

EXCHANGE STUDENT REPORT

SPRING 2012

IMBA - NCCU

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Once Upon A Time @ IUJ / Spring 2012

The simply reason I made my choice to go to Japan for exchange is because I wanted to go somewhere not far from Taipei and also I've never been to Japan. Therefore, Japan seemed to be the right option for me. Speaking about IUJ or International University of Japan, I believe little did people know about this graduate school, so did I at that time. Have a look through IUJ website; I haven't got any idea about how is IUJ until I actually arrived there. Then, where is IUJ? IUJ is located in Minami Uonuma, Niigata. Still have no idea? OK, let me tell you that in order to get there you have to take Shinkansen northwest for about 3 hours to arrive at Urasa, the nearest train station, where you can wait for IUJ shuttle bus, in front of station east exit, to go to IUJ. Not easy going there, but worth visiting at least once.

Totally, I spent 3 months at IUJ (Whole spring term), A real amazing 3 months, full of surprises, smiles and sweats. So please allow me to tell you more in details about my life as exchange student and hopefully, you will enjoy reading and may be living at IUJ as I did.



Life & Culture :

My first impression about this city and IUJ, when I first arrived in April, was SUPER COLD!!! I chose to take night bus from Tokyo to Nagaoka and then took local train to Urasa, instead of taking Shinkansen which is much faster yet more expensive. Despite the fact that April is the time for spring, the whole city and IUJ were still covered with snow, 3 Meters Height, by the time I arrived there. Everywhere was white, a real winter wonderland. However, when spring finally arrived in May, snow melted very fast, revealed its hidden beauty of rice fields surrounding school and soon Sakura lane has become a highlight for students.

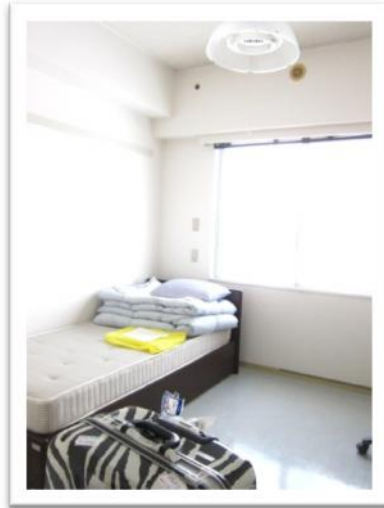
By the time I arrived there, I found out that I was the only exchange student in spring semester 2012. Not to mention that most students live on campus, I was quickly recognized as new comer. At first I felt like I was totally stranger to them and I believe they would feel the same. After a month, I finally adapted and made some friends.

My life at IUJ started with the checking in to my room at dormitory2.

- *The room* - Thanks to the terrific baggage delivery system in Japan, my big baggage arrived before mine. Soon after I checked in to the dormitory, I found the dormitory at IUJ tiny but cozy and comfortable. The room has a big window, single bed with clean bed sheet, working desk, built-in closet and toilet with small bath tub. I also found out that for the married student, IUJ provided "Married Student Dormitory"

for them as well, what a thoughtful of IUJ! The room has heater which is a must-have during winter in Niigata. The electricity, hot water and the rental fee will be billed at the end of each month.

- *The kitchen* – Each single student dormitories (totally 3 buildings) is equipped with shared kitchen on one floor. There are 2 big shared refrigerators but many students have their own small ones in rooms.
- *The laundry* – The coin washing and dryer machine are available at each building. Each wash or dryer cost you 100Yen/time.
- *Other facilities* – Gymnasium, fitness, tennis courts, canteen (open on schedule), convenient store, and parking space.



Because of its location, the school has organized big events in each semester to engage the local people and tighten good relationships with the community. Once you settle down, you will never be bored because there will always be events after events for you to attend. And because of the tranquility and location, many students told me that it is good for concentrating on study.

What to do during weekdays – studying, have a group meeting and discussion, doing assignment, going to gym/fitness, play some sports with friends, practice shows for many events, cooking and enjoy dinner with friends, drinking and throwing a party in the dorm

What to do in the weekend – wake up early to queue up for the first shuttle bus to nearby shopping mall; as the mini bus can accommodate only 33 people for a time, wake up early to miss the first bus and wait another 2 hours for the second bus to go shopping and/or buying groceries. Or buy your groceries and/or shopping on-line (famous

“Rakuten” and “Amazon Japan”), then wake up late on lazy Saturday/Sunday

Optional activities – if your friend own a car; onsen, karaoke, traveling, dining off campus

In addition, don't worry if you can't speak Japanese, you will surely survive at IUJ. IUJ is the English speaking society, I never experienced any problem when contacting the administrative office, dormitory staffs or librarian.



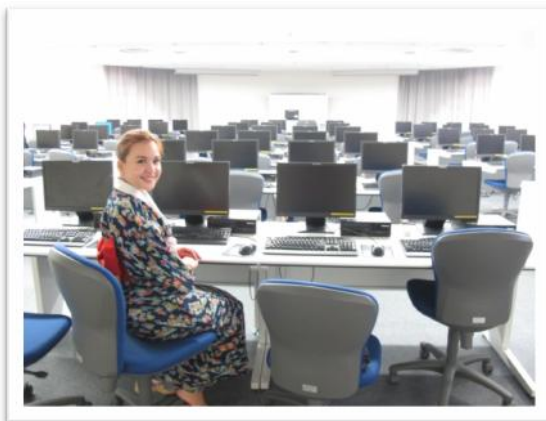
Academic :

I took 3 classes at IUJ; those classes are interesting and different from normal class offered at IMBA, NCCU; Human Resource Management, International Career Development and New Business creation and Innovation. Since there are many graduate programs offered at IUJ as IR (International Relations), IDP (International Development Program), E-Biz and others, so following I will share some experiences about academic parts at IUJ, mainly regarding IM (International Management Program) which is the program I studied.

- *Period of study* – There are 3 semesters at IUJ, fall, winter and spring. The vacation starts from July to September. The semester start from fall, begin October. The period of my study in spring which start in April to June. It is appointed that students have to finish their study within 2 years. I was told that this is also due to the limit of facilities, especially the dormitories which can only accommodate the limit number of student. Therefore, there will be only the first and second year student in the semester. After the first year, the students have to start thinking about their thesis and should finish the thesis defense

before July, when the graduation ceremony was held.

- *Varieties of class each semester* - Since there are also other graduate programs offered at IUJ, the varieties of courses are different in each semester. Students are allowed to take classes from different programs with approval from the professor. IUJ also offered free Japanese class, however, the classes for beginner (like me) only offer in fall term.
- *Size of the class* – The size of class is comparatively smaller than IMBA because of numbers of students each semester as I mentioned earlier. As I remembered each class will be limited to 30 students in order to maintain the quality of the lecture.
- *The professors* – Most of professors are Japanese with international professional background. The professors will distribute the course syllabus to the student before class. The class schedule will be conducted following the class syllabus. I was surprised that the professors know all students by name, so it was easy to recognize a new comer like me.
- *The classmates* – There are students from countries all over the world. The different backgrounds of students have made the class more interesting. However, I feel that students in IUJ are more competitive in class comparing to IMBA, NCCU. It might be due to the fact I was told that 70% of students are on scholarships so they have to try to keep their good grade.
- *The examination* – Among all the courses I took, there are only take home examinations. The professors will give assignments; either group or individual; and the students have to submit it either online or in hard copy before the deadline.
- *The evaluation and grading system* – The class participation is accounted for 15-20% of the grade. The professors encouraged students to discuss and exchange ideas both in classes and in group meetings. Most of classes take peer evaluation into account. Each course allows 3 absences or the student will fail to pass the course, or else the student has to inform the professors in advance about their absence. The grading is A (4.00), B+ (3.75), B (3.00), C+ (2.75) and so on.
- *The facilities* – Once arrived at IUJ, the administrative office will schedule the orientation time for students. In my case, any time because I am the only exchange student that semester. I was introduced to classrooms, library, computer rooms and others. Then, I was provided with a personal copy and library card. These 2 cards are used to calculate my copying and library fine expense (if any) each month. The student will be given an IUJ Gmail account name as xxx@IUJ.ac.jp. This e-mail account is the main communication channel for any news and updates among all IUJers. The computer rooms and study rooms are open 24hrs.



For future students :

For the future students who decided to go to IUJ, I would tell you that please don't expect to find a life as in a big city; clubbing, shopping, convenient transportation. This is a part of Japan that you might not imagine that there are a

very unique international graduate school existed. However, what you can expect from IUJ is the tranquility and beauty of surrounding nature.

I will not lie to you by saying IUJ is my love at first sight, as I was a bit shocked by its location; which many people mentioned as “real middle of nowhere”, when I first arrived at IUJ, after recently left cosmopolitan cities like Taipei and Tokyo. But honestly, after passed moments of struggle and adaptation, I found myself fell in love with IUJ already. IUJ has its own charm and uniqueness which you cannot find in other school in big cities.

What you should prepare is;

1. Money : cost of living in Japan is higher than in Taipei, everything cost you money
2. Clothes : check the weather condition and prepare enough clothes as much as possible because buying new clothes in Japan can cost you fortune.
3. Open-minded : living with people from different cultures, even from the one from same country, still need open-minded and understandings
4. Adventurer Heart : open your heart and give yourself a chance to try every new things you might experiences at IUJ such as trying Afkanistan food, playing indian card game or walking along rice fields for half an hour to have lunch at nearby university
5. Be modest and humble : remember when in Rome, do as Romans do. Japanese appreciate humbleness, seniority is very important

After all, before I knew, my life at IUJ has come to the end of exchange program and soon I realized that one semester is too short and there are a lot of thing I want to do and a lot of people I want to get to know better. However, this is life, life goes on and all I can take back with me are the unforgettable memories and friendships from IUJers.



With love, Leo ♥