

APPLICATION TIME FRAME

ENROLLMENT APRIL 2026

You must submit your application via the Admissions Assistance Office (AAO) system between

October 1 and 15, 2025

and send necessary documents via postal mail between

November 1 and 20, 2025

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please make sure that you have read the [JDTS APPLICATION FAQ](#) before applying for a place in the Joint Degree Master's Program in Transcultural Studies. If anything remains unclear, please contact the JDTS coordination office ([apply\[a\]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:apply[a]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp)).

The following dates are all based on Japan Standard Time.

Admission Procedures

We only accept applications for the spring semester of each year. Please follow the steps and submit the necessary documents listed below.

The admission process utilizes the online application system of the Admissions Assistance Office (AAO). Please follow the instructions below.

Please refer to the [Admission Policy \(English translation\)](#) at the Graduate School of Letters for information about the selection process.

Number of positions in the program: 5 students/year.

1. Admissions Assistance Office (AAO) Screening (Oct. 1-15, 2025)

Indicate your intention to apply for enrollment in April 2026 to the Admissions Assistance Office, AAO, by submitting the indicated documents **no later** than October 15, 2025. The office will check your eligibility for enrollment at both universities, Kyoto and Heidelberg. Thus, research students already enrolled at Kyoto University, and graduates from Japanese universities need to go through AAO for their eligibility to enroll in Heidelberg, too (and to submit further materials). You will receive the results of your degree equivalence screening by October 31, 2025.

Note: If you have applied to the [single-degree Master in Transcultural Studies at Heidelberg University](#) and have ever received a formal rejection, please understand that we cannot accept you into the Joint Degree program and ask you not to apply to the Kyoto University side [see also FAQ 35].

Please follow the instructions in the "[JDTS AAO Guidelines](#)" and submit the indicated documents via the AAO system ([certificates as scans/in digital form](#)) and follow the given file naming convention (incorrectly named files may cause a delay in processing your application or in the worst case that it is not considered).

Please submit the following items through the AAO system.

- A scan of the signed application form to be downloaded [here](#) [see also note 1].

- A scan of a certified/official English translation or certified copy of the degree certificate of your B.A. (and M.A./M. Phil if applicable) [2].
- A scan of a certified/official English translation or certified transcript of academic records of your B.A. (and M.A. / M. Phil if applicable) [3].
- Scans of certified copies of language certificates (English plus two additional languages) . You may include your respective mother tongue language as one of the two additional languages. In that case, a certificate for the mother tongue language is not required. [4]
- Letter of motivation (as PDF, in English; min. 800, max. 1.000 words) [5].
- Scan of the formal statement confirming that you wrote the letter of motivation yourself without the help of others and that you have properly acknowledged the use of all ideas from additional sources [5].
- A photograph [6]
- A scan of your Certificate of Residence or your passport (international students and Japanese nationals) [7].
- One to two writing samples (e.g., your B.A. thesis or term papers) [8].
- Two letters of recommendation [9].
- Scan of your high school diploma and transcript of records (Hochschulzugangsberechtigung) [10]

2. Document Submission (Nov. 1-20, 2025)

If the AAO screening based on the submitted documents determines that you can apply to the JDTS, please pay the application fee and submit the following documents via postal mail to the Graduate Academic Affairs office by November 20, 2025. If you send your documents before November 13 and submit the tracking number to [apply\[a\]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:apply[a]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp), documents arriving a little late will still be accepted.

- The original signed application form, which you submitted via AAO in October.
- Certified/official English translation or certified copy of the degree certificate of your B.A. (and M.A./M. Phil if applicable).
- Certified/official English translation or certified transcript of academic records of your B.A. (and M.A. / M. Phil if applicable).
- Certified copies of language certificates (English plus two additional languages). You may include your respective mother tongue language as one of the two additional languages. In that case, a certificate for the mother tongue language is not required.
- A formal statement confirming that you wrote the letter of motivation yourself without the help of others and that you have properly acknowledged the use of all ideas from additional sources.
- The "Evidence of Payment of Application Fees" [11].

We will inform you of the result of the first application step in early December. The initial assessment is based on your submitted documents, focusing on your letter of motivation.

3. Interviews (Dec. 13-17, 2025)

Applicants who passed the AAO screening and the first selection step will be asked to participate in interviews (using video-telephony). Please ensure that you are available during the indicated dates. Time zone differences will be taken into account as much as possible, but we cannot guarantee you a specific slot.

The interviews focus on the applicant's submitted writing samples, language capabilities, and

critical thinking. The interviews will be conducted in English but may also include questions in other languages depending on an applicant's certified language proficiencies.

4. Results and Visa Preparations (Jan. 23, 2026)

We will inform you of the final selection result by January 23, 2026. International students will subsequently be advised on visa application procedures if they do not reside in Japan already.

5. Enrollment Procedures and Fees (March 2026)

You will receive your enrollment documents and student I.D. at the end of February/beginning of March. You will also be asked to pay admission and tuition fees during these procedures. [12]

Academic Affairs Submission Address

Please submit all required forms and documents to the Graduate Academic Affairs Office of the Graduate School of Letters within the November application period:

Kyoto University, Graduate School of Letters, Graduate Academic Affairs Office (第二教務掛)
Yoshida honmachi, Sakyo-ku, Kyoto
606-8501
Japan

Notes

[1] Clearly fill out all required items on your computer and submit a scan of the signed form via the AAO system. If you pass the AAO screening, please send the original to Kyoto University together with the other required documents in November. Once the application documents have been accepted, no application revisions can be made.

Personal Information and Disclosure to the Partner Institution

Your personal information (including grade information) will be used only for the purpose of admission selection and, upon successful application, for the administration of your studies. By submitting your application documents and signing the application form, you also agree that your home institution (Kyoto University) may disclose your personal data, as provided by the application form and obtained by your home institution as a result of your enrollment, for the following purposes in accordance with the Act on the Protection of Personal Information Held by Administrative Agencies (Law No. 59 of 2003, Japan), the State Law of Baden-Württemberg on Higher Education (Landeshochschulgesetz, LHG), the Directive of the Ministry of Science on the Collection and Processing of University Applicants' Personal Data for University Administrative Purposes (Hochschul-Datenschutzverordnung, HSchulDSV BW), the State Data Protection Act of Baden-Württemberg (Landesdatenschutzgesetz, LDSG), and the data protection policies of Kyoto and Heidelberg University:

- (a) the processing of your application to the joint degree program; and
- (b) the administration of your enrollment at the partner institution, including exchanging information regarding grades and credit points (provided your application is successful).

[2] [3] Applicants for the Joint Degree in Transcultural Studies must fulfill any of the following two requirements by March 31, 2026:

- Must have graduated from a Japanese university and hold a B.A. degree or equivalent (cf. provisions of Article 104, Paragraph 7 of the School Education Act) in a discipline of the

humanities, cultural or social sciences with an above-average grade. A B.A. degree from a so-called professional university might be acceptable if the respective study program was research-oriented (see [FAQ 11](#)).

- Must have graduated from an overseas university (or equivalent institution of higher education) or an overseas institution located in Japan after at least 16 years of school education (including undergraduate studies) and hold a B.A. degree or equivalent in a discipline of the humanities, cultural or social sciences with an above-average grade. Please see the information concerning the degree equivalence screening provided by the [Admissions Assistance Office](#), AAO. We will inform you of the result of the screening via email.
- An above-average grade refers to a total GPA equivalent to or better than a 2.0 overall grade in the German system (~85% or better, ECTS grade B or better, GPA 3.0 or better in a system with 4.0 the maximum). As a joint degree program, candidates must fulfill this requirement from Heidelberg University (see, [\[link to MATS requirements\]](#)).

IMPORTANT: If your transcript of records does not include a total GPA (in your home country's system or the ECTS system), please provide a separate document issued by your university that clearly states your total GPA (see also [\[FAQ 13\]](#)).

Students already enrolled at other universities or graduate schools after April 1, 2026, will not be admitted (no double enrollment; students in the Joint Degree Program will, however, be enrolled at a later date also at Heidelberg University). Furthermore, those who are employed by companies, public corporations/organizations, government offices, research institutes, etc., must submit a letter of consent from the relevant director at the time of the enrollment procedures to ensure that any other duties do not interfere with academic work. If you run a business or have a job, but a company does not employ you, please submit a written pledge to dedicate yourself to studying at the time of enrollment.

Note on B.A. degree equivalence: The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) also recognizes as equivalent applicants who graduate from specialized courses at vocational schools or applicants who have only studied for three years at a university but have earned excellent grades (see provisions of Article 102, Paragraph 2 of the School Education Act). However, Joint Degree students will also have to enroll at the partner, Heidelberg University, where such achievements may not be recognized as equivalent. If you cannot submit a B.A. degree certificate conferred by a Japanese or overseas university, please contact the JDTS coordination office ([apply\[a\]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:apply[a]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp)) **no later** than October 1, 2025.

[4] Applicants need to prove very good proficiency in English, i.e., at least level C1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), by means of either one of the following tests:

- a minimum score of 90 in the TOEFL iBT
- a minimum score of 6.5 in the IELTS
- a CAE – Grade C/ FCE – Grade A

Alternatively, a certificate from your university's language department stating your proficiency level of at least C1 according to CEFRL will also be accepted.

Furthermore, good knowledge of two more languages (at least level B1 according to the CEFRL), including the respective mother tongue, is mandatory.

Language certificates should not be older than four years. A certificate for one's first mother

tongue is not required. MyBest Scores in the TOEFL iBT cannot be accepted as proof of language proficiency (see FAQ 19).

If your certified English language proficiency was below 100 TOEFL iBT (or 7.0 in the IELTS; or equivalent) upon enrollment in Kyoto, you must pass the course "Advanced Skills for Humanities Research in English" before you go to Heidelberg (or provide a certificate of proficiency of at least 100 iBT or equivalent).

[5] The letter of motivation must convincingly explain the specific motivation to apply for the Joint Degree Master of Arts in Transcultural Studies based on the applicant's thematic and regional areas of interest. How do your interests relate to the program's contents and aims? What study focus (KBR, SEG, VMC) would you like to choose and why? In addition, the letter must detail the language proficiency and methodological qualifications of the applicant that will equip them for the program. How do you want to build on and possibly expand these qualifications in your studies? What do you seek to gain from studying at the respective partner, Heidelberg or Kyoto?

You need to submit a formal statement via postal mail confirming that you wrote the letter of motivation by yourself without the help of others and that you have properly acknowledged the use of all ideas from additional sources (e.g., via citations).

[6] Submit a head-and-shoulders photograph of yourself (without head covering) taken no more than three months before the date of applying (photo size: 4 cm high x 3 cm wide).

[7] An international student living in Japan should submit a Certificate of Residence issued by the mayor of their city, ward, town, or village of residence (or a scan of each side of their residence card) if they currently live in Japan. International students and Japanese students must submit a scan of their passport (necessary for procedures in Heidelberg).

[8] If your B.A. thesis is not yet completed by the time of application, please submit a thesis abstract in addition to two writing samples. Such writing samples can be term papers (in English, Japanese, or German) you wrote during your undergraduate studies. Please submit as PDFs. Please provide samples of a total length of ca. 30-40 pages (ca. 10-12.000 words), up to a maximum of 60 pages. For further details, see [FAQ 24](#).

[9] Please submit letters of recommendation from two referees (e.g., professors from your undergraduate studies), ideally using this [form](#). Please inform them well in advance that you would like them to act as your referees. If your referees prefer to send the letters to us directly, please upload their names and email addresses as a PDF in the AAO system instead. Make sure to list their institutional email addresses (no gmail, hotmail, or other private addresses) and ask them to use those addresses to contact us. Letters of recommendation not submitted via the AAO system should be sent to [apply\[a\]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp](mailto:apply[a]cats.bun.kyoto-u.ac.jp) by the referees no later than November 10, 2025. Applications without such reference letters cannot be considered for this program.

[10] Directly after enrolling at Kyoto University, you will be asked to prepare also the enrollment process for Heidelberg University and the visa application for Germany (if necessary). For enrolling at Heidelberg University (regardless of the study program, undergraduate or graduate studies), the law asks for the submission of a student's university entrance qualification ("Hochschulzugangsberechtigung," e.g., the high school diploma). For this purpose, please submit

scans of the following items in the AAO system and prepare originals or certified copies in case you pass the AAO screening:

- your high school graduation certificate, and
- a transcript of academic records (high school).

Both documents must be in English or accompanied by a certified English translation. If you need to pass a general university admission exam in your country's education system in addition to graduating from high school (e.g., *kyōtsū* test/center *shiken* in Japan or the Spanish University Entrance Examination (SUEE) in Spain), please also provide documentation for this exam.

[11] Make the payment of the application fee using the [web form](#), and submit the "Evidence of Payment of Application Fees" via postal mail. Exam fee: JP¥30,000 (+JP¥650 handling), transfer period is between November 1 and 20, 2025.

After the application is accepted, the examination fee will not be refunded for any reason.

[12] Fees for 2026.

Admission fee: JP¥282,000

Tuition fee: JP¥267,900 for one semester (JP¥535,800 per year)

The admission and tuition fees are estimated amounts and may be subject to change.

In case of changes at the time of enrollment or during enrollment, the new admission fee and the new tuition fee will be applied.

On successful application, you will also receive information about possibilities for the exemption and deferral of fees. For more information, please see the central web pages of Kyoto University ([EN](#) | [JP](#)).

You will not have to pay tuition fees to Heidelberg University during your stay in Germany.

Others

- MEXT scholarship holders are eligible to enroll in the J.D. program once the program accepts them. However, the MEXT scholarship payments will be suspended while respective students are in Germany (see [FAQs 5 and 9](#)).
- Papers submitted for application will not be returned.

For further information, please refer to the [JDTS APPLICATION FAQ!](#)