

## *My Experience in Belgium*

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### Studying Abroad

I decided to join the exchange programme because I had a great learning experience with the teachers from Thomas More University (TM) when I was studying in Hong Kong. “To learn more from them” was the biggest motivation for me and I did achieve this goal from the exchange programme.

Since most of the subjects provided by TM are divided according to the disorder types, I could enroll in the subjects that I would like to learn more. For example, in the subject “People with Intellectual Disabilities”, we knew that people with different intellectual disabilities show different levels of speech and language abilities. The teacher showed us and practiced with us how to use different assessment tools.

Besides, I have enrolled in some courses that I have had before in Hong Kong, i.e. Voice and Fluency. I could review what I have learnt when I had these courses again. Also, a small-scaled class and a one-semester period allowed me to learn deeper as we had time to do more discussions and hands-on tasks.



As the exchange programme was in collaboration with a university in a European country, I did not miss the chance to know more about how the profession of speech and language pathology works in European context. In this course, we had chances to visit different settings targeting different clients, i.e. the ENT department in a hospital, a special school, a radio company and a private setting. This was the most exciting part for me as I could know how speech and language pathologists work in Belgium. Furthermore, I really appreciate the seniors’ attitude and I keep their words in mind.



### Making Friends

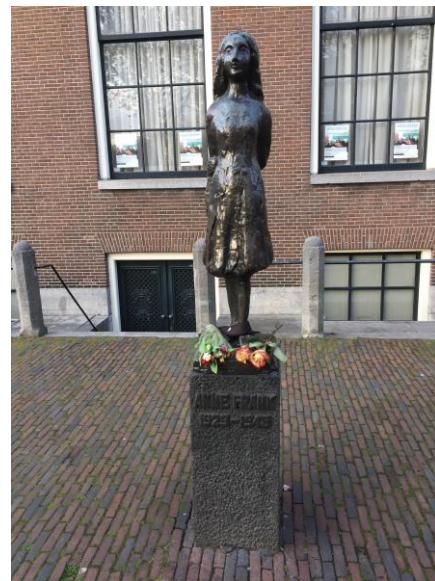
Apart from learning at school, I had much memorable moments with my classmates and friends from the school dormitory. Cultural exchange activities are indispensable in these three and a half months. Since our class consisted of people from seven different countries, including Germany, Portugal, Spain, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Hong Kong, we shared our culture whenever we had time. Everyone cooked their traditional food, played typical music and taught us their mother tongue. Belgian friends from the school dormitory brought us to experience local student life, introduced us some history of the country and told us how they celebrate Christmas as well as some interesting facts about the festival. I even had an opportunity to spend my birthday in a Belgian way!



Besides, this was the first time for me to spend over two weeks abroad. It was long enough for me to experience some cultural shock and homesick. Luckily, I went to church and met some people from Hong Kong. They cooked homemade Hong Kong food for us and treated us as family members. This made me feel better.

### Travelling Around

Although Belgium is not a big country, she is surrounded by several popular European countries, including the Netherlands, Germany, France and England. I surely grasped this opportunity to travel around. During weekends and the autumn break, I visited more than ten cities in four neighbouring countries. I even tried my very first solo trip to Berchtesgaden in Germany. It was an unforgettable experience in my life.



After spending a semester in Belgium, knowledge was not the only thing that I gained. Friendship is also a valuable present which I did not expect much before the exchange programme. We are still keeping in touch through different social media. Moreover, being away from home and familiar people for three and a half months was not a long period of time, though I understand more about what kind of person I am. It is not only meaningful to my life, but also affecting how I work as we work with humans.



Although this is the first time of collaboration, I really appreciate the work done by both universities. The staffs were responsive and we received help very soon. The school dormitory was also nice and convenient. To sum up, I really had a great experience in this exchange programme.

