

Study Abroad Experience

University of Manchester

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Due to COVID-19, this semester was quite tough. I planned to go to Japan in September of 2020 and begin my classes at Ochanomizu University from October, but because of the border restrictions I was not able to enter Japan. At first, I thought that I would be able to go to Japan before the end of the year. However, disappointing news regarding the borders came out in November, and I realised that I was not going to be able to go to Japan for a while. Additionally, due to the Omicron variant, the situation has now worsened.



As a result, I have been living in the UK with my family for the whole semester and attended Ochanomizu's classes online from my bedroom. The hardest thing about this experience was the time difference. Japan is 9 hours ahead of the UK, so my earliest classes would start at 4:20am. Because of this, most days I had to wake up at around 3:45am. Of course, this was very hard to get used to at first. It also meant that I couldn't take classes that took place earlier in the

morning – even though I wanted to – because they were too early for me.

However, eventually I got used to this schedule. The classes were really fun despite being online. The class content and teaching styles have been better than the Japanese classes I've taken in the UK, and I think I've learnt a lot despite not being in Japan. All my teachers were so kind and I've learnt so much from them. The class content was very interesting, and I've not only learnt Japanese that's useful for student life but also daily life. My main goal was to gain more confidence when speaking Japanese. Before I became an exchange student at Ochanomizu, I didn't have much confidence when speaking Japanese and was scared of talking Japanese to Japanese people. At first this meant I was very nervous during my classes, but the class sizes were very small so there were lots of opportunities to speak and I slowly came to have more confidence when speaking. By the end of the semester, I was no longer nervous and was looking forward to each class.

I am not sure if the COVID-19 situation will improve before I graduate Ochanomizu university. Of course, I want to go to Japan during my second semester, but I cannot say if I will definitely be able to. Nevertheless, I think it is worth it for me to continue my classes online. The time difference is hard, but my Japanese has improved so much already that I do not mind. This is not the experience that I hoped for, but I am glad that I have still been able to have such a good experience despite the pandemic. I am also glad to have met my classmates, and I hope we can meet in Japan soon!

I would like to express my gratitude towards those who took care of me this semester. First, thanks to all of my teachers, I have been able to learn lots about Japanese language and culture. I would particularly like to thank Hagiwara sensei and Matsuda sensei. There have been many difficult times during this semester, but thank you for always being there to help us. I would also like to thank my academic advisor Moriyama sensei and my tutor Haku-san –



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