



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Keio University - Tokyo, Japan
Semester & Year of Exchange	Semester 1, 2023 (Spring Semester)
Otago degree(s)	Bachelor of Health Sciences
Major(s)	Māori Health (minor: Indigenous Studies)

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Ghosts and Goblins in Modern Japanese Literature	English	2
Introduction to Japanese Art History	English	
Introduction to Japanese Cinema 1	English	2
Otaku Culture in Japan and its Transnational Relation	English	2
The Roots of Japanese Culture As Seen In Theater and Art	English	
Essential Japanese 1H-1	Japanese	1
Essential Japanese 1H-2	Japanese	1

Total Otago credits gained: 54 points 72 points 108 points _____

Any comments about these papers?

Essential Japanese 1 is not a JLP course, it's a KJC (Keio Japanese Course). I'd highly recommend taking it if you're: i) a KIP student; and ii) new to learning Japanese. It's the most beginner level of its kind. The learning environment in this class was collaborative, welcoming and fun. Plus, expanding your Japanese knowledge will likely improve the quality of your stay in Japan.

IMPORTANT ADVICE – some of the Keio International Center Courses have a lottery method due to class size restrictions. The first round course registration period is super short. Don't be like me and miss it because you'll have to wait for round 2, & all of the courses with size restrictions will be full.

How did the academic experience/ workload/ style of teaching differ from Otago?

At Otago, the workload and teaching style across different classes is pretty consistent. At Keio, however, there's variation. Some lecturers were quite vague while others didn't skip out on the

details. Also, unlike at Otago, classes at Keio are 90 minutes long and they're only once or twice a week. Finally, many of the classes had a heavy discussion component which I enjoyed. It was a huge honour and privilege to be able to sit in a class full of students from all around the world and share ideas!

Accommodation

What accommodation did you stay in? What were the pros and cons of your accommodation?

I stayed at Tsunashima SST International Dormitory, and absolutely loved it. It was a mix of exchange students and local students, fully self-catered. The residents were very friendly and quite sociable. The R.A's made me feel welcome and so did the dorm managers; they were all super lovely! The floors are divided by gender and there are laundry rooms with coin operated dryers, and a small kitchenette on each floor. The 9th floor has a neat common room with a TV and drink vending machine. 2nd floor has a large kitchen and your own locker where you can store your kitchen equipment. You're only allowed to host guests at 2nd.

It's a lot newer than the other Keio dorms and is located in Tsunashima-higashi, Kohoku, Yokohama. Most of the Keio dorms are located in Yokohama, closer to Hiyoshi campus. However, most classes for international students are held at Mita campus in Tokyo. So be prepared to commute if you choose to stay at a dorm. My dorm was part of Tsunashima SST, located right next to the mall. This was probably my favourite thing about the dorm!

It's about a 10 minute walk to Tsunashima station and Shin-tsunashima station, so you have easy access to the Toyoko line and Tōkyū Shin-Yokohama line. From Shin-tsunashima station, it's a 30 minute commute to Mita station and then a 7 minute walk to campus from there. From the dorm it's a 20 minute walk to Keio Hiyoshi campus.

The rooms were very large (17.40~18.85 square meters) and they came with their own bathtub, toilet with a bidet (the only dorm to have this feature), desk, desk chair, book shelves, your own Wi-Fi, AC, fridge, a veranda for drying your clothes, basin, large closet space bedding and bed. While I've heard that other dorms are thin-walled, that's not the case for SST as you really can't hear much outside noise when inside the rooms.

The biggest con of this dorm, I'd say, are the restrictions on having guests over. But this didn't bother me at all since I always hung out with my friends from outside the dorm on outings.

Overall, I'd highly recommend SST, and I think the Tsunashima area is a great place to stay.

Money matters

Please detail your basic costs, e.g. accommodation, flights, visa, food, insurance

Flights - book as early in advance as you can and it'll save you lots of \$\$\$. Part of the PMSA scholarship included funds to help with flight fares and also included paid travel insurance.

Accommodation - the monthly rent at SST was about 79,600 yen and included water, electricity, etc. It's one of the more expensive dorms. Although for all of its conveniences, I felt it was worth it.

Food - food is quite cheap, especially when you consider currency conversion being in our favour. The Keio cafeteria is really cheap, and supermarkets and convenience stores offer big discounts on ready-made meals in the evening. In general though, I found that food in Japan was MUCH cheaper than NZ (except for fruit and vegetables, they're grossly overpriced).

What means did you use to access your finances? What would you recommend? (Credit card, Cash passport, foreign bank account, etc.)

Japan is well and truly a cash-based society. Not all places will accept card. As I was only on exchange for one semester, and because I heard from other international students how much of a hassle opening a Japanese bank account is, I never opened one. But if you are considering opening an account, I've heard Yucho bank are quite foreigner-friendly.

As for how I'd access my finances, I converted quite a lot of my savings to JPY in NZ before flying as Travelex offered a really good exchange rate (with 0 fees). Apart from that, I'd withdraw cash from 7-11 ATM machines which have the lowest fees and best exchange rate of the ATMs in Japan.

As an Otago student, you still get Studylink when abroad. Also, I was lucky to have been a recipient of the PMSA scholarship. Please check them out and consider applying!! You should also apply for the JASSO scholarship too if you're gonna do an exchange in Japan (regardless of which uni). Keio's JASSO application process was easy and super straightforward, although I was unsuccessful having already been granted the PMSA. Finally, save as much as you can before coming to Japan because there's nothing more depressing than being surrounded with all these fun things to do, great shops, an incredible night life and delicious food, but being broke.

Also, book your activities well in advance because everyone seems to be going to Japan!

Visas & Insurance

Did you have to apply for a visa? What was the process?

Yes, I had to apply for a student visa. The process was quite straightforward. Keio sends you an email with instructions so follow them and you'll be fine. The Certificate of Eligibility will be sent from Keio to the University of Otago by mail, and received by the exchange office. Once I collected it, I applied to the Auckland branch of the Japanese Embassy cause i'm an Aucklander (but they have other branches too). The visa was ready for me less than a week later.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, Japanese national insurance. It's mandatory for all exchange students at Keio. This will be explained to you upon signing into your nearest ward office. Funnily enough, I assumed it was free and since I couldn't understand the letters they were sending me about the insurance fees (which btw are super cheap), I didn't know I had to pay it until I went back to the ward office to do the moving out process lol. But even then the workers were really nice and very helpful.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

What organised activities were available to students? What extracurricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?

Keio has a wide range of circles open to exchange students. I didn't join one as a lot of them would meet every week and I didn't wanna commit to that. But I made really great friends at my dorm and in the classes I took.

Going to the Keio v Waseda baseball game, however, is non-negotiable in my opinion! Whether you like baseball or not, you simply have to go. It's super fun and there's no better place to feel the Keio spirit.

What was the university/ city like?

Beautiful.

Any recommendations for things to do, places to visit, places to eat etc.?

I did the whole Tokyo -> Kyoto -> Osaka -> Nara trip in my first week there. If you're considering going for Spring semester and you wanna do a trip, I'd recommend this route, and going before the semester starts (if your visa permits it). The JR pass price will be increasing soon but I never bought it anyway as in my case it was cheaper to buy individual tickets.

Any tips for future students?

The dorm application process where you pick your top 3 choices operates on a first-come-first-served basis. Set your alarms and have the website open, ready to apply! I submitted mine 12 minutes after it opened and got my 3rd choice. (Worked out in the end tho, SST best dorm >>>)

I've scattered specific advice throughout this document but if there's anything you wanna know please feel free to DM me on insta @kelistosala and i'll be happy to chat or answer any questions you may have!

Also, Keio best uni >>>>

Overall Experience

Please write one paragraph (or more) about your exchange experience. Please include some photos!

Firstly, I'd like to thank the University of Otago for the opportunity, and also the exchange team for enabling me to go, and for being of so much help to me throughout the process. The University and the exchange team give us exchange students (current and potential) heaps of support, and I'm really grateful for that.

Secondly, a huge mihi to Education New Zealand for having the PMSA on offer, and choosing me as one of the recipients, without which my going on exchange probably would not have been possible. It is a wonderful scholarship and has allowed me, as well as many others, the chance to go overseas and learn a whole new way of life.

As a Māori and Pacific Island person, this exchange will always be remembered as a special time in my life. This time last year, study abroad was something I thought was off the cards as I had never really heard of other Māori/PI's doing it. It is certainly a huge privilege to be able to have gone and having had that privilege, I will definitely be encouraging more of my people to go! It comes from the heart when I say that exchange is for everyone and can enrich people's lives in so many ways. One of the main reasons I wanted to go was to broaden my worldview. I can proudly say that I did achieve that and my outlook on the world has been positively impacted.

I absolutely LOVED Keio and loved Japan. So much so that I'm already planning a trip back there for some time in 2024/2025. Japan is a beautiful country with a beautiful culture and you'll meet amazing people there. It was always a dream of mine to go there and experience what the lifestyle is like. I feel that exchange was the best way to do that because I could learn about their culture not only through my own experiences but through Keio University courses too. Keio supports their international students really well, and you'll meet amazing people there—not just local but from all over the world. If you're planning on study abroad in Japan, I'd highly recommend choosing Keio.

A huge thanks again to all those who made this opportunity possible for me, and if you've made it this far in my evaluation, thanks for reading!

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

- Kelis ✦ ° ☆

