



[Activity outline]

Main activity	Student exchanges with universities overseas
Related organizations	Beijing Foreign Studies University (China), Yeungnam University (Korea), The Sapienza University of Rome (Italy)
Duration	Ongoing since 2007
Number of participants	More than 100 students

[Interview with Professor Uchida]

— Could you tell us how this activity started?

Prof. Uchida:

In 2007, Kansai University was designated as a center for cultural interaction studies in the Global COE program, and this forum has been held since then. Initially, it was designed only for Japanese and Chinese graduate students under the name “Forum for Japanese and Chinese Graduate Students on Chinese Culture”. It then involved Korean graduates when the university applied for CAMPUS Asia, a program promoted by MEXT, in 2011. In the meantime, another academic forum called the “Japan and Italy Forum” was held with the Sapienza University of Rome. These two forums eventually joined together in around 2011. The purpose of this activity is to nurture young researchers of the next generation. We started this forum so that students can develop global perspectives, which are imperative for researchers, through academic interaction and opinion exchange with graduate students abroad.



— Could you elaborate on the forum?

Prof. Uchida:

Every year since 2007, graduate students from Beijing Foreign Studies University in China, Yeungnam University in Korea, the Sapienza University of Rome in Italy, and Kansai University have met together at the forum, which has been held quarterly at each university, for research presentations and discussions. Incidentally, Kansai University has provided distance education using the internet jointly with Beijing Foreign Studies University since 2002. Remote classes are given once or twice a month in the Cultural Interaction Course at the Graduate School of East Asian Cultures, remote lectures are given once a month for graduate students of the Graduate School of Foreign Language Education and Research, and Chinese classes are given every week for the first-year undergraduates majoring in Chinese language in the Faculty of Foreign Language Studies.

— What kinds of benefits has the forum produced?

Prof. Uchida:

The forum provides an opportunity for students to recognize the academic level of their research and to receive expert advice. They can make use of what they have learned for writing a thesis. Academic exchange can continue even after the forum between students who have met and interacted with each other. As for the number of participants, we set a limitation on it since the forum takes place by rotation in China, Korea, Japan, and Rome in Italy. The event can attract no fewer than 100 at the most, with an average of around 30 students participating from our university every year. This year (2017), when the venue was in Rome, about 30 KU students joined the forum, making a total of 50 to 60, including local students.

Additionally, we compile proceedings before holding the forum. For the last two years, collections of papers have been published carrying especially outstanding presentations.

— Have you experienced any difficulty in organizing the forum?

Prof. Uchida:

Well, above all, how to cover costs, such as expenses to travel abroad, is an issue. Although we try hard to raise funds by utilizing subsidies for conference presentations or other support programs, we have to cover costs with our own private funds basically. A total of ten teachers, including teaching staff members in the Graduate School of East Asian Cultures and Professor Shen of the Graduate School of Foreign Language Education and Research, support us with funding, each paying 20,000 yen for students' meals and other expenses.

Another issue relates to language. When the forum takes place in Rome, presenters are required to use English. When convened in Japan, China or Korea, they can use Japanese, Chinese, Korean, or English. Having said that, there are not many Korean speakers. We found that a certain section meeting was attended by only Korean students.





—How would you like to develop this program from now and into the future?

Prof. Uchida:

We plan to hold this forum every year, a unique event involving universities in China, Korea, and Italy. We may also work on another academic forum, whose first meeting was held the other day. This is a more specialized one exclusively for doctoral students. Unlike this one, participants are from doctoral courses in Japan, Germany, Austria, Italy, Korea, and China. Its next meeting may possibly be held in Austria in 2018.

Graduate students who are trained in this program can secure good jobs after completing their degree. Students from China often obtain teaching jobs at universities in their home country. Some have been employed as full-time teachers at China's key universities, such as Peking University, Beijing Language and Culture University, Xiamen University, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Wuhan University, and Sun Yat-sen University. Our graduate students are doing their best in finding a career. Some Japanese students also have obtained a teaching position at a university or a museum curator's post after graduation.



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