

Global Collaborative 2018 Summer Internship
Post-Internship Reflection Essay

PRE-INTERNSHIP

In my final summer break before graduation, I was extremely fortunate to have been selected by the Centre for Language Studies (CLS) to represent NUS as an intern in the annual Global Collaborative Summer Program (GC 2018) organized by Kyung Hee University.

GC 2018 was a 3-week summer program catered for international students, with the objective of giving students the opportunity to learn more about Humanity, Peace and Globalization in from distinguished Professors and UN officials. At the same time, students are enabled to reflect on their roles in this ever-changing, globalized world. My role as an administrative intern involved supporting the department in the execution of the program (both academic classes and Korean Culture Week events), bridging communication between students, professors, and mitigating any issues that may arise over the course of the program.

To be honest, after the initial feelings of exhilaration from the selection results and the anticipation of the internship experience, I was overwhelmed with anxiety and fear a week before I left for Korea. I was afraid of the unknown and was even more worried that my limited command of the Korean Language would cripple my ability to communicate effectively and fulfill my role as an intern. Granted, learning Korean for 3 years in NUS and graduating from Korean 6 was not an easy feat, but representing NUS at an international, professional work environment felt like too huge a responsibility for me to bear.

Despite the nerves, I made the resolution to go for the internship with an open-mind and utmost willingness to learn. Since I aspire to be an educator in the future, I thought working in a university environment would be a good chance for me to interact with undergraduates and graduates.

THE INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

On my first day there, I was orientated to the school environment and introduced to my department seniors whom I address as '선생님' throughout the program. All the department teachers were fluent in English, but Korean was still our main medium of communication. Whenever there were parts of instructions that I fail to understand fully, my supervisors would patiently translate and always assured me that I am welcome to ask to clarify.



The best supervisors and their favourite intern (me) HAHA.

Over the course of the first week, I familiarized myself with the whole program flow, read up more about the invited professors and their courses, and handled some simple administrative work with the teaching assistants (TAs). My 선생님 also got me to edit the information handbooks and draw out a rough map of the lecture venues for the students to refer to. Other work I did in the weeks leading up to the program included preparing the materials for the opening ceremony, picking up students at the airport, and briefing the TAs before the start of GC 2018.

After two weeks of preparation at the main office, my fellow intern and I were relocated to a temporary faculty office in the building where most of the classes were held, to directly aid professors and students over the course of the actual summer program. We also worked closely with the TAs and closer with them overtime, even having lunches and dinners together over the course of GC2018. Even when we were away from the main office, our supervisors always availed themselves to handle issues that we could not resolve as interns. As the weeks passed, I got a lot closer with my supervisors and TAs, so close that they became my closest confides whenever I felt stressed and needed someone to talk to. Despite being a mere intern, they treated me like family and made me feel at home even in a foreign land.



A quick we-lfie with the faculty members and TAs while we were on duty at the Korean Culture Week.



Another we-lfie while at work on Nami Island.

Korean Culture Week (KCW) was definitely the highlight of my internship experience. Not only was I able to go to the DMZ, Nami Island, MBC, Everland, and go for Paul Kim's exclusive concert in Kyung Hee University all in one week, I was able to spend loads of quality time with the TAs and participants! I was able to click well with the participants pretty well since we all stayed in the same dormitory, and the TAs basically took care of me like a little sister and made the final week of GC 2018 the best week I have had on the internship. Though I had important responsibilities to fulfill as an intern, I found myself having so much fun playing tourist in Korea and connecting with the TAs and participants.



Visiting the MBC broadcasting station during KCW.



Group hug with the international participants at the DMZ.

POST-INTERNSHIP THOUGHTS

I would not have imagined myself dreading to leave Korea so badly when the internship period ended. Over the short 6 weeks, I learned so much about working in a Korean University, opened my eyes to so much more of the work culture in Korea, and forged so many genuine friendships which I know will survive the test of time in years to come. To me, the time spent in Kyung Hee University was beyond just an internship, it was a period of time where I reflected a lot about myself, and learned a lot more about myself. Each week I wanted to perform better than I did the previous week, and I kept reminding myself that it was okay to be nervous to keep myself on my toes as I worked. I really enjoyed interacting with the faculty staff, TAs, and participants during my time there. Though I was put through unfamiliar situations and challenging tasks (e.g. translating for a student at the Students' Health Center, leading students during KCW etc.), each of these new experiences gave me the opportunity to learn and grow as a person, and even more as an aspiring educator.

If you would ask me, I would gladly do this internship all over again. Despite my unfounded worries prior to the internship, I had such a fantastic time in Korea. Though office work was not really something I would do as a full-time job, the people I have met and experiences I was able to go through over GC2018 made this the most fulfilling summer break I have ever had as an undergraduate.

I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to 지서원 선생님 and A/P Chan Wai Meng for granting me such an invaluable internship experience, 박경준 선생님 and 최향 선생님 for their patient guidance as supervisors and for showering me with so much love over the short 6 weeks, and finally the TAs of GC2018 for being part of my internship experience and making it so unforgettable in so many ways.