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In this report, I'll share my personal journey as a French double degree student from École Centrale de Lyon at Tohoku University. I've recently completed my last presentation for the Master's degree at the GSIS graduate school in the Interactive Content Design Laboratory of Prof. Kitamura.

Student's Life

Do you think the program and the educational environment helped promote your research?



Yamadera Temple

Due to the double degree program, after 2 years in my university in France, I came to Japan to complete the Master's degree at Tohoku University with the same status as other Japanese students. In comparison with what we had to do in France, universities in Japan are much more focused on research. The number of courses can vary depending on the laboratory you're in but I had 9 courses to complete during the two years. As one course corresponds to around 2 hours per week for one semester, the time we spend in class are really low. Most students complete all their courses during the first two semester in order to be able to focus on their research for the rest of the program. Each student needs to choose their courses among the available courses of the semester

(different between spring and fall) which covers various fields. It is important to note that most courses are taught in Japanese which can quickly restrict the number of possibilities if you cannot understand it. However, even for those courses, you can usually receive most documents in English and the professor also accept submission in English. Even with this limitation, it is still relatively easy to get all the credits.

As mentioned previously, the master program in Japan is really focused on research. When joining a laboratory, you will have to discuss with the professors to choose a subject for your project on which you will focus for the two years of the program. In my laboratory, there are a wide range of subjects, from application in virtual reality to the study of emotion via body language using machine learning algorithms and the choice is based on your own preferences. There was a meeting each week with our direct supervisor in order to talk about our progress, the problems we faced and how to solve them. There was also a general meeting each week in which every student of the laboratory must attend. In this meeting, students make a presentation of their project to all the other members. Even if most presentation are in Japanese, it helps to understand the research of the other students.

For your research, you have a dedicated working space with a computer, multiple screens and all the stuff you need to work in good conditions. You can also order online if you need something more specific. You can also freely decide when you come to the laboratory or work online. In general, I think that it was a really suitable and comfortable environment that had a great working atmosphere promoting research.

Suggestions and/or criticisms for space of improvement.

Even though you can survive without being able to speak Japanese at all thanks to the various help you can receive within the university, it is difficult to get along with the other student or understand their presentation which are mainly done completely in Japanese. It is also the same case for the major parts of the mail or information we receive which make it difficult to distinguish and understand the important information. That's why I think it would be better if more efforts were made to communicate the main information in English at least for the beginning when foreign students are not used to speak or read Japanese.

Living in Sendai : Experience and Advice

Tips for new arrivals.

For the phone subscription, I used Mobal which is a online service with which you can order your SIM card online and directly receive it at the airport at your arrival. There is also a service to send directly your luggage from the airport to the residency you live in Sendai.

For daily life, there is a free shuttle bus to commute between the different campuses which can be really convenient as the subway in Sendai can be expensive. Except some food like vegetables, cheese or fruits, you can eat for really cheap outside or in Konbini with a wide range of delicious bentos.

What is the monthly cost of maintenance in Sendai beyond the dormitory?

I lived at the UH Aobayama dormitory for which I pay about 40 000 yens per month. Then other expenses mainly come from foods for which you can expect to pay around 1000-2000 yen each day. So it goes to around 90 000 yen per month which in my case was mainly covered by the JASSO scholarship.

Preparation for essential items for maintenance prior to arrival.

In Japan you can find nearly everything you need in the really numerous Konbini so except preparing for some cash in yen in case of problems with your credit card, I don't think anything else is needed.

Difficulties you may encounter after arriving in Japan.

The main problem you will face after arriving in Japan will be the language barrier. Indeed, especially in Sendai, only a few people will be able to speak English and, in most cases, using really simple Japanese will be easier to be understood than correct English. However, all Japanese people are really nice and helpful and will do their best to help you.

Leisure.

Living in Sendai was overall a great experience. It is a really good city to live in because it is not as crowded and as big as Tokyo but you have a wide range of facilities easily accessible. You can also join the different clubs or activities within the university or freely access some of the buildings like the gym or calm working space. There a lot of different really good food in Japan whether fish or meat-based.

There are also many beautiful places to visit.



Career paths

Pursuing graduate school degree (including Ph.D.) at home university or Tohoku University.

It is possible to continue into Ph. D. and some students chose to take this path. You can either continue in Tohoku University, go back to your own university to continue or do a conjoint program (double tutoring) when you spend time in both universities. I also know that there are some scholarships to help Ph. D. students to live.

Professional career outside of academia.

Here also, you can chose to either work in your own country or continue in Japan. The usual recruitment period starts around 1 year before your expected graduation and even earlier if you need a recommendation from the university. It is also important to note that in order to work in Japan, most companies ask for a N3 or N2 level in Japanese.



Nintendo world, USJ, Osaka



Snow Monkey Park, Nagano



Yuki Matsuri, Sapporo



Torii, Hakone



View from the top of Fuji-san



Neputa, Hirosaki



Aomori



Yamadera Temple



Sakura, Ogawara