

Faculty of Law: Joint Seminars with the University of Cambridge and Seoul National University

Associate Professor Kazuhiro Obayashi



Experience the world through discussions with foreign students Fostering international awareness and basic skills for responsible professionals

The wave of globalization goes beyond the worlds of business and economics. To build good international relations, global-minded individuals with technical expertise and insight are also needed in the fields of law and politics.

Hitotsubashi University Faculty of Law provides education through two core programs, Jurisprudence and International Relations, with a focus on nurturing individuals with excellent international awareness. One educational program that symbolizes this effort is Hitotsubashi University's joint seminars introduced in this article: the Joint Seminar with Cambridge University and the Joint Seminar with Seoul National University. In these seminars, students present research results and hold in-depth discussions on various international issues, alongside students of a similar age studying international relations overseas. The seminars are perfect examples of classes in which students can "experience the world." However, a global experience is not the only thing students can gain from the joint seminars.

The Faculty of Law GLP began in Academic Year 2017

Hitotsubashi University as an institution is focusing its efforts on nurturing global individuals. In addition to these programs, the Faculty of Commerce and Management and the Faculty of Economics have developed Global Leaders Programs (GLPs), ahead of other faculties. Then, in the 2017 academic year, the Faculty of Law also introduced its own GLP. The central component of the

Faculty of Law GLP are the GLP International Seminars, in which students learn together through seminars held in collaboration with universities in five countries/regions around the world (South Korea, Taiwan, China, the United Kingdom, and Belgium). It is also worth noting that these seminars are not simply one-off events but courses in the curriculum (students can earn 2 credits by participating in a joint seminar with one country). The two joint seminars introduced here were established as pilot classes to be held prior to the launch of the GLP International Seminars.

The joint seminars are based on our international research network, which was developed over many years by various instructors working in the Faculty of Law. This was then developed into the crossover seminar format for the joint seminars. The two pilot classes we focus here involved several faculty members such as Professors Atsushi Yamada, Kwon Yongseok, Maiko Ichihara, and Naoko Matsumura. We talked to Associate Professor Kazuhiro Obayashi, who was widely involved in the program, about the aim of holding the seminars.

He said, "The primary aim is to have the students experience the world, but the abilities that students develop are wide-ranging. What do the diverse foreign students studying the same disciplines think? And what level of specialized knowledge and linguistic ability do they have? Students learn about these things through the joint seminars, and, through this experience, they improve their awareness of issues and areas where their ability or vision is lacking or biased aspects of their thinking. Then,



Students during the joint seminar. Learning alongside students from the world's top universities, experiencing the world. Students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses.



if they are able to present their opinions on equal footing during the discussions, they remember the experience as a great success and gain confidence from it.”

How can the students input and output? The whole process helps students after graduation

The joint seminars themselves involve one- or two-day programs held at each university's campus and provide an output platform on which students present research results and express their opinions in discussions. The seminars are also an opportunity for students of a similar age to initiate chemical reactions: the Hitotsubashi students are stimulated by the local students and vice versa.

“Because the other students are from the world's top universities, many of our students feel pressure to meet international standards. So they work frantically to prepare well from the beginning. Sometimes they face harsh criticism not only from the faculty members but also from their classmates. Some students even tell each other that ‘The content of this presentation is pointless.’ So, they take the initiative and try to brush up their content. The class members work together to prepare and make plans for the day of the joint seminar. Of course, they also practice presenting in English, over and over again. Some students feel worn out in the days leading up to the joint seminar. But once they start talking with the other students, they really re-energize. Their arguments, and the perceptions about the other students, are turned upside down—in a good way—through the discussions. And they all seem to enjoy that process.”

On a different topic, we heard that the students are also responsible for planning and operating the joint seminars, contacting and consulting with other universities, and preparing tickets for travelling overseas. So this is an educational program through which students can experience all the necessary steps that take place when attending or organizing international conferences in the future.

Problem awareness, logical and critical thinking, presentation skills, planning ability, coordination ability—according to Associate Professor Obayashi, the abilities developed through the joint seminars will help the students after graduation. These are also the basic skills required as a responsible professional, which are essential for operating on the global stage. These skills ought to prove useful in a wide range of situations.

Student's Voice

I gained confidence in myself because I was able to hold my own against outstanding students from around the world.



Ayaka Roppongi

participant in the Joint Seminar with the University of Cambridge,
third-year student in the Faculty of Law

The joint seminar was a great opportunity to learn overseas because I had been busy with sports club activities and had never studied abroad. My impression after attending the seminar at the University of Cambridge, where students of different nationalities come together, is that there is a deep-rooted culture of debate among the students, and they are not afraid to argue their point. I was greatly inspired by the students there. The theme of the joint seminar was Brexit (the departure of the UK from the EU), and we debated with a group of students who were conducting research on Japan. I was overwhelmed by the fact that each student had a clear opinion and excellent awareness of the issues. When the discussion came around to my own fields of study, international politics and educational administration, I was also able to hold my own. It gave me confidence: If I just improve my language skills, I could compete on a global level. (Interview)

The most exciting part of the program was getting to know different views to my own and discussing topics on a deeper level.



Maho Tachibana

participant in the Joint Seminar with Seoul National University,
fourth-year student in the Faculty of Law

Although this was my second time—I joined the seminar in 2016—the 2017 seminar was a special memory for me because I was involved in coordinating the event from the preparation stage, with students from Seoul National University. The best thing about the joint seminar is that we can hold discussions on a common theme. This year, the themes were TPP, the comfort women issue, and intergenerational inequity. I chose the theme I wanted to address and participated in the discussions. Probing a topic deeply and discussing it with others was valuable opportunity, a truly global experience. I prepared over a period of more than three months before the joint seminar, during which time I selected a topic, conducted surveys, gathered information in groups, prepared an interim report, and improved my presentation content. Through that process, I developed so many skills and qualities it would be difficult to name them all. After graduating, I would like to work in educational development fields, and I intend to make use of this experience. (Interview)



For the joint seminars, students not only present research results and hold discussions; they are also responsible for planning and operating the seminars and making the arrangements. This is precisely why they can gain so many experiences and skills.

