



Frequently Asked Questions

? Why study at AMES?

At AMES we offer a distinctive degree comprising **rigorous language tuition** and **immersive content courses** in a range of subjects taught by leading specialists in these fields. We are a small and supportive community based on the central Sidgwick site with excellent facilities including our popular library, all to help you get the best out of yourself and your studies.

? Can I apply to any college to study an AMES subject?

Yes, you can apply to any college to study in our department. There can be advantages to choosing a college that has a Director of Studies (DoS) in AMES since they will understand the course and be able to offer guided academic support. However, your college becomes your home for the four years of your degree programme so it is also important to consider what else matters to you, such as location and facilities.

? How large are language classes in the Faculty?

This will depend on the language. Typically, we have a cohort of around 20 students for our largest language subjects. Classes will therefore be split into **groups of no more than 10**, and this will be supplemented by supervisions, most often in groups of two.

? What type of Japanese will I learn?

You will learn the Tokyo-based dialect as a standard form of Modern Japanese that is understood across Japan. From the second year, you will have the option to begin studying Classical Japanese.

? What level of fluency do average students normally reach?

By the end of the degree, you should be able to converse easily in the spoken Japanese, and be a confident reader and writer of its written forms.

? What other subjects can I learn, and who teaches them?

Everything from premodern East Asian history to Literature to Cinema. Lectures, and most often supervisions too, are delivered by a lecturer, or a specialist in the subject.

? I have already studied some Japanese at A-level/ IB/ JLPT. Can I enter the programme at an advanced stage?

All students sit a placement test on their first day and are placed in a class with students who have a similar level of language. We have admitted many students who already had an A-level in their chosen language before they arrived. However, it is unusual that these students begin in Year 2 of the programme for two main reasons. First, our language course is fast-paced and by the end of Year 1 students will have surpassed the expected A-level standard. Second, a second vital component of the first year course is a comprehensive paper that teaches fundamental knowledge about the history, literature, society and politics of East Asia (Japan, China & Korea), without which progressing through second-year content papers can be challenging.

? Where will I go on my year abroad and what activities can I do?

The Faculty has agreements with several universities in Japan that provide language programmes, taught courses and library access to facilitate dissertation research. The Japanese Studies Department also has connections with companies in Japan who offer competitive internships for our students. Students plan their year abroad in the second year in consultation with the Faculty's dedicated Year Abroad Coordinator, who will also be one of their language teachers. The Faculty takes seriously the safety of all students travelling abroad and regularly assesses plans in accordance with UK FCO advice.

? When will I write a dissertation?

Students begin thinking about a dissertation topic in their second year of study and approaching potential supervisors. On the year abroad, they will carry out wider reading and/or fieldwork. **Students then write up their work in their final year under the guidance of a supervisor.**

? Can I apply to study Japanese even if I have never studied the language before?

As an *ab initio* language course, **we do not expect students to have any previous experience of studying Japanese before they arrive.** However, it is a good idea to do some research so that you are informed when you apply. Experience of studying another language can be useful experience and show evidence of your interest in language study, but be mindful that Japanese grammar can be very different to that of European languages.

? Can I apply to study both Japanese and Chinese together?

Students can only apply for EITHER Japanese OR Chinese. Both languages are grammatically very different and pose distinct challenges so our courses are necessarily immersive and demand concentration. In some cases, students have taken up the second language from the third year of study. However, this is not usual and requires special permission from the Faculty Board. By beginning a second language in Year 3 students must forego their year abroad, which is hugely valuable for promoting language acquisition and gaining insight into the country they are studying.

? Can I combine Japanese with another European language or another subject?

For the same reasons explained above, combining Japanese or Chinese with an MMLL language is not possible. This course remains very varied, however, by the range of content we offer.

? What is the Faculty's approach to applications for deferred entry?

Around 6% of students accepted to Cambridge take a gap year before starting their studies. This year out can be a useful time in which to improve skills, earn money, travel and generally gain maturity and self-reliance. You should state on your UCAS application if you wish to defer entry. **You'll probably be asked about your plans at interview, so be prepared to talk about your year out, and, if possible, how it might tie in with your broader interest in the course you propose to study.**

? What does the Faculty offer beyond my formal studies?

Both the Department of Middle Eastern Studies and the Department of East Asian Studies hold weekly public talks, delivered by specialists working within many diverse fields. Undergraduate students are greatly encouraged to attend, and, indeed, to offer suggestions for speakers. Beyond the Faculty, students can get involved in setting up and running their own societies and talks, while colleges offer many opportunities for sport and other extracurricular activities.

? Where do students end up after graduation?

Our graduates have gone on to have varied and illustrious careers in industries including journalism, academia, and international banking. **Even James Bond learned Japanese at Cambridge!**

If you want to learn more about our students and their experiences, check out our YouTube Channel for 'Japanese at Cambridge'