

JCMU Students - Study Abroad in Japan – Basic Visa FAQs

Below are common questions we receive from students preparing to participate in JCMU's programs.

Q: What is a visa?

A: A **visa** is a document issued by a foreign government which grants a traveler permission to enter and reside within that country for a specified period of time. Unless a traveler is granted a waiver, a visa must always be obtained prior to entry to a foreign nation.

Q: So I can't get into Japan with just my passport?

A: Not necessarily. Visa waivers are dependent on the traveler's home nation and status, as well as how long the traveler intends to stay in Japan. So a student who is a U.S. citizen going on a two-week program doesn't need a visa, but a student who holds a Chinese passport always does. Any traveler, regardless of citizenship, needs a visa if they plan to stay in Japan for more than 90 days. That includes JCMU students who wish to do more than one program (such as May + summer).

Q: Do I also need a landing permit?

A: No. Japanese visas include automatic landing permits, so no additional documentation is required.

Q: Does my visa allow me to stay after the program?

A: Yes, though only for a short while. Since JCMU guarantees all visas issued for our students, students are not permitted to remain in Japan more than two weeks past a program's official end date.

Q: Can I leave early for my program?

A: Yes, but only 5 business days prior to your program's official start date. Since visas are issued for a specific entry date, if you try to enter the country prior to your visa's start date, you may be barred from landing in Japan. Make sure you indicate the correct date for your flight's arrival on your visa application form before it is submitted to JCMU.

Q: I'd like to get a part-time job while I'm at JCMU. Can I work in Japan on my JCMU visa?

A: Absolutely not. Employment in Japan is specifically banned under both the Temporary Visitors and Cultural Activities Visas. As such, students holding these visas are not allowed to work during their JCMU program.

Q: My friend would like to go to Japan and needs a visa. Can you help her get a visa, too?

A: No. JCMU will only guarantee and facilitate visas for students on our programs – we cannot assist in visa preparation or processing for tourists, business visitors, or other travel purposes to Japan.

Q: Can I send a scan or copy of my visa documentation / application materials to JCMU?

A: No. The Japanese immigrations authority requires that all visa documentation be original hard copies with authentic signatures. No copies, faxes or scans are allowed. This includes all signed student forms, financial support documentation, and the visa application form itself.

Q: I heard that I need to give JCMU my passport in order to get my visa. Is this true?

A: Yes. Your visa is actually placed inside your passport, so your original passport is required for processing. JCMU will collect student passports and lock them in our office safe before sending all passports as a batch to the consulate. Your passport will then be returned to you when your visa is issued by the Consulate.

Q: Help! The “expiration date” on my visa is before my program ends! What do I do?

A: All visas have a 30-day open window, which allows the traveler to legally enter Japan up to 30 days after the visa start date indicated on the document. The end of this window is usually expressed as the “expiration date.” However, this is NOT the last date that your visa is valid! It is just the last day that you can legally arrive in Japan. After you go through customs, your visa will be validated for the length of time specified on your visa application form.

Q: I have more questions about getting a visa. Who should I talk to at JCMU?

A: Our Fiscal Officer, Kitty Douglass-Harris, takes care of all of the visa applications for JCMU and eligible MSU study abroad programs to Japan. Kitty can be reached by phone at (517) 355-4654, by email at gabele@msu.edu. She is also available for in-person consultations by appointment at the JCMU-East Lansing office – please just email her to request an appointment window.