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## Overseas Study Programs at the Japanese Red Cross Hiroshima College of Nursing



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The Japanese Red Cross Hiroshima College of Nursing is a four-year university with a graduate school and doctoral programme. We have a total enrolment of approximately 565 undergraduates and a faculty numbering slightly over 50. Coming as we do, under the aegis of the Red Cross movement, our college places great emphasis on cultivating an international mindset among our students, and prides itself on providing opportunities for students to engage in a wide range of intercultural communication courses and cross-cultural programmes.

We currently offer three overseas study programmes, and all are either directly or indirectly related to the 2009 award of a 3-

year Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology grant. This award financed the creation of an International Disaster Relief Nursing Preparatory Program, which would familiarise students with the type of relief operations carried out by International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), and prepare them for possible entry to the Japanese Red Cross Basic Training Course for International Relief Activities.

In short, our college offers three opportunities to students to take part in overseas study programmes: a first-year language study programme in the UK, a third-year field work programme based on observation of the work of Red Cross delegates in the Philippines, and a fourth-year programme visiting a variety of international relief organizations in Geneva, Switzerland.

## English Study Abroad in Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), UK

Our English study programme was originally



to take place at the University of Canterbury, in Christchurch, New Zealand. However, our inaugural visit, scheduled for late February 2011, was cancelled as a result of the major earthquake that hit Christchurch on February 11th. A decision was then made to relocate the programme, (entirely coincidentally), to Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) in the UK.

Despite some confusion surrounding the names of the two institutions, this programme has, since March 2012, offered first year students the opportunity to improve their English language skills in the historic city of Canterbury, approximately one hour by train south-west of London. The originally three- but now two-week homestay programme involves full time language study in the CCCU English Language Centre, and, when circumstances permit, includes a short seminar on the work of the British Red Cross. The programme is managed as part of a credited first-semester Intercultural Communication course, and the visit itself takes place in September. It involves no

specific nursing English language training, preferring to focus on the development of fluency, communication skills and cultural awareness.

### **International Primary Health Care Study in the Philippines**

Our third year students have the opportunity to join our International Primary Health Care Study programme in the Philippines. Although originally conceived as an immersive language and cultural experience in a predominantly Islamic state in Malaysia, when the opportunity to collaborate with Japanese delegates engaged in Philippine Red Cross fieldwork activities arose, the programme rapidly morphed into a study of primary health care in the Philippines.

The 10-day programme, which began in 2008, allows students to engage with issues related to primary healthcare, nursing and disaster relief. Students also take part in lectures with the Philippine National Red Cross, engage in site visits to learn about the issues facing people who

make a living as garbage pickers on the dump site known as Smokey Mountain, and take part in volunteer activity in two Mother Teresa centres (for the elderly and for children). Students also visit other local health institutions, both in Manila and in the far north of the Philippines, where they can gain firsthand understanding and experience of the Red Cross delegate fieldwork, and the lives of their hosts.

### **International Red Cross and the United Nations, Geneva, Switzerland**

While all our study programs aim to encourage students to learn about health issues from a global perspective, we also aim to deepen their awareness of Red Cross humanitarian principles and activities. Fourth year students interested in learning more about this area have an opportunity to join our International Red Cross and United Nations programme in Geneva, Switzerland.

In this programme, students visit various international organizations, among them the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Participants can learn about the history of the International Red Cross Movement and the roles of these organizations in international health by listening to lectures and taking part in guided tours. The 9-day tour also make a brief visit to Italy, to visit

the site of the Battle of Solferino, the battle which was instrumental in inspiring Henri Dunant to create the Red Cross.

### **Issues and Considerations**

All our programmes are carried out as part of elective courses, and are escorted by faculty members. All programmes require a minimum of 10 student participants, with upper limits varying according to the capacity of the programme. The language study programme has an upper limit of 20. On occasions programmes have been cancelled due to lack of participants, and (in the case of the Philippines) safety concerns; recruitment remains an ongoing issue. In the case of the Geneva programme, this has been partially alleviated by offering the programme as a collaboration with one of our sister colleges.

In the absence of a designated international office, all recruitment, planning and liaison with local coordinators is carried out by the faculty member(s) responsible for the programme. Administrative support from our college's educational / student affairs department and the financial sections is also both available and invaluable.

All costs for the programmes are borne by students, and while we make every effort to reduce costs, affordability is an issue for many. In order to limit the costs of such programmes, and in order to ensure fairness in the bidding procedure, a tender for bids is put out to a number of travel



agents in the early stages of programme planning.

Another issue in developing international programmes is the need for genuinely engaged, internationally minded faculty who are capable of both initiating and maintaining such programmes. While many feel their workload to be prohibitively demanding, lack of adequate language ability is also often cited as a stumbling block for faculty participation in such programmes. It is, however, incumbent on us as an institution to develop these skills, and we are hopeful that our future direction will go some way towards addressing this problem.

### **Future Directions**

Building on the success of these overseas study programmes, we are now looking to broaden the options available to our students by welcoming inbound students. In previous years we have hosted brief visits from nursing students of the Swedish Red Cross, making us aware that while our students undoubtedly benefit from overseas visits, a far greater number can enjoy an international experience as a result of hosting.

To this end, our English home page offers a warm welcome to potential collaborators, and features a downloadable pamphlet outlining the various fields that could form the basis for an inbound study programme for visiting faculty and students. We are currently engaged in negotiations with two universities, one

European and one Asian, with a view to realising a genuinely mutual exchange of both in-bound and out-bound students.