

Frequently asked questions for Japanese studies



Is Japanese difficult?

No! Although Japanese is a bit different from European languages it is certainly not a complex language. Grammar is much simpler than European languages. For example there is:

No gender

No singular nor plural

Word order rules are not strict

On top of that, the sound system is simple and clear. All Japanese sounds exist in English:

There are only 5 vowels: a, i, u, e, o

- The meaning does not change depending on the tone as in Chinese

I have no knowledge of Japanese at all. Can I take a course?

Of course. Most students have no previous knowledge. We teach you from scratch.

I have already studied Japanese at GCSE/AS/A-level. Can I take a course?

Japanese as a Minor Subject is currently offered at Ab Initio level only. Therefore, you will be asked to study Japanese from scratch as other students, if you decide to join our programme. Students who have studied GCSE Japanese or equivalent usually find this a good opportunity to consolidate their Japanese knowledge as well as new grammar/vocabulary. However, this programme might not be suitable for those whose Japanese knowledge is higher than GSCE Japanese.

The MOMD and Open Access programmes offer various Japanese courses and the highest level aims at post A-level Japanese.

What can we learn in a year?

By the end of the first year, you will know basic Japanese characters, Hiragana and Katakana, and approximately 250 Kanji. You will have a solid understanding of the Japanese writing and sound systems and of grammar structures. You will be able to introduce yourself and communicate with Japanese in predictable daily situations. You will build a solid base for further study of more complex sentences and/or expressions.

How can we learn Japanese script?

We use an interesting method called the association method for teaching Hiragana and Katakana recognition. You can remember each script by associating it with an English word as portrayed on a picture card. It's a fun way of learning characters.

Do we have the opportunity to go to Japan and if so which university?

Yes. 'with Japanese' degrees and BA Modern Languages degrees are four-year courses. You will go to Japan in your third year.

In addition to this, you will also have opportunities to be involved in a business internship programme and/or summer short language and cultural course in Kobe University in Japan. We have formal links with prestigious universities in Japan. They are Hitotsubashi University, Keio University and Sophia University in Tokyo, and Kobe University and Kansai University in the Kansai region. Our students have all enjoyed their year's study in Japan and many of them are still studying or working in Japan.

Is there an opportunity to meet Japanese people on campus?

There are two Japan-related societies on campus. One is the Japanese People's Society and the other is the student Japan Society. Japan Society members include many Japanese students who are studying in Birmingham. They organise weekly gatherings and events such as film nights or just go out to a pub together.

I would like to know more about the course. Can I contact a tutor?

Please see our contact details below.

General enquiries

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