I ate out every day for lunch and dinner. For example when you dine in Kimbap's Chonguk (Korean franchise) a meal there costs around 3-4 euro, which includes many side dishes for free.

The transportation in South Korea is very convenient and relatively cheap. You should buy a transportation card, called "T-money card" and you can travel easily around with the subway or bus. A one-way ticket to your destination costs around 1350 KRW. It is also great and easy to travel outside Seoul, to places such as Busan, Jeju Island or outside Korea such as Hong Kong and Japan.

While I was in Korea I bought a Korean sim-card at the Business building of Sungkyunkwan University. They have staff that can speak English, Chinese and Korean. I paid 40 000 KRW (28 euro), which included the sim-card, activation costs and 30 000 KRW worth of mobile credit. The 30 000 KRW could be used for calls, texts and data (18 KRW per MB). However, you will not need a lot of data as WIFI is available almost everywhere. After I had used my 30 000 KRW, I recharged it for 10000 KRW again, at the same store where I bought my Korean sim-card.

## Daily life

Overall, I had a great time in Korea. Sungkyunkwan University is located in Hyeohwa, in my opinion a great area with a good atmosphere. It is also located near famous areas on the same subway line, such as Myeongdong and Dongdaemun. With the easy subway system it is very convenient to travel to other popular places such as Hongdae, Sinchon, Gangnam etc.

The people in Korea are friendly. In general you can get by with just English in Korea, as Seoul is a metropolis city with many foreigners traveling there. Also most of the younger generation can speak English. However, the older generation may not speak English well. If you learn some basic Korean phrases in advance or take the Korean Language class, it will definitely be more convenient, and Koreans are more than happy to know that you appreciate their language and culture. It would be much easier for yourself too, if you can read the Korean language as some restaurants sometimes do not have English menus.

In conclusion, I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to study abroad. Going on an exchange in Korea at Sungkyunkwan University was really amazing. I had a great time there, and I met many people from different countries. It was an unforgettable experience to me. In Seoul you can do many things and travel around. I would recommend to anyone to go on an exchange in Korea!