

Advancing TMDU's Global Accessibility

AGAT is the Advancement of Global Accessibility Team created by President Yoshizawa and overseen by the Global Affairs Advancement Steering Committee to help globalize the university. The team consists of faculty members from the Institute of Global Affairs (IGA) and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. AGAT's vision is to assist in creating an environment that is global in reach and rich in international quality, attracting diverse, motivated individuals to the university community by broadly increasing the accessibility of university resources and facilities to all international students, foreign faculty, staff, patients and visitors across university campuses and programs.

Campus signs and university documents

Everywhere one looks campus signs and university documents are largely limited to the Japanese language. This has created a language barrier for those in the university community who cannot read or understand Japanese. In order to overcome these barriers, AGAT has launched an initiative to create a bilingual zone across the campus in which international students, foreign faculty and staff, hospital patients, and university visitors are able to easily access facilities and resources on campus.

The focus of AGAT thus far has been on bilingualizing an array of university documents and forms that are frequently used in the medical and dental hospitals and by international students, foreign faculty and staff. For example, hospital patients are often required to sign consent forms or to read a variety of medical documents they may receive upon a visit to the hospital. Working in conjunction with faculty and administration in both hospitals, AGAT has identified high-priority documents and forms and is now overseeing their

translation. International students face a language barrier as well when they are asked to read or fill out forms available only in Japanese, such as forms related to conducting animal experiments or filing one's graduate thesis. The same language barrier exists for foreign faculty and staff who must fill out employment documentation or annual performance reports. AGAT has conducted surveys to determine which forms and documents must be translated in order to create a bilingual zone that increases the accessibility to campus facilities and resources for these important members of the university community.

Improving the environment for international students

A survey of all international students was conducted by AGAT in order to capture their impressions of academic and daily life at TMDU and in Japan. The survey garnered a high response rate, enabling us to identify the challenges faced by international students. One particular challenge for students is the initial transition to life at TMDU and in Japan. AGAT has made a concerted effort this fiscal year to streamline the initial process for

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1 Orientation session for prospective tutors affords the opportunity to learn their roles
2 Orientation for new international students is designed to familiarize the students to ease their transition into TMDU



3 Discussion Café provides a rich environment for discussion in English of current controversial topics with students from various backgrounds
4 Japanese Class offers international students the chance to learn Japanese language and culture

international students to study at TMDU. For example, we have had the initial contact date between international students and TMDU administrative staff and faculty moved up well before the students arrive in Japan so that they can be prepared mentally and physically to start a new life. Furthermore, as part of the tutor system, which was designed to assist first-year international students, we have introduced an orientation session for prospective tutors to prepare them to effectively meet the needs of newly arrived international students. Also contributing to these efforts are senior international students who play a crucial role in helping new students become acclimated to their new environment and providing updated information to TMDU faculty and administration about the needs of international students generally.

Other AGAT-related projects include creating opportunities for international students and Japanese students to work together, such as Discussion Cafe, an international event where students discuss topics of general interest in English. Other projects include cultural events held on campus to promote cultural exchange and encourage TMDU students to reach out to each other with mutual understanding and acceptance. Additionally, AGAT faculty members have started to work on expanding international appreciation opportunities outside the student community on campus, including projects conceived and spearheaded by international students. These projects have been a success and we anticipate building on these successes next year.

These are just a few of the significant strides that have been made on behalf of international students at TMDU. And yet, the results of our international student survey indicate that more work remains to be done to create a truly global environment to attract and educate talented students from overseas. Not all respondents felt that they

had access to the best that TMDU has to offer, especially in terms of curricular learning and cutting-edge research and expertise. Some dissatisfaction was expressed with regards to housing on campus, a challenge that AGAT and IGA have recently endeavoured to make progress on. Going forward, AGAT will continue to work in tandem with other university committees to advance the cause of globalization at TMDU.

Further projects

AGAT would like to thank the many students, staff members and faculty members who have lent a helping hand to the projects outlined above. These efforts mark our first step toward creating an inclusive environment not just for international students and faculty but also for everyone in the university community, including Japanese students, faculty, staff, and hospital patients. Additional steps going forward will include improving the university website in terms of global accessibility and our methods of information dissemination to current and prospective international students. Ultimately, AGAT aims not only to assist in creating a global environment at TMDU but also to impart a global mindset to TMDU students, faculty and staff. We very much appreciate your input and cooperation for our shared goal of growing into a globally engaged university.

About the Institute of Global Affairs

In addition to enhancing global accessibility at TMDU, IGA is dedicated to providing high-quality language education in English and Japanese as a second language and engaging in international scholarly and professional activities such as holding the 1st Big Data Machine Learning in Healthcare in Japan (February, 2018) and Joint Symposium with Taipei Medical University (March, 2018).