

# Ueno Gakuen International Course

## 2024 Special Curriculum School Implementation Status (Self-Evaluation and Evaluation by Students and Parents)

### Summary

The Ueno Gakuen International Course consists of a curriculum that integrates the Cambridge International Education Program and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Junior High School Courses of Study and High School Courses of Study. This means that Japanese students with little experience of learning in English can obtain an international qualification after six years of study, and at the same time obtain a Japanese high school diploma (the high school curriculum is currently under development).

In junior high school, Japanese language, Social Studies, and Ethics are taught in Japanese, and other subjects are studied in English, allowing students to maintain their Japanese identity while also acquiring a global perspective, 21st century skills, and advanced English proficiency.

In addition, this course is based on the founding educational principle of Ueno Gakuen, "self-awareness," alongside the educational goals of "effort and kindness" as stated in Article 1 of the School Regulations.

### Self-Assessment

The evaluation was divided into the following four main areas.

1. Curriculum
2. Student Development
3. Teacher Development
4. Education Enrichment

#### Evaluation Criteria

A: Very good B: Generally good C: Some issues D: Needs improvement

1. Curriculum	
The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's Curriculum Guidelines for Junior High Schools and the Cambridge Lower Secondary Programme were successfully assimilated. The resulting curriculum integrates subjects through theme-based learning. All subjects follow the same theme at the same time allowing students to deepen their understanding of core concepts, discover links between subjects, and learn common language across subjects to more effectively improve their English. In addition, Japanese language, Social Studies, and Ethics are taught in Japanese, with the aim of developing an identity as a Japanese person and the knowledge necessary to be a member of Japanese society.	
Results of the Initiative	Priority Issues for AY 2025-26
Overall, in the first year of implementation, learning outcomes were achieved almost as planned. To align with MEXT's curriculum requirements for junior high schools, the Japanese curriculum subjects of Technology and Home Economics were divided into different topic areas and integrated into subjects in the Cambridge curriculum such as Science, PE, Global Perspectives, and Art & Design.	<p>The curriculum will be revised in some subjects to integrate subjects more explicitly and more effectively. In addition, we will devise ways to more systematically recycle and use English across all subjects.</p> <p>Furthermore, alongside explanations at parent-teacher meetings, information will be provided through the distribution of syllabus documents so that parents and students can understand the syllabus of the high school curriculum (AS and A</p>

	levels).
Evaluation	B

## 2. Student Development

The goal of this course is to enable students to enjoy learning independently, collaboratively, and actively. Students also learn about "kindness" at our school through actual examples and develop moral values. In addition, students build good relationships with their peers and teachers to effectively learn each subject in English.

Results of the Initiative	Priority Issues for AY 2025-26
<p>The cohesion of the class was high, and all the students were able to express their individuality. The students were actively engaged in presentations and discussions in English and are gradually gaining confidence.</p> <p>In addition, after-school support was provided for English and mathematics to improve basic skills. The students completed an individual project related to an aspect of themselves they wanted to improve.</p> <p>In the Japanese-medium classes, students learned about the use of the language as their mother tongue in Japanese language lessons, geography and history in Social Studies, and developed their consideration of "kindness" in Ethics.</p>	<p>As for the students' English proficiency, there was a significant improvement in their vocabulary and listening comprehension. In particular, there were good results in prepared tasks such as presentations. On the other hand, there were several aspects in which English proficiency was insufficient when using English in less structured situations, such as group discussions in class. Some students also have difficulty writing in English.</p> <p>In order to respond to their needs, we plan to provide training for teachers to better incorporate speaking and writing output in their lessons. In addition, after-school supplementary English support will be provided for students.</p>
Evaluation	B

## 3. Teacher Development

Regular training was conducted to help teachers improve their teaching skills and provide better learning outcomes to students.

Results of the Initiative	Priority Issues for AY 2025-26
<p>Prior to the start of classes, a comprehensive initial training programme was implemented, including CLIL training by an external expert, and all teachers received basic Cambridge training in each subject.</p> <p>At the same time, we have introduced a system for regular formal observation of classes and feedback sessions.</p>	<p>The training was concentrated at specific times of the year, but in the future, we aim to include ongoing training throughout the year. Until now, the training was mainly for teachers who teach in English, but in 2025, teachers who teach classes in Japanese will also be included in the training. The theme of the training will be decided through class observation, training surveys, and opinions from parents and students, and the training programme will be implemented from the first semester of 2025.</p>
Evaluation	A

### Training Details:

April 01-03 2024: Initial Training Workshops on Syllabus, Students, Growth Mindset, Student-centred Learning, Material and Lesson Planning

April 03 2024: CLIL training

<b>4. Education Enrichment</b>	
The goal of education enrichment is to provide students with opportunities to gain meaningful experiences beyond the framework of regular classes, to spark their interest in other areas, to begin thinking about future study and career pathways. Education enrichment also allows students to discover connections between what they are studying and these experiences.	
Results of the Initiative	Priority Issues for AY 2025-26
<p>As part of learning beyond the boundaries of the classroom, we planned fieldwork in Ueno Park and conducted an urban hike through various urban environments. We also held Music Week, a workshop that combines music, art, and science to create musical works through the medium of English. In addition, several external lecturers were invited to provide opportunities to listen to people who from a variety of backgrounds and fields. All of these activities were well received by the students, and they were valuable and memorable experiences.</p> <p>Through this program, students have acquired the ability to work together with their peers, skills of planning and making arrangements, communicating well with others, the ability to overcome difficulties, as well as developing self-confidence. They also had the opportunity to interact with people from different fields outside of the school.</p>	The program will be expanded to include requests from students. We will also begin the Duke of Edinburgh International Award scheme this year for 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade students. This is a global youth development programme that encourages young people to challenge themselves through personal growth and community involvement. Participants complete activities in four key areas: voluntary service, physical recreation, learning new skills, and taking part in an adventurous journey. The award helps young people build confidence, resilience, leadership, and a sense of responsibility.
Evaluation	A

**Education Enrichment Activities:**

April 2024: Trip to Ueno Park

June 2024: Talk by guest from Doctors without Borders

October 2024: Talk by Zen priest

November 2024: Urban Hike

December 2024: Music Week

**Student Assessment**

The following evaluation is based on the results of a questionnaire targeting first-year students of this course in 2024.

**(1) Curriculum, Learning, and English development**

Question	I think so %	Neutral %	I don't think so %
I was able to actively participate in classes (pair work, group work, discussions, presentations, etc.).	100	-	-
I was able to receive sufficient support in the subjects.	80	20	-
The teacher conducted the class with sufficient preparation and enthusiasm.	100	-	-
I was able to understand the content of the class well.	60	40	-
My listening skills improved through the lessons.	80	20	-
My speaking skills improved through the lessons.	80	20	-
My reading skills improved through the lessons.	80	20	-
My writing skills improved through the lessons.	60	40	-

### Free comments are summarized below.

Students are generally highly satisfied with their school life and friendships, and their relationships in the classroom are good. They are also actively engaged in collaborative, student-centred learning activities such as pair work, group work, and discussions, and they reported that they are deepening their understanding by working together with their classmates. The atmosphere of the class as a whole is calm, and the teacher's guidance is praised by the students as "friendly". Although many students find it difficult to learn in English, they are motivated to continue learning thanks to the careful support and guidance of teachers.

### (2) Education Enrichment Programme

activity	Enjoyed %	Neutral %	Didn't enjoy %
Lecture by a guest speaker from Médecins Sans Frontières	85	-	15
Lecture by a Zen monk	85	-	15
Fieldwork in Ueno Park	100	-	-
Urban Hike	100	-	-
Music Week	100	-	-

### Free comments are summarized below.

Students expressed a strong interest in opportunities that involve international travel and activities such as volunteering. They also seemed to enjoy spending time in nature, finding it both refreshing and enjoyable. In addition, many showed an interest in the arts and expressed a desire to engage in creative expression.

There was strong interest in talks and workshops led by guest speakers, with students requesting more opportunities like these in the future. They valued learning from the real-life experiences and career stories shared by professionals. Some expressed interest in guest lectures by animal experts.

### Parent Feedback

The following evaluation is based on the results of a questionnaire targeting parents of first-year students of this course in 2024.

question	I think so %	Neutral %	I don't think so %
How satisfied are you with the international course as a whole?	85	15	-
Do you feel that the program of this course is adequately supportive of your child's learning in all subjects?	85	15	-
Do you feel that this program is effective in improving your child's English skills?	70	15	15
How satisfied are you with the overall quality of the classes?	85	15	-
Are you satisfied with experiential learning activities such as field trips, music weeks, and guest speakers?	100	-	-
Does your child feel safe during their time in this course?	100	-	-
Does your child seem to enjoy learning at the Ueno Gakuen International Course?	100	-	-
Do you feel that communication between teachers and parents is effective?	100	-	-

**Free comments are summarized below.**

• **Positive points**

The program is highly regarded by parents for its language development, for providing opportunities for students to come into contact with a wide range of fields through a variety of hands-on activities, and improving students' speaking skills in Japanese. In addition, the fact that classes are conducted mainly in English is recognized as a major feature of this course, and many people have expressed value in a curriculum that fosters English proficiency that can be used for higher education in Japan and overseas.

While some parents voiced concern about the international environment, many expressed a sense of security in the fact that Ueno Gakuen has an established educational system as a private school. The learning and teaching approach, which emphasizes the development of thinking and problem-solving skills, was also evaluated highly, indicating that this course provides a meaningful learning opportunity for students. In addition, there are many positive opinions about the support system that takes into account students with low levels of English, and the ease of individual support due to the small group size. The development of a positive learning environment was positively evaluated.

- **Points that need to be improved**

It has been pointed out that there is not enough information provided on Cambridge A-levels in this programme, and there is a need for more specific and systematic guidance to support career choices. In addition, there are expectations for improvements in flexible learning support for students based on their individual needs and interests.

There are concerns about the use of Japanese in everyday conversation, especially the psychological barriers this may cause related to using English and the difficulty in switching languages. For this reason, it is necessary to systematically improve overall English proficiency, including reading and writing.

• **Other opinions and impressions**

Regarding communication between parents and the school, there is a desire to use digital tools in addition to paper media to make communication more convenient for parents. In addition, it was pointed out that it is difficult to understand which school events include the International Course in the annual event schedule, so there is a need for clearer presentation of relevant information.

Parents were satisfied with the program as a whole, and many expressed gratitude to the teachers and staff, but there were also comments that asked for a response to reported issues with students' tablets.

Moreover, there were some concerns related to the disclosure of class rankings for midterm and end-of-term examinations. Some parents felt that students with low rankings will lose their motivation to learn, and it is therefore desirable to communicate exam scores carefully through individual interviews. In addition, since documents for parents are distributed only in English, there are calls for them to be written in Japanese to ensure smooth information sharing. Some parents expressed a general positive expectation of further development of this course.

**Conclusion**

This is the first time that the Cambridge International Education Programme has been fully implemented in a school under Article 1 of Japan's School Education Law, and given its complexity, the first year as a whole can be considered a success. The initial educational goals were achieved and the programme was effectively integrated into the school's curriculum. The students are growing steadily as individuals and as a class, and the evaluation from students and parents is generally positive.

On the other hand, based on feedback from students and parents, as well as observations and evaluations by our teachers and staff, we recognize the need for further improvement. Several improvement measures have already been taken, and in order to ensure the sustainable development of the program in the future, we will continue to monitor and flexibly adjust our approach in the second year of operation.