



Technische Universität München  
TUM School of Management

TUM International Center – TUM Somex

## **Experience Report Exchange Semester**

**Partner University:** Peking University, HSBC Business School (PHBS)

**Time Period:** Summer Semester 2019

**Student:** Niels Sharman, 3. Semester, Master in Management (MiM)

## **Application Phase**

The application for an exchange semester at TUM-Somex is very straight forward. Just follow the steps in the guidelines and you won't have to worry about anything.

After being nominated by TUM you will have to apply on Peking University's website for study abroad. Detailed instructions will be forwarded by TUM international office. You will also have to option to apply for a single or double (shared) room. Living off campus might be an alternative if you are willing to miss out on the campus life (campus is quite remote).

## **Preparation**

### Visa

Shortly before the semester starts, you will receive the visa documents (Jw202 and Admission Letter). Don't panic, you will have enough time to get the visa. You can apply for the X2 visa at the Chinese Visa Application Centre in Laim. Foreigners please note, you will also be required to bring an enrolment certificate from TUM. The visa cost me about 150 € and was issued within a couple of days.

### Journey

Since the Semester in Shenzhen already started on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, I booked a flight one day beforehand, because I had exams to write in Munich. Due to lacking flexibility my ticket turned out to be a bit more expensive (about 680€, one way to HK) with Finnair. If you have more flexibility, I highly recommend checking flights with Finnair from Munich to Hong Kong which take about 13 hours and can be extremely cheap.

From Hong Kong you can travel to Shenzhen via train, ferry or limo service (small bus). I recommend the last two. I personally took the limo service which happens to be cheaper than the ferry and more frequent (can't remember the price, about 10 – 15 €). They take you directly to the Shenzhen boarder. From there you can take a taxi for (60 -80 RMB). Be sure to take a real taxi at the official taxi stand and don't react to random people standing behind the boarder offering you a taxi ride (fake taxis).

### Recognition of credits

Make sure that the courses you choose will be recognized by TUM at the international office. One credit at PHBS is equivalent to 2 ECTS at TUM. Courses at PHBS usually have 3 credits.

## Arrival

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the introduction week which turned out to be a big disadvantage. It took about a week to get all the required paperwork done upon arrival: registration, phone, internet bank etc. Make sure to add the coordinator (Nathan) on WeChat before you fly to China.

PHBS offers the students to apply for a residence permit which allows you multiple entries to China. I highly recommend accepting the offer since Hong Kong, and countries like Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines can be visited during weekends or holidays.

## Studies

The semester at PHBS is divided into two modules. In each module you can choose up to three courses. On the PHBS website under course selection and examination you can see which courses were offered in previous years. A couple of weeks before the semester started, a provisional list of courses was emailed to us. However, the final list which included major changes was mailed to us a couple of days before the semester started. So please be prepared to pick an alternative, in case the course you wanted to attend won't be offered.

The workload of courses at PHBS can vary but tends to be quite high. Most classes require attendance. Many courses entail homework and group work/projects. PHBS also offers a Chinese course which takes place twice a week. Since I wanted to commit more time towards studying Chinese, I enrolled in a full time Chinese Course (8.30 am – 12.30 am) at Shenzhen Polytechnic University for around 800 – 900€ for one semester. This turned out to be quite tiring since I had to commute daily between the two campuses and couldn't attend all Chinese classes. In hindsight I would have chosen a tutor instead in combination with online lectures.

## Courses

I choose the following courses: China Studies by Prof. Huang (as an elective at TUM) Corporate Finance by Prof. Li (for Investment Management) and Corporate Governance by Prof Cho (TUM elective).

## China Studies

The course China Studies can be considered thoroughly planned and well executed crash course on the Chinese economy, financial institutions, companies, culture and history. Concerning my academic experience at PHBS, this was definitely the highlight. The course aims at preparing international students for their stay in China and if applicable for their future career. The professor uses a unique and interactive teaching style which encouraged the majority of students to actively participate and contribute in their own way towards the learning experience. Since the class comprised of roughly 40 students with diverse cultural backgrounds, this happened to be a very rewarding experience. By the end of the lecture all the students knew each other personally and more about their cultural background.

The course comprised of lectures held by the professor, guest lectures by industry experts (e.g. Huawei), company visits (e.g. Shenzhen Stock Exchange), cultural excursions (e.g. Chinese Medicine Museum), discussion panels (with entrepreneurs and experts), student presentations and a final debate between the teams (e.g. "is China a developing or developed country?").

Except for the final individual report and in-class quizzes, all tasks and assignments had to be completed in teams. In the first lecture we were asked to form teams and assign different responsibilities to each member, such as monitor, group leader, main debater, main presenter, cultural ambassador (for guest lecturers) and news reporter.

Throughout the course we learned why and how China has developed to the economic powerhouse it is today by also taking its historical and cultural development into consideration. Moreover, important facts and appropriate behavior in modern Chinese business settings were thoroughly explained by the professor and guest lecturers based on real-life examples. Overall this lecture drastically changed our perception- and gave us a deeper understanding of the modern Chinese economy and its society.

I highly recommend this course to all future TUM exchange students since the knowledge conveyed in this course happened to be extremely helpful during my stay and cannot be acquired by just reading books. [Please refer to the appendix for pictures made during the lectures and excursions]

## Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance was a well-organized but also very demanding course. It aims at students with prior knowledge in Accounting and basic understanding of Finance. It comprised of group assignments, presentations, a company evaluation, as well as a mid-term exam.

The lectures were clearly structured, and all relevant knowledge was conveyed in an understandable manner. I highly recommend preparing and following up for each lecture to keep up with the fast pace of the professor since upcoming assignments from this and other classes can put students under time pressure. This also could be observed during the midterm exam where many students struggled with handling the high quantity of knowledge needed to pass it with a good grade.

At the end of the course, students were asked to form teams comprising of three and choose a company to evaluate from a given list. I highly recommend starting as soon as possible since the majority of students ended up writing the report and preparing the presentation too late which lead to long nights of work.

In overall it is possible to get a good result as long as you pick a good team and manage your time efficiently.

## Corporate Governance

Corporate Governance was a good complement for students which earlier visited the Corporate Finance lecture. The lecture comprised of smaller assignments, an individual research proposal and a final exam. The content of the lectures could be very scientific, and theory based at some points. However, the professor was always willing to engage into interesting debates with and between students which made the content more relatable. Overall the workload was in the mid-range and good grades could be achieved if students put in some work.

## Student Life

PHBS shares a large campus also called "University Town Xili" together with multiple universities. Contact with students from other universities however turned out to be rare since the majority of campus life took place at mirror lake, a small pond surrounded by convenient stores, canteens and restaurants. Everything needed for basic life was easily accessible within this area. Since this made life very convenient and due to the remoteness of the campus from the city center, many international students choose to spend time in groups and missed out on meeting other Chinese students or Shenzhen citizens. I therefore highly encourage future exchange students to try to avoid this scenario and try to meet some new people which doesn't always turn out to be easy since some of the Chinese are sometimes a little shy. Once the ice is broken however, you are able to make friends for a lifetime and get a much deeper insight into China. Learning some basic Chinese before or while your stay turned out to be helpful. Furthermore, I recommend traveling inner China. Although not always convenient to access due to language barriers and different customs, China has a lot to offer and who knows when you will ever have the time and possibility to explore it again. Stay open minded and don't think too much. Just go with it and try new things.

Appendix



*China Studies Class at the Museum for Hakka Culture*



*China Studies Class at the Shenzhen Media Group*



*China Studies Class at the Chinese Traditional Medicine Museum*



*China Studies Class at the Shenzhen Marina Yacht Club*



*China Studies Class at the Galaxy Holdings Group*



*China Studies Group at a Traditional Chinese Tea Ceremony*