

Hi! from SAGA

Summer 2020 Vol. 4 

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Update on the Corona Virus Situation in Saga University

I think the inbox of our e-mail are flooded with university' s email concerning the update on the COVID-19 situation in Saga University.

It would be hard to keep your information up to date with this amount of e-mail even for Japanese student, not to speak of international students who have hard time reading Japanese e-mail.

For the next semester which will starts on the 1st of October, it looks like the online class will continue.

However, some of the classes may be conducted face to face with strict measures. So, you should keep track of the classes you have enrolled in and whether the teacher would like to conduct it face-to-face or not. Especially classes which involve laboratory and first year classes.

Saga University hold a medical examination twice a year in every semester. Students should take at least one medical examination per year.

For this first semester, the medical exam was postponed due to the second wave of the COVID-19 virus.

But the medical examination was resumed form the 29th of July and the medical examination for foreign studen was held on the 24th of August.

For Japanese students you can check the schedule on the link :

<http://www.suhcc.saga-u.ac.jp/>

If you have club activities, you should take extra care for yourself and people around you. If it is a sport club, be sure to always wear a mask before and after the practice. If it is a cultural club, be sure to always put your mask on. Club activities is all about bonding, but we need to avoid drinking parties during these times, since a lot of staff in restaurant, café, and Izakaya in Saga have been infected by the COVID-19 virus. Please keep in mind that there was a report about 5 students that got infected by the Covid-19 virus during club activities in certain universities.

Lastly, if you want to keep track of the Saga prefecture' s COVID-19 situation, you can visit the Medical Faculty, Saga University webpage via the URL :

<https://www.med.saga-u.ac.jp/video/800-27-igakubu-gyouji-video.html> (in Japanese)



Long distance activities in Saga City

The English Conversation Community

Normally, in Saga there would be many activities foreign students could do during summer. After class, we would hear our friends inviting each other to Hanabi (fireworks). The teacher in Japanese class would always remind us that the day of the Saga Balloon festival is near. After the balloon festival, we would always go to Karatsu to see the famous Karatsu Kunchi festival. However, this year due to the COVID-19 virus everything seems to be cancelled. Even small gathering events were cancelled as well. Somehow, luckily, there are some alternatives for the small events, which is to do them online, because the purpose of them is to meet with people.

In this issue, I would like to give you an example of those online events, which is the event from “the conversation community” English conversation community, which is a free English class for all ages which encourages learning through fun games, role play and conversation, held by Mr. Steve Nguyen, an ALT teacher from California, USA. Everybody knows him and calls him “Steve”. Before the spread of corona virus, the English class was usually held on Friday evening, at Saga international Plaza with participants from various age groups, occupations, and nationalities.

Steve said that since the self-quarantine started, the community have been meeting once or twice every month through online meetings. The date and time of the meeting is not usually decided, however, everybody in the English Conversation Community LINE group decides the date and time upon their mutual free time.



Conversation Community Online Meeting

It is a little less lively than the normal meeting since usually about 4 people participate with the most being 9 people, while the regular face-to-face meeting is usually about 20 people. However, the fun is still the same.

Steve said, “The online chat is very casual and anyone regardless of English or Japanese skill level can join the meeting. We usually talk about funny

things that happened to us recently, interesting books or movies we have watched, and play drawing or word games online.” about the activities of the online meeting. When Steve was asked about the differences between online and face-to-face meeting, he said that it is a little more challenging than meeting in person because hearing something in your non-native language is more difficult online.

However, the plus side is that the online meeting is usually conducted in small groups, so everyone has a chance to speak. Also, since everyone is concentrating on the person who is speaking, they do not have to speak with loud voice. He also added that he is very happy that he can still get in touch with the group members, and he is glad that the activities can make the quarantine life of the members more fun.



Conversation Community Usual Meeting



Founder member of SUIISA graduation interview : Rami Derbel

Coming with the wind of August, is the graduation of some of our friends. The season full of gratitude for our friends graduation mixing with a bit of loneliness to part with them. This month one of our friends who is the founder member of SUIISA and this newsletter, Rami Derbel, finally graduated from the PhD. Program. We thus take this opportunity to interview him as the representative of graduating students and as a SUIISA member.

Q1. How long have you been in Saga, and how long have you been a member of SUIISA?

I came to Saga since April 2016 and we started SUIISA activities with the welcome party of October 2017.

Q3. What is the most memorable memories as a Saga student or SUIISA member that you still remember up to this day?

It's really hard to choose one memory but If I have to, it will be the farewell parties we had. The first time, it affected me a lot because I had to say goodbye to many good friends but then I learnt that it's just the beginning of a new adventure and I started travelling and seeing them again in their home countries and I brought a new level to my experience in saga as an overall international experience. But in general, separating from my fellow university international students is still an emotional moment for me.

Lastly, we would like to congratulate Rami again on his graduation. we also would like to thank him for all the good friendship he gave us.

Thanks Rami!

Q2. As someone who have been in Saga for a long time, what about yourself that you think changed the most from your first year?

Since I have been in Saga many things changed in my life. I advanced in my research and soon I will graduate as a PhD. However, the most important change came in my human relationships. I like to think I've gained in maturity thanks to all the encounter I made. I learned to avoid preconceived ideas about people and listen to their experiences rather than judging their appearances. Finally, I think I've become more benevolent with people I don't know; hence, I became kinder with myself too.

For the new students who are coming to Saga after the Covid-19 I would like to tell all the international students coming to Saga University next semester to challenge themselves by going toward people. By going upfront and creating new friendship they can build bridges between communities, learn a lot about Japanese and international cultures and mostly learn about themselves. They will overcome their fears and achieve goals that they wouldn't think possible before. Therefore, talk with your fellow students, participate in activities, enjoy travelling around and you will come out bigger from this experience.

Rami Derbel



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