The university which I attended during my exchange was the Yonsei University which is one of the top 3 universities in South Korea ---it is known as “SKY” in Korea which “S” stands for Seoul University, “K” stands for Korea University while Y represents Yonsei University. In this report, I will first briefly report about the academic part, and then I will share my unique experience concerning the accommodations, the extra-curricular activities, social and cultural encounters.

I have totally took four courses which they are “Korean language Intensive”(KLI), “Topics on Korea culture and society”, “Contemporary Koran Cinema” and “Modern Chinese Literature and Films”(under UIC). The first thing that out of my expectation is the importance of attendance in Yonsei University (or maybe all of the universities in Korea). Unlike the course in HKU, they do not have tutorial class for the courses, but all of their lectures need to take attendance seriously and if we absent for over 20%-30% (depends on course), we would fail the course. It is not as what the other students said that they do not need to go to the class for most of the time during exchange, in Korea, attendance of class is important and since the Korean language Intensive is from Monday to Friday, I have to go to school everyday. However, the workload is not heavy for those courses I have taken, besides the KLI, there is no exams for the remaining courses but only essays. I have to write response paper every week for the “Contemporary Koran Cinema” and “Modern Chinese Literature and Films”. Though the workloads for these courses are fair, but it is only because the academic culture of Korea is a bit unexpected for us, the other exchange students from Hong Kong also found it exhausting. Therefore I suggest the fellow schoolmates better get prepared to this culture before they apply the Korea exchange. Moreover, for those who really want to improve their Korean language, I do recommend the KLI. Even though it is time-consuming as it takes two hours everyday, I am lucky to have a very good teacher who can explain the grammar and usage clearly and nice classmates who get along with each other well, I enjoyed learning the Korean in KLI very much. It is almost perfect that I have achieved the original objectives before my exchange which to improve my Korean with the help of the language class and exposure to Korean-language speaking environment.

On the other hand, the academic experiences are actually all similar for us, as the others students also can share these experience, I would like to write more about the personal experience which could properly give more insights to the fellow schoolmates.

For the accommodations, I have lived for three places during my exchange. I
have lived in the International house inside the campus until the late October and move to goshiwon(고시원), a small room with individual shower room situated outside the campus. One near the Ewha University station and one near the west gate of Yonsei. The first reason I moved outside is because I did not live well with my roommate and I cannot sleep well in double room. The location of the school dorm for exchange student is also not quite good though it close to the classroom for KLI course. It takes around 15 minutes-walk from dorm to Sinchon where there are subway, shops and restaurants. As I can get the refund if I quit the school dorm before the half-way which is around the late-October, I soon found a room in Ewha which is 400,000won one month. The price of living outside is cheaper than living in dorm and they even provide 24-hour kimchi, cooked rice, water, egg, noodles, etc. I could also cook in the kitchen, use the free washing powder and the washing machine. Later, with the help of my Korean friend, I also found a cheaper room but it was even bigger than the one I found in Edae. The final place where I live was the best during my exchange since the room was well facilitated with heating machine, individual shower room and the owner was very nice. As my Hong Kong friend and my mother went to visit me in November, the owner also allowed me to live with them and he even worried that the room was too small so he had provided another room for them for free.

For the extra curricular activities, I have only take part into both hiking club and Global Angel which under the Yonsei Global. Among these two, I strongly recommend fellow students to join the Global Angel though I also found hiking club was also a brand new experience for exchange student. As Korean are well-known for their passion for hiking, I follow the lead of the Yonsei students and took part in the Ansan hiking trip. Though Ansan is just behind our school, but we did try rock climbing that made my first time in my life. I seldom go hiking in Hong Kong, but in Korea, I have not only went hiking in Ansan for twice, one in day time and one at night, I have also finished one hiking path of Serosan where located 3 hours away from Seoul (In Kangwondo).

On the other hand, Yonsei Global is a society in Yonsei which organize activities for exchange students, Global Angel is organized for participating volunteer activities with the Yonsei student. However, it is renowned for their “Membership training” programme which all member will have a 1night 2days trip located in the rural area of Seoul. We had Korean barbecue together and after that we played Korean games at night. The exchange students who come from America, Japan, Germany, Australia, England and the local Korean students gathered together to know each other.
through the whole night gathering. After this programme, I have made a lot of Korean friends and other international friends. Somehow the meaning of exchange lies in the interaction with the people there. The more people I know, the more real culture exchange is allowed to take place. From the Korean students, I have known many updated Korean culture, for instance, the etiquette of drinking, the reason why Korean like to brush their teeth. Not limited to this, in exchange, I also let them know more about Hong Kong, especially many local students do not have the experience to travel abroad. Moreover, I even got support from them to find a new house. These friends definitely enriched my trip in Korea a lot and make me want to visit Korea again. Originally I have nothing left after I back to Hong Kong’s life, everything stays in Korea and I would back to the originally life again, but because of the people there, the connections between Korea and me change the “full-stop” to a “comma”.

In search of the meaning of exchange, I have also tried many other different things for example, watched baseball matches for three times, went to a festival in Chuncheon and ride a boat there, watched a TV live recording in KBS, trip to Busan and Gyeonggi-do, etc. I have enjoyed all these events and did not ever want to stop the exploration. After all, I believe that going an academic exchange is really about doing something that not an normal visitor do, not only tasting the great food, buying a lot of souvenirs and taking photos around, but is about stepping out of our comfort zone and taking adventures. The more we do not following the travel guides, the more we can discover. The real meaning of exchange lies in the word between “live” and “travel”. “Live” in the local life and keep the curiosity to explore at the same time, and then I am able to grow and reach the real meaning of exchange.