



**STINT Teaching Sabbatical: Final Report
Programs in English at Komaba (PEAK)
University of Tokyo
Autumn 2019**

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INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes my experience as a STINT Teaching Sabbatical scholarship holder at the University of Tokyo during autumn term, 2019. Initial background about the University of Tokyo is briefly presented. The bulk of the report addresses my experiences at the University of Tokyo: my formal teaching duties, my initially informal supervision duties, the development of contacts in order to foster a closer relationship between University of Tokyo and University of Gothenburg, reflections on the overall experience, recommendations and an action plan.

BRIEFLY: THE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO AND PEAK

The University of Tokyo was founded in 1877 and is Japan's oldest national university. It is widely considered to be the most prestigious university in Japan and one of the top universities in Asia. To be affiliated with Todai (as it is called) conveys enormous social status in Japan – for students, staff, alumni, and even for STINT Teaching Sabbatical participants. University of Tokyo is ranked as one of the top research and teaching universities in the world, and is known as the Harvard of Japan. It has multiple major campuses throughout the city, with the two most central being Hongo and Komaba.

Programs in English at Komaba (PEAK) is the four-year undergraduate liberal arts program taught at Komaba campus, delivered entirely in English and founded in 2012. Students choose between two majors areas – either Japan in East Asia or Environmental Science. For the first two years of each major area, students take liberal arts courses, known as the Junior Division. In the final two years – Senior Division – students specialize in their respective major. While no courses are taught in Japanese, students are expected to study the Japanese language intensively during their time as a PEAK student. The student body is comprised of either students from abroad, or those who have been resident in Japan but have not received their education in a Japanese-language high school. Admission is highly selective, as for the University of Tokyo, and involves not just application but an interview process for finalists where PEAK staff travel the world to meet with finalists and engage in an in-depth interview to better understand the appropriateness of the applicant for PEAK.

PREPARATION AND PLANNING

In late April I spent ten days in Tokyo to conduct a series of meetings that would prepare me for my autumn term sabbatical period. During this period, two formal meetings were scheduled, and I attended one lecture in the PEAK program.

My then point of contact, Professor Taizo Takeno and I scheduled a lunch meeting on the Komaba campus early during my ten day stay in order to discuss the various details of my upcoming sabbatical period. The key point on the agenda was the two courses that I would be teaching. Here, I was given complete freedom to choose the topic and to design the content. We agreed that I would teach one junior division PEAK course on Qualitative Research Methods and one senior division PEAK course on Qualitative Approaches to Migration and Integration. Initially, I thought this latitude was being afforded to me as I was a guest professor and my courses might not fit easily into the PEAK curricula. Yet, as will be discussed further in the teaching duties section, I was being treated identically to all other PEAK teaching staff. Professor Takeno and I agreed to a deadline for when the rather brief course information would need to be submitted, and he kindly offered to provide me with examples of the straightforward and not overly-elaborated structure that this information would need to follow. During this meeting, I also took the opportunity to ask a bit about academic life at University of Tokyo, particularly in terms of teaching load, publication expectations, and administrative duties. The information gleaned at this stage was at a very general level, but I began to get the sense that the Komaba campus might have more of a teaching focus while the “main” Hongo campus was more research intensive. I was also introduced to the University of Tokyo understanding of academic freedom, and how this surprisingly found expression in substantial administrative duties, a point that will be developed later.

The second formal meeting scheduled for my April visit had to do with administrative details and was scheduled with Ms. Akiko Takao at the Komaba International Research and Cooperation Office. One point that became immediately apparent at this stage was the high level of decentralization and compartmentalization at University of Tokyo. Both Komaba and Hongo have separate internationalization offices; but moreover, on Komaba, internationalization seems to be divided between those administrative staff that focus on internationalization more broadly, and those that focus on the PEAK program. During this meeting, Ms. Takao kindly answered the many questions that I had about workspace, location of classrooms, how to secure on campus housing, and other practical matters. Give my interest in seeing the PEAK teaching staff in action, she kindly arranged for me to attend a lecture given by Dr. Joshua Baxter that focused on understandings of time in the Japanese context.

It is safe to say (and I have certainly told Dr. Baxter this too many times during my visit) that his lecture was one of the real high points of my April visit. I was deeply impressed by the way in which abstract and demanding material was presented in an accessible manner, and how he seamlessly wove pop culture references into the lecture to illustrate his key points. The use of film to underscore one of his main arguments (and its passing emphasis on both Buddhism and punk rock), coupled with the thoughtful questions posed by students and their active discussions, were clear evidence that PEAK classrooms operate at a very demanding level, both intellectually and creatively. In the best of all possible ways, I knew that I had my work cut out for me.

Lastly, with Ms. Takao's substantial assistance, my housing application to University of Tokyo was granted late in the spring, and I was fortunate enough to be placed in a 25 square meter couple's apartment at the Komaba International Lodge, located on Komaba Campus 2, which is located less than ten minutes on foot from the Komaba campus. This was ideal as far as I was concerned, as it gave both me and my wife adequate room from which to base ourselves for our stay in Tokyo, and also placed me very close to work, meaning that I was not required to endure the sometimes gruelling morning Tokyo commute.

TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During the STINT Teaching Sabbatical period, I was formally assigned to teach two courses in the PEAK program: Qualitative Research Methods for Junior Division PEAK students and Qualitative Approaches to Migration and Integration for Senior Division PEAK students, plus USTEP (study abroad) students. As is the norm in PEAK (and indeed, throughout the University of Tokyo), courses are not team taught and instructors are not required to coordinate the course content with other members of the teaching team or with other teaching staff more generally. I was given full control over the design and implementation of my courses, as well as the assessment of my students.

I develop the details of these teaching duties and other activities below.

ACTIVITIES DURING THE TEACHING SABBATICAL

Formal Teaching Duties

Upon arrival in Tokyo at the end of August, I had just over three weeks to get prepared for the start of classes. From my perspective, this was ideal, as it meant that I had time – without other meetings or administrative duties – to think through the details of the planned seminars with the students and to tweak some of my plans to ensure that students were exposed to the material in a way that would ensure active learning and impress upon them utility of the skills above and beyond the specific courses. During this time, I was also

invited to the two key PEAK events that took place – the graduation ceremony and the welcome ceremony for new students, both of which served as pointed illustration that PEAK is a close-knit community of faculty and students, and that there is understandable pride in the program. On a personal level, I also enrolled in part-time Japanese language courses during September, to assist me in consolidating the very basic Japanese language skills that I had been working on since having received word that I had been awarded the Teaching Sabbatical.

At PEAK, courses are held over a thirteen-week period, with each class meeting once a week for 105 minutes. In my case, I chose to have both courses scheduled on the same day (as many instructors do), thus leaving other days available for classroom preparation, administrative duties, meeting with colleagues, and research.

Qualitative Research Methods:

Description for students considering enrolment:

This course provides an introduction to qualitative research methods that can be meaningfully used to explore research topics across the liberal arts. Through seminars and exercises, students will become actively familiar with a varied and practical toolkit for conducting qualitative research. Emphasis will be placed on autoethnographic approaches, the use of photography, and various interview techniques as concrete methods whose basics can be learned and applied in a relatively short time frame. Social media and smartphone apps will be treated as a case for the qualitative exploration of how individuals anchor themselves within broader communities. Particular attention will be paid to the importance of situating one's research within the broader relevant scholarship that problematizes context. In addition to actively participating in classroom discussions, students will be expected to apply each method to a designated research topic, and to present a draft of their findings to classmates and the instructor at a final working session.

The Pedagogical Aim: Learning by Doing

For this course, I wanted to ensure that students had the opportunity to learn certain qualitative methods in an applied way. Moreover, my sense is that the applied learning course structure works best when all students are working on a common theme. As a scholar of migration and integration, I am intrigued by how experiences of migration can change us, and how they contribute to our relationships with our new host society as well as to our country of origin. Thus, for this course, the common focus was on our experiences as student and teacher migrants in Japan, or in one case, as a Japanese student who considered English his first language and had only attended international schools in Japan his entire life.

Over the course of the term, students became acquainted with the basics of autoethnographic reflection, photography as autoethnography and elicitation techniques,

and semi-structured interviews. Each of these tools were then used to place their own experiences in Japan under the analytical microscope. In the case of semi-structured interviews, students were expected to interview additional international students in the Tokyo area who were making sense of their Japanese experience. To emphasize the collaborative nature of this experience, I also agreed to complete the same tasks as the students, which (hopefully) had the additional pedagogical value of providing complementary good examples of how these tools can be applied to make sense of complex social phenomena.

The course culminated in two working sessions in which students presented an outline of their final paper that addressed issues of the overall narrative to be applied to their migrant experience, plus updates on data collection and a discussion of any remaining challenges before they drafted the final course paper.

Given that the students have consistently produced assignments of an exceptionally high academic quality, my hopes are that their final course papers can be made available to a broader audience, perhaps in the form of working papers.

Qualitative Approaches to Migration and Integration

Description for students considering enrolment:

This course provides an introduction to key themes and approaches that are central to the study of migration and integration from a qualitative perspective. Through seminars focusing on research articles, students will become actively familiar with how migration and integration scholars problematize specific research topics including media discourses, gender, citizenship, refugee voices and forced return. Emphasis will be placed not just on the case, but also on the design of the research itself, including how research questions are articulated and considered against the backdrop of previous scholarship, and how appropriate methods are chosen to collect and analyze relevant data. Special attention will be devoted to two methodological approaches: photography and autoethnography. In addition to actively participating in classroom discussions, students will also share responsibility for article discussions, and carry out either a small pilot study or design a more elaborate research proposal focusing on a specific migration or integration related topic. These will be presented for classmates and the instructor at a final working session.

The Pedagogical Aim: Gaining an Overview of the Field, Becoming a Better Researcher

For this course, which is a modified version of an MA course that I teach at University of Gothenburg, I have two key aims. First, I strive to present students with an overview of the state of the art of select migration and integration literature, placing emphasis on both topics more heavily researched and those that are currently eclectic and a bit marginal to the field. Second, through seminars that repeatedly center on dissecting the content and

structure of research articles, I aim to provide students with a more developed understanding of what constitutes interesting and important research in the field that is also communicated in a sufficiently rigorous manner in terms of methods and writing style.

During each seminar, we collectively discussed two articles on the basis of questions that students had submitted the morning of class. These questions were then grouped thematically, and we worked through them, both with the aim of identifying appropriate answers, but also with the aim of understanding what might lurk behind the question in terms of critique (or support) of certain methods or theoretical approaches. Halfway through the course, there was a two-session focus on the use of qualitative methods in migration and integration research, that allowed me to introduce a discussion of the tools and objectives from my methods course in a relevant manner for these students. Students were also given the opportunity to serve as interview subjects for the work being carried out on student migration in Japan, with six choosing to do so.

The course culminated in two working sessions in which students presented preliminary sketches of their final assignment, which was intended to give them the freedom to make use of both course literature and other related literature in ways of most benefit to them at this point in their academic careers: writing a research proposal for an undergraduate or MA or PhD thesis focusing on migration and/or integration; carrying out and writing up a pilot study of a migration and/or integration issue; problematizing the way in which information in times of crisis is made available for foreigners; engaging in analytic autoethnography to focus on experiences as a migrant in Japan; carrying out a photo elicitation study involving others students; conducting a more in-depth comparison of certain articles to highlight tensions or possibilities in the literature; or making use of the literature to address issues of data collection and analysis in greater detail.

(Initially Informal) Teaching Duties: Doctoral Student Supervision

Early on in the Qualitative Approaches to Migration and Integration course, I was approached by a doctoral student who was auditing my class and who had questions about qualitative methods. Her thesis project explores native-speakerism as an ideology within English language instruction for non-natives is *constructed, challenged, and experienced at the level of the individual student*, with a focus on the case of migrant students studying English in Japan. We quickly discovered that her academic interests were well aligned with my own previous research into the politicization of language, as well as my current work on migrants and integration. Given the teaching load and low administrative burden, I had ample time left over in my week to provide regular supervision.

As with my undergraduate PEAK students, I found this doctoral student to be highly ambitious and committed to her work. She is enthusiastically engaged in making sense of a

broad range of complex theoretical literatures, is relentlessly focused on making the necessary choices (as well as always asking the hard questions) crucial for completing a high quality doctoral thesis and has an impressive work ethic. Perhaps best of all, she views her research project as an exercise with value not just for the scholarly community, but as a project that can meaningfully contribute to much-needed societal discussions about the value we afford to different actors in the language learning process and how we can challenge stereotypes – even when these stereotypes may potentially be reinforced by migrants themselves.

I was especially pleased to learn that her primary supervisor is a PEAK associate professor with whom I have had many discussions about sustainability (particularly in terms of integration) and who had invited me to observe some of her other teaching program duties. While I was happy to provide this supervision informally, I viewed it as a personal badge of honor that my input was valued when both the student and supervisor informed me that I was being invited to serve on the student's thesis committee. I develop the consequences of this point further in my plans for the future section.

Other Relevant Activities

My hopes had been that the STINT Teaching Sabbatical experience would not only allow me to develop new insights on the basis of my classroom duties, but would also provide me with multiple opportunities to meet with staff at the University of Tokyo interested in teaching and internationalization. To that end, I was certainly not disappointed. To a great extent, these meetings focused on exploring possibilities for continued collaboration between University of Gothenburg and University of Tokyo after the conclusion of my STINT Teaching Sabbatical period. Below is a list of some of the many individuals with whom I was able to meet:

- Stefan Noréen, Senior Advisor to the President of the University of Tokyo for Internationalization Issues
- Professor Jonathan Woodward, Director, Global Faculty Development
- Ms. Mariko Osawa, Globalization Office, Center for International Exchange
- Professor Nicola Liscutin, Director, Center for Development of Global Leadership Program
- Dr Yuko Itatsu, Associate Professor, Center for Development of Global Leadership Program
- Professor Yujin Yaguchi, Director of International Education Support Office
- Dr Nazia Huissain, Assistant Professor, Institute for Future Initiatives

During my stay, I also was invited to present at two seminars. One was held at the Institute for Future Initiatives and focused on my recent book, examining how refugees to Sweden

from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Syria make sense of their integration experiences. The other seminar presentation was for the PEAK Global Faculty Development seminar series and focused on my overall experience as a STINT Teaching Sabbatical Fellow.

I also took part in the MoU signing events between the University of Gothenburg Vice Chancellor and the University of Tokyo President in October 2019, and arranged a series of meetings with PEAK students and University of Tokyo internationalization staff for three visiting colleagues from the University of Gothenburg in October 2019.

IMPORTANT LESSONS

I would argue that one of the most important lessons that I had reinforced during my period at PEAK had to do with academic freedom. PEAK staff (as well as those at University of Tokyo more broadly) take academic freedom very seriously when it comes to the classroom, and their standpoint essentially boils down to one important point: The instructor makes the decisions about the course content, the readings, and the learning goals. These are not negotiated in committees or among multiple instructors. Reading lists are not checked to see whether they fulfil any specific criteria that the university may currently be employing. Instructors do not need to secure approval from other institutional bodies when they wish to make modifications to their courses. Indeed, during informal discussions with colleagues in Tokyo, I would try to explain the Swedish system of needing to get approval for course plans and reading lists. The near uniform response could be boiled down to them asking how those not involved in your teaching could make decisions about the wording of your course plans, the content of your reading lists, or what topics were covered in your class. This understanding of academic freedom is clearly located at the level of the individual instructor, as opposed to the department as a whole.

A second important lesson that I had reinforced was the value for students of having classes that are not team taught. The norm in both PEAK and University of Tokyo is for courses to be taught by individual instructors. This has, in my opinion, many advantages. It allows for one teacher to devise the common logic that will guide the course and to be the person who sees that logic through from course introduction to final exam, without students repeatedly needing to recalibrate based on the appearance of new teachers for a brief period of time. My sense is that students at PEAK value the way in which they can draw on both the expertise of their teaching staff over an entire course, and also the unofficial mentoring and pastoral duties that come along with it. From the instructor's side, it is much easier to have an understanding of how students progress and develop intellectually when one follows their classroom evolution over an entire course, as opposed to simply seeing them for a few lectures and a seminar and then grading one assignment.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE HOST AND THE HOME INSTITUTIONS

Apart from the point raised in the above section, there are certainly many other comparisons that could be made. Below follows a brief discussion as to what I see as the main points that should be considered:

Pedagogy, curriculum, teaching of courses:

PEAK staff have “four and four” teaching loads and are dedicated instructors. Their course syllabi (while short, only one two pages) are clearly very demanding. Students are expected to read a substantial amount of complex subject matter at a thorough level from day one of their university education, are expected to be ready to discuss it in class and are expected to produce reflection papers and assignments that demonstrate their understanding of the subject matter. In essence, we might say that the bar is set high for students in terms of the pedagogical approach, and students understand that they must meet these expectations. Students view their instructors as having the disciplinary expertise with the ability to impart new and important knowledge to them.

Courses in PEAK, with one to two exceptions, are not the product of a conscious group decision. Instructors choose what they want to teach based on their expertise and interest. Students attend many courses for the first two weeks of each term, finding the ones that best match their interests and then sign up for those. To that end, PEAK students are able to draw on a rich course offering of diverse topics from instructors who are experts in their fields and passionately engaged in the details of their respective topic.

My suspicion is that it would be difficult to implement such a style of pedagogy at Swedish institutions, as it is not possible to take attendance, require students attend all classes and require that they do reading ahead of time. Students at Swedish universities also often have their time divided between university and non-university activities, which limits the amount of time they may be able (or choose to) devote to their studies. Placing such high demands on them -- and that they do so in ten different courses per term as at Tokyo -- would likely not be well received.

Similarly, the emphasis within Swedish universities on having limited student choice during degree programs would not allow for departments to allow staff to develop courses that primarily focus on their expertise. Whether this is an advantage, or a disadvantage is a matter that departments would have to discuss internally, of course.

Use of technology in the classroom:

In terms of in class IT usage, there is not much difference between PEAK and University of Gothenburg. Powerpoint and videos are common tools. However, classrooms at University of Tokyo appear to have fewer of the more advanced “bells and whistles” that are increasingly common to Gothenburg classrooms, such as individual monitors for groups, the opportunity for instructors to project different group work on one main monitor, etc. After five months in Tokyo, I can say confidently that I do not miss those things. Or rather, they were not necessary for me to carry out high quality teaching.

One key difference though in terms of IT between the two universities is in the on-line platform for courses. On one of my first days at PEAK, I asked an instructor what the required platform was for disseminating course information. I was told that while there is a course platform, it is not required to use it, and given its somewhat complicated structure, many instructors do not choose to use it. As explained to me, most information was simply communicated via a shared Dropbox folder. Behaving accordingly, I instituted a shared Dropbox folder for my two classes and it worked beautifully: a folder for course info, a folder for readings and a folder for their questions. Assignments were emailed to me. While I do not advocate one system over another, I do think it would be valuable for teaching staff to discuss what they perceive as the value in course platforms such as Canvas (in use at GU), and how to be careful that it could unintentionally begin to take more teaching time away from staff in terms of training, updating, etc.

Forms of examination:

At PEAK and University of Tokyo, the form of examination is completely up to the individual instructor. I was only expected to loosely specify the content of the assignments on the short two-page syllabus. This gave me the opportunity to develop the formal and detailed assignment guidelines as we got closer to the relevant assignment, based entirely on what I thought would benefit that specific group of students in terms of the skills they needed to develop, as a result of my having worked with them closely throughout the term. Students appreciated this very much. While all of these matters were my decision, I did explain how the assignments were tailor-made to what we had been doing as a group and where I thought the emphasis should be as a result of our in-class discussions.

If students do not turn in the final exam, they fail the course. They do not get multiple opportunities to take it over. If they miss an assignment, there is no make-up assignment and they do not receive credit for that assignment. This is an accepted norm.

Here too, I think these approaches would be difficult to implement at Gothenburg. While not taking sides, there is an expectation that instructors at Gothenburg will provide detailed guidelines well ahead of time (even prior to course start) for many of the assignments, perhaps barring the specific final exam questions. While I do not think it would be impossible to implement a version of the tailor made approach in Gothenburg, I think it would have to be done within a structure that requires a great deal of information to be made available to students ahead of time. As such, assignment guidelines would have to be made vague.

It would not be possible to fail students for a course if they fail their exams and assignments at Gothenburg. Students have the right to multiple make up assignments and exams, and also have the right to request a change in examiners if they fail with the same instructor twice.

Merits: Pedagogy versus research versus administration

All universities place institution-specific expectations on their staff, and Tokyo is no different. In terms of publications, it was explained to me that there is not a formal number of publications required per year per staff member, nor is there a system in place such as the UK Research Excellence Framework. However, staff activities (including research output) are published annually, making it very easy to compare productivity across staff within a department. For PEAK, high quality teaching is an important marker of being a good departmental citizen. Junior untenured staff teach three courses (generally) per term, while tenure track and tenured staff teach four courses per term.

Administrative duties play an especially important role at University of Tokyo, as the notion of academic freedom extends to a formal requirement that academic staff make decisions on all matters (and not administrators). As such, many academic staff also head up what Gothenburg would consider to be administrative decisions. Generally, the staff chosen to head these divisions are full professors. Even those who are not full professors find that they have significant administrative duties in terms of attending meetings where decisions need to be made regarding university matters that do not directly have to do with either teaching or research.

Here too, such a administrative role would be unlikely to be adopted at Gothenburg, as it has its origins in a framing of academic freedom that would not translate to the Swedish context. Yet, for those who have an interest in discussing the relationship between administrative and research/teaching staff, I suspect there is much here to be unpacked and discussed, if only for discussion purposes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For future STINT Teaching Sabbatical participants assigned to PEAK, I have the following unsurprising recommendations:

- The students are excellent. PEAK puts an enormous amount of effort into handpicking a thoughtful and creative group of highly talented students, and it shows in their classroom performance. Working with such excellent students may require adjustments in how one prepares for class as an instructor – especially in the types of questions that one wants to discuss and how detailed of an unpacking one should do at the literature. They are enormously capable students and the teaching level should be pitched accordingly.
- The PEAK staff are wonderful colleagues who can explain most things about the University of Tokyo to you, and will be interested in comparing experiences. It is easy to fall into the role of prioritizing one's courses and not always take notice of one's colleagues. Try not to do this. PEAK organizes a lovely welcome dinner for the new STINT Teaching Sabbatical participant early each autumn, and this is where one gets the chance to start building friendships with some truly nice people. Colleagues will make offers for seminar presentations, meetings, etc. Say yes to these. As much as one's schedule allows.
- The University of Tokyo more generally has many staff who are likely engaged in work (research, teaching or program administration) that will also be of interest. PEAK colleagues are fantastic resources for helping to make contacts that extend into the broader university and can be of help for developing other plans or priorities during the sabbatical period.
- Keep an eye on the clock. Five months will go by very quickly, and it is not advisable to leave any meetings that may require follow up or formal decisions to be made until the very end. Schedule meetings early, have a clear sense of what one wants to accomplish as a STINT Teaching Sabbatical participant personally and for one's home university, and get to work on it.
- Enjoy Tokyo. Enjoy Japan. Remember how lucky you are to be there.

ACTION PLAN

Individual and continued relationship with the host institution

Most immediately, I will be returning to Tokyo at the end of March 2020 for a one week period. I will be taking part in a PEAK symposium focusing on pedagogy and will present a more elaborated overview of my classroom work on qualitative methods and student migration. I will also continue supervision of the doctoral student to whose committee I am

being assigned. Lastly, I have been invited to speak at a seminar at Sophia University's Department of Social Anthropology having to do with my current research.

I am also exploring with colleagues in the Global Leadership Program how I can make a limited contribution to their teaching in autumn 2020, and with PEAK colleagues whether a short version of my Qualitative Research Methods course could be offered again in 2020 or 2021.

I will also need to be present for the doctoral student's internal thesis presentation and committee meeting in late spring 2021 as well as defense in summer 2021.

Department and home institution

The School of Public Administration at University of Gothenburg is very supportive of a continued relationship with Tokyo. One of our doctoral students visited University of Tokyo in October 2019 and held meetings with Tokyo counterparts. Upon my return to Gothenburg, we plan to discuss how to build on these initial contacts so that some degree of mobility between doctoral students could be implemented and that does not produce costs for either partner.

Given University of Gothenburg's emphasis on short term undergraduate study abroad, I am now starting to explore how the current GU-Tokyo MoU might serve as the basis for a faculty-PEAK exchange agreement to provide a small number of students and staff with the ability to spend a short period abroad. This is a priority for late spring and autumn 2020.