

## 2017 Semester 1

### BCom Economics, Finance

#### Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK)

**Accommodation:** I stayed at Morningside College one of the 10 residential halls on campus at CUHK. The rooms are basic with a bed, desk, closet, fan etc.. and you share a room with either a local student or exchange student. For me sharing a room was a bad experience but it's really luck of the draw for who you're roomed with. At Morningside each floor had a communal bathroom/shower with a shared kitchen, most of the colleges also have study areas, a gym, canteen and a laundry. Morningside is one the halls that had "compulsory" dinners 3 nights a week which you pay for, at Morningside they didn't care if you came or not but at other halls they do put it on your transcript if you miss a dinner.

Morningside is mostly local students with some exchange and the community there is great as the locals spend the whole duration of their studies at Morningside, the location is also one of the best on campus with views over the river, close to campus and the MTR station. If you wanted to be with all the exchange students I'd recommend picking I-House as that's where most of the exchange students stayed (but there are drawbacks like location, food, noise etc). The accommodation is organised through the University before the exchange and is very similar to the Otago system, you get to select your preference of hall based on whether you want to pay for hall dining or not.

**Money Matters:** You can live very cheaply on campus if you want to, I think all the food at canteens is subsidized by the government making it very cheap. Paying for a Hall for a semester is also below the average price you'd pay for a flat at Otago for a semester. Drink prices are similar to NZ in the popular nightlife areas. If you want to travel, return flights from Hong Kong are cheap, I traveled to Taipei (\$150), Bangkok (\$105), Seoul (\$250), Cambodia (\$250). How much you spend is up to you, Hong Kong caters for both ends of the spectrum, but if you wanted a cheaper exchange then say Europe/America this would definitely be a good place to go.

**Academics/course load:** Similar difficulty to Otago, some of the courses I took were easy and other were unexpectedly difficult. Most students take 4 – 5 papers a semester but if you wanted to take it easy the minimum is 3. My papers had a large mix of internal/external assessment so same as Otago, just depends on what you select. The lecturers can be hard to understand at first due to their Chinese accent but you get used to it quick.

**Transportation:** Hong Kong has one of the best transport systems in the world. The MTR is amazing, trains come every 4-6mins on most lines and take you all over Hong Kong. Octopus cards are easy to use for MTR, buses, ferries, most cheap stores, and even some taxis. From CUHK it takes about 40mins or less to get into the central part of Hong Kong. During rush hour in the morning and early evening, you will have to queue for trains and may be squashed up against other people so I tended to avoid those times. CUHK is built on a hill so the University does provide free shuttle buses which take students around campus, they're

pretty good if you don't feel like walking in the heat or need to get somewhere quick. Because I was at Morningside I didn't need to use them that often.

**Weather:** Quick note I was there for Otago's first semester (CUHK's second) from January to May this is when the weather was hot and ranged from 22 to 31 degrees with temperatures becoming warmer later in the semester. Humidity wasn't really a problem until late April/May where some days became hot and very humid. Smog is also a problem in Hong Kong, they have a website you can check to see if it's harmful to be outside (yes it's a thing) but most of the pollution is blown over from Chinese factories so most of the time it's not a huge problem. There are occasional thunderstorms/heavy rain but nothing unusual like tornados or golfball sized hail. If you're planning on going for Otago's second semester or the CUHK summer school I'd do some research on the weather as if you're like me and don't like 100% humidity and 32-degree weather you may want to reconsider.

**Eating:** On campus, there are heaps of options provided by the University, canteens are all over campus and offer a huge range of Chinese and Western food. Most places are nice, but the cheaper ones tend to be pretty simple. Just for reference an expensive lunch on campus might be more than \$7 NZD while a cheap one might be less than \$4.50, so you can see how easy it is to live cheaply. I can't really describe just how amazing the food in Hong Kong is, dim sum, BBQ pork, roast goose, steamed buns, if you love Chinese food this is your paradise and I would seriously encourage you just to go for the food. Some of the best places to eat in Hong Kong are on the street and extremely cheap. Given the cheapest Michelin star restaurant is in Hong Kong, getting good food for next to nothing is easy.

There is a supermarket on campus if you want to get fresh fruit/vegetables or milk/cereal for a more western breakfast. 10mins on the MTR from campus will take you to a large market with restaurants above that serve great, cheap food. Warning: you will get addicted to some of the Cantonese/HK style food and then find it isn't anywhere in NZ.

**Things to do/Places to Visit:** Where do I even start, there are so many things to do in Hong Kong. There is the usual touristy stuff like The Peak, Big Buddha, the markets, Star Ferry etc.. but Hong Kong also has amazing walking trails and nature parks (with monkeys) with views that rival some of New Zealand's. If I were to talk about things to do it would probably take a couple more pages so let me just say there is something for everyone, I even found a tennis court sized foosball table in a gaming arcade.

If you want to travel to Asia, Hong Kong is the perfect launchpad. Flights are cheap and accommodation in most Asian countries is affordable. China is also easy to get to, you can catch a train from campus and be in China within a couple hours. I went to Cambodia, Thailand, South Korea, China and Taiwan. All my lectures/tutorials were on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday so I could travel during the weekends which was great.

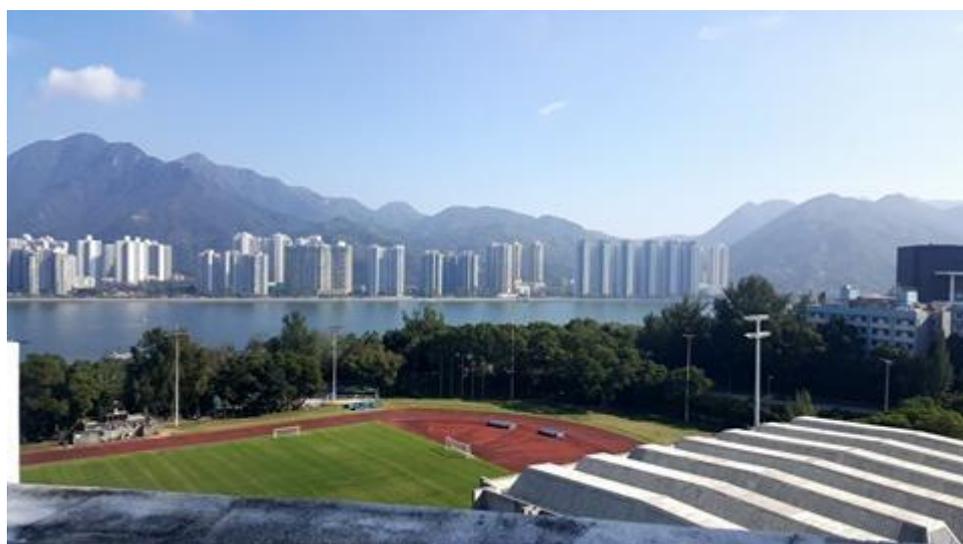
**Tips:** Here's my list: If you want to go to China (you should) get a multiple entry visa at the Chinese consulate office in Hong Kong, don't use agencies, if you go at the right time and have all the documents it only takes an hour max. Buy a CMHK sim if you want to roam in China for semi cheap rates while using a Hong Kong sim (data is extremely cheap, I paid \$5 NZD per week to get unlimited 3G data in Hong Kong). Get your vaccine shots for Asia

before you leave, although I didn't get sick eating street food the first couple weeks before I got my shots I'd still get them done in NZ just-in-case. If you need to get to the airport from CUHK use the bus from Shatin they take as long as getting the MTR to the Airport and are much cheaper/more comfortable. Don't be afraid to travel solo, sometimes friend's schedules don't align and one of the best trips I went on was to Cambodia where I traveled solo. Use Cathay fanfare for cheap flights (the equivalent of grab-a-seat). Apply for a student octopus card as soon as you arrive, it'll halve the price of most fares and end up saving you a lot over your exchange.



View from one of the Promenades

One of the City Gardens



View from Morningside Study balcony