

Waseda University (Tokyo, Japan)  
Fall 2013 – Spring 2014

1.a. Getting your inkan, phone, and opening a bank account were things that I found most important upon arrival. Shibuya Hanko-dou was a convenient place for me to get my inkan. Citibank is a great place to open a bank account because they have services in English. As for a phone, I opened a contract with a company called B mobile. B mobile sells SIM cards and you can choose from what plan works best for you. It was much cheaper than purchasing a new phone and signing a contract with a carrier in Japan. However, you have to unlock your phone in order to accept other SIM cards.

1.b. The orientation at Waseda covered registering your address in Japan at the municipal office, signing up for insurance in Japan, opening a bank account, getting a phone, how to register for classes, policies to be followed in Japan, and questions on living situations. Besides from letting me know the things I needed to get done before settling into Japan, the orientation provided some knowledge worth remembering, such as things you should carry with you at all times in case of emergencies, etc.

2.a. The classes at Waseda were significantly smaller in size than classes at the UW. However, classes at Waseda were taught more passively than I am used to. In contrast to classes at the UW, there was less opportunity for class discussion and teacher/student interaction in classes at Waseda. Some factors that contributed to this were the professor not stopping enough in their lectures to ask if students understood the material, or in the case of Japanese classes, giving class assignments that practiced reading and writing skills more than speaking. Grading and exams were essentially the same as they are at the UW. Library, computer, and classroom facility policies were slightly stricter than those at the UW, but also created a safer environment for Waseda students (i.e. library access is restricted to individuals that have a student ID card).

2.b. A downside to the instruction I see at Waseda University is the length of the classes. Some teachers did a good job of facilitating discussion and actively inviting students to engage during class, but other teachers seemed to spend the entirety of class talking. In such cases, a person can only focus for so long before losing interest. This may be how some teachers were instructed to teach (particularly in regard to Japanese language classes), which shows that the system is quite rigid. In comparison to Japanese classes at the UW, I feel that the content of Japanese classes at Waseda was lacking. Many exercises and handouts were included, but seemed hardly useful at all and only functioned to take up time. It was as if class = lecture plus homework time. If more homework was given to students to do on their own and class cut shorter, I believe students would be more engaged and learned more effectively since the class time will be devoted to the most important things.

2.c. Professor Richi Sakakibara teaches a great class on Japanese literature after 1945. The class doesn't cover a light topic, but is a great opportunity to see plainly a part of Japanese history that is dark and painful. Reading the literature from this time period allows you to see a different side of Japan that isn't readily portrayed otherwise and brings about a greater understanding of Japan's history. Professor Sakakibara also facilitates class discussion very well, making it a very engaging class.

2.d. The courses I took at Waseda were courses I needed to fulfill my Japanese minor requirements at the UW.

3.a. I was given the choice of living in the dorms, with a host family, or living in an apartment by myself.

3.b. I chose to live with a host family because I saw it as the best way to immerse myself in the language and environment of Japan. I'd be able to speak the language more frequently and also experience what it's like to live with a family very different from my own. Halfway through the year, I switched to living in a shared house where the residents were all Japanese.

3.c. I would recommend living with a host family or living in a shared house. While neither give the privacy one may be used to, they are the two environments where you can practice speaking the language in a very practical way, which I believe helps you improve your proficiency the most. Depending on your host family, there may be some strict rules that you have to follow, in which case a shared house would offer more flexibility and freedom.

4. The main Waseda campus is decently large, but not nearly as large as the UW campus. The walking distance between buildings is short and there are plenty of places to sit and relax around campus. There is also a student activity building that is specifically for international cultural exchange, which is good place for people who want to make new friends or at least have a go-to place to hang out with people. A lot of residential areas surround Waseda, so the campus gets quiet around 9pm so as not to disturb the residents. There are also many restaurants that surround Waseda as well. Convenient stores and department stores are within walking distance, making it very convenient to get whatever it is you need.

5. I went to see the doctor a few times during my stay in Japan. Medical facilities were clean and ran very smoothly. It is good to be familiar with your own body so that you don't put yourself in situations where your body is vulnerable to something (i.e. it gets very hot and humid in Japan; heat exhaustion and heat stroke are possible). Mosquito bites were common. Theft was not a very big problem at all for me in Japan. People are very respectful about what is and isn't theirs. If you ever lose something, you are almost always sure to find it where you left it. Unsafe districts do exist in Japan (i.e. drug dealing, sex trafficking, etc), but they are typically not close to residential areas and are easy to avoid.

6.a. In attempts to make friends at Waseda, I joined clubs or participated in activities with others who shared similar interests. Examples of these were a dance club at Waseda, a ping pong tournament organized by Waseda, language exchange events, cultural events that people in Japan celebrate, teaching English, and fellowship in a church community. Other ways I tried to engage with the community I lived in was talking with strangers. These interactions with strangers helped me get a better feel of how people in Japan think, behave, and live. There was also a restaurant that I frequented and eventually built a relationship with the restaurant owner and waiters who work there.

6.b. One of the biggest challenges was making meaningful and lasting friendships. The impression I got was that Japanese students were not particularly inviting. Most students at Waseda had already formed their own social groups from previous years and may have felt no need to invite others into their group or participate in a new group. I also did not participate in drinking parties, where most people tend to bond, which likely made it more difficult to meet Japanese students who were willing to open up without the assistance of alcohol. I decided to commit to staying in contact with students I talked to in my classes, regardless of how shy or anxious I felt. Eventually, schedules aligned and there came days where the people I stayed in contact with were finally able to hang out with myself and other study abroad students. After the first time of hanging out outside of the school environment, the Japanese students began to open up and respond more warmly and enthusiastically about hanging out more often. It was a challenging experience that taught me the importance of commitment.

7.a. Opening a bank account in Japan and then scheduling a wire transfer from your US bank account to your Japanese bank account was the most convenient way for me to access/transfer money from the US.

7.b. \$500 - \$700/mo on rent. \$200 - \$300/mo on food. \$100/mo on transportation. \$40/mo on phone. Japan is an expensive place to live, so I found it best to concentrate all my expenses on the aforementioned plus school necessities (textbooks, etc). Shopping for clothes was a very minor expense for me. Any money you have saved up would be better used for traveling around Japan.

7.c. I did incur about \$60 for doctor visits and medicine, but it was not a very steep price with insurance (which is mandatory for living abroad in Japan).

7.d. No complications.

8.a. For the most part, the IP&E office did a good job of helping me with this exchange program. One thing that I believe should be improved is timing. After the IP&E approved of my application, I was given a week to complete Waseda's application. This application included a large amount of paper work in which a week's time span seemed to offer just barely enough time to complete it. Other students from previous years had a similar experience; some had only a weekend's

worth of time to get everything together. If there is a way the IP&E can provide students with the Waseda application two weeks before the application must be mailed abroad, that would give students more peace of mind and time to put their application together.

9. The Waseda exchange program would be good for students who want to study Japanese, but also desire a very large international community. Students who enjoy participating in school clubs and activities would also find the Waseda exchange program suitable because Waseda offers the most clubs of any university in Tokyo. The Waseda exchange program offers an intensive language option and a liberal arts option. The liberal arts program allows students to take Japanese language classes as well as classes in other disciplines taught in English. This is a good option for students who don't want to solely study Japanese or want to take classes in English while improving their Japanese.

10. Neither my academic nor personal expectations were realistic in the sense that things did surprise and frustrate me. Academically, I was expecting courses to be taught and structured the same way they are at the UW. Once I realized that wasn't the case, I began to notice myself constantly comparing the education system between Waseda and UW and grumbling about the things I didn't like about Waseda. The differences were something I had to learn to cope with, seeing both the good and the bad aspects. Personally, I wasn't expecting to undergo much culture shock, homesickness, or emotional and spiritual waves. In contrast to that expectation, adjusting to living in Tokyo was full of bumpy rides that, at times, left me feeling in despair and depressed. Ways in which I used to be a patient individual, I noticed began to change as I suddenly became more irritable and impatient. Seeing these character flaws did shock and confuse me because they were not issues for me back in the States. Living in Japan is also very different from vacationing in Japan. The romanticized view I had of Japan was shattered as I soon began to see the bad aspects of Japan. The contrast of expectations versus reality, along with growth and wrestling with my personal identity made my year abroad a challenging one. At the same time, understanding growth comes out of difficult times also gave me much hope and perseverance.

SEP 23 2013

## IP&E PROGRAM EVALUATION OUTLINE:

Tokyo, Japan

Full year Sept-end of July, 2012/2013

### 1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Bring your own deodorant. It's not as strong in Japan. Also medicine might be a bit more expensive in Japan than in the US. Souvenirs are a must because it is a strong custom in Japan to bring souvenirs from another place to people you meet. You can never have enough souvenirs, because you will meet so many new people for what seems like everyday in a place like Tokyo. Do not bother bringing tissue paper, because almost every person you see handing out flyers on the streets will have a free packet of tissue with their ad. **Also bring an electronic dictionary for Japanese from the US.** Really, you won't regret it, especially since the only ones available in Tokyo are ones meant for Japanese people learning English

b. Our orientations gave us a TON of paper to sort and read through, so be prepared. They will cover subjects like acquiring a student card, bank account, cellphone, student account, SILS or BEKKA (Japanese language program). My advice is to find people in the same program as you that are easy to talk with, and help each other figure out what to do. This is how I made my first group of friends in Japan, actually. My last piece of advice would be to try your best not to get lost. I have a very poor sense of direction and got lost quite a few times trying to find certain buildings holding orientations on campus. But if your sense of direction isn't too bad, you might fare better than I did. ☺ There should also be maps of campus online if you do a search.

### 2. ACADEMICS:

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

- **classroom structure:** lecture classes are usually in the SILS program, and classroom is roughly same size as UW's lecture rooms. Likewise, normal classrooms for discussion (mostly Japanese language program) hold roughly 20-30 people like UW.

- **instruction:** All in Japanese. Lots of partner work. Lots of paper handouts everyday.

- **teacher/student relations:** formal, but depending on the teacher's personality they can be quite the opposite.

- **grading/exams:** graded on a A-F scale. A+ is a 4.0, A is a 3.0, and B is a 2.0. Final exams or presentations in almost every class, but presence of midterms vary.

- **administration:** Most speak only Japanese. 4<sup>th</sup> floor of building 22. Building 22 is known as the Study abroad student center building, where mostly Japanese language classes are held.

- **library, computer, and classroom facilities:** a few libraries, the largest in front of building 22 but only accessible with student card. Computer room in building 22 is open 24/7 but you can only stay past business hours if you have a student card. Must bring your own paper for printers.

b. **class structure and system:** Some are very poorly organized. Some are really fun and interactive. The registration system is the worst school registration I've ever heard of. You sign up for classes RIGHT when class starts. If a class you sign up for one that becomes full, the choosing process is NOT first come first serve, but completely random. The results come after the registration period ends. So you have a chance of not signing up for enough classes by the end of it all. Also, you cannot drop classes that you are officially registered for until the 3<sup>rd</sup> registration period starts(yes there are 3



registration periods that occur while school is already in session). Furthermore, if you sign up for MORE classes than you are supposed to, the computer will sense that you have too many and randomly delete one of your signed up classes so that you have the correct amount. So it can be really hard to control what classes you take depending on how easily they fill up. Also be prepared to take about 10 classes, because most of your classes will be 1-credit classes (according to the Waseda Japanese language system) and therefore only once a week. I was not used to having so many classes, so I barely remembered any of my teachers' names. But there are some classes that are more credits and therefore more than once a week. Each class is generally 1.5 hrs long.

**c. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?** Kanji in Town is a really good class for learning useful kanji. The teacher is nice and offers multiple levels for this type of class. It's pretty popular though.

**d. How did your study abroad coursework relate to your UW education?** I'm a Japanese major so most of my classes were related to some aspect of the Japanese language. There was grammar, kanji, conversation, novels, movies, discussion, job environment, etc. Very useful and interesting. (OVER)

### **3. HOUSING:**

**a.** There are many options for how to live in Tokyo. You can choose to live in an international student dorm like I did, find your own apartment/housing/etc, or apply to be with a host family. WARNING: if you choose international student dorm, chances are if you don't like your room or roommate, you WILL NOT be able to switch! They are very strict about this. The only way to get out of it is to move out of the dorm (giving at least a month prior notice to managers). A lot of people did this too half way into the year once they got a better feel for what else was out there. Another possible negative is that you may not be allowed to have visitors unless they're family. But this depends on which dorm you live in. My dorm did not allow this, but others did.

Also, there was no curfew for my dorm (Nishi-Waseda International Student Dorm). The current managers (husband and wife) are also VERY nice but speak only a little English. Food is not served, but there is a kitchen with pots and pans and such on every floor.

**b. Which did you choose, and why?** I chose international student dorm because I had hoped to live with one of my friends from UW. However, we didn't get to choose which dorm or exactly who we'd want as a roommate. So we ended up in the same dorm but with different roommates.

**c. What would you recommend?** If you want to be close to campus and meet tons of people from around the world and make friends easily, I recommend international student dorms. If you want to really get better at Japanese at the fastest rate possible, I recommend host family. If you are really picky about your living situation and are pretty independent and experienced, I recommend finding your own apartment to live in.

### **4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:**

Describe the campus and surrounding community. The campus has a gym with martial arts people that practice every weekday. As you walk by you can hear their alarming screams and yells. Waseda has several campuses in different areas of Shinjuku. Most international students will be taking class at the main campus. There's also the Toyama campus and Nishi-waseda campus. Compared to UW, Waseda is more integrated with the rest of society. Also, there are a TON of ramen shops around campus. Escalators are in almost every major building on campus. Make sure you stand on the left side if you're not in a rush.

## **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. There is a medical center affiliated with Waseda near the main campus. They give good cold medicine. But their English is very, very poor. Make sure you research appropriate Japanese terms before visiting. Also you will be required to purchase a separate health insurance (not the one that UW made you purchase). This makes the medicine doctors prescribe to you super cheap, something like 70% off.

Also when walking sidewalks be aware of bicycles passing by. A lot of people ride them on both the streets and sidewalks, which can be narrow.

## **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.) I joined a dance circle (it's like a club but called a circle), and participated in some fun events with another circle called Niji no Kai, a group famous for planning fun events with study abroad students and allowing you the opportunity for fast Japanese friends. The ICC organization at Waseda also offers fun events and programs to help you learn Japanese.

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

(e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.) Some people will tell you to not say something because it doesn't correspond with your gender. There are some things only guys say, and some things only girls say. But there are always exceptions, so this is ultimately up to you as long as you understand the word or phrase's effect. Also, try your best to be aware of the varying levels of formality and when to be formal or informal. Age difference, for example, is a very sensitive thing in Japan. Students usually address each other differently depending on their age or school year, even if it's only one year apart. The dance circle I joined (SeSsion) is mostly Japanese people who have little experience with meeting international students compared to Niji No Kai, so they may not be as friendly, or more shy, or discriminative. This discrimination has helped me understand how hard it is for international students at UW, which is why a lot of them may stay with those of the same ethnicity to escape that discrimination.

## **7. FINANCIAL:**

**a. What is the best way to access/transfer money from the U.S.?** Create a bank account in Japan. I used shinsei bank, which was free to make. Since it costs money to transfer money from the US to Japan, I had my parents transfer money only 2-3 times that whole year. If you have a Shinsei bank account, you can withdraw money freely from any 7-11 ATM machine.

**b. How much spending money do you recommend per month?** \$400-600 for rent including utilities, \$40-\$50 per month for food (really look for the cheaper grocery stores! The best one I've found is called Gyomu 業務, which is like the Costco of Japan. If you get a bike, transportation should be not that much at all, but it depends on where you live and where you like to go. Make sure you get a bike with different gears.

**c. Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.** Peanut butter, honey, and a lot of fruits are very expensive. A watermelon can be like \$30. But a bike is super cheap. I got mine for around \$80 and it worked great.

d. If you used Financial Aid to fund your program/exchange, were there any complications?  
No.

**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? Explain the situation of having to purchase more than one health insurance for living in Japan (the UW world health insurance seemed useless). Have more detailed and accurate information on living situation and school system for applicants. Checking up on students currently in Japan at least once or twice within the year as well would be nice.

**9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

Please describe the type of student for whom this program is best suited. Student at least at 3<sup>rd</sup> level Japanese or capable of learning languages quickly. Should have open mind and know how to live independently or with others (aka not leaving dirty dishes in shared kitchens)

**10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal? I actually had no expectations. I thought it would be appropriate for me to do this study abroad since my major is Japanese and I've been studying it since the beginning of high school. I grew more than ever thought I would as a person, both academically and personally. I made friends from all over the world, which has made me want to travel more and be aware about other countries. Spending a year in another country really expands your horizons so that you filled more fulfilled as an individual, yet thirsting for more adventure. I hope to return to another part of Japan someday as an English teacher to start a new adventure after graduating.



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## INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM/EXCHANGE EVALUATION REPORT

### CONFIDENTIAL

SEP 22 2015

**Your Name:**

**Name of Study Abroad/Exchange Program:** Waseda University Japanese Language Program

**Quarter(s) of Participation:** Fall – Summer 2014/2015

**E-mail Address:**

### 1. ARRIVAL OVERSEAS/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

I chose to stay at a student dormitory and have no experience otherwise to form a recommendation.

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

The orientation covered a wide variety of topics, including how to receive national health insurance, residence information with the city office, and in my case, dormitory information such as rules and facilities available. The orientation topics were also included in materials received prior to and upon arrival at the dormitory. The orientation was helpful if you had any specific questions, and the dorm staff were also helpful in this regard.

### 2. ACADEMICS:

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

- classroom structure

Most of the classrooms were on the smaller side, able to accommodate 20-30 students. I didn't have any classes in larger lecture halls, though there are some on campus. Conditions tend to be somewhat cramped in most of the classrooms I experienced.

- instruction

Varied depending on teacher, but typically encouraged as much student participation as possible. Group work was fairly common and many of my teachers provided a large amount of handouts and paper material. Very few of my classes made extensive use of the textbook.

- teacher/student relations

Teachers were very approachable and willing to provide answers to questions and concerns. No real office hours however, so the methods of communication are restricted to email, and during or before/after class.

- grading/exams

Varied depending on teacher, with some being very harsh and strict grading even down to handwriting, and others being much more forgiving with small mistakes and errors. I didn't generally

encounter multiple-choice format questions on exams or quizzes. Most of the questions involved writing or sentence construction/completion.

- administration

The administration was generally friendly and helpful, although they tended to be very rule and procedure centric.

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

Varied somewhat from building to building. Most of the classrooms were rather small, with access to a projector and speakers. Large classes in some of the smaller rooms were rather cramped. There are several computer labs across campus, but I felt that access to the printers was rather limited. You are required to bring your own printer paper for the school printers and I found myself using the printers at convenience stores most of the time. I didn't make extensive use of the library facilities, but they did look rather similar to UW, with independent study rooms, lots of desk space, etc.

**b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.**

I personally found that the quality and content of instruction varied quite a bit. Some classes I found to be very interesting and engaging, while others were very dry and uninteresting. This seemed largely dependent on the teacher for the particular class.

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

There are no specific courses I would recommend, but I would suggest perhaps not taking the Comprehensive Japanese courses in favor of a wider variety of courses. This will result in a potentially greater load of coursework however.

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

It did not a great deal. I was mainly interested in my own personal weaknesses with the language, instead of intensive cultural contact. I did achieve what I set out to do though.

### **3. HOUSING:**

**a. What housing options were available to you?**

Dormitory, homestay, and independent living arrangements such as renting an apartment were all potential options.

**b. Which did you choose, and why?**

I chose to stay at a student dormitory, mainly due to cost.

**c. What would you recommend?**

I would recommend a homestay for good cultural and language interactions. Dormitories are the cheapest option however.

### **4. PROGRAM/EXCHANGE SITE:**

Describe the campus and surrounding community.

The campus is relatively small, and in an urban area. Some of the campus buildings are older and don't have the same facilities available as the newer buildings. The campus has a small park next to the cafeteria building. The surrounding area has many residential and commercial buildings.

#### **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.

Japan is relatively safe with regards to crime, so I encountered no issues in that regard. Applying for the national health insurance policy is a requirement of the program, which allows access to many clinics in the area. Depending on the health issue in question, treatment may be expensive.

#### **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.)

Clubs were the best way to meet and interact with students from the university. Waseda University has a wide variety of student clubs that cover a wide range of interests.

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

I didn't encounter any significant challenges during my stay, but some other exchange students I spoke with expressed frustration with the high degree of bureaucratic procedure involved in staying in Japan. Social etiquette may also be difficult to adjust to. A comparatively high level of formality is expected in Japan compared to the US.

#### **7. FINANCIAL:**

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

Seven Eleven convenience stores typically have an ATM that accepts non-Japanese cards. This would be the easiest way to access money from a U.S. account.

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

I would recommend about 100,000 yen per month, if living in a student dorm near campus.

**c.** Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

In the case of living in a dorm, you may find that you will need to buy cleaning and laundry detergent on occasion. Textbook costs may also vary greatly, with some classes not requiring any textbook purchase and others fairly expensive texts.

**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 any 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?

The information provided to me was very helpful in preparing me for the experience of study abroad in a general. I did encounter some redundancies in the information provided at the orientations, but this is somewhat understandable.

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.

I would suggest this program to students who are more interested in the experience of living and studying in Japan, not necessarily for just language. Students with an interest in the culture would also be well suited to this program.

**10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

How realistic were your expectations, both academic and personal?

I believe I put my expectations higher than the end result, but mostly through my own faults. I found that studying independently yielded better results than from the classes themselves and my practical use of the language wasn't as extensive as I had hoped or anticipated. I definitely could have done a better job of making friends within the university that weren't other foreign exchange students.