



## My Exchange Evaluation

### Basic Information

<b>Host University</b>	Keio University (Japan)
<b>Semester &amp; Year of Exchange</b>	Semester 2, 2018 (Fall Semester)
<b>Otago degree(s)</b>	BA
<b>Major(s)</b>	Japanese and Linguistics

### Academics/ course load

*Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?*

<b>Course title</b>	<b>Language of instruction</b>	<b>Otago equivalent</b>	<b>Otago credit value</b>
Comprehensive Japanese	Japanese	JAPA233	18
Conversational Japanese	Japanese	JAPA233	
Situational Conversation	Japanese	JAPA233	
Composition	Japanese	JAPA233	
Kanji	Japanese	JAPA233	

*Any comments about these papers?*

My classes were fast paced and taught completely in Japanese. At first I was very overwhelmed, but eventually I got used to it, and now I actually prefer it! It was very useful for my listening skills and comprehension. Highly recommended especially for beginners, you'll surprise yourself how fast you pick it up!

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

Be prepared for homework EVERY day from EVERY class. This is compulsory and affects your overall grade (unlike the optional workbook exercises we get back home). Also there are grammar and kanji tests before each class in Comprehensive Japanese (twice per week). This was a little intense at times, but it honestly does work. The teachers are pretty strict with their marking - everything has to be EXACTLY perfect from the examples or you'll lose an entire grade: one mistake is the difference between A to B. (So better just to memorise everything rather than have unique answers!)

## Accommodation

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

I stayed in Okurayama dorm, and I loved it. It was a very homely atmosphere, and definitely the most social dorm available! Because you share a kitchen/common spaces it was easy to make friends and the Japanese RA's are very kind! (unlike other dorms where Japanese/International people are separated).

The cons. Firstly, distance. It took almost 1.5 hours each way to get to Mita Campus, and you have to change at Hiyoshi. In rush hour the trains are HORRIBLE. But this is a problem for every dorm, regardless of where you stay!

Secondly, if you want privacy this dorm may not be for you. The walls are paper thin! NO guests (regardless of gender) are allowed in your room, ALL guests have to leave at 10pm, and you need to submit a "staying out notice" every time you want to stay outside the dorm (including the persons name/address/number you're staying with). This can feel a little invasive since I didn't particularly want my manager knowing everything about my boyfriend!

## Money matters

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

Food is surprisingly cheap - especially at the Keio cafeteria. Expect to pay a PREMIUM for fresh fruit/veg tho.

My dorm was 55,000 Yen, all inclusive. Really reasonable!

By far the biggest shock (apart from 500 Yen per apple!) was transport. Once you begin studying you can get a pass which lets you travel unlimited between any two stations for X amount of time (I chose 4 months but you can get longer/shorter ones). Before that I was paying close to 1,000 Yen PER DAY. All you need is your Keio ID and you can get the pass loaded onto your PASMO card.

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

I used my NZ bank account and normal ATM card to access my funds. However, I would recommend opening a Japanese bank account and figuring out to transfer your money between banks. I didn't do this because it seemed too complicated, but if I was here for longer than 1 semester I definitely would have! International cards are only accepted at certain ATMS (7/11 and Family Mart, plus a couple random ones at big stations), and charge 250-ish Yen each time.

## Visas & Insurance

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

Yes I needed a student visa. Keio sends you an email regarding this, so just follow their instructions. Once you receive the Certificate of Sponsorship from them, you need to apply in person at one of their consulate/embassy offices. I went to Auckland, but I believe there is also one in Wellington and Christchurch.

*Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?*

No, Keio wasn't specific about what insurance you needed, as long as you were covered by a suitable policy of your choice. This had to be fairly comprehensive though, and therefore pretty expensive!

## Extra-curricular/Social Activities

*What organised activities were available to students? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future exchange students?*

Keio had many many social opportunities like the buddy program, the KOSMIC group, lots of parties, societies and clubs etc. Honestly, I didn't join any of these because I did not want to meet/hang out with other international students. I made most of my friends from the dorms or being introduced to Japanese people through other friends.

*What was the university/ city like?*

I absolutely LOVED living in Tokyo (other than the trains!!) Don't be put off by price - you're not paying market rent if you live in a dorm, so this is the CHEAPEST opportunity you will ever have to live in Tokyo. EVER. So take advantage of it!

Keio University definitely has a reputation. As soon as you mention that you study there to Japanese people they are very impressed and assume you're very intelligent. The university campuses are very small, so easy to get around. And like I said previously, their cafeteria is very well priced, just try to avoid the rush hour (12:15 - 1 pm).

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

No. It's better for you to come and explore/discover your favourite places for yourself! There's so much here, literally 'something for everyone'. But if you're stuck: start with Odaiba. There's a theme park, digital art museum, water restaurants, themed cafes, virtual reality etc. You could easily spend a whole week just there. After you've done the usual stuff - Shinjuku, Shibuya, Akihabara etc don't forget the gems just outside of Tokyo. Yokohama, of course, Enoshima, Kamakura, Hakone and Nikko! The latter are so beautiful (especially in Autumn), and they're usually a little less hectic than Tokyo! Have fun!!!

*Any tips for future students?*

Learn as much Japanese as you can before you come. This might sound obvious, but after 1.5 years studying (and thinking I was getting pretty good!) I was still VERY overwhelmed when I arrived. I didn't know ANYTHING, and still don't! Even just little things, like talking to shop assistants, or replying to waiters, can be daunting. So do yourself a favour and PRACTICE every opportunity you get back home before you leave. Join the Japanese chat time and facebook pages, and take advantage of each event that happens!

## Overall Experience

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

**Be prepared for ALL weather within an hour, especially if you arrive in September!**



On my very first day (seriously, about 2 hours after arriving at the dorm) the first typhoon of 'typhoon season' struck! It looked so nice and sunny that my resident advisors offered to show me around and take me to the nearest supermarket/shopping outlet.

Within 5 minutes it began to get cold and windy.

By the time we left the store we were caught in a full-on typhoon...

The weather gets more predictable (and cold!) by October though.

**The dorms are pretty nice, but VERY far from campus.**



I was actually really impressed by the size and cleanliness/state of the rooms. Not at all like the cramped, cold student dorm rooms I've seen back home. The wardrobes are huge, and there's heaps of storage. You even get your own balcony to dry your clothes on. The aircon/heater is included in the price and you're encouraged to use it! (Unlike Dunedin!)

Be aware that it took me about 2.5-3 hours to commute to Mita Campus and back every day. In rush hour the trains are a NIGHTMARE and you have to transfer. I suggest transferring at Hiyoshi since it is the first stop of the Mita line, meaning you might possibly get a seat!

## Making friends.



One of the reasons I chose Okurayama dorm was because it did NOT have a private kitchen. It also has a public bath/indoor 'onsen'. This meant I was forced to be social and make friends.



There are also opportunities to meet people on campus. Join the Tomodachi program, the KOSMIC events (like the Keio vs Waseda baseball game - one of my ABSOLUTE HIGHLIGHTS!), maybe join 1 or 2 clubs, go to the social events, and say YES to opportunities.



You should have no problem making buddies, especially at the start when everyone is in the same boat.

## Enjoy Tokyo, but don't forget to explore nearby areas too!

Of course Tokyo is an incredible city, you're going to have SO much fun! I won't spoil too much for you, because I think you just need to come, make friends, and explore for yourself. What I will say is DEFINITELY go to Odaiba. DEFINITELY step outside of your comfort zone (as a 12 year-long vegetarian I tried many many different types of food!) and FINALLY don't forget about those

wonderful places outside of Tokyo like Nikko, Hakone, Enoshima etc. Enjoy your time here, I am so excited for you to come and experience life here for yourself!

