



A tutor system for our international student dormitories where the students themselves manage the accommodations

Hitotsubashi University provides dormitories for international students at the Kunitachi Campus and the Kodaira International Campus.

Many students, including students from overseas, live in these dormitories while studying at the university.

The dormitories are primarily managed by the residents under the supervision of the university.

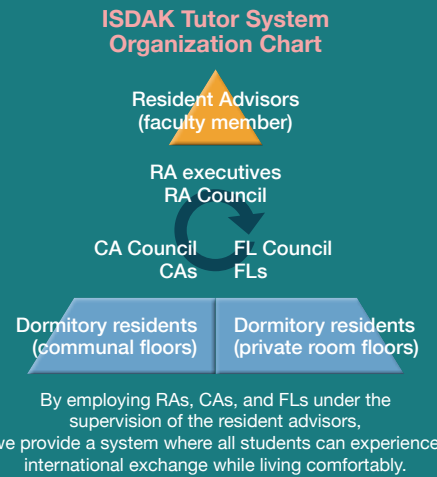
Student assistants decide on their respective roles—resident assistant (RA), community assistant (CA), and floor leader (FL)—and work to solve the issues of dormitory life. This paper introduces our own unique tutor system, under which various operating plans are formulated and implemented, including those that provide support for our international students.



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A unique tutor system that ensures the smooth operation of the international student dormitories

At Hitotsubashi University, there are three “international student dormitories.” The tutor system has been introduced at two of these dormitories, “Residence Hall Ikkyo-Ryo” (Ikkyo-Ryo), located on the Kodaira International Campus, and “International House Residence Hall” (Residence Hall Kunitachi), located on the west side of the Kunitachi Campus.

Built in 2002, Ikkyo-Ryo provides accommodations for 785 Japanese and international students. Approximately 250 of these students are Japanese (undergraduate and postgraduate) from Hitotsubashi University, 450 are international students, and the rest are student staff or others. In addition to Hitotsubashi University students, the dormitory also provides accommodations for international students who commute to Tokyo Gakugei University, Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, and the University of Electro-Communications.

The other international student dormitory, Residence Hall Kunitachi, which provides accommodations for around 80 students, is mainly used by international students who are conducting research at Hitotsubashi University Graduate School, and approximately 20 of these students live there with their families.

One common feature of the two international student dormitories is the unique tutor system under which they are

managed. This paper offers a glimpse into the lives of the various dormitory residents—families, married couples, and singles; Japanese students; and international students. Furthermore, it introduces the tutor system, a key feature of our international dormitories.

Students take on various roles (RA, CA, FL, and others) and manage the dormitories themselves

At the center of this tutor system are our RAs. The RAs, around 40 at Ikkyo-Ryo and 5 at Residence Hall Kunitachi, include both Japanese and international students, who are selected for supporting students in various ways to help them enjoy a comfortable dormitory life. Jin Abe, Associate Professor, Director at the Center for Global Education and Director of the International Student and Study Abroad Advising Office, lives along with the students at Ikkyo-Ryo and currently supports the RAs as a “resident executive advisor.” We asked Professor Abe, who has worked on establishing the tutor system since he took this post in 2007, about how the system was progressing: “When I started this job, at the Residence Hall Ikkyo-Ryo, the international students, Japanese undergraduate students, graduate students, and the organizations in charge of them functioned separately. This all changed in 2010 when we dismantled the existing dormitory management system to internationalize the dormitories as part of the university’s effort to promote internationalization. We decided to establish a system where our international student dormitories and undergradu-



The ISDAK RA Meeting is held on a regular basis. Members are discussing various subjects for improving the conditions of the dormitory



Tour of the shopping street while guiding international students through town—in collaboration with the local store association



Helping residents experience Japanese culture through seasonal events such as New Year



Communicating with residents on a daily basis and solving problems together—two important roles of an RA

Professor Abe (Resident Executive Advisor) and Haruna Goshima (International Affairs Office) with the ISDAK RAs



Ikkyo-Ryo (view from outside)

ate student dormitories were managed within a single framework” (Associate Professor, Director Jin Abe).

When the system was first introduced, there were concerns that it might not be effective to have the student staff also support the Japanese residents. Nevertheless, the tutor system is now firmly in place. In the International Student Dormitory Association of Kodaira (ISDAK), which is responsible for managing Ikkyo-Ryo, RAs work together with CAs, who coordinate the floors that contain communal space, and FLs, who support the RAs, to ensure that dormitory life runs smoothly.

Yuki Watabe, Lecturer in the Graduate School of Commerce and Management and hall director of Kunitachi International House, made the following comments about the new system in which the students have responsibility for selecting their RAs and other management staff and take an active role in the formation and implementation of management policy:

“The RAs are responsible for managing the dormitories, so we have them determine the selection criteria and organize the selection process while considering what kinds of people are needed to make the team work well. The important thing is that the RAs themselves are aware of the issues and prepared to consider and implement plans for improving the living space” (Assistant Professor Yuki Watabe).

An opportunity to develop international sensibilities and gain recognition from the university

When Professors Abe and Watabe were asked about their relationship as faculty members with the RAs, they both replied that their role is to “provide support and advice” to the RAs:

“The student RAs handle the daily management of the dormitories, and we supervise them. At the monthly meetings as well, the students give reports and discuss various cases. They also take charge of planning our yearly events and parties while considering what the other residents want to do.”

Because these activities are summarized in reports and submitted to the university, the new system has the additional effect of recognizing RAs’ efforts to improve the international dormitories. Each year, students who work as RAs for a certain period receive a letter of appreciation for their activities from Executive Vice President Tsuyoshi Numagami, who oversees the management of the international dormitories. The activities not only foster the students’ ability to identify and solve problems and manage an organization but also positively influence their individual attitudes toward internationalization.

“Through the tutor system, students have access to a field of practice where they can develop international perspectives during their daily life. Our international dormitories are a great place for domestic students who want first-hand experience of an international environment, in addition to the academic international education they receive at the school and the study abroad programs.” (Professor Abe).



The welcome parties for new residents are especially lively!



Residence Hall Kunitachi (view from outside)

Orientation training for sharing the information needed to be an RA—deepening ties among members during a hike up Mount Takao



I want to respect residents’ individual qualities and create a “home away from home”



RA at Residence Hall Kunitachi
Second-year doctoral student in the Graduate School of Commerce and Management

Juxin Yan

I’ve been living in Japan for three years now, but sure enough, I experienced a language barrier when I first arrived. This is something we all go through, so I want to support others while sharing these experiences. This is why I decided to become an RA. Of course, another reason was that my own RAs had also taken care of me when I first arrived. The hard thing about being an RA is that the students you meet, who have followed different ways of life before they arrive, come and go each year. I guess the important thing is to find the best solutions to problems while caring about each resident’s individual qualities, personality, and lifestyle habits instead of imposing a certain way of life on them.

I also want RAs in the future to create a living environment where residents can relax and enjoy their lives while also respecting each other’s individual qualities. I want them to create a comfortable “home away from home” while working together with Professor Watabe, the staff, and the other RAs and residents to solve problems that we cannot solve alone. (Interview)

My RA experience helped me understand human relations, and it will stimulate my life in the future



ISDAK RA at Ikkyo-Ryo & fourth-year student in the Faculty of Economics

Michisugu Minamoto

When I entered the university and moved into Ikkyo-Ryo, I made friends with the RAs and CAs working there at that time, and the job looked like a lot of fun. At the same time, other students in my year were not happy about the living environment, so I decided that I wanted to change the dormitory and became an RA in my second year.

This is my third year as an RA; when I talk to international students, I often respond to their English questions in Japanese or have other international students help me out when I’m struggling to deal with a situation in English. In addition to communicating through words, we can promote smooth communication and build good relationships by maintaining clean communal spaces on a daily basis and making it easy for residents to get together.

I will graduate in the spring of 2016 and start working. My experience as an RA is likely to prove helpful when I have to work overseas in the future. I think my RA experience as well as my academic study helped me understand human relations, and it will stimulate my life in the future. (Interview)

Aiming for a better, pressure-free living environment



ISDAK CA at Ikkyo-Ryo & second-year student in the Faculty of Commerce and Management

Momoka Endo

After spending many years overseas since my early childhood years, I wanted to engage in an international exchange that would allow me to make use of my English ability, so I applied to be an ISDAK CA. I am currently living in a dorm apartment where six people share a communal space, along with students who come to study abroad at Hitotsubashi University for one year.

When I began living with the international students, I realized that their individual qualities become prominent in the way they live their lives. Sometimes there are problems between members; however, most of the time, these stem from these personal qualities and have nothing to do with the nationalities of those involved. At times like these, I think it is important to aim for a better, pressure-free living environment while confirming the rules together.

Next fall I will go to study abroad in Belgium for one year. It will be sad to say goodbye to my dorm mates but I also want to make all kinds of memories in the future. Then when I come back to Japan, I hope to help to create a wonderful dormitory environment by working as a CA or RA again. (Interview)

Website of the Hitotsubashi University Center for Global Education & International Affairs Office: <http://international.hit-u.ac.jp/>