

Report : INU Shadow Program Hiroshima and Ritsumeikan University, Japan

The International Network of Universities (INU) Shadow Program is an opportunity for staff members to experience a brief period of time with an overseas partner institution to collaborate and exchange ideas, build an understanding of the university processes, share expertise and gain invaluable cross cultural understanding.

I became aware of the Shadow Program through a chanced conversation with my colleague from the international office. Then, I explored the INU website for further information to satisfy my curiosity. As a result of looking through the INU university list, Japan became my obvious choice because I believe it will provide me with an insight to an unfamiliar environment from the usual countries and institutions I have visited.

Hiroshima and Ritsumeikan University were the two chosen universities because of the strong relationship they have with Flinders University and to compare the differences between a public and a private run University.

Brief Background

I am currently the International Marketing and Recruitment Officer for the Flinders University International Office. My current role includes areas like international marketing, exchange and international student admissions. The wealth of knowledge gained from this experience covers areas like public relations, international articulation programs, study abroad, student services and admissions.

Summary of Hiroshima and Ritsumeikan University

Hiroshima and Ritsumeikan are universities steeped in tradition, equipped with modern, state of the art technology and contemporary building and facilities. Both universities are fully committed to world peace and strive to become the centre for education and research that contributes to globalisation.

Hiroshima University is a national institution which was founded in 1949. Today, it has a university exchange agreement with ninety four other universities in twenty six countries around the world. Its faculties also have institution agreements with a hundred and thirty three of their counterparts in thirty seven countries.

Located in historic Kyoto city, Ritsumeikan University is a private university which offers a wide range of international programs to 36,000

students annually. One of its campuses, Asia Pacific University, is currently ranked number one in Japan for international student admissions. Ritsumeikan currently has three hundred and seventy nine international partner universities in fifty nine countries.

Mix of past and present.

It was captivating to see the contrast of the past and present seamlessly intertwined via the corridors of Ritsumeikan university campuses. Walking through the main entrance of Ritsumeikan's Suzaku campus, one cannot help but be immersed in the rich history of the university. The dome shaped museum which is situated at the entrance, houses a statue that symbolises what Ritsumeikan stands for. Coupled with the state of the art audio and visual presentation of the university's history, visitors like me were able to appreciate it much more. Other visible examples of the clever use of the past and present are chalk boards and the latest televisions in lecture theatres plus the use of alumni and the current President in promoting the university through posters and media.



Museum Dome at Ritsumeikan Suzaku campus

Globalisation

Hiroshima, Ritsumeikan and Flinders University all have campuses, both in and out of the city. They are equipped with modern facilities, on-campus accommodation, restaurants and café's and also surrounded by beautiful trees and parks.

All three universities strive for the development and promotion of research, education and globalisation, areas in which I am particularly interested in.

Ritsumeikan University was selected as one of the first thirteen universities among the group of thirty recently, inline with the Japanese governments 'Global 30 Project' for establishing core universities for internationalisation.

Hiroshima University on the other hand, had established the 'Hiroshima Internationalisation Strategy' in early 2003 and has been making progress towards campus wide internationalisation ever since.

I was keen to learn more about the methods undertaken by both universities to increase their number of international students through globalisation.

Outcome of my 'shadow'

International links

As mentioned earlier, both Hiroshima and Ritsumeikan University maintain a global network through collaborations with a number of partner universities worldwide.

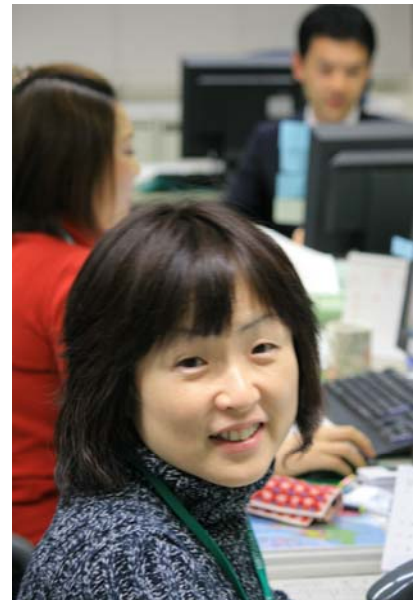
I acquired a great deal of information from both these universities regarding the articulation programs that they have with their overseas counterparts. Flinders currently has a double masters program in International Relations with Hiroshima University and is working on a similar arrangement with Ritsumeikan University.

On a humanitarian basis, Ritsumeikan University is committed in their efforts to contribute internationally. This can be seen as a measure to build university recognition. The university currently has an International cooperation and contribution commissioned by national governments and international authorities. Some of the projects vary from human resources training and reform in China, special education support in Vietnam or providing disaster relief through fund raising activities in Indonesia, Myanmar, China and Sri Lanka.

As a result of their exposure to these overseas projects, there seem to be many positive outcomes. For example, as part of his Japan tour, the Prime Minister of China, Mr Wen Jiabao, visited Ritsumeikan University. The World Bank has also increased its graduate scholarships from two candidates in 2007 to eight in 2009.

Establishing offices globally

Ritsumeikan University have successfully established offices globally. They have just set up four new offices which brings it now to a total of nine centres. The main activities of these offices include forming networks, providing information, admission base and support for alumni.



Staff at Hiroshima University

As Flinders University is looking at increasing their profile at specific target countries in the future, we could look at similar methods employed for establishing and managing these offices.

Internationalising its staff

Hiroshima University is looking at implementing staff development to further improve their services to international students. The university is also looking at appointing and utilising foreign students with diverse abilities and talents. For example, the international relations office at Hiroshima currently has an Indonesian student who speaks fluently in both Japanese and English assisting in their projects.

There has been an increase in the number of overseas staff visiting Flinders University from Europe and Asia via short internships programs. Flinders should also be looking at increasing the number of staff sent overseas to further promote and build stronger relationship with our overseas counterparts through the INU Shadow program or government run staff exchange programs.

Multicultural/Multilingual campus

I found the concept of having a similar break time for staff and students alike at Ritsumeikan Kinugasa campus unique. There is a sense of positive atmosphere because of the buzz created amongst international, local students and university employees. It is an avenue for the university as a whole to come together and communicate with each other through social activities.



Break time at Ritsumeikan Kinugasa campus

Both universities are looking at establishing a multilingual campus to provide greater support for their international students. Examples include multilingual homepage, library services with multilingual staff and resources and also a residential housing program to integrate both international and Japanese students.

On campus, I feel that Flinders could benefit from the multicultural campus aspect as it will help bridge the gap between local and international students as well as university staff.

Sharing my experience

Although the visit to Hiroshima and Ritsumeikan universities was brief, I managed to meet staff members from different areas like public relations, exchange, support services and international relations, and was able to share my views regarding Flinders general administration and marketing processes with them. I happily answered all the questions put forward by enthusiastic staff members who were eager to learn more about how we administer our processes.

In the final leg of my journey, I conducted power point presentations summarising my INU experience and Flinders profile to staff members from both universities. There were forty staff who attended my presentation in Hiroshima University and approximately twenty from Ritsumeikan University via conference setting.

Success of the 'Shadow' experience

This was my first visit to Japan and I found it to be exciting, unique and an informative experience. Although it was a brief stint, I was able to speak to many staff members from different departments and learn more about the work processes in both government and private universities in Japan.



Japanese sushi



Tea shop in Kyoto

The highlight of my trip was experiencing true Japanese culture first hand. The variety of the delicious Japanese delicacy, the latest fashion trends, the meticulously organised transport system, the latest gadgets in electronic retail stores I visited. The temples in Kyoto captures the true essence about what and how Japan was like in the past.

Friendly staff members were instrumental in making my trip a success. Special mention to Tea Hisako Umemura of Hiroshima University, Richard Emery and Shuhei Wakayama of Ritsumeikan

University, who were hospitable and kind to give up their time from their busy schedule to ensure that I was welcomed and comfortable during my stay.

I hope to share the information gained with my colleagues and students who are interested in exchange to Japan. I will definitely encourage my colleagues at Flinders University to take up this incredible challenge and experience the journey of working and living through the INU shadow program, as I have.



Miyajima Torii, surrounded by deers, Hiroshima

raditional Wedding, Hiroshima

