

IT University Travel Report

Basic information:

Host University: National Taipei University of Technology (Taipei Tech)

Study Programme at IT University: Digital Innovation and Management

Exchange Agreement or Study Abroad: Exchange agreement

Courses studied abroad: Production R&D Innovation Management, Supply Chain Management, Operations Management & Cross Culture Management.

Exchange Period: semester (autumn/spring): Autumn. **Year:** 2022

My stay abroad:

What was it like to study at Taipei Tech (including choice of courses, academic level, social life at campus)?

I took Master's level classes from the college of business. I think that there was a fair amount of choices for English-speaking students, at least I had a lot to choose between. And if you speak mandarin there are of course more choices. I experienced varying degrees of difficulty, all of the classes I took required no previous knowledge of those subjects and they were all introductory to the subjects. However, what is required of the students is pretty different than at ITU, there are frequent tests/quizzes and mid-term exams, as well as a project with a report and presentation in most classes. It can be a lot to juggle, but the academic level is not outrageous, however, there is a certain expectation of learning the professor's words by heart in some classes. And also participation is mandatory and counts towards your grade. Some classes don't even have books or texts, so all you have to go is the professor's lectures.

I experienced various levels of English abilities among the teachers, most were just fine and easy to understand, however, I did have a couple of classes where the English was an obstacle to overcome, as well as some of the slides being fully in mandarin (The google translate app is a big help and taking pictures of slides in class was encouraged and accepted).

Apart from the language, some variations in the professors' teaching plans were very noticeable. Some had on the first day of school submitted a teaching plan to the platform called "Ischools" with a description of what topics, chapters, and exercises we would cover and when they would be, as well as a plan for the exam project and so on (very organized). With others you had the definite feeling that they were just not very good at sticking to a plan - in the first lecture of every course, they introduce a syllabus and a plan for the semester, but after a few classes, it becomes clear that there is no way we are going to make it through

all that is in the plan when the teacher spends 1,5 hours on one example unprompted by students.

I liked the classes, most English language classes were very small, so it was easy to talk to many of my new classmates. People are either local Taiwanese who like to learn about your culture, or fellow international or exchange students who also just want to make new friends.

There are several clubs on campus that you can join, but you have to be aware of when they have the "club day expo" because the school won't just tell you. Apart from official clubs, there is a big community for exchange and international students, and if you are in an elevator with another foreign student, they will usually smile and nod at you, or sometimes even just start talking to you, because you are all in the same boat.

Schooldays are long for those doing full-time study, and there are always people on campus. Some classes even end as late as nine in the evening. But you can choose which ones you want, when choosing classes you get to see what time and day they are, so you don't apply for classes on the same time and day - and that way you can also have a hand in not having classes at six, seven or eight in the evening.

What was your initial motivation for going abroad and did your stay meet your expectations?

I wanted to experience a different culture and try to live in a place with different views and values from the ones I grew up with.

I definitely think that I experienced all the differences, but because our world is so connected, it wasn't too overwhelming. The Taiwanese are incredibly helpful and kind, even though they may not always know how to help you, they will try their best. It was refreshing and amazing to get to experience their kind and welcoming spirit.

I also got to study courses that I couldn't at ITU, and it gave me a better idea about what I could be interested in working on later after finishing my education.

Please describe what you got out of your stay, both personally and academically, and how do you expect it to contribute to your further studies?

I got to test myself and see if I was capable of doing all of this (organizing my exchange and carrying it out) on my own. Turns out I was, and it was an incredible feeling when everything finally fell into place. I also got to see if I would be interested in working abroad after my studies finished, and I now have the experience and know that moving and adjusting to a new country and culture is something I can definitely do if I want to and have the opportunity to do later on.

Academically I got to try my hand at new courses and found some so interesting that they actually ended up influencing the direction of my Master's thesis project.

Arranging your stay

Please give a short description of the process of arranging your stay:

I was planning my exchange during the height of the covid pandemic in Taiwan, and for the large part, I was not even sure if I would get to go.

But the process itself is very straightforward, if you are nominated, you have to apply to the school, there is a process, and ITU and Taipei Tech will help you, if you are accepted, you need a visa and to get that you need a Ministry Of Education(MOE) certificate, which will be sent to you a little after you have gotten accepted. I needed a heap of other documents as well, but I suspect that was mainly because the borders were technically still closed when I left, so I needed special permission. You will be guided through it, but don't think you won't have to take initiative sometimes. When applying for the school you can tick a box about whether you would like to stay at the dorm or find your own accommodation. There are links on Taipei Techs' webpage to certain housing sites and there are quite a few sharehouse websites as well, I know from my fellow exchange students that both are fine options, with different pros and cons. However! Do check up on potential problems like scamming, faulty carbon monoxide detectors, and not earthquake-proof houses.

Earthquakes are common in Taiwan, though they rarely get big in Taipei, but don't be surprised if you wake up in the middle of the night and feel like your bed, floor, ceiling, and walls are suddenly like the Tivoli fun house. No buildings actually collapse from this, but it is a little unpleasant. For me, it was more of a nature chock with the climate and animals and earthquakes than a cultural one.

Also, a side note is that at the dorms you have no kitchen, not even a fridge. You have public water fountains from which you can fill a water bottle or a pack of cup noodles with either cold or boiling water, but that is it. Food is very cheap here, so don't worry too much about your finances, but I actually start to miss cooking food for myself.

After accommodations, I got vaccinated for a lot of different things, and some required two shots, months apart, so if you are not up to date on your tropical country diseases and swamp mosquitos, go see a doctor, and be sure to put it in your budget as you have to pay for it yourself and some of them are quite expensive.

Plane tickets are worth buying as early as you can, in order to save money, and it doesn't hurt to check out the pricier airlines, as you can save money if you need to change your ticket or add more baggage for the return trip. Some airlines won't let you board if you do not have a return ticket, so it is best to buy both at the same time. Many of the exchange students, myself included, flew with Emirates, and they have very reasonable rates if you buy them a few months before, I bought mine in early July, and left around mid-august. Emirates is also flexible, one of the official documents I needed was delayed, due to covid guidelines being changed, so a bunch of us had to postpone the flight one week, and it cost me 9dkk, someone else who flew with budget airlines basically had to buy a whole new ticket.

When you get here, there is not that much information about the study start, but you are given a guide to sign up for courses and on the first Monday of the term, it is like buying

concert tickets and everybody is sitting ready to sign up. After the study start, a trip to the local health clinic is arranged for all those who do not have a health certificate, as a Dane you need a certificate that you have gotten your measles and rubella shots and also a chest x-ray - you can do it in Denmark and pay a couple of thousand, or wait until the health check, where they drive you to and from the clinic, it is laughably cheap in comparison, and it is an opportunity to spend time with all the other exchange students. You will need the health certificate to get your student card, which works as a payment card, travel/easy card, and access card to school stuff and the dormitory (if you live there). Also, measles and rubella are part of the danish child vaccination program, and you can download your danish copy and add some English-written pdf files to it, and if you bring that to the clinic, then you only need to get the x-ray, making it even cheaper.

For resources I spent time on travelblogs about Taiwan, I called on the SAP team, who are very helpful, and I was in almost constant contact with the Office of International affairs team, who will also do their best to help you. If you write to them, be aware that we as Danes are very casual in our email conversations, and that can be seen as rude in some cultures. I got more help and faster replies when I wrote "Dear Mr. X", or "Dear Ms. X thank you for you fast reply", Also these people are normally really busy and with the extra problems with the pandemic, it is good to be understanding that sometimes they don't have all the answers, but if you are kind, they will do their best to get you the answers you need. It also clears up a lot of things if you check out the Taipei Techs website, it might not always be completely up-to-date, but it will clear up some things and help you along with the process. The "Line" app is also something you will be asked to download and a lot of the communication will going on there so join up sooner rather than later - when you have been accepted you will be asked to join.

Expenses and Financing

Please comment on expenses connected to your stay abroad

Firstly the currency is the New Taiwan dollar(NTD), it is roughly about 24 danish kroner to 100 NTD. Food is as I mentioned cheap, and as you will find on most travel blogs local food is the cheapest. If you want western food it is always (regardless of quality) more expensive.

Tea is a significant expense as there are tea stores everywhere, and it is easy to be tempted in the sweltering heat to buy the famous bubble milk tea or a nice lemon passion green tea. As someone who didn't even like tea when I left Denmark, this was an unforeseen expense. Luckily the teas are fairly cheap as well, some stores even offer student discounts when you get your student card.

Books are not really a big expense, I had to buy one that was about 1000NTD, so around 250DKK, which we all know for a school book is not expensive.

Like I also mentioned before, set aside some money before you go for vaccinations, and if you are a member of "Danmark", see how much they cover.

The rent is comparable to Denmark, but still on the cheaper side for apartments, and most include utilities. The dorm is cheaper, I paid around 6000DKK for an entire semester with utilities and internet.

For your phone I recommend buying a simcard from brands like Chungwa telecom, they have an unlimited data plan that is about the same price as I would pay in Denmark for a non-unlimited data plan.

These are probably the most normal expenses that you will encounter.

Did you apply for scholarships and would you recommend any ones in particular?

I applied for 8 scholarships and got three, from William Demant Fonden, Augustinus Fonden, and from Knud Højgaards Fond. Beware that some of them will require a sort of "travel report" and an updated budget post-exchange. Save your receipt!

Also in Taiwan, there is a receipt lottery, so it is worth saving all your receipts as you can win money on them every other month - google for more information.

Recommendations for other students:

Start early! If you are not prepared to be on top of the practical things and to initiate contact to get answers or help, your stay will be very confusing. The Taiwanese are very kind and they want to help as much as they can, but the ones at the school are very busy, and if you need something, you need to ask them for it, don't expect them to just find out you need something, no matter how basic it might be.

Look into what you want to see on the whole island, Taiwan is not big and it is easy getting around, and there is so much to see and do, and even a few days a year the school is closed so you get a long weekend! That is the perfect time to go on a trip to the south of the island or hike in the national parks.

Also, make sure your things dry fast, the humidity is crazy! and bring an umbrella and sweater everywhere no matter if the sun is shining or if it is 30+ degrees. Rain can come at any time, and all indoor places are like freezers with the air-conditioner turned to the max! I had a sore throat all through September. Umbrellas can be bought once you are here, so don't stress about fitting one in your luggage.

Staying at the dorms is cheap. But if you are a boy I heard some horror stories about the boys-only dorm. The dorm next to campus is super convenient, but do ask them about safety procedures and get them in English. During the semester fire drill they had completely forgotten about the exchange students, and not only were we not on the checklist for if we had come out of the building, but the following 1,5 hour's safety lecture was also only available in mandarin. I did ask for an English explanation, but they didn't manage to get one to me before it was time to leave.

Also, as the last tip, I regret going the semester before my master's thesis starts, as I really could have done without all the preparation for the master's thesis, as it took time away from doing fun things in Taiwan and concentrating on the studies I had there. It is also not easy to get everything done while abroad, the ITU introduction to the master thesis is not really geared for those not able to be present and I think you would get more out of it, if you are

present for the things they have planned, also, there is no online course on offer. So unless you are prepared to do everything yourself, try to go earlier.