

## **Message to undergraduate (Senior Division) & graduate students of the University of Tokyo**

You are now ready to advance to specialized departments or graduate schools and receive specialized education and following such specialized training, you will go on to pursue a career as experts in one field or another. Public expectations toward experts who graduate from the University of Tokyo are enormous. So that you may live up to such expectations, we would like to recommend that you attend the “Liberal Arts Education for Undergraduate (Senior Division) & Graduate Students”.

The “Liberal Arts Education for Undergraduate (Senior Division) & Graduate Students” are offered based on the ideals of liberal arts. By definition, liberal arts are not just a synonym for “general education”.

As the English translation of the Latin expression “artes liberales” and originating from ancient Greek thinking, liberal arts are the arts and sciences that humans need to learn if they are to become autonomous beings, instead of slaves. Although modern humans are believed to be free, they are actually subject to various restrictions. For example, if we know only the Japanese language, we cannot imagine how speakers of the Japanese language and those of other languages think differently. If we become an expert in one discipline without any knowledge of other specialized fields, we would not be able to effectively cooperate with experts from other areas of specialization in resolving imminent issues at hand. Liberal arts are the knowledge and skills that set humans free by releasing their thinking and judgment from limitations unknown even to themselves and by liberating them from various constraints and restrictions.

What the “Liberal Arts Education for Undergraduate (Senior Division) & Graduate Students” aims to develop is the ability for students to think how their specialized fields are placed and what implications they have in the present society, and how they can collaborate with other disciplines. Specialized knowledge must accurately be able to state what has been confirmed so far and what remains unconfirmed. At the same time, specialized knowledge must enable relevant experts to sympathetically listen to what people are anxious about in actual situations, reorganize their problems perspectively, and cooperate with

specialists from other fields in working out the solutions. Meanwhile, if experts encounter other experts without becoming aware of their respective unconscious “premises”, they might invite unnecessary confrontation. The “Liberal Arts Education for Undergraduate (Senior Division) & Graduate Students” aims to develop the intellectual power and sensibility that help students make appropriate judgment whenever a problem arises.

In this sense, liberal arts education should not simply achieve a static state where students have substantial knowledge about a wide variety of subjects, but it should also help students transcend the borders of their areas of specialization. Also, it must ensure dynamic thinking that encourages students to go back and forth between multiple disciplines and cultures. In this context, going back and forth has two meanings. One is going back and forth between different communities. For instance, in lectures open to students from other faculties/graduate schools, there will be a few “away” students—students specializing in other fields—among the many students who share the background knowledge in the area of specialization of the faculties/graduate schools giving such open lectures. In this kind of setting, the “away” students going back and forth between the communities of the “home” students and “away” students will have opportunities to relativize their specialized knowledge. The second meaning is going back and forth between the academic world and real-world challenges. This second meaning indicates the social literacy of scholars, regardless of whether they specialize in the humanities or science, namely the ability to envision how their research results will be incorporated and translated into society.

The “Liberal Arts Education for Undergraduate (Senior Division) & Graduate Students” aims to help students develop abilities to transcend their specialized fields, while properly functioning as experts in such fields. Furthermore, the goal of liberal arts education is to “open the mind”. To open your mind, you must tentatively depart from the way of thinking unique to your field, review your role, and reexamine your thinking and role from a higher standpoint. The University of Tokyo offers the “Liberal Arts Education for Undergraduate (Senior Division) & Graduate Students” to help each of you become capable of flexible thinking by taking an interest in other disciplines, cultures and persons, and by recognizing plurality in yourself.