

Post Study Abroad Evaluation

THE BASICS			
Your Name	[REDACTED]		
Your Program of Study/Year	Bachelor of Arts English		
Host Country	Japan		
Host School/Agency	Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies		
Participation Dates	April 2012 – December 2012		
Type of Study Abroad	<input type="checkbox"/> Exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> Practicum	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Section 1			
GENERAL EVALUATION			
Please rate your overall exchange experience on a scale of 1 to 10 (one being poor and 10 being exceptional)			9
In a couple of sentences, explain why you rated your experience the way you did.	I had an awesome time and though some of the program was lacking, I would still highly recommend it to any student thinking of studying in Japan.		
Section 2			
ARRIVAL			
How difficult was it for you to obtain your travel documents (visa, etc.)? <small>*Always verify immigration regulations with the consulate or embassy of your host country*</small>	While it was not overly difficult, receiving documents from Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies took some time, in part due to the Nagasaki City Hall being slow with their documents. As soon as the Certificate of Eligibility was attained, receiving my visa from the consulate general of Japan was easy.		
Describe your transportation arrangements to your host country. Would you change any part of those arrangements?	I had an easy travel plan to Japan. I flew from Vancouver to Narita airport in Tokyo, stayed with my family for two weeks in Tokyo and then flew to Fukuoka where I stayed for 5 days alone and was then picked up by the University for a bus ride to the University. I flew through Air Canada and ANA and the flight was comfortable.		
How was your experience clearing customs and immigration upon arrival in your host country? Any surprises?	There were no surprises, though I did not know what to expect. It was not difficult and I encountered no difficulties.		
Describe how you traveled to your host facility. How long did it take and how much did it cost?	I traveled on points so I'm not sure how much the flight itself cost. It was an 11 hour flight to Narita and a 2 hour flight to Fukuoka and then a 3 hour bus ride to Nagasaki.		
Section 3			
ORIENTATION AND ASSISTANCE			

How satisfied were you with the orientation and assistance available to at your host school/agency.	I found all orientation and assistance to be satisfactory. Any questions we had were easily answered. My Japanese was at a level high enough to communicate with all staff members so my stay was made much easier.
What help did you receive from the international staff or office? What was your impression of the international staff or office?	Any help requested was quickly given. The international staff was very nice and helpful, especially when I encountered some difficulties with teachers.
What was the orientation like at your partner university, if there was one? How well did it suit your needs?	The orientation was informative, though a little hard to take in after our long trip to the University. It was hard to sit through such a long orientation but it was satisfactory.
What was it like to adjust to the culture of your exchange site? Were there people you could talk to about what you were experiencing?	The culture was a part of my own to a certain extent, and was therefore easy to adjust to. While it was easy to put myself in a Japanese "mind set" it was sometimes difficult to understand. But if there was anything that I was experiencing, most others were as well, and talking to Japanese people about it helped.
How receptive were the local people in providing assistance?	The local people were very helpful when asked for assistance, but were unlikely to speak to you unless you called out to them. I did receive a few reproachful stares for speaking English from time to time.

Section 4

HOUSING

Describe your accommodation arrangements.	I stayed in the female dorm and it was clean and strict, but very convenient.
How early could you move into housing before term and how long after the end of term were you allowed to stay?	We moved in the day we got to Nagasaki for orientation. The dorm was very accommodating and would likely allow you to move in early if need be.
How comfortable were you with your accommodation?	The accommodations were comfortable, though we had to buy extra mattresses because the mattresses we had were too thin and a bit sore to lie on.
Describe what you did about meals and what other options were available. How satisfied were you with the food?	We were given a meal plan that was less than satisfactory at the dorm. Food at the University was cheap and while not atrocious would probably be unsatisfactory for most Westerners.
How close was your accommodation to where you had to study?	The female dorm was a 3 minute walk down or a 5 minute walk up the mountain from the school, so it was very convenient.

Section 5

COURSE REGISTRATION

Please describe the	We were to attend a week of classes in which we would decide
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registration process at your host institution. What assistance was available to you? Were you satisfied?	which classes we wanted to take and which ones were unnecessary. Anytime we needed to consult with anyone, someone was available. There was also English counseling available for all international students.
How successful were you in registering for classes? What advice would you offer to another exchange student about how to register at your host institution?	Class registration was a very analog system and so very easy to do and fix. The main advice I would give would be to attend as many classes as possible in the first week and drop classes later if you find them to be too difficult. They won't show up on your transcript anyway.
How many courses did you take per semester? What course load would you recommend for future students? What particular courses would you recommend to other students?	I took anywhere between 13 to 17 credits per a semester. The maximum credits one could take would be 24 credits and I recommend taking as many as possible because it is a very lax system in comparison to western course style. Most of the culture classes are fun and I recommend always trying to challenge up into a higher Japanese class if possible.
Section 6	
ACADEMICS	
How satisfied were you with the amount of knowledge/skills you obtained from your host?	I feel I learned a lot from my host country and my knowledge and skills were increased exponentially in various parts of my life.
How did the style of teaching compare with that in Canada? How did the workload compare to what you would expect in Canada?	The teaching is mediocre and sometimes it is not at all informative, but the classes are fun. The workload is what you make of it. If you work hard and study hard then your workload will be large. Much of your progress is based on self-study, so I recommend studying a lot on your own.
How many courses did you take during your time abroad?	I took between 10 to 13 courses per week.
What impact did the language barrier have on your learning?	The language barrier was much smaller for me than it was for other students so I did not find it overly inhibiting. However, I did encounter a few problems but the international center was able to help me clear any misunderstandings.
What was your impression of the computer facilities, library, internet access, specialized equipment and supplies available at your host facility?	All were acceptable. There is an English speaking staff member in the library which is helpful but the English book numbers are limited.
Section 7	
COSTS	
Books and Supplies – per term	Maybe \$100 per semester. Very cheap.
Flight	Anywhere from \$1000 ~ \$2000 depending on your travel agency

	and the deal you can find.
Accommodation – per month	I'm not sure the exact number but the electric bill alone came to anywhere from \$40 ~ \$100 a month depending on how much water and electricity you use.
Meals – per month	Approx \$7 a day for the dorm meal plan on top of \$5 for lunches means almost \$400+ a month on food alone
Local transportation – per month	This could get expensive, as we usually purchased smart cards, which you would charge money to and then use to pay for the buses. Taxi-ing was expensive but there was also a street car that only cost 120yen no matter how far the ride. The bus was anywhere from 140 yen ~ 370 yen depending on how far you rode.
Health insurance – per term	I think this was approximately 1000 yen.
Communications (internet, phone, etc.) – per term	Internet was mediocre at the dorm and still cost 1000 yen a month. We charged 3000 yen to our phones and that could last a long time if you made very few calls.
Travel documents (passport, entry visa, etc.)	I believe the visa was free, and I had no need to renew my passport so I did not spend much here.
Vaccinations	I had 5 ~ 6 shots before coming and it totaled \$300 approx.
Personal Spending (eg. entertainment and extra travel) – per term	Probably anywhere between \$3000 ~ \$5000 a term.
What unexpected costs did you encounter? What items were less or more expensive than you expected?	I did not expect the electricity bill to be so expensive so that was an unexpected expense. Clothing and food also ended up being much more expensive than I thought.

Section 8

EXTRA-CURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

How satisfied were you with the out-of-class opportunities at your host site?	They were pretty good but there could have been more opportunities I think. Sometimes we were ill-informed of opportunities, and it was difficult for us to participate with a lack of English, but we did our best.
What organized activities (clubs, sports, etc.) were available to you while in your host country? What extra-curricular activities would you recommend to future students?	I joined the Tea Ceremony club late in my first semester. My friend joined the belly-dancing club. Most clubs were very welcoming save for a couple that did not like anyone that was not serious and some were simply discriminative towards foreigners. But otherwise clubs were fun.
What opportunities were there to work or volunteer. Did you require special permits to do this?	We were given any opportunity we liked to work part time but it depended greatly on your Japanese speaking abilities. We were provided with a special orientation for part-time job visa applications, and then it was left to oneself to find a job and hand in resumes and applications.

What do you recommend other visiting students see or do on their weekends or holidays?	Visit as many prefectures as possible at any time you can. This is the biggest opportunity you will have and you should make the most of it.
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Section 9

SAFETY AND HEALTH

Describe any safety concerns you had during your experience.	Not too many. The health insurance is good and you are unlikely to serious injure yourself unless you do something unintelligent. However if your Japanese is not good enough then it is difficult to go to a hospital, and food poisoning seems to be a common thing.
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Section 10

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL CONNECTIONS

What was it like making friends? How successful were you at making friends with local (i.e., not international) people?	We were introduced to Japanese students through the Conversation Partner program, which worked well if you kept in touch with your own partner, but if your partner didn't introduce you to other people it might have been difficult to make friends with Japanese students especially if you were shy.
What was it like to adjust to the culture of your host site?	Adjusting to the culture was not as difficult as I may have originally thought it to be, it was a comfortable change for me.
What, if any, cultural differences did you find particularly challenging?	The most difficult adjustment for me was probably the food. Japan is very unique in it's Japanese style of other country's food. So even if you want Italian food, it's Italian style Japanese food, more often than not.
What parts of the culture did you most appreciate?	The people's initial openness or welcoming spirit because it opened up a path for a real friendship instead of just a superficial one. I could also appreciate the attention to the past and our ancestors and the appreciation for the old traditions of their culture.
How were you treated by local people? By university staff and faculty? By students?	Local people were friendly for the most part except I sometimes received skeptical looks for being with non-Asian people and speaking in English. Or just flat out glared at. The university staff and faculty were incredibly nice to me and treated me well for my entire stay. I had a couple problems with a few teachers but the staff were mostly nice to me. Students were never mean to me, but I didn't make a lot of friends with Japanese people. Most of my friends were Chinese but I did have some Japanese friends.
As far as you could tell, how easy would it be for students with disabilities to study at your partner university?	There were a couple of mostly blind students that attended our University and seemed to do so quite easily, so I don't think it would be overly difficult,
For students who are visible minorities in your host country?	As long as you get used to getting stared at and sometimes refused from certain stores, apparently, it is not that difficult
For students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or	It does not seem to matter, especially if you don't say anything. You may be avoided, but if you're nice it doesn't seem to matter as

transgendered?	much.
Section 11	
TAKING STOCK	
What are the 5 most important things one should take with them when going to your host country or region?	
1 Something that reminds you of home and makes you feel comfortable	
2 Food from home that you probably miss	
3 Your own computer and musical entertainment system	
4 A journal to keep logs of your experience.	
5 A lot of money. As much as you can save. And expect to spend twice as much as your allotted budget. It just happens.	
What are the 10 most important things you would tell another student who is going to your host facility/agency:	
1 Do not be shy! It will be your biggest crutch.	
2 Branch off from the other international students, if you stay with them you are distancing yourself from making friends with the locals.	
3 Participate in as many events as you can. It is your only opportunity to do so.	
4 Never think "I still have x number of months left" it is always "I only have x number of months left". The prior mentality will stunt you from taking opportunities.	
5 Live within your own means but try not to be too cheap. It may inhibit your make great connections with people.	
6 Be practical, respectful and compassionate towards the culture of the country you are visiting. Never push your opinions onto others or tell them their country or culture is wrong. It is the surest way to isolate yourself.	
7 Do not wake up thinking that you are going to have a bad day. Always try to wake with thoughts of having a good day. An experience is what you make it, so try to be as positive as possible.	
8 In the event that you are having a bad day, try to talk to someone about it. Other international students are likely to understand, or at least be able to comfort you in a way that is familiar.	
9 If you are having trouble with anyone or anything, let the international office know as soon as possible. If you let it fester, it will only make your experience and the memory worse.	
10 HAVE FUN! Never hold yourself back from having fun. Even if you are there to learn, you and everyone around you knows you're there to have fun as well.	
What was the most rewarding part of your study abroad experience?	Most likely the friends and connections that I have made here in addition to the improvement of my Japanese speaking abilities. I think I have made lifelong friends here and I am grateful to all of them.
What was the greatest challenge you faced during your experience abroad?	Being used and discriminated against for not being fully Japanese.
As a result of your study	I think my outlook has become a little bit more understanding of the

<p>abroad experience, how has your perspective changed?</p>	<p>ambiguity of the Japanese mindset, but I've also come to understand more of what I do and do not like, and I have a little bit more confidence in myself, I like to think.</p>
<p>What else do you want to say about your study abroad experience?</p>	<p>If you seriously want to study the language, then you must put in the effort, and if you're willing to put in the effort, then I believe a full year is worthwhile. However, if you're only there to play, and do not necessarily have any intention of putting effort into studying the language, then half a year is fine. Honestly. Spending more time in a foreign country when you don't improve your language skills is a waste of time and drags down others around you. Your attitude towards studying will affect those around you more than you think, so don't inhibit others just because you don't want to study.</p>