

Voices from International Students
- Their Needs and Opinions on Campus Life at Kyoto University -

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There are currently, 1,425 international students* studying at Kyoto University from 92 different countries/regions. The departments in which they are enrolled, their majors, purposes of studying at Kyoto University and length of study, etc. are varied and each of them has a different cultural background. The purpose of this presentation is to introduce the voices of those international students – to learn how they spend their lives, what aspects of Kyoto University they are satisfied with or not satisfied with, and what they want from the university, taking the diverse backgrounds of the international students into account.

One of the roles of the International Center of Kyoto University, where I work, is to study various measures for the promotion of international exchange on campus – that is, improving the mechanism for accepting international students and cultivating the international exchange of domestic students. We have conducted condition/opinion surveys including questionnaires and interviews every three years since 2002. This year, the 3rd survey (for the 2008-2009 academic year) was conducted on “fact-finding for studying at Kyoto University” for international students and “intention to study abroad” for domestic students, respectively. The contents of the surveys were based on the 1st and 2nd surveys.

I will introduce the results of the above survey of international students conducted in June-December 2008. I will focus on risk management. By analyzing the survey results in detail, I hope to better understand the causes of risks, and therefore be able to more effectively prevent them.

The main findings that I would like to address include:

- (1) What attracts international students to Kyoto University differs depending on status of students (undergraduate or graduate) and their majors (arts or sciences).
- (2) Economic support and the improvement of basic living conditions such as accommodation are the minimum requirements for a satisfactory period of studying abroad.
- (3) However, it became clear in this survey that the students' relationships with the

* As of October 1st, 2008

people around them, including academic advisors, have the greatest impact on their level of satisfaction.

(4) Relating to the above (3), there are “gaps” in understanding between international students and the people around them on various matters, such as the considerable gap between the level of Japanese language skill that international students feel necessary and the level that their academic advisors require them to have.

(5) The both international students and domestic students feel that there are not enough opportunities for exchange on the campus, although they wish to have more contact with each other.

I would like to discuss with you all how we should develop the above survey results into policies for the promotion of international exchange in universities including risk management.

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- Their Needs and Opinions on Campus Life at
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Focuses

- (1) What aspects of Kyoto University (KU) are international students satisfied with and not satisfied with?
- (2) What factors influence their level of “general” satisfaction?
- (3) What can we learn from the results to better understand the causes of possible risks based on the build-up of problems and be able to more effectively prevent them?

Outline of the surveys

The International Center of KU has been conducting condition/opinion surveys every three years since 2002.

The 3rd survey (2008-2009 academic year)

- (1) “Fact-finding for studying at Kyoto University” for international students
 - (2) “Intention to study abroad” for domestic students
- Questionnaires (June-July 2008) and interviews (Nov.-December 2008)

Outline of the 3rd survey

“Fact-finding for studying at Kyoto University” for international students

- (1) number of respondents 569 students
(42% of 1,353 total international students on campus, as of May 1, 2008)
- (2) Status of respondents

	survey data	campus statistics
Research student, auditing student	21.1%	18.9%
Graduate student	63.1%	65.9%
Undergraduate student	9.3%	10.5%
Exchange program student	4.7%	3.4%
Japanese Studies Program student	1.1%	1.4%
Other	0.7%	0.0%

Outline of the 3rd survey

Branch of study	survey data	campus statistics
Arts (Humanities and social sciences)	26.7%	not available
Sciences	60.3%	not available
Interdisciplinary undecided/N.A.	8.1%	not available
	4.9%	not available
Regions where students are from		
Asia	74.2%	79.5%
Europe	10.9%	9.2%
South America	4.7%	3.5%
Africa	3.5%	3.0%
Middle East	2.5%	2.1%
North America	2.1%	0.7%
Oceania	0.7%	0.7%
Other	1.4%	0.0%

Focuses

(1) What aspects of KU are international students satisfied with and not satisfied with?

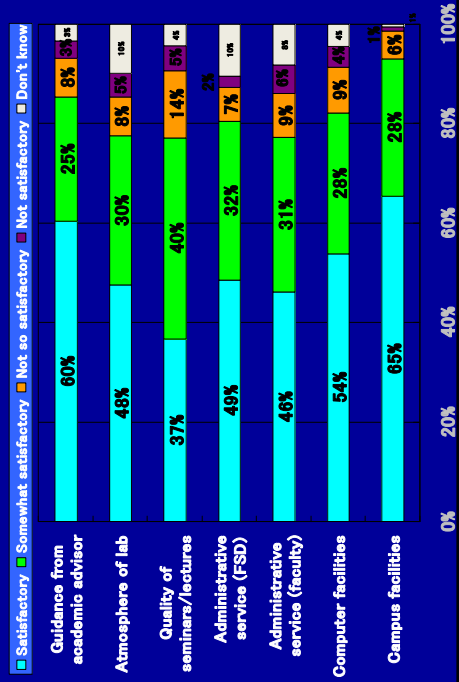
III. Education and Research at Kyoto University

Q28. What is your impression of the educational and research environment at Kyoto University? For each item (a-n), please circle the applicable number.

	1	2	3	4	8
a. Guidance from academic advisor	1	2	3	4	8
b. Standard of research	1	2	3	4	8
c. Quality of seminars/lectures	1	2	3	4	8
d. Atmosphere in your research lab	1	2	3	4	8
e. The international student advisor in your faculty/graduate school	1	2	3	4	8
f. Communication with Japanese students	1	2	3	4	8
g. Training system	1	2	3	4	8
h. Japanese language classes offered by the International Center	1	2	3	4	8
i. Student Advisory services offered by the International Center	1	2	3	4	8
j. Administrative services in your faculty/graduate school	1	2	3	4	8
k. Administration services offered by the Foreign Student Division (FSD)	1	2	3	4	8
l. Campus facilities (Buildings, libraries, laboratories)	1	2	3	4	8
m. Computer facilities/equipment	1	2	3	4	8
n. Interaction with local community	1	2	3	4	8

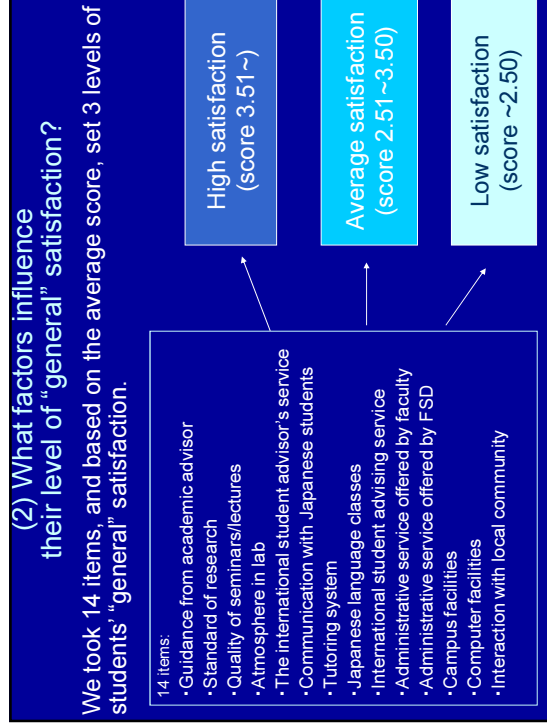
Q29. Please tell us about the ways in which you are satisfied with Kyoto University's educational and research environment.

(1) What aspects of KU are international students satisfied with and not satisfied with?



Focuses

(2) What factors influence their level of “general” satisfaction?



(2) What factors influence their level of “general” satisfaction?

The factors that we examined include;

a) Economic support and the basic living conditions.

b) Relationships with the people around them

- academic advisors
- their tutor
- Japanese students

General satisfaction level	Economic support	
	scholarship supported	not/partially supported
High	63	133
Average	91	205
Low	25	37
Total	179	375
	35.2%	35.5%
	50.8%	54.7%
	14.0%	9.9%
	100.0%	100.0%

(2) What factors influence their level of “general” satisfaction?

a) Economic support and the basic living conditions.

→ No direct impact??

b) Relationships with the people around them.

→ Major impacts

- academic advisors
- their tutor
- Japanese students

(2) What factors influence their level of “general” satisfaction?

a) Economic support and the basic living conditions.

→ No direct impact??

However, most students who were interviewed indicated that those factors were the minimum requirements for a satisfactory period of studying abroad.

Satisfaction can only be achieved with minimum living conditions guaranteed.

(2) What factors influence their level of “general” satisfaction?

b) Relationships with the people around them.

→ Major impacts

- academic advisors
- their tutor
- Japanese students

The number of cases brought to the “international students/foreign scholars advising service”

contents of consultations	The number of contacts 2007–2008	year
Admissions/changing departments	85	16.9%
Academic issues	74	14.7%
Cultural adjustment	12	2.4%
Family issues	18	3.2%
Matters on living in Japan	58	11.5%
Japanese language	5	1.0%
Scholarship	3	0.8%
Economic issues	24	4.8%
Finding jobs	12	2.4%
Accommodations	12	2.4%
Health	112	22.5%
Traffic accidents	32	6.4%
Accidents (other)	15	3.0%
Inquiries from off-campus/abroad	38	7.8%
other	5	1.0%
Total	503	100.0%

Relationships with the people around: **48.7%**

Source: International students/foreign scholars advising service, the International Center, Kyoto University. (Translated and reorganized the order by the author.)

Both the survey results and actual cases show the importance of relationships with the people around.

Gaps

However, there are “gaps” in understanding between international students and the people around them on various issues.

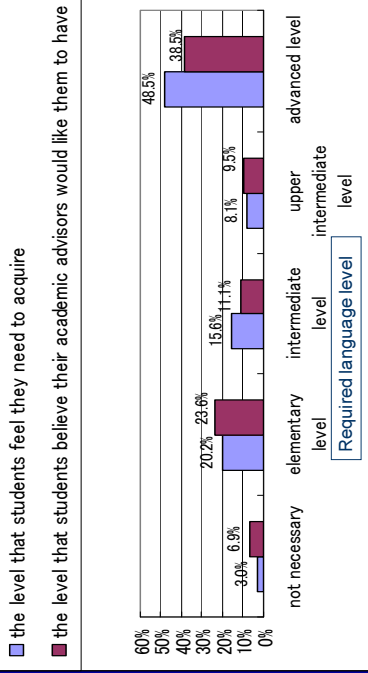
An example of gaps

The level of Japanese language that international students feel they need to acquire to be successful at the university

versus

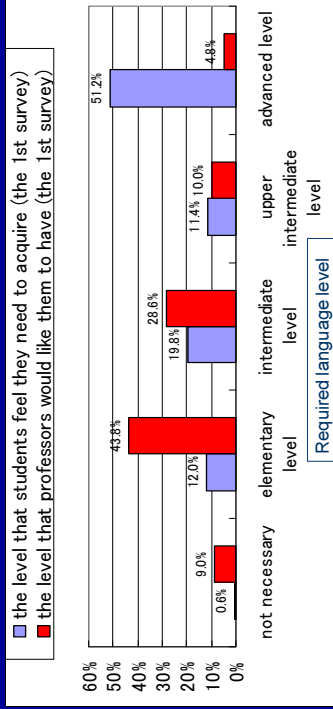
The level that they believe their academic advisors would like them to have

An example of gaps



An example of gaps

The gap became clearer when we directly asked the same question to the professors, in the 1st survey, 2002.



Focuses

- (3) What can we learn from the results to better understand the causes of possible risks based on the build-up of these problems and be able to more effectively prevent them?

summary of findings

- a) Economic support and the basic living conditions are the minimum requirements for a satisfactory period of studying abroad.

However,

- b) The students' relationships with the people around them have the greatest impacts on their level of satisfaction.

and

summary of findings

- c) There are gaps in understanding between international students and the people around them on various issues.



Therefore, it is important

- for the parties involved, to recognize the presence of these “gaps” .
- to create a system that solves problems in relationships with academic advisors.
- to create support networks within and without the campus to effectively assist the students.
- to create networking opportunities between international students and domestic students, in other words, creating more “mingling” opportunities.

Reference

『京都大学における国際交流の現状と可能性 - 第2回アンケート調査報告書』 京都大学国際交流センター, 2006 (*2nd Survey Report – International Exchange and its Possibilities at Kyoto University, in Japanese, 2006*)
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