



Going Abroad to Lund, Sweden

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Preface

This report will attempt to give the reader an overview of what going on an exchange year is like. First, this report will try to point out some of the reasons why one should or should not consider going on an exchange year. Followed by my personal experience from my exchange term. There will be some pointers and what one should or should not expect from such an opportunity. (There would be photos to show what my exchange term was like, but my phone broke and I lost all the photos.)

My personal experience

The exchange year at Sweden was something unexpected to say the least. Having lived at other countries for an extended period of time, I was confident that I wouldn't experience cultural shock and was looking forward to reemerge myself with the western culture. Having gone onto that exchange year, was also like going on a journey where I get to explore and open up my world. Whether anyone is searching for something in particular or not, it would be a journey worth having.

Having experience something so different in so many ways is an enriching opportunity to learn more about, not just the world, but also more about yourself. Personally, I've learned a lot from this trip. It wasn't just knowledge about their culture, or about their society, but also about myself. By getting to learn about a different culture, it allows for insights into one's own culture. This insight stretches over to all the different views we endear. With such a clash and drastic change towards one's idea, the views which one holds dear gets challenged, resulting in a change of attitude. This change, for better or for worse, is a progress in and of itself.

Surely, that semester was one which I appreciate, but one should not expect it to simply be amazing. The exchange will be both pleasant and difficult at times. This will vary from people to people, but generally, nothing is ever completely good with no drawbacks. Whether it be fitting in within a different society, or trying to catch up to the difficulty of the course, or getting lost with oneself in a new environment, all of it are something that logically could happen. Despite the changes and the hardship that may come by, there are rooms for potential and space for growth.

Whether it be a semester or two, that small gap of time will fly by a lot faster than anyone would think. Perhaps not much so for those not in the moment, but this surely is an experience I would

recommend. In the end, whether an exchange year will have any effect upon one's life is all on the individuals, as in the end, it is all relative. It will be what you make of it.

What to expect?

There are many reasons as to why going on an exchange semester (perhaps a year) is recommended. Sure, there are also reasons as to why one should not go abroad, however, in my view, the advantages of going on one far exceed the disadvantages. Perhaps, it's the money issue, maybe, language proficiency, or even the GPA barely scrapping by, but regardless, I would still recommend fighting it through and try to grab the opportunity. Courses which are offered abroad may be more difficult in many ways, but it is worth trying. Obviously, the difficulty depends on one's background, if the system they offered are similar to what you have in the past, then it shouldn't be a problem. From my personal experience at Lund, the system of teaching and the approach they have towards the students are different than those which are offered at Thammasat, at least for my faculty to say the least. From what I have seen, the students rely a lot less on each other, relative to what I have seen here in Thailand. That isn't to say that it is better or worse, as it may just be nothing more than a difference in culture and the norms from different society. The readings and the content seems to be more challenging and for a lot of the learnings, the student has to be the one making the initiatives and wanting to learn. But then again, this is just from my perspectives and it matters a lot on what background you have, what field of courses you will be taking, and how difficult your faculty is in the first place. Despite all these "hardships," which I seem to be putting an emphasis on, they are but something to look out on, as there is no guarantee

that everyone's experiences will be the same as mine. Even, in cases which they are, they are but a great opportunity to push oneself and outdo what you previously did not think you could do.

Why the exchange opportunities are worth considering

Ultimately, we all are going there to study. Going there to take classes which we can transfer the credits back. But, I think grade shouldn't be on the top of the priority list. Sure, it is important and passing it with a credible score is important, but there just seems to be so much more than just grades. There is so much to know, not just academic wise, but everything outside it as well. (This is to those that have never lived abroad, not vacations or visiting, but living there for an extended period of time.) Consider going into a completely different environment, into a place where norms are different, where people interact differently, where cultures are different. There is a lot to learn. If anything, all the differences shows that there is just more to everything than you previously think there were. This isn't to say that such opportunities will show which is inferior or superior, but such opportunities allow us to expand our concept of the world, of what is out there, and often leave us being more open-minded in general. In my opinion, it's always nice to always be learning, not saying that everyone should constantly be studying their midterms until morning, but that there are a lot to learn outside academics as well. Great experiences are often the spontaneous ones, if you are currently in a dilemma, I suggest going with the one that you would least expect yourself to choose.