

## Experience report – one semester in Singapore at NUS

First Name, Last Name:	Corentin Chamousset
TUM School and Course of Study:	School of CIT – Electrical Engineering
Email:	corentinchamousset1@gmail.com

### Preparation

The genesis of my exchange journey dates back to October 2025, when I initiated my application for the TUMexchange program. Selecting a destination from the extensive list of partner universities is a critical first step, as the application limits choices to two institutions. My decision to prioritize NUS was driven by a dual motivation. Academically, Singapore is globally recognized as a dynamic, innovative hub, and NUS specifically maintains an elite reputation for research and high academic standards. Culturally, the city-state serves as a unique blend of diverse heritages and a perfect gateway to exploring the broader Southeast Asian continent.

After the positive confirmation from TUM in mid-December, the NUS established contact with the nominated students. From there on followed long lists with step-by-step explanations on every detail that needed to be dealt with before arriving in Singapore. In late March, the nominated students are asked to submit their applications to the NUS. Note that this is a formal process, gathering all requested documents before finally being accepted at NUS, not a second selection from the side of the NUS.

One of the more taxing aspects of preparation was the initial course selection. Unlike the rather simple process at TUM, NUS requires students to select up to fourteen modules in the first place, that have no timetable or exam overlaps. This can be a significant hurdle. In my first round, I was only granted one module, which was not even within my core field of Electrical Engineering. Given that a student visa requires a minimum of 12 credits (usually three courses), this initial outcome can be daunting. Fortunately, a second round of course selection opens a few days later for exactly such cases, which then granted me four EE modules and one language course.

Regarding legal formalities, the "Student's Pass" is the primary requirement for entry. Once the Student's Pass application is approved, you will be issued an In-Principle Approval (IPA) letter for entry to Singapore. This is a pdf allowing you to enter Singapore for a limited amount of time. As a European citizen, no special extra document was requested for entering the city-state. Upon arrival, the pass is finalized through an appointment at the university or via an e-appointment.

## Financial Planning

An exchange in Singapore requires a robust financial plan due to the high cost of living. My total expenditure for the semester was approximately 5500€, excluding regional travel. Key expenses included:

- **Flights:** The summed cost of a Munich-Singapore and Singapore-Munich flight vary highly depending on how far in advance it is booked and can approximate a total of 1200€ or less when booked early enough. Note that the flights back usually average half the price of the flight to Singapore.
- **Housing:** On-campus accommodation for the duration of the stay can be restrained to around 2000€ depending on the dorm type.
- **Food:** Cooking is rather impractical due to high grocery prices and a lack of kitchen utensils. Fortunately, food courts on the campus and across the whole city provide high-quality meals for roughly 300€/month.
- **Insurance and Connectivity:** I opted for APRIL international health insurance, which covered me in Singapore and my trips in other countries in South-East Asia, resulting in an expense of 350€. Mobile data is remarkably affordable. For example, SIMBA offers 400GB for 10€/month, which can be acquired near the university or at the airport.

## Studies at Host University

An important point to take into consideration when applying to NUS as a student from TUM is the shifted academic calendar. While exams at TUM tend to be held until mid to end of August, the next semester at NUS already starts on the beginning of August, thus creating an overlap between the current term in Germany and the next one in Singapore. Because of this, I could only write two of the six scheduled exams of the fourth semester before leaving. Different possibilities exist to make the best value out of your time in this case. I chose to add two “Fachübergreifende Ingenieursqualifikation” (FIQ) modules that I could pass before leaving Germany, and to participate remotely in one module from Singapore. This added 11 ECTS to the two modules I had passed before leaving for my exchange. After the completion of the exchange, I had two months’ time to prepare for the retakes in March of the four modules I couldn’t write in the fourth semester because of the shifted academic calendar.

On a side note, even though everything from courses to exams is treated in English in Singapore, no language requirements and exams like the Cambridge or TOEFL test were requested for applying at NUS.

The semester at NUS starts with an integration week, which solely purpose is to give students time to connect, accommodate to the city and campus etc. Even though it might appear as an ideal possibility to take one more exam at TUM by skipping the integration week, I would highly recommend attending this first week at NUS. The integration week gives you the opportunity to meet most of the other exchange students and might determine who you will know or come

along with during the semester, making it a great opportunity to connect with and stay in contact with fellow students.

### **Academic Methodology**

The teaching style at NUS differs greatly from what TUM students are used to. First, only a restricted number of students can take part in modules. This enables a teaching style where professors can focus entirely on generally 30 or less students, making classes more interactive and dynamic than the plenum courses of the first semesters at TUM. Furthermore, modules at NUS are usually graded throughout the semester, meaning that multiple assignments need to be submitted during the span of the term. Even though those continuous assignments might be overwhelming in workload sometimes, they greatly contribute to the understanding and practical application of the module, also fostering contacts with other students through group projects etc. Although the practical workload at NUS could seem higher than at TUM, the theoretical contents of the courses in Singapore usually do not go as much in depth as in Germany. This makes the contents rather easily graspable and switches the focus on practical use and application of the theory. In the middle of the semester are held the midterms in most modules. Those exams usually count for a small amount (~10-20%) of the final grade. They are preceded by a reading week, which is a full week of lecture-free time with the focus on students preparing for the midterms. At the end of the semester, the final exams usually count for 30-40% of the final grade.

Regarding my course selection, I took four Electrical Engineering, and one language module at NUS.

EE3408C Integrated Analog Design: very time intensive module with a focus on practical construction of virtual circuits featuring different kinds of OpAmps. This module was not particularly well taught but remains interesting as the long hours creating OpAmps provide a deep understanding and intuition on the matter.

EE3731C Signal Analytics: Professor Gao is one of the best and most passionate lecturers I have ever had. This course consists of signal processing, filtering and statistical methods with an introduction to machine learning.

EE4501 Power System Management and Protection: is divided into three parts and gives an overview of economic dispatch, circuit breaker systems, short circuit analysis, grid analysis. Very insightful module that helps understand the challenges of a power grid and how to deal with them.

EE4704 Image Processing and Analysis: interesting but somewhat slow-paced module. It explains the approach of classical image processing, boundary detection, 2D-FFT and more.

LAC1201 Chinese 1: Basics of mandarin Chinese, where you get to understand the historical background of Chinese language and first notions in writing and speaking. A lot of work since every week has its own submission of homework and requires active participation and constant learning. Overall, it was a very interesting and useful module.

## **Accommodation abroad**

Just like Munich, Singapore is one of the most expensive cities to live in, with rents for average flats ranging between 1000 and 1500€. Nonetheless, finding an accommodation in Singapore was not as complicated as initially thought, as the university offers a vast offer of on campus accommodation. So far, I have not heard of any student not getting into campus accommodation (OCA) after applying through their online portal. After the first application round, I was accepted in the LightHouse at PGP.

The OCA offer spans over four very different hostel types: residences, halls, houses and colleges, with each hostel type having its distinct own perks and ways of living. The halls, for example, are known as the highly social hostel type offering a batch of activities and events, usually designed for the active and sports-oriented members of the NUS family. One attribute of those facilities is the meal plan that comes with them. Despite appearing as quite practical at first, each interaction with students of halls came with complaints about the meal plan offering small portions of food that rarely varies. Going on, houses are mostly known for their focus on a strong community and student connectivity. They offer a very diverse range of activities and interest groups in the area of sports, music, cooking, films etc. Residences are divided into PGPR and Utown, which are more individual housing options. The last housing option is the residential colleges across the campus.

During my semester at NUS, it appeared that international students mostly chose Utown over other hostel types, leaving for example Houses as a more authentic experience with more contact to local Singaporean students. Even though the LightHouse was rather far away of the college of design and engineering (about 25 minutes away by bus), it was for me an opportunity to interact with Singaporean and international students, foster friendships and take part in a lot of activities. Looking back, I wouldn't change the choice of LightHouse as my accommodation.

## **Everyday life and leisure**

The NUS offers a very wide range of student associations, activities and sports teams. Those can be divided into the official NUS teams and activities, and the offers from each individual hostel. No matter what you are interested in, no matter what you love to pursue at university, a fitting group is already waiting for you. From dance and music groups to cooking or film associations over various sports, the campus offers uncountable activities to pursue besides class. Furthermore, the university sports center is dotted with an Olympic-sized pool, a tartan track, boulder walls and other facilities that can be freely used by students. Also, almost every hostel comes with a freely accessible gym facility.

In my case, I took part in the NUS Judo sports team and various interest groups at LightHouse like the running and cinema group, as well as the outdoor adventure group of Utown. Additionally, the LightHouse and the floor I lived on regularly proposed dinners and activities like crafting, cooking and bonding with other students. Those activities were a very important part of my exchange semester to foster friendships, meet fellow students and change my thoughts after long days of uni and work.

The campus is served by a free, air-conditioned internal shuttle bus system. For city travel, the MRT (subway) and bus networks are exceptionally punctual and affordable. Fares are usually under 2 SGD and can be paid via EZ-Link cards or simply using a contactless credit card (though local cards avoid small daily fees). Note that public transport typically ceases operations around midnight. For late-night travel, the Grab app (similar to Uber) is essential and relatively inexpensive.

Singapore is a culinary "melting pot". I recommend visiting Hawker Centres like Maxwell or Amoy. A meal at a campus food court costs around 4€, making it more economical than cooking. While many vendors accept cash, many use QR-code systems like PayNow (requires a local bank account) or GrabPay. I used a Revolut account for fee-free currency exchange.

### **Intercultural experiences and personal learnings**

As Singapore is a melting pot of various cultures, the exchange with fellow students on campus, and locals whenever you engage in a conversation provides profound insights into the Singaporean politics, ways of thinking, standpoint on the international scene, challenges in the upcoming decades, struggles of the population and so much more. Observing how a nation transformed from a developing port to a global powerhouse in just 60 years is inspiring. This stay abroad was the ideal situation to enlarge my personal horizon, get in touch with new perspectives and broaden my global understanding.

### **Thinking green**

One of the most impressive aspects of Singapore is its "City in Nature" design, featuring lush greenery integrated into modern architecture. The efficiency of the public transport system makes it easy to avoid car usage. However, students should be mindful of their carbon footprint regarding regional travel. While Malaysia is accessible by bus, most other neighboring countries require flights, as air travel remains the primary regional link.

All in all, I can't recommend Singapore and the National University of Singapore enough to anyone looking for an unforgettable semester abroad. The sense of community at NUS is something I'll always remember fondly; whether it was bonding with local students during project work or exploring the city with fellow exchangers, those connections really made the semester special. I want to say a huge thank you to the EIKON e.V. for supporting me throughout this journey, and to everyone at NUS for the warm welcome. This stay has been a massive personal and cultural enrichment that I wouldn't trade for anything.

**Photo Gallery:**



Room in LightHouse



Gardens by the Bay



Marina Bay Sands



Singaporean Skyline



National Day in Singapore



Singaporean coast



Gardens by the Bay



Park in Singapore



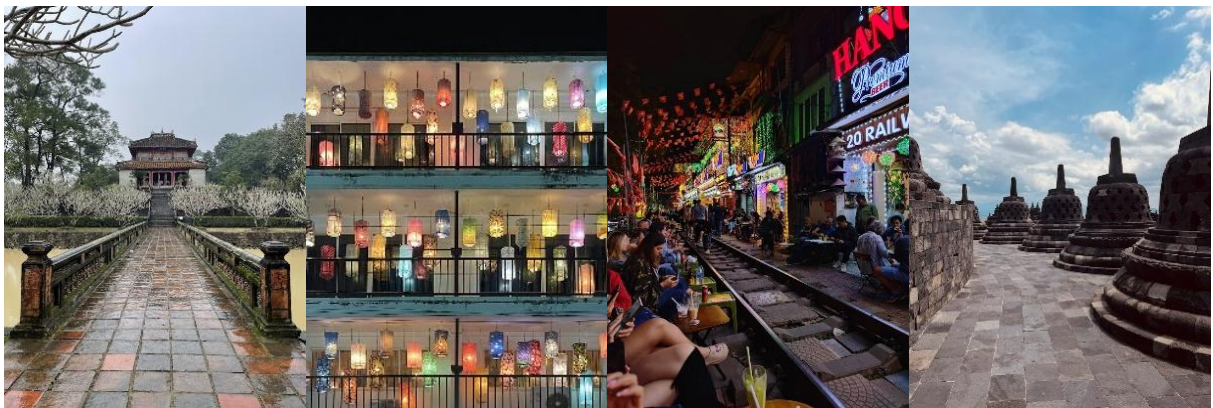
Utown on campus



Bangkok – Wat Pho

Ayutthaya

Koh Yao Yai



Hue – Minh Mang Tomb

Chiang Mai

Hanoi – Train Street

Borobudur



Hue – Khai Dinh Tomb

Hoi An

Ninh Binh



Malang – Mount Bromo

Malang – Kampung Tridi