



## YAMATE GAKUIN ONE-YEAR EXCHANGE PROGRAMME

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## INTRODUCTION

Yamate Gakuin is a private co-educational junior/senior high school located in the suburbs of Yokohama, Japan's second biggest city. The school was founded in 1966, and provides a liberal education to its student body of around 2000 students.

The Yamate Gakuin international exchange programme celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2016. Nearly 700 exchange students have come to Yamate from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, and the same number of Yamate students have gone overseas.

Each year around 5 exchange students, usually in the age group 16 -18, are selected to come to Yamate for one school year. **Please note: Applicants can be part-way through high school, or have recently graduated.**

Yamate has a special programme for exchange students, who spend part of each school day in their own class, studying mainly Japanese language, history and culture, and part of the day in regular classes with Japanese students. The educational programme concentrates on helping students improve their Japanese language skills and gain a good understanding of Japanese society and culture. The content of classes is practical and relevant to today's society. Some classes are taught by native speakers of English (whose average length of residence in Japan is more than ten years), and others by Japanese teachers, so exchange students have a good balance of Japanese and English in their daily lives.

All exchanges are reciprocal exchanges. For example, if a Yamate student whose name is Yuki and a Canadian student, who is named Lisa, are selected as exchange partners, Lisa comes to Japan, lives with Yuki's family and attends Yamate Gakuin. At the same time, Yuki goes to Canada, lives with Sarah's family and attends her school.

## SELECTION PROCESS

1. In December each year (May, for Australia and New Zealand) Yamate sends information and application forms to schools, inviting interested high school students in Canada to apply for the school year beginning in September (February of the following year, for Australia and New Zealand). If you are genuinely interested, you should fill in the application form and send it back to Yamate by the January deadline (end of August, for Australia and New Zealand).
2. You, or your school, will be notified by telephone or e-mail of a date, time and place

for an interview, which will be conducted in February (September, for Australia and New Zealand) by members of the International Exchange Department of Yamate Gakuin. You should attend this interview with at least one of your parents. You will be asked about yourself, your school and family life, and have a chance to ask questions and learn more about what to expect from the exchange.

3. Selection of exchange students is made on the basis of the application form and interview, and successful applicants are notified by phone or e-mail in March (October, for Australia and New Zealand), and told what documents they will require for them and their exchange counterparts to get student visas.
4. The school year for exchange students from Canada is from early September to late July, and from early February to late December for students from Australia and New Zealand. Students must attend for the full school year.

### **FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS**

Exchanges are direct exchanges between families; each host family takes responsibility for all normal living and educational expenses of the exchange student in its care, including school fees (if any), textbooks, lunches, fares to and from school, and family holidays.

Host families also pay exchange students a monthly allowance for incidental personal expenses. The amount is set (to avoid trouble) at ¥10,000 a month in Japan and \$100 a month in the local currency for Yamate students overseas. Since the amounts are sufficient but not large, students need to budget to avoid being left without money at the end of the month.

### **Host families are not responsible for:**

1. Air fares. Students must buy their own return ticket before they leave for Japan.
2. Health Insurance. Students **must** have full medical insurance coverage for the duration of their stay, and it must be arranged before they come to Japan.
3. Uniforms and clothing. Yamate has a uniform and it must be worn. You will need a navy blue blazer, white collared shirts or blouses, and plain grey trousers for boys and a plain grey skirt for girls. Please refer to photographs in the English-language Yamate brochure. The clothes you bring should be as close as possible to those shown in the photographs, although they need not be identical.
4. International phone calls and mail.
5. Travel done apart from your host family. If, with your host parents' permission, you arrange to travel alone or with friends during holidays, you have to pay for this yourself. Please note that you are not permitted to travel outside Japan during the year, except with your host parents.

## **FOR THE EXCHANGE STUDENT APPLICANT**

All students who come to Yamate must keep in mind that, under Japanese law and in Japanese eyes, high-school students are still children. The host parents of exchange students are their legal guardians for the year and, together with the school, are responsible for their welfare and education.

Exchange students must obey all family and school rules, and we require students to sign a declaration to this effect. Please read the Student Declaration in the Application Form. If a student misbehaves seriously or continuously, in such a way that he or she would be expelled from school or suspended for a long period, or refuses to obey family rules, he or she may be sent home. Students are not permitted to change host families.

Exchange students are required to attend school every day and for every class. Time off is not permitted except for illness. Students are expected to do all of the homework assigned and a reasonable amount of study, preparation and revision.

School is from 8.40 to 3:35, Monday to Friday. ( School finishes at 14:40 on Tuesdays) Exchange students must also join a club, either sporting or cultural, which means participating in its activities at least two afternoons a week after school. Some clubs also have practice and/or matches on weekends, and exchange students are required to attend weekend practice if the chosen club has practice.

Students spend 4 periods a day in class with other exchange students, concentrating on Japanese language acquisition, as well as studying Japanese history, culture and other subjects, including Japanese word-processing.

The other three periods a day are spent in classes with Japanese students, following their timetable. In these classes you will have real difficulty understanding the content of some of the lessons, and you will not have to sit for the exams, but you must do your best to participate. These classes, along with your club activities, offer the best chance to meet and make friends with Japanese students.

At night and on weekends you will spend time with your host family. You should bear in mind that your host family will be working hard to make your stay a successful one, even if it is not always obvious to you. You should do your best to fit in with them and not cause them unnecessary worry or stress. The maturity and confidence you gain through your homestay and your experiences at school will be the major benefit you receive from your year as an exchange student.

Most exchange students come to Yamate with the intention of learning a lot of Japanese, and the school has an excellent language programme for them. Essentially, the amount of how much a student learns depends mainly upon how much effort he or she has made. Do not think that you can learn Japanese easily just by being in Japan. You will still need to work hard to obtain results.

## **AVOIDING AND RESOLVING PROBLEMS**

If an exchange student, either in Japan or overseas, feels he or she has a problem with his host parents, he / she should firstly try to resolve that that issue himself or herself. The same applies to host parents who feel they have a problem or issue with the student in their care.

If a problem cannot be resolved directly by the host family and the exchange student, and it is sufficiently serious, the host school should be approached, through a school counsellor, Japanese teacher, or exchange co-ordinator at the school. The school will then work with the student and host parents to resolve their problems and differences, which tend to be caused through misunderstanding rather than intent. It is not appropriate or effective to direct complaints or grievances to parents or others in one's own country, as they are in no position to assess the facts or deal with the problem.

There are five native speakers of English on the staff at Yamate, three of whom teach exchange students. They have all lived in Japan for at least ten years, have many years of experience in teaching exchange students, and are always available to talk to exchange students about any problems they might have, as well as answer questions or offer advice about living in Japan.

## **FOR PARENTS OF APPLICANTS**

As the Yamate programme is one of direct and mutual exchange, you should bear in mind that not only will your son or daughter spend a year in Japan, you will also be the hosts of a Yamate boy or girl for a year. In the early stages he or she may speak little English. It is also important to bear in mind that the behaviour of Japanese teenagers is no better (or worse) than teenagers in your country and, as you will be his or her guardians for a year, it will be your responsibility to supervise and discipline him or her as you would your own son or daughter.

Exchange students can seem passive and lacking in initiative at first, and may need to be told what to do. It is a good idea to explain as clearly as possible how the family does things and what is expected of the student. This would include daily routines, who does what around the house, washing and cleaning, curfews, and so on. It normally takes time for exchange students to adjust, and the first two or three months in particular can be difficult, but if the student is encouraged to take an active part in family affairs, a good relationship should develop. *Please remember that the exchange student will be a part of your family, not a guest, and the sooner he or she fits into and becomes part of the family, the better.*

A word about the allowance. It is set at ¥10,000 a month for exchange students who are in Japan and \$100 a month for Yamate students overseas, and paid by the host family to the student in its care. While you are encouraged to ask the exchange student in your care to do his or her share of household chores, withholding of the allowance should not be used as a punishment. Neither should you vary the amount because it is more than you pay to your own children. *Please remember that payment of the allowance as set is a condition of*

*the exchange*, and that your son or daughter will be receiving the specified amount in Japan. Any variation from the set amount is likely to cause trouble in Japan as well as in your home.

Finally, our programme operates on the principle that, as a last resort, if a student misbehaves either seriously or continuously, in such a way that he or she would normally be expelled from school or suspended for a long period, refuses to obey the rules of the host family, or is in serious moral, physical or psychological danger, he or she may be sent home. Incompatibility with host families is not sufficient grounds for a student to be sent home or to change hosts, unless some danger arises from this incompatibility. Any decision in this regard will be taken by the principal of the hosting school and the host parents, usually (if time allows) in consultation with the school principal at the other end.

Fortunately, almost all exchanges are very successful and, while requiring a considerable amount of effort from all concerned, result in a rewarding experience, not only for the exchange students themselves, but also for their families. We are proud that the Yamate exchange programme is second to none in the opportunities it offers those who participate in it.

## **FOR SCHOOLS**

Since the exchange is a direct one, a school which sends a student to Yamate for a year will receive a student from Yamate in return. The only exception to this occurs when, for instance, a boys' school sends a boy to Yamate but, due to boy/girl numbers, receives a girl in return. In this case, the Yamate student would normally go to a girls' or co-educational school arranged by the host parents and school at the other end.

Yamate has a special educational programme for exchange students coming to Japan, but does not expect the same treatment for its students going overseas. Some schools have special ESL programmes already in operation for foreign students; others do not. Yamate imposes no requirements on schools which accept our students; the host school has full authority in matters of education and discipline.

We encourage our students going overseas to avoid where possible subjects which have a heavy and difficult English content, such as history and literature, and take subject options which concentrate on practical activities; e.g. P.E., art, etc.

All Yamate students sign a declaration agreeing to abide by the rules of their school and host parents, and to do their best to fit into their host society. As normal teenagers, they may sometimes need to be encouraged or corrected, and this is for the host school to deal with according to its policies and practices.

*Should a serious problem arise concerning the behaviour of an exchange student at school or outside*, the same principle applies overseas and in Japan, namely, that *the host school and host family (that is, the people on the spot) are the ones who make the final decision on how to deal with the problem*. If time permits, and the problem is

serious enough, consultation will normally take place with the principal of the student's school at home, but the final decision is up to the people on the spot.

Exchange students are not permitted to change host families unless the principal of the host school feels that there is likely to be some danger - moral, physical or psychological - or other serious problem if the student remains with his or her host family. When making this decision principals should take into account, the possibility of the host parents in the other country refusing to continue looking after their student once the reciprocal exchange breaks down. A change of host family should be permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

If a student misbehaves seriously or continuously in a way that would normally lead to him or her either being expelled from school or suspended for a long period of time, or is in serious moral, physical or psychological danger for reasons unconnected with the host family, the principal, in consultation with host parents (and the principal of the counterpart school overseas, if time and circumstances permit) may decide that he or she must be sent home. In the event of a student being sent home, his or her counterpart in the other country will not be able to stay on with their host family, and will need to find a new host family with the assistance of the school. If this is not possible, both students may have to return home.

Fortunately, a high percentage of exchanges are very successful, and in the 40 years of the Yamate one-year exchange programme the extreme steps mentioned above have very rarely been taken. We make every effort to place students in a host family and environment with which they will be compatible, and which will bring out the best in them. Please feel free to consult with us about any matters connected with the exchange programme at any time. The school to school links developed through the exchange programme are its strength and backbone, and we value them greatly.

#### **EXCHANGE PROGRAMME STAFF**

Mr Hiroki Nagano (Director of International Exchange Department)

Mr John Healey (Year Co-ordinator, Teacher of Japanese Culture and English)

Ms Julie Okamoto (Home-room Teacher, Teacher of Japanese and English)