

BWL Public and Non-Profit Management/Hong Kong/ WS2018/University of Hong Kong/ HK-2018-ebz6h-w

I spent my wintersemester of 2018 at the University of Hong Kong, where I studied Politics and Public Administration, whereas at my home university in Freiburg I study BWL Public and Non-Profit Management.

Arriving there made me feel very welcome. I arrived in my housing, which wasn't a university hall but a building organised by the university. There I was welcomed warmly by one of the tutors and she explained me the basics I needed for the evening. For the next days there was enough time to explore the neighbourhood before the Welcome Week (WoW) started. The University provides very helpful arriving tips on their website. Here there were plenty of fun things to do, like local breakfasts, campus tours, getting to know the hall evenings,... – I highly recommend participating in as many as you can! At the same time don't miss to sign up for all the orientations of the clubs. There will be stands on campus that offer information about local sport clubs etc. It's a really good idea to join a local sportsclub to meet locals and share a hobby with them.

Paperwork was a lot at the beginning but the mail instructions were really good and if you stay on track with your emails you will be just fine, just don't forget two things: bring several spare passport photos, you will need them AND have the address of your hall printed out in Chinese when you arrive in Hong Kong to show the taxi driver. One of my highlights was definitely the dragon festival that took place for the Chinese new moon, in October. Seeing the people of Hong Kong celebrating on the street is beautiful and the streetfood during this festival is excellent. Especially the mooncake.

My academic interest was not only political but also the outstanding courses and the variety of courses I could select was great. Politically Hong Kong is fascinating especially nowadays with many Chinese professors you can learn about the Chinese system as in no other place. Some things you wouldn't talk about like this in China. I really wanted to go to Asia, so Hong Kong was perfect. It is a great entrance in the Asian culture, where it's easier to get around because everyone speaks English. The official language is Cantonese but this is even harder to learn than mandarin. I decided to learn mandarin for the approximately to china and because it's more widely used and more common to learn at home.

I must admit the beforehand preparation was made fairly easy. Not only the Hong Kong visa application is simple also the international office helped provide a lot of guidelines. It sure is a lot of paper work but it is manageable. Living space and living cost is a huge issue in Hong Kong. Finding a place to live, I was lucky to get accommodation organized from the Uni. If this isn't the case the University usually recommends rental agencies that many of my friends were happy with, but it is a bit more expensive than the University halls. Also not receiving a spot in a hall isn't too worrisome. Friends of mine were as low as number 90 on the waiting list and got a room a week before departure. Where University halls are quite affordable (200-300€ a month), living outside Uni gets expensive quickly (500€ and up a month). Besides that living costs are similar/a bit higher to Germany I would say. The main difference is that in Hong Kong no one cooks because ingredients are way more expensive than getting streetfood.

Public transport in Hong Kong is also great and cheap compared to Europe. Getting from the airport into the city one can just hop in the airport express and getting around is very convenient, metro and buses work perfectly. Also taxis are affordable to go to places that are not as well connected.

The University of Hong Kong is a narrow campus, located on a little altitude along Victoria Mountain (which is also a nice afternoon hike up top for sunset). This makes you have a great view. The modern part, the centennial campus is really gorgeous and during my time there they opened up many new cafeterias. They also renovated the main library which is very modern now. Most of the technical things work, different than in Germany, perfectly online. The add and drop period is really nice: the first two weeks of the semester you can re-choose the courses you like or try more than you want and take the favorites. So no final decision has to be made beforehand. Just be online the second they open.

The courses I took were all accompanied with tutorials and many things like essays to hand in. This had the advantage that the exam at the end is not as huge. The courses were all in English which varied from very good English to very hard to understand. In general the students speak very good English and it is easy to communicate, even though I would say Hong Kong students are rather shy and it takes more effort and a bigger approach to make local friends. Generally the best way to make local friends is to join clubs. I joined the dragonboat team who are known for the warm welcome they give to freshmen. Here you make close friends and are in contact meanwhile doing an activity we don't have like this at home. Furthermore, the University of Hong Kong offers interesting guest lectures where for

example politicians come to the university and speak. This gives you a very interesting insight in what daily life and current topics in Hong Kong are. I highly recommend going there.

My timetable was as following:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10:30-12:20		Polj 3034 - Public Administration in China CPD 2.37	Polj 3022 Public Policy Analysis CPD 2.37	Polj 3059 China and the World CPD 2.59	
12:30 - 13:20					
13:30 - 14:20			Tutorial China and the World CPD-LG.35		
14:30-15:20					
15:30-16:20				Tutorial Public Admin MB113G	
16:30-18:20		CHIN 9501 Introduction to Mandarin Chow Yei Ching Building CBC	Tutorial Public policy analysis CPD-1.20	CHIN 9501 Introduction to Mandarin KKLG 101	

Having Monday and Friday off is not only great for a longer weekend but many times I used it to catch up with all the readings we had to do. Every course required approx. 60 pages preparation per week and since I was new in the topic it took me longer to fully comprehend

the texts so I liked having more time for this. Especially at the end of the semester you need a lot of time for group works so I was glad I decided against taking 5 courses. Same as in Freiburg tutorials where flexible to elect so you could choose how you wanted your week to look.

The workload of the courses are very different. In social sciences the focus is on writing essays and reading papers. Which is quite a lot of work but also extremely interesting. In many courses the final exam was a take home essay or a group project so there wasn't as intensive studying at the end required more intensive preparation for the courses. For me it felt like a lot less work then I would have with the same amount of courses back home but also it was more time during the semester invested in each course. In other faculties it is normal to have a midterm and an endterm and especially the business courses, which are quite hard.

The University offers you the opportunity to take up to 50% courses from another faculty so if you are interested you can spread it out.

I learned a lot about China in the politics courses, especially because it was the first time taking a political course. It made it harder to cope with papers and essay writing, because I wasn't used to it, but going out of it having learned that is extremely great. I also realized that this is something I really miss in my studies back home and I will try to orientate my future studies more in such a direction. The mandarin course I took was extremely helpful, not only for my travellings through China afterwards but also for the understanding of Asian languages and more of the culture.

My take away values on the Asian culture and its understanding are definitely the greatest. I learned about the relationship from Hong Kong to China and a huge amount about the current

Chinese politics. Also I understood a lot about how relationships and organizations work and what the differences to our European system is.

The exchange semester at the HKU was definitely a great experience and I would recommend it to everyone interested in the Asian culture. Being confronted with the values of Hong Kong people and also drawing a contrast to Chinese people made me realize that I couldn't live there for longer but if I were to choose again I would do it again and even considering staying a year. Values such as politeness or restaurant service are not meeting European standards at all. For me, coming from a small town, it also took quite some time to accept the denseness that Hong Kong has. People live together on an extreme small space. Studying in Germany we are not used to living on such a tight space or with such basic furniture. I definitely recommend investing money in comfort at the beginning, such as a big mattress, a couch... for 4 months it was okay. If I had the chance to choose again I would choose to stay a year in order to live the life you so adventurous built in the first 4 month. There are definitely still things to do in Hong Kong on my list and there will be many things I will miss. Thank you University of Hong Kong and THANK YOU international office for this amazing experience!