



BERICHTSFORMULAR

Non-EU Student Exchange Programm

2023/2024

BewerbungsID 17130

Nominierte Studienrichtung: 033/521 Studienrichtung Bachelorstudium Informatik

Angaben zum Aufenthalt:

Gastinstitution: City University of Hong Kong - (China, Volksrepublik)

Aufenthaltszeitraum: WS 2023/2024

Aufenthaltsbeginn: 01.09.2023 Aufenthaltsende: 30.12.2023

STIPENDIUM	
Stipendium Uni Wien gesamt laut Zuerkennung: (inkl. Zuschüsse für Reisekosten und Sprachtest)	€ 2.000,00
	Rückforderung: nein Rückgeforderter Betrag: € Rückforderungsgrund:
Weitere Stipendien (zB Jasso, Studienbeihilfe):	Weitere Stipendien: Nein • Stipendium des Gastlandes: nein () • Bundesländerstipendium: nein • Studienbeihilfe: nein • Sonstiges Stipendium:
Summe weiterer Stipendien:	€ 0,00
Gesamtsumme aller Stipendien:	€ 2.000,00

KOSTEN DES AUSLANDSAUFENTHALTS	
Unterkunft:	€ 1.300,00
Art der Unterkunft:	Studierendenwohnheim
Reisekosten:	€ 1.000,00
Lebenshaltungskosten:	€ 2.500,00
Studienkosten:	€ 50,00
Versicherungskosten	€ 300,00
Visakosten:	€ 100,00
Gesamtkosten des Auslandsaufenthalts:	€ 5.150,00

Bericht veröffentlichen:

PERSÖNLICHER BERICHT

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Verfassen Sie bitte einen persönlichen Bericht über den Studienaufenthalt

- **Mindestumfang:** Fließtext 1 Seite DinA4
- **Inhalt:** Gastuniversität, Kurse, Prüfungen, Mitstudierende, Unterkunft, etwaige Schwierigkeiten etc.

BERICHT ÜBER DEN STUDIENAUFENTHALT

I had the great privilege to be able to study abroad in the 'Fragrant Harbour' – Hong Kong for one semester. This winter semester can be characterised as quite a formative period me – and not only academical. Even though my time spent in Asia was certainly not without its challenges, I already regard this past endeavour as one of the happiest experiences in my life so far. As such I can wholeheartedly recommend Hong Kong as a destination for everyone who is considering an exchange program. In the following report I want to shed some light about my past venture. For readers comfort I structured the following topics into distinct sections.

CityU – City University of Hong Kong

Located at one of the wealthier and **northern** parts of the **Kowloon** peninsula, the campus offers a distinct departure from the fast-paced life that one can usually find in the more central districts of the city. In the beginning my European colleagues and I were quite puzzled by how "vertical" all the buildings were, and because the university is built on a decently steep hill, the main buildings have inconsistent floor numerations to one another. This initially gave us quite the challenge to find our classrooms or navigate throughout the venue. Once one learns to get familiar with the area (and on which elevators to take) CityU suddenly starts to feel quite **practical** and an amazing place to study!

All the big Lecture theatres are located in the central main building, amidst this, one can also find a big library, a bookshop, study rooms and student hubs and even two local bank branches. In between lectures students can also enjoy one of **multiple canteens and restaurants** that are spread throughout the campus. To unwind students also have access to **multiple gyms**, an **outdoor swimming pool** (that is open in the summer months) and even a **Chinese garden** to unwind.

To further support students in their academic fulfilment CityU also has a lot of **student societies** that one can join and take part in club activities, events or even tournaments.

The university itself also is quite **well connected to public transportation**: Two MTR (*Kowloon Tong* and *Shek Kip Mei*), multiple bus stations and the big *Festival Walk* mall, all are reachable in 10 minutes at most.

Accommodation – CityU Student Residence (in Kowloon Tong)

It was very fortunate to get accepted into the official student residence (SR) of the university. One can try to get into it, whilst applying for exchange directly at CityU's online application. Not everybody seems to get a spot as rooms are highly sought after, but I **highly encourage** attempting that nonetheless. The SR is an unbelievable great deal, even more so because Hong Kong is probably one of the most expensive places to rent.

Typically, an apartment in the SR can be **quite spacious** and is almost always shared by two students (single apartments can be arranged under certain conditions). The room is **equipped with a bed, shelves** for storage, **and a desk**, while **bathrooms are shared with adjacent neighbours**. An **AC is provided**, which can be used by topping up the individual room's balance. However, my roommate and I found that we rarely needed the AC, opting instead to purchase a cheap fan from the local market, which was more cost-effective and provided better air circulation. Additionally, each floor provides students with a common room/kitchen, and the top floor always has a washroom – both excellent amenities for saving further money.

The SR is divided into 12 distinct Halls, each with its own community atmosphere. Halls 10-12 are the newer and more modern ones, while I lived in **Hall 7**, which may be slightly older but offered comfortable facilities, clean interiors, and an amazing community with a friendly atmosphere. If students also can always seek help from helpful floor representatives, senior student assigned to help others.

One significant benefit of living in the SR is the **regular inter-/intra-hall events** organized by the student residence office and the halls. These events serve as opportunities for students to socialize and unwind from the stresses of university life. Events can include sports, art-related workshops, holiday celebrations, or even hiking trips. Personally, I enjoyed participating in tug-of-war sports events, where teams from different halls competed in a surprisingly grand and well-organized tournament.

For all busy and diligent students striving for a high GPA in their final exams, the SR offers two (of three) **large multi-functional halls** that are open 24/7 at the end of the semester. This allows students to study late into the night in a motivating environment.

Courses general

Just like Hong Kong's fast-paced lifestyle, semesters at CityU fly by. Each one lasts about 4 months, with the first 3 dedicated to lectures and assignments, and the last one primarily focused on final exams. The university's curricula feel **less theoretical**, as one might be accustomed to in Europe, and more practical and straightforward.

There is a significant emphasis on both **individual and group projects**, which are integrated into practically every course. While passing exams in individual courses may have felt easier compared to the University of Vienna, the semester remained challenging due to the **'respectable' workload from assignments and projects**.

Partly driven by technical courses relevant to my study program back home and partly out of personal interest, I chose to enrol in a lot of courses. In contrast, colleagues on exchange typically opted for fewer courses to have more free time. Additionally, I categorized the courses into technical, which are transferable, and "gateway" (or GE courses), which act as minor courses at CityU.

Transferable Courses (Computer Science Relevant)

CS4480 - Data Intensive Computing (3 credits)

DIC was by far the most interesting and most technical advanced course that we took this semester. It consisted of trying to teach participating students the concepts of **Big Data** and how to handle it. The first half focused on **Data Computing** (*Introduction, Data Types, Text Data, Time Series Data etc.*) whilst the later half focused more on tools that could be used for **parallel computing** (*Theory, Apache Hadoop & Spark, Others etc.*). Before transitioning to the second half, the course leaders gave us an open-book midterm exam in which student could earn some valuable points for the later half. Following that we had a **closed book final exam** at the end, which was quite challenging, but not impossible to complete.

Accompanying the lecture was a practical project in which a team of students could try themselves to use the things they have heard from the professors and teaching assistances. The topic of the project can be chosen in accordance with the individual interests of the team members, as long as the scope of the used data sets is big enough (*e.g. housing rents in Hong Kong, Game Reviews on Steam, environmental etc.*). This **project is quite big and challenging**, so I encourage you to take it seriously. At the end the team will have to present their results and defend their results in front of a commission.

In addition to the lectures and project, teaching assistants offered tutorials, which served as practical extensions of the lectures, as well as labs where students submitted solutions to given problems. These sessions were held weekly and focused on providing students with hands-on experience with the topics covered.

Overall, it was an **amazing course**, albeit sometimes challenging. If the project team conforms to self-set deadlines and attends every lecture and tutorial, the course should be achievable. Additionally, the professor and the teaching assistants were very kind and approachable for asking questions or seeking advice.

CS3483 - Multimodal Interface Design (3 credits)

This is the Human-Computer Interface Design course at this university. There is a **strong emphasis on unconventional or modern methods for user interaction with computers** – such as *facial recognition, gesture recognition, voice recognition*, etc. During the lectures, the professor aims to impart the principles of good interface design to students, supported by numerous examples.

Weekly tutorials are also held, where the professor analyses specific case studies with students. These tutorial sessions have a much smaller scope in terms of participants compared to the main lectures, which encourages in-class discussions of the given topics.

In the group project, teams are tasked with creating a theoretical project that utilizes multimodal elements to achieve its purpose. Initially, teams must **submit design drafts** demonstrating a sufficient understanding of interface design principles and the use of chosen multimodal inputs. Later, teams must **also implement parts of the proposed application** or service and **submit a final report and a video** showcasing the created prototype.

At the end of the semester, the professor also assigns an **individual project** where students must develop a browser application. The app recognizes the user's hand movements via webcam and tracks individual fingers to draw on a canvas, along with several additional functions. Despite being written in a rather obtruse coding language, this assignment was enjoyable and could be completed in a few days.

Personally, I found the final examination for this course to be relatively easy. After studying all the course materials for a week and completing all the assignments, the exam should not pose a significant challenge, especially since some open-ended questions can be approached with 'intuition'.

CS3201 - Computer Networks (3 credits)

A **standard computer networks course** that one would find at any university. Not much to say, but that it was maybe the one course where we **had to learn the most** in terms of theory and technologies **for the big final exam**, even though that one was open book.

Apart from the lecture where the professor tries to teach the attending students everything about network technologies, students can also attend **weekly tutorials** where they can submit solutions for given problems and deepen topics that they may have heard in the lectures.

Twice in the semester the professor releases **homework papers**, which are accumulations of challenging problems for which students have about 2 weeks to complete. Another challenge was that our professor sometimes had difficulties in deciding what he really wants to task the students with. Not seldom did we have to ask other colleagues in how they interpreted these, in order to solve them.

Computer Networks was one of the odd courses that did not ask its students to form groups for bigger projects. Instead of that students were tasked to do an **individual assignment**, that could be done in pairs with a colleague. The focus of the assignment lied in **socket programming** and the task consisted in creating a client that should communicate with a provided (python) server. The students were given free hand in how and with what languages they realised said task. If one got some experience, that assignment could be solved in a few hours.

The midterm and final exam were among the toughest that we had in this semester. The amount of theory one had to learn was nothing to glance over, but also the questions, similar to the homeworks where sometimes really confusing to make out what the examiner is really asking of oneself.

A big tip to complete this course, apart from visiting the lectures, is to also **not neglect the tutorial sessions** because the setting is a little more individual. Students learn how to apply covered technologies on certain tasks, but those tasks often are really similar to the exams!

Non-Transferable / Interests

GE1138 – Exploring Hong Kong: History, Culture and Society (3 credits)

Personally, my favourite non-technical course that semester was GE1138, covering the **history of Hong Kong from the Neolithic age to the Handover in '97**. The lectures were informative, providing a comprehensive overview of the city's history. As part of the course, students were required to organize a **self-guided field trip** (such as visiting a museum or exploring one of the many heritage trails) and write a **short report** about their experience. Additionally, there was a **group project** where students delved deeper into a specific topic, presenting their findings to the class, and **submitting a final paper**.

GE2244 – The Hidden City: Space, Power and Social Processes in Hong Kong (3 credits)

What I personally appreciated about this course was that the professors not only introduced us to basic concepts relevant to **sociological and urbanization** discussions but also provided an overview of recent local developments in the given areas. Students also gained insight into the historical significance of certain districts and their contribution to the broader identity of the city – for example, Sham Shui Po, the city's poorest district, experienced a revitalisation as social media influencers recognized its cultural significance and promoted it, thereby bringing newfound popularity to the area.

For the **group project**, we created a **web-based virtual reality tour** showcasing major public open spaces in the

affluent Wan Chai District, highlighting the contrasting scenery between day and night. The final exam was a straightforward quiz, manageable for students who had attended all the lectures.

LC2956 – Mandarin for Non-Chinese Speakers I (3 credits)

The university also offers a plethora of language courses, among those also Cantonese and Mandarin. This course really benefitted from an energetic and friendly professor who invested a lot of care into his students. While the pace and volume of new grammar or vocabulary could feel overwhelming at times, it was understandable given the professor's task of teaching students the basics of Chinese within just three months.

In this course there were **3 exams, weekly homework's, and a final exam (written + oral)** at the end of the semester. Like with every language, to truly excel in it one must put a lot of time into their own study.

PED1603 – Table Tennis – Elementary (0 credits)

For a physical break from academic studies, the Student Development Service at CityU offers a variety of sports courses. These range from classic activities like football, swimming, or basketball to more traditional local sports like dragon boat rowing. The elementary table tennis course was suitable for individuals interested in trying the sport out for the first time. The instructor was highly motivated and patient, ensuring that participants had ample opportunity to practice with each other, reinforcing the newly learned technical aspects. The only downside to these courses is their brevity (approximately 8 sessions), but students typically have access to tables, pitches, or courts on or near campus for free use, even after classes conclude. **To pass the course**, one only must **actively attend** most of the classes.

Financial

Undoubtedly, the predominant concern is the financial strain associated with renting accommodation in the city. **Securing a spot in the student dormitory is highly sought after due to its affordability.** Alternatively, the university recommends certain companies that offer studio apartments or shared student accommodations across the city. If that is still not an option, but you are willing to commute, apartments in the north of Hong Kong (New Territories) are a lot cheaper than in the city.

When it comes to food and groceries, **prices are generally comparable to those in Vienna.** However, it's important to be mindful of where to shop or dine out. Local supermarkets like *Wellcome*, *Parkn' Shop*, and *DS Groceries*, as well as wet/farmers markets, often offer more affordable options than international counterparts. Additionally, smaller shops such as *7eleven*, *CircleK*, or *759* are recommended for groceries. Most of the shops in *Festival Walk* or similar big malls are great for emergencies but not recommendable if you are on a budget. If one lives in the dorms, a lot of times students there, order vegetables or meat over the internet in bulk, which is the optimal way to get those.

Restaurant prices vary depending on their location within the city. Establishments alongside the harbour areas and on Hong Kong Island often offer **international cuisine** but can be **pricey**. In contrast, restaurants in local or less wealthy districts can provide excellent meals at lower prices. For those seeking authentic regional cuisine, Cha Chaan Teng's / 茶餐廳 (Hong Kong styled dinners) or Loeng Sung Faan / 兩餸飯 (two-dish-rice restaurants) offer budget-friendly options. However, it's important to note that English menus and waitstaff may not always be available, so having a Cantonese-speaking companion or a translation app can be helpful.

In terms of **public transportation**, getting around Hong Kong is **rather affordable**. MTR trains, buses, ferries, and trams provide convenient and accessible transportation options. The **Octopus Card**, a prepaid card, is widely used for fare payments and other transactions throughout the city, offering convenience and flexibility. Taxis and Ubers are also available for quick transportation, especially during late hours, although they tend to be more expensive than other modes of transportation.

Life Outside Academics & Culture

The vibrant streets of Hong Kong offer an array of activities that enrich the Quality of Life in this captivating city. From lively street markets to upscale shopping malls, from the energetic nightlife of Lan Kwai Fung to the serene evening strolls in the Soho district, there's something for everyone. Sample local delicacies from cheerful street vendors or indulge in a world of international cuisine along Hollywood Rd. Escape the urban bustle with a visit to lush parks or explore the adventurous natural reserves. Navigate through densely populated neighbourhoods reminiscent of the old walled city or immerse yourself in the modern corporate hub of Central. Experience the fast-paced local lifestyle that defines the city or discover the tranquil beauty of the outlying islands.

Furthermore, Hong Kong's unique location in the heart of the Asian continent makes it a gateway not only to Mainland China but also to numerous other Asian countries. With short and affordable flights, many colleagues opted to explore neighbouring destinations during their free time. However, for those who opt to stay in Hong Kong, there's no shortage of wonders to explore. Even with just one semester abroad, the city's wealth of experiences ensures that every moment is filled with excitement and discovery.

The Pearl of the Orient's (東方之珠) rich history and diverse social fabric contribute to its complexity, mirrored in the wide range of activities available. Whether you're seeking cultural immersion, culinary delights, or outdoor adventures, Hong Kong promises an unforgettable experience even beyond academics and that makes it the perfect location for ones abroad semester in my opinion.