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*Double-degree program student from April 2022 to March 2024*

## **The program and my research:**

The Double Degree (DD) program has been instrumental in boosting my research efforts. Its interdisciplinary approach and global perspectives have enriched my academic journey, encouraging critical thinking and collaboration. Interacting with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds has expanded my horizons and pushed me to see things from different angles, resulting in higher-quality research outcomes in my case.

## **Housing:**



Upon my arrival, I had the opportunity to stay in a university residence located on the Aobayama campus. These are furnished and equipped shared accommodations, with units housing 8 people, featuring a common kitchen and bathroom area, and

individual rooms secured by a code-locked door. Access to university residences is naturally offered to exchange students when they prepare for their arrival. Rent varies because expenses change every month (electricity bills are higher in winter, etc.), but the average monthly rent for the Aobayama residence is around ¥41,000. It is lower in the Sanjo residences, which, however, are older.

## **Money:**

The most common means of payment in Japan is cash. Except for major chains, few places accept credit cards. There are other payment methods, such as the PayPay app for paying with your phone. Upon my arrival in Sendai, the university guided me to open a "Savings" account at a local bank. This account allows you to store money without being able to pay by card (you can only withdraw from ATMs, which, by the way, have very strict hours if you don't want to pay additional charges). A bank account is necessary to receive a scholarship from the Japanese government. In Japan, it is entirely safe to carry a large amount of cash. Therefore, I recommend keeping the majority of your money directly in cash rather than in your account. Bank transfers cost money, so it's often easier to withdraw it and give it directly in person if possible.

## **Health:**

Upon arrival, it is mandatory to subscribe to Japan's "social security," with a supplement for students. In Japan, there are no general practitioner clinics like in France, nor real pharmacies. Some stores (drug stores) sell fairly simple medications (for colds, etc.). For everything else, it is best to go to the hospital, which is quite common and doesn't have the sense of "emergency" as in France.

## **Telecommunications:**

It should be noted that in France, phone contracts are particularly affordable. Some operators offer unlimited calls and SMS, as well as 50 GB of data for a tiny amount. Unfortunately, this is not the case in Japan. However, I recommend a plan with a

phone number (it's vital to have one, even if each call costs you money) and a few GB of data.

## **University Life:**



At Tohoku University, as in most Japanese universities, the academic year is divided into 2 semesters. The first semester runs from April to September, and the second from October to March. In the context of a Double Degree, it is necessary to obtain a Master's degree in 2 years. This involves accumulating credits by taking courses, primarily. Here, each student is affiliated with a laboratory, where he or she will spend most of their days. The core of the master is about research. To get their degree, students must write a master thesis presenting the content of their research. Most students concentrate their courses during the first semester of the Master's first year, to be able to focus on their research afterward. There are two types of courses: regular courses and intensive courses. Regular courses have one session per week, at the same time slot. Intensive courses are held at irregular hours or even whole days (it can be on weekends). Therefore, they end more quickly. As for exams, it depends on the professors. As for me, I didn't have a single written exam. Instead,

we had oral presentations or reports to submit. Depending on the departments, there are more or fewer courses in English. For example, in my department, there were very few courses in English. However, since most professors understand English, it is entirely possible to do presentations or write reports in English. As for professor-student relationships, they are generally very limited. In Japan, very few students ask questions during or even after classes. The strongest relationship is between the student and his or her responsible professor in his or her laboratory. It is to this professor that the student can turn in case of a problem, whatever it may be (daily life, studies, problems in his or her home country...).

## **Climate:**



In Sendai, there are 6 seasons. In September, the typhoon season is the period that concentrates tropical storms and other weather phenomena related to the ocean. There are sometimes days of heavy rain and wind when it is important to be cautious.

Then comes autumn, from October to November. Winter is cold and dry and lasts until early April. Spring is quite short, as in June the rainy season arrives: a very humid period with a lot of rain that lasts a few weeks. In mid-July, summer arrives, very hot and humid as well, lasting until September.



### **Rhythm of life:**

In Sendai, the night is rather quiet. The weekend is very busy as it is the holiday period.

### **Opening hours:**

Most stores are open every day (including Sunday). Some supermarkets and others are even open 24 hours a day (convenience stores as well).

### **Transport:**

I only use the Tozai metro line. The metro here is quite expensive, 250 yens for a ticket.

### **Food:**

It is possible to never cook at home as there are numerous possibilities. I think it's a bit cheaper to cook at home. You can

find most everyday products that we use in France, but sometimes you have to pay a higher price.

## **Friends:**

In this Double Degree program, I've had the privilege of forging connections not only with local Japanese individuals but also with people from diverse corners of the globe, and the experience has been truly enriching. The exchange of ideas, traditions, and experiences has not only broadened my worldview but also enriched my personal growth, fostering appreciation for cultural differences. It's been a beautiful journey of friendship and discovery, one that I will cherish long after the program concludes.

I recommend that the upcoming French DD students embrace interactions with other international students. Not only does it offer enrichment, but there may also not be many opportunities in the future to do so. Moreover, it can help shift the perception many internationals have about French DD students, who are often seen as only socializing amongst themselves.



## **Career Path:**

As I think about my future career, I realize I don't know much about working in Japan or getting a Ph.D. at the university here. My plan is to go back to work in France eventually. So, while I'm open to different possibilities, my main goal is to use what I've learned in Japan to succeed in my career back home.