



上智大学
SOPHIA UNIVERSITY



Wing Pui Bowen MA

Finance, Year 4

EXCHANGE REPORT

Sophia University, Japan

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PART I – MONTHLY ACTIVITY LOG

April 2018

The month of my arrival is the cherry blossom season. The sakura trees are planted all around the neighborhood and Tokyo was filled with the pink color. With such breath-taking scenery, my exchange was kicked off. After checking in the dormitory in Setagaya-ku, I headed to the campus in Yotsuya for the orientation events, the orientation included the introduction of the school, and department information.



At the very beginning, I had to deal with various government documents including the Residence Card, National Health Insurance Scheme. With the help of the staff in my dormitory and friends, I could obtain all the documents needed for my stay.

For my extra-curricular activity, I joined the Sophia University Rugby Football Club. The club has a lot of orientation events like sushi party and barbecue. All of these events were carefully prepared, and all the seniors took good care of the freshmen.



May 2018

The second month of the semester, everyone now was fully adapted to the environment and people around. The teaching style and approaches are very different from Hong Kong, they are more instructive and informative. Professors are very good at delivering the designed courses materials, all the contents are well prepared and presented. I was able to understand and intake the basic knowledge on Japanese scholars and their way of thinking.



The training in the Sophia Rugby Club is way harder than the team in HKUST. Besides the regular training, they would have joint training with other well-known university including Tokyo University, Waseda University and International Christian University. Other than the school club training, I was also lucky to join another amateur rugby club called Tokyo Gaijin. All these rugby events truly enlarged my social circle in Japan.



June 2018

This was the mid-way of the semester. I received several midterm exams and couple reports due in this month. It was one of the busiest periods throughout my exchange.

Other than studying, I was able to go around Tokyo to find the real authentic delicacies of Japan. All the food are truly delicious and reasonably priced. This was like a huge stress reliever for my midterm anxiety.



July 2018

After midterm period was also the last month of the semester. During July, all the club activities were suspended, therefore, I had more free days to check out the popular attractions in Tokyo, like the Disneyland, Tokyo Skytree and etc.

Along with sightseeing, more tasty food would compliment the journey. I just could not resist all the ramen, sushi, cakes in Japan. Certainly, the inclining figures in the weights scale would prove my thoughts. There is no better way to conclude this exchange without food and sightseeing.



PART II – GENERAL EXCHANGE INFORMATION

Visa Procedures

The passport holders of HKSAR is exclusive from the English Proficiency Requirement for student visa. For other countries' eligibility of this exclusion, you can easily obtain information from the Japanese Consulate-General website. But normally, you need to have at least IELTS 6.5. Before applying for the student visa, Sophia University sent me pre-arrival packages to fill in. The documents asked a broad range of questions, from the family financial situations, professors' recommendation forms. You will also be asked to find a clinic for body check, the items needed for checking are all shown in the Health Declaration Form in the application packages. After this package, the university will send another Certificate of Eligibility from the Ministry of Justice in Japan, which basically asking for the similar information needed for the application bundle earlier, you just need to copy and paste the information and send it back on time. With all these documents, the Sophia University will send the Approval Letters from both the President of the University and the Ministry of Justice. Then I could go to the application center to apply for the visa. The application took me in two weeks.

Orientation Activities

There is only one orientation seminar held on 2nd of April. The seminar included the introduction of the school and the application of its IT system. It is a very practical and informative seminar, however, it's hard for us to consume the overwhelming amount of information. Sophia University actually matched up the exchange students with a Sophia student each as buddy to solve any issues in future.

International Services and Opportunities

The Center of Global Education and Discovery provides monthly newsletters in email to all exchanges students. It includes the information of local services or other cultural exchange activities. There are some elementary school visits available in my dormitory as well.

Accommodation

There are various options available but none of them is on campus. Normally the dormitories are managed by other properties management agencies, so in some dormitories, you can even expect people from other universities. The dormitory I stayed is in Soshigaya, it's a quite remote place from the campus, it would take roughly 40 mins to get back. The dormitory is nice and clean, and the facilities are well maintained. I have no problems of getting along with.

Course Registration

Sophia University uses two systems for students, Loyola and Moodle. Loyola is like Student Center in UST, you can choose your timetable there. Moodle is like Canvas where you download course materials and upload your assignments. The registration would be held for a month, but you can still drop subjects even after the registration period. There is a requirement for student visa holders that you have to register at least ten hours of study each week.

Teaching and Assessment Methods

I took four courses in Sophia, that includes AANT2030 Nature and Culture, AIBE3530 International Business, ASOC2250 Introduction to Japanese Society and GSE41700 Chemistry and Good Cooking. All courses are graded using absolute grading. However, the benchmarks vary every semester, you have to check it on Loyola before registration of courses.

AANT2030 Nature and Culture

It's a 3-credit course which teaches us the human impacts on the environment. It took a philosophical approach where various philosophers and sociology contexts are covered. The grade is given based on Moodle Forum Discussion (25%), Pop Quiz (25%), Midterm Exam (25%) and Final Exam (25%). You should be aware that the professor doesn't have notes for students, therefore in-class notes and textbook reading are mandatory.

AIBE3530 International Business

It's a 3-credit course which teaches us conducting business in global markets. It is a multi-disciplinary course, which includes management, marketing, finance and operation management. The grade composition consists of Attendance (5%), Presentation (10%), Paper Study Report (5%), Midterm Exam (40%) and Final Exam (40%).

ASOC2250 Introduction to Japanese Sociology

It is an introduction level course on Japanese Society. It covers the demographic, religion, geographic, education and etc knowledge. The course is very informative and interesting, so I would strongly recommend this course personally. The course grade is given through 5 quizzes(33.3%) and one final exam(66.7%).

GSE41700 Chemistry and Good Cooking

It is a 1-credit level course, and it only has one class per week. The course is very easy where you can learn a lot on the culinary chemistry. It is very fun to me because it was my first time treating cooking as a science. The grade is given through In-class Reflective Papers (30%) and Final Reports (70%). There is no final exams.

Sports and Recreational Facilities

Sophia University is located in Chiyoda-ku, the campus size is very small therefore the options for sports and recreation are limited. There is one gym/training room on campus, the equipment is new but it would be very crowded for most of the time. The Senada-bori Sports Ground is usually booked by the Sports Clubs, so you would be recommended to join a club to use the facilities.

Finance and Banking

You have to bring yens to Japan ahead. However, you don't need to bring too much cash on hands, because you can still use the debit cards with Union Pay to withdraw money in almost all ATM in Japan. Remember to activate the oversea withdrawal option before leaving Hong Kong. It is very easy to use and my family deposit monthly in my Hang Seng account, and I can withdraw using the daily currency rate. If you want to use my method, I would advise you to with the ATM in 7-11 because its service charge is the lowest (170yens per transaction).

Social Club and Networking Opportunities

There are a lot of options on campus but many of them needs participants to have basic Japanese speaking ability. They may be reluctant to let you in if you don't speak any Japanese. There is a social club for exchange students, but I didn't join therefore I couldn't give you any information on that. I joined the Rugby Football Club where most of them can speak English, and they welcome exchange students to join their practices.

Health and Safety

Tokyo is a very safe place to be, there is no security concerns. You are required to purchase their National Health Insurance, which would give you a huge discount in visiting clinics, but you have to purchase the subscribed medicine separately which is not included in the Insurance.

Transportation

I purchased the Commuter Pass from JR East Railway. I can pay a lump sum and it allows me to take unlimited free rides from my dorm to the campus. The school has very clear introduction of how to get it. The price of the Commuter Pass would save you over 50% in going back to the school. The subway system can reach most of the regions in Tokyo, and it's the cheapest, so I use railway for most of the time.

Climate

Tokyo's weather is generally cooler than Hong Kong. The humidity is way lower. It's very comfortable for us.

Communication

The dormitory and campus provide wifi. I purchased a contracted plan with OCN mobile, you can find such plan for exchange students in Yodobashi Camera.

Cautionary Measures

Be careful of the food, I gained 8kg coz the food is too good and too cheap. Other than that, there is nothing to be careful of.

PART III – ITEMS TO BRING

- Clothing of both winter and summer
- Medicines
- Passport (you can also use it to purchase duty-free items)
- Cash and credit cards

PART IV – USEFUL LINKS

Syllabus Inquiry:

https://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/studentlife/academic_services/syllabi/Syllabus-inquiry.html

Consulate-General of Japan in Hong Kong

http://www.hk.emb-japan.go.jp/itprtop_en/index.html

JR East for Commuter Pass (Japanese only)

http://www.hk.emb-japan.go.jp/itprtop_en/index.html

