

Prospectus for the Launch of the Liberal Arts Education for Graduate Students

The University of Tokyo aims to have the world's highest level of education and research and specifies "synergy between excellence and diversity" as one of its basic principles. To realize excellence in education and research, it is necessary that open dialogue and collaboration between different fields take place, rather than individual fields simply coexisting alongside each other. It is also essential that different people, whose sets of values and meanings cannot be measured on a uniform scale, clash with and stimulate one another while respecting one another's differences and individual qualities. To achieve excellence with such diversity as its vitality and to advance academic learning through constant interconnectivity with each other, we offer liberal arts education at the graduate school level (advanced liberal arts education), aiming for a cross-disciplinary program.

Liberal arts refer to the attainments that a person must acquire to be an independent and free individual. 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.

Since high degree of specialization is required at the graduate level, there is an even greater need to view their own expertise objectively and to treat experts in other fields and citizens as free individuals. Therefore, the role of an advanced liberal arts education is to instill exceptional expertise while cultivating resolute and humble, yet proud individuals who can view their own positions and roles objectively from diverse perspectives. To be specific, it becomes meaningful when considering the position and meaning of one's specialty in society today, and how it can collaborate with other fields. We can develop the ability to relativize ourselves by encountering others who specialize in fields different from one's own and have different values. There are many ways to do this, such as reading the classics, learning about cutting-edge research in other fields,

experiencing poetry, and making comparisons. In view of the fact that data show that Japan tends to have less diversity of specialties (i.e., less collaboration with other fields) in research teams compared to other countries, such relativization skills are necessary to compensate for the deficiencies in previous specialized education.

In this sense, liberal arts education should not simply achieve a static state where students simply have substantial knowledge about a wide variety of subjects. It also requires not only transcending the borders of their areas of specialization, but also "going back and forth" between those borders. It must ensure dynamic thinking that encourages students to go back and forth between multiple disciplines and cultures, crossing various boundaries (those of specialty, language, nationality, and affiliation).

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 departments, graduate schools or faculties, 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 departments/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, or between professional intelligence and civic intelligence. 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. This is also the foundation that supports research ethics.

We offer liberal arts education in the graduate schools to cultivate an open-minded personality that becomes capable of flexible thinking by taking an interest in other disciplines, cultures and persons, and by recognizing plurality in yourself through dialogue with others who have different specialties and values from oneself.