

Japanese Studies Overseas Experiences

The Department's curriculum offers a comprehensive study of Japan. Still it is important for students to be able to spend time in Japan, to compare what they have learned with their own eyes and also to gain inspiration for furthering their studies. Therefore, the Department of Japanese Studies offers a variety of study programmes in Japan ranging from several weeks to a full year. These programmes are extremely popular and preference for admittance is generally given to Japanese Studies majors. The department is striving to offer students an opportunity to experience the diversity of Japan.

Why you should go to Japan

To live in the target culture is the fastest and surest way to improve one's foreign language proficiency. Our students who come back from Japan after a substantial length of stay have all demonstrated significant improvement in their Japanese competence. Having first-hand experience in Japan will enable you to have more insights and to gain a much deeper knowledge. As a Japanese Studies major, you will not only gain deeper and better understanding of Japanese language, culture and society, you will also realize that living abroad helps you to discover yourself and your own cultural background, and an understanding of how you are connected to the world.

NUS Student Exchange Programme (SEP)

The SEP programme in Japan is open to all NUS students, but for some schools, preference is given to JS students or students with a good command of Japanese. Different schools have different emphases in their programmes. The current SEP partners in Japan are shown in the list below: Check the FASS SEP website <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/intl/underGradStuExch.html> for detailed information such as application deadlines, available SEP spaces, and preferred duration.

University	Duration*	Location	Selection
Hokkaido University	1 sem / 1yr	Sapporo	
Tohoku University	1 sem / 1yr	Sendai	
Akita International University	1 sem / 1yr	Akita	Dept Base
University of Tokyo, College of Arts and Social Sciences	1 sem / 1yr	Tokyo	
Keio University	1 sem / 1yr	Tokyo	
Rikkyo University	1 sem / 1yr	Tokyo	
Waseda University	1 sem / 1yr	Tokyo	
Tokyo University of Foreign Studies	1 sem / 1yr	Tokyo	
Ritsumeikan University	1 sem/ 1yr	Kyoto	
Kyoto University	1 sem / 1yr	Kyoto	
Kwansei Gakuin University	1 sem / 1yr	Kobe/Osaka	
Kyushu University	1 sem / 1yr	Fukuoka	

*duration is always subject to places availability

Students' voices

Karen Ang – SEP at Akita International University (2014)

My decision to go to Akita International University (AIU) for SEP was perhaps one of the best decisions of my life. I got to experience another side of Japan and discover new things I like about this country, not to mention the tons of new friends I made along the way. Looking back, the preparations were difficult, but the experience was priceless. The lifestyle in Akita is the complete opposite of Singapore – relaxed and slow-paced. The environment is ideal for students who want to take a break from the bustling city life. Some of the best aspects of Akita include the cool weather, the beautiful scenery and the rice. Classes are relatively small and apart from Japanese language classes, all classes are conducted in English. The best place in AIU is definitely the library, it is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also opens 24/7, convenient for bookworms such as myself. I had lots of opportunities to explore Akita and to practice Japanese. For instance, AIU regularly conducts bus trips and events where we could interact with locals. To practice Japanese, we could apply for a conversational partner or make use of the multimedia available in the school's resource center. As a small university, students in AIU are all part of a close-knitted community. There are many clubs and activities organized by the students, and almost all of us joined 2 or 3 clubs. In AIU, everyone practically knows everyone and I rarely felt alone. Everyone I met was really nice and friendly. Professors were also kind, helpful and approachable. My advice to aspiring AIU exchange students is to step out of your comfort zones and enjoy the experience to the fullest.

Francesca Chua – SEP at Hokkaido University (2013)

I was extremely fortunate to have been able to do my year-long SEP in Hokkaido University in Japan. Hokkaido University's beautiful campus provides for a great learning environment, and there was a lot of support and opportunities provided by the school to help me get used to life at a place with a completely different climate, different language, and different culture.

In the one year abroad, I experienced and learnt so many things that made my SEP there truly fulfilling and meaningful. At Hokkaido University, I got to take modules that covered topics not offered in NUS, such as Hokkaido History, that provided more depth to my knowledge on the history of Japan. The endless amount of activities outside school that I participated in, such as Zen Seminar and a week-long farmstay at Wassamu, enriched my learning as I was able to see for myself some of the social trends in Japan covered in my classes in NUS. During this one year, not only was I able to learn more about Japan, I was able to learn more about other countries thanks to the international students who were in the same programme as I was. Most surprising was the fact that I also able to look inwards and learn more about Singapore and myself through all the interactions with people from contrasting backgrounds. My SEP experience, I believe, was definitely the most exciting and memorable one year so far, a year that would prove to be extremely valuable in my future endeavours.

Tan Yan Ning – SEP at Kyushu University (2013)

In April 2013, I participated in an exchange programme with Kyushu University under the 'Japan in Today's World' (JTW) programme along with 50 other students from different part of the world. For most of us, it was our first time being in a foreign country and so Kyushu University was kind to provide a welcome trip to Beppu fully paid for to welcome all of us. In addition, every student is being paired with a Japanese buddy so that should you have any trouble while in Fukuoka, there is someone you can approach for help. We are also able to apply for a conversation partner and host family and have more chances to practice your Japanese. Throughout my four months in Fukuoka, I had enjoyed my stay. It was a great experience to meet so many friends from all around the world and to learn about the different cultures. Even the teachers are kind, helpful and easy to approach should you face any challenge in Japan.

Summer Programme

There are various opportunities to spend the summer in Japan. Depending on the available funding, partial funding may be given to selected students. Students will get a taste of life in Japan before they decide whether to pursue a longer study abroad experience. If students are not planning to go on SEP, this is another option. Many students have attended Asia in Today's World, Kyushu University Summer Programme. Kyushu University will grant a scholarship of ¥160,000 to 1 NUS student.

Name	Duration	Location	No. of Places	Scholarship Condition
ATW (Asia in Today's World) Kyushu University Summer Programme	6 weeks	Fukuoka	1	¥160,000 will be awarded to 1 student

There are many other universities/institutes offering summer programmes such as Senshu University, Akita International University, and private language institutes (eg. Matsudo International School, Sendagaya Japanese Institute). Brochures are available at the JS Department. Application deadlines for summer programmes are usually in the first quarter of the year.

Students' voices

Goh Wei Hao Benjamin (2016)

Over the course of my summer holidays, I attended the ATW Programme organised by Kyushu University that was held from 21st June to 5th August of this year. This is a seven week programme that included intensive daily Japanese lessons together with two other university modules that provided insight into Japan and Asia as a whole. For most of us, this programme was split into two halves – the first four weeks was self-exploration through staying in a dormitory and the last three weeks encompassed a homestay. This 7-week program is by far the longest period of time I have ever spent out of Singapore. It is also the first time I am travelling abroad on my own for such a long time. Needless to say, there were many worries and concerns before I embarked on this trip and there were obstacles I faced along the way. Nevertheless, my words cannot describe how enjoyable and fruitful this experience was for me, but I hope that through this report I can convey at least how enriching the programme was.

Yong Xin Lin Philine (2015)

ATW by Kyushu University had been a particularly exciting program for me. I was a little disappointed that at first that the university provided only up to higher intermediate Japanese language classes. But the classes proved to be intensive and challenging. On top of having language classes everyday from Monday to Friday, we had written assignments to complete and speeches to prepare every other day. But who would have thought that language classes could be so much fun! I actually looked forward to Japanese language class during the length of the entire program. Although conducted at a rather fast pace, with a very caring and understanding teacher, classes were enjoyable and there were simply so much fun and laughter in our Japanese language class everyday.

Tan Tong Hui Claudia (2014)

As expected, ATW was extremely enriching and fulfilling. During this trip, besides learning more about Japan and Japanese anthropology, sociology and literature, I have also managed to mingle and befriend people from all over the world. This is definitely not something that one gets the privilege to do so regularly and thus I feel extremely grateful for the opportunity. From this trip, the most important lesson was learning how culturally and socially diverse Fukuoka is compared to other parts of Japan, owing to its openness to foreigners and foreign cultures. Apart from that, living alone in a foreign country has definitely helped in making me a more adaptable and independent individual, by teaching myself ways to get by without having to rely on my family members. It also gave me the opportunity to look past my own cultural norms and integrate myself into the Japanese society.

Scholarship

Scholarships are available for qualified major students to study in Japan for at least one semester. Some scholarships require a good command of Japanese language. Following is the list of scholarships available:

Name	Duration	Description	Location	No. of Places	Support	Condition
Heiwa Nakajima Foundation “Invited Foreign Scholarship Students Programme”	1 year	Scholarship for 1 year SEP	SEP university of your choice	1	Monthly stipend of ¥120,000; preparation and travel expenses	You must be accepted by SEP
Hiroshima Singapore Association (HSA) & Mihara International Academy of Languages (MIAL) *	1 year (Apr-Mar)	Scholarship to attend Japanese language courses	Hiroshima	1	Exemption of partial course fees; ¥50,000 per month	More than 18 years of age; JLPT N4
Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) – Student Exchange Support Programme	1 sem/ 1 year	Scholarship for SEP	SEP university of your choice		Monthly stipend of ¥80,000	When you are accepted for SEP, the Japanese university will inform you.
Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry Foundation Scholarship (JCCI) * <i>[application deadlines in July and August]</i>	10 months	Scholarship for studying at Waseda University	School of International Liberal Studies, Waseda University	1	Maximum of SGD50,000	Singapore citizens; below the age of 24; university undergraduate; basic knowledge of Japanese language
	10 months	Scholarship for studying at International Christian University	College of Liberal Arts	1	Maximum of SGD50,000	Singapore citizens; university undergraduate; basic knowledge of Japanese language
Monbukagakusho Scholarship *	1 year	Scholarship to attend Japanese university	Your choice	1 – 3	¥117,000 per month	Singapore citizens; between the age of 18 to 30; good knowledge of Japanese language; Minimum CAP 3.5
Mitsui Cultural Scholarship (subject to availability) *	Summer programme	Asia in Today’s World (ATW)	Kyushu University	0-4	Full scholarship	Open only to JS students
NUS-Kyushu Student Exchange Programme	1 sem/ 1 yr	Scholarship for studying at Kyushu University	Kyushu University	1	SGD5,000 per semester	You must be accepted by the Kyushu University SEP

*** Note: Announcements will be emailed to major students. Please look out for the emails!**

Other Ad-hoc Scholarships

Name	Duration	Location	No. of Places	Condition
Kyoto Summer Program	2 weeks	Kyoto	2-3	JS majors; JLPT N3
Kyushu University Re-inventing Japan Project	10 days	Kyushu	2-3	Undergraduate; interest in traditional Japanese culture, heritage preservation
One-week language course at Mihara International Academy of Language (MIAL)	1 week	Hiroshima	4	Must be accepted for Hiroshima Homestay Programme

Field Study in Japan

Name	Duration	Place	No. of Places	Estimated Cost
JS3229 Field Studies in Japan (<i>special term module</i>)	4-5 days orientation at NUS + 10 days fieldtrip (May-June)	Depends on lecturer (Kyushu in 2016)	10	SGD500-2,000 Varies, depending on funding. (primarily funded by JCCI)
Fashion Marketing Study Programme in Tokyo	8 days	Tokyo	10-12	SGD700-1,200 for flight; ¥80,000 from JASSO

Students' voices

Sebastian Sim (2014)

The field studies module is arguably the best module I have taken. Although preparation for the field study was intensive and enervating, the field study was well worth the mental energy spent during that period. My peers and I had the opportunity to participate in two homestay programmes, one in Tomonoura, a town reminiscent of Edo period Japan, and another in Minamata, a city which is probably known best for the Minamata disease. Additionally, we visited hot spring towns, had a farmstay, and on one occasion, were served food that feudal lords ate in the past. Despite having only spent about 10 days in Japan, I thought I learnt far more than I did during the field study than in school. The short assignments we were tasked to complete encouraged self-learning, while Dr McMorran offered invaluable guidance throughout the trip. The trip was enlivened with constant laughter and Dr McMorran's "jokes", and we developed close friendships with each other. At the same time, we got to hone our Japanese language and interpersonal communication skills. In all, I enjoyed every bit of the field study, and I would recommend it to any student who wishes to deepen and challenge his or her understanding of Japan, while having the privilege to do so away from school.

Fashion Marketing Study Programme in Tokyo

I definitely enjoyed visiting the huge Isetan store. It was an extremely fun and insightful experience, and I learnt a lot about the different advertising strategies used by the different brands in Isetan. I also became more aware of how the products and sections are strategically arranged, and how everything from the outfits of the sales personnel to the prices of the products have been carefully selected. I encountered first-hand how Isetan manages to enhance each customer's shopping experience. This was one definitely of my favourite site visits. The visit to Isetan company also taught me more about the strengths and difficulties of a big company like Isetan, and how the image of a company can vary across countries even within the same continent.

I had a lot of fun working with the Japanese students to do the debate, and I think that their opinions were very interesting. Living in a country where fashion is so important likely shaped their views of fast fashion and the future of fashion in a way different from how the Singaporean students viewed this.

My group went to Harajuku (Takeshita-dori) for the field work. There was sufficient time to complete what we set out to do and we also got to see some of the shops near Omotesando to give us a clearer picture of how the streets and shops are organized. Being in a smaller group and for that few hours, allowed us to properly interact with the Meiji students which I think was good.

Internship Programme

In May 1998 the department began a new Business Internship Programme for our students in Hiroshima. The Hiroshima Singapore Association Internship Programme aims to provide students with a firsthand experience of working in a Japanese business environment. They have two days of Japanese language training before the three-week internship at one of these companies: Hiroshima ANA Hotel, Hiroshima Shinyo Bank, Japan Travel Bureau, Kinki Nihon Tourist, Rihga Royal Hotel, Toppan Printing Company. The students also experience the Japanese lifestyle and culture through living with host families and in dormitories.

Name	Duration	Location	No. of Places	Estimated Cost
Hiroshima Singapore Association Internship Programme	2 days orientation + 3 weeks internship (May-June)	Hiroshima	8	SGD2,000 (¥20,000 allowance will be given)

Students' voice

Titus Teo (2014)

During the 4 weeks in Hiroshima, I was attached to Rihga Royal Hotel, one of the most highly rated hotels in Japan. While I certainly had reservations initially about the benefits of interning at a hotel since I have no intention to pursue a career in the hoteling industry, those concerns were quickly quelled as this position puts one at the frontline - you have to interact with Japanese customers directly. This is arguably the best platform to put your formal Japanese language into practice. Mannerism and etiquette are highly valued in the Japan, especially more so in the service industry, so at the end of the 4-week program one would definitely have come a long way in providing the Japanese "Omotenashi". These soft skills will definitely serve one well in any industry, within Japan or otherwise. Of course, this internship was not without play. As part of the programme, we had the opportunity to interact with students from Hiroshima Shudo University, and watched Noh, a Japanese play. The weekends were spent by doing various activities with the Japanese homestay family as well, making this internship programme a holistic experience.

Homestay Programme

Many organizations in Japan provide opportunities for students to visit Japanese cities and stay with their host families to experience real Japanese life and culture in order to promote mutual understanding between Singapore and Japan. The programme also provided very good opportunities for them to practice their Japanese language skills.

Name	Duration	Location	No. of Places	Estimated Cost
Homestay Programme in Shizuoka Prefecture	10 days (Dec)	Shizuoka	5	SGD1,500-2,000
Hiroshima Homestay Programme	7 days (Dec)	Hiroshima	15	SGD1,500-2,000

Planning to go to Japan

You should plan ahead to maximize your chance to go to the programs you want. Note the deadlines for applications. There are some restrictions for application for you to be aware the following:

Student Exchange Program (SEP)

- **Round 1** - September/October of every year. This round allows you to plan for a semester away or an academic year away in the following academic year.
- **Round 2** - February/March of every year but this is only for Semester 2 of the following academic year.

When is the best time to head off for student exchange?

That will depend on whether you enrolled in NUS on the basis of GCE 'A' levels or a polytechnic diploma.

Let's talk about 'A' levels first. You should head for exchange in your 4th or 5th semester of your study. If you are only doing a 3 year BA, then your 6th semester will be your graduating semester and you should spend it at NUS. Why? So that you will not delay your graduation by a semester and that means you will not be able to attend commencement with all your friends.

Now for the Poly graduates among you, you will only be able to go for exchange in your 4th semester if you intend to do a three-year BA degree. As you are given exemption for 1 semester, your graduating semester will be your 5th semester in this case.

More detailed information and deadlines of applications will be found at the following web address:
http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/intl/special_prog/sepfaq1.html

Plan your SEP carefully. If you are interested in the Monbukagakusho Scholarship, you have to be in Singapore in Semester 2, since application deadlines, screening and interviews happen in February and March.

Students who are in their 1st semester may not apply for SEP. That means that the earliest Round at which you can apply is in your 2nd semester. Note that if you apply in Round 2, you can only go for Semester 2 of the next academic year (one semester only).

If you plan to go SEP for one semester and go to Monbukagakusho Scholarship for one year in the following year), and still graduate in 4/5 years, you have to apply for SEP in Semester 2 of your first year.

If you are planning to graduate at the end of 3rd year, you cannot go to SEP for a whole year of your 3rd year. You should consider going for a semester in the 5th semester.

Keeping a good CAP is also important for you to be selected for above opportunities. Most of the programmes are available on competitive bases.

For all the scholarships and SEP positions, once you are accepted you should not withdraw. So plan carefully.

Most importantly, let your mentor know that you are interested in studying in Japan, so that we can work together to maximize your chance to go to Japan. E-mail to jpshelp@nus.edu.sg if you have questions.

Here are some examples of your seniors who maximized their opportunities to study in Japan:

Case of Jing Ting (2011 cohort)

	Sem 1					Sem 2					Summer	
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July
Year 1												ATW Summer Programme
Year 2											JS3229 Field Studies in Japan	
Year 3	SEP @ Akita International University										JENESYS 2.0	
Year 4		Monbukagakusho Scholoarship @ Kumamoto University										
Year 5												

Case of Maimunah (2009 cohort)

	Sem 1					Sem 2					Summer			
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July		
Year 1														
Year 2											JENESYS Japanese Language Program to Osaka			
Year 3										JS3229 Field Studies in Japan			ATW Summer Program	
Year 4		Monbukagakusho Scholarship @ Yamagata University												
Year 5					Shizuoka Homestay									

Advice and comments from your seniors

- I understand the Japanese and their culture much better through the experiences as they were firsthand. It was also through the trips to Japan that interests were sparked and I managed to think of topics and write essays on them, including for my Independent Study Module paper. And I could better understand the level 3000 and 4000 classes and engage in more in-depth discussions (Xu Yuan Shao, Kennard).
- Be very careful about module mapping. If you plan to map Japanese Studies modules, don't take too many in NUS before going on exchange. Going earlier in your 3 or 4 year course of study will help with mapping in general as the pool of graduation requirements you have yet to fulfill will be larger (Chaw En Leung).
- I think the attitude one takes when studying in a foreign country is very important. Lectures and books aside, the breadth and depth of learning can be greatly increased not just when one takes in the sights and sounds, and interacts with both the locals and other foreign students, but

basically also being open to overthrowing previously-held stereotypes about Japan that one may have prior visiting the country itself. That being said, it is equally important to just enjoy the precious experience of living and studying in Japan! (Chew Ying Ling).

- If you have accommodation options - host family or dorms, I would recommend choosing host families, because students can practice their Japanese before and after school. And it is also nice to have home-cooked food after one long day, and someone who would not be very offended or irritated when answering your queries about life in Japan. (Ang Pek Sia)
- My year in Japan opened my eyes to the fact that there is much more to life than what I had been experiencing all along. Academic expectations and classes definitely were not as demanding as those in NUS, but that doesn't mean you learn less! As long as you open your eyes and heart to new experiences and people, you'll still come back feeling extremely fulfilled. I think the key is to be bold --whether in starting conversations with people, or perhaps even in speaking Japanese in the first place, or going to places you have always wanted to go. I did a lot of crazy things in Japan I don't think I would have dared to do, or even been able to do in Singapore. Don't try too hard to stay out of trouble, because you may be missing an opportunity to learn and grow! (Evon Too)
- I had a great time! Of course there were ups and downs, but that happens everywhere and at any point of time in life so it helps to bear in mind that it is a rare opportunity to experience school-life in another country and meet all sorts of people from all over the world (whom you may never meet again), and having a positive mindset helps very much to overcome difficulties. I made many close and reliable international friends. Studying was not difficult so I took lots of time off to travel. Kansai is really a beautiful place with so much variety (big cities, cultural towns, rural villages etc.) so experience as much of it as possible. (Png Jia Yan)
- From October 2012 to September 2013, I was very fortunate to have enrolled in the Japanese Language & Culture Course at Kyushu University under the Monbukagakusho Scholarship. I made many Japanese and international friends during my stay there, while taking intensive Japanese language classes and exploring many parts of Japan. Not coming from a well-to-do family, I was very reluctant to go on overseas study trips as I thought I could not afford it myself. However, the scholarship ensured that students do not have to worry about living expenses while doing their studies in Japan. Spending about one year in Fukuoka, I have come to know more about Japanese culture, and the language (and the Hakata dialect). I made many trips around Japan, to the countryside areas of Kyushu, Shikoku, Okinawa and Yamagata, and also major cities like Tokyo, Osaka, and Hiroshima. I experienced the four seasons: watching autumn leaves fall, playing with snow, having picnics under cherry blossom trees, and watched fireflies at a creek. Living in Japan for about a year was a dream come true. It improved my Japanese communication skills, my understanding of Japanese culture, and has changed my life tremendously. I encourage all Japanese Studies students to go to Japan! You will not regret it! (Mizael Poh)