

# INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR SHIN KIMIE



**PROFESSOR SHIN KIMIE**

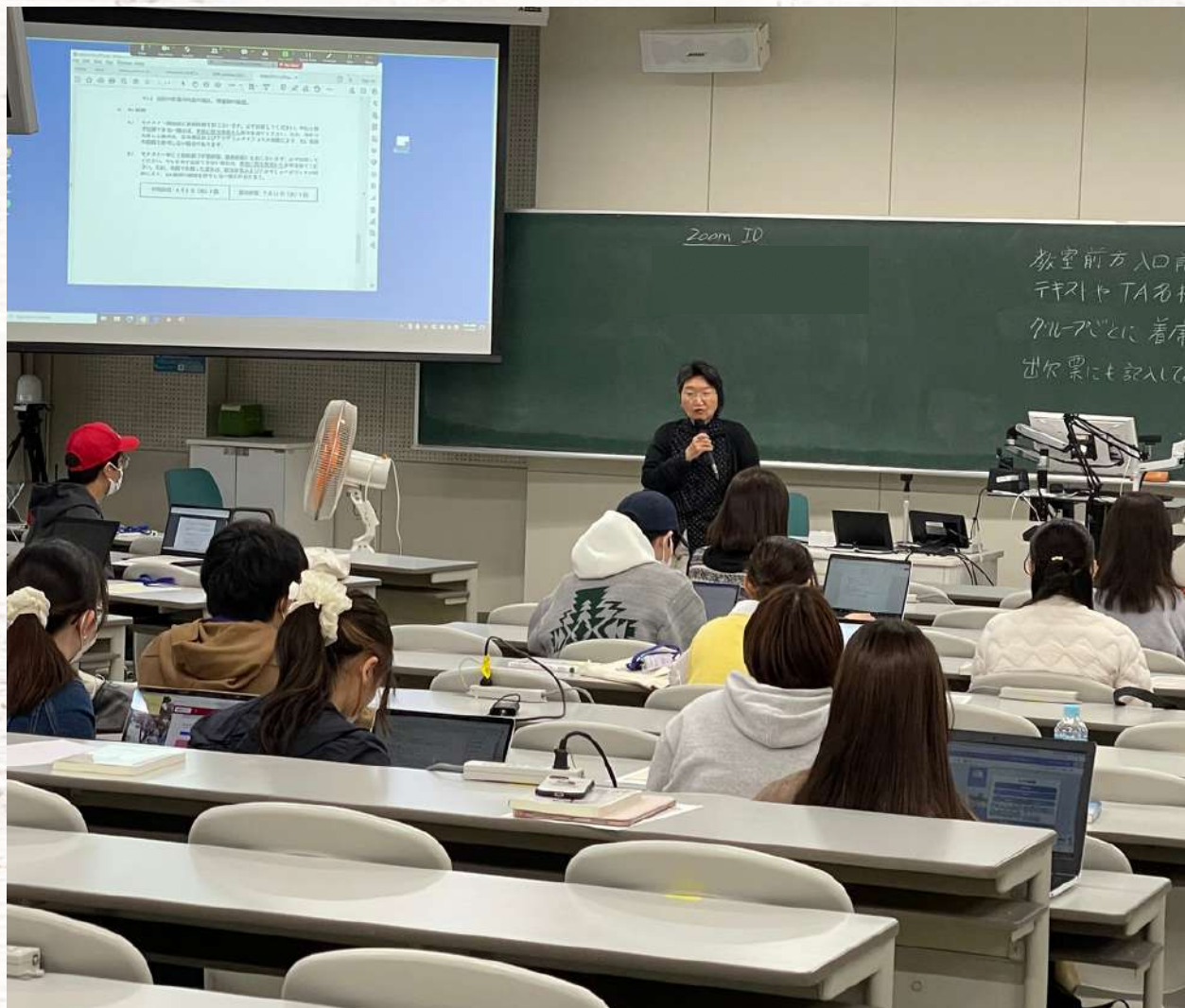
## CHANGES AND GOALS IN APU'S FIRST YEAR EDUCATION



From the observations of Academic Learning Resource Core Staff (ALCRS) Project Q-Team members, the APU campus has witnessed a surge of excitement and enthusiasm in the AY 2023 Spring semester. Factors contributing to this positive atmosphere include the opening of our new College of Sustainability and Tourism (ST)

and the revision of our curriculum, including courses under APU's ever-crucial Education Development and Learning Support Center (EDLSC). In this semester's Project Q articles, we hope to help faculty members navigate these new frontiers by interviewing and analyzing the teaching methods of two celebrated professors from the ST and EDLSC departments.

### I. INTRODUCTION



#### 1. PLEASE INTRODUCE YOURSELF, PROFESSOR

I currently specialize in Student Development Theory with a background in sociolinguistics, cultural anthropology, and *girei* studies. Based on this foundation, I now support student leadership activities by instructing classes and training on the elements of leadership development that students experience in both class and extracurricular activities.

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### II. FIRST-YEAR EDUCATION AT APU

#### 1. CAN YOU TELL US SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS AND UNIQUE POINTS OF FIRST-YEAR EDUCATION AT APU COMPARED TO OTHER UNIVERSITIES' PROGRAMS?

The goal of first-year education is to provide students with university-level attitudes, skills, and approaches to learning. To achieve such goals, students must transition from the passive learning style in high school to the active, independent style required in university. This principle of first-year education has been incorporated by universities nationwide. At APU, however, we have the additional challenge of preparing students to enter a multicultural environment. Conducting first-year education that motivates students towards intercultural understanding is a feature of APU, and Multicultural Cooperative Workshop (MCW), which is mandatory university-wide, provides this feature. Since 2011, faculty members in charge of MCW training have established a system in which APU faculty members train international and domestic student leader teaching assistants (LTAs). The

LTAs in turn train international and domestic student teaching assistants (TAs) for individual classes. Those TAs then conduct classes for mixed groups composed of Japanese-basis and English-basis students in the seminar classes. The system we created in which senior peer leaders guide exercises in all first-year subjects is unique to our university worldwide. APU's first-year education is the foundation for learning at APU in a multicultural campus environment. Additionally, in line with APU's 2030 vision for cultivating individuals with the power to influence society, we are developing opportunities for cooperative learning through activities such as creating original and socially significant "Creative Summer School" proposals in Japanese- and English-basis mixed groups in MCW and holding workshop sessions in another first-year subject Foundation for Global Leadership (FGL).

**2. FROM THE AY 2023 SPRING SEMESTER, THE EXISTING STUDY SKILLS AND ACADEMIC WRITING (SSAW) AND INTRODUCTION TO PEER LEADER TRAINING (PLT) COURSES HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO STUDENT SUCCESS WORKSHOP (SSW) AND FOUNDATION FOR GLOBAL LEADERSHIP (FGL). PLEASE TELL US ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES FROM THE PREVIOUS COURSES AND THE STRENGTHS OF THE NEW COURSES.**

In the previous Introduction to PLT course, we fostered proactive and independent students by providing essential university skills such as time management and discussion skills through collaborative learning. Additionally, we introduced the concept of career design at an early stage so that students became aware of their own four-year college journey throughout the course and incorporated guest lectures from senior students, the Career Office, and alumni. For the newly offered FGL course, however, we place a greater emphasis on leadership development to equip students with the foundation necessary to become change makers in line with APU's 2030 Vision. We incorporate leadership theories into pre-reading assignments and in class we foster students who can analyze and discuss leadership with their own experiences as resources based on the reading assignments. We structured the course to teach students about the adaptive leadership theory, which emphasizes the ability to transform oneself in order to overcome challenges, as well as to show the necessity of leadership to not only solve technical issues, but to approach accompanying adaptive challenges. At the end of the course, Japanese-English class mixed-group sessions are conducted to provide an opportunity for students to learn from others. For the final report, we ask students to reflect on the relationship dynamics within their mixed groups up until the last session and analyze how relationships among group members have progressed. In other words, FGL emphasizes making students aware of the process of group connections.

SSW is a class in which students learn about university-style learning. The aim of this course is to support newly enrolled students to realize success as students with student success defined as the ability to learn and ask questions independently. SSAW prior to SSW was a course that focused on academic writing and enabling students to write reports. We have redesigned the course as SSW to enable all students "to be capable of collaborative learning together with their peers" and "to become self-regulating learners increasing their metacognitive ability to analyze and advance their own learning" while learning knowledge and skills for writing. In the first six and last three weeks, we also incorporate approximately half of the class content from "Introduction to PLT". SSW utilizes the flipped learning approach for learning. This course structure involves experiential learning during class workshops based on preparation such as preparatory notes and videos using the fundamentals of university learning for the textbook.

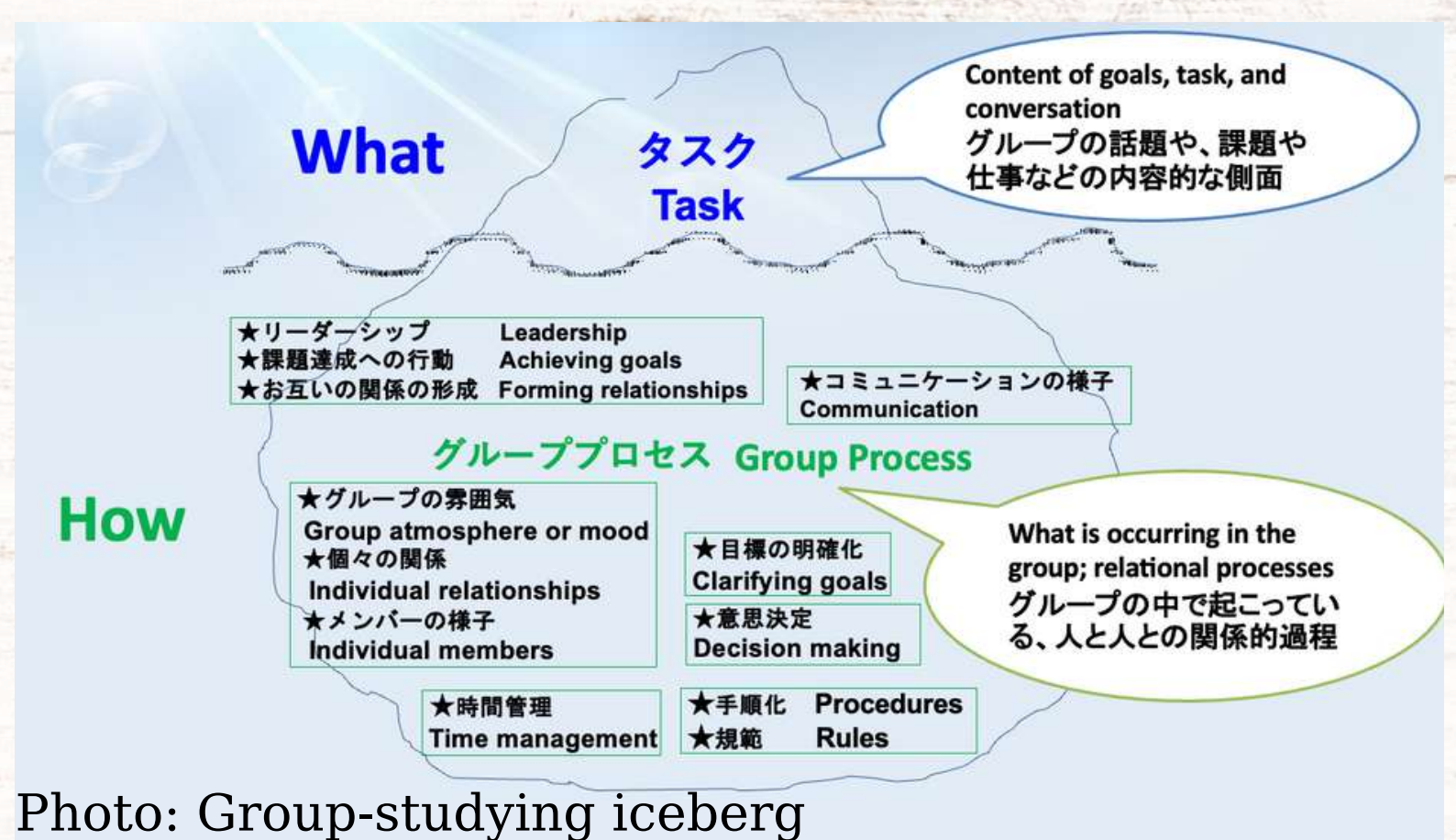


Photo: Group-studying iceberg

### III. MOTIVATING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT LEARNING

#### 1. CAN YOU SHARE YOUR METHODS FOR ENCOURAGING YOUR STUDENTS TO LEARN INDEPENDENTLY?

I clearly communicate the importance of preparation so that students understand its significance. It is also crucial to design a system that incorporates preparation into class so that students can feel that the preparation advanced their understanding in the next class and that the work was enjoyable. As a teacher, I believe I have a responsibility to ensure that what was prepared is used in the next class and connects to the students' learning, because a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in class is very important.

#### 2. HOW DO YOU MANAGE CLASSES AND GROUPS TO PROMOTE STUDENT PEER LEARNING SUCH AS GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

In FGL, we use white threads to “visualize” the discussion. In this activity, each speaker holds a ball of thread and passes it to the next speaker when they finish speaking. At the end of the activity, the group can look at the shape of their thread net which contains thick and thin sections, allowing them to analyze who spoke the most, who frequently talked to the same people, and who hardly talked at all. This exercise helps students to develop metacognitive skills to view their own activity. I also make sure to communicate to students that even if one person is absent from a group work session and they think that they are only one person who is absent, the ideas of one person are lost as each person has ideas that only they themselves think up for the group. This is the basic approach of collaborative learning in which your own learning becomes others' learning and others' learning becomes your own learning.



#### 3. WHAT METHODS DO YOU TAKE TO FACILITATE INTER-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION AMONG STUDENTS AS THE BACKGROUNDS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BECOME INCREASINGLY DIVERSE?

Paradoxically, we at APU understand that there is “value in experiencing the difficulty of intercultural communication”. Of course, we teach students the intercultural communication theories regarding how they should act as individuals within a team. However, in actual groups and teams with multicultural members, unexpected problems inevitably arise. What should students do when others cannot do the things they can do? How should they overcome differences in opinion? How should they include and encourage members who do not participate in meetings? The real learning comes when students start having these issues. First-year education is a place to provide care and support so that students will navigate university life smoothly, and my TAs, as peer leaders, provide maximum support to ensure that students who are struggling to do things will work hard without giving up.

#### 4. HOW DO YOU USE LEARNING TOOLS AND MODELS TO PROMOTE LEARNING?

I conduct my classes based on Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. I introduce this model to all students in SSW, as it can be applied throughout life. As for tools, I introduce learning methods such as the KJ Method and mind maps to help students visualize their thoughts and ideas. During the time we transitioned to online classes, I used an online tool called "Miro" which allowed students to visualize discussions and brainstorm ideas, and which I still use for academic advising at present. Since returning to in-person classes, however, I use movable whiteboards and flipcharts set up in the classroom. When ideas come up, students write them down on post-it notes,

then group them together by content and connect them with circles and arrows to improve the quality of the discussion. I have also made sure to connect students who need help in my SSW class with the Writing Center.

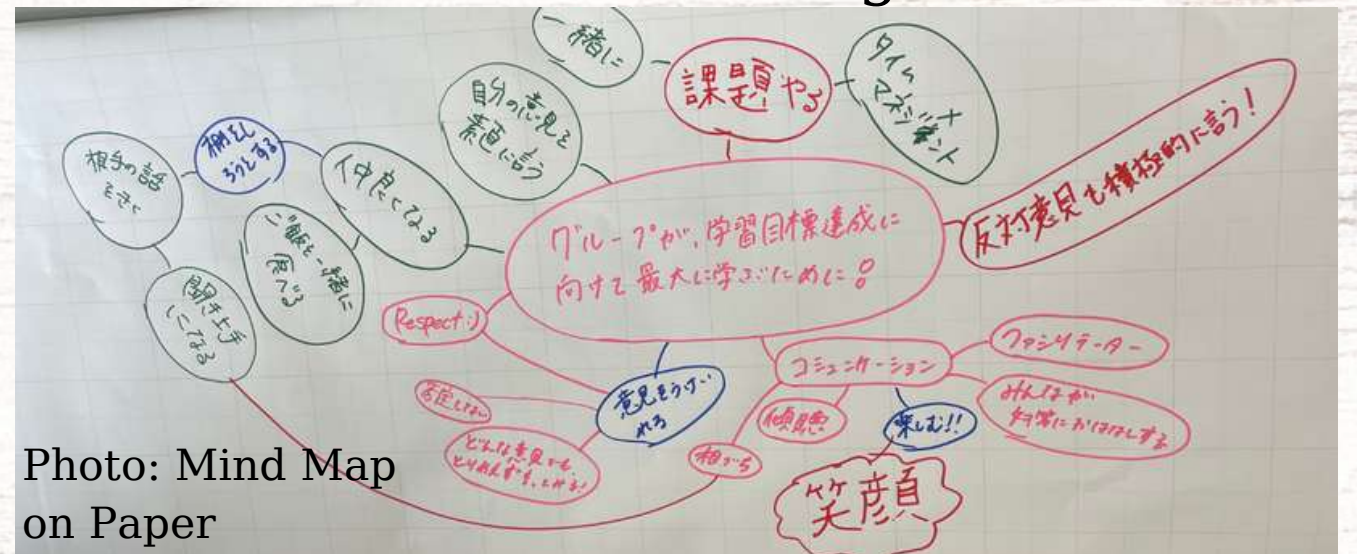


Photo: Mind Map on Paper

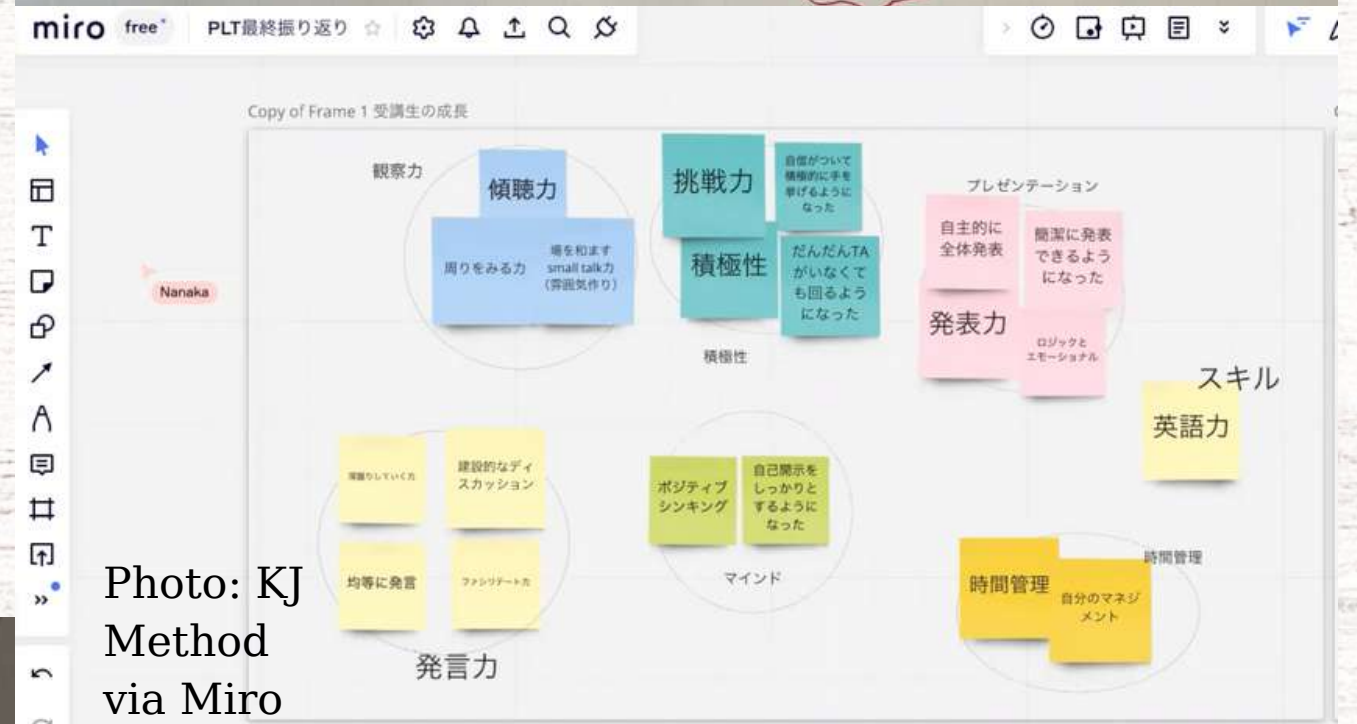


Photo: KJ Method via Miro



Photo: KJ Method Spatial Arrangement Diagram on Paper



Photo: Whiteboard Mind Map

## IV. LOOKING TO 2030

1. THE SIX ACTION PLANS OF THE APU 2030 VISION CONTAIN THE GOAL OF APU BECOMING "AN ENVIRONMENT THAT IS NOT ONLY DIVERSE IN TERMS OF NATIONS AND REGIONS REPRESENTED ON CAMPUS, BUT ONE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION, EMBRACING A RICH ARRAY OF CULTURES, RELIGIONS, AND GENDERS". I THINK THIS GOAL IS LARGELY RELATED TO CLASSES SUCH AS MCW AND FGL IN WHICH DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS COLLABORATE AND LEARN TOGETHER. HAVE YOU MADE ANY CHANGES TO CLASS CONTENT TO ALIGN WITH THIS VISION?

From the 2023 curriculum, the new FGL course (Foundation for Global Leadership) has been developed from the former "Introduction to Peer Leader Training" to focus more on developing students' global leadership skills. In this course, students study various leadership theories through reading assignments and then come to learn about them by discussing and experiencing the content during class. FGL places the most emphasis on the importance of relational leadership and aims to make students cognizant of:

(1) sharing goals, (2) inclusivity, (3) empowerment, (4) ethics and morality, and (5) reflection on processes. In addition, students are taught not only to solve “technical problems” but to become aware of “adaptive challenges”, an important approach to adaptive leadership. In the same course I design and conduct relationship-building sessions organized with mixed groups of students from Japanese and English classes to

provide an opportunity for students to learn with others. By preparing an environment in which multicultural group members must work together towards the implementation of these sessions, the system is designed to have students overcome difficulties through personal experience. The experiences students gain from these projects become the foundation for moving to the next level courses Global Leadership IIA & IIB. I would like to have students acquire the fundamental knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to become the changemakers in APU’s 2030 Vision.

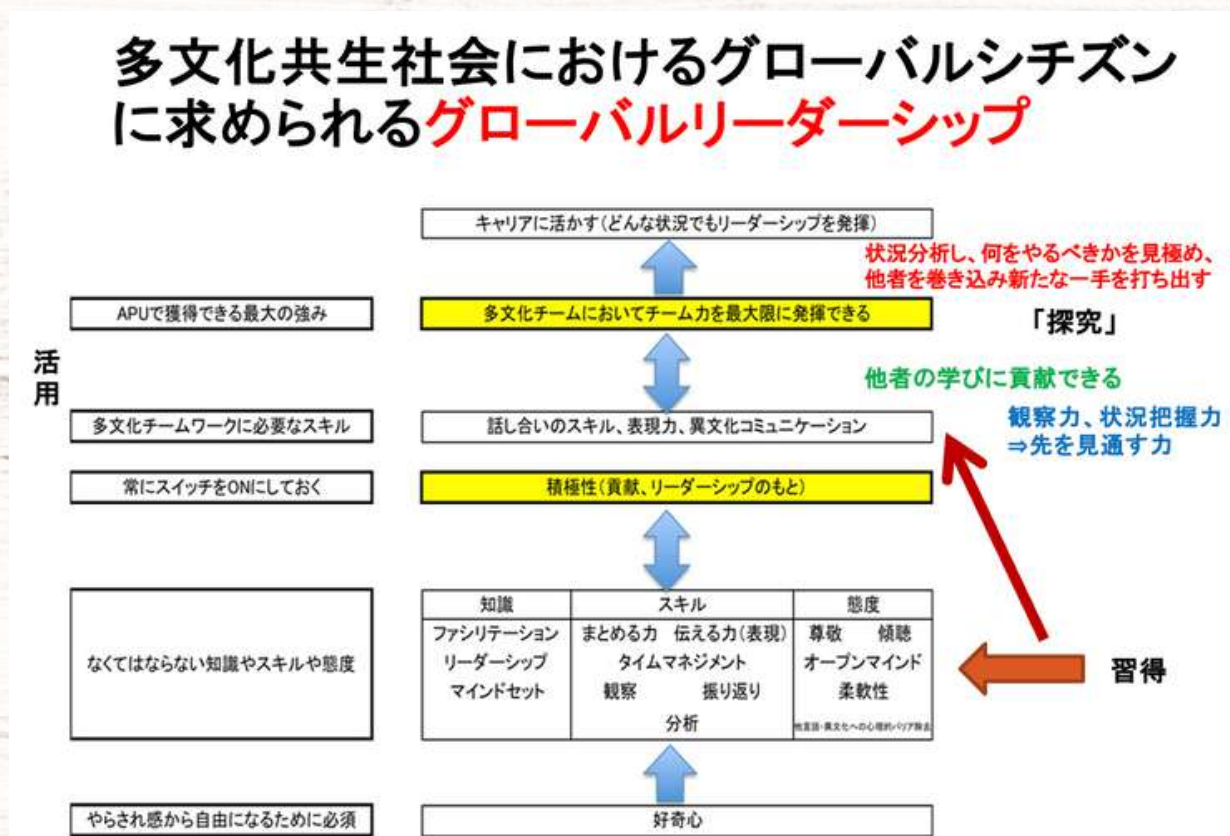


Photo: Map of “Global Leadership” required of global citizens in a multicultural society

## 2. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM APU STUDENTS AFTER FINISHING SSW, MCW, AND FGL?

I hope that my students take a step towards what they can do in any situation and work with those around them to make contributions to the world in the spirit of “What should I do then?!” when facing issues.

## 3. WHAT DO YOU EXPECT FROM THE TEACHERS YOU WORK WITH GOING FORWARD?

First-year subjects are a shared effort supported by students, TAs, faculty members, and office staff. Even with the same content, experiences vary as the group members change and student learning is also diverse. Therefore, I hope each teacher can contribute their unique experiences so that we can develop first-year education into a rich and rewarding educational opportunity unique to APU. I also believe that we should recognize student TAs and staff members as the collaborators with whom we conduct education, and that we should more consciously build a learning community through students, TAs, faculty members, and staff members.

## 4. ARE THERE ANY NEW PROGRAMS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO PROVIDE IN THE FUTURE?

As a next step for FGL, we plan to offer a new Global Leadership IIB course in the 2024 Fall Semester. Global Leadership IIB is a course in which students can learn about leadership for social impact. I think it was wonderful that many of our students are currently actual running projects such as the former President Deguchi School and Student Project B, managing cafes as individuals or in groups, or working on activities such as food waste programs. However, not having opportunities to reflect after business experiences and project implementation is a great pity. Therefore, I hope to have students who have participated in startups and projects actively take this new course. Based on David Stroh’s theory of systems thinking, I would like to guide students to reflect on and analyze their experiences, and then apply what they learn to future activities from the perspective of measuring the social impact of their own activities.



## INTERVIEWER & AUTHOR

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**Country:** Japan

**Impression:** Through this interview, I again truly realized the importance of first-year education, as the knowledge and skills learned in first-year courses become the foundation for university life going forward.

I also discovered that each class is actually created through the collaboration of many people, including faculty members and TAs, more than I had imagined before the interview.

# WHAT IS



[Q]uality  
[Q]uestions  
[Q]ueue

At APU there are many professors who put together wonderful classes, and if we could get to know how these classes are planned, it would contribute to the improvement of other professors' classes.

For that purpose, the Project Q Team holds interviews and publishes articles to share these good practices. These articles have been entitled [Q], comprising a variety of meanings such as: increasing the [Q]uality of classes, answering [Q]uestions to increase quality, and forming a [Q]ueue, or line, of class improvements. We would be very happy if these articles could contribute to the [Q]uest of APU professors' class quality improvement.

Project Q consists of student members from the Academic & Learning Resource Core Staff (ALRCS) under the support of the Academic Office Faculty Development Team.

For more information, please visit the ALRCS booth based in the APU Library.