

Student experience at Ochanomizu University

Karolina Lepicka (SOAS, University of London)

It is hard to believe that it's been nearly a year since I've been at Ochanomizu University. Although I'm very happy with my experience, I now realize how many more things I still want to do here and the places I want to visit.

When I first arrived in Japan, I really didn't know what to expect and I was worried that everything would be too difficult with my limited knowledge of Japanese, but all the teachers and other staff at both the University and the Dormitory has been very nice and helpful in every situation. For the first days, even weeks, it was difficult to communicate with people in Japanese, and I've regretted not studying more before I've arrived. While I still regret not studying more, I strongly feel that my speaking and listening skills have got better, and I also feel much more confident about expressing my ideas and feelings in Japanese.

This is of course largely thanks to the supportive teachers. The style of classes at Ochanomizu differs from SOAS, as the special Japanese classes focus on preparation for the JLPT test. In many classes I had to prepare presentations about various topics, which involved an interesting research as well as a good speaking practice. Through presentations of other classmates, I was also able to learn about other countries' cultures. Studying with people from all over the world has been a wonderful cultural exchange, and felt almost like being in London. I've made many wonderful friends, whom I hope to meet with again in the future.

As for the everyday life, I've enjoyed both good and bad days as a part of the exchange student's experience. Learning about vegan food, how to pay bills, how to commute in the complicated underground, has all been a challenging but interesting experience. I've felt in love with Tokyo, and especially with the dynamic Shinjuku where I've partied with new Japanese friends. I've also attended many animal right demonstrations, music gigs and other events which will forever stay in my memory. This year has really gone so quickly. There is so much more I want to explore of Japan, so hopefully I'll come back soon.

Thank you to Ochanomizu's teachers and faculty members, to all the classmates, and to Neko-senpai.

