

A Semester Abroad
at
Kanagawa University
in
Yokohama, Japan



As an
International Business Administration
Student from the
Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences
In the
Spring Term 2023

Preparation

A semester abroad is a unique opportunity and fits the course of studies of International Business Administration perfectly, which is why it is heavily recommended and even integrated into the courses outline for the third and or fourth semesters. As such the Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences provides plenty of support for all stages of the preparation and organisational phase. One of the first notable steps that has to be given thought early enough for example is the acquisition of a Language Certificate, conveniently the DAAD Certificate provided by our Language Centre suffices for the Kanagawa University.

Once you are nominated as an exchange student, you will have to go through the Kanagawa University's own application process. Some of the challenges here include a simple bank account statement, a health certificate including a chest X-Ray and a scary Excel Document asking for loads of personal information.

All of these seem daunting. However, they are all necessary for obtaining your "Certificate of Eligibility", which is needed for anyone to obtain a mid to long-term visa for Japan.

Ultimately, going through these steps with the incredibly helpful and seasoned staff of the Kanagawa University International Centre, was very doable and reassuring, as they point out any mistakes and help you send a perfect Certificate of Eligibility on the first try.

Once you receive your Certificate of Eligibility you can easily receive a Visa from the Japanese Consulate in Frankfurt within a week.

For accommodation I heavily recommend staying at the international dorm "Kuritaya Akademeia" which I will describe in its own section.



Famous Welcome Sign at Narita Airport

Orientation

In the first two weeks there will be multiple meetings concerning organisational aspects such as obtaining your Residence Card, opening a Japanese bank account, registering for the mandatory National Health Insurance, how to pay your rent for the international dorm, and how to receive a Scholarship which pays for your rent! This scholarship is available to all those living in the dorm that don't receive too large of a scholarship from home. Furthermore, there is a Disaster Training which very useful, as it prepares you for the ever-present threat of earthquakes.

You will go through all of this together with help from the International Centre and be joined by the Japanese assistant buddies and your new roommates. Overall, this is the perfect time to get to know people and start exploring the new area and cities.

Dorm and Everyday Life

While you can choose between finding your own residence and moving into the KU's own international dorm, I can only recommend choosing the dorm. At 50.000 yen a month, it will be cheaper than almost any option you can find yourself, while also being the way easier option, as you are guaranteed a spot as an international student, and don't have to face the difficult task of finding your own apartment as a foreigner with no guarantor.



While you can easily find specifics on the dorm yourself, I wanted to emphasise some points about it which had great impact on my stay in Japan.

With Central Yokohama and both of the University's Campuses in walking distance and Tokyo most popular districts a quite cheap 30 min train ride away (with extremely reliable and frequent connections), the dorm is a convenient hub for both university and private life, on weekdays and any holidays.

While your room will be very small, the communal kitchens, appliances, living spaces and Japanese bathroom will quickly grow on you, as you spend time in the Tatami mat pod or the Movie and Music Studios.

Most importantly you have the opportunity to live, meet and spend time with many likeminded, curious and open people, international students and Japanese students alike. These are the same people, with whom you will spend many of your days attending university, travelling far and wide, experiencing the culture, food and nightlife of Yokohama and Tokyo. For every recommendation you receive, or place you had always wanted to visit, you will find a friend, interested in the same things, eager to join in, or willing to help out if you have any questions.

University Life

As an undergraduate Student you must attend at least 6 courses at Kanagawa University. While you will be enrolled into one faculty (coming from International Business Administration I was in the equivalent faculty), you can take courses from other faculties as well. When selecting classes, you should pay attention to the language they are held in as well as the campus they take place at. The Yokohama Campus is right next to the dorm and houses many scientific faculties as well as economics and a cafeteria you can easily grab lunch from if you're hanging in the dorm. The brand-new Minato Mirai Campus is a beautiful, modern high-rise in the centre of Yokohama, right next to multiple shopping malls, the seaside promenade, parks and all other activities you can think of.

As for the courses I recommend taking courses which are all at the same campus on the same day, to not have to commute between the two campuses between lectures.

I ultimately chose only lectures at the Minato Mirai Campus, from both the faculties of Business Administration, and International Culture Studies, as well as some Japanese language classes.



Minato Mirai Campus

The “Intercultural Japanese Studies” series of courses in particular, were very interesting and interactive, allowing you to exchange and learn with fellow students, international and Japanese alike. From these you can chose courses focussing on different facets of Japanese culture such as Art, Language History, Modern Culture, Movies, Literature, and more.

In general, all courses are graded differently than in Germany: Attendance and Homework are key, and usually make up at least 50% of your grade. Projects, Presentation, and a final exam, which is usually a rather simple recap of the course contents, account for the rest.

As for Japanese Language courses, there are Support classes for every level and at different intensities, which are extremely valuable for your everyday life. Furthermore, many times just being able to speak a couple of words will let you strike conversation and socialise with Japanese people, who don’t always have the confidence in their English to open up by themselves.

Conclusion

This semester abroad was an incredibly valuable opportunity for me, and I can only recommend it to anyone. It fostered my independency, adaptability and confidence. I got to grow as a person, greatly improve my Japanese language skills, further my studies, and strengthen my intercultural and interpersonal competencies by living and studying with people from all over the world. I am grateful that I was able to befriend, and share beautiful experiences with many incredible people, neither of which I will ever forget.