

I. MY STUDY PROGRAMME AT NTU

In the first semester of 2017-2018, I was an exchange student at the Faculty of Law of National Taiwan University. My home university is the University of Groningen (RuG), in the Netherlands, where I study International and European Law (LLB). I had already lived in Taiwan for a year in 2013-2014. NTU was my first choice for exchange destination. NTU offered me the possibility of continuing learning traditional Chinese, studying in a Law faculty of very high level, and living in a country I love. I heavily recommend Taiwan to anyone who is not afraid to step out of their comfort zone and wants the opportunity to travel outside of Europe!

A. PREPARATION AND CONTACT WITH OIA

Once selected by the RuG, I had to go through the application procedure of NTU. This is a pretty well organized and straight-forward system: in March, submit the application; in June, receive confirmation and admission package; in August, access course selection. The NTU Office of International Affairs (OIA, <http://www.oia.ntu.edu.tw/>) has different exchange students' supervisors based on continent of origin. I believe this system is to provide better assistance with Visa requirements. The Europe supervisor is Mr Alfred Chiu. He was very helpful throughout the whole application system and during my exchange. The OIA has complete services in English. The most difficult part of the procedure was selecting courses, but the NTU Law Faculty and my study buddy were available to help me.

B. ACADEMICS

At NTU, I followed nine courses: International Investment Law and Investment Arbitration, Law of the WTO, Introduction to Taiwan's Commercial Law, Mediation Clinic, International Trade Law, Global Commercial Contract Law, International Corporate Law, Judicial Process and Legal Practice in Films, General Chinese (Intermediate). The difficulty with the course selection was that NTU did not offer enough Bachelor courses to fulfil my credit requirements (30 ECTS). This was an exceptional year, as usually the Law Faculty provides enough Bachelor courses in English. To solve this issue, I took six Master courses, two Bachelor level, and Chinese (which does not count in the credits). This ended up in a very heavy workload as it amounted to 16 NTU credits, where a complete Master is 24 NTU credits. On the good side, all of these courses were taught at a very high level and I truly learned a lot in my field from this semester.

C. CAMPUS FACILITIES

NTU campus is one of the most beautiful and well-equipped campuses one could wish for. There are many green areas, with grass and trees, where one can eat and relax. Most faculty buildings are new and easily accessible. The best study areas are the Koo Chen-fu library (Social Science faculty) and the Main library. The First Student Activity Centre – which is at the end of the Royal Palm Boulevard and next to the main library – is a very common and convenient place to meet up with all your friends at lunchtime.

II. LANGUAGE

Taiwan is an optimal destination for those who wish to learn Mandarin Chinese. First, NTU offers several free Chinese courses, with different time options and learning levels. Secondly, Taiwan still retains the use of traditional Mandarin Chinese. Thirdly, the locals will speak Chinese back to

you. This is a great opportunity to practice the language on an everyday basis. Before this exchange, I had a B1 level in Chinese (TOCFL exam). I believe my Chinese improved a lot through the General Chinese course and by living in Taiwan again.

III. FINANCES

Taipei is not a very expensive destination. An average budget of €500-600 per month will take you a long way in Taiwan, including housing, food, transportation, leisure time and some travelling.

A. HOUSING

Housing can be conveniently arranged through the University once you apply. Different options are available: dorms in/outside of campus, single/double room. I personally chose to stay in a double room in the ShuiYuan Prince House dorms. This type of housing cost me NT\$4,900 per month (€140). This was a great option for me! The price is very contained, the dorms are new, and offer many facilities (gym, lounge area, washing machines etc). The ShuiYuan dorms are located outside of campus, in Gongguan. From the dorms, the campus is easily reachable by walking for 10 minutes or biking for 5.

B. FOOD

Taiwan is internationally recognised as one of the best destinations for food lovers! Restaurants, night markets, street food, and local eateries are famously numerous in the capital, especially around the district of Gongguan, where NTU is located. Gongguan offers so many food options that you could probably try a different place every day and not visit all of them by the end of the semester. On the NTU campus, many cheap and convenient meal options can also be found. Because it is Taiwan, cheap does not translate into less tasty! Rather it is the opposite: the more local and familiar a restaurant looks, the better the food will taste.

C. TRANSPORTATION

Part of the budget will also be for transportation. Biking is a very convenient way of getting around campus and the city. A new bike can be purchased for NT\$1,680 (€48) at the bike shop on campus. Many students buy and sell second-hand bikes through Facebook groups (e.g. “NTU: Buy, Sell, Trade” or “出清(台大面交)”). YouBike – with stops all around town – is also a useful system where it’s possible to borrow a bike on-the-go for very low prices. Other convenient ways of transportation are the MRT and the bus. Taipei is very well-connected city and the NTU student card allows you to access discounts on transportation.

IV. FREE TIME AND TRAVELLING

Taipei is a city where there is always something going on. You can explore the different neighbourhoods and city attractions. Museum, art exhibitions, and concerts are very popular around town. There is much to do in Taipei if you have free time from your courses. Taipei and Taiwan also allow for great travel opportunities! Taiwan is a small island but everywhere you go will present different landscapes and cultural aspects. Travelling domestically is easy by HSR, train, or coach. It is rather usual to rent scooters to travel the island. From the Taoyuan Airport, you can also easily fly to most destinations in East/South-East Asia, if you intend to travel outside of Taiwan.