

## Exchange student life in Japan

Eva Lin (New Zealand Otago University)

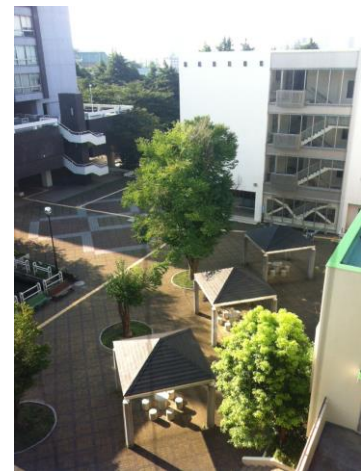
It has been about one year since I came to Japan from New Zealand as an exchange student. I came with expectation to improve my language skills of Japanese and to explore the culture of Japan. One of the many reasons why I chose Ochanomizu University is that here we have individual tutors that I find friendly and very helpful.

This is not my first time studying overseas, but first time living in a dormitory. Like everyone else, there were kinds of problems to handle when I just started living in Japan. Fortunately, there were dormitory matrons telling me much about living in Japan, besides, when I was sick, they took good care of me, so I want to thank them very much here. Living by myself, I have to be able to deal with things other than language, for example, laundry, cooking and shopping. It was rather difficult in the beginning, but better afterwards. There are convenience store, pharmacy and mall nearby, so this is quite a good place to stay. It takes about 40 minutes to walk and catch a train to school from my dorm.

Universities are different here and in New Zealand. Everything was new and interesting. But then, given 8 papers in one semester, 4 days of class and 90 minutes per lecture, things appeared to be harder than my expectation. Papers for exchange students include ones with and without credits. We are also allowed to enroll in native students' papers. I enrolled in many papers. In the first semester, I did 日本語演習ⅤB which talks about some specified grammars on which foreigners have high rate of misuse. We were able to discuss with professor on how to use such grammars correctly. I am fond of grammars, so I found this paper very useful. Another paper I did was 日本事情演習ⅣB (多文化共生論), this is the paper where I had the most practical experience related to human library which provides the minority with opportunities of say. Our university invited relevant associations to communicate with us, and I gained more sense of social responsibilities through these opportunities of communication in class.

日本事情演習ⅢB is a paper for business Japanese. I found this paper stressful, because I had no experience on business Japanese. Well now, I am able to use honorifics much better. 上級ⅡB is designed for JLPT の N1 test. It is useful for students intending to sit this test. A number of brilliant examination skills were taught in this paper. 日本語演習ⅣB is a paper for report writing and a challenge for every one of us, because the Japanese report structure is quite different from what we learned elsewhere.

But we made fast and good progress because the feedback from tutor was great help.



In the second semester, 日本事情演習ⅡA is about Japanese society, culture and history. I found it interesting because I like the Edo period and this paper discusses the history, traditions and culture in the Edo period. 上級ⅠA focuses on reading Japanese academic literature in relation to Japanese culture. For each topic of the articles, professor and we together discuss on the cultural differences, referring to our own cultures. Learning cultures both of Japan and many other nations makes this paper more meaningful.

There are two offices in Ochanomizu Uni, international office and global education office which organize many activities for us. Everyone can take part in as long as there is interest. For example, in order to promote communication between Japanese and international students, trips are organized. Else, free tickets to Kabuki are offered to students who want to learning about Japanese traditional art. And there are activities where we are free to try on kimono yukata. I find counseling room very helpful. It is set up for the good of exchange students. Sometimes I check the grammar in my essays with them and this has helped me improve my essay writhing.

I am very grateful for this opportunity. Coming to Japan is always one of my dreams. Different from the books, the reality gives me a more lively and clear picture of everything in Japan. I think studying Japanese is not the only goal I need to achieve, I must make good use of this opportunity to interact with Japanese culture. Within the past year, I started with being frustrated and gradually became well-educated and enjoying the life here. I am so happy that this part of growing up took place in the country I like so much. This is a meaningful year of my life, and studying at Ochanomizu Uni is valuable experience.