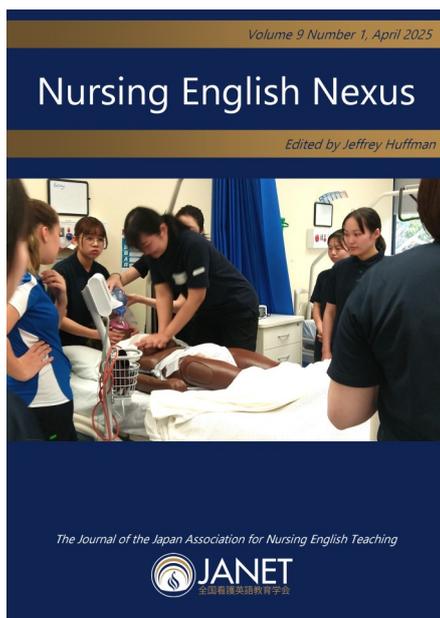


# Evaluating a Short-Term Overseas English Programme as a Co-Curricular Activity – With a Perspective on Student Outcomes

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## Article citation

Matsuzaki, K., Fukaya, Y., & Suzuki, S. (2025). Evaluating a Short-Term Overseas English Programme as a Co-Curricular Activity – With a Perspective on Student Outcomes. *Nursing English Nexus*, 9(1), 7-19.

## Nursing English Nexus

<http://www.janetorg.com/nexus>

ISSN 2433-2305

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## Evaluating a Short-Term Overseas English Programme as a Co-Curricular Activity – With a Perspective on Student Outcomes

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**Abstract:** *This study aimed to explore the learning outcomes of students participating in a newly established short-term overseas English programme initiated after the COVID-19 pandemic. It also sought to assess the programme's potential as a co-curricular activity within university education. Designed with a co-curricular framework, the programme followed six educational goals aligned with the university's founding principles and diploma policy. To assess learning outcomes and programme design, participants reflected on their experiences through an open-ended questionnaire. The responses were analysed using inductive qualitative analysis, resulting in seven categories, such as improvements in English proficiency and communication skills, understanding Australian culture and reflecting on Japanese culture. The findings confirmed that the programme aligns with the university's co-curricular objectives. However, challenges were identified, including the need for adequate preparation and reflection to better articulate student learning. Additionally, the creation of outcome indicators and examining the impact of the programme on participants' subsequent international activities is essential. This will help define the role of international co-curricular activities as integral to the degree programme and present a systematic framework for future development.*

**Keywords:** short-term study abroad, co-curricular activities, English learning, intercultural understanding and communication, nursing workshop

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The Red Cross, the world's largest humanitarian organisation, works in 191 countries and territories to protect the life, health and dignity of all people without distinction. As a member of the Red Cross, the authors' university is responsible for training nurses who can work with an international perspective. Since 2005, the university has offered language training in the UK, initially focusing on improving English language skills. The programme has gradually expanded to include learning about the UK healthcare system, volunteerism, and cross-cultural understanding. However, the global impact of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) in the spring of 2020 forced the suspension of the overseas training programme. This interruption prompted us to

review the purpose and content of the training programme in order to develop human resources that can play an active role in the international community. This paper will first review the trends in short-term overseas training in Japan. Next, we will identify the relationship between short-term English training programmes and co-curricular activities, apply our newly launched Australian training programme to the framework of the co-curriculum, and clarify the purpose of the training programme. To examine the outcomes of the training, we will (1) analyse student learning based on a questionnaire survey and (2) discuss how the learning outcomes relate to the objectives of the training.

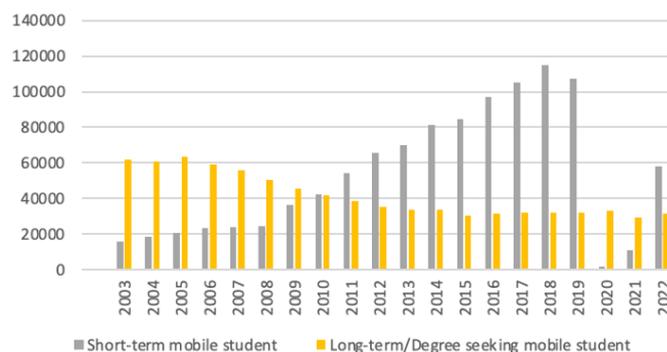
### Current trends in international student mobility

International student mobility has bounced back to its pre-COVID levels, with 6.86 million students moving abroad in 2022 (UNESCO, 2024). This resurgence is a testament to the adaptability of higher education institutions, as they have embraced the adoption of internet and communication technology (ICT), innovative teaching methods, and streamlined procedures (Hudzik, 2022). The rise of new forms of academic collaboration, such as online study abroad and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), has made international hands-on learning experiences more accessible by reducing cost and time constraints (Matsuzaki, 2023). However, it is crucial to remember that while these changes are positive, they do not replace the unique value of first-hand study abroad experiences (Knight, 2008).

The study abroad patterns of Japanese students have shifted from long-term study abroad for the purpose of obtaining a degree to short-term study abroad during their time at Japanese universities. Long-term study abroad peaked in 2004 and has continued to decline since. The Second Basic Plan for the Promotion of Education (2013) set a target to increase the number of students who participate in short-term study abroad programmes while enrolled at university from 60,000 in 2012 to 120,000 by 2020. Figure 1 shows how the number of long-term and short-term outbound students has changed between 2003 and 2022. The number of short-term students studying abroad exceeded the number of long-term students in 2010, and by 2018, the target was close to being achieved at 115,146 (JASSO, 2022). In particular, more students were studying abroad for shorter periods of less than two weeks or between two weeks and one month, accounting for approximately 38,000 students each, or two-thirds of the total.

Studying abroad during university enrolment has become mainstream, primarily through credit

**Figure 1**  
Number of Japanese outbound students



Note: Adapted from 日本学生支援機構 (*Nihon Gakusei Shien Kiko*) Japan Student Services Organization, 2022.

-awarding programmes at partner universities with strategic agreements; in 2019, approximately 60% of the total number of outbound students participated in such programmes (JASSO, 2022). The presence of agreements and credit recognition are key factors cited in study abroad surveys, underscoring the emphasis on integration with university education. Furthermore, the number of students engaging in short-term study abroad and credit-bearing training programmes in Japanese universities is growing. This trend reflects a pragmatic approach, considering cost and job-hunting concerns, which are often seen as barriers to studying abroad (Kobayashi, 2019).

As the above trends indicate, Japanese students tend to choose study abroad programmes strategically designed by universities. The rise of credit-awarding programmes with partner institutions highlights universities' efforts to incorporate international experiences into undergraduate education.

### Study Abroad Programmes as a Co-curricular Activity

The new core competencies for undergraduate nursing education by Nihon Kangokei Daigaku Kyogikai (Japan Association of Nursing Programs in Universities) (2018) emphasise the need for nursing graduates to understand global trends and the role of nursing in an international context. As students increasingly engage with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, they are expected

to learn about the role of nursing from a variety of perspectives. Our university's diploma policy aligns with this, highlighting the importance of global awareness and cultural understanding in addressing international health needs.

Recognising the need for an international outlook in nursing education, many nursing colleges have dedicated international exchange offices to support study abroad programmes (Cardenas et al., 2013). At our university, overseas English training is classified as an extra-curricular activity, meaning that students do not receive academic credits. The International Exchange Committee has been responsible for implementing the programme, including publications, communication with counterparts and coordination regarding educational components. Accordingly, an attempt was made to design a programme incorporating the concept of co-curricular activities.

In Japanese higher education, extracurricular activities in a broad sense are categorised into co-curricular and purely extracurricular activities depending on faculty involvement (Kawai, 2015; Ikeda, 2021). Co-curricular activities include those that take place outside the classroom but in some way enhance or complement the university's educational goals (the curriculum). As defined by the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS), "activities are typically ungraded and may not offer any form of academic credit, but they serve to support student learning, development, and success" (CAS website). Co-curricular refers to activities in which students apply their knowledge and skills outside of a structured, regular curriculum (Abrams et al., 2022). Key examples include international activities such as study abroad and service activities such as volunteering (Yamada, 2016). Table 1 illustrates the differences between co-curricular and regular extracurricular activities.

According to Abrams et al. (2022), co-curricular activities are:

**Table 1**  
*Classification of Extra-curricular Activities*

Classification	Extra-curricular Activities	
	Co-curricular	Extra-curricular
Involvement of universities, teaching staff	Yes	No
Specific examples of activities	Extra-curricular project work Volunteer work Study abroad	Club/circle activities Part-time work Contests

*Note:* Prepared by the author based on Yamada (2016) and Ikeda (2021).

1. related to formal education;
2. aligned with the learning outcomes of the curriculum or programme;
3. out-of-school experience, but complement in-school instruction;
4. enhance and support learning and participation;
5. complement the student's in-school experience;
6. may exist within the programme or outside the structure;
7. are constantly evaluated.

Our short-term study abroad programmes have not been explicitly delineated in relation to degree programmes and our diploma policy. However, based on the aforementioned definition, it appears rational to integrate the training experience with learning within the curriculum. Based on this understanding, the training was repositioned as a co-curricular activity, and the objectives and attainment targets of the training were initially reviewed considering the founding spirit and philosophy of the Red Cross and the university's educational objectives and diploma policy.

### **Re-examination of the objectives of the training programme**

In order to devise and implement a short-term training programme in Australia as a co-curricular experiment, the Red Cross philosophy and the institution's diploma policy provided the

overarching framework, and six specific achievement objectives were set, as follows. The programme aims to enable students to apply knowledge and skills acquired through traditional studies, i.e., to link, apply, and demonstrate competence in English, nursing, and Red Cross-related knowledge by:

1. Using English in real-life situations and developing English and communication skills;
2. Learning practical English in an academic setting through the programme;
3. Learning about social and cultural diversity through international experiences;
4. Exploring Australian culture and society by living with Australian families;
5. Increasing awareness of global health, nursing needs and the role of the nurse by studying nursing outside Japan; and
6. Developing an understanding of the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross by learning about its work abroad.

Based on the above aims and objectives, we considered regions and institutions where it was possible to study nursing and visit the Red Cross while maintaining English language learning and homestay as the core of the programme, and decided on Wollongong College (UoW College), affiliated with the University of Wollongong (UoW) in New South Wales, Australia, as the destination. The duration of the programme was set at two weeks due to financial burdens and the university schedule, and participants included first- to third-year students.

### **Programme**

#### **English and Homestay as the Core Elements**

The central part of the training was a General English programme on weekdays and homestay with a local family. The General English programme was designed to enhance students' cross-cultural understanding and international

perspectives, aligning with our objectives 1, 2, and 3. Students engaged in small group lessons, collaborating with peers from diverse backgrounds. The classes, led by qualified native-English-speaking teachers, focussed on daily vocabulary and grammar, with the goal of providing students with the knowledge they need to confidently express themselves. Groups were assigned to various levels based on a placement test, ensuring a tailored learning experience for each student. In addition to English lessons, student circles and activities at UoW and UoW College were open to the language students, giving them opportunities to communicate with UoW students. The homestay provided an opportunity for the students to learn the importance of communication in overcoming cultural and linguistic differences, which is relevant to our objective 4.

#### **Workshop with the UoW College Nursing Course**

In order to create a distinctive programme that utilises the expertise of the nursing students, we discussed the possibility of collaboration with UoW's Faculties of Medicine and Nursing, the University Hospital and the UoW College Nursing Diploma Course. As a result, we decided to implement collaborative learning sessions between the UoW College Nursing Diploma students and our students. Through these sessions, we aimed to achieve our objective 5.

Considering the participants' academic year and learning experiences, the programme theme was set as 'Complex Care for Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS)' and 'Multi-professional Collaboration in Emergency', and the learning objectives were set as follows:

1. Exchange information about health systems between Australia and Japan
2. Understand the management of ACS
3. To practice quickly working together with multiple professions in an emergency to

initiate CPR, using role-playing techniques

### **Australian Red Cross Visiting Programmes**

Our programme is deeply rooted in our university's founding principles, which emphasise understanding the philosophy and humanitarian mission of the Red Cross. Therefore, visiting the Australian Red Cross office and learning from its representatives is a vital component of the programme. Furthermore, Australia was founded by immigrants settling on Indigenous lands and continues to receive migrants from around the world. Learning about the Red Cross's activities within this unique social context, which differs from that of Japan, provides an opportunity to broaden participants' international perspectives.

As part of the visit, we arranged a lecture on the key role of the Red Cross as an international humanitarian organisation in Australia. The session focused on its main activities and contributions. Additionally, since the Red Cross oversees blood donation operations similarly to Japan, participants visited the Wollongong Lifeblood Centre to gain firsthand insight into operational differences, including work processes and donor treatment. These visits provided participants with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of our objective 6 within this broader socio-cultural and historical context.

### **Method**

To examine the outcomes of the training, we analysed student learning outcomes based on their responses to an open-ended questionnaire.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, which was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' experiences during the training program.

### **Participants**

The participants were 23 nursing students from our university who completed the short-term

training in Australia from March 9 to March 26, 2024. The participant breakdown is five first-year, three second-year, and fifteen third-year students.

### **Data Collection**

A questionnaire survey was conducted in Japanese to elicit students' reflection on their learning in each programme component (see Appendix A for an English translation). The data was collected from the final day of the training programme, March 26, 2024, to April 10, 2024. It was conducted using Microsoft Forms, and students were asked to submit their responses online. Students were informed of the purpose of the questionnaire via email. They were also informed that the survey was anonymous, and that participation was voluntary. Students were not required to complete the questionnaire and could choose not to participate without any penalty. Additionally, they were notified that the results might be shared with the faculty and committees of the college or published in journals related to international or nursing education.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analysed in Japanese by using an inductive qualitative approach. Open-ended statements from students were examined, and statements related to their learning experiences during the Australia training programme were extracted. The analysis units were defined based on meaningful text segments without altering their original intent. The extracted data were coded at the smallest possible unit to preserve meaning. Subsequently, subcategories were generated based on similarities and homogeneity in meaning, followed by further abstraction to create categories. The coding process, subcategory classification, relationships among categories, category naming, and verification of consistency were reviewed by three researchers experienced in qualitative research to ensure the

credibility of the findings. Then they were translated into English by two researchers, Kumi Matsuzaki and Suma Suzuki in February 2025.

### Results

Survey responses were obtained from 15 participants out of 23 (65.2%). In the Australian training programme, student learning outcomes were categorised into seven themes: 1) Improvement of English language and communication skills; 2) Understanding Australian culture and reflecting on Japanese culture; 3) Identifying differences between Japanese and Australian medical practices; 4) Identifying differences between Japanese and Australian nursing practices; 5) Identifying differences between Japanese and Australian blood donation methods; 6) Noticing shared Red Cross principles despite differences in activities; and 7) Transformation of students' awareness and attitudes, which were generated from 37 subcategories and 108 codes (see Table 2).

The results are presented below by category, referring to the respective subcategories and codes. Hereafter, categories are denoted by **[ ]**, sub-categories by **[ ]**, and codes by **< >**.

#### 1) **[Improvement of English Proficiency and Communication Skills]**

Through the English programme, students felt that their English proficiency had improved. They expressed opinions such as, <Since all classes were conducted in English, I was able to enhance my English skills>, and <By participating in various activities, my English improved.> Additionally, some students noted they [Learned effective methods for studying English].

Furthermore, [Interactions with nursing students improved English proficiency], and some students shared experiences such as, <We were able to communicate using gestures and body language>, which helped them [Recognize the importance of non-verbal communication]. These

**Table 2**  
*Categorisation of students' open-ended statements*

Category	Subcategory
1. Improvement of English Proficiency and Communication Skills ①②④	English proficiency was improved.
	Interactions with nursing students contributed to enhanced English proficiency. Learned effective methods for studying English.
	Recognised importance of non-verbal communication.
2. Understanding Australian Culture and reflecting on Japanese Culture ③④⑤	Gained insight into Australian culture.
	Learning about Australian culture prompted reflections on Japanese culture.
	Recognised the importance of acting with cultural differences in mind.
3. Understanding Differences in the Healthcare System Between Japan and Australia ③⑤	Gained knowledge of the education system for children with disabilities.
	Explored differences in health care systems.
	Learned about differences in medical facilities.
4. Understanding Differences in Nursing Between Japan and Australia ③⑤	Learned about differences in medical equipment.
	Discovered unique medical equipment that does not exist in Japan.
	Discovered unique nursing equipment that does not exist in Japan.
	Recognised that Japanese medical practices are not always the best.
5. Understanding Differences in Blood Donation Methods Between Japan and Australia ③⑤⑥	Gained insight into Australian nursing practices.
	Understood nursing role differences.
	Identified similar approaches to children in both countries.
	Learned about special education intervention perspectives.
	Observed differences in the working environment of nurses.
	Gained insight into the environment of nursing students.
	Viewed Japanese nursing practice more objectively.
6. Red Cross Activities: Different Approaches but Shared Principles ③⑤⑥	Recognised differences in the method of recruiting blood donors.
	The atmosphere of the blood centre was similar to that in Japan.
	The blood centre in Australia seemed more welcoming and efficient than in Japan.
7. Changes in Students' Awareness and Attitudes ①③⑤	Efforts to prevent contaminated blood donations were the same in both countries.
	Australia and Japan face different disasters and social issues.
	Learned that the scope of Red Cross activities differs depending on the country.
7. Changes in Students' Awareness and Attitudes ①③⑤	Despite differences in activities, all Red Cross operations follow the same fundamental principles.
	Understood how Japan and Australia have differed in helping refugees and migrants.
	The idea of establishing Red Cross centres in Japan, which offer pre-owned goods, with all profits supporting charity work, was seen as beneficial.
	Impact on their career development.
7. Changes in Students' Awareness and Attitudes ①③⑤	Broadening learning perspectives.
	Developed awareness of the importance of communication.
	Increased readiness to act without fear of failure.
	Increased confidence in expressing opinions.
7. Changes in Students' Awareness and Attitudes ①③⑤	Increased self-confidence through experience.

Note: The circled numbers in the category column denote the relevant programme learning objectives.

experiences contributed not only to their English proficiency but also to their intercultural communication skills.

## 2) **【Understanding Australian Culture and Reflecting on Japanese Culture】**

Through the English programme, students [Gained insights into Australian culture]. Many of them stated, [Learning about Australian culture provided an opportunity to reflect on Japanese culture]. Additionally, comments such as, <I learned about cultural differences and what to be cautious of when abroad>, highlighted their awareness of the necessity of culturally sensitive behaviour.

## 3) **【Understanding Differences in the Healthcare System Between Japan and Australia】**

By visiting the simulation lab and participating in nursing workshops, students [Explored differences in medical systems, facilities, and equipment]. One student remarked, <I was fascinated by the medical equipment that does not exist in Japan>, showing how this exposure deepened their understanding of the differences between Australian and Japanese healthcare.

## 4) **【Understanding Differences in Nursing Between Japan and Australia】**

Through nursing workshops, students had the opportunity to handle nursing tools that are not available in Japan. This led to remarks such as, <I learned about nursing tools that do not exist in Japan>, demonstrating the value of hands-on learning.

Additionally, students not only observed the differences in medical facilities and equipment but also noted that they <Learned about the differences in nurses' roles>, which helped them understand cultural aspects of nursing. Furthermore, some students shared that they were able to [Objectively view Japanese nursing] and realized that [Not everything in Japan is necessarily the best]. These experiences enabled them to assess Japanese nursing practices from a broader perspective.

## 5) **【Understanding Differences in Blood Donation Methods Between Japan and Australia】**

Many students had experience working part-time at blood donation centres in Japan, which made them particularly interested in comparing blood donation systems between Japan and Australia. They learned that in Australia, <Rather than recruiting donors randomly on the street, they contact previous donors to ensure a safe blood supply>. Additionally, they noted that <When specific blood types are needed, they reach out to regular donors instead of indiscriminately recruiting>, which prevents waste and ensures an efficient system.

Regarding the environment of blood donation centres, opinions varied. Some students felt that <Australian centres had a more inviting atmosphere than in Japan>, while others found <Not much difference>. Despite these differences, students recognized that [Efforts to prevent contaminated blood donations were the same in both countries], highlighting the commonalities in safety management.

## 6) **【Red Cross Activities: Different Approaches but Shared Principles】**

Visiting the Red Cross was a crucial opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of the mission and principles of the Red Cross, which align with the fundamental values of our nursing education. After visiting the Australian Red Cross, students realized that [Australia and Japan face different disasters and social issues], and therefore <Learned that Red Cross activities vary by country>. However, they also recognized the underlying commonality, stating, [Despite differences in activities, all Red Cross operations follow the same fundamental principles]. This visit allowed them to appreciate the global unity of the Red Cross mission.

## 7) **【Changes in Students' Awareness and Attitudes】**

Category 7 goes beyond cognitive knowledge and skill acquisition to include various aspects of attitude and perspective development, as well as confidence building. For example, some students reflected that they <Realised that media influence can lead to biased perspectives>, indicating their growing ability to critically assess information. Others stated that <Learning about the differences between Japanese and Australian healthcare expanded my perspective>, showing that their experiences went beyond knowledge acquisition and encouraged [Broadening learning perspectives].

Furthermore, students recognised personal growth, with comments such as, <I became more confident in expressing my opinions proactively>. Some also mentioned, <I believe I can now interact with people from diverse backgrounds in Japan>, and <I want to take on challenges without fear of failure>, demonstrating a shift towards a more positive and proactive mindset. Additionally, some students stated that <This programme helped me reflect on my future career path>, indicating its [Impact on their career development].

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

Through participation in diverse activities and experiencing life in Australia, students improved their English proficiency and learned a great deal about Australian culture; they were able to view Japanese culture from a comparative perspective and deepen their understanding of the differences in healthcare, nursing, and the activities of the Red Cross in the two countries. Based on these experiences, it can be concluded that the six educational objectives of the training programme were achieved. Furthermore, students broadened their learning perspectives, gained opportunities to think about their future, and developed greater self-confidence.

The following sections examine the programme from two perspectives: the achievement of its objectives and students' perceptions of the impact of their participation, particularly how it has influenced their skills, knowledge, and attitudes. Based on these findings, we will explore the possibility of positioning this training programme as a co-curricular activity within university education.

### **Achievement of the Programme's Objectives**

**Objective 1: Use English in real-life situations and develop English and communication skills.**

**Objective 2: Learn practical English in an academic setting through the programme.**

These two objectives are considered to have been achieved based on the categories 1 and 7 which were generated from the questionnaire responses. Students who participated in the English programme responded that they "felt an improvement in their English skills" and that "interacting with nursing students through workshops at the UOW College nursing course contributed to their English proficiency." By frequently engaging with English in classes and actively using it, they recognized their improvement. Since this programme took place in March, a break between academic years in Japan, this unique schedule led to a notable concentration of Japanese students in the English classes. However, the English-only instruction by native-speaking teachers had a significant impact.

On the other hand, no students reported feeling that their English improved through homestay experiences. This may have been influenced by the specific circumstances of their homestay families as well as the students' level of initiative.

Objective 2 was not fully achieved. Because the details of the nursing workshops were only confirmed at the last minute, students found it difficult to acquire specialised terminology and

apply it during exchanges with other students. However, within the English classes, there were opportunities for academic presentations and discussion, providing an environment for learning academic English. Nonetheless, the extent to which students felt they had fully acquired these skills varied, possibly depending on their individual English proficiency levels.

**Objective 3: Learn about social and cultural diversity through international experience.**

**Objective 4: Explore Australian culture and society by living with Australian families.**

Based on the generated categories 2, 3, and 4, these two objectives are considered to have been achieved. Through the English programme and daily life in Australia, students were exposed to Australian culture, allowing them to take an objective view of both the strengths and weaknesses of Japanese culture. Some students were traveling abroad for the first time and recognised the necessity of respecting and accommodating cultural differences.

While students gained an understanding of cultural and social diversity across different countries, they did not develop a deep understanding of diversity within Australian society itself. The nursing programme lectures began with a statement affirming non-discrimination based on ethnicity, but students did not receive sufficient explanations regarding the meaning and significance of this statement. Through observing Red Cross activities, students learned about refugee and migrant support, and some encountered families from diverse backgrounds during their homestays. However, they did not gain a comprehensive understanding of the internal diversity of Australian society and its historical context. For Japanese students raised in a relatively homogenous cultural environment, grasping the concept of a multi-ethnic society is not easy. Therefore, incorporating prior learning about multicultural societies and providing

opportunities for deeper contextual understanding throughout the programme would have been beneficial.

**Objective 5: Increase awareness of global health, nursing needs and the role of the nurse by studying nursing outside Japan.**

This objective was achieved, as seen in categories 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

Students learned about Australian medical equipment, nursing tools, working conditions for nurses, and emergency response systems, gaining an understanding of the differences from Japan. The realization that "Japan is not necessarily superior in all aspects" was a particularly important learning outcome. Exposure to different healthcare and nursing practices encouraged students to critically assess the current situation and develop a mindset for exploring better approaches.

This finding is consistent with a study by Hidaka (2017) on students who participated in practical nursing training in Australia, which found that they reconsidered Japanese nursing practices through comparison. Similarly, this training programme proved effective in fostering globally competent healthcare professionals.

Fifteen participants had already completed half of their specialised clinical training, which enabled them to gain many insights through comparisons between Japanese and Australian healthcare practices. However, first-year students who had only completed general coursework lacked sufficient background knowledge to make such comparisons. Moving forward, it will be necessary to clarify participant academic levels in advance, adjust workshop content accordingly, and provide preparatory learning opportunities.

**Objective 6: Develop an understanding of the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross by learning about its work abroad.**

This objective has been met, as evidenced by

categories 5 and 6.

Students recognised differences in blood donation methods, donation equipment, and donor recruitment strategies, which are central roles of the Red Cross. Those who had experience working part-time at Japanese blood donation centres showed particular interest in these differences and deepened their understanding.

At the Red Cross, students received explanations about its activities and interacted with volunteers engaged in refugee support and disaster relief, initiatives not as widely implemented in Japan. At the same time, they understood that, despite country-specific variations, all Red Cross activities share a unified purpose under the fundamental principle of “humanity.”

### **Changes in Students’ Awareness and Attitudes Through Participation**

In addition to knowledge related to the achievement of educational objectives, students showed changes in attitudes and awareness as a result of their participation. This finding was similar to that of Maeda’s (2020) study, which stated that the effects of short-term study abroad programmes were mainly related to “cognitive/ knowledge” and “behavioural aspects” (p. 9). By experiencing diverse cultures and learning about the differences between Japan and other countries, students had the opportunity to broaden their perspectives and think about their future careers. These experiences will contribute to the basic skills needed to engage with the increasing diversity in Japanese society and influence their career development as nurses.

Furthermore, since each student stayed in a separate homestay household, they had to adapt to living with families possessing diverse cultural norms and rules. This experience heightened their awareness of the necessity of expressing their own opinions and enabled them to develop the ability to do so. A study by Hiruta, Kubo, and

Yamanouchi (2017) also found that students who participated in overseas training developed a broader perspective on their nursing careers and became more proactive in their behaviour. This suggests that overseas training programmes provide valuable learning opportunities for students.

### **Positioning Overseas Training as a Co-Curricular Activity in University Education**

To integrate co-curricular education as a higher-quality learning experience aligned with the university’s diploma policy, we examined this programme using Kolb’s (1984) framework of reflective observation. Since the educational objectives of this programme were set in accordance with the university’s founding principles and diploma policy, and these objectives were generally achieved, it can be confirmed that this training programme aligns with the university’s learning goals despite being an extracurricular activity.

These outcomes also align with Abras et al.’s (2022) definition of co-curricular activities. The learning outcomes, assessed based on the diploma policy, correspond to several key points in Abras’s framework, such as complementing academic learning, supporting engagement, and enhancing student experiences both inside and outside the classroom.

Based on these results, this training programme – designed as a co-curricular activity – can be considered a legitimate and effective initiative that can be incorporated into university education.

### **Challenges for the future**

While this programme has demonstrated significant educational benefits, several areas for improvement have been identified to enhance its future effectiveness.

1. It is necessary to visualise the objectives of the programme and its outcome indicators in line with

the goals of university education. This will create a system that allows students to integrate the outcomes of this training into their daily learning and to consciously understand the linkages with their regular education and the organic relationship between training and regular education.

2. Of the students who participated in this training, four applied for an exchange programme with a Thai nursing university the following year, and two participated in an overseas training programme in the international relief nursing subject, thus deepening their learning through step-by-step international activities. It is not immediately possible to determine whether this behaviour was prompted by their training in Australia. However, it is essential to examine how this short-term training programme affected each participant's subsequent participation in international activities to gain a fuller picture of its influence and to consider the role of this training programme in university education.

Our goal is to define the role of international co-curricular activities as integral to the degree program and present a systematic framework.

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## Appendix A

### Student Questionnaire

1. Were you satisfied with the English programme in the morning? Yes / No
2. Please explain the reasons for your answer to Question 1.
3. Were you satisfied with the visit to Aspect South Coast School? Yes / No / I didn't join
4. Please explain the reasons for your answer to Question 3.
5. Were you satisfied with the tour of the Simulation Lab at Faculties of Medicine and Nursing at UoW?  
Yes / No
6. Please explain the reasons for your answer to Question 5.
7. What did you learn from the visit to the Australian Red Cross Wollongong Office?
8. What did you learn from the visit to Life Blood Centre?
9. How was your experience in the Nursing Diploma Course at UoW College, including interactions with students and coursework?  
  
Enjoyable / Not enjoyable / Difficult / Easy / Other
10. Please explain the reasons for your answer to Question 9.
11. If you have any ideas to make the interaction with nursing students more beneficial or any topics you want to cover, please describe them.
12. Were you satisfied with your host family? Yes / No
13. Please explain the reasons for your answer to Question 13.
14. Please tell us what you learned from participating in the overseas training program and how you plan to apply it in the future.