

Lappeenranta University of Technology (LUT)

School of Business and Management

Computer Science Degree Program

Nihon university exchange report

I was studying at Nihon university from 12.1 to 31.3.2016. I arrived Japan at 10.1 and left at 6.4. I arrived one day early from official arrival day (11.1) and because it was holidays they couldn't let me in dormitories. For that reason, I stayed first day at Narita town at cheap motel. Next day I went to Narita international airport to meet representative from university. This representative turned out to be guide hired from airport, to find me and buy tickets for bus for me. Representative spoke "basic" English, which made communication interesting. Especially trying to understand what bus stop I needed jump out made me nervous, partially because names of places were naturally in Kanji. Anyway guide did his work well, because I managed to jump out of bus at correct station. And later on I learned that his English was in reality good compared to rest of Japanese, only some language teacher, English language students and some tourist guides spoke better English than him, out of every one I met. Eventually student came to fetch me from bus stop and led me to dormitories. Dormitory was other side of Tokyo than University. Trip from dormitories to university was 45 minutes in time. This was fine for me.

Paper work for school and dormitories was quite simple and straight forward. Only things that was challenging at beginning was paying dormitory rent. This was done by going to convince store other side of street with bill, after paying bill at convince store, it was returned to dormitory Dean. Otherwise paperwork was very simple.

14.1 we had orientation and placement test. I was late for orientation day, because I miss read papers. Thus I missed orientation. I did need to do placement test after interview, for I didn't know enough Japanese to be placed in advanced classes. Classes started at 18.1 at first week we needed to choose in what additional classes we wanted attend, there were 4 of them for each skill level to choose from. I choose to attend 2 out of 4. I take grammar and conversation, other two being reading and listening classes. Each additional class was once a week for two 45 min sessions. Because my exchange program was Language and culture program, we had every day 3 hours of obligatory language classes and after 13:00 obligatory afternoon lessons at Mondays and Wednesdays and sometimes at Fridays. These classes were about history, culture and society of Japan. Tuesdays and Thursdays afternoon lessons were for additional classes.

Main Language class prepares for official JLPT Japanese-Language Proficiency Test. It focuses solely on raising skill level of student for JLPT test. There is huge amount of material that will be gone through, in these lessons. Major focus is in grammar, secondary are memorization of vocabulary and Kanji. Secondary classes focus on their point and are fun, grammar being grammar and conversation being conversation. JLSP afternoon culture lessons are more lecture like and are really fun and educating, they have each week visitor teaching their chosen topic. Culture lesson focus on many different aspects of both contemporary and past Japan's culture.

Because program is very intensive, I recommend not taking all additional classes, My recommendation is taking grammar and conversation classes. This leaves just enough time memorize what is learned during lessons. Other wise program will become so heavy that exploring Tokyo and resting will stay as plans for next trip to Tokyo.

We had 3 official field trips as part of curriculum. This year they were trip to Yokohama, Kabuki

theater, and Tokyo life safety learning center. Yokohama trip we visited zen Buddhism main temple, old Edo period garden and Cup noodle museum. Tokyo life safety learning center taught general fire, first aid and earthquake knowledge. Apart from these we had 2 field trips as part of main language course. We visited Shinto fox shrine at fox festival day and went to Kanji calligraphy lessons at official calligraphy art and teaching center.

All courses had “rolling grading”, meaning all participation and behavior affected to final grade. Every aspect of studying affect grade such as: lesson participation, written essays, over all class performance/activity, almost daily memorization exams, and exams after finishing topic. Benefit of this system was, that it was easier not to fail course if one studied seriously. Main language study was so hard that all of my group(3 person) would had failed if other type of grading was used. Studying in this program needs serious concentration and dedication from beginning if one wants to pass course. Main language course and grammar course had exam at end of it. Main language courses exam was official JLPT Japanese-Language Proficiency Test for skill level, that was studied. Passing final exam(more than 60% of points) was requirement for continuing studying in this language program in Nihon university.

We had 5 public holidays free from school. 3 of them were public holidays: Feb 11, Mar 3 and 21. Other two I haven't recorded in my notes and study material from Japan by post haven't arrived to Finland yet.

What comes to Tokyo, best and only cheap way to travel is metro. It is important to notice that metro lines close about 23:00. After closing walking or super expensive taxis are left over choices for transport. Better option is often staying at karaoke or internet “cafe” over night. Outside of Tokyo local trains are best option for traveling, it is important to reserve accommodation early before traveling and agree upon key retrieval time. This is because Japanese hotels and motels keepers are super strict whit times tables and one will have problems if thing are not agreed on before hand.

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