



**UWC ISAK JAPAN**  
Karuizawa, Japan

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**HEAD OF SCHOOL**  
Start Date: July 2024  
[uwcisak.jp](http://uwcisak.jp)



**Carney  
Sandoe**  
& ASSOCIATES



## UWC Shared Mission

UWC makes education a force to unite people, nations, and cultures for peace and a sustainable future.

## Vision

At UWC ISAK Japan, we empower each other to be transformational leaders who explore new frontiers and make a positive impact today and in the future. We aim to create an environment where students develop their innate potential as change-makers who can identify what is most important and needed, take action in the face of discomfort, use diversity as a strength, and support others in this practice. Our school motto reflects our hopes for and dedication to all UWC ISAK Japan students as they journey through one of the most important and exciting times of their lives.

**One Life. Realize Your Potential. Be a Catalyst for Positive Change.**

## OVERVIEW

In the mountains above Tokyo, a bold and innovative boarding school exists to educate change-makers who will make their mark in the world. Grounded in the belief that their students will be catalysts for positive change, United World College ISAK Japan strives to educate transformative future leaders who will use their leadership and entrepreneurial skills as a positive force to impact their communities and the planet. The school seeks a visionary leader who believes passionately that educational approaches must evolve to adequately prepare and equip future generations to adapt, inspire, and lead.

UWC ISAK Japan is Japan's only full-boarding international high school and one of the newest members of the global network of UWC. To fulfill their mission, the school invests tremendous energy into exposing its students to social issues and cutting-edge technologies, allowing them space and time to explore their passions, and consistently encouraging them to venture to their learning edge.

## At a Glance

Maximum enrollment: 204

Student nationalities represented: More than 80

Japanese students: Approximately 30%

International students: Approximately 70%

Students who board: 100%

Students receiving financial aid (full or partial scholarships): 70%

Total teaching faculty: 33

Total staff (including part-time): 36

Faculty nationalities represented: 14

Faculty who reside on campus: More than 50%



UWC ISAK, as a full residential secondary school, also aims to create a warm, welcoming community for all students, and supports them fully throughout their education — intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Additionally, students, faculty, staff, and administrators are referred to as equal members of this tight school community who support each other with respect and dignity to prepare future generations to be effective trailblazers. Student confidence is nurtured daily in an intimate setting so that students feel empowered to be creative and authentically themselves. This strong culture is deeply appreciated by parents who say they value the independence, confidence and agency their children develop through their time at the school.

Of course, exceptional teachers make all of this possible. UWC ISAK faculty not only represent the best in their fields, they are also fully committed to helping students understand they have one life to realize their potential and to become catalysts for positive change. Faculty live on campus and also play an integral role in the school's residential life, functioning as mentors and coaches, and getting to know how best to support each student's academic and social well-being. Faculty and staff understand that some students may have very unconventional perspectives or unique ideas, and are willing to pursue dreams and passions that many are not yet used to seeing. Faculty speak gratefully about both the flexibility of the academic program and the autonomy they are afforded in their teaching practice.



UWC ISAK is seeking a new Head of School to succeed its founding head of school, Rod Jemison, whose nine-year tenure came to an end in the late summer of 2022. Currently, Malcolm McKenzie, founding Head of Keystone Beijing, former Head of the Hotchkiss School, UWC Atlantic College, and Maru-a-Pula Botswana, is serving as the Interim Head until June of 2024. The Board looks to the next Head to maintain the tremendous momentum and exceptionally entrepreneurial atmosphere the school has created in the several years since it began and to ensure it continues as an educational bellwether. UWC ISAK's approach and program are unique in Japan, distinct in the network of UWC schools, and notable among international schools in Asia. Strong candidates for this leadership role will be enthusiastically committed to positioning students and faculty to positively impact the world. As UWC ISAK deeply believes in student autonomy, the Head needs to be able to trust students as young responsible individuals who might make mistakes at times but can also grow from them. At ISAK, nothing is "given." Strong candidates will possess the ability to identify how the school can live its mission further, better meet student needs, and flexibly modify its systems to what is most needed at that time. The next Head will also understand and leverage the ISAK program to follow one of the UWC core principles, that education is an invaluable and sustaining tool for global unification.

## SCHOOL HISTORY

Located in the mountainous Nagano Prefecture about two hours northwest of Tokyo (one hour by bullet train), UWC ISAK opened its doors in 2014 as International School of Asia, Karuizawa (ISAK) after more than six years of preparation. The school's story begins with Lin Kobayashi (ISAK founder and Chair of the Board) and Mamoru Taniya (Representative Founder), two individuals who share a long-running passion for education, who were introduced in 2008. With a longstanding interest in education and the potential to help transform educational practice in Japan, the two mobilized support from 100 additional founders who helped make the ISAK dream a reality. Many continue to support the school today.



In 2012, Lin and a newly appointed Head of School, Roderick Jemison, began talks with UWC. Lin herself experienced UWC education firsthand as a graduate of UWC Pearson College. With so many shared values between ISAK and UWC, it seemed only natural for ISAK to join the UWC movement. In October 2016, UWC International announced that ISAK had been granted official approval to join the organization. In August 2017, International School of Asia, Karuizawa became UWC ISAK Japan.

Since it opened, the school has established itself with solid academic programming, a range of co-curricular options, a bucolic, multifunctional campus, and robust summer and winter programs. Part of the vision of the founders has also been to impact education nationally in Japan through progressive educational instruction, inquiry and project-based learning, student leadership, service learning, and the student owned development of their own learning journey. Teaching students about leadership has become a distinctive signature program along with the entrepreneurial business and organizational partnerships the school has developed for the benefit of student projects and learning. In this project-based area of research, safe learning, exploration and study, students choose their projects that often allow them to follow and to develop their interests and passions, which coaches guiding them, helping them to achieve their goals. The aim is for students to learn to explore, plan, commit, take action and then evaluate.

## THE SCHOOL

Part of UWC ISAK Japan's identity also hinges on its being in the UWC movement. The group of UWCs (United World Colleges) comprise secondary schools in 18 countries and regions, with national committees and admission selection contacts in more than 160 countries. The UWC movement also consists of more than 60,000 alumni and other members in virtually every country in the world. UWC International is governed by the International Board and UWC Council. Thus, UWC ISAK's development as a school is in itself an example of both making change in the world and cross-cultural collaboration.



To know UWC ISAK Japan is to know that, on any given day, much of what takes place at school is meant to cultivate and refine skills of leadership. No matter a student's background or course schedule, UWC ISAK Japan offers a human-centered environment where its students can discover their unique strengths and capacity for leadership. The school honors its mission by aspiring to be a place where students realize their potential to become change-makers by practicing leadership in and out of the classroom, every day. The school's ambition is very much to be a courageous global leader in progressive education, continually innovating to serve its own students and to positively impact teaching and learning more broadly.

Faculty hail from around the world. Most faculty reside on campus, as does the Head of School, in a residence adjacent and with access to the school's guesthouse (providing ample space for entertainment, meetings, etc.). The school's Board, led by Lin Kobayashi, has been instrumental in guiding and supporting the school financially through resourceful and disciplined practices, energetic fund-raising and strong outside partnerships. For a school not even a decade old, the results are most impressive.

Strengths of this young school include its strong sense of community, the intentional cultural and socioeconomic diversity of its student body, its openness to change and innovation (by both students and faculty), and the high level of engagement and learning ownership of its students.

UWC ISAK Japan is accredited through the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT), and graduates receive a Japanese high school diploma. UWC ISAK Japan is also an Official IB World School, authorized by the International Baccalaureate Organization to teach the two-year International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). Over 90% of the students graduate also with an IB Diploma. The school is seeking further accreditation as well.



### **Leadership Program**

The School is currently undergoing a fundamental re-imagination and re-designing of its flagship leadership program. The ultimate goal for the program is to assist all students in finding and pursuing the intersection of “what they love,” “what they are good at” and “what the world needs,” as they develop the necessary skills to persevere when faced with challenge and uncertainty – and to position students to live a joyous and purposeful life.

To help take the school’s current leadership curriculum to the next level of development, the school has engaged a former architect of African Leadership Academy’s renowned leadership and entrepreneurship program to facilitate a community-wide dialogue to re-imagine the program. A task force consisting of current students, alumni, faculty, staff and Board members is working together in this process.

## **ACADEMICS**

### **Grade 10: Pre-IB Academics & Leadership Training**

The Grade 10 program provides a pre-IB foundation year to encourage students to develop leadership and design-innovation skills, while preparing for the IB Diploma Programme. In the Pre-IB program, students enjoy studying in small classes with peers from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. Small discussion-based classes offer exposure to many different perspectives, helping them develop critical thinking habits and the opportunity to express original views. Group projects and individual presentations are also a common part of the UWC ISAK educational experience, helping to nurture collaboration, leadership, and communication skills.

## College Placement

The following is a selection of the colleges and universities to which members of the Classes of 2017-2019 matriculated:

### United States

Brown University  
Carnegie Mellon University  
Duke University  
Furman University  
Georgetown University  
Macalester College  
Middlebury College  
New York University  
Northeastern University  
Northwestern University  
Occidental College  
Princeton University  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Savannah College of Art and Design  
Skidmore College  
Smith College  
Tufts University  
University of California - Berkeley  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of Washington  
Vanderbilt University  
Williams College  
Yale University

### Japan

Asia Pacific University  
International Christian University  
Keio University  
Kyushu University  
Okayama University  
Osaka University  
Sophia University  
Waseda University

### Other

King's College  
London School of Economics  
McGill University  
University of Amsterdam  
University of British Columbia  
University of Edinburgh  
University of Sydney  
University of Toronto



Similar to students in the IBDP, Grade 10 students participate in community service activities on Friday afternoons and also develop their own projects for Project Week.

### Grades 11-12 (IBDP)

All Grade 11 and 12 students at UWC ISAK Japan enroll in the world recognized IB Diploma Programme. With the support of an advisor, students select six courses (three standard level and three higher level) from six subject groups that include foreign language, science, mathematics, the arts, and history. One subject must be chosen from the first five groups, and the sixth subject can be chosen from Group 6, or a second subject can be chosen from Groups 1, 2, 3 or 4. Since the IBDP is a two-year program, students in Grade 12 continue studying the subjects started in Grade 11. IB examinations are held near the end of Grade 12.

Two full-time university advisors support UWC ISAK Japan's fundamental mission to help students develop into transformational leaders by thoughtfully exploring all post-secondary options. These advisors expose students to many different types of universities so that they can make informed choices about what schools will be the best fit — academically, geographically, personally, and financially. Graduates of UWC Japan have matriculated to colleges and universities in 13 countries. Each year, a few graduates choose to take a gap year to volunteer, travel, or pursue a passion or interest including choosing to develop a start-up.



## SCHOOL LIFE

### **Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS)**

All Grade 10 students participate in CAS on Friday afternoons. Grade 10 students serve the Karuizawa community in various ways, such as helping local students and adults improve their English or organizing activities for elderly people and people with disabilities. Every Grade 10 student is also committed to a number of on-campus services within the UWC ISAK Japan community. In Grades 11 and 12, students work together in small teams on human-centered, collaborative, action-based leadership projects. Each project lasts a minimum of 16 months. Leadership projects are student-initiated and student-led and are intended to be personally meaningful. While the mission and goals of projects are important, the success of a project is not solely determined by goals achieved. UWC ISAK Japan's aim is to empower students to become change-makers, so the program is meant to cultivate skills of resilience and critical thought. As an example of how to grapple with current issues, UWC students draw upon lessons from history with Noah Harari, author of *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, in order to understand the changes that COVID-19 has brought to everyday life. The [discussion with the author](#) is an example of the resources available to students to understand and learn how they might champion solutions that have impact.

### **Clubs**

Optional student-led clubs enable students to follow their passions by joining, starting, and/or leading their own co-curricular activities. Student-led clubs and committees are sustained from year to year by students who choose to become activity leaders. All student leaders must participate in a group leader training program before leading any activity and will have additional responsibilities such as managing the club's budget and meeting bi-weekly with a faculty member for support. Current clubs explore topics such as astronomy, cooking culture, chess, robotics, tennis, and many more.



### **Residential Life**

At UWC ISAK Japan, students share a two-person or four-person bedroom in a dormitory for 12 to 18 students. Each housing unit includes a spacious living room/lounge area, as well as a small kitchenette and laundry facilities. In nearly all cases, students are assigned roommates from different countries and backgrounds. Additionally, students and their housemates take ownership for developing and implementing systems for house management, providing yet another opportunity to develop leadership, problem-solving, and conflict-resolution skills. To manage residential life, Residential Advisors (RAs) — students elected by their peers to keep the house operating smoothly and resolve minor issues — work in conjunction with House Mentors, faculty members whose role is to support all students in their residential dimension of school life.

### **Outdoor Education**

At UWC ISAK Japan, all students participate in outdoor education. The focus of the outdoor education programming is access, with an emphasis on physical challenge, resilience, sustainability, real-time teamwork, and leadership. The wide range of activities each year include hiking, snowshoeing, cycling, climbing, skiing, canyoning, and overnight camping. Students also have the opportunity to propose their own journeys and missions within and outside of these areas. Enjoying the outdoors at UWC ISAK is easy as the campus is situated in a wooded, semi-rural environment, at the edge of the Joshin-Etsu national park and Mount Asama.



### **Student Circle**

Seito-NoWa (Japanese translation of Student Circle) — aka SNOW — at UWC ISAK Japan is, perhaps, one of the strongest examples of the school’s pedagogy in practice. When the idea of creating a student council arose, students were passionate about building an inclusive style of government, so that every student could be empowered to work for positive change. The result was the SNOW. Unlike a traditional student council with a president and other council members making decisions on behalf of the students, the SNOW serves to facilitate “grassroots” efforts by any student who wants to implement a new idea or modify existing school rules. A core group of 6-8 students, trained in community organizing, accept the responsibility to help build leadership in students as they advocate for and create positive change in the community.

## **ATHLETICS**

The Active Sports program supplies an athletic option for students who wish to participate in competitive sports. The school has a no-cut philosophy, so any student who demonstrates interest and shows commitment can participate on a team. Several student-led club sports are also active on campus. Active Sports have a “season” with regularly scheduled coached practices and competitive games and matches. Active sports offerings include badminton, basketball, cross-country, curling, football (soccer), and volleyball.



## CAMPUS

UWC ISAK Japan is located in Nagano Prefecture, just outside the beautiful mountain resort town of Karuizawa in an area first settled by Canadian missionaries who were drawn by the area's higher (and cooler) elevation, evergreens, streams and rivers, and rugged topography (John Lennon and Yoko Ono spent many enjoyable summers there owing to her family's roots in the area). The hillside campus is located in Asama Terrace, part of the Sengataki resort area but just 20 minutes by car from the Karuizawa Shinkansen (bullet train) station.

Following Japanese architectural principles, the school's facilities have been constructed to create a sense of harmony with the beautiful, forested environment that makes Karuizawa so special. Classrooms designed with large windows and high ceilings emphasize the beauty of the changing seasons, while brightening the interior with natural sunlight. Many students say they feel more creative, inspired, and energized by the natural light. Thoughtfully, each building serves a variety of purposes, minimizing the campus's overall footprint. Buildings also feature solar panels and eco-friendly bamboo flooring.

The gymnasium includes a full basketball court and provides indoor space where students can enjoy sports and other physical activity throughout the year. When the weather permits (most of the school year), students can also use the natural-grass sports field and surrounding grounds for outdoor recreation, including trail running.

The Kamiyama Academic Center (KAC), completed in July 2016, is a state of the art, light-filled building with classrooms, a library/information center, study areas, meeting rooms, and the main school office. KAC has already become one of the most popular places to study on campus. The two-story Asama Building houses the cafeteria, school lounge, and several classrooms. It is a hub of activity during the day and during warm weather, the beautiful deck is a popular place to eat, relax, study, and hang out.



The school recently celebrated the newest addition to the ISAK campus, the opening of its assembly hall, The Accord Center (TAC), that can seat the entire community (around 250 people) and is excited to break ground for two additional buildings in 2023 that are expected to be completed by September 2024. The new Creative Center is designed to host all creative activities ranging from music and art rooms to maker space. The Wellness Center will offer a tatami room for meditation or reading in addition to a health center, fitness room, and a counseling room.

## KARUIZAWA, NAGANO

Karuizawa is an upmarket mountain resort town of approximately 20,000 residents — with a relatively casual, relaxed energy — at the foot of the active volcano, Mount Asama. Located at an altitude of roughly 1,000 meters, the town provides much to do and see in all seasons. Within a short traveling distance one can find a range of outdoor activities including hiking, skiing, skating, and golf (14 local courses), as well as museums, parks, temples and shrines, and hot springs. Karuizawa remains the only town in the world to have hosted both Summer and Winter Olympic events: equestrian in Tokyo 1964 as well as curling in Nagano 1998. The town is served by one of the most reliable railway systems in the world that includes the high-speed line (also providing easy access to Tokyo’s two international airports).

Generations of Japanese artists have come to the area to paint and draw and find inspiration. From the area’s natural beauty. Yet in addition to a bounty of recreational and cultural opportunities and natural beauty, Karuizawa is home to one of the largest shopping malls in the country, the Karuizawa Prince Shopping Plaza, which contains over 200 stores that offer a range of fashion items, accessories, and interior design items. The outlet boasts excellent restaurants and is appreciated as a pet-friendly facility.



In a glimpse of history, the former Mikasa Hotel, built in 1905, is a Western-style hotel built entirely of wood by Japanese craftsmen in a unique fusion of American, British, and German architectural styles. The hotel is famous for having been the lodging for members of the imperial family and royalty from overseas during their visit to Karuizawa; it is now an important national cultural property. Day or night, winter or summer, Karuizawa offers natural beauty, exceptional hospitality, and top-notch sporting to both visitors and happy residents.

For school expat employees and the 400 plus foreigners residing in Karuizawa, local public daycare centers (ages 0-6), elementary schools (ages 7-12), and junior high (ages 13-15) are complimentary. Almost all faculty regardless of nationality have their children in the local daycare. The area offers a wide array of good dining options — from Japanese, French, to Italian, and the local cost of living can be fairly minimal. Nagano Prefecture is also one of the largest producers of vegetables and fruits in Japan, and grocery shopping can be very affordable, as well.

## LIVING IN JAPAN AS AN EXPAT

Those who live in Japan as an ex-pat find the quality of life to be extremely high. Beyond Japan's omotenashi (hospitality) culture, the sense of welcome from the local community of ex-pats is both warm and supportive, and helpful to both adjusting to and living in Japan. Aside from the natural beauty and history of the country, cities and towns are extremely well kept, very safe, and public services are functional, efficient and abundant. Things just work; people are courteous and orderly. Many people choose to travel about the country and its many islands where among the activities one can find world-class food, skiing, entertainment, and public transportation. Many ex-pats who have lived in other Asian locations say that they appreciate the quality of life in Japan most of all (and universal healthcare).

For UWC/ISAK faculty and families, the school has a full-time nurse on campus and a bilingual school doctor (and dentist) whose clinics are nearby. Faculty and staff are covered on the Japanese national insurance for all private school employees and their families that covers most doctor appointments and medications (and surgeries) in country.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

While not a blank slate, the school is new enough that many opportunities exist for the next head of school for the creation, development and refinement of programs, practices and priorities. Importantly, the next Head of School will work with an active, engaged, and supportive Board to create a long-term vision for the school and a road map to move the institution in that direction over the next decade(s), preserving the unique UWC ISAK culture while evolving and maturing its curriculum and programs. Opportunities the next Head will find include:

- Ensuring greater continuity and connection between the vision of the school and its ongoing implementation;
- Developing more consistency, clarity, and process around decisions, policy and procedures, and program implementation;
- Maintaining mission-compatible admissions;
- Developing bold, innovative programs and/or even diplomas that can help students – and possibly a wider audience – live up to the mission of the school;
- Guiding the school to become more systematic operationally without sacrificing the felt spirit of excitement and innovation;
- Ensuring a focus on a positive student life experience comprised of wellness, healthy residential life, and meaningful co-curricular programs;
- Ensuring that employees are nourished and supported during the consuming work of the academic year.

## DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

In addition to an appetite for adventure, strategic planning and a strong cultural competency, the school seeks candidates who possess most or all of the following qualities in some measure:

- Open-minded and flexible;
- Visionary and radically innovative;
- Organizational acumen;
- Strong, clear communicator and manager;
- Inclusive decision-maker/leader who engages effectively with all stakeholders;
- Intercultural/appreciation for and understanding of Japanese culture and diversity;
- Personal warmth/relational;
- Equitable/fair;
- Visible, accessible, and resourceful;
- Ability to manage and thrive in the face of adversities and crisis;
- Comfort with digital solutions (both design and delivery);
- Understands a boarding/residential community;
- Experience with International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme.

## TO APPLY

If you wish to explore this opportunity prior to formally applying please contact the consultants. The school is targeting to hire its next head of school as early as November 2022 through April 2023 for an appointment to begin in July 2024.

Interested and qualified candidates will ultimately submit electronically as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current and thorough résumé of no more than four pages;
- A one-page statement of educational philosophy and leadership practice;
- A list of five professional references with the name, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission.)

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