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I studied at Waseda University in Tokyo for two semesters as a 4th year Arts/Law student. After studying Japanese 7 to 12 at Monash, I went to Japan to gain credit for the Arts Honours program and research my honours thesis. Without a doubt, my exchange year was the best experience of my Arts studies, and leaving Waseda behind was the most difficult time of the eleven months.

At Waseda I took a combination of exchange students' special Japanese language subjects – from the 'Intensive Japanese Program' - and normal law faculty subjects, with approximately 10 contact hours per week. Studying law in Japanese was a constant challenge but was ultimately not impossible when viewed as just another opportunity to test and use my Japanese language skills (also remembering that marks for Monash credit points are determined by Monash lecturers – who understand the challenges!). The Japanese language classes are also excellent for extending language ability, with a variety of levels and grammar, reading, listening, writing and skill and/or theory based classes. The level of contact hours for Japanese courses is higher – around 22 hours per week – but most students I know found the level and amount of work comparable to their home universities.

Every student of Japanese has their own particular interests, but the range of clubs ('circles') at Waseda and daily life itself provides the opportunity to indulge every obsession, and find new ones! Shopping, Karaoke, Disneyland, University organised activities, summer holidays and constant public holidays also allow exchange students to explore Japan. Most exchange students live in university dormitories, so there is also never a shortage of students to explore with!

Importantly – particularly for students who might be experiencing doubt or unease about studying abroad – I would like to stress that extensive support and guidance is always available during every step of the exchange, from the Monash Japanese department, Monash Abroad and the international office at Waseda. Also, partner universities assist students with accommodation and visa arrangements, and both Monash and the Japanese government/universities have some grants and scholarships available to make exchange easier and more accessible.

I urge everyone studying Japanese and/or Japanese Studies to consider studying on exchange in Japan, and to start planning as soon as possible!