

Matsuura Seminar (6th Student Interview, M.H.)

Title: “See Things as an Opportunity Without Narrowing Down the Possibilities”

Why did you join Matsuura Seminar?

Well, the first reason was that I was interested in the research field. Since I was a high school student, I’ve been interested in urban development, and as a sophomore after entering university, I wanted to join a seminar related to that field. At Matsuura Seminar, we cannot study urban development directly, but I thought that we could study urban development indirectly as it focuses on the fields of corporate location, corporate innovation, and international competitiveness of cities. I was also attracted to the Matsuura Seminar because I can gain data analysis skills which would be useful even when I enter society and what was more, it was a new seminar and I thought we could create our own seminar and history. After applying during the Date B registration period, I was accepted.

Did Matsuura Seminar participate in Seminar Information Sessions or open seminars?

Actually, no! A week before the Date A registration period, I received a notice that Matsuura Seminar was open and that it would be accepting students. I didn’t know what kind of teacher Professor Matsuura was or what he specialized in until I applied.

I see. So in your case, did you apply for another seminar during the Date A registration period and applied for Matsuura Seminar during the Date B registration period?

At first, there was a seminar that I really wanted to go to during the Date A registration period, but as I mentioned earlier, I heard about Matsuura Seminar a week before the registration period, and I thought that the research field sounded interesting as well. However, looking back on my life, I realized that I had never been accepted to my first choice, so I decided to take a shot at my first choice instead of going to a seminar where I had a chance of being accepted from the beginning. I was thinking from the start that if I get rejected from my first choice, I would apply for Matsuura Seminar.

I see. Please tell us about your Date A registration period experience in detail.

As I mentioned earlier, I was interested in urban development, which Kawabata and Takeyama Seminars specialize in, but I applied for Kurino Seminar during Date A registration period. Professor Kurino was originally from the Department of Civil Engineering at Kyoto University who studied urban engineering. As urban planning requires knowledge of microeconomics, I was drawn to his seminar. Above all, Professor Kurino was my microeconomics professor and since I wanted to study under a professor I knew well, I decided to apply.

How did you move on when you were not accepted during the Date A registration period? Also, did you think about applying to the Date B registration period before applying to the Date A registration period?

I was greedy, so I thought, “If I fail during the Date A registration period, I can apply for Matsuura Seminar during the Date B registration period!” However, when I didn’t get accepted, I was shocked that I stayed in my room for two or three days (Laugh). But this also meant that I had the chance to study at Matsuura Seminar, so I changed my mind in three or four days and decided to do my best to pass the entrance exam.

Is there anything you wish you had done better before applying for seminars?

Yes, I guess one is that there is nothing better than getting good grades. This is not a very good story, but when a friend of mine also applied for Kurino Seminar, he was not satisfied with his result and thus, directly asked the professor why he was not accepted. The professor replied that everyone did well on the tests and interviews, so it was decided that they would cut students off based on grades in the end. So, I would like everyone to know that there is the possibility that some seminars may cut you off based on your grades in the end.

What do you like about Matsuura Seminar?

One of the things I like is that the professor is very kind and caring. At first, I applied for a seminar specializing in microeconomics, and although I had some confidence in microeconomics, I was struggling with statistics since my first year. Since I joined Matsuura Seminar under such circumstances, I was worried whether I could really keep up. However, the professor explained how I can use statistical software, what specific analysis method I can use for certain types of data, and so on from step 1. While I was not good at statistics, I was able to get used to it without having such a hard time with the help of my teacher. Now, I can write my graduation thesis on my own, and I really appreciate his kindness.

Also, as it was a new seminar, there were times when I was trying to figure out with the professor how we can run the seminar. I am glad that I joined the Matsuura Seminar because I was able to spend time getting to know the other seminar students and the professor.

What makes a new seminar so special?

In a seminar where there are senpais, the seminar's policy is decided to a certain extent, so the senpais and teachers tend to give instructions on what to do at this time of the year and what to do the next time, and the third-year students act accordingly. However, in our case, there were no such restrictions at all; we were able to do whatever we wanted to do. The professor was willing to accept requests when students say "I want to try this kind of thing", "I want to do this kind of research" or "I want to hold this kind of event and interact with other people, and I feel that this makes a new seminar so special, unlike a seminar with a long history.

I see. Some sophomores may think, "I want to do this, but I don't think I can do it in a seminar," but in a new seminar, there is a high chance that they can do it themselves!

Next, looking back on your student life, what was your seminar like?

It was the heart and pacemaker of my third and fourth year at Mita.

Seminars tend to determine the course of study during your third and fourth years. For example, those in a seminar specializing in macroeconomics will take classes related to macroeconomics, while those in a seminar specializing in economic history will take many history-related classes to gain knowledge that will be useful for their graduation thesis.

In that sense, I also took many classes on data analysis to feel more comfortable with statistics, which I was not good at all when I joined Matsuura Seminar. In order to find a research theme, I took a class on international economics, which Professor Matsuura was researching, as well as classes regarding urban development, which I had always been interested in. Furthermore, by

taking courses offered by Tokyo Institute of Technology, I took classes on urban planning and civil engineering from a more scientific approach. In this way, the seminar shaped my life at Mita.

Is there anything you would like to tell the sophomores who were not accepted during the Date A registration period?

I hope that sophomores will not be discouraged even if they are not accepted during the Date A registration period and will try again during the Date B registration period. In my case, I spent my sophomore year thinking that I would be doing microeconomics in my third and fourth year, but in reality, I realized that I was doing something completely different (data analysis) which I thought I was not good at first, but once I started, I found a lot of interesting things. At the same time, my seminar professor turned out to be very good (Laugh).

I think that the sophomores who will take the entrance exam for Date A registration period are taking the entrance exam with extraordinary feelings, but even if the results did not turn out the way they wanted, they may meet someone they never expected to meet, or they may meet a seminar or research field that will change their future. I think there are many sophomores who have already decided which seminar they would like to join, but it is important that you do not limit your possibilities. When the Date B registration period starts, you can say “I didn’t get in a seminar during Date A registration period, but now I have the chance to apply for another seminar during Date B registration period! I’m going to work hard for it!” If you think in this way, you might get accepted during Date B or Date C registration period and have an experience that you could not have had in the seminar you were accepted to during Date A registration period, which will enrich your life at Mita. I would like to tell you to not be discouraged and to do your best!

Do you think it is important to rest? (Laugh)

Yes (Laugh). During the Date A registration period, there is about a month between the registration date and the entrance exam, so I think that many people study very hard to pass the exam during that period. Therefore, it is important to tell yourself that you did a great job and if you fail, I think it is OK to cry for 3 to 4 days. I think it’s not too late at all to start preparing for the Date B registration period after you’ve cried and decided that you’ve rested enough.

One thing to keep in mind is that I had already decided to apply for Matsuura Seminar during the Date B registration period beforehand, so it was OK to not do anything for 3 or 4 days. However, if you do so without having decided which seminar to apply for during the Date B registration period, you will have to look for a seminar to apply for after 3 or 4 days have passed. To avoid this, you should rank your first, second, and third choice from the beginning and research until you can say, for example, that you will not apply for a specific seminar because it is hard to get accepted, that you would be fine even if you apply during Date B registration period, or that your life at Mita will be fine as long as you apply during the designated period.

Indeed. You’re saying that before applying, it is important to gather proper information and have your own strategy while preparing, right?

If you were to look back now, do you think you would take the Kurino Seminar during Date A registration period? Or do you think you would take the Matsuura Seminar?

I like Matsuura Seminar so much that I think I will probably apply for Matsuura Seminar instead of Kurino Seminar. The teacher turned out to be very kind, and more than anything else, I learned how interesting data analysis can be.

I was able to learn about causal relationships and connections between events that I did not know before, and I think such knowledge will be useful even after I work at a company, and I think it has broadened my future. There may not be many jobs that directly use microeconomics, but I think there are many jobs that directly use data analysis. In that sense, I think I would probably go to Matsuura Seminar if I were to go back to the past, in that I was able to take on the challenge of being interested in various things when I was job hunting.

Even though you felt that you were not good at statistics as a sophomore, you have overcome the difficulty by taking the seminar. What do you think is the difference?

In a statistics class required by the economics department, hundreds of students take the class at the same time taught by a teacher, so I think there were many cases where students did not understand the material even though they asked their friends for help. As was the case with me, in the end, there were probably students who took the exam and received the credit without really understanding the subject and ended up struggling with statistics.

However, in a seminar, there are approximately 10 students, so the professor knows the level and knowledge of statistics of each student, so he/she can teach in a way that suits the student's needs, or he/she can give a supplemental class. Even if you enter a seminar that specializes in a field you think you are not good at (not only in the case of statistics), I think every seminar has an environment in which the professor will give you a lot of support, so I don't think you need to worry too much.

I think that many students will have fewer choices of seminars to apply for during the Date B registration period and will apply for seminars specializing in the fields that they are interested in but are not good at. Still, I think they should apply without worrying about that!

Please give a message to the sophomores who are about to apply for a seminar.

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, students were able to visit only six seminar information sessions a day, whereas in the past students were able to visit many seminars in one day. Although it is a time when you need to narrow down your choices, please participate in the third information session and take a look at other seminars which you did not consider in the first and second information session. By doing so, you can change your choice immediately if you encounter any issues, or find out if you can actually do the research you want to do in a seminar. Even if the result of your first choice did not turn out to be good, I think that there are still plenty of seminars that will suit you and make you happier than your first choice. I hope you will continue to study hard without worrying about your result.

Last question, what is the strength of Matsuura Seminar?

First of all, the professor is really kind, and I have never seen him get upset even once. No matter how poor the quality of my presentation was, he did not get upset; rather, he politely told me what was wrong with it. As a result, I was able to present my research without feeling scared. Furthermore, the professor is a specialist in data analysis, so he will tell you anything if you ask

him. He is also very knowledgeable in fields other than data analysis, so even if you ask him a question in a field that he does not specialize in, he will tell you a lot about it. Although the seminar is in the international economics category, you can do data analysis so if you are not good at statistics but would like to analyze data using statistical software, please come and join us!

Also, the current third graders are very unique and include international students as well as students from other universities. I think it would be a challenge to study with such a diverse group of people in other seminars, so please apply to Matsuura Seminar!

I found it important for sophomores to attend the third seminar information session to get to know more about each seminar! Thank you so much for your time!

Sidenote:

This time, we decided to interview a student who has applied and was accepted during the Date B registration period. Once again, thank you so much!

One thing I noticed through this interview is that we should not narrow down the possibilities and see everything as an opportunity. It is true that even if you fail in Date A registration period, you still have Date B registration period and Date C registration period, so you have two more chances. For those of you who will be applying for Date A registration period, I hope that you will not give up and apply for the seminar.

Through this interview, I also realized that there are many strengths of the seminar that I did not know about. I would like to continue to do my best in conducting interviews so that I can convey the strength of other seminars as well.

Thank you very much for reading!