Instructors
- What were they like when compared to UCSB instructors?
  o Overall, the instructors were much better public speakers than those at UCSB. They were also from all over the world.

- Could you call them by their first names?
  o I believe I was on a first name basis with about half of my instructors, including many that were not from Western countries. Singaporean students are generally more formal in their interactions with authority figures, but the instructors usually don’t mind if you use their first name.

- Was the student/instructor relationship more formal than at UCSB?
  o The relationship is traditionally more formal, but instructors generally do not mind if you attempt to engage with them in a casual manner.

- Were they available for help during office hours?
  o Yes, all instructors held office hours.

Courses
- Were the courses more difficult when compared to UCSB courses?
  o Yes, the courses were slightly more difficult than at UCSB. This is due to their increased focus on rote memorization. The tests, especially in the biology department, required much more memorization than those at UCSB.

- Was the grading system similar to UCSB?
  o No. Our on-site EAP liason was charged with converting our grades to the system that UCSB uses. They do, however, use the same letter grades that we do so don’t get too worried about a different grading scheme.

- How did the course structure differ? Ex) did you have many assignments or just finals?
  o There were some assignments but exams were definitely the focus of most courses in the sciences. My tests (Dept. Geography and Biology) were worth between 40-70% of the total course grade.

- Did you have oral and/or written exams?
  o Midterm and final exams were always written but I completed a few projects, which had an oral presentation component.

- Was the final exam schedule flexible or inflexible?
  o I am not sure. I never attempted to reschedule a final. I imagine that the schedule was inflexible because the University takes final exams really really seriously.
- What kind of academic support, if any, did you receive?
  o The on-site EAP liaison is really helpful with crashing classes/arranging schedules etc.. Other than that assistance, I did not receive any academic support.

- Did you find you needed to be more independent and take more initiative abroad?
  o If I said no, then I wouldn’t have REALLY studied abroad.

- Was classroom participation expected?
  - I would say that it is “hoped for”, in the sense that it is expected but Singaporean students are extremely shy. Exchange students are easily able to impress instructors because we are generally more active participants in the classroom than Singaporean students. Seriously, their eyes light up when you raise your hand. Take advantage of it!

- How were the host university courses different than UCSB courses?
  o Final exams were more weighted than those at UCSB. Biology courses had more field trips but they inevitably all end up going to the same places because Singapore is teeny tiny.

- Were classes usually on certain days/times and for how long?
  o Most classes have one 2-hour session per week, plus one 1-hour discussion section. Science classes have an additional 4 hour lab section.

- What is the class culture like? How important was it to be punctual? Could you eat/drink in class?
  o The academic culture is pretty intense. I often thought that classes FELT harder than they actually were because all the Singaporean students would spend every waking hour studying in the library. It didn’t take me long to realize, however, that the locals preferred to “over-study” rather than risk anything less than an A+. So, my advice is to be the individualistic American you know you are and don’t give in to the peer pressure. You DO NOT need to study as much as the locals do to get As.
  Eating and drinking was allowed in all my classes. Students at NUS are notorious for being late to lecture. Having said that, punctuality is important at any school you go to.

Language
- In which languages were the courses offered?
  o All courses except language courses are offered in English.
- What language did you take your courses in?
  o I took my courses in English.

- If you took your courses in a foreign language, please provide info about your overall experience, difficulty of courses, language acquisition, placement exams, etc.
  o N/A

Host University
- How large is the university? Student enrollment and approx campus size (smaller than UCSB)? Is it an urban campus with many tall buildings or just a few building?
  o The NUS main campus is literally built around a jungle. This campus comprises a fairly circular ring surrounding a forested park in the center. The university has more students than UCSB but the main campus is comparable in size to the UCSB campus. NUS manages to retain a true “campus” in the sense that we think of one, but it is located in middle of the city. Also, I’ve heard it referred to as “National University of Stairs” so be ready to work those quads! NUS has another satellite campus that contains several graduate schools but EAP students will likely not have classes there.

- Do the local students live on campus, at home, or off campus?
  o Local students either live in dorms on campus or at home. It is generally too expensive for them to have their own apartment off campus.

- If not located in the city center,
  o How far or close is it to the city?

    o What type of public transportation could you take – cost?

    o Could students take cabs -cost?

    o How long would it take to get to the city center?

- Are there student clubs on campus that UC students could join?
  o Yes! NUS has many student clubs, often for activities that Americans will have never heard of. In particular, look out for a sport called “Takraw”! The skill level of their university sport teams is generally lower than that of UCSB so it may be possible for you to join an actual university team. Of course, you would have to be a year student in order to do this, so if you are a semester student, extend now!

- Is there a bookstore on campus? Where did you get your books?
I rarely bought books for my classes. Most profs put the readings online or put a book on reserve in the library. If you do need to buy a book then there is a bookstore on campus where you may do so.

- Is there a computer lab on campus? Or, should students bring laptops?
  - There is a computer lab but it is insanely small! You should definitely bring a laptop with you.

- What types of establishments are in the university’s neighborhood? (cafes, stores, etc)
  - There are several dining halls, known as “canteens” where students can purchase food on campus. They resemble food courts but are nothing like any food court you’ve ever experienced in a mall. In addition, the Singaporean government subsidizes food costs on campus so it is insanely cheap to eat at these places. Think $2-5 per meal.

**Housing**

- What types of accommodations are available to UC students?
  - UC students may either live in on campus dorms or off campus apartments that are owned by NUS. Unlike the dorms, off campus apartments generally don’t have local students.

- How close are they to campus?
  - Off campus housing is a 15-20 minute bus ride to campus.

- How did you find your housing?
  - I was assigned to my housing by NUS housing office.

- Where did you live and with whom?
  - I lived in an off campus apartment with 3 other Americans (1 UC student) during my first semester. During second semester, I lived with 2 Americans and 1 German exchange student.

- If you lived off campus, was it difficult to find an apartment and roommate?
  - No, NUS assigned me an apartment and roommates.

- Were the rooms nicer or not than I.V./UCSB dorms?
  - The rooms were comparable to many I.V. rooms that I have seen. In other words, they were not that nice. They weren’t horrible either though.
- Was it more expensive than living in I.V.? How much was a typical rent cost in US dollars?
  o I think I paid about SUS 400 per month for my double room in a 2 bedroom apartment. This is cheaper than anything I’ve heard of in I.V.

- How/who did you pay for housing?
  o NUS

**Food**

- What was the food like?
  o Sweet, spicy, salty, gooey, crunchy, tangy, amazing, and glorious. I chose Singapore because I like to eat.

- Where did you eat most of your meals? Cafeterias, restaurants, street vendors, etc?
  o Street vendors! Singaporeans call them hawkers, and they are located in hawker centers. The government strictly regulates the cleanliness of these eateries so there is no need to shy away from them. Honestly, my single favorite aspect of Singapore was its street food. Look up ‘Anthony Bourdain Singapore’ on Youtube to find out more.

- How much was an average meal?
  o $3 US

- What time of day did people eat lunch/dinner?
  o Singaporoleans eat all the time.

- Would it be difficult for vegetarians to find meals?
  o No but there is less variety for you guys. Many Chinese and Indian food stalls offer vegetarian options for religious reasons so it is not hard to find something that will work for you.

**Travel/Safety**

- If not discussed above, describe the public transportation system around your host university/city?
  o It’s pretty awesome. Several bus lines stop at the NUS main campus and they are currently building an MRT (sky train) station next to the campus. You do not need to worry about getting around when you are in Singapore.

- Did you feel safe in your host city? Are there tips you would offer future students?
  o I always felt very safe in the city. The laws are so strict there that the crime rate is ridiculously low. None of the other students I knew had any problems with crime.
Describe the public transportation in your host country?
  - MRT= Mass Rapid Transit = sky train
    • Comes every 6-8 minutes. Almost always on time. Super clean. Stops running at midnight.
  - MTB= bus system
    • Comes every 6-20 minutes. Usually on time. Super clean. Stops running at midnight.
  - Several taxi companies
    • Expensive if not shared. Essential for returning home from nightlife.

Was it difficult/easy to travel to neighboring countries?
  - Very easy. Singapore is situated within a 3 hour flight from several amazing countries. Southeast Asian budget airlines are ridiculously cheap. I went on 4 hour flights that cost $50US.

Host City/Country
  - What was the weather like?
    - Tropical—hot, muggy, rainy

  - Describe your host city…which California/US city is it similar to (if any)?
    - Half Asian/Half Western metropolis. It’s super clean, super organized and full of exotic tempting scents and flavors wafting from tiny hawkers and global food chains alike. The mix of familiar and unfamiliar vibes makes it an experience unto itself.

  - What were some interesting/fun things that you did in the host city?
    - I loved to follow up on food tips from Singaporean friends, or better yet, to have them show me themselves. I went to a lot of obscure hawkers and bars that I would have never found if not for local students tips. Besides eating and drinking, I enjoyed hiking in the last remaining fragment of old growth rainforest near the center of Singapore (Bukit Timah). If you enjoy nature, check this place out, there are monkeys everywhere!

  - How international was your host city in terms of tourism, cultural diversity, and international businesses?
    - Extremely international. The Singaporean government relies international companies for much of its economic power. Accordingly, there is a lively expat community. For such a small place, Singapore is culturally diverse. The 3 most represented nationalities are Indian, Malaysian, and Chinese.

Culture
  - Describe the cultural differences that you observed/encountered.
o Time & punctuality
  ▪ Local NUS students tend to get to their lectures late.

o Eye contact & staring
  ▪ In general, locals are used to seeing a diverse range of people so staring is not widespread phenomenon. Although I am biased, as I am a man, so women may have a different experience. Locals tend towards the shy side so they may be hesitant to make eye contact when you first meet.

o Relationships
  ▪ Singaporean relationships are generally taken very seriously. Almost all relationships between college-age people are long-term.

o More formal dress in general, for women, for school, etc?
  ▪ NUS students don’t dress particularly well for classes unless they have some sort of presentation to give. Guys walk around in really small gym shorts, tank tops, and flip flops so style is definitely not a necessity. However, all nightlife establishments have dress codes so be sure to bring collared shirts/nice jeans/slacks/dresses/heels if you’re into that scene.

o Alcohol consumption
  ▪ Singaporean students drink much less than UCSB students. It just depends on the crowd you socialize with. On average, there’s a lot less partying than IV.

o What culture shock did you go through?
  ▪ It was sometimes hard to work in groups with Singaporean students because they don’t focus their thoughts as I have been taught to. My group members would take an excessive amount of time to discuss ideas for a project so I would often take control of the discussion in order to express our ideas more plainly. I’ve heard some people describe this phenomenon by saying that “Singaporeans speak in circles”.

o Other?

Banking
  - Were credit cards widely accepted?
    ▪ I always paid in cash so I’m not sure. I know that they don’t accept credit cards on campus.

  - Did you open a local bank account? Was it easy?
    ▪ No

  - If you did not open a local bank account, was it easy to withdraw money from the ATM? Which banks were popular & had low ATM fees?
    ▪ I used my existing Wells Fargo account for the entire year. I just called them before I left to let them know that I would be living abroad for an extended period. There was a $5US fee for every ATM withdrawal so I made sure that I withdrew
my maximum daily allowance every time. I am not sure what the fees were for other banks.

- Were there ATMs on campus?
  - Yes.