My name is Yue Liang, from Beijing, China. As a dual degree graduate, I exchanged to Sweden Jönköping University at my last term of undergraduate studies and completed my bachelor degree from University of Victoria (Bachelor of Commerce) and Beijing Jiaotong University (Business of Administration) in 2017. After that, I chose to continue my postgraduate studies and enrolled in the Master of Global Business Program at the UVIC. Currently, I am working as a Marketing and Communications Coordinator at the International Programs Office at Gustavson School of Business.
1. How did you decide to come to UVic? What did you expect to learn from here? And what is the most valuable part of the BCom Program?

I’ve planned to study overseas since high school. When I was admitted by Beijing Jiaotong University, I applied to enroll into the international program. My home University has a lot of dual degree partners in US, Canada and Australia. I chose UVic because of its good reputation, the co-op program and the safety issue. I expected the dual degree program could add value to my degree, improve my English skills and make more friends around the world. The cross-cultural teamwork, case-based and project-based study and exchange experience are the most valuable parts for me. It developed my global awareness, cross-culture communication and problem-solving skills. I’ve learned the key to bridging the cultural gaps is to build trust and to create shared value in a diverse team. Through the case study, I gained knowledge of how those international companies adopt different strategies in a global market, which can be applied flexibly for my projects.

2. Would you like to tell us something about your exchange term?

I like to explore new things. The exchange term gave me a unique way to see the world differently. The four months in Sweden, I studied basic Swedish and gained a deeper understanding of many local brands and companies; have learned that Sweden is the most gender-friendly countries, it is very common for Swedish fathers stay home to take care of their children; got to know that the long-distance bus in Sweden is more useful than the train because the harsh climate in winter is more likely to cause the train delay.
During the term break, I travelled to the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, and France. In Prague, I took the deepest subway in Europe. In Paris, I drank the most delicious hot chocolate in front of the Louvre. After the exchange semester, I did not go back home immediately, and continued to travel to Greece, Italy and Denmark. Before going to Greece, I saw lots of negative comments about Greece on different travel blog sites. I came to Athens with the bias, but I was so surprised by everything I saw and experienced there! I lived in the district of “Old Athens” where nearby most of the tourist attractions. I didn’t have any feeling of dangerous, on the contrary, Greece gave me a sense of holy and peaceful. The historic sites bathed in the sun’s rays as if the clock stopped at Ancient Greece period. The Café and restaurants with tables on their terraces were hidden in the alleyways where tourists and locals were enjoying their cheerful talk. I do believe if I did not go to Greece, I must keep the bias for that country for a long time. My exchange experience taught me the best way to learn a country is to visit there in person. I really enjoy the way to draw the picture of the world based on my personal experience instead of the comment from others.

3. Overall your time of being an MGB student, what did you learn from your Master degree?
I became more objective and brave to make friends around the world! I learned about the cultural differences both inside and outside the classroom. My classmates are from different districts and countries, Canada, South Korea, France, Mainland China, Taiwan, Sweden, Egypt, India, Iran, Palestine, Ghana, and Nigeria. We studied, travelled and had fun together during the past year. The program established a family tie between us. Even now, we are doing the internship in different places, but the distance doesn’t stop our relationship. Culture matters in Business! I have learned a lot of cultural theories to help me understand masculine and feminine society; the direct or indirect communication style; and differing cultural sensitivities to hierarchy. I learned how to use the right strategy to handle cross-cultural business negotiations. Additionally, it also provided a great opportunity for me to deepen my self-reflection to understand my own maternal culture. The living experience in Victoria, Montpellier and Seoul gave me a comprehensive understanding of the comparative socio-economic environment of North America, Asian and Europe.

4. How the BCom and MGB program improve your professional development?
The BCom and MGB program provided me with the skills to understand business issues on a global market. Especially the MGB program, which gives me the chance to study and work in France, South Korea and Canada. The two international consulting projects in South Korea was a tremendous learning experience. Not only did I have a more practical understanding of being a professional consultant, but I also exercised my ability to work effectively with individuals and organizations from different parts of the world.
In the first two weeks in Seoul, I worked with four colleagues to develop a global pricing strategy for a small and medium-sized skin care company. I need to overcome the 8-hour time difference quickly, but I also need to overcome cultural barriers and understand customer needs as soon as possible. Everything is like the feeling of racing against time. My second consulting client is “LG household & healthcare,” one of the largest cosmetics companies in Korea. I worked with 11 colleagues to develop a marketing strategy for clients to improve the performance of their core products in the US market. We were invited to visit the headquarters and meet with the supervisor, and reported directly to the divisional leadership team. I have got enough time for this project, but things usually come up that I didn’t anticipate. A large multinational company usually has a well-developed global mindset, so the client would especially ask my team and I to work out of the box. Sometimes, I had to deal with the problems caused by different cultures between colleagues, professors and client. It provided me with the opportunity to apply the cross-cultural management theory that I learned from the classroom to the real workplace. I believe that my BCom and MGB program experience played a key role in landing my current job at UVic.

6. What’s your advice to students who are planning to study abroad?
What makes me grow is not time, but the experience! My advice would be enjoying every moment during your exchange term, whether it is happiness or sadness. And don’t let challenges and un-knowing stop you exploring the rest of the world.