



Graduate School of Law, Doshisha University (Japan)

Study Guide

1 Overall impression

I was only able to enter Japan on March 24th, 2022.

Since the semester at Doshisha runs from April to August, I still lived a full semester in Japan.

Therefore, the overall impression of the first semester is in stark contrast with the one of the second semester.

I will focus on the semester when I was actually in Japan.

I am left with an amazing experience. The quality of the education, the close contact with the professors, the privileged and distinguished institution you become part of (Doshisha University) are all very exceptional and very unique elements.

Of all Asian countries, Japan is certainly one that is worth taking the time to explore and understand.

Also, life in Japan is extremely pleasant.

Kyoto is the best city in Japan to study. It has a millenary history, is very traditional, has lots of natural surroundings, and is very well positioned in the center of Japan.

There are many opportunities to work in Tokyo, but to live in Kyoto is one precious element of this program I underrated before witnessing it.

Doshisha University is located right next to the imperial palace, in the heart of Kyoto.

It is also one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Japan and therefore holds a very special status in Kyoto.

Another great aspect was becoming part of the small and welcoming Swiss community in Japan, especially through the Swissnex consulate in Osaka.

Overall, I would recommend anyone to choose Doshisha and Kyoto because the destination is a niche, extremely rich, different, and exclusive.

2 Making preparations

(e.g. administrative matters, finding information)

This is a process where patience is key. It will take time and back and forth of documents.

Fumie, the university coordinator, is very cooperative and does an excellent job of helping you see through the process.

All in all, just do as you are told, meet the deadlines, and you will be fine.

3 Contacts/Responsibilities

(e.g. important contact persons at the Partner University and Faculty)

The most important contact (the only one you need) is the university double degree program coordinator.

In my case, it was Ms. Fumie Kurihara. You can ask her anything, and she will send you the information.

4 Housing

I found nice accommodation – Yoshida Student Center – 17 mins away from the university (5 mins by bicycle).

It was fairly expensive (95'000 JPY/ month), but included everything (3 meals/day, cleaning, laundry). Mine was for boys only, but they had another house for girls.

Yoshida Student Center is small (3 students + staff), but it provided me with a home and somewhat of a family, and I lived with Japanese and westerners, which was nice.

Also, every Wednesday, the student center would organize english-speaking dinners, and many Japanese students would come to practice their English.

Alternatively, the university proposes dormitories. The safest and easiest choice is to book a dormitory through the university.

I also just went through the process of getting my own apartment in Tokyo. It is slightly more difficult, though manageable.

You will have to count a minimum of 250'000 JPY for initial costs (that is in Tokyo, Kyoto is certainly cheaper).

Therefore, this is only a reasonable financial choice if you plan to stay longer.

5 Arrival

I arrived at Kansai airport, then took a train to Kyoto station and a bus to my dormitory.

It all went smoothly and people are keen to help. Especially airport and public transport staff.

Google maps will get you anywhere, and usually, it is exactly right.

6 Telephone

(e.g. costs, carriers)

There are various plans for a cell phone. I got a UQ mobile medium deal, with about 15 GB per month for 3'500 JPY/month.

You have to pay an initial fee of 3'500 JPY.

You can ask for help at the university COOP Shop/student shop. They will give you a flyer and point you to the nearest cell phone company shop.

7 Bank account

Opening a bank account is fairly straightforward, but you should go with someone who understands Japanese.

I got a cash account, so I could only withdraw money and not pay directly with my card.

However, you can charge money on your ICOCA (train card). You can pay in various places with your ICOCA card (convenience stores, some shops, some restaurants). I used it as a debit card.

Also, I recommend using a digital bank such as Revolut. That way, you minimize the costs of money transfers, cash withdrawals, and paying with the card.

The exchange rates are much more favorable than the ones of my swiss bank (UBS). I withdrew 1 million JPY cash in Switzerland (that is the maximum you can carry through the border).

This cost me 300 CHF. It would have cost much less just to use my Revolut card in Japan and withdraw cash from my digital bank account.

I would advise you to consider this as an option and look into it for more details.

8 Transport

Transport is pretty straightforward.

You can get return tickets at around 1'300 CHF.

A one-way ticket is usually 800-900 CHF, so you might be better off by taking a return ticket right away. You might have to stop at one of Tokyo's airports to change for a domestic flight. In that case, you should hurry up as you might not make it in time for your connection. (especially if COVID measures are still in place).

Even though the company will provide you with another flight free of charge, you might have to wait until the next day.

9 General information about the Partner Faculty and student life

Doshisha University is one of the most prestigious private universities in Japan. Private universities are more expensive than public universities.

Doshisha is the best or second best university in Kyoto and Kansai. The campus is absolutely charming, with red brick buildings and a long history.

People in Japan all know Doshisha, and you will get reactions as soon as you mention you study there. You should try to participate in events for international students. You will meet many Japanese wanting to practice their English or just meet international students.

As a graduate student, you might not be allowed to join a club.

However, I joined a rugby club outside the university, which was great.

You might want to find an activity like that.

Your closest friends might be the ones in your program. In my case, one Taiwanese, one Chinese, and two Swiss students.

However, you will be assigned a study place and a study room. If you study there often enough, you'll make friends with the Japanese studying there too.

10 Teaching and studying at the Partner Faculty

(e.g. program structure, methodology, exams, etc.)

REGULAR CLASSES

Classes are small, 1 to 4 students, rarely more. There is a privileged contact between students and professors.

Professors are always happy to have students who participate, ask questions, and discuss with them.

Doshisha is specialized in international commercial arbitration. It offers a lot of classes related to international arbitration.

Therefore, I focused my degree on international commercial arbitration.

Other choices relate more to Japanese law, which I was only remotely interested in.

I also audited classes from the graduate school of political science and graduate school of global studies.

There are several classes you can choose that are not directly related to law in other graduate schools, such as those I just mentioned.

CREDIT TRANSFER:

You can transfer 10 Japanese credits (30 swiss credits) from Zurich to Doshisha.

This will help you work on your thesis and enjoy your time in Japan, so I would recommend doing it. You can always take more classes if you want.

MASTER THESIS:

Your master thesis will take you a lot of time. Your supervisor will correct it and send it back again throughout the semester.

The workload for the master thesis can be very large, so plan your classes accordingly.

I took all my credits in my first semester so I could focus on my thesis during the second semester.

The thesis is a good opportunity to study something you are interested in, and for which Doshisha doesn't offer classes.

In my cases, I since I studied technology law at UZH, I wrote my thesis on technology arbitration at Doshisha.

JAPANESE CLASSES:

Also, Japanese classes are great at Doshisha. I took 3 of them.

If you plan to learn Japanese, you should start fairly soon. If you can, start taking classes in Zurich from your first year of master's.

After one year, you should start being able to talk. Especially if you have lived in Japan the whole time.

The international house of Kyoto also offers online talking lessons 40min. for 500JPY only.

This is a good way to improve your speaking skills.

11 City

(e.g. cultural activities, sports, discounts, nightlife, must-sees, short trips, etc.)

Kyoto is great and has a lot to offer. Simply tour the main tourist attractions.

You might want to do that with newly arrived international students.

Commuting is fairly expensive. Google maps are excellent for getting you from A to B. You can set it to show you the lowest fares.

It may take longer, but you will pay less, especially if you take the bus.

Nightlife in Kyoto is also nice. You can get great deals as a foreigner. In some clubs (Kitsune), you get free drinks up to a certain point.

I joined a Rugby team in Kyoto. If you have a sport you like, I would definitely recommend joining a team.

The university has discount tickets for the Shinkansen and other transport. You can ask the coordinator about this.

Date: August 2022