

■ 32nd START Program (Thailand)

For two weeks from March 13th to the 27th of 2016, 24 first year students participated in the 32nd START Program (*). Led by Hisashi Kuwayama (Lecturer at the Graduate School of Education) and two other supervising faculty members, the students spent this time living and studying at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, which is located in the Kingdom of Thailand. Apart from the classroom, the students visited a Japanese company based in Thailand and were able to ask about what is sought in a candidate who wishes to work in an international corporation.

The students took classes at Chulalongkorn University, all taught in English, on topics such as Thai (language), history, economy, government, culture, and English language presentational skills and techniques. Although the students had little prior understanding of, or contact with, the Thai language, through their studies and interactions with the local people, they learned the importance of being able to communicate in the national language of the country. And although at first the students were not accustomed to taking lectures taught entirely in English, sometimes struggling to understand what was being said, they were eventually able to discuss the contents of the lectures and the questions that had arisen since coming to Thailand by having had consistent interactions with the local students at Chulalongkorn University and by helping each other out.

Apart from lectures, the students spent time exploring the campus and surrounding area of Chulalongkorn University alongside local students, forming strong friendships with one another by teaching each other about their respective country and culture. The students were also able to visit a Japanese company based in Thailand, getting the opportunity to ask about the Thai people (as seen from a Japanese perspective) and the Japanese people (as seen from a Thai perspective) as well as what is sought in, and what skills are required for, a candidate who wishes to work in an international corporation. The students also visited Ayutthaya Historical Park, a World Heritage Site located about 80 km north of Bangkok, and were able to get a sense of the traditions and diversity of Thailand by eyeing this historical architecture up close.

On the last day of the program, the students presented the results of their

research projects, which they had been working on in groups before and throughout their time in Thailand. Each group had chosen a theme (e.g., politics, economy, society, education, or culture in Thailand) and prepared for an English-only presentation, which was followed by Q&A sessions.

During the farewell party, the students shared messages of thanks to their teachers, and to the local students, to whom they were indebted to for helping make their two weeks in Thailand an incredible experience. Saying goodbye, however, was not an easy experience.

After returning to Japan, the students gave presentations on what they had learned via their participation in the program, or about how they wish make use of what they had learned in the program when moving forward (e.g., in school or in the future), and were able to reaffirm their goals, and their concrete plans for how to achieve such goals.



Interacting with the local students at Chulalongkorn University



Visiting a Japanese company in Thailand (Japanese Chamber of Commerce, Bangkok)



Visiting a historic and cultural establishment in Bangkok City (Grand Palace)



Final presentation ceremony