

## **My Experience as an Exchange Student in Japan**

### **Self-Introduction**

I am Myat Thu Mon, a 21 year old student from Myanmar. I am studying International Relations as my specialization at University of Yangon. Last year, in 2018, I was selected for Campus-ASEAN Exchange Program which is funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) of Japan under Japan Student Service Organization (JASSO). Under this program, I got to study at the Faculty of Law, Nagoya University for one semester from October to February. I would like to share the experiences I had as an exchange student of Nagoya University, Japan.

### **Academic Experience**

My host university, Nagoya University, is situated in Chikusa-ku, Nagoya of Japan. It is regarded as the third highest ranked higher education institution of Japan after University of Tokyo and Kyoto University. There are total of nine faculties in Nagoya University for undergraduate students including Faculty of Literature, Education, Law, Economy, Information Science, Science, Medicine, Engineering and Culture.

In comparison with my home university, Nagoya University has different enrolling system of classes. In my home university, the major courses for an academic year are fixed and we can only choose the minor courses we preferred. But in Nagoya University, there is no major or minor courses. Students can choose the courses they are interested in and then registered at the Student Affairs to attend the classes.

Most of the courses provided in Nagoya University are conducted in Japanese but still there are a few courses which are taught in English by Japanese or foreign Professors. Even though these courses are available both for Japanese and Exchange students, only a handful of local students choose to attend those classes.

Teaching approach in Nagoya University is a little bit different from my home university. Unlike my home university, there is no tutorial class in Nagoya University and class participation is a very important component for final grade. Lecturers in Nagoya University can carefully watch and record the performance of every single student as the number of students in a class is only about thirty at most while lecturers in my home university need to analyze the performance of at least fifty students at the same time which is obviously a difficult

task for lecturers. Besides, for the courses which are conducted in English, most of them have no final exam but need to submit weekly report or final assignment.

I attended five courses in Law Faculty of Nagoya University. They are (1) Japanese for Social Science, (2) International Negotiation, (3) International Economic Law, (4) Commercial Arbitration and (5) Peer Supportive Initiatives. I studied the courses which are not provided in my home university and could extend my knowledge for my specialization. I also experienced different teaching approach which motivated me to become a more active and hardworking student in the class.

### **Social Life**

Finding myself in a different environment, surrounded by new people, using different language and such cultural shocks were really challenging for me. But with the support of friendly local students and other exchangers who were facing the same problem as me, I could overcome those struggles within a short time. I started adapting to new environment and fully enjoying myself as an exchange student.

After getting used to the new environment, I realized that communicating with local people was not that much difficult. When Japanese was the only language we can use to communicate with local people and I cannot speak any Japanese, using body language became the best option for communicating with local people. The local people I met in Nagoya were very friendly and patient enough to give their best to understand what I was talking about or asking them. Although I got lost sometimes, I did not have to panic and simply just needed to ask a person pass by. After attending “Japanese for Social Science” course, interacting with local people became easier for me.

When I had spare time from studying, I hung out with my friends and explored Nagoya, the city we lived in. Nagoya is such a peaceful, calm and developed city and it is not very crowded or lively like the way Tokyo or Osaka is. I also travelled to Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Nara to know more about Japan and its culture. From my travels, I found out that the tourist attractions in a city are mostly cultural or religious landmarks such as shrines, temples and nature sites. In my opinion, the effort of Japan in preserving nature and traditional heritages while creating a modern developed society is very impressive and deserves to be appreciated.

## Extra-Curriculum Activities

Nagoya University offers a lot of extra-curriculum activities related to arts, clubs, sports and many other themes. Some of the extra-curriculum activities I participated in Nagoya University were Ikebana (Japanese art of floral arrangement) class and cultural activity of Tea Ceremony.

Besides from that, I also joined a home stay program arranged by Hippo Club. My host family was really friendly and treated me as their own. My host mom made a lot of delicious Japanese food for me and introduced me Japanese traditional and cultural practices. In return, I also taught some Burmese words to my host family. I also got a chance to wear Kimono and it was really exciting. Although the program was only for two nights three days, being with my host family is one of my most precious memories from my exchange.

## Conclusion

Getting out of our own comfort zone always gives us life lessons and the opportunity to grow. After this exchange, I became more independent, positive and responsible adult than before. Through this journey, I could extend not only my academic knowledge but also my social network. I got friends for lifetime and still keep in touch with each other. I understand more about Japan and its people. I have learned to see similarities beyond the differences between each other. For me, it is not exaggerated to say my exchange experiences in Japan changed me completely to a better me.



*My host family during my homestay program*



*A visit to Diet of Japan during my trip to Tokyo*



*Exchangers of Campus Asia and  
Campus ASEAN Program of fall  
semester of Nagoya University*



*With the Completion Certificate*

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