

3rd JAPANESE STUDIES ESSAY CONTEST & MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME 2026

CONTEST GUIDELINES

(As of 15 April 2026)

Overview

The Japanese Studies Essay Contest & Mentorship Programme is a unique programme that invites any eligible undergraduate and postgraduate student from any course or programme to discover the world of *Japanese Studies and pen their thoughts in the form of an essay on the many topics on Japan (abstract and essay to be written only in the English language). Selected candidates will be assigned to a mentor for two months who will guide them on writing an academic essay for the chance to win cash prizes and more!

*Definition of Japanese Studies

Japanese/Japan Studies (JS) is a field of study which focuses on a comprehensive, interdisciplinary understanding of Japan, covering, culture, society, economy, and politic. Studies and research may be conducted in English and/or any other language. JS is unfortunately often misunderstood as the study of Japanese language (JL), shying many students who do not speak Japanese from joining the community and any contest on JS. This programme attempts to showcase a distinction between JS and JL and welcomes students who are looking for a platform to write about Japan's culture, society, economy, politics and beyond.

3rd Japanese Studies Essay Contest and Mentorship Programme 2026	
ORGANISERS	1. The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) 2. Malaysian Association of Japanese Studies (MAJAS) 3. Department of East Asian Studies, Universiti Malaya (UM)
CLOSING DATE	[OPEN CALL] Abstract Submission: 17 May 2026, Sunday [CHOSEN SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES ONLY] Final Essay 31 August 2026 (Monday)
EVENT TYPE	Academic Mentorship: Online // Symposium: Physical
THEME	Japanese/Japan Studies

Please read the stages of the contest thoroughly below:

Stage 1: OPEN CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

(Deadline to submit: 17 May @ 11:59PM)

For the first stage, we invite all eligible students (refer below 1. ELIGIBILITY) to submit a 300-400 word abstract ONLY (not the full essay) by choosing ONE question from the list of Topics posted on the

dedicated JFKL Essay Contest website (in English only). Please only answer using the Application Form provided.

Stage 2: ANNOUNCEMENT OF 'MENTEES'

(Mentor Mentee Camp for shortlisted candidates at JFKL: 21 June)

COMPULSORY

Once the Abstract submission deadline has closed, the organizers will select the best Abstracts with great potential and contact the students separately to attend the Mentor-Mentee Camp on 21 June.

During the camp, the student (Mentee) will meet their Mentor for the first time and devise a mentorship strategy to develop the student's Abstracts into a full-length academic essay. The mentorship period shall last two months (online) until the essay submission date: **31 August 2026**.

Stage 3: ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS & PRESENTATION OF ESSAYS

(Next Gen Symposium: 24th October)

COMPULSORY

Once the essay submission deadline is closed, a panel of judges will evaluate and decide on the winners.

All Mentees and Mentor are required to the **3rd Next Generation Symposium on Japanese Studies** in Universiti Malaya on the 24th of October (open to public) to present their essays. The winner's announcement ceremony will be conducted shortly after all presentations have concluded.

1. ELIGIBILITY

1.1 Eligibility and Duties of the Student

This contest is divided into two categories: undergraduate and post-graduate students with the following criteria:

UNDERGRADUATE CATEGORY:

- A. Malaysian student currently enrolled in a Bachelor's degree or other Undergraduate degree programme in university or other registered tertiary education institution based in Malaysia;
- B. Full-time students;
- C. Between the ages of 18 and 30 as of 24 October 2026;
- D. Not in any current legal dispute or criminal record;
- E. Is not an immediate family member of any JFKL staff or MAJAS member;
- F. Did not earn a placing (1st – 3rd place winner) in last year's contest;
- G. Able to commit himself/herself from May to October 2026 to regularly communicate with their mentors as well as attend briefing sessions, presentation, and other matters when the need arises.

POSTGRADUATE CATEGORY:

- A. Malaysian or international student currently enrolled in a Postgraduate degree or other Postgraduate degree programme in university or other registered tertiary education institution based in Malaysia;

- B. Full-time or part-time students;
- C. Between the ages of 18 and 35 as of 24 October 2026;
- D. Not in any current legal dispute or criminal record;
- E. Is not an immediate family member of any JFKL staff or MAJAS member;
- F. Able to commit himself/herself from May to October 2026 to regularly communicate with their mentors as well as attend briefing sessions, presentation, and other matters when the need arises

2. SUBMISSION

2.1 Submission Requirements

Students **must submit** the following via the **SUBMIT HERE** button on our [website](#) to participate in this contest:

- A. Completed [Application Form- Essay Contest & Mentorship Programme 2026](#) in the correct category with all segments filled up with signature. Upon submission, a copy will be sent automatically to the e-mail registered and serve as the acknowledgment of each submission.

2.2 Abstract

- A. The submitted Abstract must be an **original student work** and not written in previous or current assignment or another contest or event.
- B. Only one student (1) is allowed per submission. Group work is not allowed.
- C. It is strictly forbidden to use AI websites or apps such as ChatGPT and others to aid in your writing both for content and grammar.
- D. The format should be typewritten with Times New Roman, 12 pt. 1.15 Spacing and Justified paragraph alignment.
- E. Students must use APA 7th Edition Citation Style Guide for in-text citation and referencing.
- F. The word count range must be between 300- 400 words (excluding references).
- G. Students must choose to answer one (1) question from any one of the Category. The list of questions may be found on our website.
- H. Entries must not contain any form of hate speech, including but not limited to language or content that is discriminatory, defamatory, or incites violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, disability, or any other protected characteristic. Such entries will be disqualified and may be reported to appropriate authorities if necessary.

2.3 Copyright

- A. Submitted Abstract and completed essays will be the property of The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) under this contest.
- B. JFKL reserves the right to use, publish, and display any participant's abstract, final essay, name, photograph, or video for publicity, promotional, and reporting purposes related to this contest.

3. SELECTION, DEADLINE, PRESENTATION & WINNERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Following the closing of the Abstract submission period, a selection process will be jointly conducted by the contest organizers. Finalists (hereafter named “Mentee”) shall receive an official notification by e-mail **tentatively on 26 May 2026 (Tuesday)**.

The **Mentor-Mentee Camp** will be conducted physically at The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur on **21 June (Sunday)** where each Mentor and Mentee pair will be revealed as well as a briefing on the mentorship and later stage of the contest. The event organizers will bear and arrange all travel and lodging costs. As attendance is **compulsory**, ensure that you are available on this date before participating in this contest. A public announcement on the selected list of Mentees shall be made on the 23rd of June 2026 via social media.

3.1 Deadline- Final Essay Submission

- A. Deadline: 31 August 2026 (Monday) at 11:59pm
- B. Please submit your final essay to farah_ba@jpf.go.jp (Ms. Farah)

3.2 Winner’s Announcement & Presentation-3rd Next Generation Symposium on Japan Studies

- A. The announcement of winners will be done in the morning segment of the *3rd Next Generation Symposium on Japanese Studies*, held in Universiti Malaya (UM) tentatively on **24 October 2026**. The symposium serves as a platform for finalists to present their essays to a group of academicians and Japanese Studies experts throughout Malaysia. Family members, friends and lecturers are encouraged to attend.
- B. **Best Presenter Award** - An additional award dedicated to only one (1) winner across both undergraduate and postgraduate categories who could best capture the attention of everyone in the room with their impeccable stage presence, presentation skills and spontaneity at answering questions from the audience.
- C. All Mentees must make personal arrangements with their respective faculties and universities to attend the rehearsal and symposium. Please inform JFKL if an invitation letter is required for your release. Attendance is **compulsory**.
- D. The event organizers will bear the travel and lodging cost for any finalist based outside of Klang Valley, as they see fit to attend both the rehearsal and event day.
- E. Following the winner’s announcement, Mentees are encouraged (not compulsory) to attend a roundtable sessions on Japanese Studies by industry experts in the afternoon segment of the symposium.

4. OFFICIAL RESULT, PRIZES & CERTIFICATES

4.1 Result

The result decided by the judges is final. Official results will also be published on the contest webpage and each organizer’s social media channels.

4.2 Prizes

Prizes allocated for the winners of both categories are as follows:

- A. 1st place: RM 1,000.00, certificate of achievement.
- B. 2nd place: RM 800.00 and a certificate of achievement.
- C. 3rd place: RM 600.00 and a certificate of achievement.
- D. Best Presenter Award: RM 500.00 and a certificate of achievement
- E. Consolation prizes: Certificate of participation

B. Prizes cannot be changed or compensated for any damages unless deemed otherwise by the organizers and sponsors.

C. The award-giving ceremony will take place during the 3rd Next Generation Symposium on Japanese Studies, Universiti Malaya on 24 October 2026 (tentative).

4.3 Certificates

An e-certificate shall be awarded to all participants of the essay contest.

5. INQUIRIES

For further inquiries, please refer to the main organizer:

Address : The Japan Foundation, Kuala Lumpur (JFKL)
Cultural Affairs Department
18th Floor, Northpoint, Block B, Mid-Valley City, No. 1, Medan Syed Putra
59200 Kuala Lumpur

Tel : 03-2284 7228

E-mail : farah_ba@jpf.go.jp (Attn: Ms. Farah Ammar, Cultural Affairs Department)

Official Webpage	Submission Form (Undergraduate Category)	Submission Form (Postgraduate Category)
		
JFKL Website	Google Form	Google Form