



## University of Tsukuba, Japan

2019-2020

<b>PREPARATION</b>	
exchange application process	Honestly, the application process was awful. It was really bureaucratic, everything needed to be sent by postal mail and there were so many documents, that I had no idea where to start. It took me a while before I finally understood what to do and how to do it. I was happy that I could do the application with a few others from UU. Also, the English language in the documents was kind of odd, probably because the Japanese was literally translated, which made the sentences a bit weird.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	The international office helped me so much. I was mainly in contact with Paula Bannings, who basically helped me through the complete application process and had contact with the international office in Japan whenever I needed it. Even during my stay in Japan, she was a great help.
academic preparation	I did not really need any academic preparation, as you can choose your own courses here. You can even follow courses for freshmens, so you really do not need any academic preparation before coming to Tsukuba.
language preparation	I spoke a little bit Japanese before coming to Japan because of my family, but I wish I had actually studied some. It kind of depends on what your goal in Japan is, but I wanted to actually improve my Japanese, so I wanted some Japanese friends. But as Japanese people really do not speak any English, you can't really make Japanese friends without speaking at least a little bit Japanese. I am now (after a year) on a level where I can hang out and conversate with my friends in Japanese, but it was really hard in the beginning. If you're planning on trying to communicate with Japanese people, make sure you study at least some basic Japanese, cause it will really (!) make it much easier.
finances	I had my family who was supporting me financially and quite some savings before I went to Japan. It is quite an expensive place to live to be honest, and without any Japanese language skills it is not that easy to find a part-time job. So make sure that you either have a scholarship, some savings, support from family or speak pretty good Japanese, so you can find a part-time job there.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	Once you arrive, the uni will tell give you a book with the courses you can take. The system is kind of weird (if you ask me), but the first two weeks you can basically go to any class that seems interesting, and if it was interesting to you, you can (after those two weeks) register for the course. So taking classes in the first two weeks is without any consequences, as you can drop the courses anytime, because you're not registered yet. To register to the classes you want, you need a sign from the teacher that teaches the class. Some classes are really popular, so make sure that you don't wait to long! The book they give you with the classes do not include all the classes, honestly I don't even think 10% of them. There is a website ( <a href="https://kdb.tsukuba.ac.jp">https://kdb.tsukuba.ac.jp</a> ) that includes all the classes! Ask you're tutor for help if you don't understand it. There's also a lot of interesting Japanese classes. If you don't speak any Japanese, it might seem scary to take Japanese taught classes, but the practical sports classes and practical art classes are usually easy to follow without understanding any Japanese!
academic quality of education activities	Compared to the level of difficulty of the classes at UU, the classes are really doable. The way of examining is different though, as it is more focussed on facts instead of analysing. Some classes are given by teachers who



are not that good at English, what might make it a little bit harder to understand, but in the end I never had any problems with that. Overall, I think the level of the classes are pretty low compared to UU, so it shouldn't be a problem.

#### counselling & support at receiving university abroad

The people at the international office in Japan are really nice, but also have no idea what they're doing. They are divided in 3 different offices, and you never really know which one to go to. They sent me a few times to another one, while the other one said I needed to be there. Just be really clear while telling what you want and sometimes you should not let yourself be sent away. In the end they always helped me with whatever I needed, but it just does not always go as smooth as in the Netherlands.

#### transfer of credits

The system of credits in Japan is really different than in the Netherlands, so if you want to know how many credits you get for specific courses (according to the UU system), make sure to contact the international office. As I don't really need the credits in the first place, I didn't really look at that, but just chose the courses that seemed fun to me. You just need to send an e-mail to the UU and make sure you get your transcript of records at the end, the UU will do the rest. You do need to be aware of the rules of the UU, there are some requirements if you want to transfer the credits.

## STUDENT LIFE

#### welcome & orientation programme

The university in Tsukuba will match you with a Japanese student who will be your tutor. This person will help you, especially the first few days, with everything, as everything is new to you. Most of them speak (at least a little bit) English. I know from experience that not every tutor is as committed, but do not feel bad to ask them for something, as they want to help you and as the university actually pays them to be a tutor. The orientation program gives a lot of information, a little bit too much if you ask me, but don't feel stressed about everything you have to do, because it will all fall in place. These orientations are also a good place to make some friends, as everyone who is there is also a new exchange student.

#### accommodation

When you apply for this university, they will send you a mail with the possibilities for dorms. They vary based on priced and facilities. The room I had was the biggest (and most expensive) one. It was around 33m<sup>2</sup>, had a kitchen, toilet, balcony and bathroom (all for myself) and cost around 380 euros a month. I loved the place, it was clean, I had many friends in my building and my friends and I had a lot of fun in my big room, haha.

#### leisure & culture

In the beginning there are quite some welcoming events for the new international students. Even though they might seem boring, many new students go there, so it's a good opportunity to make some new friends. Especially the parties and food events organized by either Tisa and Casa are fun (if you ask me). These are both student associations for international students, but there's also quite some Japanese students there who would like to meet international students. Also, Japan is famous for the so-called circles, which are clubs for students with the same interests. I joined a dancecircle, where I met most of my best friends. I do have to say that in most of those circles are mainly/only Japanese people, so without speaking Japanese it might be a little difficult, but on the other hand, for me it was a great opportunity to actually make Japanese friends and practice my Japanese and get to know the "real" Japanese culture. There are maybe like a 100 different circles, not only sports, but also for singing, drawing, gaming etc etc. Literally everything you can think of. Some might be more serious than others, so please make sure to ask someone in the circle how dedicated you have to be. For example, I ended up dancing like 20 hours a week, because the circle was pretty serious. The Japanese culture is really different than any Western culture, but it is (I think) an easy one to adapt to, as everyone there is kind, polite and willing to help. The only barrier might be language.

#### suggestions/tips

My main tip is to (especially in the beginning) go to many events, look around and talk to people, even though it might be awkward or uncomfortable in the beginning. There is so much to do in Tsukuba, even though it might



not seem like that. The most important thing is to meet people that you like and share some interests with, but you will not easily find those if you don't go out and look for them.

## CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

I would 100% recommend Tsukuba, as well the destination as the university. I had the most amazing time, met the most amazing people and learnt a lot about myself, the Japanese culture, the Japanese language and about other people/society. Honestly, if you're doing an exchange because of academic reasons, maybe don't go to Tsukuba University, as the level is not really high (from my perspective), but for all other reasons, I would definitely go.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

The start of an exchange (not only in Tsukuba I think, but in general) might be hard, as it can feel lonely and you might feel misplaced. I had this too, the first week of my stay. But believe me, eventually you will find your place there and you can/will have a great time. Just relax, don't worry too much and enjoy every moment there, because believe me: time flies and before you know you'll be back, thinking of the fun times you had during your exchange.

## 2018-2019

### PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application process for UU was very easy and straightforward. The application at Tsukuba University was more elaborate and took some time. In the end it was not as complicated as it seemed.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The international office at UU helped us through the application process by checking our forms and sending them to Japan. This was very helpful.

academic preparation

I did no academic preparation.

language preparation

I had no language preparation. I do recommend that if you are planning to go to Japan and especially Tsukuba. The number of people who speak English is not as much as I expected. you will also benefit more from the Japanese lessons if you already know some.

finances

I had no scholarship. I worked in the year before my exchange and saved up. Japan is not a cheap country to live and especially if you want to travel around a bit you need some extra money.

### STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I did the short exchange program. This means you can enroll in any course for the time you are there. Because there were no law courses I did a lot of different subjects from mathematics to geography. Enrolling in a course was quite different and took quite some effort. But the counselors and professors are very helpful.

academic quality of education activities

The academic quality of the course was not as good as in Utrecht. Sometimes the teachers English was not at a adequate level to teach an English course. Also the way of testing and teaching is of a different level.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad



Japanese people are the friendliest and really eager to help. There is a special office for exchange students where you can come with all your questions.

transfer of credits

I have not yet received my credits. Tsukuba University said this will happen two months after the end of my exchange semester (30<sup>th</sup> March), so that will be the end of May.

## STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

There was almost no welcome or orientation programme hosted by the University with the goal of meeting other students. However, after a week the classes start and then you will meet lots of people.

accommodation

The university arranges your accommodation. All the exchange students live on the same part of the campus and this is very convenient. You can choose from different rooms. I had the second largest room. I did not like living by myself and therefore would prefer to share some facilities, but that is personal.

leisure & culture

There are many clubs you can join. There are sportclubs, but also culture focussed groups. I recommend joining a club to enrich your experience. Tsukuba is only a 45 minute trainride away from Tokyo. Go there and explore the city a lot!

suggestions/tips

I visited Koya San. A mountain where there are buddhist monestries where you can stay and join their prayer. This was an incredible experience.

## CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Japan is an unique country and I recommend everybody to go there. Japanese people are the friendliest and cleanest people in the world. It has so much to offer that half a year was not enough.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

If you want to grow as a person and have once in a lifetime experiences then go to Japan. If you have any questions feel free to contact me through the REBO international office.

## PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application process is very detailed and difficult, but the exchange coordinators are very helpful.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

The exchange coordinator for tsukuba knows a lot about the procedures in Tsukuba and is very helpful.

academic preparation

I didn't do any academic preparation

language preparation

I would advice you to study the hiragana and katakana alphabet before going to Japan. If you don't, you will have to study a lot on this the first few weeks, and other classes will be very difficult.

finances



Food in supermarkets is expensive. Eating out is relatively cheap, about 10 euros for a decent meal. Hotels are expensive, but the housing on campus is very affordable.

<b>STUDY ABROAD PERIOD</b>	
study programme (content and organisational issues)	
I did some Japanese language classes and art classes	
academic quality of education activities	
The teachers speak very little English, so other classes than Japanese language classes are not high quality	
counselling & support at receiving university abroad	
The coordinators are very kind and helpful. It can be difficult to explain your issue to them, because not everyone speaks English.	
transfer of credits	
I planned on graduating after coming back to the Netherlands, but this was delayed one month because it took a long time before I received the transfer of credits.	

<b>STUDENT LIFE</b>	
welcome & orientation programme	
There was an orientation program with information on signing up for classes and other study related subjects, but no activities to get to know other exchange students. I started in oktober, this is the second semester in Japan (the academic year starts in April). I heard the welcome programme is better when you start in April.	
accommodation	
There are campus rooms available, not that expensive. You get everything you need.	
leisure & culture	
Tsukuba is a very small town. Not a lot of bars or restaurants, or other activities. You can get to Tokyo in about an hour.	
suggestions/tips	
I would suggest you ask around, there are some groups that do 'club activities', a nice way to get to know people.	

<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain	
I would definitely recommend studying abroad. If you're interested in Japan, this university is a great option for you. The Japanese culture is very interesting and the people are very kind.	
do you have any additional advice or comments?	
I expected there to be more international students. Most of the international students in Tsukuba are Asian. If you go to a University in Tokyo you will have more interaction with international students.	

**2017-2018**

preparation
exchange/placement application process



<p>The exchange application was not too difficult to get through. The first stage is the normal application through Osiris which was very easy. Then after a few months, I got a letter from the University of Tsukuba in which they asked me for a lot of information. I was a bit dazzled at first when I saw the three sheets long excel file which I had to fill in. It turned out to be quite easy and it was mainly the presence of all the Japanese characters that make it seem like a lot of work.</p> <p>After sending my formal application to the University of Tsukuba by post, I was very excited and I couldn't wait to receive a letter of acceptance. It was at the beginning of July (2.5 month before departure) that I received an email asking me to submit my preferences for what kind of room I would like to live in at the campus in Tsukuba. This was not even the official letter of acceptance. Nonetheless, I had booked a ticket four months prior to my departure since everybody told me that it has never preceded that a student from Utrecht, under normal circumstances, had been denied from going on an exchange to the University of Tsukuba. 1.5 month before my departure I received a letter at home that contained the official letter of acceptance and a certificate of eligibility which I needed to apply for a student visa. The application for the visa was quite easy (two train rides to the Hague and don't forget your passphotos) and then I was ready to go.</p>
<p>counselling/support at home university</p>
<p>Everybody at the UU had been very helpful as they helped me to send the application letter and they provided me with a form to state that my English was of sufficient level. Also the UU foreign office gave me the contact details of a student who went to Tsukuba before me and the details of two Japanese students who just arrived in Utrecht. Meeting those students was nice and it helped me being even more excited and motivated to go to Japan.</p>
<p>academic preparation</p>
<p>Non existent</p>
<p>language preparation</p>
<p>Prior to going to Japan, I followed a course of Comprehensive Japanese at the Babel institute which I found quite helpful. It is advisable to follow the course and actually do your homework, especially when it comes down to learning the Hiragana (45 Japanese basic characters) because it will give you a nice head start when you start in Tsukuba, since taking a language course there is obligatory. Don't worry though if you don't speak any Japanese or haven't studied the language before. It is very well possible to start from level zero.</p>
<p>finances</p>
<p>I applied for the JASSO scholarship and only to find out later in Japan that the JASSO scholarships are no longer granted to foreign students who go on exchange for half a year or a year. I did have some financial support from my parents and I received financial support from the Dutch state which turned out to be sufficient in the end. If you want to make trips within Japan, which I can really recommend, it might be nice if your parents are willing to pay for that or that you have some savings. It is possible to get a small job in Japan for which you will have to obtain a student working visa once you are there.</p>
<p><b>study/placement abroad period</b></p>
<p>study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)</p>



<p>In your application for an exchange to the University of Tsukuba, you are required to refer to some kind of studyplan which includes courses and credits you are planning to be rewarded. Don't worry since the real choice for which courses you want to attend will be made during your first week in Tsukuba. In the second and third week, you will have the chance to visit all courses that appeal to you. If you like the course, all you have to do is get a signature from the teacher on a special form you will be given at your start at the university. So during the second and third week, you can try different courses and then from the fourth week, your choices will be permanent. Like I mentioned earlier, following a course of comprehensive Japanese is obligatory. In addition, I followed the following courses: Law and Society in Japan, Study Tour on Japanese Culture, Kendo (which is a sword fighting sport I actually practised for three months), Comperative Law and International Politics.</p>
<p>academic quality of education/placement activities</p>
<p>The courses were quite easy in my experience.</p>
<p>counselling/support at host institution/organisation</p>
<p>At the University of Tsukuba, I was appointed a tutor student who was very helpful to me. His social life was quite different to mine in Utrecht so at first I found it difficult to determine whether or not he liked my presence and friendship. In the end we got along very well and we are still in contact.</p>
<p>transfer of credits</p>
<p>This was very easy and cost me very few effort.</p>
<p><b>student life</b></p>
<p>welcome/orientation programme</p>
<p>There was a welcome programme which was informative and unfortunately not aimed at letting the different exchange students get to know each other.</p>
<p>accommodation</p>
<p>The accommodation is very basic but sufficient. It does depend on the type of room that you choose, as you can submit your preferences. I chose to live in not the largest and most luxurious room but the second one out of four. In this room I had my own shower, toilet, sink, one pit gas stove, a desk, desk lamp, small balcony and bed. There are some Facebook communities for students that live on the campus where used items are sold for low prices. I can really recommend to buy some stuff via those communities. Also, there is a Daiso (one-euro-shop) next to the train station in town where you can buy things you need, such as pans, plates, cutlery (though you should eat with chopsticks) and cloth hangers.</p>
<p>leisure/culture</p>
<p>Eating out in Japan is about as cheap as it is to eat in. I therefore tried to eat out every single day and some of the food is extremely good. There are some supermarkets in the area and there are some convenience stores (like Lawson, 7eleven and Familymarket) where you can buy food and drinks. Big plus, the 7eleven is opened 24 hours a day. Try going out with other exchange students for diner and maybe drinks after, as there are some Izakaya's in Tsukuba which are worth going to.</p>



<p>I can really recommend to buy a bicycle as soon as you get to Tsukuba. Japan contains a lot of hills but the Kanto valley where Tsukuba is located is mostly flat. Cycling around campus is very easy as there are lots of cycle tracks. Do be careful that most students, especially Japanese and Chinese students, are not used to riding a bike and that sometimes hazardous events may occur in traffic. I twice cycled to Mt. Tsukuba and I climbed it once, which was really worthwhile. You can take the lift back if you're tired and the view is simply amazing.</p> <p>With my bike I cycled around a lot and I did some sightseeing. In the weekends, I can really recommend to go out to Tokyo and to check out the city because it is one of the coolest places in the world. Tsukuba itself doesn't have lot of places to go to except for a small museum and a huge shopping centre (which is genuinely a very cool place).</p>
<p>suggestions/tips</p>
<p>All mentioned above. Buy a bike, go out for diner, don't eat at home, climb mt. Tsukuba, go to Tokyo in the weekends and try the izakaya's in town. Also, try to find out if there are ways to get a cheap phone contract for your time in Japan. On campus, you will have wifi coverage and otherwise you can always go to an 7eleven for free wifi. I didn't have a phone contract which I found frustrating in the end.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>conclusions</b></p>
<p>would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain</p>
<p>I would definitely recommend this host organisation to others. There are few places like Japan in the world. It is clean and very well organised and the people will be among the most polite and friendliest you will ever meet. This is all very comforting and pleasant. On the other hand, Japanese people have their own special ways of interaction and everything they do is different to our ways of doing things. To experience these differences first hand in a beautiful scenery, among interesting and polite people is a once of a lifetime experience that you have to seize. You can go to the UK and have a great time or you can go to Australia which will definitely be great as well. But after studying in those countries you won't be able to tell stories about a strange and difficult to learn culture in which you prevailed. Be a yes man and go to Japan.</p>
<p>do you have any additional advice or comments?</p>
<p>The best ramen I ever ate was at Aoi, which is only a five minute walk from Tsukuba train station. You should definitely go there!</p>

**2016-2017**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>preparation</b></p>
<p>exchange/placement application process</p>





Little was known about the exchange and placement application procedure when I first decided to go to Tsukuba. Although Tsukuba officially is a partner university of the faculty of Law, I went on an eleven-month exchange as a bachelor student of public administration & organisational sciences. Because of this, there was a bit of uncertainty in the beginning of the procedure.

Nothing could be done online and all documents had to be sent to Japan by post. Keep this in mind when preparing for this procedure, as post can take a while. Japan is also very strict on immigration rules so make sure you check everything in advance. Visa costs were 0 euro and the procedure for your CoE at the Japanese Embassy in The Hague could not be easier. They will eventually stamp your passport with an entry-permit and from the day you land at Narita or Haneda airport (Tokyo) your 1-year visa will start.

counselling/support at home university

Paula Banning helped me with a lot of stuff, even though not everything was familiar for the international office as well. If anything is unclear, please feel free to contact me!

academic preparation

No academic preparation was needed.

language preparation

Language preparation is a very important part of your exchange with the University of Tsukuba, or any Japanese University. Although courses will be in English (so make sure your English is sufficient, although I can't imagine it being insufficient as an UU-student anyway), knowing and studying Japanese will make your life a lot easier and your stay in Japan more fun and worthwhile. Almost all the international friends I made in Japan I met through either Japanese language courses or language exchange programs, and countless of times I have been glad to be able to speak Japanese to people. I suggest learning at the very least hiragana and katakana (two easy Japanese scripts) before you go, but I would advise to try and study a bit more of the basics.

University of Tsukuba uses a language classes system of 8 different levels, of which I joined level 2 (and later level 3) while being there. I highly recommend skipping level 1 by studying here in advance. This would include learning basic sentence structures, a few hundred words and grammar up to the "te" form. In Utrecht, Maarten teaches Japanese for a fairly low price, although his courses are a bit slow paced and buying a self-study book like Genki from the Japanese amazon might be a better option. For reference, finishing at least half of Genki I should be enough to skip the first level of Japanese classes in Tsukuba. Again, feel free to contact me with any questions.

finances



I could get the JASSO scholarship from the Japanese government, which was about 80.000 yen a month for a period of the first 6 months. However, keep in mind that laws are changing and less scholarships will be given in the future. If you are totally dependent on this scholarship please consult beforehand if you can get it. Rent in Tsukuba is extremely cheap and I suggest picking the cheapest room they have available (around 23.000 yen) to save lots of money to explore the country and to travel. Groceries in Japan are cheap if you stick with Japanese style food, eating out is way cheaper than in the Netherlands. However, because eating out is way more common, you will probably also do it a lot more often than in the Netherlands. Eating a good meal at university campus sets you back around 400-500 yen, which is very cheap, depending on the current exchange rates. I suggest saving at least 2000 euros to travel around the country: it will be worth it!



<b>study/placement abroad period</b>
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
<p>You cannot choose courses before you arrive in Tsukuba. I mean, you can pick some courses listed online, but chances are the schedule changes or other things interfere with your original plan. Courses in Japan are of lower quality than most courses offered in Utrecht, but there is also more freedom of choice because courses are a lot smaller. I think I took around 8 courses the first semester, which gave me a lot of opportunities to try different subjects.</p> <p>Semesters run from October 1 – March 31 (but courses end around February 8, so you have holidays from then until the end of March/beginning of April). Semester 2 starts the beginning of April and ends September 31, but classes usually end around August 1<sup>st</sup>. Please keep in mind that the Japanese academic year begins in April, different from the Netherlands. Joining clubs will, for example, be easier when you arrive in April as opposed to arriving in late September.</p>
academic quality of education/placement activities
<p>As I said academic quality is lower than in the Netherlands, but I still learnt so many different things that I could have never learnt here in Utrecht. Some courses I have taken include: Japanese economy, Japanese educational system, Influence of robots and future of work, Law and development, Programming, East Asian Business Culture, etc.</p>
counselling/support at host institution/organisation
<p>The international office of the UoT was very helpful, for example when I decided to extend my stay with another 6 months.</p>
transfer of credits
<p>I only just came back so I have no idea about the transfer of credits just yet. Please keep in mind that Tsukuba uses a C, B, A, A+ system.</p>
<b>student life</b>
welcome/orientation programme



There was almost no welcome or orientation program, so it could be a bit tough in the beginning October. However, almost all international students from Western countries arrive at the same time and everyone wants to make friends, so do not worry! Just go to all the introduction things available, go to some welcome parties and make sure to pay Omochi (language club) on Friday evenings a visit. They usually go for dinner after so it's an easy way to make some friends.

#### accommodation

Accommodation will most likely be in Ichinoya dorms, which range from 23.000 – 44.000 yen per room. I had the cheapest smallest room with shared kitchen and shower, but it was very much worth it. I saved a lot of money to spend on more important things and I did not have to cook in a super cramped space with only one gas stove, but I had a shared kitchen that I could use.

#### leisure/culture

I made countless of trips all over the country and that has been one of the most wonderful parts of my year in Japan. I visited Okinawa, Kyushu, Kansai, Wakayama, Tohoku and a lot more regions and I cannot recommend travelling through Japan more. Some trips I made with friends but a considerable amount I did by myself, meeting new people along the way. Knowing a little Japanese helps a bunch when exploring Japan's beautiful countryside and mountain areas. Tokyo is only 45 minutes away so makes for great weekend trips and cities like Yokohama, Kamakura, Fuji area and Nikko are within great range for weekend trips. Shinto and Buddhist culture are well worth exploring, as well as Japan's beautiful nature, ranging from dense rainforest areas to the peaks of the Japanese alps.

#### suggestions/tips

Go walk the Kumano Kodo, a pilgrimage in Wakayama prefecture, one of the two pilgrimages worldwide that have the UNESCO world heritage status. Also go visit Yakushima island. Google these two and you won't be disappointed.

### conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Writing this only makes me realise more how much I would recommend going to Tsukuba to anyone. I've learnt so much more about the world and myself, gained a lot of different perspectives and made Japan my second home in one year. I can't think of any industrialised country that would give you an experience that is so unique, so special and so different from our little country than Japan. Honestly, don't even hesitate anymore and just make the final decision to go to Japan. Learn another language, eat with chopsticks and try real sushi, walk through beautiful nature, explore the biggest metropolis on planet earth within 45 minutes' reach, live in a cheap dorm in one of the most prestigious universities of Japan, make friends from countries all over the world and just enjoy getting to know the country like you've always lived there.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

The only reason for not going to Japan would be if you want to strengthen your academic skills in a way that



requires education that is on par or better than that of Utrecht University. But honestly, speaking to friends who have been abroad, I have never found people saying the courses they followed were the most special about their (half) year abroad. Education better than in Utrecht is hard to find worldwide, so don't pursue some magical academic wonder courses, just go to Japan! And contact me if you have any questions, of course. I'm very willing to help or advise you.

## 2014-2015

preparation
exchange/placement application process
In February 2014 I decided to go to Japan at the start of the 2014-2015 university year. The application process was very difficult and I bet the Tsukuba procedure is one of the most difficult procedures. Utrecht University tried to support me during the appliance procedure, <a href="#">(see)</a>
counselling/support at home university
Utrecht University tried to support me, but the procedure was too difficult to give good guidance. Luckily, the Utrecht University brought me into contact with Mio, a Japanese girl studying in Utrecht as an exchange student. She helped me with the procedure. I was the first student in a few years time to go to Tsukuba, so maybe that was why Utrecht had problems helping me out.
academic preparation
None.
language preparation
None.
finances
I worked for a summer in the 'Gamma', although I knew that I would obtain the JASSO scholarship. Japan is an expensive country and saving money is advisable, especially if you are going to do some traveling like me. Getting the JASSO scholarship is a realistic goal, because I got it and my academic results are far from impressive. But take into account that it's not an easy procedure and that the outcome of the procedure is only given just before you leave The Netherlands.



study/placement abroad period
study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues)
<p>When you arrive in Tsukuba, you get a booklet with all possible classes. Everyday language class is a logical pick, it gives you a lot of credits and gets you to know some people. Next to the language classes you can pick classes in almost every direction: biology, economics, debating, Japanese culture etc.</p> <p>The non-language classes are always only 1 or two hours in the week and don't require a lot of work outside of classes. I picked courses about Japanese language and Japanese culture/history and I was also participating in a debating class.</p>
academic quality of education/placement activities
<p>The language courses are of great quality. I love languages myself and therefore my time in Tsukuba was great. Every day my Japanese improved and you immediately get the reward when you speak Japanese with friends/ in the supermarket/ on the street.</p> <p>The teachers are intelligent, funny and patient and they explain really well. Learning Japanese in Japan has been a pleasure. The other courses are of different quality; the Japanese culture classes were usually good, the debating was horrible on the other hand. A teacher with limited English and very bad debates with even worse feedback from the teacher. I would recommend students to visit a lot of courses in the first few weeks, you can easily drop a few (that's what I did).</p>
counselling/support at host institution/organisation
<p>In Tsukuba you get a tutor that helps you with a lot of stuff, or that's at least the idea. In my case, the tutor wasn't of great help. She was always busy and didn't really take me around the city, you can get unlucky I guess. Luckily, there are always other options to get advice regarding Tsukuba life. In the ISC (International Student Center) is an 'Ask us' desk, I was there almost daily to ask questions. There is also an Academic service center in case the 'Ask us' desk (ran by students) doesn't know the answer. Japanese people are very eager to help you and extremely friendly. The support is great.</p>
transfer of credits
<p>Important! Transferring credits from Tsukuba to Utrecht turned out to be a lot more difficult than I thought it would be. A credit in Tsukuba takes 45 hours, in Utrecht it takes 40 hours. You would think that you can therefore take your Tsukuba credits, do them times 45 and divide them by 40.</p> <p>A girl from Delft told me that I made wrong calculations when I complained to her that I was obtaining a very small amount of credits. The 45 hours for a credit have to be summed with the hours that you spend in class. The total amount of these two have to be divided by 40. This way of calculating is also written down in the Tsukuba paperwork, but you have to read really closely to find out that this is the right way of calculating</p>
student life



#### welcome/orientation programme

I had a really rough start because there were no welcome parties/ introductory activities/ orientation programmes. Furthermore, I was the only Dutch exchange student in Tsukuba and people from one country tended to stick together.

It is important to notice that the university year in Japan starts in April. When I came back to Tsukuba after traveling in March I noticed a big amount of introductory activities and parties at the start of April. It is therefore easier to start in April, but the Japanese summer is extremely hot and humid so I don't regret going there from September until April.

Being the only Dutch turned out to be a great advantage in the end. My English became completely fluent and after four weeks I had some friends that I regularly saw. Having no Dutch friends led to a great academic focus and fast Japanese improvement.

#### accommodation

The dorms in Tsukuba are small and far from cosy. On 9 square meters you have a hard bed, a desk, a toilet, a shower (both very small) and a 'kitchen' with one gas pit. Might sound horrible but it's actually not too bad. The rent is incredibly cheap (around 150/200 euros a month, depends on where you stay) and you don't have to share your room with other students as in some other exchange programs.

Going out for dinner is cheap in Japan so there is no reason to spend a lot of time in your room, especially not when the weather is good (it usually is).

#### leisure/culture

Tokyo is a 40 minute train ride away: a metropolis with an unbelievable size, so big, so overwhelming. Thinking back of Tokyo already gives me goosebumps, the variation and the possibilities in the city are endless. It really feels like the centre of the earth, and there are enough arguments that support that stand.

But there also enough possibilities to experience Japan to the fullest in Tsukuba. Tsukuba University has an incredible amount of clubs and circles, and it's definitely advisable to join one or two. I was involved in Omochi (a language club) and Noh Kyogen (Japanese theatre and singing).

#### suggestions/tips

Learn Japanese on beforehand to start off with a great advantage in comparison with other students.

#### conclusions

would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? please explain

Studying in Tsukuba is probably the greatest challenge that you can face in your student life and I can wholeheartedly recommend you to go. You will grow as a person and will get to know a language and a culture of a unique and very interesting country. On top of this you have a good chance to obtain the JASSO-scholarship (roughly 3000 euros for one semester). JASSO makes an exchange to Japan into an affordable



do you have any additional advice or comments?

Meet up people that have studied in Tsukuba (Japanese exchange students in Utrecht or former exchange students like me), this will definitely help you in your application procedure. You can always [contact me \(via the REBO International office\)](#)



