UCEAP Japan
Advising Notes

Objective

This document is an advising tool written by a Berkeley Study Abroad advisor to review program specific details that may impact a student’s decision to apply for an UCEAP program. The document is **not** a summary of eligibility requirements, academic, housing, application and other logistical details freely available to students on the UCEAP and BSA website. The best source of detailed program information are the [UCEAP webpages for Japan](https://www.uceap.org/study-abroad/). If any concerns you have are not addressed on the UCEAP website or this Advising Notes document, please contact the [BSA Advisor](https://www.berkeley.edu/) for this program.

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COVID-19 Information

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to present challenges related to health concerns and international travel. UCEAP has been updating their website's Coronavirus Notice with up-to-date information on program cancellations for the 2021-2022 cycle. Please note that certain programs listed in this Advising Notes document have been moved to a fully online format for the 2021-2022 cycle. All other programs listed are scheduled to proceed at this time, and UCEAP will inform campus offices if there are any updates.

The programs that have been moved to a fully online format are:
Japanese in Tokyo (Summer 2021)

Last updated February 1, 2021.

Quick Links

Below is a summary of the ‘21-’22 UCEAP Japan programs available to Berkeley students:

Immersion
Hitotsubashi University (Spring)
International Christian University (Year)
Keio University (Year)
Waseda University (Year)

Language
Japanese in Kyoto (Spring)
Japanese in Osaka (Summer)
Japanese in Tokyo (Summer)

Research
STEM Research Osaka (Fall, Spring, Summer)
STEM Research Tokyo (Summer Engineering, Summer Science)

Research/Themed
Engineering and Science (Spring, Year)

Themed
Global Studies, Japan (Fall, Spring)
What UCEAP Alumni Say About Studying Abroad in Japan

In 2013, the Tokyo Study Center staff spoke with past UCEAP Japan students about their experiences and their lives in Japan. Check out Part I and Part II of the videos on YouTube.

A UC Berkeley student at Global Studies, Japan in Fall 2014 blogged about their experience in Japan! Check it out here.

Check out the UCEAP Tokyo Site Visit Video from Summer 2015 here.

Spring 2019 Japanese in Kyoto students talk about their favorite places on campus (in Japanese)! Check it out here.

Citizenship, Passport, and Visa Considerations

Per Japanese government regulations, if you have Japanese citizenship, you must enter Japan as a Japanese citizen, even if you have dual citizenship with another country. If you are a Japanese citizen and would like to apply to an UCEAP Japan program, please notify the BSA Japan Adviser by email prior to application. Students with Japanese citizenship do not need a visa to enter Japan.

Students participating in UCEAP Japan programs must obtain a student visa in the U.S. prior to departure. In order to apply for a student visa, you will need a Certificate of Eligibility, which is issued by the host institution 10 to 30 days prior to the start date of the program. Do not make plans to travel outside the U.S. in the month before the official start date of your UCEAP Japan program.

Students who are in the process of applying for U.S. citizenship or making any legal name changes are not eligible to apply to any UCEAP Japan programs unless the changes will be completed before application. There are no exceptions to this.

Non-US citizens should contact the Japanese Consulate to determine your visa requirements. Requirements and processing times for non-US citizens may vary. Ensure that you have the proper documents to re-enter the US. Consult with the Bureau of US Citizenship and Immigration Services (UCCIS) if necessary.

For all UCEAP Japan programs, students cannot be accepted to a Japanese university without a valid passport at the time of application to the program. Your UCEAP application will state how long your passport must be valid after the end date of the program. If you do not have a passport or need a renewal, please review the Passport Information section of the COVID-19 Information for Berkeley Study Abroad Students page, and take action immediately.
Impacted Programs

In some academic years, we receive more applications for select programs than we have allotted Berkeley spots on the program. Students should not be discouraged from applying to their first choice; however, all applicants are encouraged to consider other programs for suitable alternatives.

The selection criteria we will use for impacted programs include:

- GPA
- Class Standing
- Student’s coursework background and training in relevant areas
- Statement of Purpose: priority will be given to students who successfully convey why the chosen program in particular is a good fit for them and how the program will benefit them academically, professionally, and/or personally.
- Completeness and thoroughness of application. Incomplete applications without sufficient reason could be denied immediately.

The following programs are considered impacted. If your first choice is an impacted program, contact the adviser for this program to discuss if you may obtain permission to apply to a back-up choice.

- Global Studies, Japan – Fall
- Keio University - Year
- Japanese in Osaka – Summer
- Japanese in Tokyo – Summer
- STEM Research Osaka – Summer
- STEM Research Tokyo – Summer Science & Summer Engineering

Program Considerations – Immersion

Year-long Immersion Programs
International Christian University, Keio University, Waseda University

Students may consider the year-long immersion program for broad-based study in Japan at one of three Japanese universities. Placement notifications can be expected in late January.

These three Japanese universities have the following minimum language requirements:

- International Christian University (ICU) – None
- Keio University – None
- Waseda University – minimum of 1 year of university-level Japanese prior to departure

None of the year-long immersion programs have a language maximum (e.g. a student with three years of Japanese prior to departure may still apply to Keio or Waseda).
The UC unit value of courses taken in Japanese universities varies widely, but it is typically less than the standard units earned for a Berkeley course. Please refer to the summary below to see the average Berkeley units earned per course at the host institutions. It is encouraged that you discuss with your major/college adviser the possibility of using two courses on a similar theme to fulfill a single requirement.

- ICU: 1.7 – 2.7 (regular classes), 8.0 (intensive language classes)
- Keio: 2.0
- Waseda: 2.0 - 4.0

There are significant differences in academic culture between Japan and the U.S. It is highly encouraged that you research the Japanese academic culture prior to applying for a year-long program.

How do you decide which host university is right for you? Research, research, research! The BSA Japan Adviser cannot simply tell you the host institution that is going to be the best fit for you, academically or socially. Expect to dedicate many hours of research to the process of deciding which university to apply to. The best place to begin is on each host institution’s website to review their course listings.

**Semester-length Programs**

**Hitotsubashi University**
The UC unit value of courses taken at Hitotsubashi University is less than the standard units earned for a Berkeley course. Courses at Hitotsubashi University are each 2.0 semester units, so you can expect to take 7-10 courses during a single semester to get to a full academic course load. It is encouraged that you discuss with your major/college adviser the possibility of using two courses on a similar theme to fulfill a single requirement.

**Program Considerations – Language**

**Japanese in Kyoto**
There is no language prerequisite, but beginning to advanced speakers can be accommodated on the program. The program is 4 ½ months in length and offers students an amazing opportunity to explore Kyoto and the historic Kansai region of Japan.

Most of the academic offerings of this program fall into the "language" category. All students take 10 semester units of language on the program. Though it will feel like taking one large language course, it will actually translate into ten 1-unit courses on your transcript, each with an individual grade. The language courses are taught every weekday from roughly 9am to 12:30pm. On top of your language coursework, you will also take a minimum of two elective courses. Electives meet only once per week for 1.5 hours per class, and are worth 2 semester units each. Thus, the minimum unit load on the program is 14 semester units. You are welcome to take additional electives beyond the required two.
You will not find out which electives are available to you until after you arrive at Doshisha University (which hosts the Japanese in Kyoto Program) and take the language exam. The language exam determines what level of language course you are placed in (there are 8 levels), and it also tells you which electives you can take, because electives are taught at different language levels (you can also take electives in English). Additional course information can be found on the Doshisha University website.

**Japanese in Osaka**

The Japanese in Osaka program is for students with little or no prior study of Japanese language and is suitable for those with 1 semester or less of university-level Japanese language study. Students who are looking for a summer option in Japan but are linguistically overqualified for the Japanese in Osaka program should consider the Japanese in Tokyo program or semester or year-long UCEAP options.

The beginning Japanese language course is divided into two four-week sessions. The course is reported as part A and B. Both grades will be reported at the end of the program to the Office of the Registrar. Students must receive a passing grade in the first session (part A) (as determined by Osaka University) in order to be allowed to stay at Osaka University and progress to the second session (part B).

**Program Considerations – Research**

**All Research Programs**

**Engineering and Science, STEM Research Osaka, STEM Research Tokyo**

Prospective students are encouraged to accept placement in this program only if they are certain they will be able to participate within the lab they are assigned. Lab research placements such as this are often competitive; if you accept and later decline a placement, you may be taking an opportunity away from students who were not selected. Research teams at the host university also count on having nominated students as part of their lab, so you are encouraged to accept the placement only if you can commit to participation in the program.

**Semester or Year-long Research Programs**

In Japan, UCEAP engineering and science students have the status of junior researchers. You will be assigned to work in a *kenkyushitsu* (laboratory) that typically includes a professor who oversees research, an associate professor, a post-doctoral student, graduate students, and undergraduate seniors writing their senior theses. Graduate students conduct independent research, and undergraduates conduct assigned research within their field of interest. Most learning and interaction with other students takes place in the *kenkyushitsu* through a mentor process rather than in a formal classroom setting.

Because of reasons above, applicants to Research programs will be asked to submit a research project proposal after being nominated for the program by Berkeley Study Abroad. The purpose of the proposal is to match you with an appropriate professor/lab at the host university.
**Engineering and Science (Spring, Year)**
This program does not have a language requirement, but students with advanced Japanese language skills also have access to electives taught in Japanese.

At Tohoku University (which hosts the Engineering and Science program), students typically take the following course load each semester:
- Independent Study Project (Lab Research): 5.3 semester units
- Japanese Language: 4 semester units
- Science and Engineering Electives in English: 3 classes worth 2 semester units each (6 total units)

You may review electives offered on the [Tohoku University website](#).

Students have the opportunity to double the amount of time (30 hours per week) and units (10.6 UC semester units) earned in the lab portion of their program at Tohoku. This is known as the intensive research course, and it requires the approval of the research supervisor after arrival at Tohoku University.

**STEM Research Osaka (Fall, Spring, Summer)**
This program does not have a language requirement.

The Fall program runs from late September to mid-February, so it is only possible for students who do not have to return to UC Berkeley for the Spring semester.

It is possible to turn this program into a year-long option by applying to both Fall and Spring programs. Consult the BSA Japan adviser if you are interested in this possibility.

This is a full-time lab program. During the Semester-length program, you may take one or two courses in addition to the lab research. Courses that will be open to UC exchange students will not be known until the program begins. Many students take one Japanese language course.

During the semester-length program, students take the following course load:
- Lab Research: 14 semester units
- Optional Japanese language course

The Summer package of the STEM Research Osaka program is often impacted, and UC Berkeley is only able to send a few students each summer. If you are not nominated for this program due to space constraints, your application may be redirected to other summer research programs, such as [Research in Hong Kong](#) or [Research in Taipei](#). Nomination by Berkeley/UCEAP does not guarantee placement by Osaka University. You must be selected by the host university in addition to BSA and UCEAP.

The Fall and Spring packages of STEM Research Osaka are not considered impacted.
STEM Research Tokyo (Summer)
The STEM Research Tokyo program is often impacted, and UC Berkeley is only able to send a few students each summer. If you are not nominated for this program due to space constraints, your application may be redirected to other summer research programs, such as Research in Hong Kong or Research in Taipei. Nomination by Berkeley/UCEAP does not guarantee placement by The University of Tokyo Research Internship Program (UTRIP). You must be selected by the host university in addition to BSA and UCEAP. Science, Engineering, and Math majors are welcome to apply. Placement in Biology-related labs is often very competitive.

Review program information and possible research projects on the UTRIP website. Nominated students should apply to as many labs as possible at University of Tokyo to ensure best chances for placement in a lab.

Students participating in this program earn 5.0 UC semester units for this program. To qualify for summer financial aid at Berkeley, a student must enroll in a minimum of 6.0 semester units. Therefore, this program does not qualify for summer financial aid as a standalone option.

Program Considerations – Themed

Global Studies, Japan
This program is often impacted in the Fall package due to space constraints. If your application is not nominated, you may be redirected to another UCEAP program. Students with a declared Social Science major are given priority, but all majors will be considered so long as a student demonstrates sincere interest in the academic program via their UCEAP application (and any follow-up requested by the BSA Japan Adviser). This program is not impacted in the Spring.

Meiji Gakuin University (MGU), which hosts the Global Studies, Japan program, is one of the few UCEAP Japan partner universities that offers some 4.0 semester unit courses. Higher unit value courses may be easier to use for major, minor, and/or breadth credit. Course information for the current MGU semester can be found on the MGU website.

For the courses at MGU that have lower unit values (2 semester units), students may be able to do a special study project related to a particular course in order to increase the unit value of the course and meet their departmental requirement.

UCEAP students at MGU will be housed in a subsidized university dormitory in single rooms. The housing includes a meal plan with breakfast and dinner, keeping the program affordable and providing excellent opportunities to mingle with Japanese students. A limited number of homestays may also be available on the MGU program. More information can be found on MGU’s website.

MGU offers internship positions for UC students to help in the learning center as English tutors and to pursue teaching internships for academic credit.
Calendar Considerations

The academic calendar in Japan is not a direct match to UC Berkeley’s. Programs that do not compare to the Berkeley academic calendar are listed below (if a program is not listed, there is no significant difference).

Engineering and Science
- Spring: early April to early August
- Year: late September to early August

Global Studies, Japan
- Fall: early September to late December
- Spring: early April to late July

Hitotsubashi University
- Spring: early April to late July

International Christian University
- Year: late August to late June

Japanese in Kyoto
- Spring: late March to early August

Keio University
- Year: early September to late July

STEM Research Osaka
- Fall: mid-September to early February
- Spring: late March to early August

Waseda University
- Year: early September to late July

Japanese Language Preparation

Some programs in Japan do not require previous Japanese language study. However, you are advised to expose yourself to learning the language now so that you have an idea of what learning Japanese is like.

Below are a couple resources to assist in learning Japanese:
- Learning hiragana
- Learning kanji
For Research programs, although research is supervised in English, all seminars, courses, and meetings of the research unit are in Japanese. It is mandatory that you attend the seminars and colloquia and participate in the group’s research efforts and social events, even if you lack an optimal level of Japanese comprehension.

Financial Considerations

Studying in Japan can be expensive due to the high living costs in Japan, but it should not deter you from pursuing this option. There are many generous scholarships offered by organizations in the US and Japan. Here are a few scholarships to explore:

- Bridging Scholarships
- JASSO Scholarship: if available for your program, you will be invited to apply through your pre-departure paperwork, after you have been nominated for UCEAP. Please wait for instructions.
- Gilman Scholarship: you must be a US citizen receiving a Pell Grant to qualify for this scholarship.
- American Association of Japanese University Women Scholarship
- Japanese Government (Monbukagakusho; MEXT) Scholarships

Students participating in the STEM Research Tokyo summer program earn 5.0 UC semester units for this program; 4.0 units for research and 1.0 unit for the lecture series, which are both graded on the Pass/No pass grading option only. To qualify for summer financial aid at Berkeley a student must enroll in a minimum of 6.0 semester units. Therefore, this program does not qualify for summer financial aid as a standalone option.

Considerations for Graduating Seniors

If you are a graduating senior who is applying to a Spring semester program, please be advised that the finals period may stretch into July or August. Returning to Berkeley to walk in a commencement ceremony is an unrealistic expectation for Spring participants. If walking in graduation is very important to you, we recommend that you apply to the National University Singapore, as there is a better chance that program will end before commencement. As an alternative to walking in a Spring ceremony, there is also a UC Berkeley "December Graduates Convocation" if you would like to have the experience of walking in graduation (not department specific). Similarly, you can wait and walk in the following Spring departmental ceremony.
Graduating seniors participating on a spring semesters program should ensure that they are on the Spring degree list. If they are not yet on this degree list, students should petition to move their graduation term with their UC Berkeley college. However, spring program grades are often not reported to UCEAP until mid-September or October, so your grades will not arrive in time for your degree to be processed with the spring degree list (which occurs in mid-July). You will be automatically removed from the spring degree list and placed onto the summer degree list, which is processed in October. Thus, your diploma would display a summer graduation date rather than a spring graduation date. This policy is subject to change. For all students, after your UCEAP grades arrive and you are waiting for the next degree list to be processed, you can request a “Certificate of Completion” from the Berkeley Registrar that can serve as “proof” of graduation.

Considerations for LGBTIQA+ Students

International Christian University is one of the best campuses in terms of support offered for LBGTIQA+ students. Please review the LGBT in ICU Student Guidebook.

Japan is included on UCEAP’s list of tolerant destinations for LGBTIQA+ students. Nations on this list are included based on recognition of same-sex unions and the existence of human rights laws prohibiting discrimination against gay individuals. This resource considers potential risks as they specifically affect members of the LGBTIQA+ community, and not necessarily the overall threats posed to all students traveling and studying abroad. You can review the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2019 from the U.S. Department of State for more information.

According to the U.S. Department of State’s Human Rights Report, no law prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. In general, societal acceptance of LGBTIQA+ persons continued to improve. There are no existing penalties associated with such discrimination, and no related statistics were available. Laws governing rape, sexual commerce, and other activity involving sexual intercourse do not apply to same-sex sexual activity, since the law defines sex as exclusively male-to-female vaginal intercourse. This definition leads to lower penalties for perpetrators of male rape and greater legal ambiguity surrounding same-sex prostitution.

NGOs that advocate on behalf of LGBTIQA+ persons reported no impediments to organization but some instances of bullying, harassment, and violence. Stigma surrounding LGBTIQA+ persons remained an impediment to self-reporting of discrimination or abuse, and studies on bullying and violence in schools generally did not take into account the sexual orientation or gender identity of the persons involved. Pervasive societal stigma surrounding LGBTIQA+ persons also prevented many from being open about their sexual orientation, and attorneys who frequently represent LGBTIQA+ persons related several cases during the year in which clients were threatened with disclosure of sexual orientation. Self-censorship in the press remained an impediment to bringing LGBTIQA+ issues into mainstream discourse.

The law allows transgender individuals to change their legal gender, but only after receiving a diagnosis of gender dysphoria.
Traditional Japanese society stigmatizes homosexuality, often discouraging an open expression of identity. Despite some occasional social discomfort, the LGBTIQA+ community enjoys a high degree of freedom and increasing levels of support from communities and the government. Pervasive societal stigma surrounding LGBTIQA+ persons also prevent many from being open about their sexual orientation, and attorneys who frequently represent LGBTIQA+ persons related 10 cases during 2012 in which clients were threatened with disclosure of sexual orientation.

Diversity Abroad Resources

BSA recognizes that there are many nuances to exploring your identities abroad, and these articles may not be representative of all identities and experiences. Diversity Abroad's resources, however, are a great starting place for your exploration. You can find a variety of articles to help you prepare for your study abroad experience as well as a Japan Destination Guide.

A Final Note on Applying to UCEAP Japan

Preparations for studying abroad in Japan are complicated and time-consuming, beginning with your actual UCEAP application and continuing through departure for your program with host university and visa paperwork. Attention to detail is vital to the success of your application and placement at a Japanese university. Remember that Japanese officials (including host university administrators, Japanese Ministry of Education, the Japanese Immigration office) are very strict about the accuracy and appearance of your paperwork, so please look over all forms meticulously before submitting them.