

Symposium

📅 2025年9月28日(日) 13:10 ~ 14:40 🏢 Session Room 5 (Conference Room A)

[Symposium 96] Studying in a Japanese medical school as an international student: aims and challenges

Moderator: Yuji Ozeki (Shiga University of Medical Science), Akiko Ohnishi (The University of Tokyo)

[SY-96-02] Beyond Just Research: Navigating Culture, Challenges, and Growth as a Muslim Iraqi Postgraduate Student in Japan

*Asraa Faris Aldoghachi¹, Chizuko Tezuka², Yuji Ozeki¹, Daijiro Yanagisawa¹ (1.Shiga University of Medical Science(Japan), 2.Keio University(Japan))

キーワード：Cross-cultural adaptation、Host culture、Challenges、Identity、Resilience

Studying abroad is often seen as an academic dream, but over time, it becomes a deeply personal journey of cultural adaptation. As an international neuroscience PhD student from Iraq, where few students pursue higher education in Japan, I faced academic demands, profound cultural contrasts, and a sense of cultural solitude. Navigating a society where emotional restraint, indirect communication, and unspoken social expectations are valued, I found myself facing aspects of Japanese culture that lie beneath the surface. Adapting to such a high-context environment while overcoming language barriers, finding few fellow Arabs/ Iraqis, and managing religious practices like halal dietary restrictions and daily prayers required ongoing negotiation between authenticity and sensitivity.

What initially felt overwhelming gradually became a catalyst for growth, leading to one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. This journey has promoted scientific development, mental and emotional resilience, and a more profound sense of identity. In my presentation, I will reflect on the interplay between cultural norms, personal identity, and adaptation and share strategies that helped me thrive. Through my presentation, I hope to offer a personal lens into the realities of studying abroad in Japan and its transformative potential, especially for those coming from minority backgrounds.