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An Introduction to Oxford University

Oxford has been a centre of academic study since the 12th century when scholars from France escaped there from the unfriendly regime in their home country and created the first university in the English-speaking world. Since then, Oxford University has built a solid reputation for uncompromising and rigorous research and teaching; it is now recognized as one of the top universities in the world.

Life for Students at the University

The admissions standards for High School students to enter Oxford University are extremely high, and competition for places there is intense. In Japanese terms, a student would need to achieve a '5' in all subjects. Students also have to submit essays which they must defend in an interview.

The University is made up of 39 'Colleges', most of which accept students from High Schools to study for a 3 or 4 year 'degree course'. Students choose which College they want to enter, and, if they are accepted, can live, eat and study in the College buildings until they graduate. Every College has a 'Hall' where students and professors can eat breakfast, lunch and dinner. The Hall is also used for formal dinners when the meal begins with a traditional prayer in Latin. Colleges also have their own libraries where students can read and study in peace.

Although Oxford University has lectures and classes, the most important part of the teaching is the 'Tutorial system'. Every student meets with an expert in their subject – usually a University Professor – at least once a week for a one-to-one meeting (tutorial). At the meeting, the student will read an essay and then have a discussion with the tutor. At the end of the tutorial, the tutor gives the student a list of books to read and a question to answer at the next week's tutorial.

My own experience of Oxford University was at Merton College – recognized as the oldest college in Oxford – where I studied a 4-year course of Russian and History. As it happens, Crown Prince Naruhito of Japan was a student at Merton as well; though he left 6 years before I entered. One of the most interesting things about life at Oxford is the mix of people – as well as members of the Japanese Imperial family, you can see students from both private and public schools, from all parts of the country. Also, about

25% of students at the University come from foreign countries, which creates a dynamic and international atmosphere. Each of the 3 terms lasts for only 8 weeks; of course, students have to work very hard at Oxford University, but life is not all about studying.

Sports and Societies

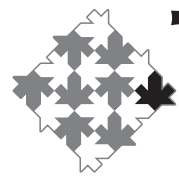
Students at Oxford are active in many sports – the University has top-class teams for rugby, cricket, football, and many other sports. But the most famous sport at Oxford is rowing. Every college has a rowing team, who wake early every morning and run to the River Isis (which turns into the Thames flowing through London) for training. In the Summer term, a rowing tournament is held and students gather on the river-side to support their college teams. The best sportsmen and women from each college are chosen to join University teams which compete nationally and internationally. A number of famous Olympic athletes are Oxford graduates.

Producing Leaders

In addition to sports, Oxford University students are active in theatre, music and politics. There is a famous debating society at the University, called 'The Oxford Union', where students can develop their public speaking skills. Twenty-five British Prime Ministers have graduated from Oxford University, including Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair. Twenty-five international leaders have also studied at Oxford, including King Harald V of Norway, King Abdullah II of Jordan, three Prime Ministers of Australia (John Gorton, Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke), two Prime Ministers of India (Manmohan Singh and Indira Gandhi), Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Norman Washington Manley (Chief Minister of Jamaica), and Bill Clinton, the first American President to attend Oxford. Forty-seven Nobel prize winners have studied or taught at Oxford University.

The Foundations for Success

Oxford University is able to produce effective leaders because it maintains the highest standards and independence from political interference in its teaching and research. Young people have a chance to learn from some of the greatest minds in the world, from teachers who have given their lives to deepening human understanding and knowledge and passing it on to future generations. That is why studying at Oxford University is a life-changing experience and one that we hope our students at Nagoya International Junior and Senior High School will aspire to. ☑



[持続可能な未来へ]

21世紀を迎えてはや8年の年月が経過しようとしています。かつて人類は今世紀に夢を描いていましたが、私たちが生きる現代社会は、不安定な国際情勢、地球環境問題の深刻化などの大きな課題を抱えており、まさに地球規模の歴史的変動の時代を迎えることとなりました。これらの課題を解決するために、もはや1つの国の力のみならず、多数の国の共同・協調による地球規模の具体的な行動計画が推進されています。人類が今までに経験したことも無いほどにスピーディーに変化していくこのグローバル化の浸透した現代社会で、国際舞台で活躍することに憧れながら、さらなる未来の世界に夢を抱く国際生には多くの期待が寄せられます。

1992年にブラジルのリオデジャネイロで開かれた

地球サミット「国連環境開発会議(UNCED)」では、人類が抱える環境と開発に関するさまざまな課題について議論がなされ、行動計画の達成度合いを定期的に評価することが取り決められました。このサミットでの重要なキーワードとして「持続可能性」が挙げられます。持続可能性とは、英語の「Sustainability(サステナビリティ)」に対応する言葉で、「保ち続けていくことができる」という意味です。もっと分かりやすく言い換えるならば、「現在だけでなく将来にわたっていつまでも存続できること」となります。この持続可能性の考えは、「環境を守ること」、「社会に貢献すること」、「経済的に成り立つこと」、という3つの基本的な要素から構成されています。私たち自身の生活と、将来の世代の生活を考える時に、この3つの要素を目安に考えることになります。

環境、社会、経済のいずれかに対する視点が1つでも欠けてしまうと、私たちの社会はとてもしつな物になってしまうでしょう。このことから、3つの要素についてバランスよく取り組むことが大切とされています。

持続可能な未来を切り開くために、私たち国際生は、幅広い分野を単に知識について学ぶだけでなく、修得した知識を活かして、その先に見える多彩な学問領域に触れるよう心がけることも大切です。それによって先人たちが長年必死に取り組んできた課題解決のためのさまざまな方法について知ることでもできるでしょう。そして、現代社会が抱えている課題を自分自身の課題として、さらには地球共同体の一員として、将来生まれてくる人々に思いを馳せながら、国際舞台で活躍することが国際生に求められているのです。☑