

## **Report QTEM Waseda University**

### **1. Introduction**

Studying abroad and living in Japan had been a dream of mine ever since I first visited two years ago. Joining the QTEM program turned that dream into reality, offering me an unforgettable academic, cultural, and personal journey. From navigating the application process to settling into life in Tokyo, the experience was both challenging and incredibly rewarding. I gained valuable academic insights, made lifelong friends, and explored a culture that continues to inspire me.

### **2. Application**

To participate in the QTEM program, I first needed to take the GMAT, which is a mandatory requirement. While many universities set the bar at 650, QTEM typically accepts scores starting from 600. After submitting my list of preferred universities, I was fortunate to be placed at my first choice: Waseda University. From there, I had to wait for Waseda to reach out — a process that took longer than I initially expected. That said, as long as you stay on top of your emails and respond promptly, the timeline shouldn't be an issue, especially given Waseda's quick and helpful communication.

Waseda will guide you through all the essential processes, providing helpful information about housing, residence registration, course selection, and more. Additionally, I highly recommend booking flights early, as prices can rise significantly. However, keep in mind that the visa application process can sometimes take longer than expected — it did for me.

### **3. Preparation and Housing**

Once accepted, the preparation begins. Waseda's Graduate School of Economics QTEM coordinator will contact you after your nomination. One of the first key steps is obtaining a Certificate of Eligibility (COE), which Waseda applies for on your behalf through the Japanese Immigration Service. This process typically takes around three months, which usually leaves enough time for travel before the semester starts in late September.

However, in my case — and for several other exchange students — the COE took longer than expected. I ended up receiving it just one to two weeks before my planned departure in mid-September. Once you receive your COE, apply for your student visa immediately. Thankfully, my visa was processed within a week, but to avoid last-minute stress, I'd recommend leaving extra buffer time if you're hoping to travel beforehand.

For financial support, QTEM students can apply for the JASSO scholarship, which provides 80,000 JPY per month for five months. Keep in mind that JASSO isn't compatible with the Promos scholarship. To receive the payments, you'll need to open a Japanese bank account — Waseda's CIE (Center for International Education) and GSE (Graduate School of Economics) will provide guidance on how to do this. Additionally, you'll need to sign in at the office once a month to ensure your payments continue without issue.

Housing applications typically open around June or July. While Waseda doesn't have enough dormitory spaces to accommodate all international students, the university collaborates with a wide range of partner housing options. The GSE will guide you through the application process to help secure a spot. I ended up staying in a share house called BeGood Zoshigaya, one of Waseda's partner accommodations, just a 15-minute walk from campus. The room was small, but the location was fantastic — close to

Ikebukuro Station, a major hub with great food, shopping, and easy transport connections across Tokyo. I paid around 80,000 yen per month, which was a great deal compared to some of my classmates, who paid nearly double for similar locations. Overall, I was happy with my choice — it balanced convenience, affordability, and a great neighborhood vibe.

To prepare for life in Japan, I suggest you should take a basic Japanese course or using language apps like Duolingo. Most people in Japan don't speak English fluently, and I personally don't speak Japanese either. That's why I highly recommend learning at least some basic Japanese before coming here. While Google Translate can be helpful in a pinch, knowing a few key phrases can make a big difference—especially when chatting with locals in a cozy izakaya (a traditional Japanese pub). Even if you start with just a few words, try to pick up new ones from each interaction — it will enhance your experience and make connecting with people much easier.

You'll receive some guidance from the GSE about essential steps like registration at the municipal office and welcome events. These are important to complete soon after your arrival. However, once you've settled into your dorm room, I recommend going with the flow. Connect with other students — this is a great way to gather extra tips and ensure you don't miss any important information.

In addition to learning from fellow students, explore social media for practical tips on navigating Japan — platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok are packed with helpful advice for your first days, covering everything from restaurants and bars to activities and neighborhoods worth exploring. It's a quick and engaging way to get familiar with local customs, hidden gems, and how to make the most of your time. I also suggest getting a SIM card or mobile WiFi (collectible at the airport) before your flight. I personally used an eSIM with a Japanese number from Mobal.com, which came in handy for registrations. Some friends chose eSIMs without a Japanese number, but having one proved useful for me.

#### 4. University

Studying at Waseda University is an incredible opportunity, as it's one of Japan's most highly respected institutions. The academic environment stands out with its smaller class sizes, fostering a more intimate, classroom-like atmosphere that makes learning engaging and interactive. The structure of weekly assignments and homework helps balance the workload throughout the semester, making it manageable without the stress of heavy exam cramming at the end.

Courses are divided into fall quarter, winter quarter, and general fall semester classes — plus intensive courses lasting around two weeks — giving you the flexibility to create a schedule that suits your preferences. Whether you want more free time to explore Japan or prefer a balanced academic load, the setup supports both approaches. When selecting courses, though, it's essential to ensure you meet the QTEM program requirement of 22 ECTS in quantitative credits, which might take a bit of planning. In total I attended 5 courses at Waseda, along with the GBAC while being abroad.

**GBAC - Global Business Analytics Challenges:** I completed the GBAC while studying abroad, and it turned out to be a great opportunity to enhance my skills and collaborate with other students. Although it was sometimes demanding, the experience was rewarding — both for the academic credits and the connections I made with students from different backgrounds.

**Business Data Analysis:** This course provided structured guidance on how to analyze business data using various statistical methods. It combined theory with practical exercises through quizzes, homework, and a final report, which helped deepen my understanding of data-driven decision-making.

**Industrial Ecology:** An interesting, though technical, course that introduced Input-Output Analysis — a method used to attribute emissions to products and industries. Weekly quizzes kept me engaged, and a short-term paper allowed me to apply the concepts learned throughout the semester.

**FinTech – Financial Innovation and the Internet:** This course explored the rapidly evolving world of financial technology, covering innovations like blockchain, digital payments, and online banking. It was eye-opening to see how traditional financial systems are adapting to modern technology.

**Risk Management:** A comprehensive look into the principles and techniques of risk management. The course combined theoretical foundations with practical applications, including homework, papers, and a final take-home exam.

**Analysis of the Japanese Economy:** This course was particularly fascinating, offering an in-depth look at Japan's economic structure, history, and current challenges. I highly recommend this class to anyone studying in Japan, as it deepens your understanding of the country beyond the surface level.

## 5. Japan

### Culture

Japan is a country where modern energy meets timeless tradition, creating an unforgettable cultural experience. In Tokyo, you can start your day wandering through historic shrines, exploring serene gardens, or visiting world-class museums — and by evening, dive into the city's vibrant nightlife, from lively izakayas to neon-lit entertainment districts. The balance of old and new extends to Japan's rich sports culture as well. Watching sumo tournaments is a must, and catching a baseball, rugby, or football match brings you right into the heart of local excitement — the Waseda vs. Meiji university rugby match at the Japanese National Stadium was a personal highlight for me.

Beyond the sights and events, Japan's deep-rooted sense of order is woven into everyday life. Whether it's the meticulous garbage disposal rules, the quiet courtesy on packed trains, or the unspoken understanding that eating while walking is frowned upon, these customs prioritize the greater good over individual convenience. While this may feel unfamiliar at first, it's surprisingly easy to adapt — and I found this structure fosters an atmosphere of respect and harmony that I came to admire.

### Social Life

Building a social life in Japan, especially as an exchange student, is easier than you might expect — you just need to take the first step. Waseda's university introduction events are a great way to start meeting people. I recommend joining university circles (student clubs), such as the "Waseda Outsiders". While not all clubs accept exchange students, many do, and it's worth trying to join one that aligns with your hobbies.

Beyond campus, WhatsApp group chats, Discord channels, and Facebook groups are valuable for staying in the loop on events and making new friends. In the first few weeks, students often organize meetups and activities — so don't hesitate to join in. If you're living in shared housing, connecting with roommates is another great way to expand your social circle.

For finding events beyond the university, I highly recommend the Meetup app. It's perfect for meeting locals and other internationals around shared interests. As someone who loves football, I found numerous casual games through the app — many of which I attended regularly.

## **Travelling**

If you're coming to Japan, make sure to explore as much as you can — it's worth every yen! I spent a lot of time (and money) traveling, and although I still haven't seen everything, I highly recommend venturing outside Tokyo. The city's lively, fast-paced energy is exhilarating, but taking a break in the countryside or other cities offers a refreshing change of pace. For budget-friendly stays, hostels are a good option, but I also suggest experiencing a traditional ryokan — where you'll sleep on cozy futon beds and may even get to relax in an onsen (hot spring).

If you plan on exploring more remote areas, getting your driver's license translated (about 2000–3000 yen, takes ~2 weeks) is a game-changer. Car rentals — like Nippon Rent-a-Car, Nissan, or Toyota — can be pricey but become affordable when split among 4–5 people. It's more convenient and flexible than buses, and cheaper than the Shinkansen (bullet trains).

Some of my favorite travel destinations include Osaka, Kyoto, and Nara, each offering unique cultural experiences and breathtaking sights. For a tropical escape, Okinawa is a must-visit. About a three-hour flight from Tokyo, it boasts warm weather even in February and March. Fall, particularly October and November, is ideal for spotting migrating fish. The island's slower pace, stunning beaches, and crystal-clear waters make it perfect for relaxing. Snorkeling with fish and sea turtles, whale watching, and exploring the smaller surrounding islands can make your trip unforgettable.

For a completely different vibe, head north to Hokkaido. If you're a fan of winter sports, Sapporo and Niseko are fantastic destinations. Niseko is famous for its powder snow, with slopes suitable for all skill levels. After a day on the mountains, relaxing in a traditional onsen feels amazing — the perfect way to warm up and unwind.

Southern Japan is worth exploring, too. Hiroshima offers a moving historical experience, while Kyushu boasts vibrant cities, hot springs, and beautiful landscapes. If you're short on time, there are plenty of great day trips from Tokyo, like Nikko, Kamakura, and Enoshima. For stunning views of Mt. Fuji, I recommend visiting Hakone or Kawaguchiko. The Japanese Alps, including Nagano and Takayama, are also breathtaking and worth visiting for a more mountainous, nature-filled experience.

If you're feeling adventurous, you can also consider trips to nearby countries, too — Japan's location makes it easy to hop over to South Korea, Taiwan, or even Southeast Asia for a quick getaway.

Japan has so much to offer beyond Tokyo, and every trip brought new memories and experiences. Whether you're exploring bustling cities, relaxing on tropical beaches, or skiing through fresh powder snow, traveling here is nothing short of unforgettable.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, I highly recommend spending a semester abroad in Tokyo. It was truly an incredible experience, and I'm certain I'll return to Japan in the future, whether for work or travel. The blend of a culture that feels both uniquely different and surprisingly familiar makes it an ideal destination for studying abroad. It's an opportunity to not only immerse yourself in a new way of life but also to gain valuable insights about yourself along the way.