

## **Efforts towards creating an International Baccalaureate student friendly Japanese National University**

**Background:** The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma program is a standardized international curriculum equivalent to a third year high school qualification. The number of IB students applying to Japanese Universities is increasing every year. Okayama University is a Super Global National University which recognizes the IB diploma (IBDP) and has been admitting IB students into the undergraduate course without imposing any admission tests, since 2012. As of October 2017, 26 IBDP students from IB schools in Japan and abroad, have enrolled in 11 faculties and one special course. Okayama University has not only been a pioneer in IB admissions but has a solid IB student support system and is also taking great initiatives to create IB awareness, through IB research and faculty education. Previously, two research papers on IB student voices about University life and IB student Academic Advisor interviews on IB student academic life and adjustments following admission, have already been published. This research is the last step in summarizing opinions and suggestions of IB college counselors with regard to IB admissions, with the hope of creating a more IB friendly Japanese University based on IB student needs. **Method:** Twenty college counselors from International Schools and First Article schools in Japan, were asked to fill out a survey anonymously, with regard to the following questions. a) What are your expectations of Japanese National Universities? b) What are some disappointing aspects of Admission policies at Japanese National Universities? c) What are your suggestions for improving the existing Admission policies? d) What are the reasons behind IB students choosing Foreign Universities over Japanese Universities? e) What are the reasons behind IB students choosing Private Universities over National Universities in Japan? **Results of Survey:** Lack of understanding of the IB education system leading to unrealistic expectations of IB students, was a major concern among all college counselors. Next, unfamiliarity with overseas admission policies with regard to age at admission, language requirements, IB credit transfers and subsequent recognition of the IB Diploma were also reasons why IB students opted for foreign Universities over Japanese Universities. Finally, Japanese Private Universities which try to provide offers similar to overseas Universities are given priority over Japanese National Universities by many IB students and parents, irrespective of the high costs involved. **Conclusion:** Multiple approaches are necessary by Japanese Universities to accommodate and welcome IB students, who come from a very international educational background which is quite different from Japanese High School education. Balancing the needs of IB students with the expectations of University teachers who are eager to admit IB students for the Internationalization of Japanese Universities, can only be achieved through surveys and interviews which convey a realistic picture of what actions need to be taken create an IB friendly Japanese University. **Keywords:** Japanese Higher Education, International Baccalaureate, Internationalization of Japanese Universities