



# Hi! from SAGA

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## Love Story in Saga University

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## Online Language Lounge

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## Graduation Ceremony

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## Entrance Ceremony

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## Online Welcoming Party

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## Love Story in Saga Univ

Toba is a German Foodchemist, he is working in Thuringia, he will be moving next year to another city. In October 2016, He participated in a 6-month exchange program at Saga University.

Miki is a Japanese teacher in Germany. She has graduated from Saga university in March 2017 and then moved to Germany for Master Studies.

We were happy to hear that in the 23d of April 2021 they took their marriage vows. Congratulations to Saga University international couple!



Nagasaki trip with international students

### How did they meet each other.

Toba: I met Miki first time during our fieldtrip to Karatsu in October 2016. She got my attention from the first moment, you can see on the pictures that we were getting closer to each other during that day. Then we met again in the German class, where Miki was a senior helping other students, and me and Clemens (another German exchange student) went there for international exchange. I took that chance to ask her to start a language tandem. We would talk half of the time in Japanese and the other half in German but quickly we switched to English as it was easier to know each other that way. Shortly after that we went on a date at Saga castle. Kids visiting the castle were following me everywhere as they were not used to see foreigners, it was a cute and cheerful atmosphere, and it gave me the courage to open my heart to Miki and confess my feelings to her.

### The best memory of the period at Saga University.

Miki: For me also Okinawa is my best memory, like he likes, but Nagasaki Trip with the friends group was also one of the wonderful memories. We went there during the lantern Festival, we visited Chinatown and it was beautiful, and the food was great. I remember that we spent the night in a youth hostel all together in a big tatami room and we had fun talking the night with everyone.

### Words from Toba and Miki

Toba: I recommend you to be open to try new experiences. During my stay at Saga University, I tried Kyudo and Kendo just to see what kind of sports Japanese people like and get new perspectives. Also, I think there are many shy Japanese people so try to break the barriers and you might get be surprised how they want to communicate and build long-lasting friendships. I would like to tell Japanese students to try to speak with internationals because we also would like to have people coming forward to us to make us comfortable.

Miki: Most importantly, enjoy your life, especially when you have the chance to go on an exchange or know people from different backgrounds. It is a unique opportunity to mix it up and build a group not only Japanese alone or foreigners alone but all together. It is not only funny but I think it is one of the best way to grow up and open up your minds and perspectives. (Rami)

## Online Language Lounge

During March, Online Language Lounge was held as a part of the university's event. Under the supervision of Kitamura-San from the international office, and the support of international students as students staff, including some of our writers, a Japanese section and English section was held alternately. Each time there were about 10 to 15 students including Japanese students and international students, where some were still in their home country due to Covid-19.

The Online Language Lounge was held using Zoom, and each time it started off with self-introduction from the students staff, followed by the others. Later on the students were separated into several break out rooms, where they talked about their own countries and differences between each other's. Other then that, some small games were held such as "shiritori" with drawings, guess the word and spotting the difference using the student staff's room.



Sending love from Online Language Lounge

It was the first time that this kind of event was held, therefore there were some small things that didn't go too well but all and all it was a good opportunity for international and Japanese students to have some healthy international exchange. (Alvin)

## Graduation Ceremony

This year, Sakura bloomed faster to greet Saga University students for their graduation ceremony. The graduation ceremony was held on 23rd March 2021 located in Saga City Cultural Hall. Students couldn't go there with any family members in this time, since it is one of the rules for corona virus prevention by Saga University. Everyone was really happy to know that there will be a graduation ceremony in this year, including me. I was the one of students who are lucky enough to enjoy the graduation ceremony in this year.

I started that day by going to Saga station by bus to meet my lab mates there and then going to the venue together. The situation in the venue was so crowded, but it was safety since everyone was having the mask and implementing the physical distancing rules too, even we had to submit our profile data and seat number before the ceremony started.

The first ceremony started with the opening, singing the Japanese national anthem (Kimigayo), conferring graduation certificate, a speech from Saga University president, a word from students, the announcement of student award and then closing. I personally felt amazed when we were singing the Kimigayo with the flag of Japan and Saga University there surrounded by many beautiful Hakama (the kimono for graduation). I was about to cry remembering how hard to be here and finally I could make it happens. Thanks God.

The second ceremony was held in the university. In this ceremony, we were asked to come to the front of the hall one by one to get the graduation certificate by the chief of each department.



Finally, it was a really sad moment when we say goodbye to our friends in this graduation. Farewell is always there but we can catch up again someday and if not, we still have those beautiful memories in Saga University that always be in our heart. (Jevri)

## Entrance Ceremony

People say that the "entrance ceremony" day is a fresh start of university life or the first step to an enormous milestone of life. I woke up early with the rising sun having my heart set going to the entrance ceremony. I even tried to calm down my anxiety a bit with coffee while enjoying the outside picturesque beauty of spring from my apartment window. Since the venue of the ceremony is a little far from the university campus, I decided to go together with friends by car.

After 15 minutes' drive, here we were at the venue. The view outside was stunning, with hundreds of students waiting in line to enter the hall, everyone was wearing suits. I did not know many things about the dressing code in Japan, but it was good that my friend strongly suggested me to wear a suit too. As we all know that Japan is famous for being disciplined and punctual, I could not help but be impressed with their way of handling regarding the global pandemic. Due to the rule of social distancing, one hall was not enough for all students and thus, students were separated into two halls and we had to follow the ceremony through the screen so that we, students, can participate all together at the same time.



During the ceremony, there were speeches from the president and heads of the university. The atmosphere inside galvanized me and there is no doubt that the welcoming speeches provided the motivation and sense of empowerment to embark on my new educational pathway here in Japan. In addition, there were presentations and thankful speeches from top-scored students in the admission test since they have received offered scholarships. After every speech, we bow to each other to show our respect, deep gratitude, and appreciation. For me, this meaningful behavior is very astonishing and breathtaking since it cannot be easily seen in my European culture.

This year's entrance ceremony was different, not because that everyone was wearing the mask and social distance but because there were two ceremonies within the same day. That is right, due

to covid, the entrance ceremony for those who enrolled last year was canceled. Therefore, this year they arranged two ceremonies that day; once in the morning and the other in the afternoon. We can see how they pay attention to the feeling of the students and make it fair.

After our ceremony has finished, the students who enrolled last year have arrived. This brought a huge opportunity for me to meet with last year's batch students as well. We had a conversation and took a lot of pictures together under the warm sunshine of the spring season. Many people say that "A photograph keeps a moment from slipping away". However, for me, I will always remember this grateful moment as a memory that can never be erased. (Erjon)

## Online Welcoming Party

On the 21st of April 2021 in the late afternoon of hot summer air, a welcoming party for the new international student was held online. This brighten up my week after I found out that Saga university was announced as a cluster area two days ago. Honestly, it was unexpected for me that I was cheered up by the welcoming party this much. I was so motivated by this party that this time I decided to describe my feeling first rather than put it as a closing paragraph as I always do.



There are a total of 19 participants both current and new international students from undergraduate to graduate level. Some of them are a 1-year exchange student who cannot come to Japan from the effect of Covid-19. However even they cannot come to Saga now, but they did not give their hope up and even consider applying for a scholarship to study here as a graduate student which really moves me.

Now moving on to the activities in the party, since it was the second time we were holding it online, we run it more smoothly than last year. Our host of the party Mustofa greeted us cheerfully and began the party with a toast. After that we spilt into separate rooms and did a country guessing game and two truth one false game to know each other better. Moving back to the main room, Jose and Me (Guess who? It's Peem) shared our "useful things to know for living in Saga" based on our experiences. We covered about mobile phone contract, Japanese greetings, convenience store, bicycle registration, Karaoke and barber. We then separate rooms again with different group to introduce our country's proud artifact. After that it was Rami's turn to introduce our association 'Suisa'. Then we ended with a 'Shiritori' game.

Meeting everyone online really makes me want to see them in person and hope that those who still cannot come to Japan will be able to come here soon. To make that happen let's cooperate by wearing mask, washing our hands and stay at home. (Peem)

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