

Application: the application takes up to 3 months, before you receive the official answer from Kwansei Gakuin University. So please don't worry during the wait. The document preparation takes lots of patience, but as long as you follow the instructions carefully, it will be no big danger of dropping out and problems will be solved eventually.

Visa: The visa procedure takes about 2 weeks, but rather easy and smooth. It is useful to check well the working time and document requirement of Japanese Consulate in Berlin on the website.

Insurance: Kwansei Gakuin University provides you documents for visa and also insurance. You just need to follow their instructions on the document info page.

Orientation: the 2-week long orientation phase before classes takes a bit patience. It is not to be taken granted that you just start new life in a totally different country without problem! The orientation is very detailed and they are very responsible in answering out questions. From your first arrival to the airport (which is the starting date of the orientation), till the start of the first class, every thing is taken care of. You will see there are a lot of dos and don'ts for you to follow strictly. Don't try to be independent and different, it will just cause them trouble!

Tutor: you will have a chance to choose if you want a buddy/Japanese partner in the application document. It is very recommendable, because they might be your best channel through which you know the culture in depth. They will try to know you and talk to you, even if they are usually very shy and even younger than you. Be responsible and caring, the gap between two cultures needs positive effort to get through. Make sure you don't spend too much time with people who speak the same language with you. You can explore the world in a deeper way than you think!

The uni will arrange everything well for you to let you choose, to guide you, to teach you things. There is three kinds of residence available: student residence, home stay, self-rent. If you have more budget, home stay will teach you a lot more than living with other foreign students, which I would definitely recommend. These families are all very responsible, sometimes even very resourceful, and used to providing the students with enough care and knowledge in many aspects. The student residence is cheaper, but also confine your life view within the foreigners' world.

Depending on your level of Japanese and your study goal, the intensity of study life here may vary much. I took all-Japanese MA seminars with normal master students. The learning is not so demanding as in Viadrina, because you don't need to read or write a lot. The only important task is the term-end paper of 3 pages in Japanese.

Courses I chose are: academic Japanese, Theology special lecture, Art history special lecture, Culture and Language, Conversation Analysis in Japanese, Japanese fieldwork. My Japanese classmates are generally much older than me, but it is still easy to get along well with them.

Like in any uni, the teaching style of the professors may vary. Japanese language course is provided to all exchange students. Their learning system is very organized and disciplined, but still allowing some freedom for yourself. I am sure you can learn a lot here.

The international Office - CIEC - will help you through all your administrative questions as exchange student. Pay enough attention to their instructions, because they expect enough discipline from you as from local students. The front person, a french lady, is very nice and experienced in dealing with different situations among exchange students. They also provide you information of many activities outside of the uni. Make sure you explore!

The uni has a gym and swimming pool, at a very cheap price. Depending on your social life, how often you go out for food, clothes and entertainment, the living cost may vary greatly. Every month I suppose a minimum of 700EUR needs to be prepared, not including residence fee, if you want to travel a bit and try out different things in the town. The transport is a little bit more expensive than in Europe. If you travel to other cities, you better have local friends to have you stay over, so that your monthly budget does not run out too fast.

## **Fazit**

This experience is one of the best episodes of my student life. So much new experiences, new friendships, new insights into the society and new knowledge that helps me into future career. I am truly thankful that I can be part of this.

