

Semester Abroad Report — National Taipei University of Technology (NTUT), Taipei, Taiwan

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1. General information

I spent two semesters at National Taipei University of Technology (NTUT) in Taipei as an exchange student from Hochschule Trier (International Business). Honestly, I chose NTUT because I waited too long to apply and there weren't any spaces left in China. The most I knew about Taiwan was that it was often mentioned in the news due to its rocky relationship with China. However, not making it into China is one of the best things that happened to me, and I am extremely happy that it worked out the way it did. I absolutely fell in love with Taiwan, my life and experiences there, and hope that you seriously consider it as an option as I think it's an extremely underrated country.

Taipei was safe, modern, and lively during my stay. It's a city where the ancient temples sit next to massive shopping districts, incredible food is always around the corner for an affordable price, and weekend trips across Asia are cheap and easy. If you want to expand your horizons, meet interesting people from all over the world, and have a high quality of life, I would absolutely recommend Taipei.

While the bureaucratic process at the start did feel quite daunting with the visas, health insurance registration, and university paperwork, if you stay organized and keep on top of deadlines, everything will fall into place quickly. In hindsight the admin was much easier than it first appeared.

2. Course modules — overview & content

Most of my classes were master-level and the content was very high quality. Professors never just gave lectures and made sure to include activities, case discussions, group work, and practical assignments that made the classes engaging. The professors are passionate and clearly love teaching; they come across as motivated by students' learning which creates a positive environment. This style of teaching was very effective for me, and I went from someone with adequate grades, to getting a 1,3 grade average in the first semester due to the quality of the classes. I was very surprised because I didn't expect my classes to be such a highlight of my semester abroad.

I have to mention that this was in part due to NTUT's and Hochschule Trier's flexibility, which allowed me to combine typical business courses with technical ones, which I have a personal interest in. My coding, database and app development classes were hands-on and energizing, and very interesting and rewarding. Regarding language learning: This was a bit of a miss, with the official Chinese classes being very popular and therefore overcrowded; However, there are other options available, like the private COTL option (intensive but costs €150/month) and the language exchange groups, which I took part in, and were excellent and fun.

3. First & second semester classes

First semester:

- Big Data Analytics (Master)
- Data and Decision (Master)
- Corporate Leadership (Master)
 - Smart Retailing (Master)
- Corporate Governance (Master)
 - Chinese (no-credit)

In the first two weeks you are able to trial whatever classes you found interesting, and I clicked more with the master's ones, which is why I ended up taking so many. The classes from my first semester were interactive and project-centered, which helped me apply theory to real problems. I really liked smart retailing as the professor would bring professionals in who would show us the latest retailing technology like service robots, VR/AR glasses, and delivery robots which I had only seen in videos before.

Second semester:

- Mobile Application Design and Development (Bachelor)
 - Database System Application (Master)
- Technology and Innovation Management (Bachelor)
- International Advertising and Media Strategy (Master)
 - Data Science & Visualization (Master)

The second semester was more varied and for me more fun. The mobile app and database classes were very hands-on; under the supervision of Dr. Hendri Sutrisno, the Database Systems teacher, I went from almost zero programming knowledge to building an app from scratch in one semester. Another professor, Dr. Gordon Li, stood out with his industry background as a manager in Alibaba and Amazon, and made the classes feel very relevant to modern business-tech due to his practical experience and expertise.

4. Exams

Exams come in different formats: written midterms, final written/oral exams, individual projects and group projects. Compared to Hochschule Trier, NTUT spreads assessment more evenly across the semester. Effort required is an 8/10 but the difficulty is manageable (6/10) if you keep up with weekly work. Group projects were common and great for meeting classmates.

5. Accommodation — options, prices and my experience

Options: dormitories, WGs (shared flats), single apartments. I lived in two different types of accommodation during my stay.

Dorms: Extremely cheap (≈€50/month). I stayed in the student dorms during my first semester to save money. The dorms are basic with small rooms and bunk beds with a desk under the bed and shared bathrooms for all of the students. This was quite rough at first, especially since the

room is shared with 3 others. The location, however, was very convenient (metro, restaurants, easy access to hiking). Dorm life is social and economical, but the conditions of the facilities and room were hard to get used to. However, you really can't complain about the quality because of the insanely low prices.

Private housing (second semester): Typical private single apartments range ≈€200–300/month depending on location and quality; WGs in the city center or nicer singles a bit further out are €400–500/month. I was fortunate to find a private place for €150/month in my second semester which was an unusually good deal. Central neighborhoods (Xinyi, Ximen) cost more; cheaper options are usually further out. However, as long as you're close to the metro line, it's not a big deal.

6. Costs of living

Food: Street vendors and small restaurants typically cost €3–4 per meal. Convenience store meals are €4–5. Western-style meals are pricier (≈€6–10). I spent an unexpectedly high amount in my first month because it's exciting to try everything. I have to say that I will miss never having to cook or do dishes; eating out every meal every day is quite a luxury, but you have to have an open mind to the food as western options are limited.

Transport: They have a very efficient metro + bus network. Monthly unlimited transport pass ≈€35. Lifestyle: total monthly costs vary by housing and habits, but was roughly €400–900/month based on frugality. Nightlife: alcohol is relatively expensive (≈€4/beer), so factor this in if you go out a lot.

7. Social life & clubs

NTUT's club culture is incredible! At the start of term the campus hosts a huge club fair with dozens of societies: music, dance, sports, photography, coding, traditional arts and more. Joining a club is the quickest way to make local friends and integrate into the student life there. I joined the school band and performing with them was one of the highlights of my exchange.

Language exchange nights were also very valuable for practicing Mandarin and meeting locals. Some clubs (AI Club Taipei) even offer free entry and unlimited free drinks for foreigners every Thursday which was a very fun and unexpected perk. Taiwanese students can be shy at first, but regular participation in clubs, rehearsals or dinners makes friendships form fast.

8. Communication in English & local customs

English is common at the university, but less so in daily life. Convenience stores, taxis, and some services have quite limited English skills. I would recommend learning 10–20 basic Mandarin phrases and use Google Translate often. The locals appreciate the effort and are always very kind and patient. I do also have to mention an important etiquette: do not eat or drink on the metro (I made this mistake my first day and got a stern talking to) and keep noise low on public transport.

9. Other useful information

Healthcare: Keep German health insurance and register for Taiwanese insurance (~€130/semester). Healthcare is extremely affordable, for example, I had a doctor visit and medication for about €10 without local insurance.

Weather: Very hot and humid in summer (30°C+); winters are damp and feel colder than they look, so I would recommend bringing some winter clothes too.

Travel: Taiwan offers many weekend destinations (Taroko Gorge, Sun Moon Lake). High-speed rail and low-cost regional flights make island travel and trips around Asia easy and affordable.

11. Living quality

Taipei is one of the safest and most welcoming places I've ever lived. You can leave your wallet on a table or even on the train, and it will still be there when you return. Walking at night feels completely safe, and locals are friendly and curious about foreigners, often impressed if you try even a little Chinese. The university students are a bit shy at first, but once you connect, they're happy to share activities and spend time together (especially eating out). I was also surprised by the type of exchange students Taiwan attracts. They were smart, adventurous, and open-minded people who made the time there even better. I made amazing friends that I met up with even after my exchange here in Europe. Getting around is effortless with the metro, which connects almost every part of the city within 30 minutes. My favorite part, though, was walking through Taipei itself: the city feels alive at all hours, with night markets open until 4 a.m. and endless alleys to explore, each time finding something new.

12. Final thoughts

My time at NTUT was perfect for me, and I can't believe how much it broadened my horizons and how much it taught me about other cultures and myself. I had enthusiastic professors, cross-disciplinary study options, affordable living, and a very lively social scene which made it an exceptional exchange experience. Building an app from scratch with no prior experience was a personal highlight since it's something I never thought I would be capable of; the many friendships I made, people I met and connected with, and cultural insights and experiences are unforgettable. For students seeking academic growth and deep cultural immersion, plus a superb base for exploring Asia, NTUT/Taipei is an outstanding choice. For any further questions, I would be glad to help at hrcv0485@hochschuletrier.de!