

Diplomates: David Male

I completed the Diploma in Modern Japanese from 2010 – 2011. I started the course with no prior Japanese study and was an absolute novice. It is a testament to the merit of this course that I never felt left behind or secluded from those that had prior Japanese experiences. The diploma expanded and changed the direction of my professional career, enhanced my perception of my own language and culture and most importantly gave me a very solid education and understanding of the Japanese language. I have never felt such a connection to any of my academic pursuits as when I was on the Diploma course.

The diploma has an exceptionally thorough study plan that supports students along a very steep leaning curve and enables them to reach a high level of Japanese in a very short period. There are five areas of study: grammar, reading, writing, listening and kanji. The course consists of three hours class study each day, five days a week and demands the use of free time to complete homework and revision. Each area is taught by a separate teacher that ensures a varied and tailored mode of study that is essential when learning a language as complex as Japanese. I have never met a group of people that are as dedicated, friendly and prepared to go out of their way to help students as the diploma sensei's.

However students must manage their expectations and stay focused throughout the whole year; without commitment, a lot of hard work, and real zeal for Japan, students may find it difficult to keep up and stay on the course. That being said, those that do face the challenge, like I did, will be amazed with how much they can accomplish in such a small space of time.

The Diploma course changed my life by showing me that I could dedicate my mind to something if I really tried. Furthermore, it allowed me to create solid friendships whilst giving me a unique skill that separated me from the crowd both professionally and socially. Learning on the course was genuinely enjoyable thanks to the sensei's evident passion for teaching. As students we soon formed a friendly mutual support group helping each other in out-of-class time keep up with the intensive pace. Whilst on the course I could see real results which helped me to strengthen my passion towards Japanese. This passion has lasted with me ever since and drove me to apply for the JET programme in 2012. I am now living in Japan as an English teacher and thoroughly enjoying myself. There is no doubt in my mind that the course is 100% to thank for my recent achievements and unbelievable opportunities. I am staying in quite a remote area where English is not understood, how much more fulfilling it is to be able to understand and integrate into the local life and socialise with my Japanese work colleagues. The course has put me in such good stead that I am planning to take my N2 Language Proficiency Test in the New Year.

Yes, there were times when I was unbelievably stressed by the level of difficulty of the homework, the fast paced learning and the 30 new kanji to learn a week, and yes it was difficult. BUT it was also the BEST thing that ever happened to me and the most fulfilling experience ever!