



UHM Summer Faculty Resident Directorship Application –
Kobe, Japan
Marija Čolić, Assistant Professor, Special Education
Department

Experiential Learning and Student Mentoring Plan

いらっしやいませ, Welcome to Kobe, a city where picturesque mountains beautifully surround the harbor

The University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (UHM) Summer Study Abroad Program in Kobe offers a wonderful opportunity to explore Japanese culture and language during the summer at Kōnan University. In addition to attending Japanese language classes, you will also be immersed in Japanese culture both within and outside of Kōnan University, providing you with a unique cultural experience. You can visit the Ikuta Shrine, which dates back to the 3rd century, or ride the antique cable cars that connect Kobe to Mt. Rokko to enrich your experiences. As the Resident Director, I plan to support you on this incredible six-week journey and witness your cultural and educational discoveries.

Experiential Learning Description

As part of your Study Abroad experience in Kobe, you will keep an electronic journal to document and reflect on your intercultural experiences. This journal will not only help you deepen your understanding of Japanese culture but also allow you to explore your cultural values and biases, and how they influence your ability to work with others. These assignments are designed to ensure maximum experiential learning and address the Study Abroad Program’s student learning outcomes:

- (1) Demonstrate awareness of your own cultural values and biases and how these impact your ability to work with others;
- (2) Demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in your Study Abroad program;
- (3) Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups;
- (4) Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints.

Your journal entries should be thoughtful and reflective, focusing on specific aspects of Japanese culture, language, food, and interactions that you encounter throughout your time at Kōnan University and in Japan. This assignment encourages you to think critically about the similarities and differences between Japanese culture and your own, and how these insights shape your understanding of diversity and effective communication. You can use text, photos, drawings, clippings from local newspapers, or anything else that represents your experiences and reflections for your electronic journal.

You are required to submit a reflection on your experiences from the previous three weeks on Friday of the third week. This reflection will be worth **30 points**. Additionally, you will submit a final reflection on Friday of the sixth week, which will also be worth **30 points**. There is no page requirement or limit; I want you to explore this unique experience freely.

To guide your reflection, I have provided weekly prompts for the duration of the program. These prompts will help focus your journal entries and ensure that you are engaging with the key cultural experiences that will enhance your learning.

Week 1: Initial Impressions and Cultural Value

- **Prompt:** Reflect on your first impressions of Japanese culture and how it differs from your own. What aspects of Japanese culture have surprised you the most? Consider how these differences relate to your own cultural values and biases (SLO 1 and SLO 4 addressed).

Week 2: Language and Relationships

- **Prompt:** Observe how the Japanese language reflects relationships between people (e.g., formality, politeness, and respect). How do you see language shaping interactions between professors, students, and others? Compare these language dynamics with how people communicate in your culture (SLO 2 and SLO 3 addressed).

Week 3: Food and Culture (Reflection due on Friday for the previous three weeks)

- **Prompt:** Explore the ingredients commonly used in Japanese cuisine. How do they differ from or align with those in your home culture? Reflect on what this tells you about the relationship between food and culture in Japan and in your own country (SLO 1 and SLO 2 addressed).

Week 4: Dress and University Life

- **Prompt:** Observe how students and professors dress at Kōnan University. How does this compare to university life at UHM? What cultural values might be reflected in these differences in dress and behavior? Consider interactions with professors and peers—are they similar or different from what you're used to? (SLO 2 and SLO 4 addressed).

Week 5: Social Interactions and Communication

- **Prompt:** Reflect on your interactions with Japanese students. What differences or similarities do you notice in how they communicate compared to students at UHM? How have these experiences impacted your ability to communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds? Have you met any neurodivergent individuals? If so, how might these experiences differ from those in your home country? (SLO 3 and SLO 4 addressed)

Week 6: Reflecting on Growth and Cultural Understanding (Reflection due on Friday. This submission should include all six weeks of journal entries)

- **Prompt:** Look back on your time in Japan and reflect on how your understanding of Japanese culture has evolved. What cultural values or aspects of Japanese life have you come to appreciate the most? How has this experience influenced your awareness of your own biases, and how will it shape your future interactions with people from different backgrounds? (SLO 1 and SLO 4 addressed)

Group and Individual Meetings (30 points; each group meeting 10 points)

I'm excited to meet with you as a group three times throughout the program! We'll find times and locations that work for everyone, and these gatherings will be a wonderful opportunity to share insights and reflect on your experiences together. In our discussions, we can explore aspects of the culture that you might have overlooked and gain new perspectives from one another. You're welcome to express yourselves however you feel comfortable—whether that's sharing with the group or keeping your thoughts personal and sharing them just with me in your electronic journal. To further enhance student engagement throughout the program, I invite you to suggest additional topics or questions for discussion during our group meetings. Your insights are invaluable, and incorporating your ideas will make our discussions more relevant and

enriching. Prior to each meeting, please think about any specific experiences or themes you'd like to explore further.

Remember, I'm always here to support you throughout this journey. In addition to our three scheduled face-to-face meetings, I'll also be available for individual appointments as needed, and I plan to meet with you individually in informal settings, such as the cafeteria and field trips, to get to know your experiences better. If you ever encounter any challenges or have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me—whether it's via email, phone, or in person. Your experience is important to me, and I'm here to help you navigate it!

Warmly,
Marija Čolić, Assistant Professor, Special Education Department

Grading Rubric

Written reflections and discussions will be evaluated using the rubric below:

Learning Outcomes	Exceptional (9-10 pts)	Satisfactory (6-8 pts)	Below Expectation (0-5 pts)
Demonstrate awareness of your own cultural values and biases and how these impact your ability to work with others.	Provides deep insights into personal biases and cultural values, with thoughtful reflection on how they influence interactions.	Submits reflections that show basic self-awareness of cultural values and their impact on interactions.	Fails to submit thoughtful reflections or entries lack depth in exploring cultural values and biases.
Demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on the population or topic of interest in your Study Abroad program.	Provides detailed examples of cultural diversity, demonstrating clear understanding and appreciation of differences and similarities.	Reflects on experiences with the host culture, showing awareness of cultural differences.	Fails to demonstrate understanding of diversity or lacks reference to the host culture.
Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups	Demonstrates exceptional communication with the host culture, effectively navigating cultural norms and fostering deep connections.	Shows evidence of meaningful communication with people from diverse backgrounds in the host culture.	Journal entries show little to no engagement with the host culture or people.
Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints.	Thoroughly analyzes cultural issues, demonstrating a clear appreciation for multiple perspectives and cultural contexts.	Provides basic analysis of cultural issues with some consideration of different viewpoints.	Fails to reflect on multiple perspectives or analyze cultural issues.