



My Exchange Evaluation

Basic Information

Host University	Keio University
Semester & Year of Exchange	S2 2023
Otago degree(s)	BA
Major(s)	Japanese and Politics

Academics/ course load

Which papers did you take whilst on exchange?

Course title	Language of instruction	Otago equivalent
Orthography 5	Japanese	
Orthography 6	Japanese	
Modern Text Reading 5	Japanese	
Modern Text Reading 6	Japanese	
Grammar 6	Japanese	
Writing 6	Japanese	
Conversation 6	Japanese	
Japanese Culture 7 (Anime/Games)	Japanese	
Japanese Culture 7 (Tea ceremony/Music)	Japanese	
Otaku Culture and its Transnational Relation	English	

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

Any comments about these papers?

Language papers are worth 1 credit and other papers are worth 2 credits. 4 credits in Japan is supposed to be equivalent to one paper at Otago. The way JLP is structured is a bit difficult to understand but they will explain it at orientation/your course interview so don't worry too much beforehand.

Apart from the Otaku Culture paper, all papers are from the JLP.

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

Classes are an hour and a half long but only once a week. Most language papers have homework and a small test every class so you need to revise for every class. I wanted four papers worth of credits so I had to take 16 credits, however most exchange students at Keio take around 8-10 credits per

semester so I was taking double the usual workload. I had class from Monday to Saturday so it was difficult for me to travel or have time outside of uni. I recommend taking less classes and stacking them on certain days so you have a long weekend. The teaching style depends on the teacher but level 6 (upper intermediate, roughly equivalent to 300lvl) tends to have smaller classes and is quite interactive. The orthography classes introduce about 20 new kanji each week and are effective but they are usually harshly marked and workload-heavy.

Accommodation

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

I stayed in Motosumiyoshi International Dormitory (MID). It's quite new and rooms have a private toilet, shower, and bath which I liked although it is a hassle to buy bleach etc to use for only half a year. There are kitchens on each floor and there is also a cafeteria with breakfast (260yen) and dinner (420yen) on school days. Most halls are close to Hiyoshi station or Motosumiyoshi station. You can catch the express from Hiyoshi which is convenient, but I think it's more important that your hall is close to the station – it also means supermarkets etc will be closer too. MID is a little less social than other halls which I didn't mind, however they do have occasional events with both international and Japanese residents. MID is also on the expensive side.

Money matters

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

Accommodation: 75,700 JPY/Month (rent is less if you move in/out partway through the month)

Flights: About 1600 NZD

Insurance: 460 NZD for Travelsafe with student discount

Food: I didn't keep great track but if you cook for yourself it is pretty cheap. You can usually buy a good meal for between 500 and 1300 yen. I mostly ate onigiri from the supermarket which were discounted in the evening.

Train pass: About 30,000 JPY for 6 months

Phone bill: 2728 JPY/Month for 20gb data and a phone number (eSIM) with LINEMO

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

I had a Wise card which is probably the most cost-effective way to convert money. A lot of places in Japan (especially food services) do not take card so make sure to always have cash on you. If you're not going to work part-time, opening a bank account for one semester isn't worth the bother.

Visas & Insurance

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

I'm half-Japanese so didn't need a visa – I entered on my Japanese passport and left on my NZ one. I did need to get my passport stamped on arrival to show when I registered my address at the ward office. If you are Japanese you will need a copy of your koseki as the university requires you to register your address and present proof.

Did your host university have a mandatory insurance?

Yes, you need to enter national insurance which is about 1800 yen per month.

Extra-curricular/Social Activities

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

I joined the story manga kenkyuu-kai which was a small social circle where we draw together, play games, and go out for dinner. We also had a booth drawing portraits at the Mita Festival which was really fun! Most extra curriculums are based on the Hiyoshi campus and require a good level of Japanese. A lot of circles and bukatsu don't accept exchange students at all.

For the JLP, classes are level-based and a lot of people take the same classes so it is easy to make friends through class. There were a few mixer events organised by the university as well.

What was the university/ city like?

Living in Motosumiyoshi was convenient since there were direct trains to Shibuya, Shinjuku, the university (Mita and Hiyoshi), Yokohama, and Minato-mirai. From Musashi-Kosugi you can also get on the JR lines directly to Narita, Kamakura, etc. There are infinite amounts of things to do and the area around the station is still bustling until about 10pm when places start closing.

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

Kamakura is great for people who like traditional things like temples and shrines. I also recommend going to local food places. I went shopping in Shibuya and Harajuku a lot. If you like art, go to the Sekaido and Loft in Shinjuku for supplies! Ueno and Akihabara are fun to go to as well, I went to a lot of museums and arcades. Inogashira Park and Kichijoji are nice downtown places with cafes. Japan has very distinct seasons so there are lots of pretty parks around. A lot of my friends also enjoyed onsen trips to Hakone and Kusatsu. Musicians that don't come to NZ often play in Japan so keep an eye out (you'll need a Japanese phone number to buy tickets though). Also, I loved the Keio-Waseda baseball match! The amount of hype was crazy!! The Keio-Waseda rugby match is also popular.

Any tips for future students?

Make the most of your time by planning trips ahead, especially if it's during holiday periods where the shinkansen will be booked out. Make the most of days with little/no classes to visit places – shopping in Shibuya for example is much nicer midday than in the evening when it is packed. If you need help with things don't be afraid to ask someone, people are often very helpful. When filling out forms they would often let me write in English or write out the kanji sections for me if I asked. The dorm manager was also very kind when I caught COVID in my first week and needed help booking a test.

Overall Experience

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

The experience overall improved my Japanese a lot. I learned how native speakers interact in a wider variety of situations than you would encounter in class. The specialised classes helped with filling in gaps that I had in my knowledge and gave me the foundations for writing in different styles.

Having the chance to experience living in a big city was one of my favourite parts of exchange. There is so much to do, and I was surprised at how many people live in one place! I challenged myself to go out and do things that I wouldn't normally be able to in New Zealand, and I gained more confidence and independence. It really changed my outlook on possibilities for living overseas in the future, as well as giving me a chance to learn more about cultural differences and understanding which is still useful back home. I definitely want to go back to Japan again!

A few photos are on the next page :)

