Personal information

Name: Robert (Robbie) Ettinger
Major: Applied Economics and Management
Name of host university: Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST)
Period/Time of Exchange: Spring Semester 2018

Practical Advice

Visa: You do need a student visa but HKUST makes it super easy once you’ve been accepted and committed. Get it done early though, it makes everything easier. You will also need Visas to travel to some places in Asia so make sure to prepare before traveling.

Housing: HKUST provides on campus/dorm housing for everyone that studies abroad. I would strongly recommend putting the Jockey Club Hall as your preference. It is the only off campus dorm, but the regular shuttle bus makes it easy to get to and from campus. The rooms are also much nicer.

Arrival: Immigration is super easy, you will have your visa beforehand and there is no issue entering the country. Once you get to campus you will be given a student ID and then you can leave and enter the country through the “Hong Kong Residents” immigration lane. There was also a Buddy program and welcome that was nice to meet some local and exchange students and get acquainted with the university.

Academics

The University: Although it is a bit outside of the center of HK, the campus is beautiful and has good amenities. Students are focused but there is a lot of room for fun, especially as an exchange student.

Courses: Course enroll is simple enough – you preenroll and then fix your schedule once you’ve arrived on campus. Courses are difficult and graded on a bell curve, but shouldn’t be of any serious issue for Cornell students.

Difference between studying at Cornell and at your host university: It is definitely very different studying in Asia, but the experience is extremely worthwhile. Both are very well respected universities and require focus and dedication to studying, but nothing unreasonable. Also, exchange students generally take easier classes than at home, which makes the transition less difficult. I would focus on taking your core classes at Cornell and some more interesting and relevant ones abroad, such as Deal Making in Asia, or a Buddhism class.

Life Abroad

Language: The entire university is taught in English although you can take Chinese courses if you want. In general, there is a language gap, but nothing compared to many other cities. For example, studying in mainland China would be extremely difficult without at least a little bit of knowledge of the Chinese language.

Health and Safety: There are plenty of resources available. Keep your International SOS card (which HKUST will give you at orientation) on hand whenever you’re traveling in case something happens.

Overall exchange experience: I had a fantastic experience at HKUST. Hong Kong is an amazing city and is super central in Asia, so it is easy to travel and see a lot of the region. People are nice and even though its difficult to meet local students, the exchange community is great. I would STRONGLY recommend doing a semester in Hong Kong, especially if you’re interested in business or technology.

Additional Tips for future students

Packing: It is a bit chilly at the beginning so bring at least a jacket, but overall the weather is quite nice.

Anything else that students should be aware when studying at your host location: Hong Kong is fantastic, definitely come study here! If you have an internship for the summer, I would also recommend trying to do a trip before school starts to travel a bit more, Asia is an amazing place with so much to see!