During the Spring semester of 2012 I was enrolled in the intensive language tract program at
Kwansei Gakuin University in Japan, which was outside their normal fields of study.

 When I first prepared for applying to the school, I had to fill out a large number of papers and
write introductions about myself in English and Japanese as it was for my language assessment,
but the legwork of applying could have been made much easier I am told, had I used a company
that helps with filling out forms for student visas abroad, but those can cost up $1000 + for their
services. Upon arrival in Japan, they were undergoing a new system of foreigner registration so I’m
not sure of the details, but it was still necessary to go to the city office during orientation to get a
card which you carry with you for identification. After leaving the country, make sure you
relinquish this card.
 As I stayed at a dorm with other Japanese students based on my language ability, I don’t know
the lifestyles of the other international students who lived in the international dorm or the host
families that they signed up for themselves, however there were three men’s dorms and only one
girl’s dorm. The application for the men’s dorms may ask you how social you are, and your
placement is decided on that: the more social you say you are, the more events your dorm may
have and these may be mandatory alongside your studies. The lifestyle there is also based on
Confucian ethics of respect to elders, so the students who are in their fourth year are treated as if
they are superiors in the military. One word of caution: there is hazing for first year students in the
Spring semester.

 Arriving into the country, I wish I had reserved a hotel instead of relying on a friend to provide

accommo dation for a few days because m y flight through Shanghai was delayed; they also lost my

luggage temporarily coming back so don’t be cheap on the flight, take a direct flight if possible. I

also recommend

Living in the Japanese dorms is different from home stay or international dorms. My experience
was being on the second floor of a four floor building. I had a desk, closet, bowl for the shower,
chair, an ironing board and iron in the lobby, and free access to the washing machine. There was
no rug on my floor, no free international power plug adaptor given, drying was done on a
clothesline, and detergent can be shared, but it is best to buy your own. The dorm mother was
very friendly and provided me with her own rice cooker, slippers, and fan to use but I bought a rug
at “Nitori” – a housing goods store near the JR Nishinomiya station which you get to by taking the
bus going the opposite direction of the Hankyu Kotoen station (the station everyone will use
before going up the hill to school). One month I forgot to buy food tickets and they didn’t make an
exception for me, so prepare for food.
 For the actual classes, prior to being assigned a class we took a language proficiency tests. For
the people that show the highest level of Japanese comprehension, they may be given the option
to take a test to qualify for regular courses among Japanese students. The elective courses are free
to choose but your placement depends on your proficiency and chosen level of intensity for
language courses.

 Intensive level classes meet around 4 times a week. Kanji classes were the most stable, having a
test each day of the last week and a sheet of paper for homework after class. The most overlooked
class was Monday grammar class, but the essays we wrote in this class helped the most with
realizing our own mistakes when forming sentences and should be given more attention than the
flow of classes suggests. Keigo (polite Japanese) and news related vocabulary were perhaps the
hardest classes out of all because of the many rules involved and a tendency to never need to use

Japanese of that level for students. Electives were not impossibly hard, but phonology had only
homework and one final worth 60%.
 All during the semester, Kwansei staff members were there to help students with any academic
or housing issues and any important notices were sent to our cell phones after being shown how
to receive emails from them. They take care of most of the international student’s problems.
 One of the things I noticed during my stay was the tendency for international students to only
mingle with other international students in the “International Lounge” right across from the
lounge with all Japanese students. I felt it was hard to break into a group of Japanese people and
make friends unless youu92.98BT
1 0 0 1 85140.3 601.9 Tm
[( )] TJ
1.05BT
1 0 0 1 85 i(o)-dentnts in the
_[^lwerIlor internle and

that Canada was dangerous, slow, lax, and people had bad attitudes but it was much easier to live
in. I quickly learned that not everybody has an ear to hear the bad side of their country, and as
such I felt much like the returning veteran that can’t fit back in. Having a social circle to come back
to is important.
 If I can give any advice about going to Japan, it would be enjoy it before you have to work in it.
There is the fun side, but it is stressful to live in for a long time and when working there it is the
most stressful environment feasible to work in. The seniority system doesn’t give much protection