

President NISHIO's 2016 Entrance Ceremony Speech
Shift from "How to do" to "What to do," and then to "Why we do"
Welcome to Osaka University

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First of all, I would like to heartily welcome you to Osaka University. I also offer my sincere congratulations to your families and relatives.

Today, 3,502 undergraduate students entered into 11 schools and 2,879 graduate students advanced to 16 graduate schools in Osaka University. As President of Osaka University, I extend a hearty welcome to you.

You enrolled in Osaka University after overcoming entrance examinations, a great challenge. I'm sure you feel relieved and your mind is likely filled with hopes and dreams, thinking of your study, research, sports, new life, and life plan in the coming years. You have many new paths ahead of you. You will learn and experience many things, as well as acquire abundant knowledge at Osaka University. As you start your life at OU, I have something to tell you.

Characteristics of Osaka University

As you may already know, Osaka University was founded in 1931 as the 6th imperial university in Japan thanks to financial support from economic and financial circles in Osaka, Osaka Prefecture, Osaka City and, above all, to the enthusiastic support of Osaka citizens wishing for an imperial university.

Our roots go back to Kaitokudo and Tekijuku founded in the Edo Period. The building of Tekijuku still remains and is designated as a national historic site and an important cultural asset. These two places of learning were not established by the government or feudal domain but rather by citizens as schools for citizens. Osaka University has inherited the academic culture and mind of these places of learning and has approached education and research on the axis of the spirit of innovation and endless challenge.

In 2007, Osaka University merged with Osaka University of Foreign Studies, the predecessor of Osaka School of Foreign Languages, which was also established by money donated from a couple who had succeeded in marine business.

Osaka is a noteworthy city in that schools and universities have developed thanks to local people, although officially the government set up these schools.

Osaka University is a comprehensive university with 11 undergraduate schools and 16 graduate schools. The number of undergraduate students is over 15,000, the largest

among national universities in Japan. And the university also ranks first in the number of female students among national universities in Japan. In such a setting, Osaka University has put an emphasis on both sending OU students overseas to study and accepting international students, and the numbers are increasing every year. For example, we accepted 2,000 international students in the 2015-2016 academic year, which was almost double the figure of 10 years ago.

In this way, your university has become what it is now through its noteworthy history and development. Knowing these things is also part of learning and encourages you to study more. For that purpose as well, I hope you will visit The Museum of Osaka University on the Toyonaka Campus as well as Tekijuku.

Education at Osaka University

At the time of its change of legal status into a national university corporation in 2004, Osaka University set an education objective; to cultivate personnel who have “critical thinking” for making judgements, “design prowess” to nurture a free imagination, and “international mindedness” to be able to be active in a globalized society. Additionally, we have also offered education to nurture “communicability.”

Generally speaking, “being liberally educated” refers to richness of the mind and heart cultivated by being educated. Let’s consider this more deeply. For example, just drawing auxiliary lines occasionally helps when solving geometry problems. Multiple lines can be drawn in some cases; therefore, the way of solving problems differs accordingly. In this sense, we can call the ability to draw various auxiliary lines even in solving the same problem, the power of thinking of a way to solve the problem from multiple perspectives, “critical thinking.”

Design prowess refers to the ability to draw the best answer from any given environment and conditions of constraint when facing a challenge. For instance, the ability to create the best design in the case of building construction: it’s the ability to make the best design based on a comprehensive view of the given site area, budget, various rules and regulations, the surrounding environment and its characteristics as well as the customer’s intention, or the ability to satisfy all conditions for completing the project.

In short, acquiring critical thinking skills and design prowess will make it possible to understand a problem from multiple viewpoints and draw the best solution based on objective indicators in a given environment.

Regarding international mindedness, Osaka University strives to implement education which enables us to achieve our motto, “Live Locally, Grow Globally,” that is, education to nurture students’ skills and abilities so that they can be active on the world stage while

taking a look at the world with emphasis on being entrenched in the local community. Just as an example, consider a group of students who are engaged in fieldwork while living with local residents in a mountain area in Japan at one time, but a few days later, make a presentation at an international meeting in New York, a world stage. To put it briefly, we aim for the cultivation of community-based students with global perspectives: “glocal students.” Communicability is represented by a dialogue, face-to-face communications in words. In modern society in which email is a major means for communication of information, face-to-face communications have decreased. Email is useful for confirming, say, the place of meeting, but dialogue can also mean arguing heatedly. In recent years, actions triggered by egocentric assumption without spending a great deal of time to talk about one’s idea in person have caused various problems. Being equipped with communicability is the most important thing for you when leading a student life, and even after going into the workforce. As I mentioned earlier, for you to become individuals who are trusted in the local community, can participate in intellectual discussions, and be active on the world stage, it’s important to improve your communication skills in your mother tongue, Japanese. Because you cannot do in English what you cannot do in your mother tongue. As you already know, the reality is that intellectual discussions in the world are conducted in English. In order to participate in such discussions, not simply everyday conversation level English, which may be useful for travel overseas, it’s necessary to acquire an English proficiency level capable of convincingly speaking about intellectual topics.

Osaka University offers various education programs to improve your English skills to the point where you can participate in such intellectual discussions. In order to acquire basic intellectual ability to live in the globalized society, I hope you will take these courses.

Osaka University will do its best to support you so that you can acquire these four powers: critical thinking, design prowess, international mindedness, and communicability.

Learning at university

By the way, I’m sure you have made efforts to find the best way to get higher marks to pass entrance examinations. You have probably studied by focusing on “How to do” in a given situation where the subjects you need to work on and the challenges you should address were clearly defined.

Now that you have enrolled in Osaka University, you are asked to open your path by selecting subjects to study and a theme for the research that you will do for your graduation work or for getting your master’s or doctoral degree. You will also be asked what life you will live in the future, what you will or will not do, as well as why you will do it, all one after another. In this way, the questions you will be asked will shift from “How to do” to “What to

do” and then to “Why we do.”

In my relationships with students in my 35-year career as a teacher, I feel more students fail to change gears from “How to do” to “What to do” and then to “Why we do.” By this I mean, in recent years, more students have trouble switching their mindset from a passive way of leading their lives to a mode requiring them to clear their path at their own judgment. In modern society, human beings face complicated global challenges such as a deteriorated global environment, resource depletion, as well as religious and ethnic conflicts. In order to challenge these difficult issues, we are being asked what we should do, why we will do it, for what purposes we will do it, or whether we won’t bother to do it. Society craves for personnel capable of considering “What to do” and “Why we do.”

To respond to such a demand, Osaka University will carry out further educational reform so that we can nurture individuals who have both expertise in limited fields as well as the ability to see things from a wider perspective.

However, the most important thing is for everyone to take advantage of this entrance ceremony to change their sense of awareness and shift gears to “What to do” and “Why we do.”

And it’s needless to say that enhancing the four powers: critical thinking, design prowess, international mindedness, and communicability that I spoke of earlier will play an important role in pressing on the gas pedal toward these new gears.

What I expect in the future

I hope you will not lose your excitement of today and your original intentions. I want you to spend your college life with pride and awareness that you are Osaka University students. For some of you, today is the first day of your relationship with Osaka University. The relationship will last long after graduating from OU. I think this opportunity brings OU closer to your families as well. Your understanding and cooperation are greatly appreciated. In closing, I wish for your continued good health and success. My sincerest congratulations to you all!

April 4, 2016

President of Osaka University
NISHIO Shojiro