

# Exchange Report

Hanyang University, South Korea



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## Introduction



Hello! My name is Gustav, and I have had the privilege of spending a semester at Hanyang University in South Korea during my 4<sup>th</sup> semester in 2024. As a computer science student at KEA, this experience was both academically enriching and personally transformative. From navigating a different educational system to immersing myself in Korean culture, I gained valuable insights and unforgettable memories. This report captures the highlights of my academic, practical, and cultural experiences as well as sharing the realities of daily life in South Korea, and the bits of wisdom I gained along the way.

## Academic Experiences

Applying for Hanyang University was initially overwhelming. The selection of classes was based on a first-come-first-served system, requiring you to be up at night (in Denmark time) to apply and I also had to ensure that my class schedules did not overlap. Additionally, in the first week of the semester, a lot of exchange students would go to already filled classes and ask the professor for an extra spot in the course, and this was mostly successful.



All the courses intended for the exchange students were labeled as English courses, but many students, including myself, would be surprised when they attended the first lecture and found out the course was in fact taught in Korean. This created some frustrations and required students to look for new courses by approaching the professors personally.

Initially, I intended to enroll in only computer science related courses. However, due to the first-come-first-serve system, I was not able to get all the courses that I wanted, so after consultations with my international coordinator, Anne Dibbern, I ended up finding some other courses I thought sounded interesting and would also get accepted by KEA.

## Overview of my courses

### **Software Development Practices**

This course was one of the original courses I wanted from the beginning, and it was only due to luck that I even got in since all the spots were filled instantly, but a spot suddenly became available and luckily, I was the first to see it. Out of all my courses, this one was the most related to my major computer science, and it was very interesting. It was about best practices in software development, and we got to work in groups teamworking with other groups to develop a game.

### **UX & Usability**

This course was about learning of and improving user experience and usability on websites, games, apps etc. At first, I thought this course sounded interesting and I think the subject is, but my experience of the course was not. The main reason for this was the general atmosphere in the classroom. A very big group of French students from a university in Paris attended this course and created major disturbance and distractions in class. They would speak, laugh and even stand up and walk around to each other while the professor was speaking, and I thought it was very distracting. The professor's English level didn't quite help the situation.

### **Organization Behavior**

I enjoyed this class even though it was not related to computer science but more business and psychology, which I also had a course about in my previous semesters at KEA. We learned about different behavior in organizations, and we explored team dynamics, leadership, and workplace culture.

## **Global Content Business Strategy**

This was the final course I added to my list after consulting with my international coordinator, Anne Dibbern. Similar to organization behavior, this course was also about business, but more about, as the name describes, strategies of content businesses. This was pretty interesting as we were working in groups doing case studies before discussing in class about today's case.

## **Survival Korean**

I highly recommend this course. The course itself turned out to be quite hard, as I was completely new to the language. Though, the basic words and phrases we learned proved to be useful and helped me understand daily conversations and interact with Koreans.

# Practical Experiences

## Application Process and Assistance

The application process for Hanyang University was overwhelming as I also described in the beginning, but a big reason for this was also because I was working all summer and was not home to get all my documents in order. I ended up being very last minute and got my visa the day before I departed for Korea. KEA provided guidance on documentation and was a good sparring partner in making sure everything was in order. I also had several meetings with my international coordinator, and she was very helpful in answering my questions.

## Accommodation and Living Expenses

I stayed in one of the on-campus dormitories. The dormitory life at Hanyang University ERICA, particularly at the CHANGEI dorm, is highly recommended. It provides various facilities, from gyms to dining options. Most of the other exchange students also choose to stay in the dorm, so it is a great opportunity to socialize with other people from all around the world.

The total price for four months in the dorm was around the same price as one month in my apartment in Copenhagen, making it an even more attractive living option. Some people also chose to live by themselves or with roommates in Airbnb, but the cost for that is way higher.

Living in South Korea required careful budgeting. Major expenses included accommodation, transportation, food, and occasional travel. I received financial support through SU and an Erasmus grant, which significantly eased the financial burden. Additionally, I applied for and received an invaluable grant from Knud Højgaards Fond, allowing me to participate in cultural activities and explore the country more extensively.

## Cultural and Personal Experiences

Studying abroad isn't just about the academics or cultural experiences, it's also about the people you meet along the way. I was lucky enough to connect with a diverse group of folks from all around the globe. This includes people from the Netherlands, Germany, China, France, Mexico, Indonesia, Ireland, England, Lithuania, Japan, and of course South Korea. Each one of us brought something unique to the table, and it was enlightening to see how different cultures approach problem-solving or express their creativity. Sharing thoughts, ideas and having experiences for life together, created bonds that were more like a family than just friends.

Outside of the classroom, I got to do loads of cool stuff. ERICA campus is located in Ansan, a city with a lot to explore. From food markets to parks and karaoke spots, there was always something to do. Korean cuisine is a whole new world of flavors, and outside of campus offers a lot of restaurants that's just waiting to be discovered.



## Traveling Around South Korea

One of the most exciting aspects of my exchange was traveling around South Korea and experiencing the diverse regions of the country. I began my explorations in Mokpo, a coastal city known for its scenic views and delicious seafood. The slow pace of life and the stunning landscapes offered a refreshing break from the busy city life in Seoul.

Next, I ventured to Busan, South Korea's second-largest city. Its beautiful beaches, such as Haeundae and Gwangalli, and iconic attractions like the Gamcheon Culture Village left a lasting impression. The vibrant city offered a perfect blend of urban energy and natural beauty, making it one of my favorite destinations.

The east coast presented another side of Korea's charm. I visited places like Sokcho and Gangneung, where the mountains meet the sea. Hiking in Seoraksan National Park was a highlight, providing breathtaking views and a serene connection to nature. The coastal cities also offered a chance to indulge in fresh seafood and enjoy the laid-back lifestyle of the region. The east coast is also a nice place to surf.

Around Seoul, I explored various districts and attractions, from the historic palaces and Bukchon Hanok Village to the modern vibes of Gangnam and Hongdae. The metro system in Seoul works really well and is very cheap. Each neighborhood had its unique flavor, and I appreciated the seamless blend of tradition and innovation that defines Seoul. My adventures extended to nearby destinations like Suwon and Incheon, making the most of Korea's efficient public transportation.

These travels not only deepened my appreciation for Korea's cultural and geographical diversity but also allowed me to create unforgettable memories with fellow students and locals alike. A place I didn't get to visit was Jeju Island, but many of my friends went here and talk very positively about it. I highly recommend taking the time to explore the country during your exchange.



## Advice for Future Exchange Students

For those planning an exchange at Hanyang University or elsewhere in South Korea, preparation is key to making the most of your experience. Course registration operates on a first-come, first-served basis, so it can be a good idea to research your options in advance and have a few backups in case your preferred classes fill up. Learning basic Korean phrases before you arrive can make a difference in your daily interactions but I found Duolingo doesn't really work for that, so the Survival Korean course offered at Hanyang is an excellent way to build a good foundation.

Budgeting is essential, as living expenses can add up quickly with accommodation, travel, and social activities. Applying for grants and tracking your spending will help you stay financially secure while allowing you to enjoy the culture and opportunities for exploration.



Above all, say yes to everything. immerse yourself in the culture and take advantage of the unique experiences available. From visiting local markets and enjoying authentic Korean cuisine to participating in university festivals and exploring the country's rich history, there's so much to discover. Staying open-minded and proactive will ensure your exchange is a truly transformative adventure.

## Apps you should download

- **NaverMap** or **KakaoMap**: Google Maps doesn't do a great job in Korea. So, I suggest you use these apps. They are like the Korean version of Google Maps. NaverMap is my top choice because it is in English, and it does a really good job at offering directions when you are taking public transportation.
- **KakaoTalk**: This is a messenger app that is widely used in South Korea. You will most likely use it with the Koreans that you meet during your exchange.
- **WhatsApp**: It seems that most exchange students use WhatsApp to chat. Back home in Denmark, we often use Messenger. But outside of Denmark, WhatsApp is more popular.
- **KakaoTaxi**: This is an app for calling taxis. It works well and is easy to use. It's a lot like Uber.

## Conclusion

My semester at Hanyang University was an incredible journey of academic and personal growth. It provided me with a unique perspective on Korean culture, valuable international friendships, and skills that will benefit me in the future. I can confidently say it's an experience you won't regret. Embrace the challenges, immerse yourself in the culture, and make the most of every moment.

In a nutshell, my study abroad journey at Hanyang University ERICA was filled with academic and cultural learning, personal growth, and some good old fun. So, if you're considering this opportunity, I say, "Go for it!".