

01 Global

International Joint Degree Program to connect with the world

An Unprecedented Approach towards Globalization of Medical Research

At Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine, founded on a seamless philosophy in undergraduate throughgraduate level education, we established the first joint PhD degree program in Japan to promote globalization. We asked some of the faculty members at the center of this initiative to speak about the program –future vistas and exciting content–and how it will lead to the nurture and development of both our students and Nagoya University itself.

KASUYA, Hideki



**EL-KABBANI,
Ossama Ahmed Lotfi**



ALEKSIC, Branko

A First in Japan,
Leaders in World-Class
Medical Education



**EL-KABBANI,
Ossama Ahmed Lotfi**

PhD from College of Medicine, University of Saskatchewan (Canada). Formerly Associate Professor at Monash University (Australia), currently Professor of the International Collaborative Program in Comprehensive Medical Science between Nagoya University and the University of Adelaide.

KASUYA, Hideki

PhD from Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine. After working as a surgeon and doctoral researcher at Harvard University (US), currently Professor at Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine, Associate Dean for International Affairs, Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine, and Chair of Surgical Project Cancer Immune Therapy Research Center.

ALEKSIC, Branko

PhD from Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine. Previously a physician at the Institute of Mental Health in the Republic of Serbia, currently a Designated Associate Professor at Institute of International Education & Exchange, Nagoya University.

01 Global

International Joint Degree Program to connect with the world

A Joint Degree Program with a foreign university realized in Japan for the very first time

KASUYA | Our goal is to educate our students to become internationally active, both as clinicians and researchers, and to focus on instilling global awareness and English communication skills from the undergraduate medical school all the way through the graduate program. Students begin learning medical English from their freshman year, culminating in overseas clinical training in their final Year 6. Many of the students who receive overseas clinical training also go on to show interest in the Joint Degree Program (JDP). More and more outstanding high school students are attracted to our rich program, and they aim to enter our highly-competitive undergraduate program, while about 100 foreign students are currently enrolled in our graduate school.

ALEKSIC | It's my job to support those foreign students. I'm also a psychiatrist, so I can provide psychological support as well, listening to their opinions and creating a friendly environment for them to study in. I'm also actively involved in thoroughly supporting Japanese medical students to hone their English skills so that they will start off on the same footing as the foreign students when they enter graduate school.

KASUYA | Our graduate school has concluded an agreement with the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Adelaide in Australia to offer a JDP. This was established in 2015 as the "International Collaborative Program in Comprehensive Medical Science between Nagoya University and the University of Adelaide". Students will spend at least 1 year of their 4-year doctoral program abroad at the partner university, conducting research and ultimately be awarded a joint PhD degree from both universities. Students are already enrolled in this program at both universities and are currently studying in



preparation for their time abroad. In April 2017, Nagoya University also concluded another agreement with Lund University in Sweden and will begin accepting students into this program. We are also currently in talks to set up an additional JDP with the University of Freiburg in Germany.

EL-KABBANI | I have come to this graduate school to shoulder the responsibility of administrating the JDP. As this program begins, I have introduced the students and researchers at Nagoya University to information about our partner university, and am currently involved in creating a syllabus. As we move forward with this program, we will have to compromise, and overcome many barriers. However, when we encounter differences in our approach to the syllabus, for example, we will listen to each other's opinions and work together to bring things to a good outcome. Every year, we hold an international joint symposium with Nagoya University, University of Adelaide, and University of Freiburg in Germany and have been doing so for some years now to facilitate student networking and to provide students with opportunities to present their research. I believe that it was through our continued efforts in activities such as these that we have provided the foundation for the current program.

Education and Research connected to the world as the University Evolves

KASUYA | The greatest appeal of JDP from a student's perspective, is that they will acquire invaluable experience conducting research abroad, early in their careers. The ability to understand another person's perspective while in another culture and adapt accordingly, is an essential trait that any good researcher should acquire. Our program would provide young researchers with an opportunity to do just that. It also has the advantage of allowing graduates to create the personal networks they will need to conduct research on an international scale in the future. Although Nagoya University is not as widely-recognized abroad as it deserves, Lund University and the University of Adelaide are both among the leading 100 universities in the world, and quite renowned in Europe and the US. Holding a joint degree from either of these 2 universities would be proof that our graduates have received the finest graduate-level education, ensuring our students' futures and allowing them to receive commensurate recognition in international academic societies.

ALEKSIC | You are absolutely right. Giving young researchers an opportunity to experience and work in research environments abroad is vital to expanding their international awareness and outlook. Collaborative research among laboratories is essential to continued progress, and JDP will no doubt become the first step towards global cooperative research. Participation in global research reflects on university rankings, and we become involved in more of these studies, it will provide Nagoya University with a huge advantage.

KASUYA | I also believe JDP will prove an initiative that introduces many advantages for our university. Learning more about each other's curriculum will provide an opportunity to adapt those methods to our own curriculum, and better understanding of the research conducted at individual laboratories will provide opportunities for more cooperative research between our institutions. This means JDP will change the entire outlook of university education and research activities, and

ultimately lead to the evolution of research at Nagoya University, elevating it to a whole new dimension beyond mere collaboration with other laboratories.

EL-KABBANI | I agree. University collaboration in educating students and researchers allows us to provide opportunities that would not be possible from any one institution alone. It would allow our students to grow, honing them into better scientists. Studying in two diverse environments will teach them to approach a problem from two, or even multiple perspectives. This cooperation between universities would allow for further innovation, and may even lead to collaboration with the industrial sector. Nagoya University currently aims to become a hub for higher education in Asia, and these activities will help solidify our role. Through collaboration, we will also gain further understanding towards each other's countries and cultures, and this, too, will be good for both sides.

An educational environment and program chosen by students around the world

KASUYA | We have a very long history of accepting foreign students into our programs, and many students from abroad, including top universities in the US and Europe, apply to our undergraduate clinical practice programs. We are only able to accept about 35 students every year, but applicants exceed 300 students, so those remaining after a highly selective process are truly some of the best of the best. There are so many applicants because each department offers very distinctive programs which have received high evaluations from foreign students who have taken advantage of our program. This only leads to increasing applications from foreign students in subsequent years creating a positive cycle. Our graduate school program also accepts many foreign students, primarily from Asia, but what do you think is the appeal of our program?

ALEKSIC | The most appealing aspect is that students can focus on their studies in a research environment equal to that in top tier institutions in Europe and the US. For Asian students, Japan is geographically near, and the cost of living is stable. More than anything, they are guaranteed a safe environment to live in. Many of the lectures in our graduate program are provided in English so the lack of a language barrier has an added appeal.

EL-KABBANI | The quality of education at Nagoya University is very high, and the rapid and advanced globalization of our program explains



its popularity. We are involved in many major joint research projects, and this is also an advantage. Conversely, doctoral theses in Japan are written quite differently from those in other countries, so students may feel a bit daunted by the great difference in that respect. In JDP, we would like to be sure to keep these differences

in mind and adjust accordingly.

KASUYA | I agree. In JDP, the doctoral dissertation defense will involve a joint review with our partner university, and so we hope to learn from the University of Adelaide's methods, such as inviting external committee members to evaluate the thesis, to ensure a fair assessment of quality. Until now, we have only compared our methods with other Japanese universities, but through JDP, we will have an opportunity to learn more about how doctoral dissertations are evaluated, and credit certification in other countries. This will prove very stimulating for our educators and we can already sense how this will lead to globalization of our entire system as well.



As a leader in globalization inspiring Japanese Medical Education to greater heights

KASUYA | We plan to spread the JDP even further. In addition to the University of Adelaide and Lund University, we intend to sign an agreement with University of Freiburg within the next few years. Currently, the program is still limited in its numbers as we start, but we hope to continue increasing the number of applicants both from within and outside our university.

EL-KABBANI | We currently offer a joint degree between 2 universities, but as the number of our joint universities expands, the possibility may arise for joint degrees with 3 universities, another first in Japan. It is an ambitious goal, but since our graduate school of medicine has already succeeded in creating a first in Japan, we hope to continue issuing challenges as we expand our research activities.

ALEKSIC | In several years, I look forward to seeing some of the first graduates from our JDP return to Nagoya University. They will have had experience in collaborative research with the partner university, and be able to continue conducting world-class research while guiding our students as educators who possess an international perspective. By utilizing their overseas experience in education, they will help to accelerate the globalization of our graduate school for further expansion of JDP.

KASUYA | Exactly. Our graduate school aims to build an integrated cycle. Students who have studied an organized curriculum during undergraduate training will undergo clinical training after graduating, and then return to Nagoya University to earn a JDP. We will continue doing our utmost to improve our program so that the JDP will lead to the creation of world-class medical researchers. Currently, we are firmly in the lead among medical schools in Japan promoting globalization of our program, and hope to galvanize our position as we move ever forward towards the future.