

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:	Business	Degree Status:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate <input type="checkbox"/> Graduate
Major/Minor:	Finance		
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:	Sophia University		
City/Town:	Tokyo	Country:	Japan
Exchange/Summer Program Period:	From: 04/01/2014 (mm/dd/yyyy)	To: 08/01/2014 (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		
What issues (if any) did you encounter while obtaining these immigration documents?	While there used to be a Japanese embassy in Edmonton, that closed down and the nearest one is now in Calgary. Luckily, they now allow you fill out a form to obtain your student Visa via mail if you are comfortable putting your passport in the mail. If you choose mail, you must also pay for a tracked envelope for them to send the student visa back in.		
What tips would you give to future students regarding their student visa and other required immigration documents?	The earlier the better! Some parts of the application process were slower than anticipated, and others faster. Also, be very careful and thorough with Japanese paperwork - they are meticulous about paperwork and will check all the details very carefully.		

### 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 type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" 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?	Yes, up to Japanese 202.
How did taking a class in another language (that was not your first language) impact your learning experience? Did you instructor make any accommodations?	I took a Japanese class, but my other classes were taught in English.  Sophia's Japanese Language program is great - they integrate many phrases and words which are more commonly used in daily living rather than academic. This meant that what you learned in that language was immediately applicable to your surroundings and you remembered what you learned better. A placement test was done on arrival, so people were placed in their appropriate levels. The instructors were very fluent in English and could adapt to explaining in English if needed, although they spoke as much Japanese as possible during classes.

## Academia

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

I did not need any credits for my exchange, so my faculty did not arrange any credit transfers before I left.

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?

Students were not able to pre-register in Canada.

At orientation, students were given details about the online systems and pamphlets about the courses. We were given a week to register for our courses online - most classes did not have a maximum size and people generally got into the classes they wanted to.

The Japanese courses were assigned to us based on the results of our placement test. Plenty of student advising was available from the beginning up to 2 weeks into the start of courses, and most students utilized the host university's advising service.

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

I had taken 3 courses during my exchange. Japanese 150, Introduction to Japanese Religion, and Introduction to Japanese literature. As I did not need credits, I had taken courses of interest not related to my degree.

I believe all exchange students were required to take a Japanese language course.

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

Most courses are worth 3 credits, and classes are generally 3 hours a week (1.5 hour classes twice a week).

Japanese language courses were a bit different, they were only 3 credits but classes were 1.5 hours 5 days a week. An Intensive Japanese language course is available as well, which was 3 hours of class 5 days a week and worth 6 credits. Students can choose a regular stream or intensive stream during their placement test.

Japanese language courses are graded based on a raw grade, and most other courses are graded on a class curve.

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

Japanese language courses are quite small and very well planned out. They are structured so that you have small amounts of homework and assessments (quizzes and tests) nearly every day.

In general, I found that the courses taught in English had large class sizes. Like here, the structure of the classes changed quite a bit depending on the professor. The ease and amount of homework is considerably easier than at the University of Alberta.

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

I believe a transcript will be available for students online by logging into Sophia University's website in September.

## 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.

There is one library, free wifi access was available in some of the buildings, there were many computer labs, one bookstore, and counseling services. I did not observe a health clinic. There was also a chapel on campus, and many gyms. There are 3 cafeterias and 1 convenience store.

The university hosts many interesting guest lecturers, festivals, and sports events.

They will often notify via email of free tickets (orchestra concerts, traditional shows, etc) available to international students.

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

Elevators are available everywhere, and counselling services are available for international students.

I am unsure about the situation regarding visible minorities or LGBTQ at Sophia University. I did not notice any discrimination towards these groups though.

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

There is a very good international students office that will help you with scholarships, and answer questions. They are easy to find in the main floor of the administrative building. The campus is quite small, so they are not difficult to find.

Academic counselling was available and many students utilized the service at the beginning of the semester to help register for courses. They were available for both drop-ins and appointments.

## Housing Information

To the best of your knowledge, what housing options are available to students?	Sophia`s Soshigaya House Dorm, DK House, Azalea House, international share houses, and private apartments.
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 checked="" 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"> <li>• <i>Application process for housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Utilities and furniture</i></li> <li>• <i>Meal plans, cooking facilities</i></li> <li>• <i>Housing rules (e.g. curfew, how early can you move in, closure during major holidays etc.)</i></li> <li>• <i>Assistance from host institution staff (e.g. airport pick-up, orientation)</i></li> </ul>	<p>Almost everything in Soshigaya is great! There is no curfew and 24-hour security. The only problem was the kitchens. Many people shared one kitchen (over 30 people or so), and there were only 4 burners. It can smell bad when people don` t clean up or you may have to wait to use the appliances. Some kitchens only have 15 people to 4 stoves and were quite clean, this may depend on your luck.</p> <p>Rent does not include utilities, you will get a bill depending on your usage and have to pay this monthly. The air conditioning in the summer and heating in the winter can become quite expensive. Men and women are not allowed on each other`s floors, but there are two floors worth of common space (lounges, library, gym, kitchen...etc) to mingle on. Many people did not like this.</p> <p>They will let you come early or stay an extra few days at no extra charge.</p>
What should future students be aware of when choosing off-campus housing? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lease agreements, deposits, tenant rights</i></li> <li>• <i>Utilities and furniture</i></li> <li>• <i>Location and neighbourhoods</i></li> <li>• <i>Safety and security</i></li> <li>• <i>Type of resources available to look for housing (eg: Craigslist)</i></li> </ul>	

## 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.)

**There are many clubs for international students that meeting very often. Most students at Sophia joined clubs - which is quite a serious commitment as they generally do not allow members to skip praactices. There are festivals, events, sports tournaments, speech competitions, and various other extra curricular activities that welcome exchange students.**

**The residence had events monthly, and weekly language exchanges.**

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

Most students looking for internshi pi opportunities were able to find them off campus.

I don` t think there were many resources for these students - it seemed like they had to search for these internships on their own.

## 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?

Cannot think of too many problems.

Near Soshigaya dorm, there was a medical clinic which was able to speak English.

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

Yes they did, I arranged this through guard.me. The University will require a proof of your insurance.

Sophia also made you get National Health insurance as a Japanese resident living there more than 3 months - be aware that this is an extra cost you will be billed for at the end of the semester.

Insurance in general was an expensive part of this experience.

## Cultural Adaptation

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

I found in general the culture shock to be quite small.

Japan is a very group and rule oriented society though, I often felt as though my opinions mattered very little and that requests which were unusual or required change were difficult to get. Japanese people often tend to be shy as well - while I made a few local friends, it was quite difficult to feel connected to many of the locals.

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

It is an extremely safe country - people will use their purses to save a spot at the table.

## 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	\$ 1300	Brief Description	I flew on United, which was quite cheap.
Visa fees	\$ 60	Brief Description	The visa itself is cheap, the tracked mail was a bit more.
Books/term	\$ 200	Brief Description	Textbooks are cheaper than at U of A. They are priced like normal books.
Accommodation/month	\$ 425	Brief Description	Rent was about \$400/m, utilities ranged from \$10-\$50.
Meals/month	\$ 400	Brief Description	Cheap rice bowls in the cafeteria were about \$4, but I ate out a lot.
Health insurance/month	\$ 115	Brief Description	I paid about \$400 for travel insurance, and National Health insurance was \$50 for my 4 month term.
Local transportation/month	\$ 40	Brief Description	3 and 1 month commuter pass are available. It only includes the route between dorm and school (pretty far).
Personal spending/month	\$ 300	Brief Description	Tokyo is a consumer society, there is lots to buy. I bought more than I thought I would.
Communications/month (e.g. phone)	\$ 50	Brief Description	No cell phone or internet, I used a rental pocket wifi for all my communication needs.
Other travel	\$ 1000	Brief Description	Travelled to Kyoto, Nikko, Hakone, Osaka, and Korea. Transportation is quite expensive, hostels are cheap.
What unexpected costs did you encounter?	There weren't too many unexpected events or emergencies that cost me anything.		

## 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 type="checkbox"/> Student loans <input 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?

The people I met and the friends I made - I made many international friends and some great people which I hope to stay in contact with.

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

I think Sophia University was a great choice, and I would highly recommend it. The only downside is that Tokyo is quite expensive - so this is a great option if you have time to save beforehand.

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

Don't be afraid to try new things! Many students were scared to participate in things that were new/unfamiliar to them, but I think that many of the greatest moments were when I took a risk and ate new things or went to events that I was unfamiliar with and hesitant to try! Money is part of how much you can experience, so I'd recommend saving as much as possible - I was working 60 hour work weeks before my exchange and that money came in handy quite often and opened more options for me. .