Visa Application:

- This is very straight-forward and handled very well by KBS. Upon acceptance they will provide you with a detailed process of the steps and timing for the visa. Essentially it occurs in two steps. First you must apply for a “certificate of eligibility” and that is done through Keio. Simply send them the paper work requested. Courier services are recommended and cost about $80 AUD. Note if you are not Australian you do need to present your passport when sending the package. That is not optional.

- It is also important to note that you have to enter Japan within 3 months of the certificate being issued. If you do not then the certificate and visa are expired; you will be denied entry to Japan. It takes about 4-6 weeks for the process to the certificate to be issued. So recommend sending the paper work to KBS about 3 months before you plan to enter, maybe 2 weeks earlier.

- After that it is very simple. KBS sends the certificate to AGSM. Take that paperwork, your passport, and 2 passport-sized photos (can get them at the post office on UNSW campus for $20) to the Japanese consulate in the CBD. Typically it takes 3 working days, up to 5 if they are busy. No further fees are required for this part. However, expedited options of 1 day are available if necessary and those do incur a fee.

Enrolment Procedure and recommended subjects:

- KBS uses a simple open enrolment and there are only 6-8 English language courses available. The coordinator will simply ask for your choices. I have not heard of anyone being unable to get their choices. Also, you do have up to 1 week to confirm courses once the term starts. That means you can shop around. But you will need the professor’s signature if you decide to drop a course.

- There were 7 English language options available this term:

  - Financial Management – didn’t take this course, but heard it is a deeper study into how financial management is conducted in Japan. Builds on basic financial analysis skills.

  - Production Management – this is an in depth focus on Japanese operations management. Japanese companies are profiled and students will visit several factories for presentations and tours. Note that there are about 5 tours for this course. Some can require travel by train of 3+ hours one way. You should budget an extra $125 AUD for transportation expenses if you take this course. Students will be assigned groups that will then produce written projects covering the learning during these tours.

  - Marketing in Japan – this involves a series of case studies and presentations concerning Japan specific marketing issues. Various tools, techniques, approaches, and cultural nuances are explored. Additionally this term there was group work where we consulted with Daimaru Department Store at Tokyo train station on their expansion. The store’s general manager gave us a tour and overview of the store’s business then asked each team to come up with specific plans for the expansion. Very good practical application of MBA learning and a really insightful experience working with the management of a very traditional and well established Japanese company. Not sure if this will be done next term, this is an experiment in updating the course.

  - Japanese Business Environment – a very basic theory course that explains the economic development and business culture in Japan. Provides context for students to appreciate other courses and the day-to-day operations of Japanese companies. 

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day experiences as a customer in Japan. It is a theory course though so there is not any real technical skill development.

- Multinational Strategy – A very intense case study and interactive course about Japanese multinational strategy. This is done in both the context of Japanese companies operating abroad and foreign companies expanding into Japan. Executive guest speakers are brought in from major companies (including ABB and L’Oreal this term) to discuss their situation and the details behind the case studies. They will also do some future perspective and often have a recruiting pitch for students.

- Entrepreneurship – this is probably the best course offered. The lecturer ran a Venture Capital fund in Japan that launched a 1 man coffee store in Ginza to an international franchise in Asia that is the main rival to Starbucks. Guest speakers, both Japanese and foreign, are involved in the class to give first hand perspective of entrepreneurship. The main group project of the class is a business plan competition. Students must submit business ideas, with the 5 most promising are selected by the lecturer. The students who had the ideas become “CEO” and must recruit team members from the rest of the class. Judging panel consists of entrepreneurs, VC managers, and angel seed investors. A great opportunity for practical experience in pitching for funds!

- Special Research Topic – similar to an ISM at AGSM, however, KBS will assign you a professor. At that point you will negotiate the terms and nature of the project. Most seem to be finance or accounting projects. Note, if you do an ISM at AGSM you cannot do this course for credit at KBS.

- Note: while you may only take 4 courses for credit, professors seem to be very happy to have exchange students audit other classes. You can go to all of them (not having to do the group work) or just select lectures of interest.

Workload at exchange school:

- The workload is moderate if you plan your time well. Aside from the special topics, there is a lot of reading at the beginning of the courses. Expect 3-5 hours of reading per course. Participation is a major factor for grades and the course structure. Plant tours involve preparation and travel in addition to the material, often occurring on non-class days so they are in addition to the classroom learning.

- As the courses pass the midpoint the emphasis shifts more to group work. Again this is moderate if you plan well and have an effective group dynamic. Be cautious though as several local KBS students have Japanese courses that do not have a harmonized time-table with the English courses. So they can have finals and / or midterms at seemingly random times. This can lead to last minute cram work which will eat up your entire weekend before the last class and usually several late week nights too.

- Advice: don’t plan any travels, having visitors, or major events during the final two weeks (approx first half of March). Conflicting schedules with group mates and the workload can vary dramatically. If you have personal commitments on top of that you can end up very stressed and annoyed.

- Note: while the KBS does expect and encourage students to explore Japan beyond the classroom, you do need to be there for the classroom. If you miss 3 lectures you risk getting denied credit. Missing a 4th class will trigger an automatic “F” in the course.

Accommodation options:

- Very limited. Japan does not have a lot of foreigner friendly housing options and even fewer for short-term stays. But they do exist. Some are close to the campus. If you are willing to invest the time you can find them. Just be prepared to pay; they are more expensive and often you will need to pay all 3 months upfront plus “key money” (deposit). I have heard that some “key money” payments are equal to the 3 months of rent… so a lot of cash up front.

- The easiest and most affordable option is the international dorm, KBS house. You will have a 1 room
apartment with a washroom and small kitchenette. There is a larger kitchen in the common room with cooking / eating utensils. It is a 15 minute walk to the school and 10 minutes to the Hiyoshi train station.

KBS only provides single rooms and has a “no overnight guest” policy. If you are married, travelling as a couple, or expecting lots of visitors get a regular apartment.

- In the dorms you will be provided with basic bedding. You will either need to bring or buy a towel. There are washers and dryers available for free on the second floor. Each room has a heater, though all instructions are in Japanese. Also they do not operate continuously, so many people wake up to a cold room and / or come home to one after classes. There is no heat in the common areas of the building. You can turn it on in the common kitchen area… but only until 9pm. It is deactivated after that.

- There are fridges in the room, however they are the size of small beer fridges with only a small tray space as the freezer (large enough for two ice cube trays at most). The laundry room does have irons / ironing boards for public use. Free internet is also provided in the building; they provide a LAN cable for in your room and the wireless works in the common room.

**Campus Facilities and Careers Services:**

- The facilities are pretty good. There are no lockers assigned for foreign students. If you find an available locker you may claim it. There is a small common area for the MBA students, though most work in syndicate rooms. The booking system is obscure and in Japanese so you will need help from classmates. Printing and photocopying services are available but you will need to pay for each page.

- There is a coffee shop and convenience store in the KBS building. The cafeteria is not too far away with a wide choice of food. Getting seats around noon can be difficult. Travel and healthcare offices are also available within the KBS building.

- On campus there are two gyms available, although only one is practical. The Keio student gym costs 200 yen ($2.50) per visit but has erratic hours. It closes whenever exams or events are on so as not to disturb the students. So it will be closed approximately 5 of the weeks during the winter exchange. A private club, Central Sports is in the KBS building. While costing about $200 for the 3 months you get a modern facility with full cardio / weights, pool, hot tub, sauna, and fitness classes. It also has long hours Tues – Sunday. Monday it closes for cleaning and maintenance. Fitness classes are in Japanese, but you are welcome to join and just try to follow along.

- Careers Services was virtually non-existent. In 2 months I have never seen or heard anything from KBS concerning career services. Talking with some regular students they have said other than inviting some companies to recruit from campus there is no service. Even then all are in Japanese.

**Student life:**

- KBS is not for the timid. First you will need to have some capacity for Japanese language. While classes and KBS services are available in English virtually everything else is not. Ordering coffee downstairs or getting something from the convenience store you will be interacting in Japanese. Very few local stores and services have people who can communicate in English. It is very rare to have an English menu in restaurants. Highly recommend taking a Japanese course before coming, and definitely taking classes while here as offered by KBS. On a related note while your classmates have some English capacity, having any Japanese is essential in connecting with them. So for practical matters and social interaction you will need to take on Japanese language.

- Second, life at KBS is quite fast and people are often very busy. They are accessible though; you need to reach out to them. So if you are shy about the language or timid socially it will just seem that you are not interested. Introverts will have a tough time at Keio. The more open you are and willing to learn about the culture the more you will find people opening up to you.

- The campus is not in a central area in the grand scheme of things. It is between Tokyo and Yokohama. You can get to Shibuya in 20 minutes, but given the train schedule it is usually 30 minutes. Central Tokyo will take about 1 hour. Yokohama is 20-30 minutes away. Aside from the time both cities are very accessible and easy to reach. Just note that trains stop at midnight! If you miss your train the next will not start until 530-6am… so if you go clubbing, be prepared to party until dawn. Taxis are prohibitively
expensive. A taxi from Shibuya to your campus dorm will cost almost $100. From central Tokyo it will be $150-$200.

- Locally the train station (Hiyoshi) is a hub for the area. There are a host of bars, lounges, restaurants, and services. If you are adventurous you will find billiards, karaoke, great hole in the wall bars, tasty places to eat, and other fun things. Again the area isn’t as big, vibrant, or have as many choices as other areas. But there are lots of options if you explore the area. More practically there are grocery stores, barbers, doctors, chiropractors, tailors, post office, and drycleaners right there as well.

- There will be many opportunities to explore and experience Japan. Often students will get together for trips and local students will be happy to show you around. There is no set schedule or prime club events. It just happens as things come up.

- So overall the student life is quite good – but it is what you make of it. You need to make the effort and take initiative. Being open to new foods and experiences is essential.

**Things AGSM MBA students should consider/be aware of when applying to this school for exchange:**

- I cannot stress enough two key points; having at least some capacity in Japanese language and that you be outgoing / open minded. These two factors are essential to make the most of an exchange with KBS. If you are not comfortable with this then I highly recommend that you not apply.

- There are also social considerations. The KBS students are very well connected and pretty well aware of everything at the school. Within 2 weeks you will have a general equity amongst your Japanese colleagues whether they speak English or not. You will likely not be told what this is, but be aware that your conduct and behaviour create a strong image here. This will be very important if you want to maintain any of your personal / professional networks here long term.

- Finally, although your student visa says “multiple entry” it is not, that is until you get permission to re-enter Japan. If you leave and try to comeback you will learn a very hard lesson. Saying “oops I didn’t know” is very unlikely to prevent major issues with immigration, which might include your deportation. Japan is a country of rules whether you know them or not. If you want to travel outside of Japan while on exchange you need to go to the immigration office in Yokohama to get re-entry permission. It costs 4,000 yen for 1 permission or 6,000 yen for multiple re-entry permission. The travel time and process take about half a day.

- Also you need to be flexible. Many things do not work here as they do elsewhere. In particular process! If there are rules or ways of doing things realize that is the only way. They will not change them or make exceptions. Fighting against it is futile and will only make you mad. Basic services will take much longer than you expect. That is just the way things are.