

The Education Abroad Program office wants to hear about your experience abroad! Tell us about your experience by filling out the *Return Student Report for Exchanges/Summer Programs*. Your feedback will be used to help improve programs and services for future students and be a valuable resource for future students who are interested in studying abroad.

The Return Student Report consists of two parts:

- Part A: Participant Information
- Part B: Internship Information

Part A will not be made public. Part B will be made public and available online to future students interested in learning more about the education abroad process and program. Education Abroad Program will preserve your anonymity by not revealing your name or any personal details.

Part A

Participant Information

Please provide the following information.

Name:			
Student Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Domestic <input type="checkbox"/> International	Home Institution:	University of Alberta
Faculty:	School of Business	Degree Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate
Major/Minor:	East Asian Studies/Human Resource Management		
Current Year of Study	<input type="checkbox"/> 1st <input type="checkbox"/> 2nd <input type="checkbox"/> 3rd <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4th <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/> N/A		

Part B

Exchange/Summer Program Information

Please provide the following details related to your Education Abroad Program.

Host Institution:	Hokkaido University		
City/Town:	Sapporo	Country:	Japan
Exchange/Summer Program Period:	From: 10/01/2013 (mm/dd/yyyy)	To: 08/08/2014 (mm/dd/yyyy)	
Did you participate on an internship during your exchange/summer program?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		
What immigration documents (e.g. study visa, residence permits etc.) are required to study at your host institution?	Student Visa, Certificate of Eligibility (to get the Visa, provided by host institution)		
What issues (if any) did you encounter while obtaining these immigration documents?	Needed to go to the Japanese Embassy to apply for Visa. The nearest one was Calgary. Also received the Certificate of Eligibility required for said Visa rather late (ie, close to my departure date).		
What tips would you give to future students regarding their student visa and other required immigration documents?	Keep your schedule relatively free on a weekday and secure a method to go down to Calgary to handle Visa application procedures.		

Languages

What was the language(s) of instruction at your host institution? <i>Check all that apply</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Arabic <input type="checkbox"/> Cantonese <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> German <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Mandarin <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Japanese <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Were there any adequate course offerings taught in English for your field of study?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Prior to your departure, did you take any language courses at your home institution? If yes, what courses (e.g. FREN 111) did you take?	JAPAN 101 to 402, all 8 classes.
How did taking a class in another language (that was not your first language) impact your learning experience? Did you instructor make any accommodations?	<p>It makes you open your mind to different ways of understanding languages, words, and phrases. It's also a bit of a struggle to understand what's being conveyed, and there's no small amount of confusion when you don't get what's going on or if you misinterpreted something.</p> <p>Instructor accommodations depended on the instructors. Generally speaking, all will attempt re-explanations and similar alternatives if there's something hard to understand, or when students ask.</p>

Academia

What arrangements regarding pre-approval of credit transfer were you able to arrange with your faculty before leaving on your program?

N/A, I had no more transfer credit available for my degree.

Please describe the course registration process at your host institution.

- Were you able to pre-register in Canada?
- Did you receive any assistance from your host institution?
- Did your course registration change upon arrival? If so, why?

Courses were not available for pre-registration in Canada. We could view a sample course selection, but there were courses that were removed and others that were added to said sample, which you would only find out after orientation (or even later) at the host institution. Courses are to be registered via a paper application after the semester starts, allowing you to attend whichever classes you want prior to deciding what courses you want to stay in.

Please describe your academic plan (e.g. number of courses per term, course name etc.).

Given that I could not receive transfer credit anyway, I chose to check out the courses that interested me the most and enroll in the ones that held my interest. I usually enrolled in 4 HUSTEP courses and 4-5 Japanese language courses per semester.

Japanese courses I registered in included Intermediate Kanji/Vocabulary, Intermediate Reading/Listening/Oral Communications, Intermediate Grammar, Academic Writing, and Business Japanese.

HUSTEP courses I registered in included Youth and Cultures in Japan, Contemporary Japanese Society, Strategic Thinking, Introduction to Applied Ethics, Child Language Acquisition, Career Planning, Education and Society in Japan, and Political Economy of East Asia.

Please describe the credit and grading system at your host institution.

There is a minimum requirement of 10 credits to retain your student visa status, of which 8 must be from HUSTEP courses. Most HUSTEP courses are worth 2 credits each. Japanese language courses may be 1-2 credits, depending on the course. Approx. 70% attendance is required to pass courses.

Grading varies per professor, and generally works on a percentage/letter grade scale, wherein 60% will be considered a pass.

How was your overall academic experience (e.g. teaching style, class structure and sizes, amount of coursework, assessment) in comparison to your home institution?

HUSTEP courses: generally, UofA academic experience is enough to prepare you for the workload. In many cases, the assessments and workloads were much easier than at the UofA. The biggest drawback would be a lack of preparation for poor teammates in the case of groupwork.

Japanese courses: UofA Japanese language courses are good preparation for everything except the learning pace. The pace of some of the Japanese courses at Hokkaido University felt very rushed.

How did you obtain a transcript for coursework completed at your host institution?

Half year transcripts are sent out automatically by the coordinators of the program. Final transcripts are to be requested by the students, to the coordinators.

Student Services

Please describe the type of facilities (e.g. library, internet/Wi-Fi access, computer labs, bookstore, health clinic, counseling services) available at your host institution.

Library, Internet/Wi-Fi access, computer labs (with free printing and scanning if in the International Student Centre), health clinic and consulting, counseling services, on-campus hospital, student support desk, free gymnasium/athletics/recreational centres on campus, multiple cafeterias and a few restaurants. Some dorms are also considered on campus.

To the best of your knowledge, what support and services are available at your host institution for:

- Students with disabilities or special needs
- Students identifying as LGBTQ
- Students of visible minorities

Aside from counseling services, mostly none. There is rumored to be a LGBTQ club on campus. Minorities are generally not discriminated against on campus. There are ramps etc for those who require wheelchair access, but the campus is extremely wide (more so than the UofA) and the campus bus is for staff only.

Please describe where you could find exchange student advising or receive academic counseling at your host institution.

At the counseling office in the International Student Centre, or at the administration office or student support desk in the same building. Students may also ask the coordinators or professors.

Housing Information

To the best of your knowledge, what housing options are available to students?	Students are provided a choice of 4-5 dormitories of varying prices and accommodation environments. Private apartments are not recommended, but may be pursued if the student is insistent enough.
What type of housing did you stay in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> On-campus residences <input type="checkbox"/> Off-campus housing <input type="checkbox"/> With a host family <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
How satisfied were you with your housing choice?	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> 1 = Not at all satisfied</div> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> 2</div> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> 3</div> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> 4</div> <div style="text-align: center;"><input type="checkbox"/> 5 = Very satisfied</div> </div>
What should future students be aware of when choosing on-campus residences? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Application process for housing</i> • <i>Utilities and furniture</i> • <i>Meal plans, cooking facilities</i> • <i>Housing rules (e.g. curfew, how early can you move in, closure during major holidays etc.)</i> • <i>Assistance from host institution staff (e.g. airport pick-up, orientation)</i> 	<p>All dorms are considered on campus, but are still quite far from where most classes will be held. A bike is very useful for transportation. Otherwise, expect approx. 15-40 minutes of walking between dorms and classes (I generally require only 15-20 minutes by foot, and 8-13 minutes by bike).</p> <p>Application works on a "list your top 3 preferences" basis, with no guarantee to receive your #1 preference. The more expensive the monthly rent is, the more comfort and private space you'll receive. I personally recommend the middle-priced options, where common space is shared, but you enjoy a decent amount of comfort. Meals are generally self made at dorms. Minimum furniture only is provided.</p> <p>Supporters can be requested to assist in airport pick up and initial immigration procedures.</p>
What should future students be aware of when choosing off-campus housing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lease agreements, deposits, tenant rights</i> • <i>Utilities and furniture</i> • <i>Location and neighbourhoods</i> • <i>Safety and security</i> • <i>Type of resources available to look for housing (eg: Craigslist)</i> 	<p>Generally not permitted without much difficulty and negotiation with the coordinators, as far as I know. It is also extremely difficult to secure an off-campus residence without someone to act as your guarantor. Home stays are available as a temporary experience.</p>

Student Life

What would you recommend to future students who are looking to meet other students at your host institution? (e.g. extra-curricular activities such as student groups, intramurals, residence events and activities, volunteering opportunities, etc.)

Join circles/clubs, social events and conversation events as much as possible until you feel they are not worth it anymore. Try and be social, and if not at least talk to your classmates/program mates and be open to new experiences. Searching the internet in Japanese for extra-curricular opportunities is also a good idea.

What work or internship opportunities are available for students on and/or off campus?

Part time jobs. Internships are more complicated (most are in Japanese and provide no financial compensation) and require a formal application process.

Health and Safety

Are there any specific health/safety issues that future students should be made aware of? What precautions can you recommend to mitigate or eliminate these issues?

Sapporo does almost nothing about their ice. Winters mean thick layers of ice in some places, and when the snow melts, pools of water or slushy snow. Temperatures are not as cold as Edmonton, but consideration must be made for the winter still.

Bikes are extremely useful but caution is a must due to tight spaces and a large population. Follow the biking laws and don't speed where people may appear.

Did your host institution require a mandatory travel/health insurance plan for exchange students? How did you arrange this?

The UofA already mandates that all exchange students must have travel and health insurance.

All exchange students in Japan must apply for national health care, which will be handled by your supporter with you in the first 2 days. Additionally, a "Certificate of Health" (aka a verified health check) is required in your application to the exchange program, which includes chest x-ray.

Cultural Adaptation

What cultural differences (if any) did you find particularly challenging?

Having grown up in an Asian family to begin with, my biggest issue was with different values. Many Japanese and other Asian-country exchange students are not as accustomed to direct, matter-of-fact approaches. Many experiences and words cannot be taken at face value, and it's important for both yourself and your company that both parties are able to read the atmosphere. "Yes" may not actually mean yes, but "no".

What parts of your host country's culture did you most appreciate?

The environment feels extremely safe, and there are many consumer goods you can enjoy at cheaper prices than what you would expect back at Canada. 100 yen shops and convenience stores are extremely useful. The people are also generally very kind.

Costs and Budgeting

Please describe your basic costs in Canadian dollars. This will help future exchange/summer program students plan their own budgets.

Airfare to host country	\$ 1600	Brief Description	One round trip.
Visa fees	\$ 50	Brief Description	Forgot cost, but transportation to Calgary necessary.
Books/term	\$ 40	Brief Description	Textbook fee only. Find digital or used books if possible.
Accommodation/month	\$ 250	Brief Description	My dorm was approx 22,500 yen per month (middle cost).
Meals/month	\$ 350	Brief Description	+/- \$50 depending on how much you cook or eat out.
Health insurance/month	\$ 20	Brief Description	Payment dates are set, and are not quite monthly
Local transportation/month	\$ 100	Brief Description	If using the train. 0 if always walking/biking.
Personal spending/month	\$ 600	Brief Description	Personally, I always spent more than I expected. Better to be safe than sorry.
Communications/month (e.g. phone)	\$ 1500	Brief Description	I used a prepaid phone (3000 yen/60 days)
Other travel	\$ 150	Brief Description	Definitely go out and see the rest of Japan, or at least Hokkaido. It is extremely worth your time and money.
What unexpected costs did you encounter?	Costs for enrolling in non-University lessons, and costs for sending things home after the program when I realized I couldn't fit the permitted free luggage limits.		

Funding your International Experience

Please indicate how you financed your program. This will help future students plan their own budgets. <i>Check all that apply.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scholarships from UAlberta <input type="checkbox"/> Scholarships from Host Institution <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Student loans <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Family contributions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal savings <input type="checkbox"/> Employment while in host country <input type="checkbox"/> Other:
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Final Thoughts

What were some highlights of your experience abroad?

Amazing food, a lot of personal development, learning to work with an open mind as well as people with differing backgrounds, values, and thought patterns, beautiful sights and plenty of nature nearby, relaxation/busy to your own pace, reasonable education, a lot of improvement in Japanese, 100 yen shops, truly convenient convenience stores, and tons of fun. The ups are definitely worth the downs, as long as you let yourself enjoy them.

Would you recommend your internship program to other students? Why or why not?

I would definitely recommend it. The HUSTEP provides an excellent opportunity to not only mature as an individual, but make friends with people all over the world, all the while pursuing both your original degree path as well as learning the Japanese language and culture.

Please provide any final information/tips for students interested in studying abroad that you would like to share.

Sapporo is a wonderful place to live, where you can get a good slice of Japan without feeling overwhelmed from the usual crowds or hustle-bustle of the bigger, more popular cities like Tokyo and Kyoto. The climate and environment is also somewhat similar to Edmonton, which makes adjusting easier. Everyone interested in Japan assumes Tokyo must be best, but living in Sapporo while visiting other places on your spare time is much more advantageous. The food is absolutely wonderful in Sapporo as well. Summer is also much, much more bearable in Sapporo than on the mainland.