

Exchange Student experience in Japan

Ochanomizu University

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I was very fortunate to attend a semester at Ochanomizu University, unfortunately, because of Covid-19, I was not able to go to Japan and had to attend all of my courses online.

First of all, I will say that the semester was very hard because there is an important time difference between France and Japan, the courses were taking place very early in the morning, so it was not easy to keep an ordinary routine, especially when you live with your family. Being focused this early in the morning, especially to learn a new language was also demanding. The Japanese government kept on giving false hopes of a potential re-opening of Japan's borders every week which was mentally harsh because the borders never opened enough to let us travel to Japan. One of the most difficult parts was the isolation, and the fact that I could not interact normally with the teachers and the students. Attending the courses alone in a room is hard from a mental health perspective.

But my experience was also very good because I had the chance to make a few friends. I attended a French course which was very fun where I met Japanese students and we interacted a lot. They helped me with any question I had and I tried to help them when they needed it. I also managed to make friends with other exchange students who were in the same situation as me and this was very helpful because we could help each other and even if it was only digitally, it was nice not to feel alone.



I am also very happy and grateful that I got the chance to learn Japanese, all of my teachers were amazing and very patient with me. I started the semester with zero

knowledge of the Japanese language so I was behind everybody else in class but thanks to all of my teachers who explained, took the time to answer my question and show me the basics I managed to have a little knowledge of the Japanese language. I definitely do not recommend studying at Ochanomizu University with no knowledge of the Japanese language at all because it is very challenging, not impossible but hard. I do think that if I had the chance to be in Japan, I would have learned more and progressed faster but I do not regret anything, I love learning languages, especially Japanese. It was the first time I had to learn a new alphabet and everything about the Japanese language is so interesting, I will keep on learning the language until someday, I hope, I can finally go and see for myself everything Japan has to offer.

I would like to thank all of my teachers who highly contributed to make my semester good and academically stimulating. A special thank you for Hagiwara sensei and Matsuda sensei who were always by my side to answer questions or help me when I needed it. I would also like to thank my Academic Advisor, Komatsu Sensei who always made sure everything was great and introduced me to Miki and Kyoka who became my friends.

I really hope that the next exchange students will be able to go to Japan and live an even more incredible experience there.