

I'm writing to you about your application to study in the School of East Asian Studies at the University of Sheffield. As you know, the University will be adjusting how it delivers its courses in the autumn to accommodate the social distancing measures required to combat the coronavirus pandemic. The current plans involve a blend of face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield, where social distancing can be maintained, supported by digital delivery. In this email, I'll explain what this will mean for your studies.

Course content

There will be no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain proficiency in Chinese, Japanese or Korean language (if studying a language-intensive degree), an advanced understanding of East Asian Studies, with country-specific specialisations, and a wide range of transferable skills. However, to accommodate the new protocols for the 2020-21 academic year, we have made some adjustments to the content and structure of Level 1.

Your core modules remain the same. Adjustments to a blended learning model of learning for both staff and students, plus changes to our current students' years abroad means that unfortunately we are not able to offer non-specialist Chinese or Korean modules in 2020/21. Non-specialist Japanese will still be available to students on our BA East Asian Studies degree and those studying BA Chinese Studies/Korean Studies with Japanese only. We fully intend to run non-specialist Chinese and Korean again from 2021/22, so they will be available to you later in your degree programme.

We've removed the 40 'unrestricted' credits available at Level 1, where students could study any Level 1 module from across the University, not just the options listed in the course regulations. Because of the challenges of managing module selection during the pandemic, the University has suspended unrestricted credits for 2020-21. In their place, we'll be offering a 'guided choice' of modules which will compliment your degree, from departments across the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and from the Faculty of Social Sciences. More information about these modules will be available over the summer.

Please be assured that there will still be a wide selection of modules for you to choose from, you will still get to learn all about China, Japan and Korea, and you will still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you will need for Levels 2 and 3.

Teaching

As you know, the majority of our teaching comprises a variety of language classes, and lectures and seminars in studies subjects, and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21, although these will be adjusted for the restrictions imposed by social distancing. Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

It's not possible to social distance in a crowded lecture theatre, so we'll be delivering all our 'lectures', and some language classes online. Lectures are primarily presentations by one of our subject experts, and online delivery suits the format well. We've made recorded lectures available online for several years, but in 2020-21 instead of having a recording of a live session which you can review after the event, the content will be delivered in a series of shorter, pre-recorded presentations. This will allow you to absorb the information in shorter bursts, which works better for online learning.

Seminars and some language content will be delivered asynchronously through a range of online discussion tools, meaning you'll have plenty of time to consider what you say when responding to the comments and questions of both your teachers and fellow students.

Asynchronous teaching will be supplemented by live, interactive classes via the university's online learning platform. In these, you'll be able to see, hear and talk to teachers and other students in real time. You will also have some face-to-face teaching, initially in language classes as these are the subjects which most benefit from being in a classroom with other people. Both synchronous digital and face-to-face classes will be timetabled, so you'll know what your regular weekly schedule will be. You'll also get a weekly schedule of tasks for all modules, telling you how much time you should spend on different activities, so you'll know exactly what you should be doing, and when.

All face-to-face sessions will take place in small groups, so that we can use our larger teaching rooms and still maintain social distancing. Our face-to-face teaching has always taken place across the University's campus, and this won't change in 2020-21.

Our academic staff will be available as usual for tutorials and other one-to-one meetings, and will still hold their regular office hours. It may not be possible for these sessions to take place in person, and if so, you'll be able to make an audio or video call.

Learning resources

Most of our learning resources are already available online, and this includes all the core reading for our Level 1 modules. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it's safe to do so, and our librarians are committed to providing as full a service as possible, taking into account social distancing requirements and all the latest government advice.

Assessment

We will be using a variety of assessments in 2020-21, just like we do in a normal year, but there won't be any formal, invigilated exams in the Semester 1 exam period in January/February for any SEAS modules. For non-language modules, all assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online. These can range from a portfolio of short

written pieces done throughout a module, to needing to complete a final piece of work, an essay, for example, at the end.

In language modules, you will have a combination of assessments, including assessed written homework; and listening and speaking tests. For these you may need to record yourself speaking and submit it, or they may be live sessions where you have to answer questions from a teacher in real time via video call.

We'll confirm the arrangements for all Semester 1 assessments in the individual module handbooks you'll receive when you join us.

Costs

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we're making. You'll be able to participate in all the online activities using a regular laptop or tablet connected to the internet, although you will need a microphone and camera to contribute fully in virtual discussions.

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you'll be aware, this pandemic is a fast-moving and unpredictable phenomenon, and we might need to make further changes as the situation develops and the University responds to updates in public health guidance. Please be assured that we'll be approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we're committed to ensuring that you're supported, and that you still receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with our Learning and Teaching Team (Clea, Susie and Emma) at seas@sheffield.ac.uk.

Further information

Please keep looking out for emails from the University and checking our [frequently asked questions](#), which are updated regularly with all the latest developments. We also have some on demand content from our online [applicant open days](#); which you might find useful.

I hope you enjoy what's left of the summer and stay safe.

Best wishes

Kate Taylor-Jones
Head of Department
School of East Asian Studies