

## Life at NCHU during the Pandemic? Out of Sight but Not Out of Mind!

After the news of Covid 19 broke out, almost 2 years later, the world still has not been able to go back to how it used to be. Experts said, probably, the world with the freedom of physical meeting each other which we used to take too much for granted, may never come back to us again. Like many international students living in Taiwan, since the pandemic, I have not been able to go back home yet. If I wasn't living in Taiwan and studying at National Chung Hsing University (NCHU), I could not even imagine how my life would have been as an international student during this pandemic time.

### *A whole new world*

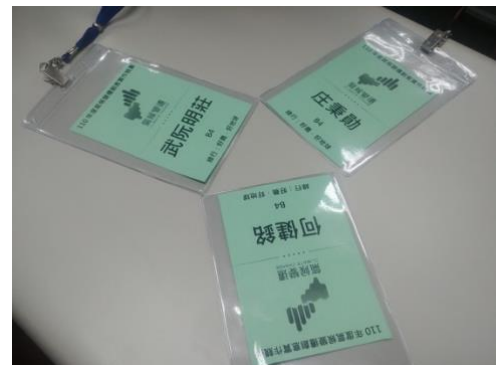
Staying in Taiwan during the pandemic in 2020 was probably the luckiest thing to any students. While other countries were experiencing tremendous damage in economics with schools and restaurants being totally locked down as the pandemic was at its peak, alongside with other students in Taiwan, I was lucky enough to still be



able to experience taking graduation pictures with my program-mates and attending my graduation ceremony with friends physically. Although I was probably one of the first ever to have graduation pictures taken with a mask on, thanks to Taiwan's ability to keep the country safe and stable, and thanks to NCHU strict restrictions, I got to fully

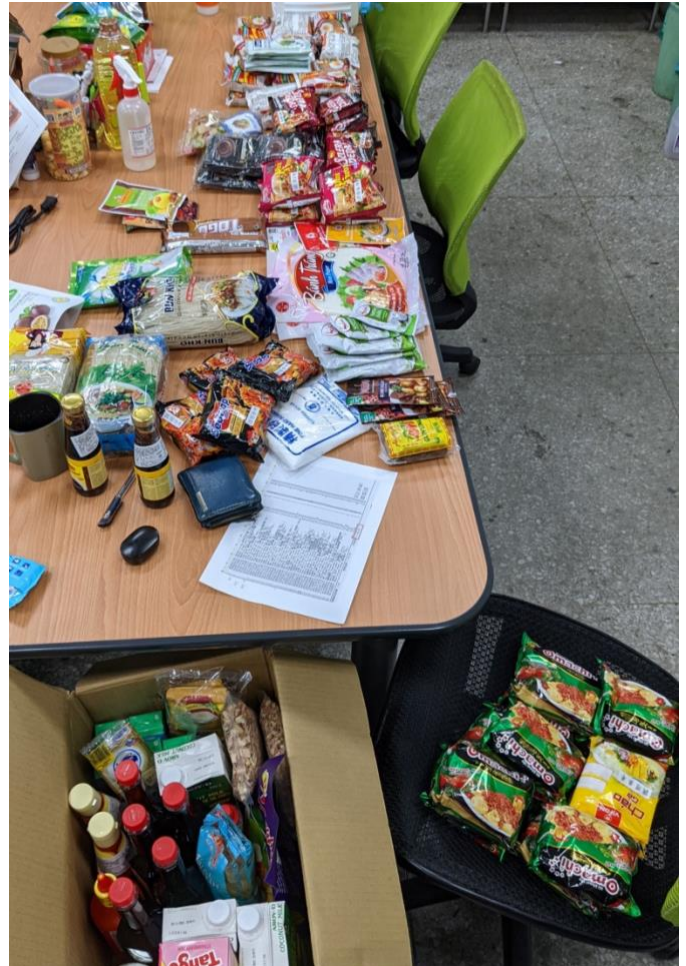
experience Taiwan's unique culture in celebrating graduation while feeling completely safe and protected.

Life in Taiwan during the first wave of the pandemic was almost as usual as before the pandemic. There were of course regulations on maintaining social distance when being out door or in school. However, compared to the condition of Taiwan with other countries, Taiwan was among the only few countries in the world that school still opened in 2020. I am greatly thankful that I was able to go to school, to dine out with friends once in a while, and to even join the Ministry of Education (MOE) Climate Change Innovation Program held in National Taiwan University.



### *Out of Sight, but not Out of Mind*

However, life always has its ups and down. Living in Taiwan during the pandemic from 2019 to 2021 means I got to see the circle of the pandemic repeatedly. In 2019 and 2020, countries in Western regions including the United States and United Kingdom got hit the hardest. Then the wave started coming to Asia, starting with India, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia then finally Taiwan. Suddenly, the peaceful and safe environment in Taiwan turned upside down. Schools were closed down, classes got switched to online mode, dining in was not available, and even shopping for food became hectic. Like many international students who can only keep in touch with family and friends back home virtually while continuing receiving negative news about the



*Sharing Food was an icon of care during the pandemic*



*A good-bye is not for an end, but a new beginning*

outbreak from home country and Taiwan as well as news of sudden losses of family members starts adding to the despair of an uncertain future. Slowly, it has started to break me down, piece by piece, day by day. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to always be “surrounded” in such a considerate environment. “Hey, is everything ok? How are your parents? Do you need any food?” were no longer just a casual ask from friends, but became even more powerful than anti-depression drugs. In addition, I did not feel as being left behind in Taiwan since Taiwan Ministry of Education and NCHU also always tried their best in offering support to the students. Not only is there a 24 hours free-depression helpline, but also there is a financial relief package for international students to apply if they face financial burdens because of the pandemic.



## ***In love, we trust!***

In Chinese, there is an idiom “塞翁失馬·焉知非福”, with the same meaning as an English proverb “a blessing in disguise”. Being in such a difficult situation has taught me a vital lesson which I didn't notice before. Life is actually very fragile, so I should appreciate every second of it without taking any simple thing for granted. Although Taiwan has proved its ability in controlling the outbreak with firm regulation as well as transparent information, the pandemic has not been over yet. Nevertheless, life



*Taken during level 1*

still keeps going on. Hence, instead of worrying about the blurry future, showing affection to the loved ones while continuing striving for new opportunities is probably what students and newly graduate students can do. I have had a blast, developed as a whole, earned innumerable memories during my 3 years studying as a master student in Taiwan, and unquestionably, I truly believe that my upcoming years as a Ph.D. student will be even more valuable.

To the friends that we have shared all the precious and priceless memories with, especially during such



difficult situations, thank you for being a part of my life. Without your presence, the positive experiences I have had in Taiwan until now would have never been completed. It doesn't matter if we still see each other or not, you will always have my strongest support. To all the Professors and the people that always try to hand me your kindest support, you will always have my most sincere appreciation. To the school-NCHU that has given me financial support during such a difficult situation even though I am just an international student, and to the country that has tried its best

to protect all the citizens living inside during this pandemic, Taiwan, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for everything. During this pandemic, except my home country, Vietnam, where all my loved ones are staying, you're the second place that I would ever rather want to be in.

Until the border is free again, keep loving and keep hoping. In love, we trust!

