

# SEP Report

## 1. Student Information

Faculty/Major	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences/Economics
Host University	Waseda University
NUS Semester and Year of Exchange (eg. AY14/15 Semester 1)	AY15/16 Semester 1

## 2. Study at Host University

Please provide information on the academics at your host university:

- Studying or learning culture at your host university. How were classes conducted?
- What did you like most or dislike most about the academics at your host University?
- Advice on module registration and module mapping

I was enrolled in the School of Political Sciences and Economics (SPSE) at Waseda University as an exchange student. I took 6 Economics modules during my exchange period, which all 6 modules were conducted in English. Although all the classes in the exchange programme are said to be conducted in English, certain level of Japanese proficiency will be very helpful, as some of the Japanese professors will try to explain concepts in Japanese (to the Japanese students in class, but it is definitely a bonus if you can understand that). Future exchange students are advised to self study a little before or after class, especially in the beginning of the semester, before getting used to the Japanese English, or you will be very lost during lecture.

3 out of 6 of the Economics modules had relatively small class size(as compared to NUS, each of the three had only around 20 students and they were all regular lectures, not seminar; the 3 modules were: Experimental Economics, Social Security and Comparative Economic History). The small class-sized lectures were good for in-depth learning and meaningful discussion. However, there is no such thing as tutorial in Waseda University; most of the time students are expected to do and check their homework by themselves. Hence, in a way much lighter workload as compared to NUS. Exchange students are not advised/expected to take seminar classes in Waseda University, as there are usually specific requirements to get into those seminars (most of them include an interview beforehand with the professor in charged, and some professors prefer to conduct the interview in the end of the previous semester).

Most of the lecturers took attendance very seriously, some of them required students to attend at least 70% of the classes in order to get any credit from the module. Especially for the small-sized classes, I would advise future exchange students to email the professor personally if you can't make it to class, as sometimes the professor will have specific plan for each of the student in the class, therefore prior notice is much appreciated (according to my personal experience). In some classes (for example, Game Theory), undergraduate students and postgraduate students study together-which means sometimes the study materials could be way above your level if you are an undergraduate student. However the good news is in such classes, undergraduate students and postgraduate students are graded separately (as in there will be two different bell curves).

Module registration was pretty easy and straight-forward through the university's online registration system. No bidding required. Most of the time, you can get all the modules you want in the first round, as there are not many Japanese students who want to take modules that are taught in English. Please

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utilize the 'Syllabus Search' in the Waseda University's homepage, to check the timetable and module description and make sure you get the correct class. There can be two modules with the same title, one taught in Japanese and the other in English. The first week of school is like introduction and trial classes, you can add and drop classes during that week.

A side note: I also took Japanese classes under the Centre of Japanese Language (CJL) at Waseda University. I highly recommend the Japanese classes to future exchange students-no matter you are a zero-experience beginner or an expert in the language, there are a huge range of classes (comprehensive, grammar, kanji, conversational, business, listening, vocabulary etc) you can choose from in order to improve your Japanese language skills.

**Please list the courses that you took during SEP.** *(Please take note that the list of modules available to exchange students at the host university are subject to change. This table merely serves as reference.)*

Host University			NUS Equivalent		
Module code	Course title	ECTS Credit	Module code	Course title	Modular credit
ECNT211L	Game Theory 01	2	EC3312	Game Theory & Applications to Economics	3
ECNA321L	Money and Banking 01	2	EC3332	Money and Banking I	3
ECNA331L	Social Security 01	2	EC3353	Health Economics I	3
ECNA341L	Labor Economics 01	2	EC3361	Labour Economics I	3
ECNT331L	Comparative Economic History B01 (The Rise of the Western Europe on the World History)	4	EC3393	Comparative Economic Systems	5
ECNT331L	Experimental Economics 01	2	NA	NA	NA
LANJ101L	Comprehensive Japanese 3	5	LAJ3741	Department Exchange Module	7

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## 2. Accommodation

**What kind of accommodation did you stay in during your exchange (eg. on campus / off campus)?**

**Would you recommend this accommodation to future outgoing students?**

**Do you have any other suggestions?**

I stayed on campus (technically speaking it is not really in the campus, but it is just a 5 minutes walk away), in the Waseda University International Student House. I would recommend staying on campus, as it will be really hard for exchange students to find a decent room with reasonable price off campus, especially if you are only here for a few month, it is considered short-term and most of the rooms outside will require contract signed up to a year. The university dormitories' monthly rental range from 46,000 yen to 89,000 yen, mine was 69,000 yen with utilities included. My room was spacious, fully furnished, carpeted and clean, A/C and mini fridge provided, and attached with toilet, good for the price.

## 3. Activities during SEP

**Were there any activities organized by school/student group/external organizations at your host university which you would like to recommend to other students?**

I joined a lot of activities in Waseda University, most of them were mainly occupied by international students. You might want to join circles or clubs and get to know more local students, but you can only do so if you speak certain level of Japanese, as most of them do not speak English at all. Having taken up to Japanese 4 in NUS (which I am very grateful for that, Japanese proficiency is a great asset to help you access to anything in Japan), I was able to join TAP-LOVERS, a tap dance club in Waseda University (however some of the members are from neighbouring universities). It was very new and interesting to me.

I also took part in the International Student Speech Contest, and I highly recommend future exchange students to try it, if you understand basic Japanese (and that should be enough). After an interview with the committee members, you will be assigned to work with a group of friendly Japanese students. It is called an advisor system, where the Japanese students will help you with everything, from writing the script to pronunciation. You get to learn the Japanese style of working together as a group, and you will make a number of good friends towards the end of the programme. It was an amazing experience! I am truly grateful to be given the opportunities to take part in the speech contest-not just that my Japanese has improved a lot (especially listening, as we have meetings and discussions at least twice a week, and most of time they are conducted in Japanese), I have gained more confidence speaking the language and most important of all, I made some really good Japanese friends!

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## 4. Cost of Living

**Please provide an estimation of how much money you spent during your SEP?  
Please list travel expenses separately.**

Total expenditure for the entire SEP (excluding travel expenses) is around 10,000 SGD.

## 5. Challenges

**Did you face any challenging issues during your SEP stint? How did you overcome it/them?**

To be honest, there wasn't any hiccups (at least not that I actually feel or remember it) during my stay in Japan. For some exchange students, it might be the language barrier, as most of the Japanese, even the university students do not speak English at all. However, as I speak Japanese, that wasn't really an issue for me-I just needed to pay more attention during lecture (in order to fully understand the Japanese English by some of the professors).

## 6. Overall SEP Experience

**Please write one paragraph about your exchange experience and attach some photos that represent your exchange experience.**

If I were to sum up my exchange experience in one word, it would be 'FANTASTIC'... oh wait, it could be 'WONDERFUL' too! Or 'AMAZING'... Either way, you can tell I feel so positive talking about my exchange experience at Waseda University, Japan. To be honest, Waseda wasn't my first choice when I first applied for SEP, but it turned to be the best decision I have ever made (or given. Millions thanks to NUS, FASS, IRO and Waseda!) Ever since I have started to learn Japanese two years ago in NUS, I have always wanted to experience the Japanese culture by my own. During my stay in Japan, I have learned to embrace cultural differences and challenge my own limits (by taking part in the International Students Japanese Speech Contest and a lot of other things that I have never tried before in my life). By immersing myself in different culture, I learned to open myself up to different options and challenges in life. This is perhaps the best thing I got out of my exchange experience and I am truly grateful for that.

## 7. Suggestions for future outgoing students

**Please share any other suggestions for future outgoing students.**

Try to learn basic Japanese before you come to Japan-you can survive in Japan without knowing a single word of Japanese, but trust me, it would be MUCH easier if you speak the language.