



P.R. China
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1 Introduction

In October 2015 I participated at the CDHK – TU Berlin ‘Summer School Program’. This program allowed me to obtain a first impression of the campus life and courses at Tongji University. I thoroughly enjoyed my stay and the great first impression encouraged me to apply for the dual-degree program. The dual-degree program is aimed at post-graduate students who study industrial engineering. It is one year long and gives students the opportunity to obtain a degree from both Tongji University and the Technical University of Berlin. Overall, the dual-degree program has given me a unique opportunity to engage with a new cultural and educational environment. This report aims to capture the most important advice to help the cohorts that follow.

2 Preparation for the Exchange

The preparation for the dual-degree at Tongji University starts early, since the application deadline for the program is a year in advance. Fortunately, the CDHK-Office lead by Dr. Sigrun Abels and the TU Berlin Exchange Office offer assistance and guide the process. The main organizational issues that needed to be covered in preparation for the exchange are in the list below:

- Register on the online portal of the Tongji University and send in the documents to the Tongji office. This is best done early since express letters are far more expensive than regular ones.
- The process for applying for a visa at the Berlin office took about 10 days. I decided to apply for an X1 visa that I exchanged for a residence permit once I came to Shanghai. Despite there being several possibilities, this is probably the most popular method among exchange students.
- In order to change your visa to a residence permit you need to pass a health examination within the first **30** days of arrival. It is important to make an appointment for the health-test online since the clinic is frequently full and appointments on short notice are not always available.
- I would recommend applying for a credit card with no withdrawal fee. This is something I initially forgot to do which in turn cost me a lot of money during the first few weeks. An alternative is opening an account with a Chinese bank. Note: Opening an account at the Chinese Merchants Bank is mandatory if you receive the CSC Scholarship.
- Apply for Scholarships! The most popular ones are the Chinese Government Scholarship, PROMOS Scholarship and CDHK D.A.A.D. Scholarship. Make sure that the individual scholarships are compatible

with one another as some institutions do not allow more than one scholarship at the same time.

- Set-up a VPN connection with your computer and other portable devices. This is very useful since many web-sites are blocked in China.
- The first few organizational tasks in Shanghai can be challenging since not everyone speaks English and most of the registrations, contracts etc. are in Chinese therefore it is definitely useful to apply to the Buddy-Program.
- Get the appropriate vaccines. Despite this also being possible in China, it is much less troublesome to do this at your local clinic in Germany. I was vaccinated against Hepatitis A+B and Tetanus. Most clinics provide recommendations on what vaccines to get – it mostly depends on where you intend to travel.

3 Arrival in Shanghai

The arrival at Hongqiao or Pudong airport are both equally convenient. Both airports have a metro station that takes you directly into the city. Pudong Airport even has a maglev link which goes into the city in 15 min. If you arrive at night, the chances are that the metro & maglev will already have closed. If this is the case I would advise to avoid the taxis at the entrance and taking the bus instead since this is much cheaper. I decided to book a hostel for the first night in Shanghai since I wasn't aware if the room in the dormitory was already free. I would recommend checking with the person responsible in advance when your room will be available.

4 First Steps in Shanghai

The first few days in Shanghai can be overwhelming especially due to the large amount of organizational and administrative things that need to be done. The following list gives a brief overview of some of the most important things to keep in mind at the beginning of your stay abroad:

- When buying a SIM card it's important to make use of the special offers on the Tongji Campus at the beginning of term. You'll find a large variety of different carriers offering SIM cards around the football field across from the student clubs and activities center. The offer is only available for a limited amount of time, it's worth being patient and making use of these offers since they are much better than any off-campus deal.

- Internet: The Sino-German School for Postgraduate Studies offers free internet in the library once you have your student I.D. In order to have Wi-Fi in the dorm room you need to register at the China Mobile store on the Siping campus (only possible there). This isn't quite so easy since most of the contracts are in Chinese therefore I recommend taking your study buddy with you.
- If you have a friend with whom you want to share a dorm room, make sure that you go to the administration office together. If you come on separate days the administration will likely assign you to different rooms.
- At the beginning of term the student associations at Tongji University introduce themselves. This provides a good opportunity to learn about the extracurricular offers at Tongji University.
- The distances from dorm to campus and on campus are very long. It's convenient to buy a used bicycle or a scooter during the first few days.

5 Tongji University

The Siping Campus accommodates most departments and faculties that are related to economics such as the CDHK. It is worth noting that the campus is large which makes walking from one lesson to the other inconvenient. Commonly, people buy a bicycle or register on one of the numerous public bicycle websites to make the travelling around campus easier. As a dual-degree student most of the courses will be held at the School of Economics and Management (SEM), Sino-German School for Postgraduate Studies (CDHK) and International School.

5.1 Overview of the Courses

Most courses are graded based on attendance, a presentation and an examination. It's important to note that at Tongji University the lecturers pay close attention to class attendance. Most of the courses at the CDHK are taught in English but there is also a large offer of courses taught in German and Chinese. Below is an overview of the classes that I have attended with a brief description and personal opinion:

- **Introduction to Chinese Culture and Society by Dr. Hernig:** One week course that covers the most important historical events in China. The course included a few small fieldtrips around Shanghai. The lecturer is passionate about his class which makes the lecture a pleasure to actively take part in. Overall, I would definitely recommend this course.

- **New Product Development by Prof. Max von Zedtwitz:** This course gives an introduction into the process of designing new products and their impact on society. The course is held over one weekend and is mainly case based. I can recommend this course to anyone who is remotely interested in innovation and entrepreneurship. The class is examined by an open book exam on the last day and a few small group presentations during class.
- **Econometrics by Prof. Werwatz:** Since this course is only a few days long it only covered the basics of statistical regression. This class gives a decent overview of the fundamental concepts of regression and it helped me gain a more tangible understanding of the topic. The classes are structured into iterating segments of theory and practice. The course will be considered easy by anyone who has prior knowledge of undergraduate statistics. Grades are based on an exam which is conveniently held a few weeks after the final lecture.
- **Entrepreneurship in China by Prof. Han:** This was both the most challenging and interesting course that I had during my first term. The course is several weeks long and every week a new sub-topic related to entrepreneurship is covered. The main part of the course is conceptualizing a start-up business idea in China. This idea is then pitched during class and the individual groups have the chance to invest virtual money. Overall the course had an interesting teaching approach that never failed to entertain.
- **Information Management and E- Collab. by Prof. Ludwig Nastansky:** This course taught the basics of using the IBM lotus notes desktop environment. During the few classes that we had a lot of the time was used to get the program installed on every computer. This was extremely time consuming and tied to several technical difficulties. The course content was limited to learning how to make calendar appointments, send/receive e-mails and a brief overview of deep learning and neural nets. Overall, the course was unstructured and lacked substantial content to qualify as a course for postgraduate students. A disappointing experience for a course that initially made promising impression.

Generally, the quality of the courses at the CDHK was similar to what I was used to at the Technical University of Berlin. However the quality of the courses at the “School of Economics and Management” and “International School” was slightly disappointing. Commonly, the problem is rooted in the communication as many foreign lecturers have problems expressing themselves fluently in English. Moreover, the organisation is also frequently an issue. Since many dates and lectures are planned on short notice course collisions are frequently inevitable. This is especially unfortunate when the colliding courses both check attendance and are only offered once. Fortunately, most (not all!) lecturers are aware of this organisational issue and are willing to compromise. Usually, the lacking attendance can be compensated by finishing additional homework or something similar.

5.2 Advice on Structuring the Dual-Degree

In this section I would like to share several key-learnings that will help structuring your degree:

- Try to complete all the necessary engineering courses at the Technical University of Berlin prior to coming to Shanghai. The engineering courses at Tongji are mostly held at the Jiading campus which is (very) far away from the Siping campus.
- You will come across a document named ‘Curriculum of Degree Program’. This document lists the courses that need to be completed in order to complete the degree in Shanghai. Make sure you know exactly which courses count towards your degree and which courses don’t.
- There are courses at the School of Economics and Management (SEM) and International School that you need to complete. Make sure that you register for these courses on time – it’s usually first come first serve. To register for the SEM course you need to visit the administration office and talk to Mr. Spencer Fan. The registration for the International School courses can be done online.

6 Accommodation in Shanghai

Here are some of the things to keep in mind when choosing a place to live in Shanghai. In the following I’ll discuss the most feasible options for accommodation and what you can expect.

6.1 University Dorms

The dorms at Tongji University are free of charge for CSC Scholarship students and moderately expensive for non-Scholarship students. The Zhangwu dorm is

the one that I am familiar with. Generally, the double rooms are okay. They have the necessary facilities such as a bathroom with toilet, desk, bed, wardrobe and air-conditioning. It is important to note that some electrical appliances such as microwaves, heaters, cookers etc. are not allowed and are confiscated during regular room checks. The Zhangwu dorms are conveniently located in an area with a lot of restaurants.

6.2 Off Campus Accommodation

Off Campus accommodation is the more favourable option if you dislike sharing a room with someone else. However renting a room in Shanghai can become costly with rents between 400€ and 600€. CSC Scholarship students have the option to retrieve approx. 100€ if they decide to live off campus and not make use of the dorm room.

7 Sport On- and Off-Campus

Aside from university it's worth talking part in the sports offers that are available on and off campus. On campus there are tennis courts, volleyball pitches, football fields and basketball fields that can be accessed most of the time. It's easiest to simply join a group of people which is also a great way to meet new people. Off campus there are a lot of activities to take part in as well. The most popular is probably joining one of the fitness centres near university.

8 Miscellaneous

8.1 Language

The 'new' lifestyle in Shanghai took several weeks to get adjusted to. A key learning from the first few months was that knowing some of the language helps a lot. Prior to my stay I thought that most people would be able to speak English however this was not the case. Shops, dorms, restaurants, clubs, malls etc. the staff can usually only speak little English. Therefore, I would recommend learning some of the basics or downloading an app such as 'pleco' to make the communication during your stay easier.

8.2 Weather

During my stay, the weather in Shanghai was best between September and November. This is the time when the weather is moderately warm and the air-

pollution was lowest. This changes during mid-December when the air-pollution becomes stronger.

8.3 Food

The food in Shanghai takes time to adjust to. If you decide to live in the dorms at Zhangwu road, the surrounding area has a lot of different restaurants. On the campus there are several canteens that offer food all day. This is also a popular option for those who spend a lot of time on campus. Personally, I think the food on campus gets slightly repetitive and the quality is not that great. Another great option is ordering food, this is very convenient since the food comes fast, cheap and is usually good. The most common applications used to order food are: “mei tuan wai mai” and “e le ma”.

9 Conclusion

Adapting to the different cultural setting has been an intuitively rewarding task. Finding new friends, overcoming bureaucratic hurdles and adapting to the fast progression at university often require a fundamentally new – sometimes counter-intuitive – approach. I think the program has given me valuable insight into what it is like to live and learn in Shanghai. Personally, I can see myself spending more time in China and establishing a career at the cross-section of Chinese and German culture. Throughout the time in Shanghai I learned that not everyone shares these thoughts. Nevertheless, I believe that if you embrace the new surrounding the time in Shanghai can truly be a transformational experience.