

Japan–Canada collaborative education programs

BY NORIE YAZU

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Many collaborative education programs exist between Japan and Canada. All help foster closer relationships between the two countries, and notably the study of Canada in Japan. For instance, the Cross-Cultural College (CCC), which was established in 2011 at Kwansei Gakuin University (KGU), located in Hyogo prefecture (close to Osaka), Japan, is celebrating its 15th anniversary this year. This is a collaborative education project jointly run by Mount Allison University, Queen's University, Western University, University of Toronto, and KGU. As of 2024, 740 KGU students and 567 students from Canada have participated in the CCC program. The program, conducted entirely in English, features two courses of problem-solving activities related to business and two courses for students to participate in internships. Through these courses, students improve their understanding of global business, cross-cultural competency, analytical skills, and international team building.

THE GLOBAL CAREER SEMINAR IN JAPAN

The Global Career Seminar in Japan (GCSJ)¹ is held during the first week of August at KGU. Students are taught modern business tactics and are then given business assignments by participating companies/organizations. Working groups of six students from KGU and the four Canadian universities produce a business plan. The course is divided into two parts: the online period (remote) and the on-site period (in Japan). The online period, from June to July, consists of several short video lectures and assignments about business analysis, an icebreaker session that allows the students to get to know each other, and Q&A sessions with the companies/organizations. The on-site period takes place in August at KGU. Flying to Japan, the students from the Canadian universities meet the KGU students. On the first day in Japan, the students attend lectures and learn about team conflict management and cross-cultural communication. The teams are given several days to brush up their business plans and prepare for their final presentations. During the tutorials, the students make preliminary presentations and meet with the representatives of the companies/organizations to get their advice. The final presentations are conducted competition-style, with all teams presenting their business plans to the representatives of the companies/organizations. The participating companies/organizations in 2024 were Manulife, Ricoh, the Embassy of Canada to Japan, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Garuda Indonesia, and others.



Global Career Seminar in Japan (GCSJ), August 2024, Kwansei Gakuin University (GKU)

THE GLOBAL INTERNSHIP IN JAPAN PROGRAM

The Global Internship in Japan (GIJ)² is held for two weeks after the GCSJ. Most of the GCSJ students stay to participate in the GIJ. This internship program combines online and on-site course work about business analysis and cross-cultural communication. It provides paired KGU and Canadian university students with an opportunity to experience and analyze practical issues in Japanese business settings. The course is grounded in a problem-based learning (PBL) approach, in which the students tackle actual business assignments given by their internship companies. The online period in June and July consists of short video lectures along with assignments including topics such as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis and modern market research methods, an icebreaker session, and Q&A sessions with the companies to which they are assigned.

The on-site period takes place at the end of August. Prior to their internship, students attend lectures and participate in workshops and tutorials at the KGU campus. Here, they acquire basic knowledge about internships, business analysis, Japanese business manners, and cross-cultural understanding, and they study their assigned companies. This prepares the students for the start of their internship. On the last day of their 10-day internship, the students present their solution for the assignments given by the supervisors of their companies and receive feedback from them. After their internship, the students return to KGU to give a final presentation about what they learned at their companies and to share their experiences with other students. The participating companies/organizations in 2024 were Elecom, All Nippon Airways (ANA), Kameda Seika, Yamaha, and others.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PROGRAMS

Two additional programs are held at the University of Toronto. The Global Career Seminar in Canada (GCSC), held in February during reading week for Ontario universities, is the Canadian version of the GCSJ. The KGU students fly to Toronto to work with the Canadian students. Some of the participating companies/organizations in 2024 were Toyota Canada, Kubota Canada, Air Canada, and Ontario Tourism Educational Corporation.

The Field Study in Canadian Business (FSCB) is an internship program that is the Canadian version of the GIJ. The program is only for the KGU students as it takes place for two weeks at the beginning of February when the Canadian students are in school. The participating companies/organizations in 2024 were Yamaha Canada, Japan Foundation, Nikkei Voice, Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Toronto, and others.

AWARD-WINNING PROGRAM

During the CCC programs, KGU and Canadian students are required to stay at the same hostel or hotel and have meals together. They work closely and spend private time together throughout the programs. Thus, the students are immersed in a cross-cultural environment and learn about each other's culture. Such efforts have been recognized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). In April 2024, the GIJ program won the MEXT Award in the 7th National Career Design Program Competition, being recognized as the most impactful and innovative program for the students' career learning and development. From over 1,000 applications, GIJ won the most valuable award.³ To my knowledge, this is the first time the Japanese government has awarded a Canada-related educational program. As a Canadianist of Japan, I am honoured to share this news with the Canadianists of Canada. ■

NOTES

1. Global Career Seminar in Japan (GCSJ) 2023 digest
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItfgwOcC_Zg&list=PLpANqLjIHajiv7YZB1JPIZ-pI6qWIrQmx&index=2
2. Global Internship in Japan (GCSJ) 2024 digest <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LhJOdKS-5y0&list=PLpANqLjIHajiv7YZB1JPIZ-pI6qWIrQmx&index=1>
3. See https://mcs.mynavi.jp/university-case/2024/08/isaward7_kwansei_u/ and https://www.asahi.com/thinkcampus/pr_kwansei_3/