

Winter Semester 2019 SKKU SUWON – South Korea



Before the semester starts

One of the most important steps in advance is applying for a visa. You can do that in the Korean embassy just check beforehand on their website what documents you need. It is free if you have a German passport. In Korea you will have to apply for an Alien Registration Card, but the University will give you all the important information for that, just remember to bring a biometric picture so you don't have to take one in Korea.

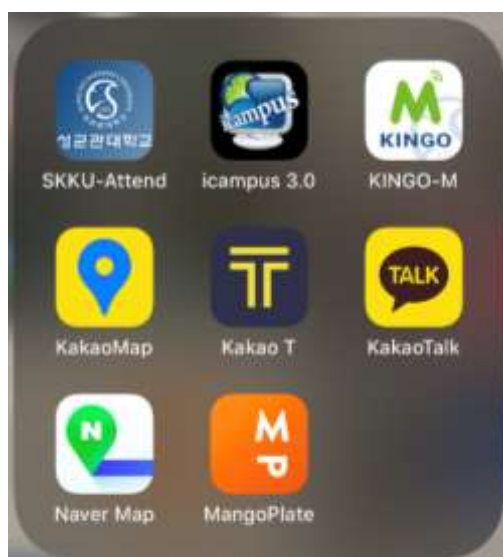
I would also recommend doing a language course. It is way easier to get around if you can read Hangul (Korean Alphabet) and know some key phrases. The one offered from the FRA-UAS is nice.

Join the Facebook group of your semester, the international office posts everything there first so it is the best way of getting information. In addition, join the Open Kakao Talk Chatroom, probably someone will post a link in the FB group. Speaking of that; download the Kakao Talk App! It is the app to stay in contact with people in Korea as basically nobody has WhatsApp. It is one of the must have apps.

On that Note,

Usefull Apps and Websites:

- Kakao Maps or Naver Maps:
 - don't use Google Maps it does not work accurately in Korea
- Kakao T:
 - it is an app which allows you to call a taxi using your location,
 - saves you the hassle of trying to get a taxi from the street, it is especially handy if there are no empty taxis around
 - only works with a Korean phone number



- Mango Plate:
 - perfect app for finding nice restaurants in your area
 - you can filter for price, type of food, and distance to your location
- Trazy.com
 - if you want to book tickets for a festival or an award show they offer special seats as well as discounts for a lot of the tourist attractions (e.g. Lotte World)
- Naver Papago
 - best app for translating

SKKU specific apps

- Kingo App
 - has your Student ID, Timetable etc.
- SKKU Attendance
 - some professors use this app to check attendance

Courses at SKKU and how they are different

One difference is that you must sign up for the courses. The popular courses will be full in seconds as they only have limited spots for exchange students. So be ready when the course registration starts. The university will give you all the important information in advance. I originally chose five regular courses. Sadly, I had to withdraw from one of the courses as it was a hundred percent in Korean. From the other four courses one was also nearly exclusively in Korean and the professor's English was frankly spoken horrible. The other three courses were however taught in English with exception of the lab class which was part of a programming course. So, one major thing to keep in mind is that the courses may not be in English even though they officially should be. That can range from the lecture being 50% in Korean to the professor not speaking any English. I can only speak for my experiences at the Suwon campus, it is a different situation at the Seoul campus. If you want to take courses at the Suwon campus here are some tips:

- Try getting in contact with previous students and see if they can tell you something about the professor or course you want to take
- Sometimes courses are taught by foreign professors consider taking those as they will be in English for sure
- Labs will be held in Korean, even if stated differently on the course plan

Just have a couple plan-b courses ready, maybe register for more courses than you actually want to take. In the first two weeks you can drop courses without any trouble.

You can still manage if the course is all in Korean though, as the Exam will be in English and most of the material will be too, just be prepared to do a lot on your own. Also, you can be lucky and have all your courses in English.

The courses at SKKU are way more “school like” than in Frankfurt. You have mandatory attendance and fail the course if you miss too much. It often is represented in your grade as well with around 10%. In addition to the exams there is homework as well as essays, presentations and quizzes which will make up a percentage of your grade. The main percentage of your grade most of the time are midterm and final. Those are each written all in one (very stressful) week. General rule for Exams in Korea – Memorizing is key. It is not as much about understanding but rather how well you know the book and/or PowerPoint slides. Besides from the regular courses SKKU in addition offers courses only for exchange students such as a Language class or special classes about Korean culture.

The Campus

On campus there are multiple cafeterias as well as some shops and all the buildings offer space to study and sit.

The Highlight of the Campus is the Samsung Library. It offers a lot space to study as well as space for group meetings. There is a more café like first floor where music is playing but also very quiet areas for focused studying as well as laptop areas and more.



Every semester the university offers a free festival on campus for the students. Through the day there are performances by students as well as student run booths. In the evening Korean Music Stars perform. These two days are also the only ones where alcohol is allowed on campus.

Dormitory

For Suwon the dorm is on campus. There are shared rooms with each 2 people and a private bathroom per room. Also keep in mind that you do have a curfew (except for Master Students and Architects) which is from 1am-5am, Sunday to Thursday. Dorms are a nice option if the curfew isn't a problem as you are close to a lot of the other exchange students and it is convenient to live on campus. A useful tip for checking out is that you can extend the checkout date for a couple of days without paying extra.

Life

Korea has A LOT to offer when it comes to food, culture, and going out.

Food

Korea offers a lot of options when it comes to food and eating out is generally more affordable than in Germany, especially if you go for Korean. If you want to have western food like pizza or pasta you will have to spend considerably more. It is quite easy to find good food in Korea just be open to try and don't be afraid if they only have a Korean menu you can always just point a something. Also get used to spicy food. If you're at Suwon campus, there is an Instagram account (@skku_food) run by students which offers food recommendations in Suwon. Especially if you are in bigger cities Mango Plate is a great help to find restaurants or

cafés another tip is to search for the hashtag of the area where you are plus restaurant on Instagram to find interesting places (e.g. for Hongdae it would be “홍대맛집”)

Korea is great for going out as well and offers a big variety from small intimate bars where you can hang out with friends and talk to big clubs with various genres of music. The two main districts for going out are Hongdae and Itaewon. You have to see for yourself which one you like best. But not just Seoul but also Suwon has bars and pubs to offer where you can meet and hangout.



Culture

Korea has an old and fascinating history. So, visiting a palace and temple while in Korea is a must. I would also recommend the National Museum of Korea (entrance is free) and if you want to learn more about Korea’s history with Japan the Seodaemun prison museum. Not just history but also art museums are a worth visiting. A lot of the museums are free for students and every last Wednesday of the month is “culture day” which means that there is free entrance to the palaces as well as a couple museums. In Suwon you can visit the Hwaseong Fortress and the area around it.

On weekends you can take short trips to other parts of Korea. The cheapest way is Bus or the Munghwa Train. A faster but also more expensive option is the KTX. Busan, Seoraksan national park and Jeju are just a few destinations absolutely worth visiting.

In conclusion

Even though there were hard times, when I felt frustrated with situations or just kind of out of place, I never regretted doing this semester abroad. The friends I found will stay with

me for a long time. I would recommend everybody to go abroad, especially a country like Korea which is completely different to Germany as it gives you tons of opportunities to grow, get out of your comfort zone and to make valuable, great and unforgettable memories.

Enjoy your time in Korea! 감사합니다