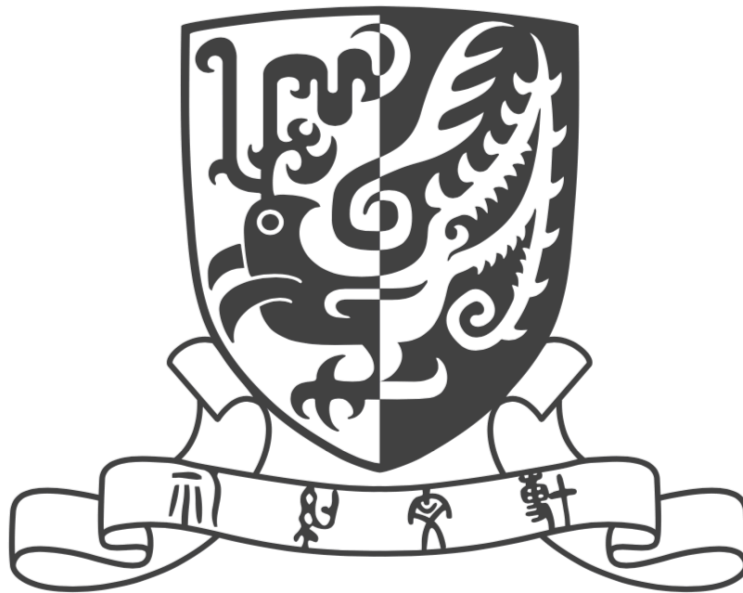


The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

Exchange Term – Fall 2018

Lawrence Lin



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Introduction

Hi there! My name is Lawrence Lin and I'm from the class of 2019. I specialized in the Product and Service Management of the MBA program at UBC. I attended the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in the fall of 2018. I chose Hong Kong as my exchange destination because of the vibrant city and its unique culture. CUHK has a great reputation and is the oldest university in Hong Kong. The exchange option was an exciting opportunity to expand my network, diversify my learning and explore new career opportunities. I want to learn about the key industries and how businesses are conducted in Hong Kong. In addition, I was excited to meet and work with people from different parts of the globe. In my opinion, the exchange option is a great choice if you want more exposures to other international industries and markets beyond the Global Immersion Experience. I would recommend Hong Kong to students who enjoy a fast-paced lifestyle and want to network with professionals in the finance industry.



Orientation

I arrived in Hong Kong during the first week of September, a few days before classes begin at CUHK. You can get your welcome package (forms, campus map, name tent, student card, etc.) at the MBA building before classes begin. The school organized a welcome lunch for exchange student later in the month. There are also many clubs and networking events organized by FT MBA students and CUHK for you to join. Postings are available from either the WeChat group or weekly newsletter emails. Similar to UBC, CUHK has a buddy system and I was assigned to 2 FT MBA students. There were around 15 exchange students from the US, the UK, Italy, Japan, Germany, Canada, France and China.

Courses and Registration

The MBA administrative staff from CUHK will send out a few emails in the summer regarding the registration process. You can expect course selection to take place around July. Heidi Tam and Sandra Chan were the staff at the MBA office that I contacted for all administrative related inquiries.

The course selection process was straightforward, Heidi will send out an excel file with all available courses for exchange student to make their selection. Only a brief description about each course is provided in the excel and the course outline will not be available until classes begin in September. CUHK has 2 specializations: finance and entrepreneurship. There were around 15 courses related to these areas to choose from during my exchange term. Since most of the courses are first year, you need to check to make sure the courses you select are different from the ones you completed at UBC. Also, make sure you have enough credits to graduate if you are not planning to take capstone in December. In my case, I took an extra course during the summer to make up for the missing credit (you can consider online courses from GNAM). The option to add and drop classes will remain available until the first week of classes. You can have morning, evening and weekend classes (they vary in length and duration). CUHK require a minimum of 9 credits of MBA courses during the exchange term. 3-credit courses will run from September to November (with the exception of business school trips – more on this later). 1.5-credit courses will either run for half the duration or complete in 2-3 days (8-10 hours per day) depending on the instructor. Some courses have limited enrolment and courses from other faculties are also available for exchange students. I took 5 courses from September to November.

- Financial Management (3 credits)
- Current Topics in Business Modelling (1.5 credit)
- Platform and Strategy (1.5 credit)
- Current Topics in Management (1.5 credit)
- US Business Trip (3 credits)

The US business trip was optional and required a course fee. The trip was similar to our Global Immersion Experience and ran for one week in San Francisco to explore Silicon Valley. Other destinations are available at different times of the year.

Teaching

There is not much class participation at CUHK as instructors generally do all the talking in class. Some courses have in-class activities where you can win small prizes. Course contents are illustrated in the context of different industries and markets in Asia. All lecture notes and business cases are provided in class. Some courses have an online lecture component. Students are expected to watch the online lecture and then complete a quiz. Overall, the workload at CUHK is less than UBC.

For 3 credit courses, deliverable include weekly quizzes, 1-2 business cases/assignments and a final exam in late November. The US business trip require a pre-trip presentation, a daily log for each company visit, a group presentation and a reflection paper.

For 1.5 credit courses, deliverable can a mix of quizzes, group report/project and presentation. The 1.5 credit courses that I took did not have a final exam. These courses can run for 6 weeks or over the weekend (8-10 hours each day).

Regardless, you will have a lot of time to explore the city, join field trips and attend networking events/workshops.



Financial Management Class Photo

Language Courses

I did not take part in any language classes. CUHK offer language classes (Mandarin and Cantonese; 1 week to 3 months in length) at the Yale-China Chinese Language Centre. More information can be found on the practical guide which is included as part of the welcome package. I learned from some FT MBA students that CUHK offered an introductory Mandarin class in August.

Campus Facilities

CUHK has 2 campuses, the main campus is located in Sha Tin (University MTR Station) and a downtown campus at the Bank of America Tower (Admiralty MTR Station). There are many facilities at the Sha Tin location including libraries, sport amenities, restaurants, bookstore, medical clinics and more. Libraries can be crowded at times and study rooms are also difficult to book. Computers are available on campus but I usually carry my laptop with me. Shuttle bus provides free transportation around the main campus. Most of my time was spent at the Cheng Yu Tung/MBA building in Sha Tin. Some of my 1.5 credit classes were at the downtown campus. The location is less packed and study rooms were usually empty. Hong Kong is densely populated and most of the time it will be difficult to find a quiet place to study. I would recommend the downtown campus if you want to get some work done.

International Students

Heidi Tam and Sandra Chan were part of Student Services & International Programs. They are friendly, knowledgeable and usually respond to email on the same day. Their office is on the 14th floor of the Cheng Yu Tung building.

Housing Facilities

On-campus accommodation was not an option for exchange students. CUHK provided a list of off-campus locations for exchange students to consider. Rent in Hong Kong is expensive and, depending on the size and location, can range from \$5,500 HKD to \$18,000 HKD per month (utilities may be extra). It can also be difficult to find a place for a 3-month duration (prices are also higher for short-term stay). Serviced apartments and AirBnB are good options because they offer weekly cleaning services and short-term accommodation.

Costs and Expenses

Accommodation. I found a place in Mong Kok before leaving Vancouver and it cost around \$9,000 HKD per month. The place was small but modern and included everything that I needed. Mong Kok can be packed with tourists but MTR stations, restaurants, convenience stores, malls and coffee shops are footsteps away. Central, Causeway Bay and Tsim Sha Tsui are also good locations. In general, Hong Kong is very convenient with easy access to your daily needs.

Textbooks. I did not have to purchase any textbooks for the courses that I took. All courses materials were either available online as downloadable files or provided as hardcopies by the instructors.

Transportation. The public transportation system (MTR) in Hong Kong uses an Octopus card (similar to the Compass card in Vancouver) for transportation (bus, train and subway). Each trip cost around \$10-30 HKD depending on where you want to go. The card can also be used at many locations including CUHK, printing and laundry services, McDonald's, 7-11 and many restaurants. You can refill the Octopus card at any location the payment is accepted but you must pay in cash (no credit cards). Taxis are also inexpensive but some drivers will have problems understanding where you want to go. If you are unsure about the location, try to save it on your phone and show it to the driver.

Internet and Phone. Wi-Fi was included at my accommodation. Free Wi-Fi is available at many locations in Hong Kong. I used a prepaid service from ChinaMobile Hong Kong and costs around \$150-250 HKD per month depending on your usage.

Food and Groceries. Local Asian food is cheap in Hong Kong. You can expect to spend \$50-100 HKD per meal. Western foods cost about the same or more in Hong Kong than in Canada. Taxes and tips were not needed. There are also many upscale restaurants and bars to check out.

Student Health Services

The health insurance provided by UBC will cover you during the exchange term. According to the welcome package, there is also a University Health Service on campus which provides general health care. The service is free of charge for any of the clinical services including medicine provided directly by the UHS except house visits and dental services. The welcome package contains contact information and office hours.

Social Events

Most social events were posted on the MBA WeChat group or by emails. There are many clubs and activities to join from September to November (FMCG & Luxury club, Finance & PEVC club, Technology & Startup club, Sports club, Woman in Business club and Consulting club). I attended a FinTech event, a speaker event from LVMH and a few case/career/company workshops organized by different clubs. There is also a large UBC alumni group in Hong Kong. I attended the Happy hour event in September and the Cryptocurrency and Blockchain event in November hosted by UBC.



Cyberport Venture Capital Forum

Career Services

The career services are available to all exchange students. You also have access to CUHK's online job board (the interface is the same as COOL) where you can apply for jobs and book appointment with a career advisor to review resume or learn about the job markets in Hong Kong. CUHK has a career fair on campus in October.

Sports and Recreation

CUHK has many sport facilities on campus. Tracks, badminton, basketball and tennis courts can be booked free of charge. Squash courts and swimming pool have an entrance fee. Hiking and running are popular activities in the MBA program and have their own WeChat groups.

Study Tours and Field Trips

CUHK offered an optional 3-credit US business trip to visit Silicon Valley in late November. The trip took place after our final exams and was similar to the Global Immersion Experience at UBC. Instead of a consulting project, we had to come up with a venture and pitch it to a panel of CEOs from the Valley. There was a pre-meeting in late October where you have to finalize your group and give a brief presentation about your venture. The trip was one week in length and included many company visits (Google, IBM, Oracle, LinkedIn, Prezi and more). The trip has a course fee and students are responsible for their own flights and meals. Accommodation was arranged by the school (not included in course fee). FT MBA also organized other field trips to Shenzhen, Macau and Japan. Student arranged trips are typically one day long or over the weekend.



US Business Trip at Prezi

What to Bring

Hong Kong can be extremely hot and humid from late August to September. The temperature starts to cool in October. I wore a T-shirt, a pair of jeans and kept a sweater in my backpack most of the time (thick jackets are not necessary). This sufficed for the hot outdoor temperature and cool air-conditioned lecture rooms. Business/smart casual and business formal are recommended for most social events. Business formal for events arranged by the FMCG & Luxury club and the career fair. For other occasions business casual will do. I would recommend to only pack the things you absolutely need. Expect to live in a small place with not a lot of storage space and you can find the things you need in Hong Kong (shopping malls are everywhere).

General Impressions

The exchange program is a great opportunity to extend your learning to an international level and get a different perspective on the MBA program after completing the core courses at UBC and an internship. Hong Kong is a global finance hub and the lifestyle here is very fast-paced. Despite its dense population, Hong Kong is a safe place to live. People are incredibly responsive and efficient. The city is vibrant and you get to experience both the east and west side of the culture. I really enjoyed living in the city and everything is super convenient (stores open late).

The MBA program at CUHK has 2 concentrations: finance and entrepreneurship. The former caters to a well-established industry and latter nurtures students who want to become future entrepreneurs. FinTech, sustainable businesses, and start-ups are popular in Hong Kong. Studying at CUHK exposed me to new topics and business strategies in Asia. I also had the opportunity to network with students from other MBA programs (HKU and HKUST), industry professionals, seasoned instructors and of course, our UBC alum community in Hong Kong.

Feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

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