

# Exchange agreements between Japanese and foreign institutions

## Keywords

foreign language exchange, study abroad

A great deal of research has been done on the benefits of, and problems associated with, students studying abroad, particularly those who participate on school and university-sponsored programs, but this research has been based on the premise that there is a system in place that allows the students to study at another institute connected to their home institution. Usually, such an exchange is achieved through an exchange agreement with a foreign university. There has been less discussion of the actual exchange agreements. The author reviews what these agreements are and the benefits of establishing them before explaining the processes of and difficulties encountered when working to finalize one with a department at an American university.

学生の海外研修、特に学校や大学主催のプログラムに参加する学生の利点や問題について多くの研究が行われている。しかし、これらの研究は、学生が他の教育機関で学ぶことが出来る交換システムが既にあることが前提になっている。多くの場合、このようなシステムは、海外の大学との交換協定に基づき実施可能となる。しかしながら、この論文の焦点である、実際の交換協定自体に関しては、これまで殆ど論じられていない。筆者はこの交換協定を締結するよさを論じると共に、米国の大学某学部との最終的な締結に至るまでの過程と問題点についても論じる。

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In Japan, the literature on study abroad tends to focus on sending Japanese students to another country, but this is only one part of the international exchange equation. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) formulated the Global 30 Project to raise the number of international students in Japan to 300,000 (MEXT, n.d. a). MEXT also promotes international activity through research, including joint international projects and symposia, informational and intellectual exchange, and the physical exchange of researchers (e.g., MEXT, n.d. c), with particular emphasis on the sciences and technology (e.g., MEXT, n.d. b). The University of Tokyo's academic exchange agreements provide one example of this threefold approach to internationalization, with 37 involving the sending and receiving of students and 284 including academic staff, researchers, and students (University of Tokyo, 2010).

The exchange of both researchers and students is usually conducted under the umbrella of an international cooperative exchange agreement, but the establishment of such an agreement is rarely discussed in the literature or at international conferences. MEXT is equally silent on how to establish these formal alliances. This lack of concrete information can become an obstacle for those working outside of an International Center but who hope to further international activities at their university. The author, for example, found that most staff and professors at his university agreed that it was in their best interest to conclude an exchange agreement, but they were unable to provide concrete guidance on how to proceed. Furthermore, the majority of staff and professors were unwilling or unable to devote time to explore the idea or see the project through to completion. On reflection, the team who went forward with the project was not fully prepared for the intricacies of establishing a researcher exchange agreement, and

this learning curve became an impetus for this article. After reviewing the benefits of exchange agreements, the paper draws on these experiences to suggest how others may approach the entire procedure.

### Benefits of exchange agreements

Both internationally and in Japan, international exchange is neither novel nor new. In the 1870s, Dairoku Kikuchi studied at Cambridge University, influencing other Japanese students who later studied in Great Britain (Long, 2005; National Diet Library, 2004). International exchange in Japan is facilitated by agreements between Japanese and foreign university departments, faculties/colleges, graduate schools, research institutes, or entire universities. On the broadest level, international exchange agreements allow the university to gain a competitive edge over other universities with fewer international relationships. The author's university calls this "branding." Guest and White (2009) were less restrained, referring to the agreements as necessary for "the survival of the university." Gilmour (2007) used equally strong language when asserting that if Japanese institutions ignore international educational exchanges, then the universities are either static or digressing.

The advantages of exchange agreements are not limited to university-wide prestige. To begin with, when others become aware of their international activities, exchanges can legitimize the status of a department and individual faculty members within the university (Guest and White, 2009). In addition, researcher exchanges allow Japanese instructor-researchers to use resources on the foreign university's campus (e.g., a secure, individual study carrel; Internet and library access), thus making the actual research process more efficient. Equally important, international exchange agreements give faculty members an advantage because they can be more specific in grant applications and show greater development in their proposals (e.g., demonstrating an ability to get approval to actually do research on a specific campus).

In addition to the opportunities afforded the university and individual researchers, when international exchanges result in more foreigners on Japanese campuses, there are two main

advantages for the student body. First, Japanese students who do not have the financial resources to study abroad are afforded the opportunity to gain intercultural knowledge and have unique experiences, resulting in exposure to new ideas. For example, Ryan (2009) discussed the dilemmas and cultural learning that occurred when Filipino students who were visiting his Japanese university had a different sense of time, had different eating habits (i.e., five times a day rather than the Japanese three), and viewed walking and biking very differently than Japanese university students. This type of interaction is crucial for meeting the needs of future global citizens.

Second, having foreign students on campus allows Japanese students the "unique opportunity to observe the language learning process from a number of different perspectives" (Freed, 1995, p. 4). For example, Japanese students enrolled in an elective English discussion course with one French student were asked to reflect on the intercultural discussions they had in class and to provide any insights about the importance of English as a common language. One Japanese student reflected, "I have learned the difficulty. It is difficult to listen to English which is spoken by non-native speakers except Japanese people (sic)." When asked what, if anything, they had learned about language studies by having the French student in the class, one student noted, "There many type of English (People have each accent), so we don't need too attention to speak clean English (sic)." The French student's insight is equally revealing. "By being here studying English with Japanese people I have felt again how much it's difficult to learn a language totally different from you mother tongue. French and English have many similar words so it is much easier to remember vocabulary but for Japanese people, I realized that it is as difficult as for me to learn Japanese (sic)."

### Finalizing an agreement: A case study

Table 1 outlines the time required before the Japanese Faculty completed its researcher exchange agreement with a Department in an American university; activities since acceptance are also summarized. When a charter was first explored, the Japanese university project members worked to establish an exchange that included both

researcher-instructors and students. However, this type of agreement requires the approval of both the president of the university and the International Center, and further discussions revealed a division of opinion about whether an additional all-university student exchange with an American university was needed. When the agreement was not quickly finalized, initial enthusiasm for the project waned. In addition, when concerns about long-term obligations were raised, the future success of the project became less certain, resulting in some people becoming even less willing to devote time to an uncertain outcome. The project team eventually decided it would be best to first establish a researcher exchange agreement, and then as the international relationship developed, student exchange could be pursued.

August 2003 – March 2004	Japanese professor conducts research at the American university.
June 2004	Japanese faculty agrees to allow the professor to explore a cooperative agreement.
December 2005	Two professors visit US university and discuss an agreement that would include both students and researchers.
2007-8 School Year	Attempts to take students to the American university are unsuccessful because the proposed program lacked a homestay component and was not significantly different than a program already offered.
June 2008	Dean's competitive grant awarded to two faculty members. The grant covers part of the expense for the members to go to the United States to finalize a researcher exchange agreement.
2008-2009	Discussions within the Japanese university result in a decision to finalize a researcher exchange agreement and not include students initially.

March 2009	Three faculty members visit the US university. Verbal researcher exchange agreement made. Fourteen Japanese students visit the American university and have a short-term cultural awareness program designed to meet students' expressed needs.
April – December 2009	Approval process completed. Researcher exchange agreement finalized and signed.
March 2010	Two faculty members do research made possible by the exchange agreement (e.g., office space was provided at the US institution). At the same time, Japanese students visit the American university for a short-term cultural awareness program.
Summer 2010	Author completes a how-to document to help Japanese faculty members wishing to conduct research by utilizing the exchange agreement.
March 2011 to March 2012	Two faculty members again take Japanese university students to the American university for a short-term cultural awareness program. American faculty members continue to express interest in bringing students to Japan but also discuss financial and administrative barriers that will not make this possible in the immediate future.

Table 1. Timeline of the agreement

### *Obstacles during the process*

Even after the Japanese faculty had agreed, in principle, to a researcher agreement, the details had to be negotiated and formulated in both English and Japanese. During these procedures, there were three main objections. First, there was a great deal of discussion about the "balance of power" between a Japanese faculty and an American department. This problem was finally resolved when the International Committee

members acknowledged the fact that the American college's size, which includes 23 departments, a 2008 enrollment of 14,582 students, and 826 faculty members, was larger than the entire Japanese university. As a result, the members agreed that the size and scope of the Japanese faculty is more equivalent to the American department than to a college. The second concern was raised by Japanese faculty members who questioned whether they would be able to do research with American faculty members who are not directly included in the proposed agreement. Once Japanese faculty members understood that the agreement could help them arrange, and did not in any way preclude, co-research with professors across the American university campus, these apprehensions abated. Once this issue was resolved, however, the third challenge, the "balance of status" between the people signing the document, became prominent in the discussions. The American department kindly complied with the Japanese faculty's request, and the final agreement was signed by the Dean of the Japanese faculty, the Dean of the American department, and the Dean of the International Centers in both countries.

### The endless paper trail

The university at which the author works established its first agreement with a foreign university (in the United States) in March of 1982. As Chart 1 demonstrates, following the national trend, there has been a steady increase in the number of agreements, and in 2011, the university or institutions within the university had completed 39 inter-university agreements with institutes in 12 countries (Center for International Exchanges, 2011).

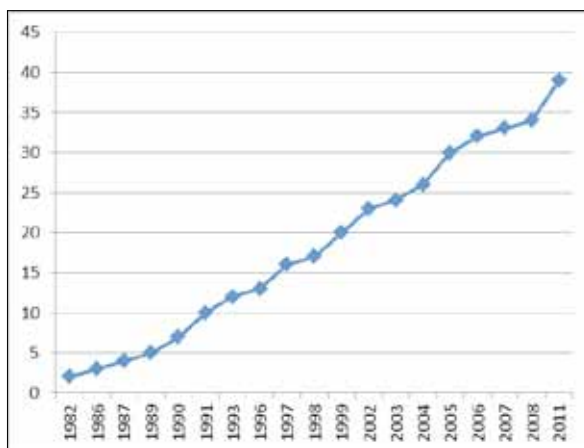


Chart 1. Growth in agreements at author's university

In spite of this, neither the university nor the faculty has a boilerplate document that can be used as a basis from which to start discussions with a foreign institute. In addition, at the time of negotiations, the university guidelines lacked most of the detail that was necessary to conclude an agreement. As a result, when making the documents, it was unclear who to talk to or whether that person had the correct information. Officially, there are nine steps before an agreement is approved, but revisions sometimes required the documentation to again be presented to a sub-committee in a previous step of the process, resulting in my colleague noting that there appeared to be a virtually endless loop between two of the steps. Through this undertaking, the author and colleagues gained valuable insight into how the process could have proceeded more smoothly.

### Concluding an agreement: Some advice

Although the author can only speak from personal experience, if he and his colleagues had had the following advice when first exploring an agreement, it would have greatly facilitated the process. Before deciding to pursue an exchange agreement, therefore, there are several important considerations.

1. Do many of the people in your faculty agree that they need the agreement? Could you (personally) accomplish your goals without it?

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2. Does the university, or your faculty, already have a similar agreement? If so, what makes your proposed agreement unique?
3. What does the agreement commit you and the faculty or university to do? Who will be responsible for these commitments? Can you realistically fulfill these obligations alone, if necessary?
4. What is the period of the partnership? Does it renew automatically upon mutual consent or will negotiations be necessary again in a few years?
5. In the long-term, will exchanges continue or is there a high probability that they will stagnate or become one-sided (e.g., only Japanese researchers going to the other country)?

Once you have decided to proceed, you, your department, and the university must make four decisions. First, between whom will the agreement be? This is a surprisingly complex question. If the agreement will be between the two universities, the approval procedure may be longer than first anticipated because responsibility for continuing the exchange is not limited to the faculty.

A second consideration is whether to include student exchanges in the agreement. When students are included, there are more implicit and explicit obligations. The appendix includes questions that your university should consider if you will be required to host students from the foreign university.

Another consideration is funding. In order to conclude the agreement, two faculty members traveled to the United States twice; this travel was supplemented by the Dean's competitive grant but also significantly funded by private budgets. Had we had the information we have now, one trip may have been sufficient. Once the agreement is concluded, there is no expense to maintain it, but there could be costs in hosting foreigner researchers (e.g., proportionate cost of electricity and phone costs for the office space given to the visiting researcher) and/or students. When first exploring a new agreement, discussions about funding for travel and hosting expenses are prudent.

To minimize financial outlays, both faculty members and researchers may want to explore collaborative research culminating in co-authored publications and joint education projects. With a little creativity, there are many research (e.g., comparative studies) and student exchange possibilities (e.g., students interviewing each other using Skype) that can be accomplished when you collaborate with a faculty member in another country. Eliminating travel not only decreases costs but also the time required, and still allows you to contribute to the body of literature and increase your students' participation in international exchange.

The last issue to resolve is who will be involved in the process. Based on our experience, it seems prudent to have a team of people that work well together, but at a minimum, two people are necessary. The team members must be willing to commit a great deal of time to an uncertain outcome and be able to work within the existing system to achieve the final result. At least one of the people needs to work closely with the Japanese university--answering queries and completing the countless documents that are required. Ideally, this person should be a Japanese permanent faculty member who also speaks the language of the foreign university. The second person must liaise with the foreign university, so a native speaker who understands the culture of both countries and can explain, when necessary, the cultural differences to both parties, is best. In addition, if you will take students overseas while concluding the agreement, it is helpful to enlist an additional team member. Our third member was an English instructor who had been actively involved in study abroad. This allowed the other two members to continue to focus on the negotiations while the instructor handled logistics of the trip (e.g., domestic and international transportation, schedule while visiting the foreign university, lodging).

### Final suggestion

MEXT continues to emphasize international exchange, and as a result, more universities and faculties are incorporating the establishment of exchange agreements into their mid-term (five-year) plans. Concluding an agreement with a foreign university is a time-consuming, but

very rewarding, experience. It not only allows you to learn more about your own and other universities but also provides you with additional contacts for the future. If you realistically define your goals from the outset and explain the Japanese institute's approval procedure to the foreign university, the process will be smoother and there will be less chance for misunderstanding between the two institutions.

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has been teaching in Japan since 1993. Since completing the exchange agreement, he has returned to the American university with students for three exchange programs. As part of his research into English as an International Language (EIL), he has conducted interviews with university students in seven countries and plans to visit two more this year.



## Appendix

1. Does the other university want a cultural awareness program or an intensive language course, or perhaps some combination?
2. Who will be responsible for creating and implementing the students' schedule--your university or theirs?
3. Who will teach the students? Some American universities are making programs in foreign countries; their faculty members

lead the programs (e.g., Hulstrand, 2006), reducing the burden on the host institution and allowing the foreign university to better control course content.

4. Does your university have classrooms or other facilities that will be available during the time of year that the foreign university would like to visit?
5. How long will the students stay? Will they visit other parts of Japan?
6. How many students and chaperones do they expect to send? What are their language abilities?
7. How will the students travel to and from your area? Will you be required to escort them to and from an international airport?
8. Will you be required to provide transportation in your area?
9. Where will the students stay and eat? Can you provide home stays for at least a week-end?
10. Will you be required to provide conversation partners, leaders, and/or funding for activities?



TLT RESOURCES

# MY SHARE

...with Dax Thomas & Harry Harris

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We welcome submissions for the My Share column. Submissions should be up to 700 words describing a successful technique or lesson plan you have used which can be replicated by readers, and should conform to the My Share format (see <jalt-publications.org/tlt/departments/myshare/guidelines>).

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tributor, Christopher Pulte, helps build English context comprehension skills using a projector and a whiteboard. Finally, Doreen Gaylord has students creating personalized bookmarks to augment an extensive reading program. We're sure you'll enjoy these activities as much as we did.

## Using L3 mini lessons in the L2 classroom

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### Quick guide

- » **Keywords:** Students as teachers, mini lessons, third language, L3
- » **Learner English level:** All levels, especially beginner to intermediate
- » **Learner maturity:** High school and above
- » **Preparation time:** 30 minutes in-class, the week before
- » **Activity time:** Variable, usually 45 to 90 minutes
- » **Materials:** Handout for the teacher's demonstration lesson

**W**elcome to this issue's installment of My Share. As always, we have a great variety of interesting activities to help bring fun and excitement to the classroom. Our first author, Germain Measureur, has students teaching mini L3 lessons to their peers. Next, Nathaniel French uses vocabulary cards to encourage students to generate creative conversation and story output. Our third con-