

His Excellency Mr Hajime Hayashi
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Embassy of Japan
101-104 Piccadilly
London W1J 7JT

22 August 2022

Dear Ambassador Hayashi,

We hope that you, your family, and the staff at the Embassy in London are well and coping as best as possible with the continuing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to present many challenges to the academic community, and although academics, PhD students, and undergraduate students have generally been able to find ways to get to Japan, it has been much more challenging than when formal visas were not needed at all (for short-term visiting researchers/PhD students) and for undergraduate students needing visas.

In relation to the undergraduate students, many are now trying to apply for student visas so that they can join the exchange programmes at partner universities in Japan. Unfortunately, we are hearing that across the UK, many students are finding it extremely difficult, even impossible, to make appointments to apply for their student visas at the Consular Section. Appointments must be made for within a three-week period, but currently no appointments are available during that period (none during the rest of August and September). The only way to try to get an appointment is to try immediately at 12 midnight, when the next available day's appointments open, but in practice, appointments are taken within 30 seconds.

Because students are finding it extremely difficult or impossible to apply for their student visas in a timely fashion, some of them may unfortunately be unable to take up their exchange study places in Japan, if partner universities cannot allow them to arrive later than expected. This will be extremely problematic for their degree studies and for our Japanese Studies degree programme as a whole.

This will be a serious problem for Japanese Studies programmes across this country.

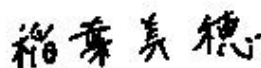
I understand that the current pandemic situation presents significant difficulties, but I urge you to please address the problems with visa appointments immediately. If I may, I would like to suggest that student visas are given a special priority in the application system or that the embassy might allow the use of visa agents for student visas, which currently I do not believe you do.

Thank you very much for your kind consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Christopher Hood
President,
British Association for Japanese Studies



Dr Miho Inaba
Chair,
British Association for Teachers of Japanese