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INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

Your Name:

Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program: Kyoto University (KUINEP)

Quarter(s) of Participation: A/W/S

E-mail Address:

1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

Kyodai's international houses aren't available for move-in on weekends, so be sure to book your flight either on a weekday, or plan to stay the night somewhere. In addition, it takes about two and a half hours to get from Kansai International Airport to anywhere in the Kyoto area, so be sure that your flight arrives in the daytime so you can move in before 5pm. (Otherwise the house won't be open.) There's a hotel attached to the airport if you need a place to stay, but I actually came in through Narita and visited friends in Tokyo for a few days, so I'm no expert. I took the shinkansen from Tokyo to Kyoto and arrived about two PM.

The house provides substantial bedding. The set includes a thick quilt for winter and a thin one for summer, a futon cover for said quilt, a pillow, a pillowcase, a sheet, and a mattress pad. Keep in mind this is only for Kyoto University International Houses. I'm not sure what the case is for dorms.

I find the best way to get to an international house is to take transportation to Kyoto Station, and catch a cab from there. You can take a bus or the subway, but both are confusing and not easy to navigate with a large suitcase, let alone two. If taken during the day, the cab will cost only about ¥1000 more than the subway anyway.

Finally, you may want to pack a towel, as the international houses don't provide them, and you may not be in the mood to go out looking for one while extremely jet lagged.

b. If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

The orientation covered how to register for classes, academics, class requirements, and tips on to how navigate the university. There's also a section on bike usage, as they are Kyoto's primary form of transportation. You also register for the university co-op, buy insurance, and receive your student ID during this time.

There is a second orientation students are required to attend for Japanese language classes as well. Registering for Japanese classes is slightly different, so the administration reviews the process, takes questions, and administers a placement test. If going into a higher level of Japanese class, your placement test will be later in the week. It is not mandatory for those who only wish to take a kanji class. Finally, you are not required to take a Japanese class at all. As many of them aren't that helpful, it's perfectly fine to not take one.

There's a separate orientation for the library. It's on a completely arbitrary day, and if you don't attend it, you can't use the library or the school computers for the entire semester, so pay attention.

The main orientation will help you adjust best, but, frankly, Kyoto University is still working on fine-tuning its system to help international students, so a lot of adjustment to Kyoto life will be from experience. Luckily, the people here are incredibly kind and patient, so you're not going to upset anyone if you make a mistake. If anything, the international houses are your best bet for helping you figure out confusing situations. (Like going to the ward office to register your address.)

2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure

Classrooms generally follow more of a lecture format than a discussion format. This can make for boring classes, so I recommend venturing out of the KUINEP realm to take some of the liberal arts classes offered in English. For many of them, you end up with just 3-6 students, but the Kyodai won't cancel the class. This results in a personal learning environment and a professor far more receptive to the needs of their students. I took a cosmology class with just three students in it this year—It was full of theoretical math and near impossible to understand at first, but, since the professor had so few students, he was able to find ways to present the curriculum in a way we understood. I ended up learning a lot about the universe, and had a great experience.

- instruction

Instruction varies from teacher to teacher. If looking for a more discussion-based class, I suggest foreign teachers. This isn't to say that Kyodai professors are bad teachers, but they're used to teaching in a lecture format, not student discussion. Some lectures can get pretty dry. (DO NOT under any circumstance take Agriculture and Foods in Japan, unless you want to listen to some guy drone on in broken English for five weeks about how rice grows.)

- teacher/student relations

Teachers are kind and receptive towards their students, so long as you make a connection with them. This applies especially to the Japanese professors. If you're confused or lost, speak with the professor, they'll happily try to set things right, and remember you thereafter.

- grading/exams

KUINEP courses do not have a final—Usually, they have a paper. This paper is worth a large chunk of your grade, and usually about 2,000 words long. While not incredibly hard to write, you're going to end up with at least five or so papers if you're a KUINEP student, so be prepared to write. I had seven of them this past semester. Now the idea of just one term paper at UW seems like a piece of cake to me, though it will be graded more critically than the ones here.

In addition, the other large part of your grade in KUINEP courses will come from your attendance, so be sure to show up. You can sleep when you get there, but you still need to be present.

- administration

As much as I hate to admit it, the International Office at Kyodai is lacking in several aspects. They have a tendency to explain things only vaguely. For example, at orientation you will receive a list of all the active clubs and circles on campus, but no instructions as to how to contact and join any of them. The contact information for the club leaders is online, but the online system is hard to navigate and you're given no instructions on how to do so.

It's also easy to "fall between the cracks" at the International Office. When the IPE office at UW received no official Kyoto University application for me by mid-March, we emailed them. The application had gotten lost in the mail, and Kyoto University hadn't bothered to contact us when my application didn't arrive by the due date, which had already passed by the time we figured out it was missing. As a result, I had to do the application in the extra week extension allowed by Kyoto University. It was dead week, and thus it was stressful.

Overall, I'd say the International Office, which generally represents all international students to the larger administration, needs to work on its human relations. While organized and usually efficient, those working there fail to remember that the students they serve often feel very lost in a country that is not their home.

The one program the International Office has that I love is the "tutor" program. KUINEP students are assigned a tutor—This tutor is another student, and is there to help you adjust to life in Kyoto, and deal with stuff like health insurance. I'd say I learned more from my tutor, Maki, than the International Office itself. I have been here close to eleven months now and she still helps me on a regular basis—Last month, she helped me get a box out of customs that was withheld.

In fact, I found Maki so helpful that I think UW should instigate a similar program for our own study abroad students.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

Computers are standard PCs, accessed in the library through a student ID and password. Libraries and learning areas are kept clean, and are nice to begin with, except for KUINEP Hall, which has uncomfortable seats that are too small for foreigners.

The university runs not on Wi-Fi, but a VPN. If you have a Macbook, connecting to it is incredibly troublesome. Kyoto University provides instructions that allow you to connect to the VPN, but they are for OSX Snow Leopard or some other ancient OS and entirely in Japanese. Since Apple has since changed the process it takes to connect to a VPN in System Preferences, there's no way to infer how to do it, unless you speak fluent Japanese.

If you have a Macbook and need to connect to a VPN, I suggest the following—Pull up the instructions for how to connect on your current operating system in English on a smartphone or something, then take the connectivity guide (there's one in the international houses, I believe, and in the libraries too), and enter the proper numbers for Kyodai's IP address and whatever else you're supposed to do to connect to a VPN. Once that's done, you need to login with your student ID number and password, so don't bother if you don't have those yet.

There is almost no Wi-Fi to speak of in Japan, other than in Starbucks. Even Yoshida International House, which was built in 2013, requires you to connect to the Internet via a LAN cable. Bring a modem if it bothers you. Also, bring a LAN cable. You're going to need it.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

With a few notable exceptions, KUINEP classes are long, tedious lectures that do not encourage critical thinking. I suggest taking as few as possible (two minimum) and taking the liberal arts classes offered in English, which are often discussion based and do encourage critical thinking.

Japanese language classes are really a shot in the dark. Their quality varies greatly, depending on who's teaching them. However, I can vouch that the kanji classes are pretty good.

c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

My recommended classes, in terms of interesting lectures and discussions are: Introduction to Anthropology, Introduction to Globalization, Introduction to World Religions, Introduction to Cosmology (math heavy), Introduction to Japanese Politics (or anything taught by Ken Hijino), Self Formation in Adolescence, and Introduction to Japanese Literature.

My favorite Japanese language teacher was Kawai Junko. She kept me engaged, even in kanji class.

d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?

Most of my coursework was related to my major (International Studies: East Asia), but I also took a few classes that would satisfy NW or I&S credits.

3. HOUSING:

a. What housing options were available to you?

Kyoto University highly encourages students to live in its International Houses. There are also several dorms that are unaffiliated with the university. You can also try to get an apartment in Kyoto, as they're relatively cheap, but the process is troublesome and stressful, and you'll be ripped off if you're a foreigner. My friend got an apartment through a company that helps foreigners find residences in Kyoto, and ended up paying ninety thousand yen a month for an apartment that should have been sixty thousand.

Also, it should be noted that all of these types of housing are 100% single rooms.

b. Which did you choose, and why?

I chose to live in an international house, though actually getting into one is done on a lottery-based system. I am diabetic, and so I told one of the international office workers I preferred to live close to campus, and thus I think I was pulled from the lottery and placed in Yoshida International House. Yoshida is by far the best place to live—It's right on campus, brand new, and provides residents with both a private bathroom and kitchen, all for a little under four-hundred dollars a month, as of spring 2015. It's a deal that's too good to be true. I was very lucky.

c. What would you recommend?

International houses are the best way to go. The dorms are usually privately owned and charge for showers, but cost the same amount as international houses. Unfortunately, no matter where you live at Kyoto University, you won't be living with Japanese students. I think it's something the university could stand to improve on.

Still, international houses provide bedding and really nice facilities. Also, though you won't be making Japanese friends in them, you will be making international friends. My neighbors are Chinese, Finnish, and French.

4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

Kyodai is located in the northeastern part of the city. It's about a thirty-minute walk downtown, or a ten-minute bike ride. The surrounding neighborhood is urban, by Kyoto standards (the city has no skyscrapers), with plenty of restaurants and establishments for students. However, there are still quiet areas. Yoshida Shrine is just past the university gate, the side streets are residential and silent, and you can always go for a stroll by the Kamogawa (about five minutes away). Overall, it's a really beautiful, safe area. The only thing that might pose danger are cyclists, who have a tendency to not look where they're going. As a pedestrian, be sure to look behind you before you change your direction on the sidewalk!

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

Kyoto is blissfully safe. I am female. I feel perfectly secure going out at 3 AM on a Saturday in my pajamas with my headphones in to go pick up a loaf of bread from the local conbini. Nobody really steals anything, and misplaced items will find their way back to you with a bit of prodding. For example, I left a Nalgene water bottle on a densha, which was picked up by the railway company and left waiting for me at the lost and found office in Osaka. (Osaka is about 30-40 minutes away by train.)

The only areas that might be slightly unsafe are Gion (only at night, creepy dudes and prostitutes come out), and Pontocho, for the same reasons, but also only at night. Even then, I've walked through both areas alone on Saturday nights and been fine, if only slightly uncomfortable.

Medical facilities are wonderful! Kyoto University Hospital is right across the street from Yoshida International House (and the university itself), and regarded as the best medical facility in western Japan. If you need an oddly specific type of medicine, they probably have it. They even had long acting insulin on-site. There are only about 10,000 type one diabetics in Japan, so I was really impressed. Emergency room staff are also kind and competent. I've been twice now, which is weird, as I've never needed the emergency room in the United States. It's also far cheaper here—About \$50, last time I went.

Regular doctors are great, too. Super kind, super cheap—Just be sure to take a Japanese person to all these appointments, as most doctors don't speak super excellent English, and you as a Japanese language student probably won't be able to respond to all the questions. Kyoto University offers a medical translator if you're in a pinch.

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

a. How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community? (e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

At Kyoto University, it's very difficult to gain Japanese friends. Housing options don't have you living with Japanese students, and the international office doesn't really tell you how to *actually* join a club. That being said, I gained most of my Japanese friends from a club called KIXS. It's basically what Kaiwa Table is here at UW—We meet for dinner on Wednesday nights in the central cafeteria and speak in both Japanese and English. I find that my speaking ability has improved greatly in part to KIXS—I speak more naturally and confidently, and know a lot of funny slang words taught by my fellow students.

KIXS will be handing out flyers on campus towards the beginning of the semester, along with iAT, another English conversation club that meets for tea on Thursday afternoons. Both are fun, but KIXS is a little more intimate, and making friends is easier there. iAT has far more members.

As scary as joining a club can be, I thoroughly recommend trying one out. I really regret being too nervous to do so, as my Japanese ability has always been relatively low, and I felt held back by it.

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

Perhaps it's because I'm already an International Studies major, but I was not immediately thrown by cultural differences here. My biggest issue was that people don't bring Starbucks (or any to-go coffee, for that matter) to class. There's a Tully's under the clock tower, but it's an expensive habit to keep up with.

Just don't offend people, and you should be fine—Don't gesture wildly with your chopsticks, or do anything weird with them, for that matter, be quiet on the densha, and try to take up as little space as possible, and you should be fine. Also, don't forget to take off your shoes before entering a dressing room!

7. FINANCIAL:

a. What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

I failed miserably at getting a good method to this. I have Citibank, so I just withdrew money from my American account with a 3% charge for this entire trip. There's no easy way to get American dollars into a Japanese bank account unless you physically carry it over the ocean with you (dangerous), or wire it, which is complicated and didn't work when I tried it.

So, if you can get a bank that won't charge you for using an ATM that isn't theirs, that's what I recommend. Post offices have ATMs that accept most cards, so I say go for it.

b. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

In an international house, rent is about \$400, electricity is about \$40, and spending is about \$450 per month. So, in total, about \$900. Food is really cheap here, and I spend a lot of my money at Starbucks down on Sanjo-dori, so you could probably do it for less. In Kyoto, everyone travels by bike, so while I do take the bus or subway occasionally, it's usually only to get out of the city, or if I happen to be in a yukata that day (there are many summer festivals to attend here!).

So, expect to pay for a bike when you get here. You can get one new for about ¥11,000, or a used one for about ¥4,000-6,000. After that, your transportation is free!

If you weren't planning on buying a bike, add that to your expenses. No, don't say, "No, I don't think I need one, I'll see when I get there," *you're wrong*. You need a bike, everyone uses one, I don't care if you don't even know how to ride one, it's best to learn and purchase one here, or all your friends will leave you behind when they go partying down at Kawaramachi. Without a bike, you will be lonely, sad, and poor, as public transport near the university is expensive.

BUY A BIKE.

c. Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

Health insurance is about ¥1,700 a month, and I spent about \$150 on emergency room visits, but that's really about it.

d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any problems? If so, how did you address them?

8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:

a. If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

One the UW side of things, IPE was really effective. Whenever I emailed, I usually got a response back within a day or two, which is acceptable in my opinion due to time difference.

b. If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

Exchange at Kyoto University is best suited to someone that really loves Japan and Japanese history, especially the more traditional stuff. There's no Akihabara here, but there's shrine after shrine, and beautiful, traditionally built houses are a typical part of the city.

Since Kyoto University is still working out some serious kinks in the way it looks after its international students, a student who comes here will have to be patient and optimistic. Otherwise, you're just going to become bitter, as I saw happen with several students here.

You don't have to be good at Japanese to come here. Honestly, I think the more important factors are personal interest and open-mindedness. If you love Japanese history and culture, and are open to trying new things and willing to let the university make mistakes in an effort to globalize its community, this program is for you. If you're uncomfortable with feeling lost at times, then I suggest a more popular program.

Because Prime Minister Abe wishes for Japan's universities to globalize, Kyodai is really doing its best. I've asked students if they've seen a difference so far, and they all say yes—Most senior students say the difference in the international community now and when they entered school here is huge—Before, there were almost no foreigners, and now there are many. Everybody really likes it.

That being said, Kyodai still needs to work out a lot of its issues when it comes to supporting international students. With enough time, I think this program will gradually become suited to almost everyone, but not quite yet.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I expected my classes to be a little more challenging, but they were not—This is because I speak English as a first language, and the classes are catered more to ESL students. While I do wish there had been a bit more challenge, I am not upset—The easier curriculum allowed me to really focus on *being* in Japan, and I really loved it. In fact, I think that is one of the advantages to this program.

Personally, I wish I'd become better at Japanese. Everyone speaks English here, and so you really need to make an active effort to improve. While my Japanese is miles better compared to what it used to be, I wish I'd had more opportunities to practice.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

Your Name:

Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program: Kyoto University Exchange

Quarter(s) of Participation: Spring 2015 – Summer 2015

E-mail Address:

1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

Shiori-an Guest House, Kyoto

This was an amazing hostel, with a very helpful, welcoming staff. The rooms are clean and comfortable with clean, bright bathrooms (toilets and showers). There's not too much storage space, but they do have lockers to keep smaller items.

b. If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

The Kyoto University orientation covered registration of classes – both KUNEP and Japanese language courses – and various laws we would be required to know, such as bike-safety laws. We also received necessary paperwork for being a student at Kyoto University – such as health evaluation and insurance(s).

It helped me adapt by informing me of laws I would be required to abide and giving explanations of what I must do, and how I could accomplish it. Without the orientation I would not have known how to register for my classes, nor would I have been able to fully register as a student at Kyoto University because I would have been lacking necessary documentation.

2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure

Classroom structure was about the same at UW and Kyoto University.

- instruction

Instruction was also similar. The courses I took involved a single faculty member teaching, grading, etc. courses with multiple students.

- teacher/student relations

I think teacher/student relations were also comparable between Kyoto University and UW. I felt comfortable that most of my professors were very invested in the students and truly wanted us to learn. I also felt comfortable asking for clarification when I did not understand.

- grading/exams

Most of my courses consisted of two exams (a midterm and a final) or of essays taking the place of (an) exam(s), akin to what I experienced at UW. However, homework was not really graded, nor were there many quizzes. The grading system and weights for all assignments were not often written/given in a syllabus, so I often felt unsure of where I stood (with my grade) in my courses.

- administration

I think administration was also similar to UW. Kyoto University is split into Departments and different Faculties, just as UW is. Whenever I was unsure of who to talk to, I could ask a professor, or go to the International Office and they would be able to tell me where I needed to go.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

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There are a number of libraries on the Kyoto University campus; a main library and smaller libraries with more specific texts. We had access to computers, and – included in tuition – a certain number of pages to print for free (after which one could obtain a printing card and pay for additional pages if needed.) As in UW, classrooms were equipped with desks, chairs, white/chalk boards at the front of rooms and a projector in each class.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

I think the instruction was of a quality equal to that of the University of Washington. The content was similar, but I sometimes felt a bit lost in the course-objectives because professors rarely handed out a personalized syllabus. On occasion I felt that my professors were disinterested in teaching, having no specific goals for the semester themselves.

However, I largely felt that all my professors were highly motivated and really wanted us to learn.

c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

I would definitely recommend Sasaki-sensei. (I apologize for not being able to remember his first name – I've already sent all the documentation I have with his full name to UW and therefore no longer have any way to look it up.) I felt that Sasaki was always full of energy and 110% invested in teaching us learn. I took his Intermediate II kanji class and wished I could have taken all my Japanese courses from him. He was very passionate and I always felt that comments and questions from myself and my classmates were taken respectfully and used to further the learning of the class as a whole.

I would also highly recommend Niels Van Steepaal. He has an amazing knowledge of Japanese history and a firm grasp of the Japanese language, so he was able to help us further understand by explaining certain terms/words. While I felt that many of my other professors at Kyoto University were slightly apathetic and disorganized, Professor Van Steenpaal was driven, focused, and had a very high expectation for his students.

The third professor I have whose classes I will remember for the rest of my life was Professor Jonathan Matthews. Professor Matthews was from Wales and I took two of his courses about English literature. He was a fascinating professor – intent on teaching us life-lessons in tangency with his course topics. Not only was the material interesting, but I still find myself thinking about questions he posed or lessons he taught even now, months after my last class with him.

d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?

As a Japanese language major, my study abroad in Japan directly related to my studies in Japan. I took 7 Japanese language classes (relating as about 10 UW credits) and 2 Japan-related courses. It was difficult to decide upon the level-equivalent of my coursework at UW because the fashion

in which courses are counted in the KUINEP program is not measured by year-level. Japanese language classes at Kyoto University are further divided within their level by topic (composition, kanji, grammar, conversation, etc.). I ended up deciding that Intermediate-level II related as close as I could manage to JAPAN 423. (I cannot say what it was officially approved as, because I have not yet received those results.)

Of the two Japan-related courses I took, I felt that "Intellectual and Cultural History of Early Modern Japan" related very closely to Japanese History classes I might have taken at UW.

3. HOUSING:

a. What housing options were available to you?

I was able to choose to live in either one of the 6 university international houses, or to find housing for myself.

b. Which did you choose, and why?

I chose to live in the Shugakuin International House. I wanted to be a little bit more independent – able to see the city and campus, without feeling "stuck" on campus throughout the week. I really wanted to feel like I was living in Kyoto, surrounded by the local Japanese residents, rather than on campus surrounded largely by other study abroad students.

c. What would you recommend?

Personally, I really enjoyed living in Shugakuin. I was "forced" to explore more of Kyoto, giving me a sense of self-confidence and independency. I would definitely recommend Shugakuin; it was clean, spacious and is conveniently located near the Eizan train station as well as various bus-stops.

However, due to the apartment-like feel of the building, I did not often encounter other students. It is also about 2 miles from campus, so I had to factor in about 20 minutes of travel time – which was especially not fun in the rain.

If you would like to be closer to more students and campus, you might want to try the Yoshida dorm.

4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

The Kyoto University campus is set in the northwestern part of the city. Kyoto has a variety of affordable public transportation (busses, trains, and metro), but the most common mode of transportation (at least for the university students) was by bike. The university campus is close to a number of bus stops and within walking distance of at least two train stations. The university is bordered by the city, but is also just across the street from Yoshida Shrine – an excellent area to go for a walk if you need to get away from university/city life for a bit.

Living in Kyoto really does give you access to contemporary/modern Japanese society while simultaneously providing incredible access to some of Japan's most famous temples, shrines, and historic buildings/locations. In addition to the benefits of Kyoto itself, the city is located near other cities in the Kansai area; I found it very easy to travel within Kyoto and around Japan.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

I did not feel that my health or safety were ever threatened while abroad in Japan.

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

a. How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community?

(e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

The Japanese friends I made while in Kyoto were made through the club I joined (さいもんめ (Saimonme), a volunteer club that worked with children. I also joined a cooking club, but its meetings often clashed with my schedule, so I wasn't able to spend much time with them.

However, they, too, were incredibly friendly and welcoming!

I think making friends with people from the country you're studying in really has to be a conscious decision – otherwise, you'll both be so shy, you might never even talk to them during your stay! Many of the clubs are looking for members who can guarantee a four-year commitment, but don't be discouraged; there are just as many clubs willing to accept new members for any length of time!

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them.

(e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

I did not largely struggle with any cultural differences while in Japan. That being said, it is true that gender differences are still much more prominently pronounced than in American society. I also slightly struggled with the university-life, as Japanese students do not often have homework, most students spend their time working for club activities rather than coursework.

I think that socially it is best to be polite and more reserved than one may averagely find in America.

The easiest way to avoid too many cultural conflicts is to observe and imitate the Japanese around you. It is also never a bad idea to (politely/tactfully) ask a question for explanation and clarification. The Japanese people you will encounter are well aware that you are a foreigner in their country. If asked, they will do their best to explain the cultural differences so that you can come to feel comfortable in their home country.

7. FINANCIAL:

a. What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

Very few ATMs/banks in Japan will accept a foreign credit card. To my knowledge, the only way to retrieve cash while in Japan was to use a 7-Eleven ATM.

Alternatively, one can exchange cash (dollars for yen) at the airport, or open a Japanese bank account.

I would recommend taking cash to exchange when you first arrive in Japan to allow for transportation, food and housing when you first arrive – I found that \$100 was sufficient until I could reach a 7-Eleven to take out more money.

b. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

I would recommend \$800 per month, plus a little extra to be able to use during school vacations to be able to travel around Japan.

c. Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

Be aware you will have to pay for your national health care insurance during your stay in Japan (but before you leave, be sure to have it prorated so you're not still paying when you're no longer there!)

I read the bus times wrong, completely missed my bus, and had to buy a new ticket. That was unexpected.

d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any problems? If so, how did you address them?

I did not use Financial Aid.

8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:

a. If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

I really felt largely that the IPE was very effective in managing my program. I always felt that my advisor was very invested in my personal experience and my smooth transfer from UW to Kyoto University. However, it would have been very helpful to have a copy of the dates of instruction at my study abroad university, and I think an overall timeline of all required documents – of the dates/relative times they would be issued and need to be returned.

b. If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

My program was administered by the IP&E office.

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

I think this program would be really well suited for an out-going, curious student. It's best to be active, because there's so much to see in Japan; you want to be up for it. Japanese students tend to be shy, so it's probably going to be up to you to make the first move – after that though, the students I met did an amazing job at making me feel like I really was just another student, it's more than worth overcoming your nerves to meet them! Don't forget to take advantage of every opportunity you're given, and do your best to make some opportunities for yourself! There may be days when it doesn't seem like it, but time is going to fly by so quickly, you don't want to miss a moment.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I think that my personal experience exceeded my expectations. I never suspected I would have such luck to make such great friends! I was able to travel to a large number of famous sites within Kyoto, as well as visiting a few other cities. The friends I made in my club were fantastic

AUG 20 2015

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INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

Your Name:

Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program: Kyoto University (KUINEP)

Quarter(s) of Participation: A/W/S

E-mail Address:

1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

Kyodai's international houses aren't available for move-in on weekends, so be sure to book your flight either on a weekday, or plan to stay the night somewhere. In addition, it takes about two and a half hours to get from Kansai International Airport to anywhere in the Kyoto area, so be sure that your flight arrives in the daytime so you can move in before 5pm. (Otherwise the house won't be open.) There's a hotel attached to the airport if you need a place to stay, but I actually came in through Narita and visited friends in Tokyo for a few days, so I'm no expert. I took the shinkansen from Tokyo to Kyoto and arrived about two PM.

The house provides substantial bedding. The set includes a thick quilt for winter and a thin one for summer, a futon cover for said quilt, a pillow, a pillowcase, a sheet, and a mattress pad. Keep in mind this is only for Kyoto University International Houses. I'm not sure what the case is for dorms.

I find the best way to get to an international house is to take transportation to Kyoto Station, and catch a cab from there. You can take a bus or the subway, but both are confusing and not easy to navigate with a large suitcase, let alone two. If taken during the day, the cab will cost only about ¥1000 more than the subway anyway.

Finally, you may want to pack a towel, as the international houses don't provide them, and you may not be in the mood to go out looking for one while extremely jet lagged.

b. If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

The orientation covered how to register for classes, academics, class requirements, and tips on to how navigate the university. There's also a section on bike usage, as they are Kyoto's primary form of transportation. You also register for the university co-op, buy insurance, and receive your student ID during this time.

There is a second orientation students are required to attend for Japanese language classes as well. Registering for Japanese classes is slightly different, so the administration reviews the process, takes questions, and administers a placement test. If going into a higher level of Japanese class, your placement test will be later in the week. It is not mandatory for those who only wish to take a kanji class. Finally, you are not required to take a Japanese class at all. As many of them aren't that helpful, it's perfectly fine to not take one.

There's a separate orientation for the library. It's on a completely arbitrary day, and if you don't attend it, you can't use the library or the school computers for the entire semester, so pay attention.

The main orientation will help you adjust best, but, frankly, Kyoto University is still working on fine-tuning its system to help international students, so a lot of adjustment to Kyoto life will be from experience. Luckily, the people here are incredibly kind and patient, so you're not going to upset anyone if you make a mistake. If anything, the international houses are your best bet for helping you figure out confusing situations. (Like going to the ward office to register your address.)

2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure

Classrooms generally follow more of a lecture format than a discussion format. This can make for boring classes, so I recommend venturing out of the KUINEP realm to take some of the liberal arts classes offered in English. For many of them, you end up with just 3-6 students, but the Kyodai won't cancel the class. This results in a personal learning environment and a professor far more receptive to the needs of their students. I took a cosmology class with just three students in it this year—It was full of theoretical math and near impossible to understand at first, but, since the professor had so few students, he was able to find ways to present the curriculum in a way we understood. I ended up learning a lot about the universe, and had a great experience.

- instruction

Instruction varies from teacher to teacher. If looking for a more discussion-based class, I suggest foreign teachers. This isn't to say that Kyodai professors are bad teachers, but they're used to teaching in a lecture format, not student discussion. Some lectures can get pretty dry. (DO NOT under any circumstance take Agriculture and Foods in Japan, unless you want to listen to some guy drone on in broken English for five weeks about how rice grows.)

- teacher/student relations

Teachers are kind and receptive towards their students, so long as you make a connection with them. This applies especially to the Japanese professors. If you're confused or lost, speak with the professor, they'll happily try to set things right, and remember you thereafter.

- grading/exams

KUINEP courses do not have a final—Usually, they have a paper. This paper is worth a large chunk of your grade, and usually about 2,000 words long. While not incredibly hard to write, you're going to end up with at least five or so papers if you're a KUINEP student, so be prepared to write. I had seven of them this past semester. Now the idea of just one term paper at UW seems like a piece of cake to me, though it will be graded more critically than the ones here.

In addition, the other large part of your grade in KUINEP courses will come from your attendance, so be sure to show up. You can sleep when you get there, but you still need to be present.

- administration

As much as I hate to admit it, the International Office at Kyodai is lacking in several aspects. They have a tendency to explain things only vaguely. For example, at orientation you will receive a list of all the active clubs and circles on campus, but no instructions as to how to contact and join any of them. The contact information for the club leaders is online, but the online system is hard to navigate and you're given no instructions on how to do so.

It's also easy to "fall between the cracks" at the International Office. When the IPE office at UW received no official Kyoto University application for me by mid-March, we emailed them. The application had gotten lost in the mail, and Kyoto University hadn't bothered to contact us when my application didn't arrive by the due date, which had already passed by the time we figured out it was missing. As a result, I had to do the application in the extra week extension allowed by Kyoto University. It was dead week, and thus it was stressful.

Overall, I'd say the International Office, which generally represents all international students to the larger administration, needs to work on its human relations. While organized and usually efficient, those working there fail to remember that the students they serve often feel very lost in a country that is not their home.

The one program the International Office has that I love is the "tutor" program. KUINEP students are assigned a tutor—This tutor is another student, and is there to help you adjust to life in Kyoto, and deal with stuff like health insurance. I'd say I learned more from my tutor, Maki, than the International Office itself. I have been here close to eleven months now and she still helps me on a regular basis—Last month, she helped me get a box out of customs that was withheld.

In fact, I found Maki so helpful that I think UW should instigate a similar program for our own study abroad students.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

Computers are standard PCs, accessed in the library through a student ID and password. Libraries and learning areas are kept clean, and are nice to begin with, except for KUINEP Hall, which has uncomfortable seats that are too small for foreigners.

The university runs not on Wi-Fi, but a VPN. If you have a Macbook, connecting to it is incredibly troublesome. Kyoto University provides instructions that allow you to connect to the VPN, but they are for OSX Snow Leopard or some other ancient OS and entirely in Japanese. Since Apple has since changed the process it takes to connect to a VPN in System Preferences, there's no way to infer how to do it, unless you speak fluent Japanese.

If you have a Macbook and need to connect to a VPN, I suggest the following—Pull up the instructions for how to connect on your current operating system in English on a smartphone or something, then take the connectivity guide (there's one in the international houses, I believe, and in the libraries too), and enter the proper numbers for Kyodai's IP address and whatever else you're supposed to do to connect to a VPN. Once that's done, you need to login with your student ID number and password, so don't bother if you don't have those yet.

There is almost no Wi-Fi to speak of in Japan, other than in Starbucks. Even Yoshida International House, which was built in 2013, requires you to connect to the Internet via a LAN cable. Bring a modem if it bothers you. Also, bring a LAN cable. You're going to need it.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

With a few notable exceptions, KUINEP classes are long, tedious lectures that do not encourage critical thinking. I suggest taking as few as possible (two minimum) and taking the liberal arts classes offered in English, which are often discussion based and do encourage critical thinking.

Japanese language classes are really a shot in the dark. Their quality varies greatly, depending on who's teaching them. However, I can vouch that the kanji classes are pretty good.

c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

My recommended classes, in terms of interesting lectures and discussions are: Introduction to Anthropology, Introduction to Globalization, Introduction to World Religions, Introduction to Cosmology (math heavy), Introduction to Japanese Politics (or anything taught by Ken Hijino), Self Formation in Adolescence, and Introduction to Japanese Literature.

My favorite Japanese language teacher was Kawai Junko. She kept me engaged, even in kanji class.

d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?

Most of my coursework was related to my major (International Studies: East Asia), but I also took a few classes that would satisfy NW or I&S credits.

3. HOUSING:

a. What housing options were available to you?

Kyoto University highly encourages students to live in its International Houses. There are also several dorms that are unaffiliated with the university. You can also try to get an apartment in Kyoto, as they're relatively cheap, but the process is troublesome and stressful, and you'll be ripped off if you're a foreigner. My friend got an apartment through a company that helps foreigners find residences in Kyoto, and ended up paying ninety thousand yen a month for an apartment that should have been sixty thousand.

Also, it should be noted that all of these types of housing are 100% single rooms.

b. Which did you choose, and why?

I chose to live in an international house, though actually getting into one is done on a lottery-based system. I am diabetic, and so I told one of the international office workers I preferred to live close to campus, and thus I think I was pulled from the lottery and placed in Yoshida International House. Yoshida is by far the best place to live—It's right on campus, brand new, and provides residents with both a private bathroom and kitchen, all for a little under four-hundred dollars a month, as of spring 2015. It's a deal that's too good to be true. I was very lucky.

c. What would you recommend?

International houses are the best way to go. The dorms are usually privately owned and charge for showers, but cost the same amount as international houses. Unfortunately, no matter where you live at Kyoto University, you won't be living with Japanese students. I think it's something the university could stand to improve on.

Still, international houses provide bedding and really nice facilities. Also, though you won't be making Japanese friends in them, you will be making international friends. My neighbors are Chinese, Finnish, and French.

4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

Kyodai is located in the northeastern part of the city. It's about a thirty-minute walk downtown, or a ten-minute bike ride. The surrounding neighborhood is urban, by Kyoto standards (the city has no skyscrapers), with plenty of restaurants and establishments for students. However, there are still quiet areas. Yoshida Shrine is just past the university gate, the side streets are residential and silent, and you can always go for a stroll by the Kamogawa (about five minutes away). Overall, it's a really beautiful, safe area. The only thing that might pose danger are cyclists, who have a tendency to not look where they're going. As a pedestrian, be sure to look behind you before you change your direction on the sidewalk!

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

Kyoto is blissfully safe. I am female. I feel perfectly secure going out at 3 AM on a Saturday in my pajamas with my headphones in to go pick up a loaf of bread from the local conbini. Nobody really steals anything, and misplaced items will find their way back to you with a bit of prodding. For example, I left a Nalgene water bottle on a densha, which was picked up by the railway company and left waiting for me at the lost and found office in Osaka. (Osaka is about 30-40 minutes away by train.)

The only areas that might be slightly unsafe are Gion (only at night, creepy dudes and prostitutes come out), and Pontocho, for the same reasons, but also only at night. Even then, I've walked through both areas alone on Saturday nights and been fine, if only slightly uncomfortable.

Medical facilities are wonderful! Kyoto University Hospital is right across the street from Yoshida International House (and the university itself), and regarded as the best medical facility in western Japan. If you need an oddly specific type of medicine, they probably have it. They even had long acting insulin on-site. There are only about 10,000 type one diabetics in Japan, so I was really impressed. Emergency room staff are also kind and competent. I've been twice now, which is weird, as I've never needed the emergency room in the United States. It's also far cheaper here—About \$50, last time I went.

Regular doctors are great, too. Super kind, super cheap—Just be sure to take a Japanese person to all these appointments, as most doctors don't speak super excellent English, and you as a Japanese language student probably won't be able to respond to all the questions. Kyoto University offers a medical translator if you're in a pinch.

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

a. How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community? (e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

At Kyoto University, it's very difficult to gain Japanese friends. Housing options don't have you living with Japanese students, and the international office doesn't really tell you how to *actually* join a club. That being said, I gained most of my Japanese friends from a club called KIXS. It's basically what Kaiwa Table is here at UW—We meet for dinner on Wednesday nights in the central cafeteria and speak in both Japanese and English. I find that my speaking ability has improved greatly in part to KIXS—I speak more naturally and confidently, and know a lot of funny slang words taught by my fellow students.

KIXS will be handing out flyers on campus towards the beginning of the semester, along with iAT, another English conversation club that meets for tea on Thursday afternoons. Both are fun, but KIXS is a little more intimate, and making friends is easier there. iAT has far more members.

As scary as joining a club can be, I thoroughly recommend trying one out. I really regret being too nervous to do so, as my Japanese ability has always been relatively low, and I felt held back by it.

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

Perhaps it's because I'm already an International Studies major, but I was not immediately thrown by cultural differences here. My biggest issue was that people don't bring Starbucks (or any to-go coffee, for that matter) to class. There's a Tully's under the clock tower, but it's an expensive habit to keep up with.

Just don't offend people, and you should be fine—Don't gesture wildly with your chopsticks, or do anything weird with them, for that matter, be quiet on the densha, and try to take up as little space as possible, and you should be fine. Also, don't forget to take off your shoes before entering a dressing room!

7. FINANCIAL:

a. What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

I failed miserably at getting a good method to this. I have Citibank, so I just withdrew money from my American account with a 3% charge for this entire trip. There's no easy way to get American dollars into a Japanese bank account unless you physically carry it over the ocean with you (dangerous), or wire it, which is complicated and didn't work when I tried it.

So, if you can get a bank that won't charge you for using an ATM that isn't theirs, that's what I recommend. Post offices have ATMs that accept most cards, so I say go for it.

b. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

In an international house, rent is about \$400, electricity is about \$40, and spending is about \$450 per month. So, in total, about \$900. Food is really cheap here, and I spend a lot of my money at Starbucks down on Sanjo-dori, so you could probably do it for less. In Kyoto, everyone travels by bike, so while I do take the bus or subway occasionally, it's usually only to get out of the city, or if I happen to be in a yukata that day (there are many summer festivals to attend here!).

So, expect to pay for a bike when you get here. You can get one new for about ¥11,000, or a used one for about ¥4,000-6,000. After that, your transportation is free!

If you weren't planning on buying a bike, add that to your expenses. No, don't say, "No, I don't think I need one, I'll see when I get there," *you're wrong*. You need a bike, everyone uses one, I don't care if you don't even know how to ride one, it's best to learn and purchase one here, or all your friends will leave you behind when they go partying down at Kawaramachi. Without a bike, you will be lonely, sad, and poor, as public transport near the university is expensive.

BUY A BIKE.

c. Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

Health insurance is about ¥1,700 a month, and I spent about \$150 on emergency room visits, but that's really about it.

d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any problems? If so, how did you address them?

8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:

a. If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

One the UW side of things, IPE was really effective. Whenever I emailed, I usually got a response back within a day or two, which is acceptable in my opinion due to time difference.

b. If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

Exchange at Kyoto University is best suited to someone that really loves Japan and Japanese history, especially the more traditional stuff. There's no Akihabara here, but there's shrine after shrine, and beautiful, traditionally built houses are a typical part of the city.

Since Kyoto University is still working out some serious kinks in the way it looks after its international students, a student who comes here will have to be patient and optimistic. Otherwise, you're just going to become bitter, as I saw happen with several students here.

You don't have to be good at Japanese to come here. Honestly, I think the more important factors are personal interest and open-mindedness. If you love Japanese history and culture, and are open to trying new things and willing to let the university make mistakes in an effort to globalize its community, this program is for you. If you're uncomfortable with feeling lost at times, then I suggest a more popular program.

Because Prime Minister Abe wishes for Japan's universities to globalize, Kyodai is really doing its best. I've asked students if they've seen a difference so far, and they all say yes—Most senior students say the difference in the international community now and when they entered school here is huge—Before, there were almost no foreigners, and now there are many. Everybody really likes it.

That being said, Kyodai still needs to work out a lot of its issues when it comes to supporting international students. With enough time, I think this program will gradually become suited to almost everyone, but not quite yet.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I expected my classes to be a little more challenging, but they were not—This is because I speak English as a first language, and the classes are catered more to ESL students. While I do wish there had been a bit more challenge, I am not upset—The easier curriculum allowed me to really focus on *being* in Japan, and I really loved it. In fact, I think that is one of the advantages to this program.

Personally, I wish I'd become better at Japanese. Everyone speaks English here, and so you really need to make an active effort to improve. While my Japanese is miles better compared to what it used to be, I wish I'd had more opportunities to practice.

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

Your Name:

Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program: Kyoto University Exchange

Quarter(s) of Participation: Spring 2015 – Summer 2015

E-mail Address:

1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

Shiori-an Guest House, Kyoto

This was an amazing hostel, with a very helpful, welcoming staff. The rooms are clean and comfortable with clean, bright bathrooms (toilets and showers). There's not too much storage space, but they do have lockers to keep smaller items.

b. If your program/exchange had an orientation, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

The Kyoto University orientation covered registration of classes – both KUNEP and Japanese language courses – and various laws we would be required to know, such as bike-safety laws. We also received necessary paperwork for being a student at Kyoto University – such as health evaluation and insurance(s).

It helped me adapt by informing me of laws I would be required to abide and giving explanations of what I must do, and how I could accomplish it. Without the orientation I would not have known how to register for my classes, nor would I have been able to fully register as a student at Kyoto University because I would have been lacking necessary documentation.

2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received abroad. Compare the following to the University of Washington's system:

- classroom structure

Classroom structure was about the same at UW and Kyoto University.

- instruction

Instruction was also similar. The courses I took involved a single faculty member teaching, grading, etc. courses with multiple students.

- teacher/student relations

I think teacher/student relations were also comparable between Kyoto University and UW. I felt comfortable that most of my professors were very invested in the students and truly wanted us to learn. I also felt comfortable asking for clarification when I did not understand.

- grading/exams

Most of my courses consisted of two exams (a midterm and a final) or of essays taking the place of (an) exam(s), akin to what I experienced at UW. However, homework was not really graded, nor were there many quizzes. The grading system and weights for all assignments were not often written/given in a syllabus, so I often felt unsure of where I stood (with my grade) in my courses.

- administration

I think administration was also similar to UW. Kyoto University is split into Departments and different Faculties, just as UW is. Whenever I was unsure of who to talk to, I could ask a professor, or go to the International Office and they would be able to tell me where I needed to go.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

-

There are a number of libraries on the Kyoto University campus; a main library and smaller libraries with more specific texts. We had access to computers, and – included in tuition – a certain number of pages to print for free (after which one could obtain a printing card and pay for additional pages if needed.) As in UW, classrooms were equipped with desks, chairs, white/chalk boards at the front of rooms and a projector in each class.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

I think the instruction was of a quality equal to that of the University of Washington. The content was similar, but I sometimes felt a bit lost in the course-objectives because professors rarely handed out a personalized syllabus. On occasion I felt that my professors were disinterested in teaching, having no specific goals for the semester themselves.

However, I largely felt that all my professors were highly motivated and really wanted us to learn.

c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

I would definitely recommend Sasaki-sensei. (I apologize for not being able to remember his first name – I've already sent all the documentation I have with his full name to UW and therefore no longer have any way to look it up.) I felt that Sasaki was always full of energy and 110% invested in teaching us learn. I took his Intermediate II kanji class and wished I could have taken all my Japanese courses from him. He was very passionate and I always felt that comments and questions from myself and my classmates were taken respectfully and used to further the learning of the class as a whole.

I would also highly recommend Niels Van Steepaal. He has an amazing knowledge of Japanese history and a firm grasp of the Japanese language, so he was able to help us further understand by explaining certain terms/words. While I felt that many of my other professors at Kyoto University were slightly apathetic and disorganized, Professor Van Steenpaal was driven, focused, and had a very high expectation for his students.

The third professor I have whose classes I will remember for the rest of my life was Professor Jonathan Matthews. Professor Matthews was from Wales and I took two of his courses about English literature. He was a fascinating professor – intent on teaching us life-lessons in tangency with his course topics. Not only was the material interesting, but I still find myself thinking about questions he posed or lessons he taught even now, months after my last class with him.

d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?

As a Japanese language major, my study abroad in Japan directly related to my studies in Japan. I took 7 Japanese language classes (relating as about 10 UW credits) and 2 Japan-related courses. It was difficult to decide upon the level-equivalent of my coursework at UW because the fashion

in which courses are counted in the KUINEP program is not measured by year-level. Japanese language classes at Kyoto University are further divided within their level by topic (composition, kanji, grammar, conversation, etc.). I ended up deciding that Intermediate-level II related as close as I could manage to JAPAN 423. (I cannot say what it was officially approved as, because I have not yet received those results.)

Of the two Japan-related courses I took, I felt that "Intellectual and Cultural History of Early Modern Japan" related very closely to Japanese History classes I might have taken at UW.

3. HOUSING:

a. What housing options were available to you?

I was able to choose to live in either one of the 6 university international houses, or to find housing for myself.

b. Which did you choose, and why?

I chose to live in the Shugakuin International House. I wanted to be a little bit more independent – able to see the city and campus, without feeling "stuck" on campus throughout the week. I really wanted to feel like I was living in Kyoto, surrounded by the local Japanese residents, rather than on campus surrounded largely by other study abroad students.

c. What would you recommend?

Personally, I really enjoyed living in Shugakuin. I was "forced" to explore more of Kyoto, giving me a sense of self-confidence and independency. I would definitely recommend Shugakuin; it was clean, spacious and is conveniently located near the Eizan train station as well as various bus-stops.

However, due to the apartment-like feel of the building, I did not often encounter other students. It is also about 2 miles from campus, so I had to factor in about 20 minutes of travel time – which was especially not fun in the rain.

If you would like to be closer to more students and campus, you might want to try the Yoshida dorm.

4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

The Kyoto University campus is set in the northwestern part of the city. Kyoto has a variety of affordable public transportation (busses, trains, and metro), but the most common mode of transportation (at least for the university students) was by bike. The university campus is close to a number of bus stops and within walking distance of at least two train stations. The university is bordered by the city, but is also just across the street from Yoshida Shrine – an excellent area to go for a walk if you need to get away from university/city life for a bit.

Living in Kyoto really does give you access to contemporary/modern Japanese society while simultaneously providing incredible access to some of Japan's most famous temples, shrines, and historic buildings/locations. In addition to the benefits of Kyoto itself, the city is located near other cities in the Kansai area; I found it very easy to travel within Kyoto and around Japan.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study abroad experience.

I did not feel that my health or safety were ever threatened while abroad in Japan.

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

a. How did you integrate into the culture and meet members of the community?

(e.g., clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

The Japanese friends I made while in Kyoto were made through the club I joined (さいもんめ (Saimonme), a volunteer club that worked with children. I also joined a cooking club, but its meetings often clashed with my schedule, so I wasn't able to spend much time with them.

However, they, too, were incredibly friendly and welcoming!

I think making friends with people from the country you're studying in really has to be a conscious decision – otherwise, you'll both be so shy, you might never even talk to them during your stay! Many of the clubs are looking for members who can guarantee a four-year commitment, but don't be discouraged; there are just as many clubs willing to accept new members for any length of time!

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them.

(e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

I did not largely struggle with any cultural differences while in Japan. That being said, it is true that gender differences are still much more prominently pronounced than in American society. I also slightly struggled with the university-life, as Japanese students do not often have homework, most students spend their time working for club activities rather than coursework.

I think that socially it is best to be polite and more reserved than one may averagely find in America.

The easiest way to avoid too many cultural conflicts is to observe and imitate the Japanese around you. It is also never a bad idea to (politely/tactfully) ask a question for explanation and clarification. The Japanese people you will encounter are well aware that you are a foreigner in their country. If asked, they will do their best to explain the cultural differences so that you can come to feel comfortable in their home country.

7. FINANCIAL:

a. What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?

Very few ATMs/banks in Japan will accept a foreign credit card. To my knowledge, the only way to retrieve cash while in Japan was to use a 7-Eleven ATM.

Alternatively, one can exchange cash (dollars for yen) at the airport, or open a Japanese bank account.

I would recommend taking cash to exchange when you first arrive in Japan to allow for transportation, food and housing when you first arrive – I found that \$100 was sufficient until I could reach a 7-Eleven to take out more money.

b. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

I would recommend \$800 per month, plus a little extra to be able to use during school vacations to be able to travel around Japan.

c. Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

Be aware you will have to pay for your national health care insurance during your stay in Japan (but before you leave, be sure to have it prorated so you're not still paying when you're no longer there!)

I read the bus times wrong, completely missed my bus, and had to buy a new ticket. That was unexpected.

d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any problems? If so, how did you address them?

I did not use Financial Aid.

8. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATION:

a. If the IP&E administered your program/exchange, please comment on the effectiveness of the office's services. What service could be improved?

I really felt largely that the IPE was very effective in managing my program. I always felt that my advisor was very invested in my personal experience and my smooth transfer from UW to Kyoto University. However, it would have been very helpful to have a copy of the dates of instruction at my study abroad university, and I think an overall timeline of all required documents – of the dates/relative times they would be issued and need to be returned.

b. If the IP&E did not administer your program, please evaluate the program's administration, both in the U.S. and abroad.

My program was administered by the IP&E office.

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited.

I think this program would be really well suited for an out-going, curious student. It's best to be active, because there's so much to see in Japan; you want to be up for it. Japanese students tend to be shy, so it's probably going to be up to you to make the first move – after that though, the students I met did an amazing job at making me feel like I really was just another student, it's more than worth overcoming your nerves to meet them! Don't forget to take advantage of every opportunity you're given, and do your best to make some opportunities for yourself! There may be days when it doesn't seem like it, but time is going to fly by so quickly, you don't want to miss a moment.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I think that my personal experience exceeded my expectations. I never suspected I would have such luck to make such great friends! I was able to travel to a large number of famous sites within Kyoto, as well as visiting a few other cities. The friends I made in my club were fantastic