

Korea University Business School (KUBS) – Seoul, South Korea  
Fall Semester 18/19



Student: Oscar Zimmermann

Major: business administration

E-Mail: [oscar.zimmermann1996@gmail.com](mailto:oscar.zimmermann1996@gmail.com)

This report is about my preparation for and the experiences of attending Korea University Business School (KUBS) in Seoul for one semester in 2018/19. I am starting with introducing myself briefly to give you a rough picture of me. Then, I am expanding on my **preparation** I had done before leaving Germany including everything from deciding my choice of university all the way to packing the suitcase. The next part consists of my **accommodation, studying at KUBS and followed by the daily life**. To each aspect I am talking about, you will find some advices. Some of them might help you.

*Who am I?*

My name is Oscar and I study business administration at University of Cologne, at which I am about to finish my bachelor degrees. To the time when I was leaving to Korea, I was 21 and just started my fifth semester of studies. Noteworthy is that during my high school time I had already participated at a likewise program, but at that time I had decided to go to the United States of America. I had already been to many countries; however, Korea was the first Asian country I visited.

*Preparation*

For some people the preparation is the toughest part, because they fear of missing any deadline or anything organizational wise. Here you will get a short overview of how I approached and accomplished my preparation. The first and already most difficult decision I was confronted with was **choosing the destination**; the country and city where you are going to live in for roughly five months. However, if you are still in an earlier stage and even thinking of going abroad in general, I can truly recommend you to do so. You would miss out a unique opportunity to experience and learn a bunch of stuff you will never be able to redo later. From international friendships which sometimes hold a lifetime up to a cultural understanding which gives you both personal impressions and career wise high incentives for your future. The destination decision starts with examination the offered universities for your study and for your time frame. My preferences were based on both how the university and the city performed in the categories which were important for me. After weighting my categories for the two factors I came up with my five preferences and an order for them. Killer-criteria help to fasten the progress. My biggest killer-criteria was that the city had to be a metropolis in the Asian area. Then I did rough researches on the quality of life and economic influence of the countries/cities and the reputation and programs the universities could offer. Regarding the city I specifically looked at the sightseeing attractions, leisure time offerings and geographic connection to other countries. With respect to the university, the reputation was important to me. I really wanted to attend a private school which enables to give me impressions University of Cologne cannot offer. Additionally, the class offering and especially the student exchange program is worth taking a look at. In my case, Korea University is proud of its exchange student support buddy program (KUBA) which provides a buddy for each visiting student and organizes group activities to meet new people and have a fun time together. You really should look out for universities which offers likewise, because you will make quickly international and local friends and have a great time together. Such a program makes it impossible that you will end up being alone, so one concern less to think about!

After you discussed your preferences with your family or even friends, you can fix them and go on to step 2: the application. Here you will get enough information from your home-university about what to submit and when. Of course, let your application proof-read by a second party. Then you are just waiting for the results. In the meantime, you can already start thinking in detail about how to

finance the semester abroad. Here you should check on potential scholarships which fit to your circumstances. Make a list and a note for their last days of submission, thus you do not miss any date. Back to the program itself, once you get the result and the offer regarding the destination you need to accept it within two weeks. Many people do not get their first options, so no reason to be sad if that is your case. After your acceptance you will get further information about the next step, which is to apply at the targeted university directly. Sometimes you need references from professors, also for scholarships, who take quite a while in making them. Therefore, do not wait until last minute to contact them.

Choosing the **accommodation** is a central decision because it will contribute a huge part to your daily life. If you are about to attend Korea University, I personally recommend you to live in Anam either on-campus or off-campus. There are two essential reasons: firstly, you live directly nearby university and do not waste much time to get to class, secondly, Anam has a good night life and most of your future friends will go there frequently. By living there, you do not have to think about how to get back home each time after going out, since the metro stops driving after 11:50pm ish. However, if you want the big night life each day, you better should go and live at Itaewon. While one of my friends moved from Anam to Itaewon, around four other friends came to stay in Anam during their time there. I am not a fan of on-campus living, so I only concentrated my researches on off campus accommodations, because you the rules are looser there and apparently the chances to get into on-campus living is low in general. I stayed at Crimson House which is just two minutes away from university which I really appreciated, especially because some professors are really strict about punctuality. Crimson House is expensive and there are cheaper alternatives in Anam which I would consider good as well. However, Crimson House has its benefits. In case of choosing Crimson House, try to get a type B room. Type A is really small and does not have its own fridge, while type C offers too much space you actually do not need for the time you spend there. If you really want to get the cheapest option at Crimson House and thinking about sharing a type D with another person, I am highly discouraging you from doing that. Some days are really exhausting regarding university and social life, so you need your private time. Therefore, if you are looking for living in Anam cheaply, then go to a different accommodation. There are enough which are at least 100.000 Won cheaper monthly. From the beginning I had already been aware of that Crimson House is relatively expensive. However, I chose it because of the social life. You have your own Crimson House community and find friends already in the very first week, because almost everybody is open-minded there. With just a "Hi!" and "Where are you from?" a conversation is already started. That is the big advantage of Crimson House and from my experience I can approve that. I had a very lucky incident at Crimson House. Each year –fall semester– you have the big rival games of KU against Yonsei University. They compete in five competitions. Some of them are open for everyone, but in ice hockey and basketball there are only limited seats and therefore you need tickets. To get one of those tickets is really difficult and can cost up to 40.000 Won. One day I went up to the manager's office to pay my rent and she had some of those tickets and they were free for everybody, but of course on a first come first served basis. The manager had only three of each which is not a lot. I did not know a lot about those games and the importance about the tickets, because the games were coming up three weeks later. I grabbed two ice hockey tickets and I think my friend I invited to join and myself were the only exchange students out of 600 in the ice rink. So, we were really lucky. The ice hockey game against Yonsei was one of the very best experiences I have made in Korea. The atmosphere was fabulous! Apparently, the atmosphere at soccer and baseball is usually also great, but unfortunately, we had rainy days.

How are you going to **pay** in Korea? That is a question you have to think about as well. Are you mainly going to pay by card or withdrawing once in a while a big amount of money and pay then in cash? I was the cash-type. The type you are going to be should influence the decision of choosing your credit card. Considering the experiences of my friend, I would recommend you a visa card if you are the card-type. If not, then it usually does not matter a lot. I had a master card. More importantly you should check your daily withdrawing restrictions. I was not allowed to withdraw more than 500 Euro per day. So, when I needed to withdraw money, I tried to get close to that number to minimize relatively the fees the Korean banks impose. I think in my case it was around 5 Euros which is not a lot, but it can be if you only withdraw 50 Euro each time. If you go to Korean banks to withdraw you have to check for the international ATM, because you as a foreign card holder cannot withdraw from each ATM.

### *Daily life*

Now I am talking about packing the baggage and important things you should take with you. Starting to talk about your passport. Of course, you have to take this one with you, but you should take several copies of it with you as well. You have to copy this in Korea several times anyways, so better you have them already. Then regarding the visa. Usually as a German citizen you get a **D-2 multi-entry visa**. So, make sure that you are getting that multi-entry visa, because I heard about some German who just get the single entry one. In Korea you need to register and get the ARC- alien registration card- if you will stay longer than 90 days, what you will. This card is also essential for you to reenter the country when you are taking a trip to another country. However, as a multi-entry visa holder, you can enter Korea again without any problems. But you have to consider one important thing. Once you got your appointment for ARC and applied for the ARC you have to wait around 25 days to get the card. If you go within these days abroad and come back, the possibility is very high that you have to apply for ARC again and also pay for it again (30.000 Won). However, if you still want to go abroad for this time, you need to contact the immigration office and asked if your ARC-number is already created. If yes, then you can pick up a certificate of that number and you still can go abroad without doing the procedure afterwards again. Another advice I can give to you is to take some cash in Euro with you. Euro is a strong currency and the exchange rates you get for Euro are much higher compared to Won. For example, if you go for a weekend to Japan and do not want to withdraw money there, you better exchange Euro than Won, you can save up to 25 percent in this regard. If you are travelling with a big suitcase and you have only a small backpack for university, then I am recommending to take a small travelling bag along as well. Not each accommodation offers shower gel and shampoo, so if you have some spare space in your suitcase/bag just put an additional bottle in there, because that stuff is really expensive in Korea. Actually, all cosmetic products are pricy (no idea about girl's cosmetic like lipstick or the like). One of my friends said the big Timberlands he carried with him was not worth it. However, I had also brought a pair along and I really appreciated them. I did not wear them a lot, but once in a while you get heavy rain showers or rain which lasts for days. The first time I experienced such a rain, the shoes I had on were soaked with water afterwards, even though I just spend 5 minutes with them outside. My Timberlands helped me a lot for this kind of weather. During the wintertime it is really getting cold in Seoul. Therefore, either prepare at home already and put a big jacket and some pullovers in the suitcase or be ready to buy suchlike in Korea. Besides the physical packing you also should think about **additional gadgets** which makes your arrival and living in Seoul easier. Some useful advice is to download the map of Korea in order to use it offline. For example, it already helped me right at the beginning, when I arrived in Korea and wanted to check when I had to leave the bus, I took

at the airport to get to my hostel and later actually walking to it. In this regard I used the app maps.me which works sometimes slowly but helped me in each case I really needed it. Mind also important **vaccinations** for destinations you might want to travel to. Many people travel to the south and Japanese Encephalitis is recommended to do in advance.

The next aspect I want to give you a little insight about is my **daily life**. My daily life is subdivided into three categories: Crimson House (CH), KUBS, and spare time. I already mentioned **Crimson House** and there is not a lot to add. You have very open-minded people there who are doing the exact same thing you are about to do and because of being in the same situation it is easy to find new friends. You share your bathrooms which get cleaned each day, except for Sundays. Depending on the people on the floor you might live with there this cleanliness can be destroyed quite fast, but that is not the fault of CH. On the other hand, you have the kitchen. Even though this gets cleaned as well, I personally did not enjoy either cooking or eating there. However, you will automatically lower your standards in CH and see things less bad. It happened to me as well and I even cooked once in a while there. Rules are not enforced strict there. Overall, at CH you can have some decent times and get great memories. The life at **KUBS** is the main part of your daily life. Besides the studying you also spend some you're your spare time with its buddy programs KUBA (Korea university buddy association) and KUBS buddy program. Many students did not get their classes in the first online registration period, which happened when you are still in your home country. It is difficult to get them because all students get online at the same time to register. Important here is to do the pre-registration you will get informed about. Regarding the start of the actual registration period it is very important to know that you can already log in to your account a few minutes before it actually starts. You cannot register before the time KU will set, but being already logged in gives you a huge advantage and might decide over if you get most of your classes or not. However, later during the add and drop period everybody will get enough classes, so no worries. I met people who did not get into any course at the registration period and were about to flip out before the add and drop period. Later on, they were surprised it was that easy. Do not get me wrong, you might not get all of your favorite classes, be flexible and have a backup plan. I was really fast and had already all of my classes at the beginning. However, during the add and drop period I changed a bit in order to favor my credit transfer to my home university. I took six classes. One is Korean management, which gives great insights into the Korean history and business in the Asian context, but it has a lot of group projects. However, I still consider it a must do, because you will learn a lot about Asia and Korea specifically. Furthermore, I took an English lab class, which is supposed to enhance your business vocabulary, macroeconomics, business economics and macroeconomics from a firm's perspective. Additionally, I took international business, which was one of the best classes I have ever taken. I was lucky with the professor in this class, because he had some great teaching skills. We did a lot of case study analysis and group presentation. It was a lot of effort but I learned a bunch of stuff in this class. Unfortunately, this experience does not apply to all international business classes. At Ku the content style of some classes can differ a lot from professor to professor. Moreover, you can even take sports classes which have high popularity among the Korean students. I had golfing, but unfortunately due to a potential time clash I had to get rid of it in the add and drop period. The KU buildings look amazing. There are some under construction, so it might be even better when you go there. It is really clean and you feel like the elite of the country. Also, if you talk with Koreans, most of them know the KU and are going to be impressed about you instantly. **KUBA and KUBS** buddy program (latter one only for bachelor business students) set up many events and appointments to meet exchange students and the local buddies to have some great time together and enjoy Korean culture as well. I recommend to go to many of those activities. There are myriad things you can do in your

**leisure time.** At the beginning I did a lot of sightseeing in Seoul. At the end I did more like having dinner together with my friends or meet up with Koreans. Eating out with friends is for Koreans a big part of their social life. Usually they order food and share all dishes together. You will probably eat out a lot while being in Korea. Eating out might not be expensive compared to European countries, but if you do it often, it is adding up. Therefore, you might have to look out for some cheap, good places to save some money. One inside tip is a restaurant which is on campus at the basketball court over the cafeteria, which serves great food for cheap money.

At the end I am giving you a short, realistic overview about your potential expenses. Depending on the arrival and departure times of your flights you have to pay roughly 700-800 Euro. For the accommodation I paid about 420 Euro monthly. I spend 4 months in Korea, therefore, the fixed costs are already 2.400 Euro ish. I am pretty sure at the beginning of your time abroad your spending will be at the peak. You have a lot of events from university where you also might buy clothing like the KU jacket, you have to pay the caution for your accommodation, you probably do a lot of city sightseeing and buy stuff for your room. Additionally, you are curious about your new surrounding and want to try as much new stuff as possible. One time I was very sick and had to go to the doctor. I went to the KU hospital which is very expensive. So far, I did not get my money back from the insurance, but I am pretty sure, I will. Compared to my fellow students my expenditures are a good average. Each day you will roughly spend 50 Euros, for four months that would be 6000. In this calculation everything is included: flight, sightseeing, accommodation, school stuff, food and also a trip to Busan. There are also a lot of trips which are offered by the government. They are extremely cheap. You pay for trips 20 Euros which are actually for 150 or even 200 Euros. I participated at one, but for me the program was too full and therefore stressful. I could not really enjoy these trips, however, some other did. That is up to you the.

I hope I could give you a good insight about the preparation and living in Seoul. If you have any questions or want to get some more details about any specific topic do not hesitate to contact me.