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Study abroad to: University College London, UK
Exchange period: September 2015 to May 2016

Study-Abroad Experience without Going Abroad

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The first time I became aware of the Hitotsubashi University Global Education Program (HGP) was during the summer after I had finished my very first semester as a university student. I was quite content about what I had achieved up to that point and felt happy about reaching the summer break successfully. However, I felt that one thing was missing: courses taught in English. Although we have a mandatory English language requirement for the first year, I suspected that this was not enough for me to maintain my English proficiency level after having graduated from high school in the United States. As I was walking around the East Campus, I saw a billboard about HGP, and it stayed in the back of my mind.

When fall arrived, I decided to enroll in an HGP course with the intentions of making greater use of my English skills and broadening my social community within the university by building friendships with international students. The first course I took was a Japanese Affairs course related to cross-cultural communication. The lively lectures and the challenging discussions were definitely a wakeup call for me, as I was barely able to keep up with the intensive coursework. My class was quite diverse with students from Western Europe, Scandinavia, North America, China, and Southeast Asia. Once I entered the classroom, it felt as though I was at a different university. Most importantly, as I became accustomed to the distinct learning environment, I was more eager to speak up and participate actively in all of my courses—particularly after seeing how seriously my international classmates took their coursework.



My second HGP course was one of the Commerce and Management seminar-type courses, on investments. The topic was completely new to me since I belong to the Faculty of Social Sciences, had mainly taken interdisciplinary courses, and had little knowledge in the field of finance. This was when I realized the importance of balancing practical or applied knowledge with knowledge in the humanities.

Although my initial purpose in taking HGP courses was to maintain my English proficiency level, I learned so much more than just linguistic skills. The learning experience at HGP definitely broadened my horizons academically and socially, thanks to my diverse set of classmates, some of whom I still keep in touch with despite the geographical distance between us.

These experiences and insights gained from my HGP courses prepared me for going abroad as an exchange student. I did not

know what to expect at University College London, but I did have the confidence that I would be able to learn as much as the native students would during my year abroad. I had no hesitation about asking questions or speaking up in the classroom, which I believe gave me a jump-start on my year in comparison to other students going abroad. Of course, taking HGP courses does not provide the same intensity as spending a full year abroad does, but it does give you a taste of what studying abroad will be like.