

I'm writing to you about your application to study the BA Japanese Studies and History programme in the Department of History and 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 on the BA in Japanese Studies and History.

Course content

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. We will still offer you a comprehensive understanding of history from the ancient world to the modern day, and across the globe as well as advanced Japanese language skills. You will still experience stimulating research-led teaching with our academic staff, be able to develop critical understanding of relevant academic debates and methodologies, and gain a wide range of transferable skills to prepare you for your future career or further study.

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 for both History and Japanese language will be the same but we have taken the opportunity to make our new American history optional module available to you. This module replaces our previous American option and is called "Land of Liberty? Rights in the USA, 1776-2016".

We've also made changes to the 'unrestricted' credits available at Level 1, where students could study modules from outside the Department of History and School of East Asian Studies. 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 rest assured that there will still be a wide selection of modules for you to choose from, you'll still get to learn about a wide range of topics, and you'll still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you'll need for Levels 2 and 3.

Teaching

As you know, the majority of our teaching comprises lectures, seminars and tutorials, and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21. 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, for 2020-21 we'll be refreshing this content and providing recorded videos prepared specifically for this year's students.

For our interactive classes, we'll be using a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching, and you'll have regular, timetabled sessions of each form. The face-to-face session, which will include some language classes, 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. The digital sessions will be live and fully interactive via the University's online learning systems, where students can speak, use text and share video.

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, but if not 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 have made some changes to our level 1 assessment to simplify the activities you will be undertaking. Coursework assignments are already completed electronically and submitted online. In some History modules this will include 'open book' exams, where exam questions are made available online and you have a certain amount of time, for example three days, to answer them. You'll complete your answers electronically at home, and will be able to consult your books and notes.

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.

To complement the blended learning approach planned for semester one, our usual participation mark will become a digital engagement mark that ensures recognition of your engagement in the learning activities and environment for each module.

Support and guidance for all aspects of assessment will be provided by the Department and by support services across the University, for example the [301: Academic Skills Centre](#).

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 that we plan to consult with students regularly throughout the year to ensure that your voice is heard and your views are represented. We are 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