

**Nikkei Asian Review**

**Dare to speak  
without prejudice**

**Waseda University**

**School of International Liberal Studies  
Professor A. Pinnington, Dean**

Dean Pinnington was born in Slough, UK, in 1955. He obtained a Ph.D. in English Literature at University of Sussex in 1982, specializing in British, Japanese and comparative literature, and became a professor in the Faculty of Law, Waseda University, in 1988. He was a founding member of the School of International Liberal Studies in 2004, and has been its Dean since 2014.



Young people often ask themselves how they should enter the world and what they should learn to do so. Everyone, not just the young, needs communication skills and open-mindedness to interact with people on a global level. We interviewed Professor Pinnington who tackles such issues as the Dean of the School of International Liberal Studies at Waseda University. (Interviewer: Toshihiro Tonishi, NAR Deputy Chief Editor)

**—What kind of education do we need to nurture truly global talent?**

As our name suggests, the School of International Liberal Studies offers an international liberal arts curriculum.

First, all classes are taught in English. This is not just for students to learn English, but to enable students from different cultural backgrounds to study together using English as a common language. Passive learning is not productive, so we focus on participatory education. From the first year, students hold presentations and debates in small classes.

As a school of liberal studies, we cover various subjects. First, we let students find a field that interests them. Students who speak Japanese as their native language must study abroad for a year. Foreign students, Japanese students from abroad, and native speakers of Japanese all have a different level of English proficiency at first, but they all reach almost the same level when they graduate.

**—What career do the your students choose after university?**

About 70% get a job and the rest go on to graduate schools, half of them in the US or Europe.

Companies appreciate their strong presentation skills and ability to pose questions well. Students who studied in a non-English-speaking country can communicate in three languages, which is an advantage for job hunting.

Among students who go on to graduate schools, some have been admitted into Harvard or Oxford University. Language skills are not enough to enter Harvard. Their admission is the result of their proactive research and creative learning. Some students also get interested in law while at university and go to law schools in Japan and abroad.

**“Understand different opinions without hostility”**

**—What is the most important attitude that students should have?**

I think the most important attitude is not to be prejudiced. Anyone will almost instinctively oppose an opinion that differs from their own.

I sometimes have prejudices too, but human beings always have things in common. It is important to listen to others and try to understand them without being hostile. I learned Japanese as an Englishman. I was embarrassed at first because I could not speak fluently. Then I learned not to worry about my mistakes and just to speak. My interest in Japanese literature motivated me as well. I focused on reading and writing, and the experience made me a humbler person. There is always someone who speaks a language better than you. As you speak, you will know that you are not the only one who feels embarrassed, and you will overcome that feeling. It is great to see students who are native speakers of Japanese speak up as they move up through the years.

**—Can grammar take a back seat when we have something to say?**

We cannot disregard grammar. It is important to improve our speaking, reading, and writing in a balanced way, and we must not give up. I still read Japanese books every day for an hour and discover new words.

It is important to learn about other things using English. It is good to sometimes face difficulties in doing high value-added things. Young people should get out of their comfort zone. I want them to be more ambitious.



[Picture] Class in English at the School of International and Liberal Studies.

“Importance of uncovering regional information”

—How would you use media, such as Nikkei Asian Review, that report Asia-focused news in English?

I think the effort to uncover information on a region that has not been covered sufficiently until now, like ASEAN, is reminiscent of the initiative of the School of International Liberal Studies. We also try to communicate a wide range of subjects to people with different needs. It is thus important to use English, the language used around the world. “Despite being at the School of International Liberal Studies, students are most interested in economics and business. They also start to think about their career path in their third or fourth year. I would like to use Nikkei Asian Review as a classroom material and source of information.

—Thank you for your time.

The School of International and Liberal Studies at Waseda University is a relatively new school founded in 2004. It has over 3,000 undergraduate students from Japan and abroad. Almost all classes are taught in English from the first year until graduation. While the School does not specialize in a particular field of study, it holds seminars in small classes of 20 students per instructor starting in the first year to develop the students’ presentation skills.

Ms. Akira Ikegami (19 years old), a sophomore who takes the seminar “British Popular Fiction at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” enthusiastically says she wants to focus on her interests, such as international relations, in her third and fourth year.

Ms. Hanaka Coffron (19 years old) says she wants to work using English and Japanese in the US, where she was born and raised. Professor Graham Law, who teaches the seminar using the sci-fi novel “The War of the Worlds” by H. G. Wells, emphasizes that it is meaningful for foreign students, returnee students, and students who received Japanese education to bounce ideas off each other.

Focusing on the School of International and Liberal Studies, Waseda University has conducted the AIMS7 Universities Consortium Plurilingual and Pluricultural Program with six renowned universities in ASEAN countries since 2013. AIMS, which stands for ASEAN International Mobility for Students Programme, is a MEXT-designated program. Every year, Waseda University takes in 25 students from ASEAN countries and sends 25 students to them. The students spend the autumn semester in the destination country without paying tuition fees and can receive free plane tickets. They aim to develop their communication skills to interact with people of different cultures in their mother tongue, English, and the local language, and to become a bridge in the international community.

Mr. Taiki Kawagoe (20 years old), a sophomore of the Department of Economics, School of Political Science and Economics, who currently studies at Thammasat University in Thailand, says his internship at a digital marketing company made him reflect on the development of Thailand and motivated him to work in Southeast Asia in the future. Waseda University provides the students and teachers involved in the program with IDs to access Nikkei Asian Review and use it as a source of information.

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