

The Authentic Japanese Study Abroad Experience: A Unique Curriculum in a Unique Environment

In this issue, we sat down with three international students studying at Kyushu University to talk about all things study abroad—why they chose Japan, what it's like living here, and what international student support is available on Ito Campus.

Q. Why did you choose Kyushu University?

“The main reason I chose Kyushu University is that I thought I would get a more hands-on education here than at other universities.”

— Geofanny



Billy: I came here to conduct research in signal processing and machine learning, a field in which Japan particularly excels. I was also interested in Japan as the world leader in research on realizing “Society 5.0,” an initiative being promoted by the Japanese government. Additionally, Kyushu University has laboratories that are well suited to my research goals.

Michaela: I became interested in Japan the day I discovered the work of author Haruki Murakami. As I started looking into ways of visiting Japan, I found out about the Kyushu University JTW program (short-term study abroad course).

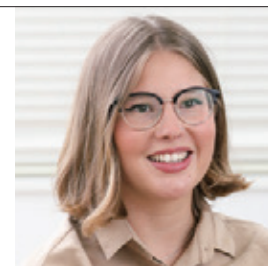
Q. What was it about the Kyushu University curriculum that made you want to study here?

Geofanny: IUP (International Undergraduate Program) at Kyushu University is good because it lets you interact with undergraduate students from other faculties, including the humanities. The program is fleshed out and includes classes that help students improve different skills, such as giving presentations. I am learning about bioresources and the environment, but my studies aren't limited to courses inside my biology major. I am also taking a wide range of subjects that include the humanities, economics, and international law, all topics that will be useful in the real world.

Billy: What makes Kyushu University unique in comparison to British universities is its research system. In the UK, I don't think I ever saw a group of faculty and students across different years, both undergraduate and postgraduate, collaborate on research like they do here at Kyushu. I think this system might be unique to Japan.

“JTW curriculum is based on the cultural experience of study trips and field trips, which I like because I can interact with both Japanese students and other international students.”

— Michaela



Michaela: I majored in anthropology in Sweden, and from that perspective, I think these kinds of interaction and fieldwork are great ways to learn. We get to go outside the school and experience things like kimono and tea ceremony, which I think is very important for understanding the culture.

Q. What were your first impressions of Japan and Kyushu University?

Geofanny: I was impressed by the sheer natural beauty around campus, so I like taking walks around the area.

Billy: It was like being inside a Japanese movie. Mountains, bamboo groves, rice fields—you really feel like, “This is Japan!”

Q. What do you think of your classmates?

Geofanny: I have plenty of classmates from different countries, each with diverse backgrounds and ways of thinking, which has helped me to start viewing things from different perspectives. They all work really hard and are goal-oriented, and everyone works together to help each other.

Billy: When I first came to Japan, I was pretty nervous that I wouldn't be able to communicate with the people here, but in reality, I realized that I had been worrying for no reason. Whenever something went wrong, I was always surprised—in a good way—by how kind and helpful people were.

Michaela: All of my JTW classmates are international students, and

everyone is really laid back. I feel like we can discuss most things, and I learn a lot from them. I like all of my classmates—and professors!—and it really feels like one big family to me.

Q. What have you enjoyed about the university's support system for international students?

“Whether it's looking for an apartment or making pension payments, the ISRSC has always been there to help me and made my student life a lot easier and more comfortable.”*

— Billy



*International Student and Researcher Support Center

Geofanny: Kyushu University's support system is fantastic because it matches Japanese student volunteers with international students. And the ISRSC makes it easy for international students to get help with important things like applying for scholarships.

Q. What are your plans and goals after graduation?

Geofanny: I would like to go on to the master's program if I can get a scholarship. If that doesn't work out, I want to find a job related to what I'm studying.

Billy: After completing my doctoral program, I would like to work in a field that is directly related to my research. Coming to Japan, I've gained a unique perspective on working in a different cultural environment, forms of collaboration, and international research, so whatever I do, I want to further my career in an environment where I can make the most of my experiences here.

Michaela: I'm hoping I can do something that combines all of the things I'm interested in, such as French literature and anthropology.

Billy

From the United Kingdom
Graduate School of Information
Science and Electrical
Engineering

Michaela

From Sweden
JTW (Japan in Today's World)

Geofanny

From Indonesia
School of Agriculture
International Undergraduate
Programs (In English)

The international alumni interview



Daniel Rakove

From USA
JTW
Current Position :
Consul for Political and Economic
Affairs, U.S. Consulate Fukuoka.

1. Please tell briefly about your work.

I have worked in the U.S. Department of State for 11 years, serving in Bangladesh, Mongolia, South Korea, Washington D.C., and now, Fukuoka, Japan.

2. What precisely does your job entail?

I meet with people from all backgrounds across the Kyushu-Yamaguchi region, trying to build ties, and learn from them about pressing issues, such as new

developments in science and technology, business, and politics. Then, I try to report on what I have learned to colleagues in the U.S. government and explain why it is important. I also try to assist American businesses. In February, I traveled to Yokohama to help with the evacuation of Americans from the Diamond Princess.

3. What makes your job worthwhile?

I love learning foreign languages and meeting all sorts of people. In 2019, I arranged an English-language startup pitch contest, which attracted some incredible entrepreneurs from around Kyushu (including from Kyushu University) and from Busan. This was the professional highlight of my time here.

4. What are your career goals?

As a diplomat, I am never sure where I will be in a few years' time. But wherever I go, I want to break down barriers and build consensus through dialogue.

5. What are the useful things acquired from your study at Kyushu University?

My time at Kyushu University helped give me the confidence that I could live abroad as a diplomat. Also, the friendships I made there have really lasted.

6. Would you give a message to current and future international students at Kyushu University?

Challenge yourself and take chances.

Scan this QR code for more details,
including a long version of the three students' talk.

