

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

WANT TO WORK IN SINGAPORE?

GET TIPS FROM YOUR
ALUMNI NETWORK!

Young professionals and graduate employers from the Birmingham alumni community share their experiences of living and working in Singapore.

With more than 300,000 alumni, there are Birmingham graduates across the globe. Singapore is one of the most popular destinations for our alumni, with more than 2,500 based there.

This guide will take you through the process of moving to Singapore, with insights from alumni who have already made the move. It will cover what to plan before leaving, how to find and apply for jobs and how to integrate into society.

THE BASICS

In case you haven't started your research yet, let our alumni talk you through the basics of life in Singapore.

MAIN NATIONALITIES

MALAY
INDIAN

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

995
(AMBULANCE AND FIRE)
999
(POLICE)

MAIN TRANSPORT

PUBLIC TRANSPORT



‘Public transport is very good and reasonably priced.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

‘Few people own a car in Singapore because it is so expensive. Don't expect to be able to afford one right away.’

Laurence Corroon

(MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

CURRENCY

SINGAPORE DOLLAR
(SGD OR S\$)

INTERNET DOMAIN

WWW....
SG

POPULATION
5.47 MILLION



MAIN LANGUAGES

CHINESE
ENGLISH
MALAY

‘Singapore has its own dialect of English called ‘Singlish’ which takes a lot of getting used to!’

Laurence Corroon

(MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

‘English becomes more scarce away from the main business district.’

Sam Barnett (BA History, 2013)

MAJOR RELIGIONS

BUDDHISM, ISLAM,
CHRISTIANITY,
TAOISM, AND
HINDUISM



THE LABOUR MARKET

What can you expect from working in Singapore?

LABOUR FORCE

3.07 MILLION (2013)



‘Singapore is an international city and the workforce is around 50% foreigners.’

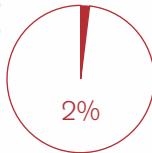
Laurence Corroon

(MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)



AVERAGE AGE AT GRADUATION

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE



HOLIDAY ENTITLEMENT

11 PUBLIC HOLIDAYS AND
7-14 ANNUAL LEAVE
(DEPENDING ON LENGTH OF SERVICE)

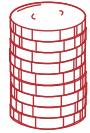


TAX RATE

RANGES FROM 2-20%
(DEPENDING ON SALARY)

AVERAGE STARTING SALARY

2,750 SGD PER MONTH



‘The salary package has to meet the rising living cost and the requirements of various levels of work permits (called Employment Passes).’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

‘An average graduate starting salary for a fresh graduate with no work experience is usually SGD 2,500 per month.’

Lissy Vadakel (MBA, 2014)

AVERAGE WORKING WEEK

44 HOURS, MONDAY TO FRIDAY

(WITH OCCASIONAL HALF DAYS ON SATURDAYS)

‘The general lifestyle is very work-centric and sentiment against this is becoming more evident.’

Sam Barnett (BA History, 2013)

‘Multi-national corporations are much more in sync with flexible work arrangements.’

Lissy Vadakel (MBA, 2014)

COST OF LIVING

CAN BE HIGHER THAN THE UK

‘Housing cost is rising but eating out and transport is not so expensive.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

‘Cost of living is high so it is important to budget the finances carefully.’

Hwee Tin Tan (MBA, 1998)

For more information about each of these areas, Google ‘TargetJobs Working Abroad’ or ‘University of Birmingham Graduate Careers’.

Please note that these figures are averages or estimates that were deemed accurate at the time of print.

WHAT TO PLAN

Don't forget anything! Let our recent graduates talk you through what they planned before they left, as well as what you can leave until you arrive.

‘UK citizens can stay in Singapore for 90 days without a Visa. If you already have a job lined up then the company will apply for an Employment Pass on your behalf.’

Laurence Corroon, (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

‘I would avoid agreeing

accommodation prior to heading out. Find a cheap hotel for a few nights and make finding a permanent room your priority. Housing Development Board flats are the cheapest accommodation but, if you can afford it, it is better to find a room in a condo facility.’

Sam Barnett (BA History, 2013)

‘Once you have an Employment Pass you can easily open a bank account.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

‘The Singapore Government has introduced various

measures to reduce the inflow of foreign professionals and create more opportunities for the locals.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

- ✓ FIND A JOB WHILST IN THE UK
- ✓ SORT OUT A VISA
- ✓ FIND ACCOMMODATION
- ✓ DECIDE ON A PHONE OPTION
- ✓ SET UP A BANK ACCOUNT

‘The best websites for finding accommodation in Singapore are *PropertyGuru* and *Singapore Gumtree*.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

‘I bought a very cheap pay-as-you-go. I tended to mainly use my home phone and relied on WhatsApp, which was fine to do since most places have Wi-Fi.’

Sam Barnett (BA History, 2013)

‘Graduates moving to Singapore can obtain a Student Holiday Visa fairly easily. This gives you 6-7 months of total employment freedom in Singapore.’

Sam Barnett (BA History, 2013)

‘Unlike the UK, you generally can't use ATM machines which belong to other banks. The banks with the most ATM machines are POSB/DBS, UOB and OCBC.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

For more detailed information on the legalities of moving abroad, consult the [Careers Network's International Work Experience page](#) or the British High Commission Singapore [website](#).

FINDING JOBS

Our alumni have pursued a wide range of careers, but there are some key sources that they all advise you use when searching for a job in Singapore.

‘Entry level jobs can be found through job portals.’

*Rashid Mohiuddin
(MBA, 2010)*



WEBSITES

www.jobstreet.com.sg
www.jobbank.gov.sg
www.stjobs.com
www.sg.jobsdb.com

‘The most popular job websites are *Jobstreet* and *ST jobs*.’

*Laurence Corroon (MEng
Civil Engineering, 2013)*



RECRUITMENT AGENCIES

‘There are many recruiting companies active in Singapore.’

*Rashid Mohiuddin
(MBA, 2010)*



EVENTS

‘For graduate entry-level positions, the company may conduct recruitment talks or participate in job or career fairs at local universities.’

Hwee Tin Tan (MBA, 1998)

‘In Singapore it helps a lot to have contacts in the industry. I found my first job from a job website but got my current job via a contact in the company.’

*Laurence Corroon (MEng
Civil Engineering,
2013)*



NETWORKING

‘LinkedIn is picking up popularity. It would be worthwhile signing up for LinkedIn’s premium services for the duration of the job search.’

Lissy Vadakel (MBA, 2014)

‘For junior or entry-level positions, advertisements would be placed in the newspapers as well as jobs databases or job banks.’

*Hwee Tin Tan (MBA,
1998)*



NEWSPAPERS

Straits Times

(English daily newspaper)

For more information on where to look, use the [TargetJobs Working Abroad](#) pages.

APPLYING FOR JOBS

Our alumni talk through some of their experiences of applying for jobs in Singapore.



‘The recruitment process in Singapore is much faster. “Assessment centres” are almost unheard of thankfully, normally you would have two interviews before being offered a job.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

‘LinkedIn’s increased popularity means that a filtering process happens before an applicant’s resume reaches the advertiser.’

Lissy Vadakel (MBA, 2014)

‘Expect to put your age and gender in your CV, as well as a photograph.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

BUSINESS ETIQUETTE



‘Singaporeans tend to ask hard questions, questions that might catch a Westerner off-guard.’

Gerald Kwa (BSc Business Management, 2014)

‘In the work environment, there is usually more focus on delivering results and measuring the performance.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

WHAT ARE THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESSES IN SINGAPORE COMPARED TO THE UK ?

WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO MAKE A GOOD IMPRESSION ?



DESIRABLE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

‘We look for candidates who have a track record of being active in pursuits outside of curriculum, with strong competitive spirit, who can write well, think on the spot and who have done homework to understand what our company does.’

Hwee Tin Tan (MBA, 1998)

‘Apart from the ability of the graduates to fulfil our job requirements, we also look for graduates who are aligned to our core values, with good communication and leadership skills.’

Tan Wee Kiong Augustine (MBA, 2005)



GROWING INDUSTRIES

‘Singapore is a vibrant economy that has shown outstanding growth in financial/banking, hi-tech manufacturing, shipping, tourism, education, and biomedical sectors in the last decade.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

‘There are more job opportunities in Engineering, making it much easier to land a job as long as you have a recognised qualification.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

Make the most of the Careers Network (CN). They can discuss your career options, give guidance on your CV, conduct mock interviews and much more. Google ‘University of Birmingham Graduate Careers’ for more info.

Remember that CN is also available to you for two years after you graduate.

HOW TO INTEGRATE

So you've made your plans, you've booked your flights and you've found your job...but what should you do when you actually arrive? Our alumni have loads of advice to give you to ensure that you feel a part of Singaporean society as quickly as possible.

BE RESPECTFUL

‘Be aware of the cultural and social environment, particularly while dealing with other genders and other ethnic and religious groups.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

BE HUMBLE

‘People appreciate humbleness here. It's shown in various practices, e.g. people will slightly bow and present their business card with both hands.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

EAT OUT

‘Food is an important part of the culture. It is very common for people to eat out at food courts (or hawker centres) regularly and multiple times a day.’

Rashid Mohiuddin (MBA, 2010)

FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH RULES AND LAWS

‘Certain small things can carry heavy fines in Singapore, such as littering and jaywalking.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

‘In Singapore people tend to eat out more often than they cook, because delicious, cheap food is easy to find.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

‘There is a degree of political censorship. People tend to self-censor and are not openly critical of the government.’

Sam Barnett (BA History, 2013)

TRY AND GET A BALANCE BETWEEN LOCAL FRIENDS AND EX-PATS

‘It is easy to make friends within the ex-pat community, but I suggest to make friends with more locals even though it may be challenging at first.’

Laurence Corroon (MEng Civil Engineering, 2013)

GET INVOLVED WITH LOCAL ACTIVITIES

‘To get to know the community better, newcomers to Singapore can go to any of the Community Centres to sign up for activities and get information on what is happening locally.’

Hwee Tin Tan (MBA, 1998)

Enjoy yourself!

YOUR ALUMNI

A wide variety of alumni contributed to this guide. Here are just a few examples of what they're up to at the moment.

Degree: Masters in Business Administration

Year of graduation: 2014

Role: Head, English for Education Systems, British Council, Singapore

Responsibilities: In charge of the Teacher Development Centre, a department which delivers training and professional development for teachers of English



Degree: History

Year of graduation: 2013

Role: Education Consultant, Prep Zone

Responsibilities: Helping foreign students with their applications to UK and USA universities

Reason for moving: I moved to Singapore for a new experience and also to make my CV stand out



Degree: Masters in Business Administration (Singapore Campus)

Year of graduation: 2010

Role: Business Application Advisor, Strategic Solutions & Big Data, FedEx Express

Responsibilities: Managing strategic systems, projects and programs in the accounting, policies and controls (A,P&C) region



Degree: MEng Civil Engineering with International Study

Year of graduation: 2013

Role: Senior Project Engineer, Singapore Land Transport Authority

Responsibilities: Working on construction of an underground station for the upcoming metro system, managing progress, safety and quality

Reason for moving: My positive experience during my year abroad in Singapore coupled with struggling to get the jobs that I wanted in the UK



Want to stay in touch with other Birmingham graduates once you're in Singapore?

-  University of Birmingham Alumni
-  University of Birmingham Alumni and Friends
-  @birminghamalum

Our Singapore alumni society also meets regularly and will give you the opportunity to meet and network with fellow alumni in the area.

-  University of Birmingham South East Asia Alumni Group

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Edgbaston, Birmingham,
B15 2TT, United Kingdom
www.birmingham.ac.uk