



WASEDA UNIVERSITY

## Waseda University Visiting International Scholars Conference

### 外国人研究者シンポジウム —早稲田大学の研究・生活環境

Hosted by:  
International Office & Office of International Research Promotion,  
Waseda University  
早稲田大学国際部国際課・国際研究推進本部 共催

14 November 2008



## Panel Discussion Report

In the panel discussion, the research environment and life at Waseda University were discussed.

First we asked the audience questions and they each answered using individual remote terminals. As we all looked at the results projected on the screen on the stage, an interactive discussion developed between the panelists and the audience.

In sum, six major requests to Waseda were identified:

1. To increase opportunities for researchers to develop relationships among themselves (and in some cases their families)
2. To improve the accommodation facilities
3. To act as guarantor for visiting researchers
4. To improve the usability of researcher rooms and laboratory facilities
5. To improve the environment for matching applicants to faculty members
6. To improve the information environment



【The courtesy title in the text is omitted】

【Moderator】

Koji Fukuda (Deputy Director-General, Office of International Research Promotion)

【Panelists】

• Visiting international scholars

El-Amir, Nilly, Kamal (visiting researcher, Egypt)

Gundry, David (visiting researcher, U.S.A.)

Tan, Beifang (exchange researcher, China)

Li, Mo (visiting lecturer, China)

• Host faculty members

Masahiko Gemma (Professor, Faculty of Social Sciences)

Kenichi Oyaizu (Associate Professor, Faculty of Science and Engineering)

• Director, Office of International Research Promotion Kenji Horiguchi

• Director, International Affairs Division Takahiro Ohno

● Introduction of visiting international scholars

**Gundry:** I am currently studying Japanese literature in the doctorate program at Stanford University. My field of specialization is the literature of the Genroku Period, mainly the work of Ihara Saikaku. My period of research at Waseda is two years, until the end of June 2009.

**Li:** I came from Beijing as an exchange student. I have been at Waseda about 12 years now, in both Master's and Ph.D. courses, and then as an associate researcher. Currently I am teaching here as a visiting lecturer.

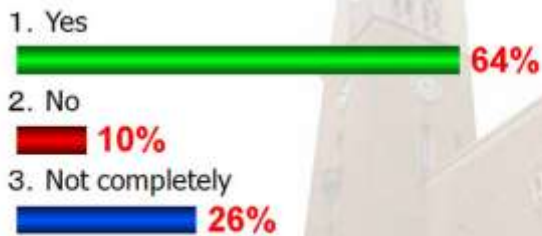
**El-Amir:** I am a second year political science Ph.D. student at Waseda. When I was in Egypt, I was conducting research on Asia. I came to Japan as a visiting researcher last October, and will be here until the end of this academic year.





Question 1

Are you satisfied with your life in Japan in general?



**Gundry:** I have been here for two years now and am having a good time, as various things have happened. As I like living in a big city, I am satisfied with my life in Tokyo: the transportation system is convenient and it is safe here. Although my first years in Japan were a little problematic, it

was a good experience anyway.

**Li:** I selected number 1 too. Of course I encountered various problems in Japan, but I came to Japan because I felt some affection for Japanese culture, so I am satisfied in general.

**EI-Amir:** I chose number 1. I am satisfied with my life in Japan. I think so far I have achieved what I planned to do before I came to Japan.



Question 2

Are you satisfied with your research and living environment at Waseda University in general?



**Gemma:** I think the answer would be different for researchers who are doing individual research and those who are doing joint research with their peers from Waseda. As a host faculty member, when many visiting scholars come all at once, I sometimes cannot spend enough time to do joint research with each one of them. I think this might

be unsatisfactory for them. In terms of lifestyle, there is some accommodation but still there is lack of space and it would be inconvenient for people who cannot stay long. Office space is also in short supply and is not always available. That is probably not comfortable for them.



Question 3

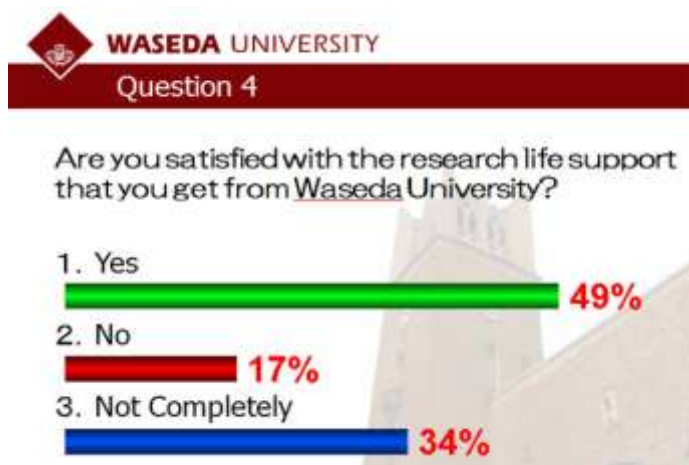
Are you satisfied with the living environment services that you get from Waseda University?



**Member of the audience:** I am in the Asian studies Masters course. I have been living in Japan for a long time and there is no problem so far, since I live in a dormitory. But it would be very tough if I had to move to an apartment. Things are very complicated:

how to find a room, language issues, contracts and deposits. I would like to have the support of the university.

**Member of the audience:** The residence offered by Waseda is very comfortable but some of the staff do not speak English at all. It is surprising to see a non-English speaker in such an international organization. Also instructions or manuals for electric appliances are in Japanese so it is difficult to use them. Furthermore, I think there is a lack of information in English about the living environment, for example, about restaurants and movie theatres.



**Member of the audience:** I am from Sweden. It would be good if printers were more readily available. At this moment we have to go to the computer lab, bring our own paper and print there. Since researchers need to print frequently, it is quite inconvenient.

**Member of the audience:** I study telecommunications and because of my research field, I need to study other fields such as mathematics and physics. However, credit transfer from other fields is very limited. I would be grateful if I could transfer credits. I would like to point out that Waseda should expand the double degree systems, in particular the credit recognition system.

**Member of the audience:** I would like to point out the lack of laboratory facilities for science and technology, in particular in the new graduate schools. Is it possible to use or share facilities at other universities? Also, I think the linkage and coordination among offices including the offices of the graduate schools and the International Office is weak. In addition, I think it is necessary to have a forum or club for community building and as an information sharing channel.



**Member of the audience:** The procedure for eligibility recognition is very slow. When I received mine, I had to send off my application to another city in Australia to receive the visa. I got my passport back with my visa the day before my flight. It would be easier if the procedure had been

started a week or a so earlier.

**Member of the audience** (graduate student): When it comes to information for foreigners, we usually use JASSO (Japan Student Services Organization). In 2006 or 2007 I made a call to JASSO and I was asked to look up university websites and their syllabuses, but the information that was I found there was as old as 2003 and 2004, so I had to make a call to the university. It would be good to have a better coordination between JASSO and Waseda and other universities.

**Oyaizu:** Working for the host organization, I had a troublesome experience trying to find guarantors for researchers hosted by the GCOE program. The host researcher is expected to serve as guarantor in the current practice, but it would be good if the university were able to serve as a guarantor; this would simplify the process in many matters such as visa applications and housing contracts. I heard from my friend in another university that in case of an accident, if a faculty member is the guarantor, he/she has to take care of the matter and could actually be involved in some serious problem. So some host researchers may be hesitant to serve as guarantor. At this moment there is no such problematic case at Waseda but it would really help if the university could serve as guarantor in the future.

**Member of the audience** (graduate student): There was a problem when a friend of mine applied to Waseda University using a national grant. When the procedure was complete he was not accepted because he had no alien registration. It was a difficult situation in which his scholarship was given by his home country but the university was not able to accept him. I think there are over 100 foreign students studying at Waseda and some of them are from countries which have some difficulty in terms of visa applications. I would like to see the visa application categorizing situation in Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs improved.

**Li:** Since I have been here for a long time, I tend to take everything for granted. I married a woman who was also an international student at Waseda (I am grateful that the university gave us an opportunity to meet!). Anyway, at the time of the marriage the Immigration office checked all our information meticulously: to get accompanying family status my wife had to go home once and then come back to Japan. We had to answer a lot of questions about things including our income and what sort of apartment we lived in, and we were even asked how we could survive in such a small apartment. Waseda has been giving us the utmost support in various aspects.

**El-Amir:** I would like to mention two points briefly. First, to apply for my fellowship, as a matter of course I needed a letter of recommendation. It took a long time to search the websites of universities in Japan even for the basic information as to what sort of universities they were and whom I should contact. The second

point is not an actual problem but about the status classification at Waseda. Since my status is here is visiting researcher, I am not entitled to join various Waseda activities.



**Gundry:** I encountered a problem when I tried to open a bank account. In the beginning, I was on a Japanese fellowship, and I needed to have a Japanese bank account to cash my stipend checks. All of the bank branches I tried in Shinjuku Ward told me that because foreigners had increased in numbers in Shinjuku over the last few years and sometimes “did bad things with their

bank accounts,” they could not give me one until I had had an alien registration card for 6 months. If I tried bank branches outside of Shinjuku, they told me that since I was not from their neighborhood, I could not get a bank account. Fortunately this problem was solved through the support of a person from Waseda’s International Office, and I was able to open an account in a bank. Then I went into the bank, but the bank people were not polite to me. I thought they could at least use *keigo* language since it is a bank. At one time I thought I would have to go home since I could not receive my fellowship stipend due to lack of a bank account.

**Member of the audience:** I have lived in Japan for 5 years. This is a problem my wife encountered. When we first came to Japan, she had not studied Japanese much so we could not communicate with other people. So she wanted to study Japanese, but when she came to Japan, Japanese language schools and Waseda’s Japanese course had already started the autumn semester so as a result of bad timing she could not take any course. I hope those Japanese language schools will provide a more flexible system.

Member of the audience: I went to the Japanese Language Center at Waseda and asked what courses were available. At that time I was given a piece of paper about courses in Shinjuku, written in Japanese. Although I could somehow read it since there were *furigana* for the *kanji*, it was complicated. So a little booklet about Japanese language courses in English would be very helpful.

**Ishikawa** (Director, Shinjuku Multicultural Plaza): As I mentioned before, Shinjuku Ward is preparing a ‘Starting to live in Shinjuku’ booklet in four languages now. I think it will solve the problem pointed out earlier. In addition, Shinjuku provides a living information booklet when a person files for foreign residency. The

booklet covers ten topics including childcare, healthcare and living information, in four languages. This booklet is available at Shinjuku City Office.



**Horiguchi** (Director, Office of International Research Promotion): If we provided more English information on the research areas of the faculty, that would generate accurate external information about Waseda faculty and their research. As a result potential international researchers could gain a better understanding of the possibilities. I think we have to make a great effort to dispatch

English information about Waseda overseas. I think not enough effort has been made so far.

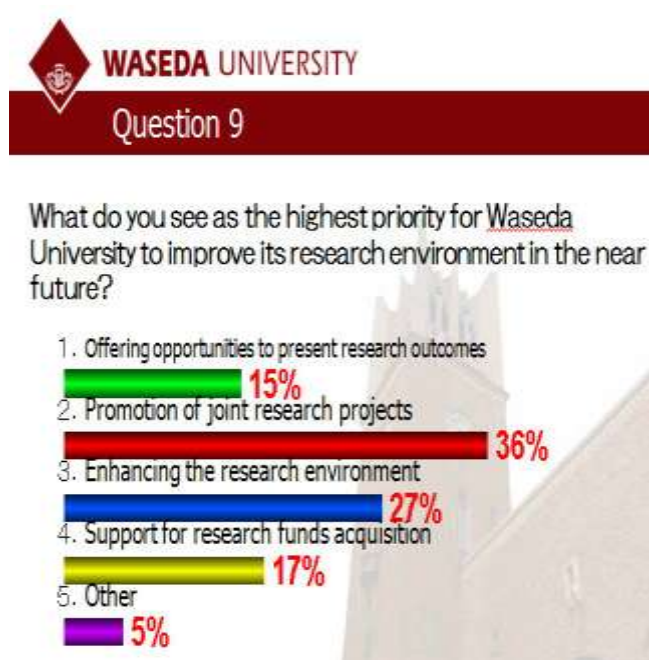
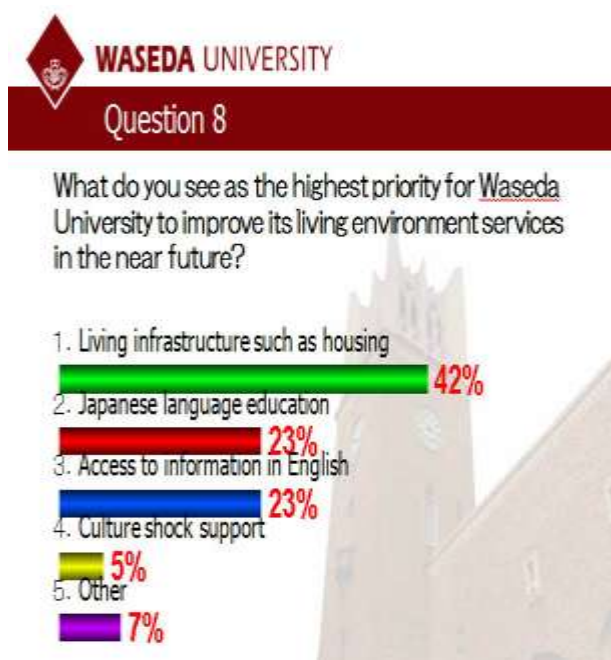
**Ohno** (Director, International Affairs Division): The results show that the biggest reason for choosing Waseda is the relationship with Waseda faculty members. As for Waseda's current situation, generally overseas scholars come to Waseda through personal connection with Waseda faculty members. However, as Professor Horiguchi pointed out, it is better to convey information about Waseda's faculty members' research areas in a more accessible manner. When overseas researchers who are interested in conducting research at Waseda inquire, the International Office, for example, should be able to provide information about host faculty members. This has been done on a one-to-one basis in the past but the organization should get involved in this kind of effort, as it is important to establish relationships between overseas researchers and Waseda University.

**Oyaizu**: I will talk about the research environment. In the case of the global COE in the science area, only Waseda University, Tokyo University and Technical Institute of Tokyo were chosen in metropolitan Tokyo, so I think enough information about the high quality global COE research environment has been supplied to international scholars. Global COE targets mainly doctoral degree course researchers and we have a variety of educational programs. I hope such programs will be well used in the future.

**Gemma**: I get the impression that the number of international scholars visiting Waseda has been growing in the past few years. Then it might be unavoidable that host faculty members will have to sort out their hosting priorities, for example, to set a standard for the hosting of research that will produce output through a joint research project. On the other hand, it would be rather difficult to host researchers in a self-sustained

research program. As far as the university is concerned, since there are some 500 partner universities, Waseda needs to apply some order of priority to the selection of proposals for Waseda's research programs. I think it is time to make such a strategic choice, giving due consideration to the importance of joint research programs that can be linked with Waseda's research programs. However, increasing the number of acceptances is also important and at the same time we should not discriminate against researchers.

**El-Amir:** I also had difficulty establishing contact with the Japanese faculty. Of course I had known of Waseda University for a long time. At Cairo University, my home institution, we had a joint program with Prof. Sakuji Yoshimura, so I could say that my case was not too difficult. My host faculty member, Prof. Fukagawa, became my tutor and I took her lectures when I first came to Japan through an exchange program. So the reason I chose Waseda University was a connection with a faculty member.



**Member of the audience:** I understand Waseda gives some subsidy to faculty members hosting international scholars. I think the usage of this subsidy is quite poor. In fact it seems that my host faculty member does not know how to use it. On one occasion, he used it to buy us a nice dinner. I appreciated it very much but what I really needed was support for my research. I would like to have support to develop my research project in cooperation with Waseda and other universities. It is rather more difficult to make contacts in Japan than in other countries. I would like to meet appropriate people and find opportunities for cooperation through occasions such as small exchange parties and informal dinners or lunches. I hope the subsidy can be used for such a purpose. Also, the Waseda accommodation where I am living now is very

comfortable. However, I do not know any of my neighbors. It is quite amazing but actually I do not have any opportunity to meet people outside. So, for example, it might be a help if on Friday nights we could drink alcohol in the lobby of the residence, which is now an alcohol-free zone; that way we could socialize over a drink and a snack.

**Moderator:** No. 2 'the necessity of the promotion of joint research project' got 36%, the largest proportion, of all the responses to question 9. I would like to ask about this point.

**Gundry:** Working in a laboratory, one can feel socially isolated, so I think it is necessary to have some sort of support system that will get the researchers socially connected to other foreigners and to Japanese people as well.

**Li:** I think joint research is important in the case of the sciences, but my field is literature, and I am doing research on an individual basis. Therefore I do not know much about the importance of the promotion of joint research projects.

**Member of the audience:** According to my own experience, it usually takes a long time for the university to make contact with companies for joint research projects. It is good to have such joint research with companies, not only for research itself but also to enrich the lab environment. Better ideas can be produced through the exchange of opinions and through group discussion. It is also good idea to rent companies' experimental installations since it costs a lot for one university to build such laboratories.

**Ohno:** I've just heard the comment that contracts take time, but I think that depends on the situation. In general, in the past it took a lot of time make decisions in a university. However I think university practice is finally catching up with the outside world.

**Question 10:** Please list any good points that you know of in other overseas universities' researcher acceptance systems.

**Member of the audience:** I think the IT environment could be improved. Japan has such good broadband connections, so I would like wireless Internet in Waseda's accommodation. My wife and I both use the Internet for work but at home we cannot both access the Internet at the same time. **【Note from the International Office:** It is not allowed to use wireless communication at Waseda accommodation, for security reasons. We appreciate your understanding. **】** In my graduate School, the IT person only comes twice a week. I wish there were support around to help with problems such as no drivers for my operating system. So Waseda could improve its IT environment.

**Member of the audience:** What I appreciate at Waseda are its recent COE programs, which are the best for young researchers. It is also good that we had exchange programs where we could take courses from other universities for credit under the system that started last year. On the other hand, a point I would like to see improved at Waseda is the system for passing on new knowledge in the doctoral course. Most courses given in the graduate schools are for the master's course, so I am often dissatisfied when I attend such courses. I would like to see some improvement on that point.

**Member of the audience:** I am doing post-doctoral studies with a JSPS fellowship. I attended in an activity held by JSPS this week, a lecture on Japanese culture which was very helpful for our understanding of life here. For most foreigners in Japan, understanding and adapting to Japanese culture is a very important issue. It is also important for us to get along in life here and get along with our Japanese colleagues, so it would be helpful if Waseda could provide free Japanese culture seminars for us, for example about the reality of living and working in Japan. In addition it would be good if Waseda could provide some opportunities for us visiting scholars to work as, for example, interns in the university. This would greatly help us to get familiar with the university as well as to enrich our lives here. It would be a good opportunity to enhance our abilities too.

**Question 11:** Other questions and comments.

**Member of the audience:** My experience here has been very fortunate and I am very grateful for being accepted with impressive everyday hospitality as a researcher and a resident of Japan. However, I would like to point out that I am worried that in some cases where researchers have come here with children, their family members are often isolated. It would be good idea to set up a network among researchers' families, to help them make contact. I as a researcher am enjoying my exchange with other researchers but my partner does not have such a network and is a bit isolated. I believe that happy partners and happy families make for happy researchers, so that would help to make the research experience at Waseda much better.

**EI-Amir:** I would like to be able to get more information in English. Since there are so many foreigners at Waseda, there could be a full English version of Waseda portal or Waseda web, so that students overseas could more easily access information about Waseda. I have seen the Waseda handbooks for visiting scholars and for international students: in addition to them, it would be good if the foreigners could get support for their daily lives by means of, for example, volunteer Japanese students, since there are a number of Japanese students who are fluent in English.

**Li:** Although this is not only an issue for international scholars, a number of doctoral and post-doctoral

researchers have been unable to move up to the next level. I have heard that in universities in Germany and the U.S., once you receive your Ph.D., you are allowed to teach some courses, which can facilitate career moves or moving to the next stage of one's research. So I think it would be helpful if Ph.D.'s could also have an opportunity to teach.

**Gundry:** It is a minor point but if the computers were left on in the computer labs, we would not have to turn them on and wait for them to fire up each time we use them. It can make a big difference if you have to use the Internet really quickly, as it can take quite a while to get online.

#### General summary

**Moderator:** There were several questions voiced, and I would now like to ask Professor Ohno, Director of the Office of International Affairs, to summarize and to comment on those questions. Then Prof. Ohno will give the closing remarks.

**Ohno:** Thank you very much for your attendance despite your busy schedules. We had some really precious opinions voice here, and we were able to identify areas to be further developed. Working from the suggestions and comments given to us here, we would like to work to make improvements in our system. We have time constraints here so I am going to summarize some of my observation and comments.

First, Waseda University is a large organization with a number of different groups and different organizations involved in different activities, so it is difficult for us to offer you one-stop service. One of the goals we would like to pursue is making the International Office, the International Affairs Division the contact point at which you will be able to build a comfortable living and research environment. Of course we are making efforts on this, but there is still room for improvement.

With regard to accommodation and housing, for universities located in the center of Tokyo that is a very difficult issue. However, we are expanding, and we are going to accept a growing number of international scholars. We are now constructing a building that can accommodate international scholars behind Waseda station, and it will be completed in the second half of 2009. I think that building will accommodate about 50 international scholars and their families. Hopefully you can use them the next time you come to Waseda.

With regard to information sharing and provision, some information is not yet provided in English and that is something we have to reflect upon. This handbook for international scholars is now available online; please take a look at it and give us your feedback. It has just been launched, so there must be some things we need to add or improve upon. We produced this handbook based on the experience of other universities so the basic necessary information has been captured there, but please explore its usefulness.

Aside from that, our official website does not provide much information in English, and the university is now looking into how to restructure the website. In the process we are hoping that the English website will be enriched and strengthened. With regard to the signboards on campus, most of them are only in Japanese and that is a big issue. We recognize the importance of this matter, and the signboards are being reconsidered at this point in time.

And as you correctly mentioned, networking is a big issue, the question being how international scholars will be able to find out about and contact Japanese researchers other than their host researchers.

Following up on this seminar, we are going to have receptions or get-together parties at different places, bringing together host researchers and also international scholars and related staff from the international office. We have such occasions only twice a year now, so we have to strengthen that kind of initiative.

When it comes to the relationships with the students, ICC – the International Community Center, is located on the first floor of Okuma Garden House. It's a place where Japanese students and international students and the citizens from the community are developing different kinds of networks. Every week there are different kinds of events, so please come to them. The network of researchers is also a very important issue and should be strengthened. Based on your suggestions, we hope to develop some kind of system to promote such networking.

Finally, there is the guarantor issue and the question of how the university can serve as a guarantor. We are now in the midst of making preparation to address that. Thank you very much for your suggestion.

**Moderator:** Lastly, the Vice President Horiguchi, would you please make some closing comments?

**Horiguchi:** Thank you very much for today. On behalf of the board of directors of the University, I can say that we need to promptly construct a building that can accommodate the overseas graduate students and international scholars. So first we are giving priority to constructing the buildings which will be able to accommodate international scholars in units of 1000 or 2000. At the same time we are going to speed up our work to improve facilities and content for international scholars. The university staff are going to be trained with all speed to bring their English proficiency up to the required level.

I am in the Department of Economics. Through Global COE and 21st Century COE grants we have acquired funds for team projects in which we can invite international scholars or employ them as RAs. The system is also applied to Humanities courses. As well as a system in which each professor can invite international scholars, we have to establish a system under which a team will be able to invite international

scholars, and we need to give research grants for that. Today we did not hear much expression of dissatisfaction from the host researchers, but at this point in time everything is still left up to individual efforts. The university recognizes that the structure for organizational support for host researchers is insufficient, so we have to strengthen the platform for support of both host researchers' and international scholars' research empowerment. Thank you very much for your very helpful suggestions.

Information about the symposium:

Total number of participants: 70 (including 56 international scholars and graduate students)

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