

TRAVEL REPORT STANDARD VISITING:

PROGRAMME FOR THE VISIT

At the time of the exchange I was a 3rd semester master student of Computer Science programme. I attended the exchange with Kyoto University Department of Intelligence Science and Technology. I got assigned to the NLP Lab under the lead of Prof. Kurohashi. To fulfill the 30 ECTS requirements it was necessary for me to uptake 5 courses, which are (usually) worth 2 Japanese credits (1 JP credit = 3 ECTS). Each course comes as once-per-week lecture that lasts 1,5h. Many of them will come with few assignments that will dictate your final grade. The amount of assignments depends on the subject – one of my subjects had weekly assignments of small-medium size, others has medium-large sized assignments per month or two. Many of the lectures were physical and online as they were students from abroad rejected from entering Japan yet. But also may lectures employ outside lecturers, which also dictated the online type of lecturing. I generally found the level of lectures very suitable to my preferences – less practicalities and hands-on exercises, more research, real life applicability, how the tech is applied/employed in the nowadays industry, what are the new trends and the concepts, architecture behind it. In short – more science than engineering. I definitely enjoyed that.

It is up to the student to make sure they lectures do not overlap. It is fairly easy to switch or drop courses, you just need to file a paper to the secretary before the deadline (one month after study start), but remember to inform SAP about the changes. When it comes to university's administration, it was rather swift and to the point. The on-boarding (establishing library card, learning platform account etc) might take some time to grasp the entirety of tools KU offers, but you get used to it within a week or two. What is more confusing is the administration process at the ward and the whole bureaucracy world, but you can always reach out to the Study Office of your department for help.

OTHER

I heard from other exchange students that finding the apartment is a tricky matter. I personally used Sakura housing service (officially recommended housing agency by KU) and contacted them approx. 4 months prior to study start. I was told I'm contacting them way too early, but after all it appeared that it was the just the right time, because I was able to get a small studio on my own, which was barely possible to get even 2 months (as suggested by agency representative) before study start. Just make sure to check the vacancies every few days and contact them immediately when you see one available.

Also make sure to establish a Revolut-like account with a physical card, my DanskeBank card was often rejected at the stores. This country is rather cash-based, not even coming close to digital credit cards.

Trips by bullet train are on the expensive side. To lower this costs you can take an overnight bus to fx. Hiroshima or Tokyo. The costs is more than 2x cheaper than bullet trains.

TIP: once you get a NHI (National Health Insurance) card, make sure you solve your dental issues in Japan. It's extremely professional and horribly cheap in comparison to Denmark. There are few English-speaking dentists in Kyoto, just check them out on Reddit to see which ones people recommend nowadays.

NETWORKING & PEOPLE MET

At first I met the Professor behind the NLP Lab together with other Professors assisting there. I discovered that the Lab is actively engaging students to take up projects to learn the skills, which is also what I have done. This enabled me to join their weekly meetings, learn from them and their findings, ask for help. I found it very encouraging and definitely the wisdom coming from others' experience is something invaluable to experience. The project groups in my lab were hosting meetings in English. Professors, secretaries, other staff as well as my course teachers were fluent in English, and I did not find it difficult to understand them. However, despite the courses being in English, they are attended by Japanese students that speak very little or no English. Those were raising up questions in Japanese and, obviously, teachers were responding in Japanese, sometimes translating to English what they have just said. Generally, if you do not speak Japanese, you will find it hard to socialize with other students. There is a definite language gap, as majority of them don't speak English but can understand you or write decent English. Usually there are few non-Japanese KU students, and you might find them your best companion in that case. Generally comparing the social life of Danish universities and Japanese, it's two different worlds. While in Denmark we emphasize the social life at the university and a lot of integrating activities, those almost do not exist at KU. Most people (from the ones I could speak with) go home after university or meet with their other Japanese pals. Cutting it into some social circle of theirs might appear hard. Kyoto is also a rather local city and very little people in public services (banks, restaurants, malls, convenient stores) speak English. In places of bureaucratic relevance, they have devices that translate the JP speech to EN text to enable communication.

PHOTOS



