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## Global and Local: Introducing the “International Liberal Arts Program” and “Regional Development Program” (Minor Programs)



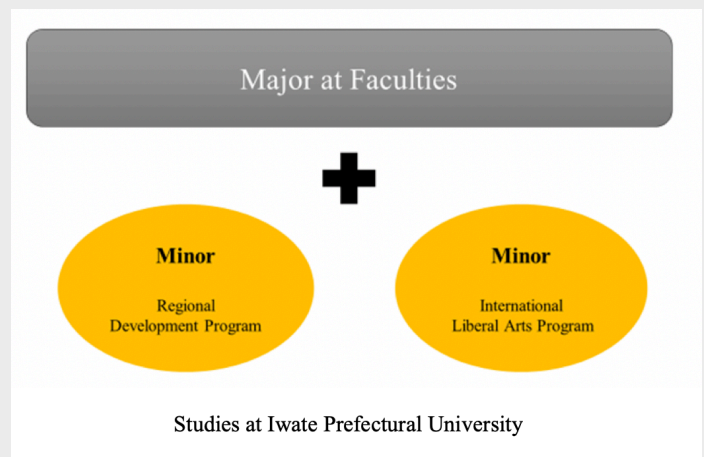
**Principle 6:** Encouraging global citizenship through education

**Principle 9:** A commitment to promoting sustainability through education;

### 1. Introduction: Two Minor Programs in Liberal Arts Education

Iwate Prefectural University offers a systematic minor education as parts of liberal arts education. From the first year at the university, students take basic education courses for their cultural enrichment and the development of a “foundation of knowledge” for the pursuit academic learning. However, the aim of the “Minor” is not to stop there, but to provide students with opportunities to further expand and deepen their specialized studies in each faculty.

The main features of the “Minor” are (1) students from all faculties are eligible to apply, and (2) it consists of two programs: the “Regional Development Program” and the “International Liberal Arts Program”. Both programs are practical approaches to understanding the world from the viewpoints of regional and international perspectives respectively. After completing each program, students will be granted the titles and certificates of completion of “Specialist in Regional Development” or “Specialist in International Liberal Arts”.



### 2. Minor in International Liberal Arts Program

#### Program Managers:

Professor Wenjing Liu-Würz, Professor Sachiko Kuroiwa, Associate Professor Tetsuya Kumamoto,  
Associate Professor Hideya Takahashi, Lecturer Minoru Otani  
(Center for the Advancement of Higher Education)

The “International Liberal Arts Program,” which started in the 2020 academic year, is characterized by the following features: (1) exploring the possibilities of cross-cultural understanding and multicultural society, (2) examining the issues of global society, and (3) learning multiple languages. Based on these characteristics, the following subject groups have been established: Core Courses, Foreign Language Courses, Global Understanding Courses, Practice and Seminar Courses and Capstone Course.



All students are required to take Core Courses in their first year and Capstone Course in their final year. Besides the two courses, students are eligible to choose classes depending on their interests from each course group (elective compulsory). For example, in the Foreign Language Courses, students are required to take one language from among Chinese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, German and French.

The Capstone Course, which is the final course in the program, asks students to set a theme to carry out research and investigation, culminating in a presentation of their academic results. By providing an opportunity for students to express their own thoughts and opinions, they will be able to improve their presentation skills and confirm whether they have the insight of the “International Liberal Arts Specialist”.



Course structure of the International Liberal Arts Program

- ***Class Example: Introduction to Global Understanding***

This section will present “Introduction to Global Understanding”, one of the core subjects of the “Minor” in the International Liberal Arts Program. In October 2020, the class invited Mr. Keishi Otomo, an internationally renowned film director from Iwate Prefecture, to give a special lecture titled “Images as a Communication Tool”. The aim of the lecture was to help students acquire an internationally cultivated mind by listening to a globally active person.

Mr. Otomo said that in recent years, the internet has made visual images more accessible and a means of communication, but it has also created

new social issues, in particular fake news. He therefore stressed the importance of learning video literacy, such as “how videos are made” as it will help us to read facts without being misled by fake news.



Mr. Otomo shot a film called “Eiri” (2020), which is set in his hometown (Morioka city in Iwate Prefecture) and based on a novel by Shinsuke Numata. It won Japan’s prestigious literary award, the Akutagawa Ryunosuke Prize (2017). His film also received international attention, for instance, “Eiri” won the Best Actor award prize at the 2nd Hainan Island International Film Festival in China, and was also released in Taiwan. In the lecture, Mr. Otomo stated that he valued “localness” in the filming of “Eiri” and the “Rurouni Kenshin” series, which is also popular overseas.

He also emphasized that internationality is able to be reached by receiving and exploring our own Japanese culture. Namely, he pointed out that local matters can be a key to approaching universal issues in the world. Based on this international experience, Mr. Otomo explained the necessity of self-expression in overseas communication and the importance of individuality for this purpose. In other words, in order to be active overseas, it is important to discover one's individuality through trial and error rather than relying on a company or organization. Therefore, he encouraged the students to accumulate experiences such as watching movies at the cinema.

### ***3. Minor in Regional Development Program***

**Program Manager:** Associate-Professor Yoshiei Watanabe  
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#### **I. Program content**

The major classes of this program are “Iwate Regional Development Studies I”, “Iwate Regional Development Studies II”, and “Actual Practice in Iwate Research”.

#### **Iwate Regional Development Studies I**

“Iwate Regional Development Studies I” is a class to develop not only basic-learning methods for the regional community, but also the ability to find out local resources and local issues through all five senses in specific areas of the prefecture. In addition, by presenting the learning outcomes to local people, it is intended to acquire the ability to understand and explain their learning logically and organically.



#### **Iwate Regional Development Studies II**

The students of “Iwate Regional Development Studies II” have to be responsible for planning and managing the regional study of "Iwate Regional Development Studies I". As a result, students acquire the abilities of communicating with local residents and the designing of projects. Here, students make full use of the methods of regional community learning acquired in "Iwate Regional Development Studies I” and the ability to find out local resources and local issues.



## Actual Practice in Iwate Research

“Actual Practice in Iwate Research” is a capstone subject of this program and is a class that serves an overall wrap-up. The goal is that students should point out local issues and implement methods for solving them on their own. Therefore, there are more opportunities to actively interact with the local community than "Iwate Regional Development Studies I" and "Iwate Regional Development Studies II". Students must go to a region many times to find existing resources and issues, and to verify over and over again how they can be combined to provide an appropriate solution. In addition, the "Actual Practice in Iwate Research" is a half-year class, and thus schedule management is also important in order to move toward its realization in this limited time.



## **4. Results of the 2020 fiscal Year**

### **“Iwate Regional Development Studies I” and “Iwate Regional Development Studies II”**

The class conducted local learning in three areas: Nishiwaga Town, Miyako City, and Shizukuishi Town. Nishiwaga Town has the highest aging rate in the prefecture and strives for the slogan of human health and happiness. Setting up this slogan as a keyword, students tried to contact with hospital officials and migrants from the outside of the prefecture and look into current issues.

In Miyako City, the students had the plan to learn how this city is revitalizing as we pass 10 years since the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. And then, they went to see persons who were actively engaged in various fields in this city, and discussed the earthquake recovery.

In Shizukuishi Town, the students focused on green tourism, visiting sites that are actually active in the tourism business, and had the chance to gain experience, and interact with the local people.

Both program-classes were held on a Saturday and Sunday in October. The students of “Iwate Regional Development Studies I” understood their two-day learning, and acquired the ability to summarize and explain details in an easy-to-understand manner for the debriefing session in November. The students of “Iwate Regional Development Studies II” planned the 2 day-course for "Iwate Regional Development Studies I”, spending 5 months preparing, and achieved many learning outcomes.



## “Actual Practice in Iwate Research”

The 2020 hands-on exercise was put into practice in the Matsuzono district (hereafter M-town) in Morioka city. This district was developed as a new residential town in 1970 – 1990, and at present suffers from declining and aging populations like other similar districts. The two groups of students visited M-town many times over the course of about four months, and discussed effective measures for solving current issues in M-town. Both groups examined existing statistics and questionnaire surveys conducted in this district, and while discussing with the local people many times, they valued what they actually saw and felt in their hands-on experience in the district. They then devised their own solutions.

- **Group 1:**

Based on the questionnaires of residents, one group focused on the lack of places for residents to gather. They experienced the real calm atmosphere of M-town, and aimed to solve regional issues on the theme of books. Specifically, the group had handmade bookshelves called "book racks" installed in three places in the town, and arranged about 100 books collected through the group's own efforts. And the group decided to use a free style of operation in which residents could borrow a book whenever they liked and return it at any one of the three places.

The only request to persons who borrowed books was to write down their impression of the book. With this action, the group tried to promote close relationships with local residents through books. Through the implementation of about two months, the group analyzed where the books moved from where and how much they were utilized, and compiled the data as a report.

- **Group 2:**

The other group aimed to solve the issues by surveying existing statistical data and walking around the town. As a result, it was found that the residents had negative comments on the lack of hustle and bustle of shopping streets, and also showed a low evaluation on the quality of existing public facilities. Based on these resident's opinions, students tried to solve these issues by publicizing stores and public facilities in M-town.

Consequently, the group proposed to make a “regional map” by referring to those of other universities and local governments. While utilizing what was valuable from the preceding cases, the group considered the method of effectively disseminating and publicizing information by posting contents from different internet gourmet sites. As a result, the group planned to make a booklet called "Matsuzono *Iitoko* Map" which describes the information of stores including their origins, recommendations, preferences, etc. which they gained through interviews. The booklet also serves an introduction to the "Ten Views of Matsuzono".



It took about two months to produce the booklet. Then, 1,500 copies of the map were printed and distributed through local public facilities, elementary and junior high schools and stores that had responded to interviews. After distribution, the group conducted a questionnaire on the internet and received opinions on good points and points which should be improved.

## 5. Awarding of “Specialist in Regional Development” (Mini-Degree)

In fiscal 2020, 6 students completed all curriculums and were awarded the title of “Specialist in Regional Development”. The following message was received from the student who greeted the audience as a representative at the award ceremony:

"I think I was able to gain communication skills by jumping into the community and working with the residents, and at the same time I also gained the ability to think in order to grasp and solve local issues, and until then I had tried to do it all by myself, but I was able to believe in my friends and enjoy it with my friends."



“Specialist in Regional Development” recipients of the 2020 Fiscal Year (left) and 2019 Fiscal Year (right).