

Tohoku University (National) Graduate School of Law

◆ Program name

Legal and Political Studies Course, International Law Program

◆ Degrees:

Master of Law

◆ Credit and years needed for graduation:

30 credits, 2 years

◆ Address:

27-1 Kawauchi, Aoba-ku, Sendai, Miyagi
980-8576 JAPAN



Features of University <http://www.tohoku.ac.jp/en/>

1.1 History and Achievements

Tohoku University was established in 1907 as the Tohoku Imperial University. Ever since, Tohoku University has embraced its role as one of Japan's leading academic institutions, fostering the next generation of leaders through academic excellence. "Research First", "Open Door" and "Practice-Oriented Research and Education" have been the defining principles of the university for more than a century. Emphasis has been put on research, with the belief that top-class researchers would be able to provide a high level of education and contribute to the overall good of society. This spirit has allowed us to earn recognition in Japan and beyond for both research and educational excellence.



Since its establishment, the university has continued to grow in size and is attracting a growing number of students. Tohoku University now consists of 10 faculties for undergraduate students, 16 graduate schools, together with a number of research institutes. More than 3,000 academic staff engage in research in a variety of areas. There are approximately 16,500 students enrolled, including 10,644 undergraduates, 4,266 graduate students in the master's program, and 2,776 doctoral students. International students come to Tohoku University from over 90 countries and regions.

1.2 Location and Campus

The main campuses of Tohoku University are located in the city of Sendai, the political and economic center of the Tohoku region. Sendai is located approximately 300 km to the north of Tokyo and is linked by high-speed trains to the capital (travelling time: approximately 100 minutes). Sendai Airport is served by flights to major airports in Japan, including Narita International Airport, and also to a number of international destinations such as Seoul and Taipei.

Despite being home to over one million residents, Sendai is known as "the forest city" for its natural beauty. The main campuses of the university are located on the nature-rich Mt. Aoba, conveniently connected to central Sendai by a subway system (less than 10 minutes to central Sendai). The city is remarkably compact and easy to get around. Most students live near the campus and commute by foot or bicycle.

Features of Graduate School <http://www.law.tohoku.ac.jp/eng/>

2.1 Bridging Theory and Practice

In line with the university's motto of "Research First" and "Practice-Oriented Research and Education", the Graduate School of Law has been promoting research with the ideal of "bridging theory and practice". We continue to value this tradition we have inherited from our former faculty members, which include notable figures such as Shigeru Oda (former judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ)), Tokiyasu Fujita (former



justice of the Supreme Court of Japan), Soji Yamamoto (former judge at the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS)), and Kuniko Ozaki (judge at the International Criminal Court (ICC)).

Bridging theory and practice together in our research, the Graduate School of Law/Faculty of Law at Tohoku University is regarded as a center for research in a number of fields of law, such as administrative law, family law, and international law. We endeavor to continue our ongoing contributions in addressing various issues faced by society today through the lens of law.

2.2 Continuing the International Law Tradition

Ever since Judge Oda took up his position at our school after writing his renowned “International Control of Sea Resources”, our department has been a center for international law studies, especially in the field of the law of the sea, in Japan. Centering mainly on the issue of ocean resources, the law of the sea has considerably evolved and increased its importance since the era of Judge Oda’s early career. This is especially true in East and Southeast Asia, where ongoing territorial and maritime disputes are a significant problem for the overall relations in the region. Other areas of international law, such as international environmental law, international trade and investment law, and the law of international dispute settlement, also provide an essential backbone for international relations in the region. We envisage that expertise in international law should greatly benefit JDS fellows from Vietnam who are pursuing a career in diplomacy/international law or ocean policy.

Continuing our tradition, current faculty members of the Graduate School of Law include leading experts on cutting-edge issues such as South China Sea issues, conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) and Arctic issues. We invite future JDS Fellows with an interest in this field or any other area of international law to be a part of our tradition, and to bridge a deeper understanding of the law of the sea from studying at our school (“Theory”) with your future career (“Practice”).

2.3 A Rich Academic Environment

The Graduate School of Law at Tohoku University is an ideal place to study law, and in particular, international law. The close academic community of faculty members and students offers a unique environment to engage in discussions with professors and students in your own field of study and also with those involved in research in other related fields.

The Tohoku University library’s extensive collection of academic material will support students in their coursework and in writing their master’s theses. The library holds a good collection of books, journals and electronic material, including access to major law databases. A considerable amount of material on the law of the sea, in particular, has been accumulated over the decades. The library is also a United Nations Depository Library and will provide easy access to UN documents and materials.



Features of the Program

3.1 Master’s Program in Law

Students enrolled in the Master’s Program in law are required to acquire 30 credits or more in two years to be awarded a degree of Master of Laws. They must also complete their master’s thesis and pass an oral examination in partial fulfillment of the degree requirement. The Master’s program consists of two main components: (1) taking courses in order to acquire/enhance their knowledge of specific areas of study (18 credits) and (2) completing a master’s thesis on a specific topic under supervision (12 credits).

To fulfill the needs of JDS Fellows seeking to become experts in international law and especially in the law of the sea, courses on international law in general and in the law of the sea will be provided in English. However, students are also encouraged to explore the variety of English-taught courses available in the Graduate School of Law Master’s program and in other departments of the university. Courses in related areas such as global governance, international relations, Japanese politics and Law and Chinese politics are provided in the Master’s Program in Law and will provide a broader perspective in which to address international law issues.

Based on basic training provided through the courses, students will then focus on a selected topic they choose for their research. Students are expected to choose a particular theme in international law that has both theoretical and practical implications. A supervisor will closely guide students on their research, from choosing the research theme to completing the thesis. A number of “checkpoints”, such as a colloquium for students to make interim presentations on their progress will be set up, to ensure that students will not be left behind. Through this process,



students will acquire the basic skills and knowledge necessary to become an “expert” in international law.

JDS Fellows interested in studying the Japanese language will also have the option of taking courses offered in the Tohoku University Japanese Language Program. The Language Program offers a variety of courses at different levels. Although these courses are not eligible as credits for the fulfillment of the degree requirement, they may provide additional value to your stay in Japan for two years.

3.2 International Law Program

For JDS Fellows from Viet Nam, we are offering a program focused on public international law, specially tailored to suit the needs of those wishing to acquire or enhance their knowledge of this field of law. The program places some emphasis on the international law of the sea, but applicants with research plans in any area of public international law will be eligible for the program. We are offering the program with the renewed realization that this field of law increasingly requires serious attention, especially in its current Asian context. We look forward to discussing international law issues with JDS Fellows from Vietnam, among other students from various backgrounds.



In light of our spirit of “Research First” and “Practice-Oriented Research and Education”, it is our belief that being an expert is more about being able to utilize deep understandings of the law in practice than merely being knowledgeable. For this reason, less than half of the courses on international law are lectures. The rest of the classes will be small-sized seminars focused on discussing a particular case or issue. For example, in the Seminar on the Law of the Sea, students will choose a particular topic from a list of issues and conduct research on their own, starting from the suggested reference materials. They will then make presentations in class, followed by discussions with all the participants. Through this kind of active learning process, JDS Fellows will foster not only their legal expertise but also their presentation, writing, and debating skills in English.

3.3 Special Program for JDS Fellows

Special Programs for our JDS Fellows will focus on two major areas: (1) special seminars and lectures and (2) organizing study trips.

(1) We will organize special seminars and lectures and invite renowned experts or practitioners in the field of the law of the sea and in related areas. The seminars will highlight a particular current issue and will provide an opportunity to have discussions with an expert with first-hand knowledge of the issue. The themes of the seminars will be selected to facilitate JDS Fellows in their work on their master’s thesis as much as possible. The special seminars also aim to connect JDS Fellows with key experts and practitioners in Japan.

(2) We will organize study trips to visit related ministries and think tanks and exchange views with officials and experts on ongoing law of the sea issues. There will also be opportunities to attend international academic conferences concerning international law. The study trips will allow JDS Fellows to understand how experts and stakeholders perceive different issues.

Necessary Curriculum to Obtain the Degrees

To obtain the degree of Master of Laws from the Graduate School of Law at Tohoku University, students are required to take 30 credits or more and to complete a master’s thesis under the supervision of the supervising faculty member. Six credits are awarded when students complete their master’s thesis and pass the final examination, and six additional credits can be acquired for supervised work in developing the thesis. The rest of the credits must be acquired by taking and passing courses in the Master’s Program.

There are no compulsory courses in the Master’s Program. JDS Fellows may choose from courses taught in English in the program. If they wish, they may also choose from courses offered in other departments and in the Faculty of Law for undergraduates (Upon approval, students may include up to 8 credits in the 30 credits required for the master’s degree).

Courses specially designed for JDS Fellows and other international students will be offered in the field of international law and the law of the sea (4 to 6 credits each semester). These courses include an introductory lecture in international law (depending on Fellows’ experiences in international law), a lecture on the international law of the sea, and seminars each focused on (1) international legal theory, (2) reading academic literature, (3) analyzing judgments/awards of international courts and tribunals, and (4) engaging in research and discussions on contemporary issues in the law of the sea. Special lectures will also be provided in the inter-semester period.

Supervisor for JDS Fellows

Kentaro NISHIMOTO, Ph.D., Professor of International Law

Kentaro Nishimoto is Professor at the Graduate School of Law, Tohoku University. He obtained his doctorate from the University of Tokyo in 2011, with a thesis on the “Territoriality and Functionality in the Historical Formation of the Modern Law of the Sea”. He teaches public international law at Tohoku University and also teaches a course on the law of the sea at the Graduate School of Public Policy, the University of Tokyo. He has advised the government of Japan on international law issues in various capacities, such as a member of the Advisory Board on the Extension of the Continental Shelf at the Secretariat of the Headquarters for Ocean Policy and adviser to the Japanese delegation to the “Intergovernmental Conference on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction”. His current research focuses on the legal regime of the outer continental shelf, settlement of maritime disputes in Asia, marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction, and Arctic issues.

Academic Schedule

The standard time frame for the completion of the program is two years. The following table is a model schedule for JDS Fellows in the Master’s Program in Law:

First Year (October 2024-March 2025)
<u>Fall semester (October-March)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductory guidance from supervisor on studies and research topic• Register and take courses in English• Colloquium for international students in the Graduate School of Law• Study trip to ministries/think tanks in Tokyo
Second Year (April 2025-March 2026)
<u>Spring semester (April-September)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to take courses• Decide the details of the research topic• Participate in Special Seminar <p><u>(After the end of class period)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Special Lectures <p><u>Fall semester (October-March)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take additional courses (if necessary)• Make a presentation on research progress at a colloquium• Start writing thesis• Study trip to ministries/think tanks in Tokyo
Third Year (April-September 2026)

Spring semester (April-September)

- Participate in Special Seminar
- Present research progress at a colloquium for interim reporting
- Completion and submission of the thesis (July)
- Final oral examination based on the thesis (July-August)

Graduation (September 2026)

Facilities

Accommodation

Tohoku University has several residence complexes (“University House”) close to its campuses that offer housing for international students, subject to availability. There are also private housing options in the area around the university campus. Further information on housing can be found on the website of the International Support Office.

Library

Students in the Master’s Program in Law will have access to the Tohoku University library system. The department library located on the first floor of the Faculty of Law building has a good collection of periodicals in the field of law and politics, including international law. The Faculty of Law building is conveniently located next to the Main Library, which houses over 2.7 million books, about 40% of which are in foreign languages (mostly English). The Main Library was recently renovated and is easy to use. The library offers “Concierge Service for International Students” staffed by graduate student staff from various countries to help international students with using the library or with their studies.

International Support Office

The International Support Office of Tohoku University provides support to international students and researchers on a variety of issues, “from issues with the Status of Residence to tips for everyday shopping.” The office has an informative website in English, covering all aspects of coming to and living in Sendai. The website can be accessed at http://sup.bureau.tohoku.ac.jp/index_en.html.

Message for Applicants

Message to Future JDS Fellows

The international law program at the Graduate School of Law at Tohoku University expands on the previous law of the sea program and offers a curriculum designed to meet the needs of JDS fellows in the area of the law of the sea and other areas of international law. Based on our experience with JDS fellows from Vietnam and our tradition of bridging theory and practice, we are confident that our program will fit comfortably with the needs of Fellows with interest in international law. We look forward to seeing you in Sendai.