

# Campus News

"By the students, for the students" "By the students, for the students" "By the students, for the students"

## KU Students Struggle to Adjust to Online Learning



By Ayaka Yamane

Most people feel that 2020 was the most unusual year ever because of COVID-19. Also, our everyday lifestyle changed in some big ways - wearing masks at all times when we go out, keeping two-meter distances between people, and not being able to travel freely around the world, or even within Japan.

Especially, for students, our study style has changed completely. Most universities, and even some junior and senior high schools, had to do their classes online. To get accustomed to this new education style, teachers and students went through an extreme trial and error period. On the positive side we all helped each other. What are your opinions about online learning? Is online learning convenient and useful for our studies? This story aims to consider both the positive and negative aspects of learning online from the perspective of students.

For first-year students, it was obviously their first experience with university learning, and everything was different from high school such as the course registration process and using computers to study. In normal years these things can be hard but in 2020 the freshers faced the biggest challenge of all. Moreover, they did not have important opportunities to interact with peers and their seniors, so there were almost no chances to consult about things.

In online classes, students faced yet more obstacles. "When I presented something to other students," said Ms. Aoi Ojima, who is a first-year International Studies student, "I couldn't understand what they think and how do they feel based on what I saw on the screen." She noted that four out of 11 classes did not require students to show their face even once during the first semester. Classes in which students showed their faces were a bit better, but still challenging. "The hardest thing was group work without using video. In particular, when I asked

students something, most people turned off the camera, so I could not communicate properly. I felt uncomfortable and anxious all the time," said Ms. Ojima.

Learning online not only comes with technical and communication problems but also prevents important learning that occurs when we're in a physical learning. Many KU students struggle to keep motivated to study online. Before online classes started, students could meet friends to talk about their daily life, and exchange information about assignments or seminars. Also, by meeting with friends we can stimulate each other, so we can improve our motivation for study.

### My motivation got worse and worse while learning online

-Ms. Narumi Waki

However, university admin decided to prohibit coming to campus to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Therefore, students had to stay at home, and many experienced feelings of loneliness and isolation. "My motivation got worse and worse while learning online," shared Ms. Narumi Waki, who is a third-year student in the International Studies Course. "I strongly prefer face-to-face classes because we can encourage each other, and I can compare myself with my friends and look at myself objectively" said Ms. Waki. Most students make effort to maintain their motivation, but this often declines day by day.

For this story, I also interviewed Ms. Karin Yoshitani who is a second-year student in the Faculty of Education. She expressed worry about her training as a future teacher in this online environment. "I would

like to interact with elementary school students face-to-face and study about education through ordinary interaction," she said. Students who have to do practical educational training couldn't get the vital experience they needed after COVID-19 started. Most of trainings were cancelled, so the only option was to take online classes and attend information sessions instead of doing the actual educational training.

In addition, the Faculty of Education students have important teaching demonstrations to learn from each other and practice to be a teacher. If this is done face-to-face, students can see other students' reactions and then they can better reflect and improve on their next teaching demonstration. By contrast, when teaching demonstrations were done online, it was impossible to do their demonstration lessons and see their fellow students' reactions. "I'm worried about my future becoming a teacher, because I cannot feel what it's like to be in a school and working with students through educational training," Ms. Yoshitani lamented.

On the other hand, learning online has had some positive effects for some students, especially fourth-year students who do job hunting. In general, if students do job hunting or attend company briefings, they have to be absent from classes. I spoke with Ms. Nanami Shinjo who is a fourth-year student in the International Studies Course about this. "Fortunately, with all classes online, I can attend them from wherever I am, even when I'm not in Kochi."

The option of online classes also eliminates transit time for jobhunting, so students can attend many kinds of company briefing and job interview without worrying about their class schedule. Therefore, it is convenient and helpful for them to be able to synchronize their online studies and their jobhunting activities.

Everyone has a different perspective but for me, I would rather take classes online than come to university because we can relax and do our class activities from the comfort of home and not worry about time. Gone is the busy morning preparation for school, waking up early, choosing clothes, worrying about oversleeping and missing classes, and eating breakfast in a hurry. It's a lot easier to join a Teams class late than to walk into class late. Our virtual education style now means we can take classes just by sitting in front of the computer at home. And there are no worries about what clothes to wear because only our upper body is seen by other students and teachers.

For most students and teachers, one of the biggest challenges about learning online is ensuring a strong wi-fi connection. Teachers and students sometimes panic when computers freeze. Wi-fi connection is probably the biggest factor in whether we can take classes comfortably or not, and many students can't afford a strong connection. When we have wi-fi connection problems, students are unable to concentrate on their class material, and are sometimes forced to leave the class, missing valuable course content and falling behind other students.

This situation is not unique to KU students, of course. Students around the world face similar or even bigger challenges. In this unforgettable year, some students have been devastated physically and mentally because of online learning, while others have tried to adapt positively as best they can. Either way, everyone has had to live with this new style of classes, so we are forced to adjust.

As we cannot expect that this circumstance is going to change anytime soon, let's try to stay positive, adapt, and make the most of opportunities from this new learning style as we eagerly await a return to normal.

## Our 18<sup>th</sup> Edition: *KU Campus News!* Read all about it!

*The Kochi University Campus News* aims to present a voice for the students of our university. It is meant to profile the great potential of the many KU students who take initiative and action during their university days. There is much to learn from the experiences of those who have taken the first step in making something special and unique from their university experience.

This newspaper will introduce some of the people who might inspire other students. These people encourage us to try something new. Although it is hard to try things that we are not sure about, it is very important for us as university students, to take advantage of our time here and make the most of our opportunities. Now is the time to think about our future and gain valuable life experiences.

The purpose of publishing *The Kochi University Campus News* is to inform students about what is happening around the campus. Profiling students from the various faculties helps us to see what other students are interested in. We believe students will see that our university is a lot more dynamic than we might think. It's a small local university, but all students have the potential to open up their world. As we present some aspects of our university, we hope that this will give students an opportunity to think about how university life should be, and inspire students to be more active in their learning.

Another ongoing feature of this newspaper is

to promote the many international aspects of our campus. As always, our focus is on the word 'exchange'. There are many international students, teachers, and researchers here at Kochi University, and there are many Japanese students who are involved with international projects. Hearing about them helps us to understand more, start friendships and develop relationships. International opportunities abound for us, both inside and outside Japan. Let's learn more about these opportunities and do what we can to fulfill our potential. Profiling this aspect of our campus is good for us as students.

This year, due to obvious circumstances beyond our control, our 18th issue is almost completely devoted to the impact of the corona virus pandemic on students. This has affected us on every level, but we are proud to present an issue of the *KU Campus News* based on how we are adapting to online learning, challenging restrictions and this new reality.

Last, but not least, we would like to follow the lead of the students who have worked hard on the *KU Campus News* over the past years. This newspaper represents the voice of students. Although we are always trying out new column ideas, the theme remains the same for this 18th edition, "By the students, for the students". We thank you for taking the time to read our paper. Comments, suggestions, criticisms and feedback of any kind are welcome. Please enjoy the stories in this 18th edition!

# Online Classes – No, thank you! Cycling Around Japan – Yes, please!

By Yoshiki Nomura



Mr. Hayato Kimori is a third-year student from Osaka in the International Studies Course of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Active in everything, he is especially passionate about cross-cultural exchange. We can all use a little inspiration these days so in this story we profile his many activities.

After entering university and doing an intensive summer study and homestay program in Minnesota during his first year, he fell in love with going abroad. He followed up on his U.S experience by taking part in the Ship for World Youth program in his second year. Mr. Kimori has now visited various countries and has a wealth of cross-cultural experience. When his future international activities were put on hold due to the pandemic, that didn't stop him. He simply went online with his international exchange work.

Mr. Kimori likes to talk with people and enjoys the fun and challenge of communicating, so exchange is something that comes natural to him. Above all, what he gets most from international exchange is fun because he learns new things by talking with people who have a completely different culture and language. "I can feel like we're all the same people even if we have different languages, cultures, and skin tones," he said.

Mr. Kimori took it upon himself to get more active during the first days of the pandemic. He is involved in various events related to international exchange. One is a language exchange between Japanese students and foreign students through the OASIS Center. The purpose of this exchange is to talk to students from different countries and get to know each other in



English. Another was the online student exchange between KU and RMIT University students in Melbourne.

While some students look at the current situation and get down because there are almost no foreign students at KU due to Covid-19, Mr. Kimori doesn't see that as a barrier. "If you can interact internationally online, you can interact with more foreigners than ever before," he said. In fact, students from around the world now regularly use Internet tools such as Teams and Zoom to meet up and talk. If you think international exchange has to be put on hold because of the pandemic, you are not thinking creatively. Such exchange opportunities help us to learn the importance of communication in a fresh way.

When the corona outbreak changed the way people interact, Mr. Kimori was affected deeply because he relies on communication so heavily. He is one of the students who clearly wants to build relationships with people. By doing online international exchange, he noticed that we have a lot of things that can be done online without making excuses and letting the pandemic stop us.

He is also active in an organization called IYEO Japan (International Youth Exchange Organization of Japan) and has helped to organize various events in Kochi. This year, partly due to the influence of corona, they decided to engage in more international exchanges online.

As an example of how pro-active Mr.



Kimori is, he found an opportunity from the pandemic. Unsatisfied with the non-communicative nature of learning online in 2020, he decided to take a one-year leave of absence from school and is now doing a bicycle tour project around Japan. He got a lot of support through his crowdfunding page to do this project. He

can do this because he has a wide range of contacts and friends. Many people are attracted by his outgoing character and this has helped to get his project off the ground.

All of his many activities are connected to a bigger future plan. Cycling around Japan by bicycle is something he can really enjoy, but he also wants to use it as a learning experience to visit countries and go around

the world by bicycle. It means that his plan is to conquer every country possible. At present, he does not think about what he wants to be in a career sense, he just wants to travel.

Can you feel his energy and positivity? Have you ever thought of absorbing yourself in something like he is doing now? You will surely be

able to see a new world. In the corona situation, students are facing some barriers which are difficult to overcome but now, more than ever, we have to work hard to make things happen. Mr. Kimori is a guiding example for us.



# More Consideration Needed to Support Student Learning During Pandemic

By Haruka Abe



Due to the impact of COVID-19, many universities have closed their campuses and only teach online or use both face-to-face classes and online classes. Kochi University, as we all know, is one of many such schools both in Japan and around the world. This past year spent in the pandemic has made students feel uneasy, unsatisfied and confused. Throughout the 2020 academic year, we students have gradually become clear about what kind of support we need from the university. This article details what is most needed from the viewpoint of students.

First and foremost, the wi-fi infrastructure at KU is simply not good enough to support the kind of online learning that students are expected to do. A well-organized network environment is essential for online classes. Some people used Kochi University's wi-fi, others use their own at home, or even carry pocket wi-fi with them for classes. Despite being so essential, the wi-fi provided by Kochi University is of very poor quality.

For example, if many people access the wi-fi at the same time, it will stop working or become inaccessible. Also, even when using wi-fi at home, as in my case, the audio is often interrupted, and the video stopped. Many students cannot afford strong wi-fi. In order to improve this situation, I think that the university should introduce wi-fi that works well even if many people access it and take measures to lend wi-fi to students for free with poor network environments.

Another area that is lacking from the student perspective is technical support. When I used Zoom or Teams for the first time, even if the teacher instructed me to "enter the code to join the meeting" or "share the

screen", I had no idea what to do. I had to research on my own for everything from how to install programs to how to turn off the microphone, and then take classes using those apps. To eliminate this labor, Kochi University should provide more technical support such as teaching students how to use these new and complicated tools. And, if possible, it would be more helpful to use only one instead of using various tools. It's a common complaint among students that teachers use different delivery platforms for their classes.

It also goes without saying that students need more mental health support in this challenging time. Some college students who have been unable to meet friends for a long time, have no club activities, and are isolated from the social community need mental support. Kochi University set up a place where students can consult on campus, but because of online classes, people outside Kochi Prefecture cannot receive this support in person. Many students do not even know that there is a place to consult. So it is necessary to properly announce it by e-mail or homepage so that everyone can know about mental health support options that are online. It would be helpful if Kochi University could prominently introduce a system that allows them to consult about various things online.

What is most difficult, and perhaps a touchy subject, is the issue of financial support. Many students and their families have been affected by the COVID-19 and have had to quit their part-time jobs, or their parents' income has decreased. In addition, we are not able to take online lessons of the same quality as face-to-face lessons. Online lessons are considerably inferior to face-to-face lessons in classes that require dialogue between

students or between students and teachers, such as English Conversation class and seminars. Even though students and teachers are getting more accustomed to learning online and understand that it will continue as part of their daily routine, many students still value traditional face-to-face learning and consider it essential for their education. So, many students feel that the university should reduce their tuition fees. More flexible deadlines for paying tuition fees are also required for those who cannot afford it due to financial problems.

Almost every student would agree that what is most needed is for the university to speed up important university decisions about classes. This is what we need most because, for example, the situation where we don't know when university classes will be fully face-to-face puts a lot of strain on us. At first, the university said that it would start face-to-face classes on May 6th, but this was postponed, and it was eventually decided that classes would start face-to-face in the second semester. Eventually this was also postponed. Now, we still don't know what will happen when I become a third-year student. We understand that the university can't make predictions about the future, but we want to express that early decisions can help students a lot.

There is much more that students need in addition to the issues mentioned above. It is necessary to consider student support from various perspectives such as physical, mental, financial, and technical angles. I hope that students and the university together will be actively involved during the difficult and unstable times under this pandemic and improve things to make a better university learning environment.

# KU-RMIT University Exchange Moves Online



By Crystal Sera

Back in April and May 2020 when teachers and students were first struggling to deal with online learning and wondering about how to continue with international exchange projects when travel restrictions prevented study abroad, staff at Kochi University and RMIT University in Melbourne decided to experiment. They took the chance of holding a virtual online exchange in a way that was win-win for students at both schools.

KU and RMIT have been doing international exchange projects since early 2019 when a group from RMIT University's School of Education came to Kochi to do an international teaching practicum about TEFL in Kochi primary schools. Shortly after that, in March 2019 a group of Kochi University students went to Melbourne to do guided field study projects on language education and aboriginal culture in Australia.

The focus of the exchange program for RMIT students from Melbourne is about teacher training. Their participants plan to be teachers and this exchange project is an opportunity that was created for them to practice teaching English as a Foreign Language in Kochi schools. They visited local primary, junior high and high schools to learn about education in a different country and try to teach English.

While not all Kochi University students who went to Melbourne are training to be teachers, participating students mainly look at Japanese language education or broader educational issues related to Aboriginal culture.

To keep the positive momentum from these valuable exchange projects, and serve the exchange needs of their students, Professor Naomi Wilks-Smith from RMIT and Darren Lingley from KU scrambled to simulate the KU-RMIT exchange online. Two online exchanges were held in June and September between small groups of students. These exchanges were partially held to see what could be done through online collaboration between KU and RMIT students with the aim of doing a larger scale virtual exchange in 2021.

I spoke with Dr. Wilks-Smith to prepare this story and I was also lucky enough to get some feedback from one of the KU participants, Mr. Hayato Kimori, who is in his third year. Their comments indicate that there is some potential for online virtual exchange in spite of the fact that it can never really simulate actually going abroad.

One thing that is obvious is that Dr. Wilks-Smith's enthusiasm and energy is off the charts. She focused mainly on the positive aspects of this unique online exchange project. First of all, she pointed out that no money is needed. Since it was online, expenses for travel and accommodation are not a factor. All you need is to sit back, grab a computer, connect to wi-fi, and join the virtual online meeting.

There are also no limits about who can participate or join. Everyone who is interested in both culture and language can participate without limiting the number of students. This opened the exchange to a lot of new faces who might not otherwise be able to travel abroad. Students can also connect anytime and anywhere though there is an established program time each week. What this means is that even after the program ended, connections remained strong after the formal exchange concluded. "Even though it was online, lasting friendships were established between KU and RMIT students because they continued their relationships through Line, Facebook and Instagram," Dr. Wilks-Smith noted.

The exchange mainly took the form of working in small groups and pairs. RMIT students did some experimental EFL teaching to KU students, and the KU students asked questions to the RMIT teacher trainees about education, contemporary society and multiculturalism in Australia. They also talked freely as peers, mostly in English.

Dr. Wilks-Smith highlighted the value of one-to-one

online exchange. "If people are one-on-one, they don't feel like they are talking too much or that they have to share the time or whether the topic they are talking about is okay. If it is just pairs, one from RMIT, one from Kochi University, it's really valuable English time for the Kochi students. It's also a great teaching experience for the RMIT students to focus on one person. Because it was just one's own level of English, and a single topic they wanted to talk about. The breakout session was a really good function."

The student I interviewed for this story, Mr. Hayato Kimori, had a similar view. "We talked a lot. We talked about our hobbies, plans and dreams for the future."

He commented, "There were a lot of students from Australia who like Japan and we talked a lot about that, and we even got hyped up during the conversation. I actually like anime, personally, and when one of the students from RMIT talked about the anime they don't really know much about, I said I knew about it. Once they realized that I, in fact knew, they all got really excited!"

It was obviously a successful online event for both RMIT and Kochi University students. There were some hiccups, of course, because not everyone has a good connection, and this caused minor frustrations when participants were not able to hear each other. When you can't converse properly and smoothly, the limitations of online exchange become clear. But that is the case for everything from lectures to Teams meetings to family talks on FaceTime. It's part of the reality we face in this new world.

The key is to work around the problems as best we can. As Dr. Naomi Wilks-Smith showed through her efforts on the RMIT-KU exchange, anything is possible!



## Fourth-Year Students Share Job Hunting Experiences During Pandemic

By Ayaka Ogasawara, Yuji Yamamura, Kayo Yamato and Rei Maeda

In the 2020 academic year, we fourth-year students experienced a whole new world of job hunting due to restrictions in place because of the COVID pandemic. In this article, three students share what job hunting was like in 2020.

### Yuji Yamamura: Job hunting as a long staring contest with my laptop screen

As the rite of passage, job hunting is one of the hardest parts of our lifetime, which almost all people go through. For university students, people normally start the process around winter in our sophomore year, though the timing of when it actually starts depends on the person. However, how job hunting worked in 2020 was totally different from usual. Covid-19 made everything different from what it used to be.

For me, when winter of my sophomore year passed and my friends started working hard on job hunting, I was hardly even thinking about it. Thus I had to rush to start my job hunting and to get back on track. Then, all of a sudden, it happened. Covid-19 rapidly spread through Japan and changed everything in society. My job hunting activities were turned upside down!

Although I was supposed to spend lots of time in Tokyo for job hunting, this was all cancelled. Company information sessions, internships and job interviews turned into the so-called online style. Of course, there are some advantages for students from local universities such as KU. There is no need to visit companies, no need to pay expensive airfares, and accommodation. However, it was still quite a hard time for me. What was hardest is that I was home even when I was on a job interview. Job hunting is supposed to be done face to face. I spent the whole day in my room and had a staring contest with my laptop screen doing job hunting. I felt like nothing was actually being done and there was no sense of accomplishment in my mind.

Such a job-hunting term continued for about three

months and I thankfully got a job offer at the company of my first choice. When I look back to my job-hunting term, I feel like time flew by fast. However, it was the hardest and the most stressful time in my life. I wish my younger friends success in future job hunting and that everything will settle down soon. Stay safe and healthy.

### Kayo Yamato: Employment door closed, grad school door opened

My plan after graduation is to go to graduate school abroad. I did job hunting until the summer of my fourth year, but I realized I wanted to study more at grad school. Job hunting during the covid-19 pandemic was obviously quite hard. Virtually all of the job fairs got canceled last spring. Also, face-to-face job interviews switched to online interviews. Some companies even canceled the recruitment of new graduates. A company which I applied for also stopped the recruitment under the selection. This was just when I was waiting for a message about the schedule for the final interview. I was shocked and disappointed because the company was one of my first choices.

During such a tough job hunting environment, I rethought what I want to do in the future. I realized that I would like to work in an international organization to help find solutions to social issues. I learned about various social problems that have emerged through globalization while at Kochi University. I want to improve my knowledge and skills more, and work in a field related to global issues. To achieve my goal, I would like to study more about globalization and social issues in an international Master's program.

### Rei Maeda: Balancing job hunting, thesis writing and practical teacher training

It was so hard to get a job due to corona virus. Through this experience, I found positive points and negative points. The negative points were that I was not able to go to explanatory meetings. Also, we were not

allowed to go to big cities easily since so many people got the virus.

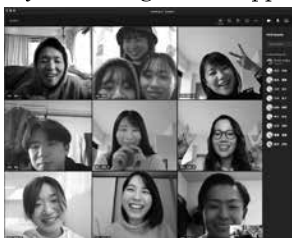
On the other hand, the positive points were the "online" final interview. This was a really good way for me because I did not need to go outside and there were no transportation costs. Fortunately, I got a good job but it's quite strange that I still have not had a chance to meet my bosses or colleagues face to face. At the same time, since I was planning to get the teachers license, I had to do my practical training at a local high school. This was even worse than job hunting for me because the period for educational training had to be postponed because of covid19. I had to do both educational training and write my graduation thesis at the same time. Fortunately, I got the job offer I was looking for before educational training in the fall.

### Ayaka Ogasawara: The merits of online job hunting

The corona virus changed many things in our daily lives and every single person on this planet is experiencing some kind of difficulties, and this includes students. Some were studying abroad but were forced to come back to Japan, some could not do their part time jobs, and some had long anticipated plans cancelled. And we fourth-year students had to overcome job hunting hurdles that neither students or companies had ever experienced.

However, for me there were some merits. It is said that it costs about three hundred thousand yen for transportation costs when Japanese students do job hunting. But since we did it all online the costs were so low. In addition, we usually have to think about transit time between each job fair but, with everything online, it was smooth to go back and forth. It was also easier to balance course work at school with all of the job hunting activities.

We hope this article can provide some help for the younger students who may have to ready themselves for a similar experience next year. We wish everyone the best of luck!



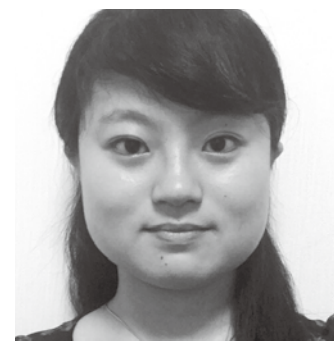
On the mental side, the hardest thing was that I couldn't do circle activities. Some of the events I was looking forward to were canceled at the last minute. I thought there were some positive aspects to online lessons, so I was working positively. However, I miss my previous daily life and now appreciate that much more. Meeting people, having plans, and going out was more necessary than I had imagined. Originally, I was planning to travel or study abroad, so I was shocked that I couldn't do that. Now I'm worried that my motivation will drop. I try to look on the bright side and not just the bad effects of corona, so I guess the



**Michiyo Konko**  
Humanities and Social Sciences  
2<sup>nd</sup> year

environment must be getting better. I want to change things for the better, so I would like to do what I can.

Studying abroad was one of my ambitions and that is why I decided to enter TSP. Their curriculum includes study abroad. I was planning to study in Thailand from last summer, so I prepared documents and had an interview for that. However, due to the corona virus pandemic, the university stopped all study abroad programs including Thailand. Although there are some choices to get credits and do online internships, I believe I can learn a lot more through studying abroad. I hope the situation will soon get better so that I can study in Thailand as planned.



**Haruka Tanada**  
Tosa Sakigake Program(TSP)  
2<sup>nd</sup> year

As a mature graduate student, I am taking my MA over four years while working. During my second year, I was planning to get the data for my research on vocabulary size and vocabulary learning strategies of university students, but due to the pandemic and most classes going online, it was impossible for me to do such an investigation during the 2020 academic year. I was forced to delay my data collection for one year and I plan to survey students with a questionnaire and vocabulary size test sometime during the 2021 academic year. Also, just like undergrads, it was difficult to take graduate level courses online, either synchronously through Teams or asynchronously through Moodle and activities. For this level of study, face to face interaction with my professors is really important and that was missing during the COVID 19 outbreak.



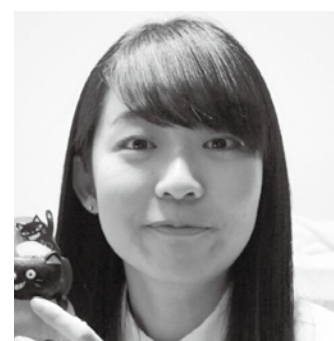
**Tomoshi Kotogaoka**  
Graduate School of Integrated Arts and Sciences  
Humanities and Social Sciences Program  
Master's Course student  
3<sup>rd</sup> year

I'm worried because I don't know if practical educational training will be held. Also, since the only alternative to practical training is lectures and online information sessions, I am worried that I do not know what to do when I become a teacher in the future. I want to study with children in person, and I want to practice and feel the actual atmosphere in schools. Mock lessons are held, but since these are not a face-to-face, it isn't possible to practice how to respond while watching the reaction of the students. I'm just writing a teaching plan, but I'm not practicing it, so I'm worried when it comes time to do real classroom practice. Also, I am anxious because I have to work on these things by myself and I cannot hear the opinions of peers, and there isn't enough feedback.



**Karin Yoshitani**  
Faculty of Education  
2<sup>nd</sup> year

The biggest influence for me about the pandemic was that I lost the opportunities to meet people in person. It was really hard that I couldn't meet my good friends because of the government and school requests to refrain from going out. I feel lonely because I was separated from the social community at KU, including university lectures and club activities. In addition, I couldn't easily meet my family outside Kochi prefecture, which caused great damage to my psyche. I think I was able to understand the importance of connecting with people again.



**Sakiko Nishimura**  
Humanities and Social Sciences  
2<sup>nd</sup> year

## How has COVID Affected your Studies at KU?

**In this section, we reached out to students to hear what they have to say about dealing with COVID. The pandemic obviously affects everyone and there are countless unique stories about how our lives have changed. The student experience during the 2020 academic year has been particularly challenging at KU and all over the world. We hope that our readers will know from these shared experiences about our university studies that they are not alone in coping with the pandemic.**

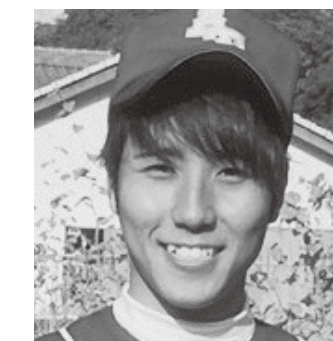


I did not really have any plans to go study abroad and there were not so many important events that got canceled for me. But I had plans to go to Cebu on a trip last year around March with friends and, unfortunately, this was the time that the COVID-19 virus was really spreading. We therefore had to cancel. Personally, I think the hardest part is the fact that I can't go back home anytime I want to and even when I can, I still have to be quarantined for two weeks. It's also so hard to go out and hang around with friends.



**Rinko Arai**  
Agriculture and Marine Sciences  
2<sup>nd</sup> year

What I don't like about when the pandemic started is that first, almost all of my track and field tournaments were canceled. Second, it's not just the tournaments that got canceled but regular practice, too. When the state of emergency was declared in Kochi prefecture, facilities such as the stadium or any places that we can use to run, and practice were all closed and there were no places to practice. We had no choice but to give up. Third, since the school year started and ended without face-to-face lessons, there was no chance to talk with friends or meet new people unlike last year when everything was fine, and it was easy to talk and have friends around. Lastly, the fact that drinking parties such as New Year's parties and year-end parties are no longer possible, got me really frustrated and down.



**Kanta Horikawa**  
Faculty of Education  
2<sup>nd</sup> year

The research study and teaching practice of faculty members have been dramatically affected over the past year. Many of us have had our international research plans derailed. Our research presentations at academic conferences have all been switched to online which I find generally unsatisfying. This makes it hard to network with other researchers. I haven't been able to do any classroom research in the past year. This is partly because most teaching is online but also because, like many other teachers, the learning curve was pretty steep in moving all courses online. But the toughest thing for me has been to find ways make online teaching effective in communicative classes like English Conversation and EPIC. Students have missed precious opportunities to practice English communication skills in the traditional F2F classroom environment. Setting up off campus learning projects was virtually impossible. I have my fingers crossed that I can see students in the classroom in 2021!



**Sean Burgoine**  
Lecturer  
International Studies Course  
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

I think this whole school year has been pretty rough. I'm a university student and also a vocational student at a Hair and Makeup school. My practice for on-site assistant training at the hair makeup school has been cancelled. And as a third-year student, turning as a senior year in the next school year, I had to go for an internship but that, too, got canceled. What's worse is that I live in one of the school's dorms, one that you have to share a room with another student, and because of the virus, there was a major change in the dormitory from double room to single room. This meant that the dormitory management method changed as well. Because the number of people decreases, the dormitory fees went up.



**Aki Matsuo**  
Humanities and Social Sciences  
3<sup>rd</sup> year

When the COVID-19 situation worsened, the most troublesome thing was the work involved in getting a refund after the cancellation of study abroad. First of all, I had to write a lot of documents in the procedure, and only after many phone calls and time could I finish all of that. I had some friends who had their study abroad plans ruined, who actually went abroad. They were abroad but their experience was altered forever. Maybe they couldn't go out and meet people even though they were in a foreign country. Maybe their classes were all online and they couldn't study as usual. Maybe they had to suddenly return home after just arriving. So, I think it's the study abroad aspect that has affected me and other students so much.



**Naoto Fernando**  
Faculty of Science and Technology  
3<sup>rd</sup> year

# My COVID-delayed Never-ending Journey to Kochi: Finally Here!

By Huda Azhari

If there is one thing that we can all agree on, 2020 will go down in history as one of the worst years in human history. One of the lives that COVID 19 deeply affected has been mine. As a student from Malaysia who was supposed start my four years at KU in April, I lost a full semester because of travel restrictions and now I'm getting a late start on my studies from second semester.

Even as I prepared to depart for Japan in October, my flight was again delayed and I worried about whether I would ever get to Kochi. Though I wasn't able to take online classes in the first semester, I started online learning at KU from Malaysia in early October in the hopes I could get to Kochi whenever a flight became available. A week before my supposed departure in late October, an email from my sponsor arrived containing a long explanation on how the virus is spreading too fast to be ignored, and how my flight will be put on hold... until a later time.

It was the uncertainty that scared me most. As noted, I wasn't able to attend my classes in the first semester, so I worried if Kochi University might decide not to accept me anymore. What if the situation got even worse and I will never board the aeroplane? I waited and waited since March, wondering if I would ever be able to go to Japan after all.

Then, one day in October, an email arrived, this time detailing a long list the strict measures that need to be taken before going to Japan. The process was painstakingly long, from the swab test that made me bleed from my nose to the piles of documents that needed to be signed to prove that no, I have not been in close contact with an infected person. After a sleepless night, I was finally on a flight bound for Japan (and two weeks of quarantine!!) on October 25.



I spent the quarantine in a training center called Tokyo-Kenshu Center in Adachi, Tokyo. While the meals they served were incredibly delicious, their wife wasn't exactly the best, and I was slowly losing my mind over the many times I got disconnected in the middle of an online class. I couldn't talk to anyone else in the Center, but I was communicating with Tsutsui-san from Kochi University's Center for International Collaboration (CIC) on a daily basis, since I was required to report on my temperature to KU every single day. I told her about what type of meals I had eaten that day, and she encouraged me to try and cook them later, when I arrived in Kochi. This kind of communication managed to help stave off my boredom, since I couldn't call my family.

After quarantine ended and I was waiting for the bus to send me to the airport for my long awaited flight to Kochi, a staff member at the center asked me where I would be studying. I told her that it's Kochi University, and she was confused as to why I had chosen somewhere so far away from the bright lights of the Kanto or Kansai area, where most foreign students would often prefer. It was the same question some of my friends asked me, after I had shown them where Kochi is located.

My answer remains the same; I despise the hustle and bustle of big city life. I live in a metropolis city in Malaysia called Putrajaya, and I never truly feel like home. The air reeks of smog, there are skyscrapers everywhere I look, and the people keep a distance



between one another, even before COVID. I long for a change from that, and Kochi, a sleepy, quiet town with its bountiful nature, seems like a perfect choice.

After I was picked up from the airport by Darren-sensei, Sean-sensei, and my senior sempai from Malaysia, Khai-san, I couldn't look away from the mountains surrounding the endless fields on our way to the university. Everything is so green, and so peaceful. I hadn't even gotten to my own house then, but I already felt like home in the mere minutes I had been here. It was a feeling I never get back in Malaysia.

Now two months have passed since then and we are at the end of the second semester, and I never regret my decision to come here. Living in a secluded, remote area meant that the locals will always be looking at me differently, from the children to the elderly, but I find that a friendly smile and a polite nod always do the job. Sometimes I struggle to get by with my rusty Japanese, but I do my best to get my intention across and, more often than not, the conversation works out fine. I'm already on good terms with the local obasans in the neighbourhood, who often wave me in to give me fresh vegetables. The Tosa-ben that they use makes my head spin, but I'm slowly getting familiar with it.

After all, this is where I belong now. I'm so glad to finally be here at KU!

## Ship for World Youth Program Cancelled but Students Sail the Virtual Seas Through Online Exchange

By Crystal Sera



Last year in 2020, people around the world were having a lot of trouble dealing with the Corona Virus. Many people wondered how to cope with it. Plans made in the few years beforehand had to be cancelled when travel restrictions prevented study abroad for everyone. An event operated by The Cabinet Office of the Japanese Government called Ship for World Youth is one example. It is a widely acknowledged international youth program for the young leaders of the world.

The Ship for World Youth (SWY) Leaders program partners youths from Japan and countries around the globe. Participants board the ship for a month to study and discuss common issues from a global perspective. Participating in various activities that involve multi-cultural and multi-national exchange opportunities cultivates an international awareness and leadership skills. The program runs for over a month onshore and onboard the ship.

The plan for the onshore and onboard training session, to be held in January 2021, had to be cancelled in July 2020 but this was after people had already been

accepted. Everyone was shocked and as they took the time to digest the reality that the number of COVID-19 cases were not getting better, the students wanted to come up with a solution.

They started to gather online to have each person do a presentation every week. This deepened their understanding of issues in their home country. Talking with people from around the world made it seem more like a global society and this helped them to develop their leadership skills to change the world for a better place. Participants got exposed to the diverse cultural backgrounds of fellow participants even though they never actually boarded the Ship for World Youth.

Last year, one-hundred twenty people from ten countries joined, and within those one-hundred twenty people, most were many from Japan. Seven or eight were students from Kochi University who originally were accepted to join the program.

To prepare for this story, I interviewed Ms. Anbi Yamamoto, a second-year student from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences who was one of the KU students accepted. Ms. Yamamoto explained the details on how to apply to the program and her experiences during the process. Her comments pointed out that it is still good during a pandemic for online virtual exchange even though there is the reality that the participants could not actually be on board and work with other participants face-to-face.

She highlighted mainly how long the procedure was, adding there were a lot of things to do and prepare, even after getting accepted. You have to prepare for the presentations you will do during the process. But even

though it took a lot of blood and sweat to join, it was well worth the effort. Ms. Yamamoto also said that she learned many things about the program and from the people who joined it.

When I asked her how she knew about the program, she answered, "I was walking down the hall in OASIS and saw the poster about the Ship for World Youth. At first, I was not that interested, but as I walked past the hallway again, it somehow triggered my curiosity about what it is, and that maybe it could be interesting. I thought maybe it is a good opportunity to learn and see new things."

A great many participants who joined the program wanted to keep the chance of having these opportunities, and they took advantage by doing a virtual online exchange. The students from Kochi University and other students from Japan and all-over-the-world gathered to simulate virtual online exchange.

"Even though it was only online, I had a lot of fun chatting with many people," Ms. Yamamoto said. "Imagine having people from 10 countries meeting to discuss deep topics with people you barely know. Yes, I think that was the most challenging thing, but it was a great experience because it helped me a lot to practice not just my English but about how I see the world too."

Based on Ms. Yamamoto's words, I am sure it must have been a successful online event for all who joined, even though there were some obvious issues like poor internet connection, noisy background, different time-zones, and other minor problems during online meetings.

When there are some things that you want to try but circumstances prevent you from doing what you wanted, it's a good idea to look at what Ms. Yamamoto and the other SWY participants did to make the best out of an unfortunate and disappointing program cancellation.

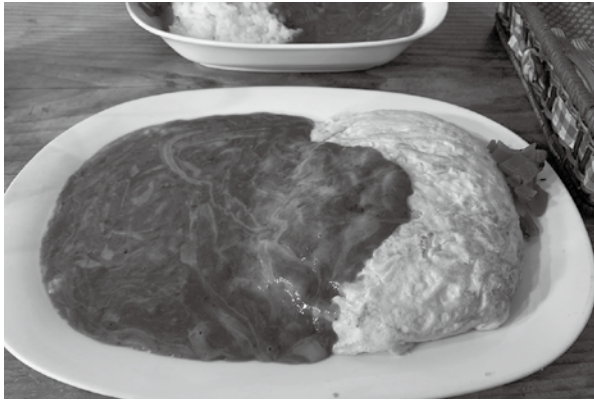


# Guide to Eating Out in Asakura



By Yoshiki Nomura

Do you know any delicious lunch options near the KU Asakura campus? If you always eat in the cafeteria, you might be looking for a change every once in a while. If so, how about going out to eat at a nearby restaurant? COVID is still out there and some might think that eating out may still be dangerous, but it's actually safe because every restaurant is taking good measures to prevent the spread of the infection. It's really no different than eating in the cafeteria.



**Danke**

The first shop we will profile is a cafe called Danke, just east of Kochi National Hospital. It's a warm cafe with an atmosphere that makes you feel like you are in a mountain lodge. There is a TV in the middle of the cafe, and it's quite comfortable with only moderate noise. This shop is famous for its curry lunch, and cheese toppings are especially recommended for the omelet curry. Danke is so popular, in fact, that it is profiled in a magazine called Hot Kochi.

Speaking of omelet rice, you may imagine orange ketchup-flavored rice, but this rice is white. So, it was a cheese curry with fluffy eggs on top of white rice. There are various types of curry, and if you do not know the recommendations, you might be confused about what to order. You can choose from three sizes, and if you choose the largest size, you will surely be full. In addition, curry comes with a salad and fruit. Surprisingly, it is as cheap as 670 yen. If you want coffee after your meal, it's an additional 100 yen. Or you can just enjoy a coffee while working on a college assignment. After all, it's a cafe, so you can go there to read or relax.



**Cafe Labo**

Another nearby option is Cafe Labo at the corner just south in front of Kochi National Hospital. As soon as you enter this cafe, you will see many kinds of tableware. There are about three seats for two people and the remaining table can seat five or six people. The unique characteristic of this cafe is that there are only two types of rice menus. One is soup curry and the other is a daily menu. The soup curry is full of different ingredients, and it looked like something I could only eat there. But on the occasion of my visit, I had the deep-fried chicken with soy sauce, which is the daily menu. The sauce contained tomatoes and cucumbers, and it had the taste of home. In addition to the chicken, you get a potato salad, miso soup, cold tofu, and simmered dishes are also included in the menu. So you can not only get full but also feel the satisfaction of eating various things.

There are many attractive dishes on this daily menu, and every dish is something you will want to try at least once. The atmosphere and taste are such that you won't get tired even if you go every day for a week. Moreover, coffee is included after meals but you can also substitute it for other drinks. Also, there are plenty of books, so you can read until the your meal comes, or after eating with a cup of coffee. It is a great place to take your favorite books and go to study. Their daily menu goes for 800 yen.



**Aguraya**

For noodle lovers, a ramen shop is located just a few minutes south of Kochi University called Aguraya. Tonkotsu ramen is the most popular item on the menu. The reason why this ramen is so good is that the soup is just right. What does it mean that the soup is just right? In other words, you can choose the intensity as you like. I like regular tonkotsu ramen, so I ordered it and a chashu bowl on the side. The taste is really great, and the aftertaste is light. The chashu bowl has volume and high calorie, therefore it is very satisfying to eat. You will also find a magical food on the table that made the ramen even more delicious. It is Aguraya's special takana with red peppers. Just add this to your ramen and your appetite will increase. This spicy feeling made me order additional noodles. I definitely want you to eat this again. The tonkotsu ramen is 750 yen and the chashu bowl is just 250 yen. Other kinds of ramen are available for different prices.



**Kitchen HAMA**

Kitchen HAMA opened this past year and is just across from the main north entrance of the university. There are many seats in the restaurant, and it has a beautiful interior. This shop is new - it just opened in October 2020. The recommendation of this shop is HAMA rice, the namesake of the shop. There are two types, white and red, with red being a little spicy. This time I ordered the red HAMA rice. The taste is similar to hayashi rice, and the aftertaste is of Japanese pepper. Also, the texture of the minced meat and mushrooms is a pleasure to the mouth. Therefore, one never gets bored eating this meal. The price is just 600 yen, which is quite reasonable for students. If you don't like spicy food, you can ask for white rice. It's a restaurant where you can enjoy a delicious lunch at a reasonable price at noon, and you don't have to go far.



**Kikori**

Another popular option for students, teachers and community folks is Kikori which is conveniently located just south of Asakura Station. Kikori serves a very healthy lunch filled with a range of vegetables, and you can make it even healthier by ordering either salmon or saba instead of the daily special. They also serve healthy portions of shogayaki and karage lunches. Kikori is very popular with international students and teachers and offers a friendly service. Their daily special includes such items as namban chicken, fried vegetables, subuta and deep-fried cuts of chicken, pork and fish. It goes for 600 yen and the fish bento for 500 yen. Coffee is optional for an extra 100 yen. It's a real taste of home.



**King**

A long-time lunch favorite among KU students is King, a restaurant which used to be located southeast of the campus but has recently moved just opposite the supermarket, Ace One. King is famous for its good taste and volume. You won't leave there feeling hungry. They have many different teishoku style meals including karaage, fried fish, hamburg and namban-style vinegared chicken. King is popular with KU athletes because of the volume. Their most popular namban teishoku pictured here goes for 780 yen.

The above shops are just some of the options near the Asakura campus that I recommend. Others include student-run Café Satobito but we have already done several recent stories about this restaurant in the *KU Campus News*. If you look up these cafes on the Internet, you can easily find the exact location and business hours.

So, if you're curious, why don't you check these options out and enjoy an off-campus meal to change things up? Many students have increased their own home cooking during this corona period, but when you need a break, it's good to enjoy the taste and atmosphere of a local café. It's also fun to try to imitate the taste at home. Let's eat out - but safely!



# First-year Students Surveyed on Challenges of Starting University Online

By Haruka Abe and Ayaka Yamane

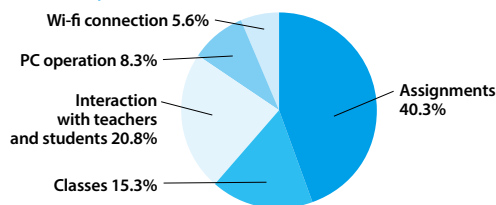


First-year students had high expectations about their new university life such as living alone, making new friends, and studying university subjects on campus. Unfortunately, however, because of COVID-19 most first-year students never got to experience a normal university life at Kochi University or anywhere else for that matter.

Because of limitations about meeting people during this academic year, students had to do things like subject registration and taking classes by themselves even though they did not understand the system completely. Right from the start, in early April, when the university wasn't prepared for COVID restrictions, it was the first-year students who were most affected.

We thought it would be good to learn more about how first-year students dealt with this very difficult situation, so we conducted a survey to ask them about what made them feel most anxious during their first year of university life, and in the aftermath of COVID-19. We found they had serious worries and challenges about online learning, and that these concerns will continue if KU stays largely online.

## What were you most worried about?



To learn more about how the pandemic affected learning at KU, we conducted a web survey and received responses from 72 first-year students belonging to four different faculties on the Asakura campus. We asked questions about their worries, how they managed online learning, and what can be done to improve learning if the present situation continues.

As you can see from the first graph, approximately 40% of the students answered "assignments" to the question "what was the biggest worry about online classes?" The reasons for this were that "the method of submitting assignments differs depending on the teacher" and "the number of assignments is large". This is a problem faced not only by first-year students but also by many students

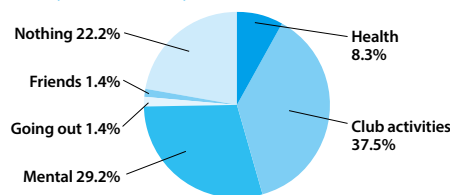
of other grades at Kochi University. There are many ways to submit assignments, such as by email, Moodle, or using KULAS. Especially the first-year students, who are new to systems such as Moodle and KULAS, had a hard time. Many did not even know how to access these platforms.

It is also true that the number of assignments is greater in online lessons than in face-to-face lessons. This is because it is not possible to know if a student is attending a class in an online lecture, so the method of confirming attendance by assignment was adopted by many professors.

Furthermore, about 20% of the people in this survey answered that they were worried about "connection with teachers and friends". This is a noticeable problem for first-year students. Many students must have started university life with no friends around them. If you go to campus and have face-to-face lessons, you may happen to make friends with the boy or girl sitting next to you in class, or you can make friends through club activities. But this is not the case online. "I was very worried because I had only SNS connections with students and teachers, so I couldn't ask my friends and teachers what I didn't understand in the assignments and classes, and I couldn't deepen my understanding together," one first-year student commented. "I think having conversations will enrich my student life, so I was very worried in the first half of the year when I could only meet people online."

In addition, in the survey, there were voices saying that they were worried about the network connection, PC operation, and whether they could keep up with the lessons. The first-year students managed to overcome the year while having these troubles, but there are a lot of things that still need to be improved if online lessons continue.

## How were you affected by COVID-19 other than classes?



We also questioned students about the aftermath of COVID-19 in relation to their social lives aside from classes. We anticipated that most first-year students would be affected by mental and physical health issues as a result of COVID-19. However, the result was surprisingly different that we expected.

Students responded 'Club activities' as the highest percentage of how they were affected, occupying roughly 40% of the total number of respondents. "There were no club invitation events, so it was hard to get information about what club activities there are and briefs about clubs," one student answered. Another noted "I signed up for a club, but all activities were cancelled, so I could not enjoy even a bit."

For first-year students who live with their family, joining club activities was also an issue. "There are no chances to participate in club activities, so it is difficult for me to make my new community from university life," answered a student. If they had done club activities without limits, they would have been able to spend a better more satisfying university life, and get rid of stress about studying. But for now, this is impossible.

Furthermore, it is clear that limitations of club activities relate to other problems such as having no chance to make peer and senior friends and damage of mental wellbeing. About 29% of students answered 'Mental' in relation to how their social lives have been affected. "I had to take classes by myself, so I always feel so lonely," was once of the most common answers. Second-year students and older students are accustomed to living alone, but most first-year students have never had this experience before. Another mentioned that "COVID-19 intensified my new situation of living alone. For that reason, this situation makes me gloomy and I accumulated stress and anxiousness day by day." In fact, COVID-19 has given a strong blow to both physical and mental health of first-year students.

COVID-19 has obviously curtailed students' pastimes and university life in serious ways. Up until now, Kochi University has tried to improve the online system and classes, so that students can become more comfortable to take classes. But as we saw through this result, we think that university administration should make a strong effort to care about students' mental health, especially first-year students. We hope that the university will improve so that the next group of new students can start a better university life by listening carefully to the opinions of the first-year students.

## Editorial

By Haruka Abe

Thank you for reading this issue of the *KU Campus News*. Looking back at this year's issue, we writers faced many new challenges because of COVID-19. The first one is that we had to do all the activities online this year. What this means is that all stories were checked and corrected through web conferencing, and interviews were not face-to-face. Also, KU students usually study abroad, or many international students come from overseas, but we couldn't access their stories because international activities and travel was banned. It was difficult for students to know what is happening at KU during 2020, so we think it's great to share the latest information with our readers.

The first page of this edition highlights the pros and cons of online learning from a student perspective. After six month or a year of online learning, students have been affected in many ways. On the downside, some students were worried about communication and were less motivated to learn. But on the contrary, the online style has had a positive effect on job hunting for fourth year students. We hope to provide readers with an opportunity to learn more about the new style of education at the university.

Also, in this complicated and difficult situation, Huda-san, who came to KU from Malaysia shared her valuable experience. She stayed in Malaysia for one semester and was finally allowed to come to Japan after the second semester started. Huda-san's journey to KU was harder than we could image. We can see what challenges she faced and how she overcame them. She also explains about why she chose KU over urban universities. Her story provides useful information for both Kochi University students and teachers.

In the center page section, which is produced in a slightly different way each year, we asked people from various faculties the question, "How has COVID affected you?". From an individual point of view, they told us that they have various influences other than school life. Some were planning to study abroad but programs were canceled, and some were worried about club activities and educational training. But those effects are not all bad. You can see how they perceive each situation. This is a good opportunity to learn about the situation of other students, so please visit the center page section.

The last page features an article about the first-year students who seem to have been most influenced by COVID. We conducted a survey on the web for first-year students and wrote an article based on the results. Figures are used to show the results and we also quote some first-year student comments. I think you'll see interesting results that are not what you expect. Let's get inspired by knowing what the first-year students actually think!

This was our first time to work on the *KU Campus News* and we were worried at first, but we are proud to be able to complete a good issue even under such challenging circumstances. This activity helped us grow a lot as students and as English writers.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the writers, interviewees, and our editorial advisor, Professor Darren Lingley, for supporting this year's edition. We would also like to thank all the readers who picked up this issue of the *KU Campus News* and take the time to read our work. I hope that Kochi University and students will work together to overcome this COVID pandemic and create a better campus life.

## The Kochi University Campus News

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All articles are written by students unless otherwise noted.

### STUDENT EDITOR

Haruka Abe

### WRITERS

Haruka Abe, Rei Maeda,  
Yoshiki Nomura, Ayaka Ogasawara,  
Crystal Sera, Yuji Yamamura,  
Ayaka Yamane, and Kayo Yamato

### EDITORIAL ADVISOR

Darren Lingley

The *K.U. Campus News* aims to provide an English language forum for sharing university related news, profiling students and faculty members involved in unique endeavours, promoting a sense of pride in our university, and highlighting the international aspects of Kochi University.

Inquiries and comments may be directed to the writers at:  
Rm. 407, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Kochi University, Akebono-cho 2-5-1, 780-8520  
Tel: (088) 844-8203 E-mail: lingley@kochi-u.ac.jp