

# STUDY ABROAD REPORT

You should upload/send this report **within 2 months** after the end of your stay abroad to Mobility Online (Joint Study) /send via e-mail (CEEPUS). You should also upload the confirmation of your stay abroad from your host university as well as the equivalence list signed by the dean after your mobility to Mobility Online (Joint Study)/send via e-mail (CEEPUS). If you should not fulfil these requirements it is possible that your whole study grant will be revoked (see letter of acceptance). Queries: [jointstudy@boku.ac.at](mailto:jointstudy@boku.ac.at) or [ceepus@boku.ac.at](mailto:ceepus@boku.ac.at)

## BASIC INFORMATION

1. Name of student: **Anonym**

Study programme: **H 066 418**

2. Host university: **Kyoto University**

Host country: **Japan**

3. Your period

of stay: from **01. 10. 2024** to **28. 03. 2025**

Study year: **WS 2024/25**

## FEEDBACK FOR FUTURE STUDENTS

4. Information about the host university. How helpful were the following sources of information?

(Please enter a number between 1 and 5, where 1 = not helpful and 5 = very helpful):

Homepage of the host university	3
Students / friends	5
Teachers at BOKU	2
Curricula	2
Host university	5
BOKU International Relations	4
Other:	

5. How would you evaluate your ability in the language of the host university?

(1 = weak to 5 = excellent)

	Before your stay abroad					After your stay abroad				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Listening	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**6. Languages of care/support at the host university and their use in percentage:**

Language of care was German: ☐ Yes ☒ No

1.) English	50 %	3.)	%
2.) Japanese	50 %	4.)	%

**What recommendations would you give to future students about the host country and university? (Questions 7 -14)** Please give tips, sources of information, contacts, and links

## 7. Host country

Japan is by far the best country I have ever had the luxury of visiting. The culture is unlike anything I have ever experienced and the food is unparalleled (you have to try everything there is!).

Culture-wise there is so much Japan has to offer. Especially Kyoto, which was once the capital of Japan, has many cultural sites, temples and shrines scattered throughout the city. Moreover, Kyoto is located in the Kansai region, which offers many opportunities for travelling in the vicinity (Kobe, Osaka, Himeji, Nara, Amanohashidate, Ine, Kanazawa, ...).

Food-wise, Japan is most popular for Sushi and Ramen, but there are so many more foods that just taste amazing and are must tries.

For example:

Yakiniku is Japanese all-you-can-eat BBQ with a lot of exotic varieties, like intestines and heart

Soba are buckwheat noodles that are served cold or hot in soup

Tempura is the general term for deep-fried food, most commonly known is Ebi Tempura - deep-fried shrimp

Tonkatsu is deep-fried pork similar to Schnitzel

Gyudon is a bowl consisting of beef and rice with a variety of toppings

Shabu Shabu is Japanese hot-pot which is usually all-you-can-eat with a lot of customizations

Japanese curry - I recommend Coco Ichibanya with the hand-made chicken filet

Udon is like ramen but the soup is different and the noodles are thicker

Okonomiyaki is a savoury pancake with regional differences

There are a ton of varieties for ramen (Tonkotsu, Hokkaido, Kyoto, Tokyo, Soy Sauce, Miso...) try ALL of them!

For sushi, I recommend trying the basic sushi train (sushi assembled by robots) and also normal sushi restaurants where the chef prepares sushi in front of you (usually more expensive).

Japan is definitely NOT vegetarian friendly. I'd say it is almost impossible to be/stay vegetarian in Japan. Almost every food comes with meat.

Kyoto is surrounded by mountains if you are interested in hiking. Daimonji, Kurama and Hiei-zan to name a few.

Some tips regarding living in Kyoto in general:

Learning basic Japanese (JLPT N5 level) is highly recommended before travelling to Japan. It makes life much easier.

Write down your personal information (full name in Katakana, Address in Kanji, Phone number) somewhere and always take it with you. You will need it a lot.

Get a used bike. Bikes are very convenient in Kyoto and the bicycle market is highly saturated. Buying new bikes off a bike store is a waste of money IMO (been there, done that). You will need to transfer ownership at a bike store when buying used bikes. Keep in mind that you need to park your bicycle at parking spots, otherwise you get fined and your bike is confiscated.

Withdraw money from 711 ATMs with your debit card and click Yen when withdrawing and always pay in cash. This is the cheapest & easiest way to get by in Japan.

Get an IC card at JR ticket machines (Android phone) or add an IC card to your wallet (Apple) for easy use of public transport.

**8. Host university**

Expect some of the lectures to be held in Japanese even though the curricula explicitly states English as the language of instruction. The professors' English skills vary greatly, but (in my case) tend to struggle with the language and will occasionally switch to Japanese during the lecture. Additionally, the workload varies depending on the professor and subject, but tends to be lower than what we are used to at BOKU. You can create your own timetable and I recommend planning your lectures so you have Monday/Friday off for longer weekends to explore Japan. Attendance is usually mandatory. Keep that in mind for the feedback week if you plan to go for vacation during that time!

You will be assigned to a laboratory during your stay and a Japanese student in this lab will be your tutor. Their willingness to be proactive and help you in getting acquainted with the University depends on the lab. I got unlucky and my tutor rarely got in contact with me.

**9. To what extent did you feel socially integrated?**

(1 = not at all to 5 = very well)	1	2	3	4	5
in the local culture/community in general	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with students at the host university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
with international students at the host university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10. Which contact person (at BOKU/the host university) helped you organise your stay abroad?**

BOKU: Ms. Eleonora Coni, M.A. & Ms. DI Lisa Maria Schmidtberger  
 Kyoto University: Ms. Atsuko UCHIYAMA

**11. How would evaluate the general advice and help given in administrative matters?**

(Please give a number between 1 and 5, where 1 = not helpful and 5 = very helpful)

at BOKU International Relations	4
from teachers at BOKU	2
from the host university	5
from students at the host university	3
from others:	

## 12. Registration process, financial support, other requirements

Financial support was gratefully received by Joint Study Outgoing.

TOEFL 80 points is not too difficult to achieve, but it is rather expensive (~280€).

You will have to register at the ward office after moving in to the dorm. The University organizes a group that helps in this process and everything will be explained there.

The student visa requires you to register for 10 Credits (20 ECTS) but from what I understood there is no penalty for passing less than 10 Credits. You only need to register.

Course registration is done manually by a University staff during the first two weeks. The courses can't be changed after registering so be sure to register for as many courses as possible, since there is no penalty in not completing courses. Also I'd recommend signing up for more classes than needed, since some courses might be held in Japanese or get cancelled.

You can register for Japanese language courses and earn credits (highly recommended), but there is a pre-registration process online one month before the semester starts. Don't miss it if you are interested, otherwise you will not be able to attend.

## 13. Can you give advice and suggestions regarding the social aspect of your host country/university (cultural differences, importance of language ability etc.)?

Get accustomed with the dos and don'ts in Japan before arriving there. For example: they value politeness and good manners (no talking on the subway, no cutting lines!) and are unable to handle direct confrontation (be mindful!). Unfortunately, the English proficiency of Japanese is quite low, which makes day to day life cumbersome.

The Japanese are very friendly people but they tend to be shy / distance themselves from foreigners. However, there are some Japanese with experiences outside of Japan that are more tolerant/interested towards foreigners and those people are among the most welcoming and heartwarming people I have ever met in my life. I highly recommend making the effort to mingle with locals (if you are proficient in Japanese) or try talking to Japanese students that are interested in internationals (keep in mind that they really struggle with English though!).

**14. Were there events organised especially for exchange students during your stay?**

☒ Yes ☐ No

**If yes, please indicate which ones:**

Welcome Party by Kyoto University, daytrip to Himeji, KUISC (voluntary international student organization) holds special events usually once a month (hiking, cooking, culture games...) be up to date on Instagram and Line! Most events need you to sign up and have a limited amount of participants so be fast, you don't want to miss any of those! There was one event every Friday called Otsukare Party where international students attended and got together in a small room for talking.

All in all, I think the frequency of organised events for internationals was too low. There were at most 2-3 events per month which made socializing / networking with new students somewhat difficult. Additionally, the Graduate School of Agriculture is located on the North Campus, which was kinda far away from where most exchange students had their lectures in (South Campus). There were only 2 other european exchange students in the Graduate School, the rest of the internationals were Asians that used to stick with people from their Nationality. Also most Japanese students were not too interested in talking to internationals. I recommend applying for dorms with shared facilities (e.g. Hyakumanben), that way it is easier to socialize with other internationals.

Kyoto University is #2 national university. That means the students attending are of the studious type, therefore, the university is not known for it's party culture (+ Kyoto becomes a ghost town after 10 pm). Keep that in mind before enrolling if that is an important factor in deciding for your exchange semester. There are some clubs and bars in the Kawaramachi & Gion area, keep in mind that all public transport in Japan closes at 12 pm!

There are leisure clubs that are open for international students. If you find something you like, be sure to sign up. However, the amount of clubs available for English speaking students is limited so make sure you meet the requirements.

**ACCOMMODATION, SERVICES, AND COSTS**

**15. What was your primary residence during your stay?**

☒ Student dormitory ☐ Hotel / guest house  
☐ Room in a private apartment ☐ own private apartment  
☐ Flat share with other students

**16. Who helped you look for accommodation?**

☒ Host university ☐ Friends/family  
☐ Housing market ☐ Other:

**17. How helpful was the host university in looking for a room?**

(1 = not helpful to 5 = very helpful)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☒ 5

**18. How would you evaluate the quality of the accommodation? (1 = poor to 5 = excellent)**

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☒ 5

**19. How would you evaluate the availability and/or accessibility of assistance given during your studies (regarding for example the library, computer rooms, labs, equipment etc.)?**

(1 = poor to 5 = excellent)

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☒ 4 ☐ 5

**20. How would you evaluate the accessibility and/or quality of computers and email services at the host university?**

(1 = poor to 5 = excellent)

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☒ 4      ☐ 5

**21. Expenses during your stay abroad (in Euros):**

Travel costs (for a single return journey): 1500 €

Overall expenses per month (inc. Accommodation) 900 €

Breakdown:

Accommodation	400	€ / Month
Food	400	€ / Month
Travel costs at place of study	50	€ / Month
Costs for books, photocopying, etc.	0	€ / Month
Study fees	0	€ / Month
Other:	Necessities	50 € / Month

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT**

**22. How would you evaluate your stay abroad from an academic point of view?**

(1 = poor to 5 = excellent):

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☒ 4      ☐ 5

**23. How would you evaluate your stay abroad from a personal point of view?**

(1 = unsatisfactory to 5 = highly satisfactory):

☐ 1      ☐ 2      ☐ 3      ☐ 4      ☒ 5

**24. Which aspects of your stay abroad did you like the most?**

**From an academic point of view:**

The content of the lectures provided by the Graduate School of Agriculture were quite diverse. It gave me the opportunity to learn more about a wide variety of subjects that expanded my horizon and increased my understanding in other aspects of life sciences.

**From a social/cultural point of view:**

Immersing myself in a culture completely different to what I was used to in Europe made me realize that there is so much more to life than the way I was brought up and taught by Austrian/European society. The experiences I made were precious and helped me appreciate my country more and I learned not take anything I have here in Austria for granted. I am sure that I will look back fondly for the rest of my life at the wonderful time I have spent in Japan with the great people I was lucky to meet during my time abroad

**25. Did you have any problems during your stay abroad?**

I did not encounter any significant problems during my stay abroad. A minor problem that got more and more frustrating as time went on was that the Japanese are (mostly) unable to speak English, which made managing daily life somewhat difficult.



**26. Will your academic progress at BOKU be hindered as a result of your stay abroad?**

☒ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ I don't know

**If yes, please explain why:**

The application process and preparation for the upcoming exchange took quite some time and energy, which could have been used for studying. Additionally, it was not possible to earn 15 Credits (= 30 ECTS) relevant to my studies from Kyoto University due to lectures being either unrelated to my degree, held in Japanese or cancelled, which naturally prolonged my studies. I also decided to stay in Japan as long as possible, since this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, which, for me was more important than finishing my studies quickly.

**27. How could the Joint Study and student exchange programme be improved in your opinion?**

I think all instructions were clear and concise, so there is no inherent need for improvement. The staff was helpful and got me in contact with the last student who was there, which was very very helpful. Thank you so much for your support R!

## **General Report**

**Short feedback on your stay: attended lectures, seminars, excursions, etc.**

Other things you found interesting, you think future students should know, problems, general tips and recommendations...

There are two different kind of courses provided by Kyoto University: Intensive Courses and Semester Courses. The former are 1 Credit courses which are mostly blocked over a period of a few weeks. The time of lectures vary greatly from course to course. The latter are, as the name suggests, courses held over the whole semester that have a fixed time of the week and usually grant 2 Credits. Both types of courses usually require mandatory attendance and come with homework in the form of assignments or preparations. Final exams are typically less common than at BOKU, but there is usually some kind of other type of grading involved (attendance, assignments, presentations, participation).

I signed up for the following lectures:

Semester course - Japanese Listening 1: Basic listening course in Japanese. I have learned Hiragana & Katakana and basic grammar and vocabulary. There was no homework but a mid-term and a final exam that used mostly JLPT N5 questions.

Intensive course - Tropical Forest Environments: This was my favourite course by far. The professor used to conduct research at American Universities, which made her English skills excellent. There were only 3 other students enrolled besides me, which created a face-to-face study environment with the professor that I really enjoyed. We learned about earth's climate and quickly dove deeper into how this influences tropical climate, the seismic components of tropics and the ecosystem - both on the macroscopic and microscopic scale. Grading was done by proposing a paper of our own interest related to the lecture to summarize and answer questions provided by the professor.

Semester Course - Agricultural Systems Engineering: This course focused on Systems Engineering and it's applications to agricultural machines. Even though the topic could not be further from my field of study, the professor made it interesting and I have learned a lot (mainly programming). Weekly assignments were the basis for grading.

Intensive Course - Applied Plant Sciences: We were given lectures on the research of the Molecular Plant Science department of Kyoto University, which ranged from the structure and use of lignin in vascular plants to the biotechnological applications of plant hormones to, for example, reduce the growth of parasitic organisms in fields. This one was very interesting and related to my field of study. The grading was conducted by mini exams after each lecture and two assignments.

Intensive Course - Health Science: Also very interesting, we learned about the causes, symptoms and biochemical mechanisms of the most prevalent diseases of the 21st century (type 2 diabetes, fatty liver disease, leaky gut syndrome and many more) and latest research and discoveries that are currently undergoing to tackle these challenges against human health. The grading was conducted by weekly assignments.

Intensive Course - Microbiology for Human Life: This one quickly covered the basics of biotechnology before diving into more advanced topics like the use of microorganisms for humans (drugs, food, ...). We had to either prepare for the lecture by researching relevant topics, hold presentations or were required to participate in oral exams.

Semester Course - Topics in Advanced Plant Breeding: This course was by far the most challenging one. The students were asked to hold a lecture by themselves (1-1.5h presentation) regarding research related to plant genetics and molecular plant biology. The professor provided us with papers regarding the topics and our task was to summarize one of the papers and try to best teach the other students the highly complicated topics. This course greatly helped me to get out of my comfort zone and I could learn a lot about the molecular mechanisms during the plant's life cycle.

The course requirements were generally lower compared to BOKU, which was partly because in the graduate program, students are usually busy with research besides attending courses. Professors are aware of that fact and tend to lower the bar for passing courses. This does not mean, however that the course material is easy. On the contrary, the topics were oftentimes quite advanced and challenging.

The Graduate School of Agriculture tends to forget about its exchange students when it comes to forwarding important information. While the exchange students assigned to other faculties got relevant information about moving out of Kyoto, we internationals from the Agriculture department did not get this email forwarded. Luckily one friend told me about it and I was able to handle every important matter for moving out / leaving Kyoto. Keep that in mind and stay in contact with exchange students from other faculties. I am sure that this was not the only case where I missed something important.

Other stuff that might be useful:

Students that stay only 6 months are not eligible for opening a Japanese bank account. You can enter the Nidec Kyoto Tower for free once you obtain your Student ID, the tickets are available upstairs in the building opposed to the station.

Buses in Japan are bad, but the buses in Kyoto are something else. How you use the bus is different in every city, inform yourself before visiting other cities in Japan. For Kyoto, you enter the bus through the rear entrance and pay a standard fare once you leave at the front door. When the bus is crammed, this becomes a nightmare. I avoided buses at all costs and only used them when necessary. Use the Subway instead or go by bike. + It is not prohibited but Japanese do not like it when you bring large luggage on the bus, I recommend taking subway or taxi (expensive).

If you want to go to a sushi train restaurant, go to Kura Sushi, it is better than Sushiro in my opinion and you can get online reservations through google maps. I recommend that, since Kura Sushi is very popular and if you are unlucky you will have to wait over 1h without a reservation.

If possible, get insider tips for restaurants from locals. They know where the good restaurants are that tourists usually don't know about. For example, north of Kyoto University is a hidden ramen district (Ichijoji) with many local ramen shops. Depending on the restaurant, they are strict with a lot of rules and do not speak English. But you can ask your tutor if you want to go there together if you don't know anyone that speaks Japanese.

The Life supermarket near Hyakumanben and next to Kamogawa sells Sushi plates. They are not super good quality but taste generally way better than anything you can get in Austria. I always bought those in the beginning of the semester when it was still warm outside and sat down at Kamogawa, this was a pleasant experience.

There is a Starbucks near Kawaramachi by Kamogawa. It has a lower level where you can enjoy your drinks and look at the riverbank. Perfect for studying or relaxing (it is very popular among students so you might not get a spot everytime you are there).

There is a café near the north campus at Hyakumanben (Shiru cafe) that sells free drinks for students. You need an app for that.

Getting a gym membership at FitPlace24 at Hyakumanben is great for meeting expats or even locals (I made a Japanese friend there for example).

711 is said (by locals) to have the worst food quality among the convenience store chains.

University student get discounts at Karaoke places.

Go to Okinawa early if you plan to, it gets really hot in summer

Avoid going for trips around golden week and new years (a lot of domestic tourism)

## The last two questions

### What did you gain the most out of your stay abroad?

The decision to study abroad in Japan for half a year was quite nerve-wrecking. I have never left Austria on my own to live in another country for 6 months so I would not know what I could expect. Plus, I have never visited Asia before in my life, so the cultural differences and language barriers were quite the challenge.

That is why, through the exchange semester I gained the confidence to take big steps into the unknown and trust myself with successfully overcoming huge challenges and upcoming hurdles in the future.

I also gained insight into a new culture, made meaningful friendships and had a blast throughout the whole semester with all up and downs. Thank you Joint Study for providing me with the chance of living through this unforgettable experience!

### Which particular piece of advice would you give interested students?

Don't doubt the decision about doing an exchange semester in Japan. Just apply and don't overthink it. It will be an invaluable experience to your life you will never forget!

## Many thanks for your support!

### Publication of this report

I agree that this report, including the above data (field of study, host university, year of study, length of stay), will be published on the website of BOKU International Relations for the purpose of exchanging information on the study visit, so that future interested outgoings can be informed about your experience at the host institution.

☒ Yes ☐ No

The consent is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time in the future without giving reasons. Any revocation can be declared at any time by e-mail to [joinstudy@boku.ac.at](mailto:joinstudy@boku.ac.at).