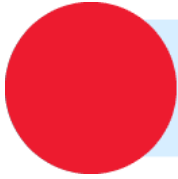




Exchange Experience Reports

Waseda University, Japan



Host University Evaluation

Reports

Name: Shelby W. **Term Abroad:** W'19 **Faculty:** Arts..... 1

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Academic life

How easy was it to figure out your course selection at your host university?

- Super simple!
- Relatively straightforward
- Pretty difficult to navigate
- It was complicated and frustrating

What did the process look like? Was it easy to register in your preferred classes?

The catalog of available courses was not available until after arrival, and it was unclear how much space was available in them. They use a three-round raffle system to determine who gets into courses, which is inconveniently timed with the McGill deadline to submit course evaluations (especially when you aren't certain if you will get into the courses you submit until late), and makes no guarantee you will get into any courses that might be essential. You are also not allowed to drop courses after the final round (which means they cannot be dropped until after the first class), so I had to accept a failing mark for extra courses/those which I did not want to take.

Were your courses as academically rigorous as your McGill courses?

- Yes, they were as rigorous as my McGill courses
- They were similarly rigorous to my McGill courses
- No, they weren't as rigorous as my McGill courses



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Waseda University, Japan

How did the teaching quality at your host university compare to what you're used to at McGill?

- It was better!
- Pretty similar
- It was much worse

Tell us about it! How did it differ from the teaching quality at McGill? What can other students expect from their profs and course work?

The quality of expertise was similar, though I found the lecturing style to be less focused on individual students and less engaging.

What were the main evaluation methods in your courses?

Exams (mostly written essays or identification questions) and essays.

How would you describe the evaluation and grading methods at your host university? Please select as many adjectives as applies!

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Unfair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transparent | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Complicated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Easy to understand | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficult to understand |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Similar methods to McGill | <input type="checkbox"/> Different methods from McGill |

Student Life

Were you satisfied by the welcome and orientation services provided to you by your host university?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Very satisfied, everything was clear | <input checked="" type="radio"/> Pretty satisfied |
| <input type="radio"/> I was able to figure things out, but it took some time | <input type="radio"/> Pretty confusing |
| <input type="radio"/> Very confusing, I was lost | |

What is the best resource that helped you find your way at your host university?

The Waseda official website was useful, but most information was from other exchange students or my dorm manager.



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What was the campus environment like at your host university? Please describe your experience on campus with regards to safety, social opportunities, accessibility, etc.

Very vibrant with many extracurriculars, but the majority were hard to access without speaking Japanese (which is understandable). There were a good number of extracurriculars for English speakers or for people who spoke other languages.

Where did you live? Was it easy to find housing? Did you receive any support from your host university?

I lived in a university dorm that was conveniently located near campus and nice quality, but many other exchange students did not get in due to the raffle system and had a harder time finding housing on short notice.

What advice would you share with students travelling to your host university? Briefly give up to 3 tips!

Waseda made it sound far more difficult than necessary to find housing outside the dorms, despite many shared houses in the area. Alternative secondary dorm options which they promoted were up to an hour transit from campus, in less vibrant areas of the city. If you do not get into the dorms near campus, I would advise looking for shared houses in the Nishiwaseda area or in neighbourhoods that you are interested in closer to campus.

Even if your dorm says you can pay rent in cash, you will probably have to open a Japanese bank account as I did (keep an eye out for the information session and instructions for automatic rent deduction from your account). Japan is a cash-based economy and debit cards are not common, expect to need to carry around cash.

It is very difficult to predict what classes you'll get based on Waseda's raffle system, so you should communicate any issues in this process with McGill study abroad and program coordinators, who will probably be understanding. I studied political science and the classes were fairly similar to McGill, but the quality of SILS classes can vary wildly. If your course is unfairly or confusingly graded, communicate to McGill about this (since you cannot drop or add classes once the term starts).

What advice would you share with students who will live in your host city? Briefly give up to 3 tips!

You do not need to speak or learn Japanese to get by as most employees will know some English or have interpreting machines (you can use your phone in these situations - download google translate). However, learning basic phrases will make everyday life much easier for you, and learning to read hiragana and katakana will be greatly beneficial and are not very difficult.



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Expect to do a lot of paperwork and

expect it to be confusing and old-fashioned (i.e. not online), especially if you don't speak/read Japanese. Many services (banking, the city office, the university, medical care) require you to come complete paperwork in person, mail them

forms or call for appointments with limited online or English resources. It may be helpful to bring a friend who is fluent, or lookup resources from English-speaking expats' blogs or forums online (these can be helpful for many situations, and there are many).

Read up on social etiquette. Most things are common sense, but in general, being loud, eating/drinking, or blowing your nose in public places will make you stand out - a lot. While some things will simply make you stand out, other things you might get fined for, such as smoking in public spaces (outside designated areas), or anything deemed excessive PDA (you could get charged for public indecency), or drunken behavior. Take laws seriously, the Japanese legal system is notorious for being unfair to foreigners (especially if you can't speak Japanese) and you really want to avoid being arrested (it has happened to exchange students before), Japanese jail apparently really really sucks.