The **New Southbound Policy Elite Study Program (NSPESP)** is a fully funded scholarship and exchange initiative by Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), designed to attract outstanding students from Southeast Asia to study in Taiwan. It combines academic courses, Mandarin training, cultural immersion, and industry visits, with themes ranging from sustainability to semiconductors.

Application Process

The application process goes through the office of international affairs of the faculty, then it is nominated to Thammasat International Office. The documents required for application are as follows:

1. Official academic transcript
2. Certificate of Enrollment issued by the Office of Registrar
3. Maximum one A4 page of Study Plan
4. Updated autobiography or CV
5. Certificate of English Proficiency
6. Copy of applicant's ID card or passport
7. Copy of applicant's household registration
8. Copy of supporter's ID card or passport
9. Supporter's consent and financial support form (Designated format)
10. Academic Advisor Support Form (Designated format)

Visa Application

Since it's a short-term exchange study in Taiwan (less than 6 months), it is required to apply for a **visitor visa** for study that has a validity of 60 days per entry. Applicants are required to deposit the visa fee of *1,700 THB*. The fee will be refunded upon collecting the visa from the office. The processing time is usually 5-7 working days. The required documents listed below should be prepared in **both original and copy**.

1. Visa application form completed online at BOCA Visa Application System, printed with barcode and signed.
2. TWO 2"x 2" photos with a white color background
3. Acceptance letter from university in Taiwan
4. Study Plan
5. Certificate of student status
6. Current grade transcript
7. Health certificate
8. Bank statement
9. Latest Thailand arrival stamps (for international students)
10. Air Ticket

11. Passport and one Photocopy of Passport

Insurance

The student does not need to purchase international medical & life insurance before the departure. The host university provides **Foreign Student Insurance (FSI)** for the foreign students who are not eligible for National Health Insurance (NHI). The coverage period is one visit per day, 30 times a year. The maximum coverage per visit is *NT $1,000* (*999.94 THB*).

Course Registration

Course registration at National Chung Hsing University (NCHU) is handled entirely online through the university's Single Sign-On system. Students must log in with their student ID and password, follow the official schedule, and complete course selection or withdrawal before the deadlines. In addition to the courses that the students can choose by themselves, there are two 5-hour sustainability related courses per week provided by the program.

Accommodation

The program provides on-campus dormitory accommodation for applicants, offering a safe environment and well-equipped rooms. Each dormitory room is furnished with essential items such as a bed frame, desk, chair, bookshelf, wardrobe, air-conditioner, and internet port, ensuring that students have a comfortable living space. Additionally, students do not need to bring their own mattresses, bedding and blankets.

Public facilities—including study rooms, laundry equipment, shared kitchens, and 24-hour reading room—further support a safe and convenient living experience for all female residents.



Figure 1 Pu-Xuan Building



Figure 2 Interior of a room in Pu-Xuan

Cost of Living

The cost of living in Taichung city, especially the area around NCHU, is affordable and student friendly. Since on-campus housing is provided, the student only needs to spend on daily expenses like food and groceries. Eating in and around the campus can range from *NT $50 ~ 200* (*49.59 ~ 198.37 THB*). However, eating out can cost more, starting from *NT $90* (*89.27 THB*). In addition, Taichung residents enjoy free public bus rides within the city, making daily commuting more affordable.

Activities outside the Classroom

The program provides a rich variety of cultural activities designed to give students a deep and meaningful immersion into Taiwanese culture. These experiences range from activity-based practices such as Tai Chi, Chinese painting, calligraphy, Erhu music, and Go (A Chinese traditional board game), to DIY handcrafting workshops including tea art and pineapple cake.



Figure 1 Erhu Activity in Class



Figure 4 DIY Handcraft Activity in Class



Figure 5 Baking Activity



Figure 6 DIY Handcraft Activity in Class

In addition to on-campus cultural engagement, the program also takes students on diverse cultural trips across Taiwan, offering the opportunity to explore the country's cities, traditions, natural landscapes, and local communities.



Figure 7 Group Photo in Tainan



Figure 8 Group Photo in Nantou



Figure 9 Group Photo in Taipei

Combined with its Mandarin language courses and sustainability studies, NSPESP ensures that every participant gain not only academic knowledge but also firsthand cultural understanding throughout their stay.

Challenges faced during the Studies

It was quite challenging as I chose subjects taught in Chinese to transfer the credits. Although I had studied Chinese since childhood, adapting to the classes was still difficult. The professional terminology used in the lectures was especially hard to grasp. Nevertheless, I maintained a regular study routine, completed the exam in Chinese, and successfully delivered the presentation.

Overall Satisfaction and Suggestions

First, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Thammasat International Office at the Faculty of Architecture and Planning, as well as the Office of International Affairs at Thammasat University. I am deeply thankful for their guidance throughout the application process, especially when the deadline was approaching. Their efforts in helping me obtain information from the immigration office were truly appreciated.

Secondly, I am grateful to the partner university, National Chung Hsing University (NCHU). Their timely responses and continuous support during the exchange program were invaluable. The Office of International Affairs was always ready to assist me, from arranging my insurance to guiding me through the course selection process, especially since I arrived in Taiwan later than planned.

Lastly, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan (R.O.C) for establishing the NSPESP program. This opportunity broadened my perspectives on sustainability and policymaking. Moreover, meeting and connecting with international friends from Southeast Asia and East Asia made the experience truly meaningful and memorable.



Figure 10 Opening Ceremony for New Southbound Policy Elite Study Program (NSPESP)



Figure 11 Closing Ceremony for NSPESP

Advice for Future Students

The NSPESP program is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students. It offers invaluable experiences along with meaningful challenges for personal growth. To make the most of it, it is important to prepare well in advance because there can be many tasks to manage, and it may feel overwhelming at times. Prioritizing and planning tasks will help you stay organized and focused.

After arriving, embrace every opportunity by immersing yourself in the local culture and exploring new places. Living in a foreign country is a unique chance to broaden your perspectives. At the same time, finding a balance between academic learning and personal experiences is essential—this ensures you gain knowledge while also creating unforgettable memories.