

# **Exchange Evaluation Report**

*Host University:* Keio University, Japan

## **Academic Experience**

Keio University offers two main study programs for exchange students; the JLP (Japanese Language Program) and the KIP (Keio International Program). JLP focuses mainly on studying the Japanese language intensively within the period of time on exchange in order to build the competency of the students' Japanese ability in all areas. This is recommended for students who wish to increase the Japanese language ability drastically within the limited period of time as their main goal of their exchange. KIP is designed for students who wish to study courses outside of Japanese language. These courses are all offered in English, and may be courses related to the students' major back at their own university. This is recommended for students who are not focusing too much on improving their Japanese but only wishes to study the courses of other subjects of their own choice, conducted in English. All JLP courses are conducted in Japanese, which in my opinion, is a really efficient way for the students to improve their listening and speaking as well as all other areas of the language. I strongly recommend students to take JLP because the purpose of going to Japan is to improve their own language ability with the actual environment provided.

## **Clubs and Activities**

Keio University offers a wide range of clubs and circles, including sports, cultural, musical, food, language, and many more, as well as other special social communities aimed at providing more interaction between the international students and Japanese students. I personally recommend that exchange students should join at least one circle during their time at Keio. One reason is that this is one of the easier methods to make native friends. Another reason is that circles are less strict than clubs, meaning that members do not necessary have to participate in sport practices or other club events regularly for certain amounts of hours every day after school. Keio also has a community called KOSMIC (Keio Organization of Student Members of International Center), which runs many social events for the international students and Japanese students. One of this is the conversation partner programme, which the international students are put into pairs or groups of 3 and 4 with the Japanese students to gather up regularly to do conversations in either English or Japanese. The purpose of this

programme is for the students to improve their languages as well as make friends and learn about each other's culture.

## **Dormitory**

Keio has 8 dormitories, each with its own features and conditions. I lived in Shimoda Student Village, the biggest dormitory which holds around 150 people altogether. Shimoda is a fairly new dormitory which provides single rooms consisting of a private bathroom and common use kitchen for all students. The rent is 59000 yen/month excluding the water and electricity fees which may seem a little bit expensive. However, it is still cheaper than other dormitories if consideration is taken for all conditions it provides. The good thing about this dormitory was that it has a lot of people living in it and has common-use lounges, which allows people to make friends very easily when they are cooking meals, watching television or socializing in the lounges. Many dormitories do not have these common lounges. Therefore, I was really glad that to have lived in this dormitory as I have made many good friends from all around the world. The distance from the dormitory to the campus are all around the same among all the dormitories, which takes around 50~60 minutes to commute (train and foot). So, the distance does not need to be taken into consideration when choosing dormitories.

## **Holidays and Travelling**

Apart from the semester breaks, there are many other holidays in Japan, especially in the autumn semester (second semester of New Zealand). These include the Golden and Silver Week, which both lasts for around 5 days, Keio's Mita-sai (Mita campus festival, similar to school opening week), Keio's Keio-Waseda baseball matches, of which the classes will also be cancelled for, and many more public holidays. These holidays are all good opportunities for us to travel around famous sightseeing places in Japan. I have visited several famous sightseeing places; Hokkaido, Touhoku, Kyuushu, Izu, Nikko and Shikoku. These are all famous places with their own unique characteristics. For example, Hokkaido's Hakodate night view is one of the world's top three night views. Nikko is famous for its waterfall and maple leaves during autumn, Izu is famous for its onsen (hot springs) and so forth.

## **Part-time work**

As the living costs in Japan can be very expensive compared to anywhere else in the world, it would be a good idea to do at least one part-time job during your stay in Japan. Doing part-time jobs not only earns you a little bit of pocket money, but is also a good way to gain work experience and practice your Japanese as well. Most labour work such as convenience stores or restaurants can earn you around 900~1000 yen per hour at an average rate. Another good way of earning money is doing private tutoring. Learning English is very popular in Japan and it is very easy to find private students to teach. For me, this was a more preferable way to earn pocket money because the pay is much higher with less time and energy spent compared to labour work. The average wage of private tutoring is usually around 2000~3000yen per hour which is a reasonably good deal.

### **Other Advices and Conclusion**

Finally, I would advise everyone to treasure their time in Japan and make the most out of it. For me, the exchange year felt really short and there seemed to be a lot more things that I have not yet done, or that there were still a lot of room for language improvement. So I would strongly suggest everyone to keep themselves occupied all day every day. When having finished classes and homework, go out and see all the exciting places around the city or country, or spend a lot of time with your Japanese friends, using this as a chance to learn a lot about their culture and improve your Japanese conversation ability, or spend a lot of time revising at home on rainy days. Just keep in mind that **basically, the worst things to do is doing things that can also be done back here in New Zealand, because that totally loses the point of going on exchange, and is a complete waste of money, time and chance.**

Personally, I think this applies to all exchange students. Therefore, no matter which University you decide to go, do your best and good luck! I wish you a fruitful trip!