

Travel Report of Student Exchange in INHA University in Autumn 2016

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1 INTRODUCTION

INHA University is a multi-field university in the third biggest city in South Korea, Incheon, which is located next to Seoul. From the campus in Nam-gu district it takes about 1-1.5 hours to the capital by bus and subway, and transportation is cheap. The campus is easy to get around and next to it there is a lively area of restaurants, cafes, bars and shops.

After being allocated to INHA by LUT, I needed to prepare an application for INHA with various types of documents including bank balance statement, scanned copy of passport, recommendation letters and official transcript of records. After confirmation, INHA also requires a valid insurance. It is strongly recommended to get one already in home country, and then send the documents to the university, but the university also sells an insurance for those who need it. All the application documents could be sent by email, except visa application.

2 HOUSING

The university has two dormitories inside the campus. Rent is about 200 €/month, and breakfast on weekdays is included. Rooms for exchange students are for four persons. Each floor is either for men or women, and toilets and showers are found on each floor. There are some restrictions in living in the dormitories, most notably the curfew from midnight until 5 am.

The university also offers off-campus apartments, their rent is about 400 €/month. These apartments are located close to the campus, about 10-15 min by foot. They are in several buildings, but most are close to each other. Apartments include bed, desk, very small kitchen, bathroom and washing machine. Blanket and pillow can easily be bought on the first day in a department store next to campus, we made this together with the off-campus assistant in autumn 2016.

One can also acquire an apartment by their own. For example, some exchange students found shared apartments via Airbnb. Getting an apartment from the regular market might be challenging, and typically rental apartments in Korea have very high deposits.

The rent for both the dormitories and off-campus apartments needs to be paid in full amount in the beginning of the semester either by cash in Hana bank located at the campus or from a Korean bank account. Hana Bank inside the campus and Woori bank next to the backgate have international ATMs, where one can withdraw the money.

3 ORIENTATION

Orientation was on 25 August, and lasted about three hours. There was not much new information in the session, basically the international advisers went through Foreign student guidebook, which was already sent to exchange students in the summer. Most important thing on the orientation day was the proceeding of the alien registration application.

The university also offers Korean buddy for those who apply. As individuals, the buddies' performance differs quite a lot, some are more active and willing to hang out with foreigners, others are busier with their studies.

International Student Lounge (ISL) is a great organization in INHA. It is not only a place for international students to hang out and study, but also offers language lessons and field trips. Korean volunteers in ISL are really friendly and helpful.

4 VISA AND ALIEN REGISTRATION

The required visa is Student Visa D2. Applying for visa was made easy by INHA. I sent all the materials directly to them, and the university applied for the visa. After getting visa number from INHA, I was ready to apply for the visa in Korean embassy in Helsinki. With the preliminary application from INHA, I only needed to fill basic information in the application for the embassy and my visa was ready to be picked up in a week.

The visa is single entry, but once I got my Alien card, I was able to travel from Korea to other countries and get back as well. Alien card was received after about one month in Korea. It needs to be returned to the border officer when leaving the country in the end of studies. For the card, I filled an application on the orientation day and gave it to the international office of INHA, and later went to the immigration center for fingerprint registration by a bus organized by the university. For the application, remember to bring some passport photos. The rules for the picture are quite strict, one cannot wear any earrings for example, so some of the students needed to get new photos. Getting a passport photo in Korea is an experience as well, as the Koreans use a good amount of photoshop. It is possible to get photos next to the campus in the backgate area or Homeplus department store, it costs about 13.000-15.000 won.

5 LANGUAGE

It is very useful and quite easy to learn the letters and some basic phrases beforehand. Orientation and getting into the culture gets easier this way, although Koreans are very friendly even without any common language. Language skills vary a lot, English is not widely understood, and some might stick to Korean even they know English.

INHA offers Korean language courses for beginners and advanced learners. There are also some courses offered by ISL volunteers, they do not give any study credits but are useful and fun anyway.

6 COURSES

Majority of the courses are held in Korean, but there are also a lot of courses in English. I received a list of courses in English some months before arrival, but the final selection differed remarkably from this. One rough guide of all courses offered can be seen in <http://sugang.inha.ac.kr/sugang/> -> Curriculum -> English track guide, and the courses offered for current or upcoming semester can be found from the same site Sugang -> Curriculum -> Course Schedule -> from Etc, select Foreign language, and do not make any other selections, this would reset the language choice. Final list of English courses was not ready until just a couple weeks before the beginning of the semester. In addition, even on the first day it might appear that the course will be held in Korean instead of English. Therefore, I would recommend INHA for bachelor level students who are flexible with the courses, unless fluent in Korean. In that case, the university has a huge number of courses to offer.

Sign up for the courses is made via Sugang system (<http://sugang.inha.ac.kr/sugang/>) and is somewhat different from LUT's practices. Undergraduate students have 2 days for enrollment. These days were already before orientation and the time was restricted from morning to early evening. The first week's contents varied a lot between courses, as the first Friday is so called "Course add & drop period" from 8.30 am to 7.00 pm, when students could make changes in their course enrollments. Later after a few weeks, there is also "Withdrawal period", when students can drop one course, but only one.

The courses in autumn 2016 began on 19 August and the semester ended on 16 December. (Academic Calendar: http://www.inha.ac.kr/mbshome/mbs/eng/subview.do?id=eng_050101000000_0) Majority of the courses last for the full semester, and most of them have mid-term exams and final exams. Attendance was required on all the courses, and part of the grade was formed by it. However, checking attendance varied quite a lot. The courses that I attended were worth 3 Korean credits, which in LUT

corresponds to 6 ECTS. Exam and project evaluation was done quite fast. INHA also sent the transcript of records directly to LUT in January.

During my exchange semester, I attended five courses in INHA: Business Strategy, Financial Engineering, Basic Korean, Korean Society & Politics, and Analytic Study of Economic Problems. Basic Korean was a beginner-level Korean language course for exchange students. We began with the alphabet and learned some basic conversations. Korean society and politics was very interesting course and the professor was also inspiring. The course gave me useful information about Korean society and lots of new thoughts. Financial engineering included option pricing calculations with different methods in Excel VBA, very interesting and a bit challenging course. This was the only course where evaluation was not absolute but relative, so even with bad points people could pass the course, and getting the best grade did not require getting highest possible points in the exam. Analytic study of economic problems did not have lectures but we did assignments and projects about current economic issues during the classes, no exam in this course either. Business Strategy was really basic and a bit repetitive for me, as it was an undergraduate level course. The final exam was already in the mid-term week and for the rest of the course we did a team project. The above mentioned Sugang-system has also all the syllabuses available.