



光华管理学院

Guanghua School of Management

TUM SOMex – Experience Report

Dear outgoing exchange students,

I hope this report will be useful to you, the students who are seeking to do an exchange semester in Beijing. I did my exchange semester at Guanghua School of Management (GSM), Peking University (PKU) in Spring semester 2019 (which was Summer semester 2019 at TUM). I would like to summarize all my experiences during the semester and provide you some advices about life in Beijing, China.

Application phase

Application process started from applying to TUM SOMex program. I submitted my application to TUM SOMex in Winter semester 2017/18 and specified that I would like to do an exchange semester in Summer semester 2019. The reason was the courses offered by GSM in Spring semester fit my own interests more than those in Autumn semester (the courses offered in from previous year can be found on GSM website).

After I got nominated by TUM SOM, I received an email from TUM SOM and was informed about the list of documents I needed to provide to TUM SOM by the end of September 2018. Those documents are:

1. Application Form - Application for International Passport Holder, you can complete the online application on PKU's system (<http://www.studyatpku.com>)
2. Resume
3. Copy of the highest degree certificate – in my case was my copy of bachelor's degree certificate
4. Official academic transcript – I sent an email asking TUM SOM to provide an official transcript. The process took about 1-2 weeks.

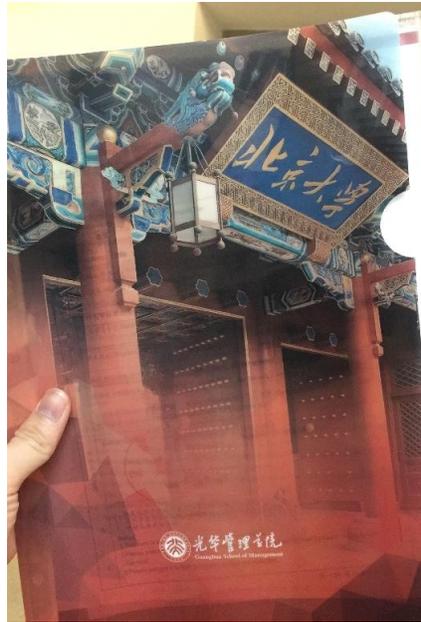
5. Official nomination letter from home university exchange office – I received a PDF copy of nomination letter beforehand. I printed it out and talked to International Office to attach the official copy for my application.
6. A photocopy of valid passport
7. One passport-sized photo, attached on the application form
8. One-page letter of motivation

The problem I found during this process was that once I was filling out the application form on PKU's website, the system asked me to provide 2 letters of recommendation. Therefore, I wrote an email asking International Office to contact PKU and I received the answer that I didn't need to provide any letter of recommendation. I needed only 2 persons' contacts in order to fill out the form and International Office provided me those contacts without writing any letters. Once those documents were ready in hard copies, I handed them in to International Office and they took care of the further process.

Preparation

I received the first greeting email from PKU around mid-November 2018 and email of acceptance around the end of December 2018. In the email it was stated that I would receive my admission package which would be sent directly to TUM SOM International Office. Once the package arrived, International Office contacted me to pick up the package. The package provided all the documents I needed in order to apply for my Chinese VISA.

Since Spring semester at PKU usually starts in mid-February, I proceeded my Chinese VISA application as soon as possible since the beginning of January. As I received the information from PKU, I needed to apply for X2 VISA in order to stay less than 6 months in China. The process took approximately 5-6 working days.



Admission package from PKU

I also needed to find accommodation in Beijing myself since PKU provided around 10 spots in student dormitory. It was difficult to find accommodation in Beijing from Germany since the language barrier was the main trouble. Therefore, I decided to book a hotel for the first two weeks to stay in Beijing and looked for accommodation there.

Students were also required to register for the courses beforehand. In my case, as a Master student, I was only able to register for the courses provided by GSM MBA program. The registration can be done on GSM's website. For international exchange students, we were only able to register for electives that were taught in English. However, as I was interested in some of their core courses, I wrote an email to ask GSM whether they can manually register those core courses for me. I took 6 classes in total, which are:

- Corporate Finance I (core course)
- Corporate Finance II (core course)
- Basic Case Study in Corporate Finance (elective)
- Valuation and Financial Statement Analysis (elective)
- Doing Business in China and Along the Belt and Road (elective)
- Real Estate Investment and Development (elective)

Arrival (welcome event/support, contact person, accommodation...)

The most important thing when I arrived in Beijing was the registration at the police station within 24 hours. In my case, I stayed at the hotel first therefore the hotel staff did the registration for me upon check-in.

PKU organized an orientation and getting together event for students. They took the students to visit all around the campus and provided some basic information about life in Beijing. Students could also buy a SIM card in the event. The carrier was Chinese Unicom.



Frozen lake in PKU campus in late February

After two weeks, I found a share apartment which costs monthly 4,300 RMB (around 550 Euros) excluding electricity, water and Wi-fi. I also had to pay a deposit of one month. I got the place by contacting a Chinese agency, therefore, I also had to pay commission fee to her. Normally people can negotiate with the agency for the commission discount. In my case, I negotiated with her and she gave me a discount. She charged me 80% of the monthly rent as commission. The agency was very helpful. She helped me in every matter of my life in Beijing even though it was not related to the apartment. She helped me to go the registration at the police station. She helped me in delivery when I needed a Chinese speaker, and so on.

The places that PKU students tend to stay are Wudaokou and Zhongguancun. My apartment is at Wudaokou and I met lots of exchange students there. Therefore, it was very easy to hang out around with exchange student friends. The place has everything and very convenient to travel to PKU (taking only 3-4 stops to PKU by bus or 10-13 minutes by bike).

Studies (course choice, teaching, exams)

Since GSM is one of the most famous business schools in China, the students in MBA program (also called IMBA or International MBA program which is taught in English) come from various background around the globe. In my class, it is comprised of roughly 1/3 Chinese and 2/3 international students. By gender, there were a bit more female students than male. And the average age of the class was around 28 years old.

The classes at GSM were different from TUM. At GSM, the grades were assessed from participation in class discussion, assignments (individual and group), and class attendance. Therefore, every class at GSM required me to sign my name. Normally, the electives do not have any final examination. But since I took two core courses, I had two final examinations which I had to prepare well for the writing examinations. The exams were rather more relaxed compared to those exams at TUM. At GSM, they gave students reasonable time to solve and write down the answers for all questions.

For the atmosphere in the class, they were also more relaxed compared to those we have at TUM because of the various background of the students, therefore, the professors wanted to make sure that all students get the basic concepts of the subjects. For example, Corporate Finance at GSM, the professor did not go deep into calculations but rather focused more on the concept and applying the concept into sample problems.



Basic Case Study of Corporate Finance Class

I attended the classes where I had both international professors (mainly from the United States) and Chinese professors who speak English very well. They took a good care of students and wanted to get in touch with the students. I had one professor who even knew the current political situation in my home country at that time.

Student life/cultural experience

In order to make life in China more convenient, international students should open a Chinese bank account. Once students receive Chinese bank account, they can use online payment through WeChat and Alipay. Every payment can be done on these applications. For example, topping up money in the student card, calling taxi, etc.

Even though there are a lot of sport clubs (badminton, football, basketball, volleyball, tennis, etc.) at PKU, I did not join any club. Since I had some MBA classmates who also love to play badminton, I hanged out and played badminton with them instead. There are also fitness gyms in the campus which the students are required to pay before use as well.



Badminton with IMBA classmates

PKU has a lot of canteens and cafés with cheap price for students (student card needed). One meal at canteen costs only around 15-20 RMB (cheaper than 3 Euros). Outside PKU there are also lots of restaurants. The most convenient way is to order food via food delivery applications such as Eleme, Meituan, etc. The delivery fee costs around 6-7 RMB (around 1 Euro).

GSM also provided trips for exchange students. Students could join the tour with reasonable price due to the subsidizing by GSM. I joined all the events to get connected with other exchange students (both in bachelor's and master's). Those events were:

- Beijing Hotpot and KTV: We had traditional Beijing hotpot and went to karaoke after.
- One-day trip to Tian'anmen square, Forbidden city, and the Temple of Heaven
- One-day trip to the Great Wall of China

- 5-day trip to Xi'an (where we can visit the Terracotta army, Mount. Huashan, PKU Xi'an campus)



One-day trip to the Great Wall of China



Trip to Mount. Huashan (Xi'an trip)

There were a lot of interesting seminars at PKU and Tsinghua university as well. Students can take the opportunity to learn more about China through these events. I participated some seminars such as a talk about the trade war between China and the United States, Chinese trading and commercial culture since 1700, etc.

Apart from those events offered by PKU, there were also a lot of cultural events in Beijing. I also watched the real Peking Opera and travelled around the city. Beijing is the great city surrounded by many mountains. People who love hiking will love Beijing. I did a hike almost every weekend. There are also many tour agencies in Beijing providing many kinds of trips for foreigners. I also joined a trip to Tianjin city, Mount. Baishishan, Longqing gorge, some other parts of the Great Wall, Inner Mongolia, etc.



Peking Opera



View from the top of Baiwangshan nearby Wudaokou district

Some tips about life in China

Downloading these applications for your life in China:

1. WeChat: The most used chat application. It is also used for online payment.
2. Alipay: Another channel for online payment. But on Alipay you can top up your PKU student card as well.
3. Baidu Ditu (Baidu map): To navigate around China.
4. Baidu Translator: To help you translating Chinese.
5. Mobike: A mobile sharing bike which you can pay 50 RMB (around 6 Euros) for unlimited rides in 90 days.
6. ExpressVPN: There are many providers of VPN. I used ExpressVPN. I was charged around 10 Euros monthly for the service. ExpressVPN was quite stable but sometimes if there was

some event related to the Chinese government, such as National congress, the service can be down for several days.

7. Taobao: It is like E-Bay for Chinese people. You can get any cheap and acceptable quality products within three days on this application.
8. JD: Another online market to buy authentic product directly from the distributor.
9. Didi: Online taxi service like Uber.
10. Eleme: Online food delivery.
11. Meituan: Online food delivery.
12. Mobile banking applications such as ICBC, PSBC apps



WeChat



Alipay



Baidu Map



Baidu translator



Mobike



ExpressVPN



Taobao



JD



Didi



Eleme



Meituan



Mobile banking apps