

Beyond the Classroom: My ACT Journey Across Three Countries

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Why did I choose ACT in the first place?

Even before joining the IBMBA program, I had noticed the graduation requirement of studying abroad. At that time, I also discovered the ACT program (**A stands for Austria, C for Canada, and T for Taiwan**). Through approximately nine months of study, students have the opportunity to earn dual master's degrees while broadening their horizons in both North America and Europe.

Another important reason was that both Canada and Austria offer visa-free entry for Taiwanese passport holders. Since each stay is less than three months (around two and a half months), there is no need to apply separately for a student visa. There is also time between the two modules to return to Taiwan, allowing us to recharge, and prepare for the next stage. As someone who had little overseas experience, this made ACT an especially attractive choice, so I decided to apply without hesitation.

Although the flights for the two modules were quite expensive, I considered ACT a worthwhile investment compared with other exchange or dual-degree opportunities. In other programs, students may only stay in one place for six months to a year, and it can be difficult to know in advance whether the courses and overall experience will meet their expectations. Traveling to other countries independently may also cost more, and it can be harder to build close friendships.

One of the most appealing aspects of ACT is that the whole cohort moves together. In each location, local students are there to help international classmates settle in, understand the culture, and adapt to daily life. For me, this makes ACT a truly valuable program.

※ This article reflects the student's personal experience at the time of participation. Visa and entry requirements may vary depending on nationality, individual circumstances, and policy changes. Please refer to the official regulations and program information applicable to the relevant year.

What advantages did I discover after joining ACT?

What surprised me most after joining ACT was how actively the program responds to student feedback. Since the program is held every year, the organizers continually make adjustments based on students' experiences. These improvements cover many areas, including course design, professors, and practical support before and after going abroad.

ACT is a unique type of dual-degree program. Before departure, I had heard senior students share that some partner universities in other exchange programs offer limited support. Apart from information posted online, students may not have a clear understanding of the local environment. They therefore need to do extensive research by themselves before leaving, including housing, transportation, and courses. This can create considerable hidden costs and stress.

Even in less extreme cases, I believe few programs value student feedback as much as ACT does. Before departure, Taiwanese students who are about to leave gather for experience-sharing sessions with senior students. If you start paying attention early enough, you may even have access to more than one session. After arriving abroad, ACT-related administrative staff are also available to support students in both Canada and Austria.

In addition, students are assigned to different groups in each module, and they complete all course assignments with those groups. Group arrangements are discussed by administrative staff and professors from Canada, Taiwan, and Austria. This design encourages students to step outside their comfort zones and genuinely collaborate with classmates from different countries. Through these group interactions, ACT aims to develop students' cross-cultural communication and teamwork skills.

What courses are offered in each country?

The following experience is for reference only. Courses may vary from year to year, and each student's experience may differ.

A. University of Victoria, Canada (UVic)

- **North American Business Context:** This was one of the best English-medium courses I have ever taken. The instructor (Matt) still works professionally and has taught in ACT for many years. He is also a UVic alumnus. By connecting current international events with real business cases, the course trained students' critical thinking and presentation skills. Based on our in-class presentations, he also offered very practical advice, such as how to make presentations engaging through body language and eye contact, appropriate font sizes for professional slides, and key points to note in academic writing.
- **International Financial Management:** The instructor (Jen) uploaded lecture slides before class so students could review the material in advance. She was very willing to help students and incorporated practical examples into the course.
- **International Marketing and Global Strategy:** Before most classes, students were required to read a case of approximately 10 to 20 pages and consider guiding questions in advance. During class, the professor (Wade) first provided a concise overview, then emphasized participation and discussion. The course encouraged students to examine the reasons behind business decisions from different perspectives while connecting cases with relevant theories.
- **International Logistics and Supply Chain Management:** This course placed a strong emphasis on sustainability. The instructor (Jie) used important sustainability issues to connect the course content with real-world topics. At the beginning, students could choose from several themes, and different groups gave presentations and led activities each week.
- **Global Leadership and Cultural Intelligence:** Students prepared for class through cases and guiding questions each week. The course emphasized active participation and discussion, while connecting theoretical concepts with practical cases.

- **Language, Communication and Cultural Intelligence:** This course frequently explored cultural differences, including Hofstede's cultural dimensions framework.
- **Language Skill I (German)**

B. Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria (JKU)

- **European Business Context:** This module was divided into three courses: *Comparative Analysis of Governance Structure*, *Economic Perspectives of the EU*, and *Legal Perspectives of the EU*. Each course was taught by different people.
- **Austrian Company Project:** During the first or second week of the module, students visited several companies. At the briefing session, each group learned which company it had been assigned to. Students took on the role of consultants and, throughout the Austrian module, met with company representatives to understand the challenges they faced, or the issues they hoped to solve. Each group then developed recommendations and delivered a final proposal and presentation. This was the largest final project of the entire program.
- **Global Leadership and Cultural Intelligence:** This was the only course offered across all three modules. Through cases and reflective activities, students learned how to adapt to cultural differences, identify potential conflicts, and develop essential soft skills.
- **Language Skill III (German)**

What did I learn from living and studying abroad?

Studying abroad allowed me not only to live alongside local people and understand local customs, but also to learn many practical details that can only be understood through firsthand experience.

For example, while trying to save money by finding affordable local ingredients, I began to understand why certain fruits and vegetables were inexpensive: they were locally produced, had lower transportation costs, or were affected by trade policies between countries. When I searched for and rented accommodation in Canada, I learned that Airbnb had been affected by recent government policies, especially in British Columbia. As a result, many properties became available for long-term rental, which was one reason we were able to find housing. I also wondered why Victoria had buses but no urban rail system, and later learned that energy-related factors played a role.

There are reasons behind many aspects of everyday life. Through personal experience and communication with local people, I gained knowledge beyond the classroom. These observations were not merely about daily life, they were closely connected to the business environments we had studied before.

Because ACT brings together students from several countries, group discussions also taught us different communication styles and the importance of respecting and embracing diverse values. We could observe how people from different cultural backgrounds viewed the same issue in very different ways. Even while we were in Taiwan, I learned a great deal from my international

classmates. They helped me recognize what is distinctive about the lifestyle we take for granted in Taiwan and understand the reasons behind it.

For instance, Taiwan's 24-hour convenience-store culture may seem ordinary to us, but it is not easy to replicate elsewhere. It is shaped not only by Taiwan's high population density and limited land area, but also by policy differences related to wages and labor.

Time management was another important lesson. Living abroad required us to balance travel, coursework, itinerary planning, group meetings, and everyday responsibilities within a limited amount of time. In Canada, the schedule was extremely intensive, so we had to adapt to the local environment while efficiently completing numerous group presentations and individual assignments. In Austria, where the course schedule was relatively less intensive, we had to coordinate with team members to complete a consulting project with a real company. Only after going abroad did I truly realize how vast the world is, and learn how to adapt myself accordingly.

What concrete benefits did I gain from ACT?

- **Improved foreign-language skills:** I strengthened my English reading and communication skills through numerous cases, presentations, in-class exercises, and assignments. At first, I went through a difficult period and felt that my language ability was not good enough. However, by continuing to persevere, I gradually realized how much I had improved. After the program, I also continued learning German because of my interest in the language.
- **Presentation skills:** Both professors and classmates were very helpful. Every course required at least one presentation, so we could learn from feedback, presentation techniques, and observing others. It was unavoidable practice, but also an important opportunity to step outside my comfort zone.
- **A broader international perspective:** I developed a more global approach to management and gained a better understanding of business regulations, market conditions, and operating models in different countries through courses and interactions with classmates.
- **Cross-cultural communication and collaboration:** I was required to work with classmates from different countries to complete many group reports and projects.
- **International mobility and adaptability:** Moving between two (or even more) countries within one year taught me how to understand and adapt to life in different local contexts.
- **Critical thinking:** Many classroom discussions trained us to examine issues from multiple perspectives.
- **Information and resource-searching skills:** Academic research, classroom projects, and presentations require master's students to verify information carefully and conduct research with a certain degree of rigor.
- **An international network:** I built meaningful relationships with classmates from different countries.
- **Practical consulting experience:** I gained experience working on real business challenges for an actual company.

Reflections and advice for junior students

Participating in ACT is completely different from joining a typical exchange program or dual-degree program. It is a growth journey that strengthens both hard and soft skills. It goes beyond theoretical learning by putting global management into practice through its course design. Through theories, case discussions, and even hands-on consulting projects with companies, students can understand differences across countries and regions, as well as how businesses survive in rapidly changing environments.

What makes ACT especially unique is that the entire cohort moves and studies together across three countries. This shared journey fosters a strong spirit of mutual support. Local students in each region can use their home advantage to help international classmates adapt to daily life. This not only promotes deep cultural exchange, but also creates emotional connections among students.

Through the many class discussions, presentations, and explorations we experienced together, we gained more than knowledge. We also built a valuable international network. In today's rapidly globalizing world, I believe this is an irreplaceable asset.

I sincerely encourage everyone to make good use of university resources and step into the world. Each person will learn different lessons along the way, and only through firsthand experience can you discover the unexpected surprises and rewards that such a journey can bring.

照片分享 Photos



圖一、加拿大校外教學(CAN school trip)



圖二、加拿大德文課期末報告(German Final)



圖三、加拿大 Hockey Game



圖四、ACT 學員合照



圖五、奧地利期末聚會(Farewell party)



圖六、奧地利餐廳聚餐(Restaurant Gathering)