

White Rose University Consortium: College of Arts and Humanities

Arts and Humanities Research Culture in Japan

Academia

Norms of Behaviour

What TO DO and what NOT TO DO

TO DO

1. Try to learn Japanese.
2. Publish your work in a journal.
3. Socialise with other scholars in and outside campus (e.g. drinking party).
4. Do offer to help. If your supervisor, others in your department, or colleagues need something done, you should offer your assistance if possible (and carry out the task to the best of your abilities). If you are a native English speaker, you may be asked to edit or even compose English-language documents; it is a good idea to agree (without expectation of pay) if you have the time and ability. While some British students may be unwilling to carry out work without pay or the possibility of improving your CV, presenting yourself as an enthusiastic, dedicated worker is likely to make others think more highly of you, which can turn out to be important in the long run. On the other hand, don't let others take advantage of you, and don't agree to anything if you will only be able to do a half-hearted or sloppy job – doing something poorly will likely lead to a worse impression than not having done it at all.
5. Do be honest about your needs and issues. Some non-Japanese people assume that Japanese people are unwilling to openly address problems and express personal needs. However, in a university environment, you may be surprised to find teachers, other students, staff members, and/or colleagues who are receptive to the issues you face and willing to help. In fact, it may reflect well on you to have the modesty to admit your limitations, or be taken as a compliment (as you are looking to them for guidance). It can also be a good way to build trust. It is common for those coming from abroad to suffer health problems based on adjusting to life in a different country, and it is likely that you will be confused about numerous things related to researching, teaching, learning, and living in Japan. Do not think you have to handle everything alone. While you should act in a formal, professional manner that does not necessarily preclude addressing your problems and limitations.



NOT TO DO

1. Don't wear tattoos in visible parts.
2. Don't speak in a casual way to your supervisors and other scholars.

3. Don't be too pushy – try to hedge and use some expressions to soften your speech. (e.g. 'I'd prefer to do this' rather than 'I hate it.')
4. Don't be embarrassed. As stated above, you will likely have to ask people for help. If you are not completely fluent in Japanese, you will likely make mistakes in speaking, writing, and comprehension. If you do not have extensive experience living in Japan, you will likely make mistakes related to everyday living. On another level, you may have to release information that seems private or irrelevant to the situation at hand – for example, providing photographs on application forms or CVs, or providing detailed medical information to universities or employers. This can be galling to a British person, but there is no way around it.
5. Don't assume you know about Japanese culture based on university courses (or other learning methods). The vast majority of information about Japan available in English, whether from the depths of the Internet or from the most reputable academic sources, is based on long-held stereotypes that may have little relevance to actual life in contemporary Japan. Be wary of everything you have heard or been taught, particularly theories that try to fit significant, far-reaching socio-cultural norms into simple keywords or single explanations.
6. Don't be unprepared. Whether it is the application requirements of the programme you are applying to, how to use the library in which you intend to research, visa-related information, the process of renting a flat, or even information about the local area, don't expect to just figure it out as you go along – especially if you are only visiting Japan for a short period of time, and need to jump into your research immediately. It is best to work under the assumption that everything will take at least twice as long as you expect it to take, and be at least twice as difficult. Thoroughly research all issues related to your stay and keep detailed notes (the application Evernote, available for computers, mobile devices, and as a web app, can be particularly useful at this stage). You may be surprised at what steps end up causing problems, but careful research can ensure you do not get caught out.



