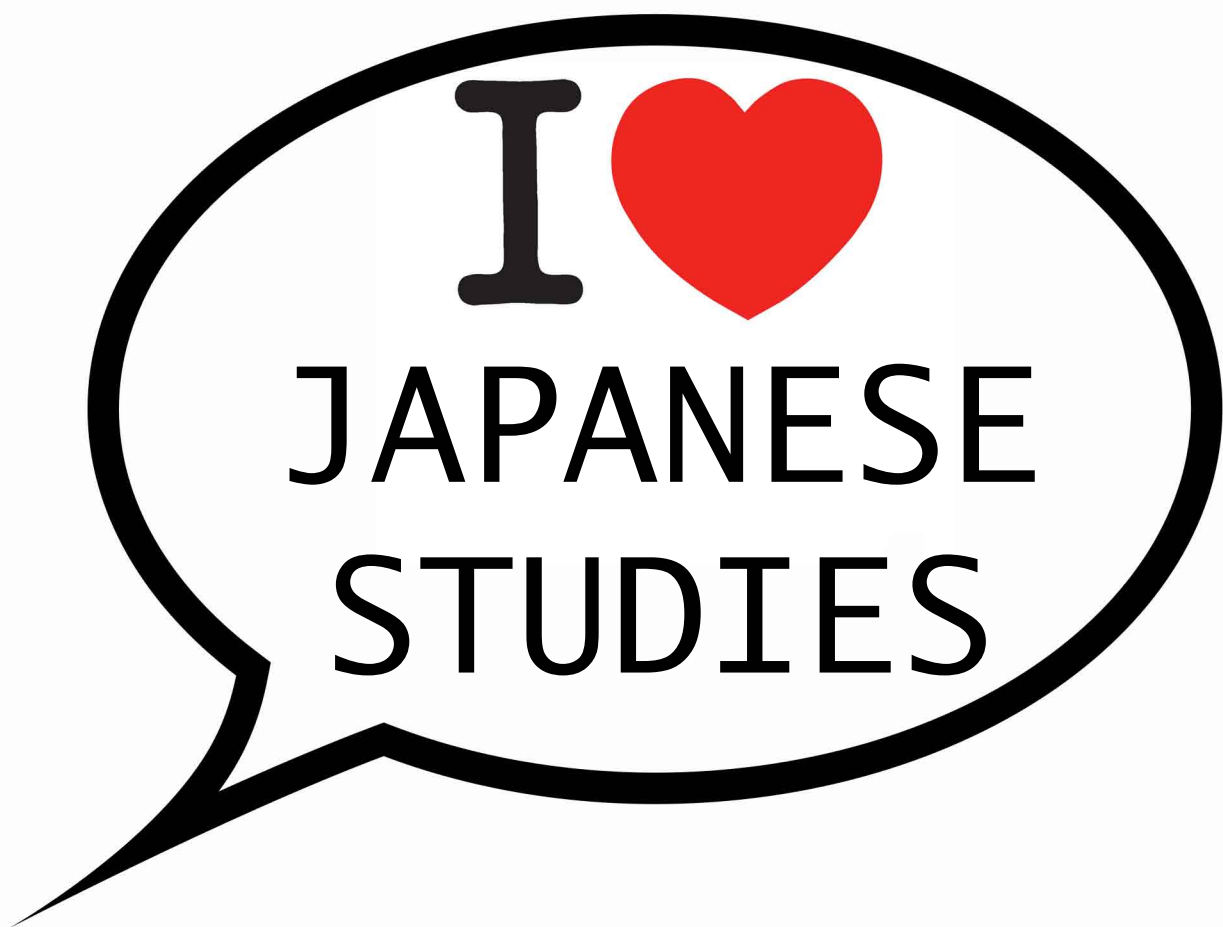


# Japanese Studies Student Survey UK

## Preliminary Report



JAPANFOUNDATION



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Russell Square House, 10-12 Russell Square  
London WC1B 5EH

[www.jpf.org.uk](http://www.jpf.org.uk)

# Foreword:

This year, in the course of updating our 2007 Survey of Japanese Studies at Higher Education Institutions in the UK, we have also taken the opportunity to seek out the opinions of Japanese Studies students. In a time of continued change within Higher Education, and given the increasing shift by University Administrations towards viewing students as a market of consumers, we felt it was important both for ourselves at the Japan Foundation and for the wider Japanese Studies community to know the thoughts of the current generation of students.

Here we present a preliminary report based on the first round of responses we have received - with the lure of a competition offering Japan Foundation goods to a lucky few, we have managed to entice 150 replies so far, with the survey having been sent to approximately 700 students across nine Universities. We expect further responses once the new term begins, and the full results will then be more comprehensively compiled and analysed for inclusion on our website containing the update of the survey of Japanese Studies Institutions by the end of the year.

For now though, we hope this initial summary of the data received so far will prove to be of interest and of value - of course in some cases it might not tell you anything you don't already know because surely Japanese Studies lecturers know their students best of all. But more generally we hope that this report represents just the first small step towards working together with partners throughout the Japanese Studies community to produce the type of evidence based analysis that is required to demonstrate the impact and value of the subject within the UK. Given the increasing budgetary pressures within University Departments, which many worry might unfairly marginalize a subject with the more complex educational needs of Japanese Studies, we hope this report serves as a symbol of our intent to do all we can to provide support where discussions are taking place to justify the continued importance of Japanese Studies.

Of course we would welcome any analysis you may wish to contribute after looking through this report - please contact Neil Cantwell with any comments you may have, either by e-mail at [neil.cantwell@jpf.org.uk](mailto:neil.cantwell@jpf.org.uk) or by calling 020 7436 6695 .

Thank you for taking the time to look at this report and I hope you find it to be an interesting read.

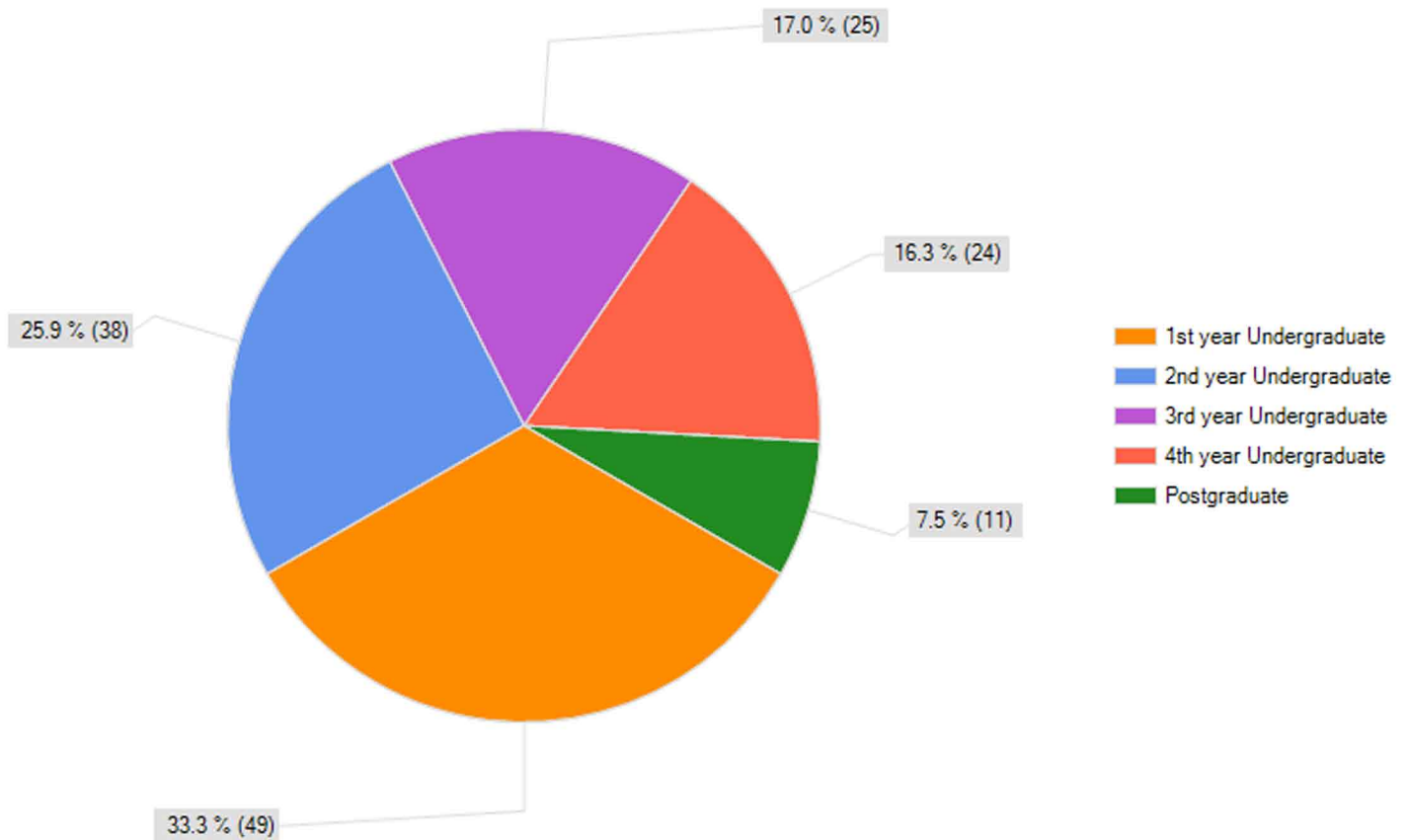


Takashi Ishida

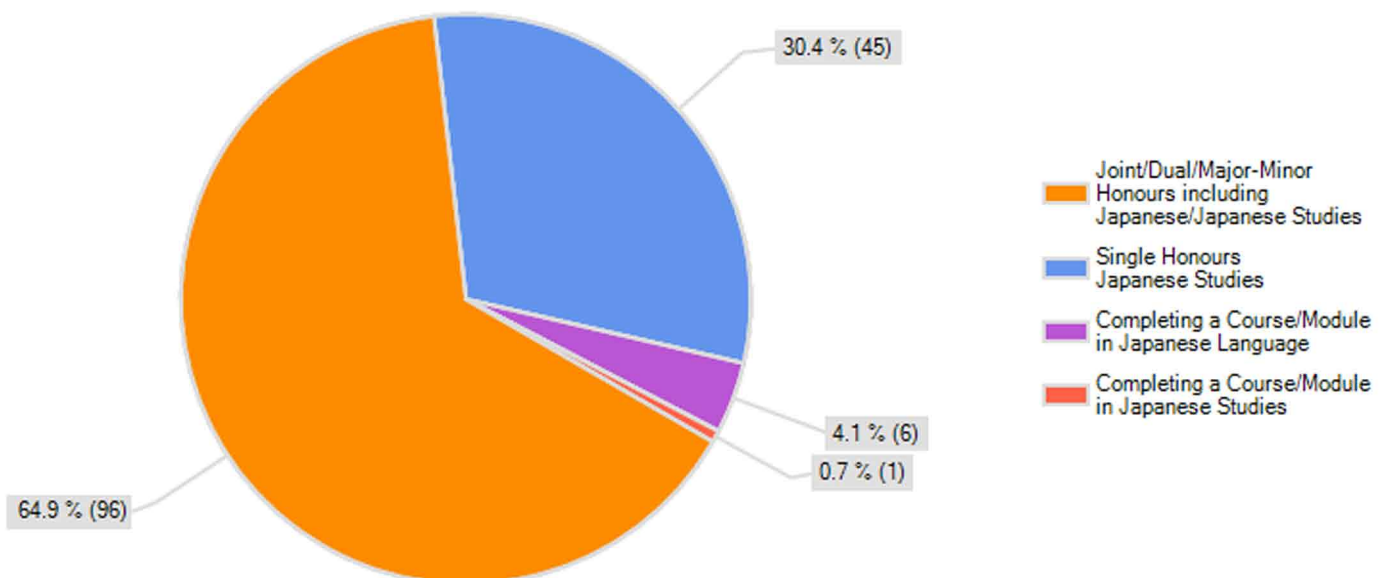
Director-General, The Japan Foundation, London

September 2010

## Q1. What year of study have you just completed?



## Q2. Please select which option best describes your Japan-related study.



### Q3. What was your first encounter with Japan?

The most popular answer was some variation on **Anime/Manga/Children's cartoons (34)**, with special mentions for **Pokemon (3)** and **Dragonball (6)**. Next came learning about Japan while at **School (20)**, followed by **Personal Encounters (13)** through a family member or someone they had met. Then grouped together were the similar categories of **Video Games (12)** and **Japanese Cinema/TV (10)**. A reasonable number mentioned that they had encountered Japan for the first time at **University (7)**, with other small groups of responses for **Literature (6)**, **Exhibitions (3)**, **Holiday (3)** and **Martial Arts (2)**. Just single mentions for **Bonsai**, the **Internet**, **Food/Sushi** and **Music**.

“...tried on a kimono at an exhibition at age 8...”

“...a school project when I was younger involving the World Cup...”

“..my first encounter with Japan was with Square Enix's Final Fantasy video games!...”

“...Sailor Moon on FoxKids at about 7am...”

“...a Japanese national student who was studying in my high school...”

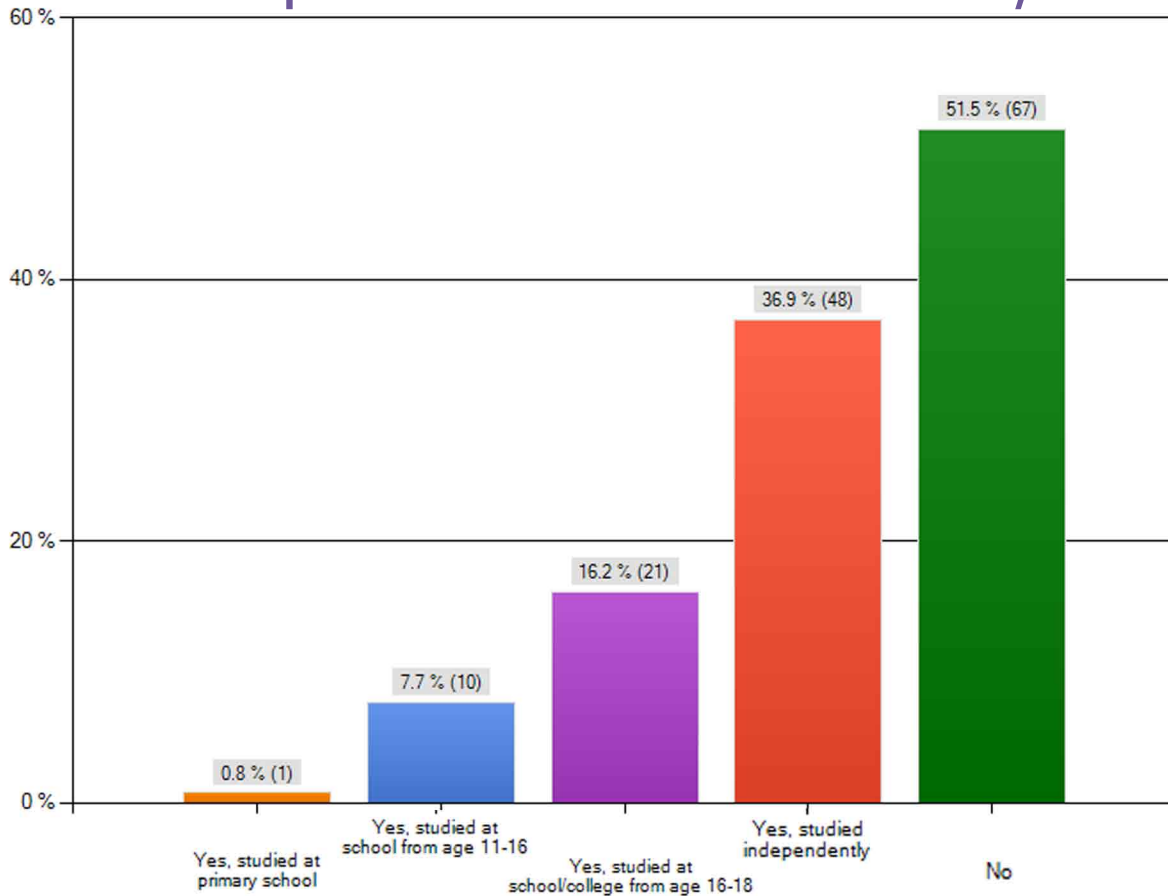
“...attending The Japan Festival in London in 1990 and going to The Albert Hall to see the first official sumo tournament outside Japan...”

“...Anime - the very beginning was Pokemon back in 1999!...”

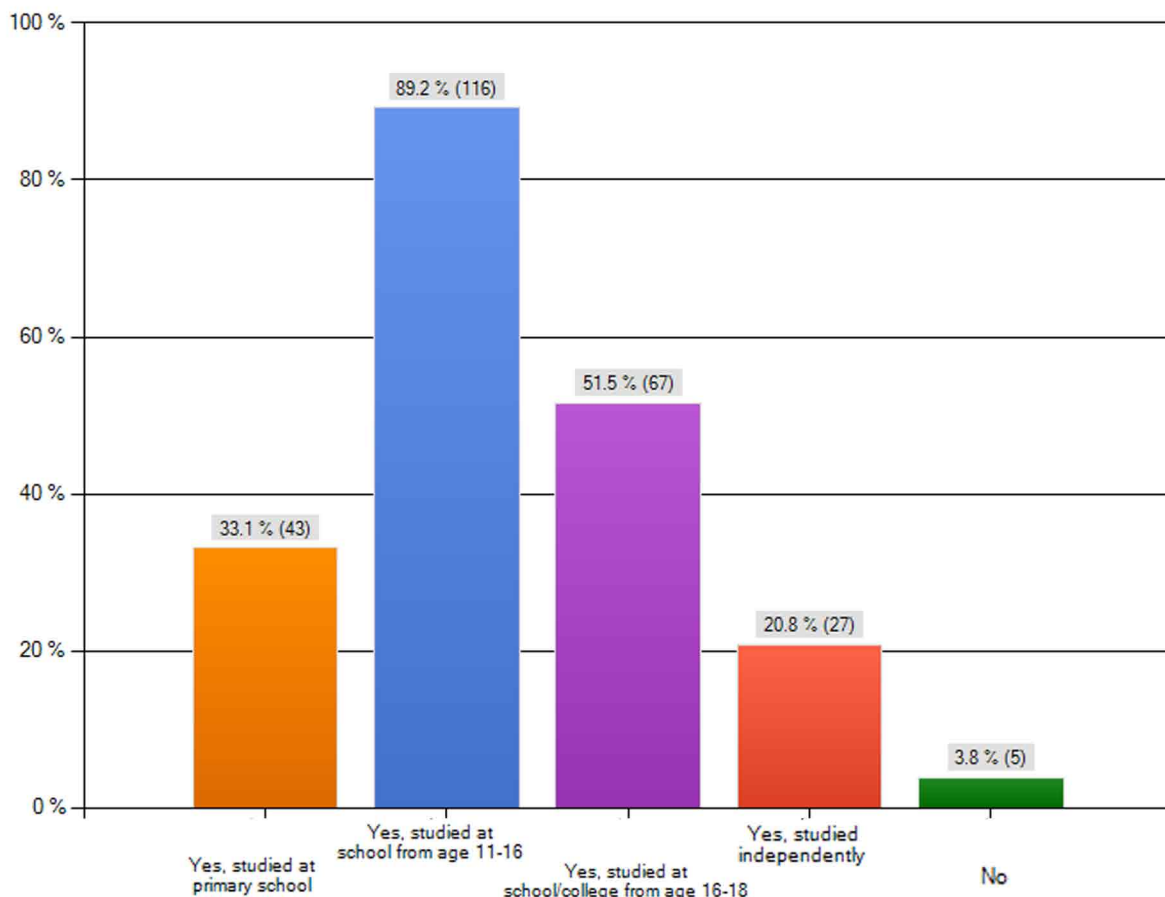
“...had a small course of Japanese language lessons with a native Japanese speaker who visited my primary school...”

“...my babysitter as a child was a fan of anime/manga art and Japanese street fashion...”

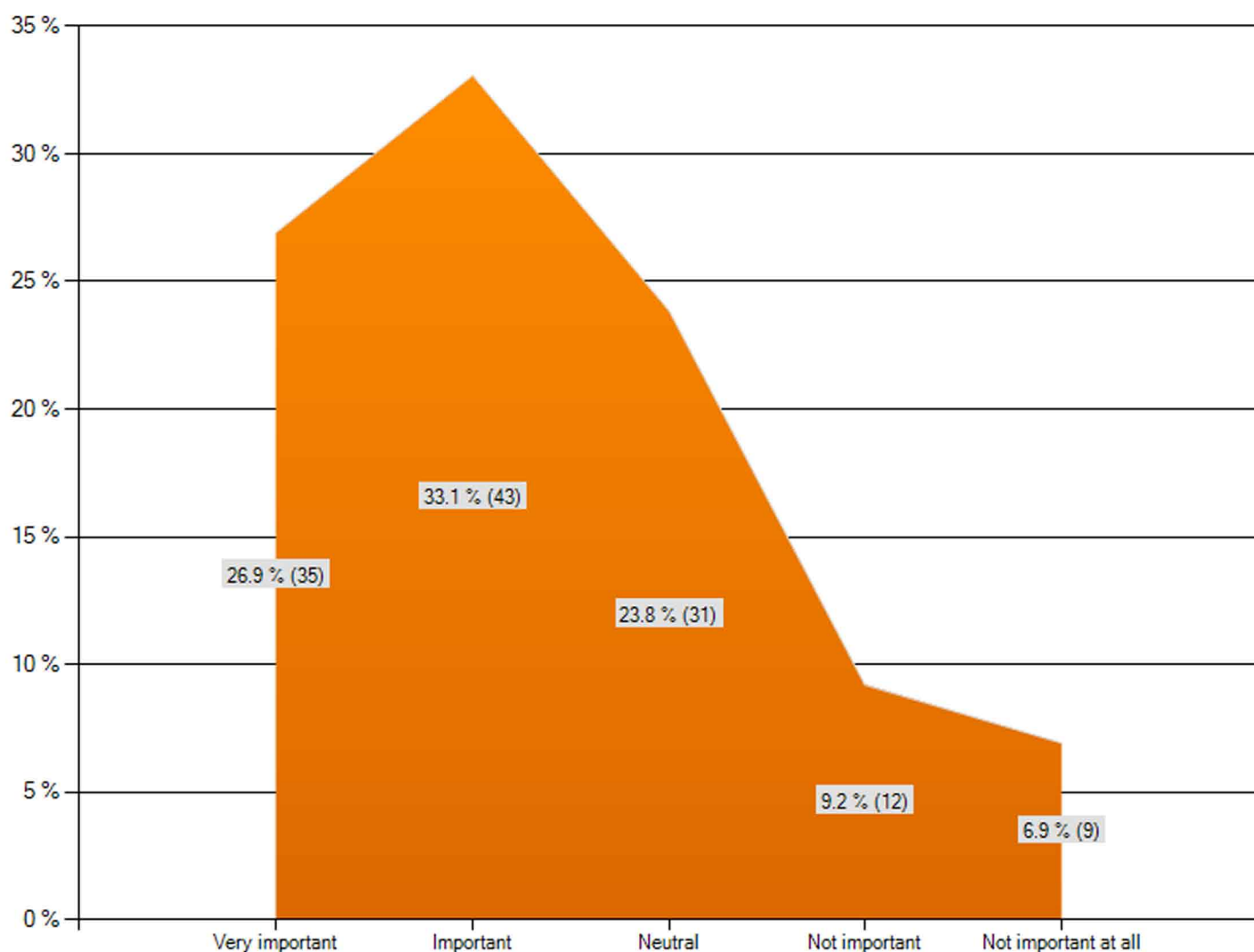
## Q4. Had you studied Japanese before undertaking a Japan-related course at University?



## Q5. Had you studied a second language other than Japanese prior to undertaking a Japan-related course at University?

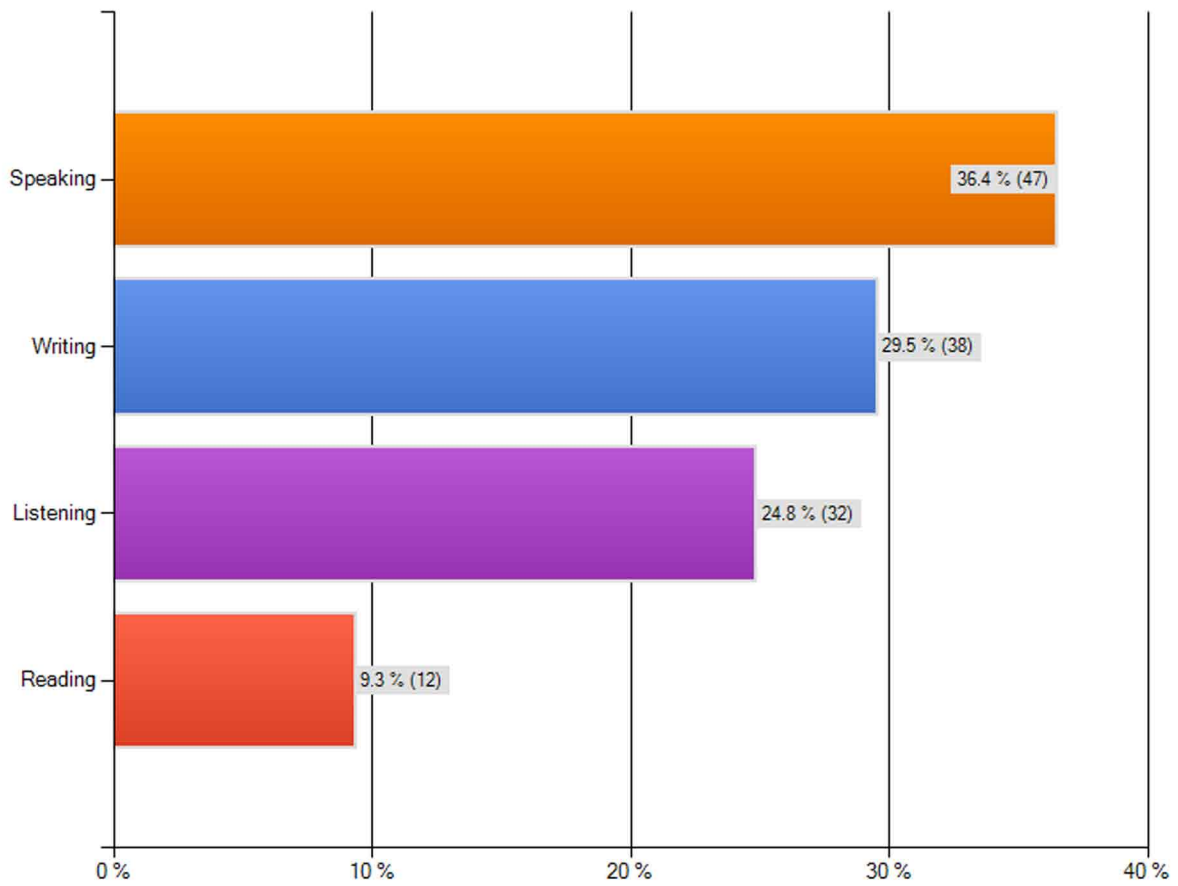


## Q6. How important do you think previous experience and study skills from learning another language has been in enabling you to learn Japanese at University level?

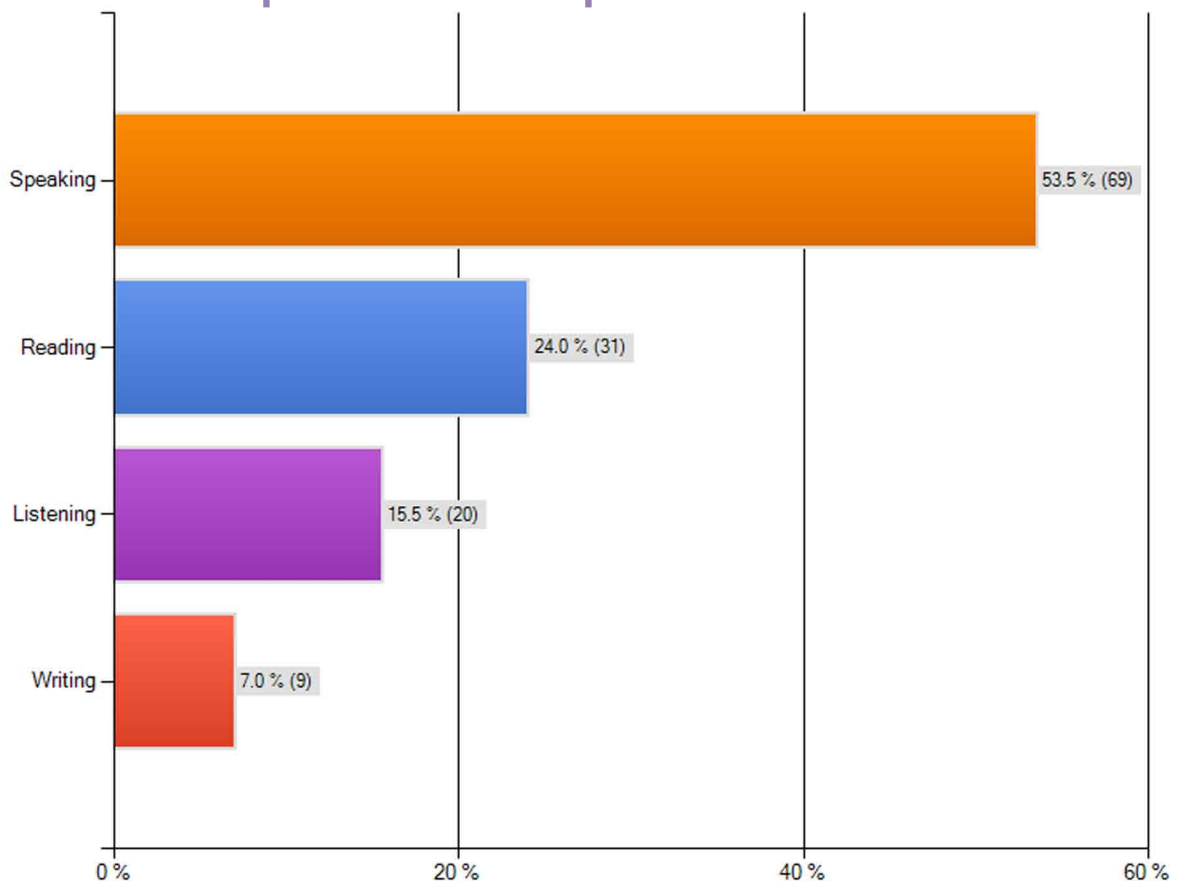


We felt it important to ask this question given the change in education policy in 2004 no longer requiring the study of foreign languages at GCSE level. It is worth noting that Japanese Studies students recognise the importance of general language study skills and experience for their current course, which could perhaps be used to argue that the recent changes have undermined the basis for studying a challenging language like Japanese at University level.

## Q7. What area of the Japanese Language have you found most challenging in your course to date?

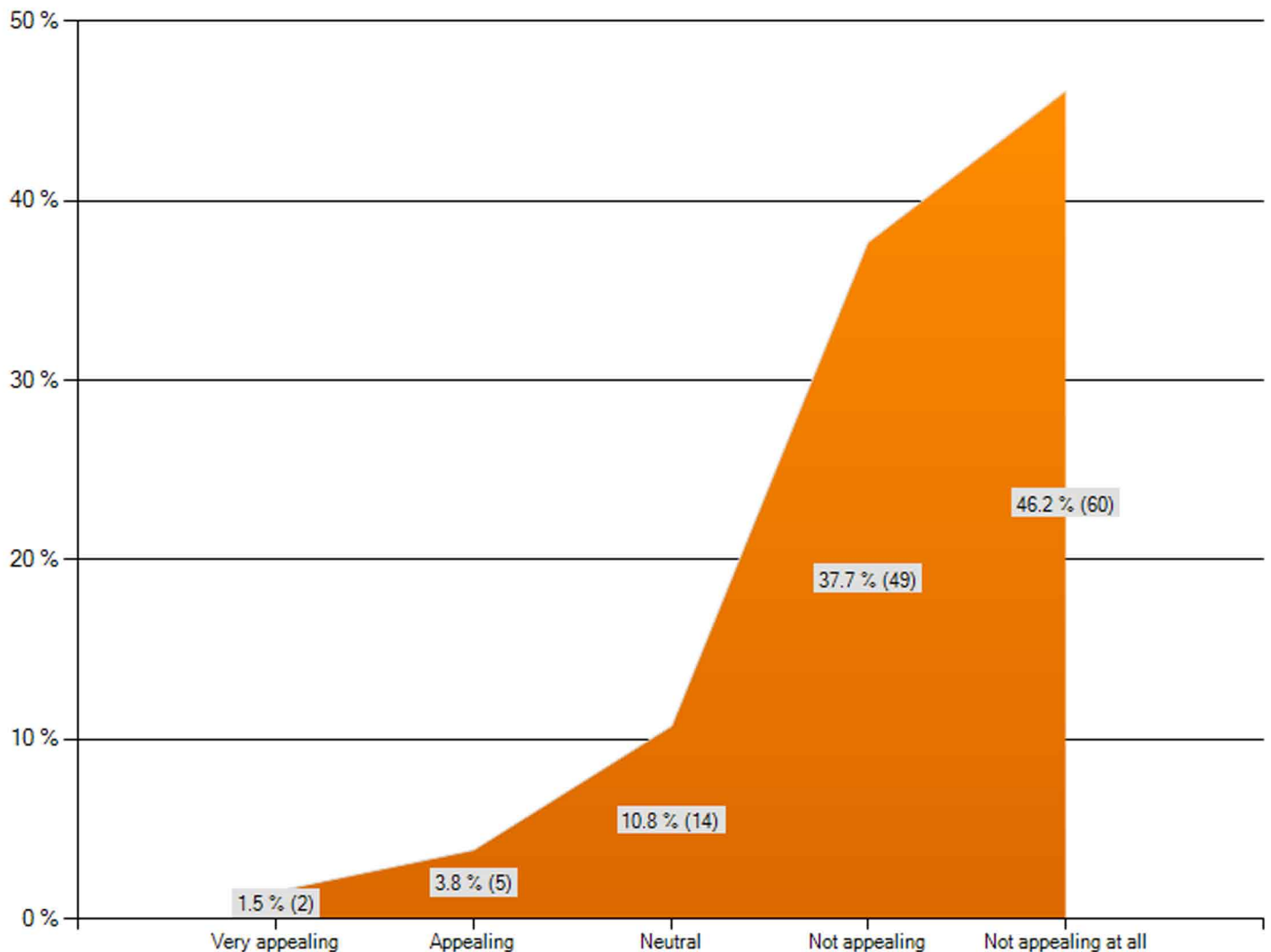


## Q8. What area of the Japanese Language do you feel is most important for Japanese Studies?





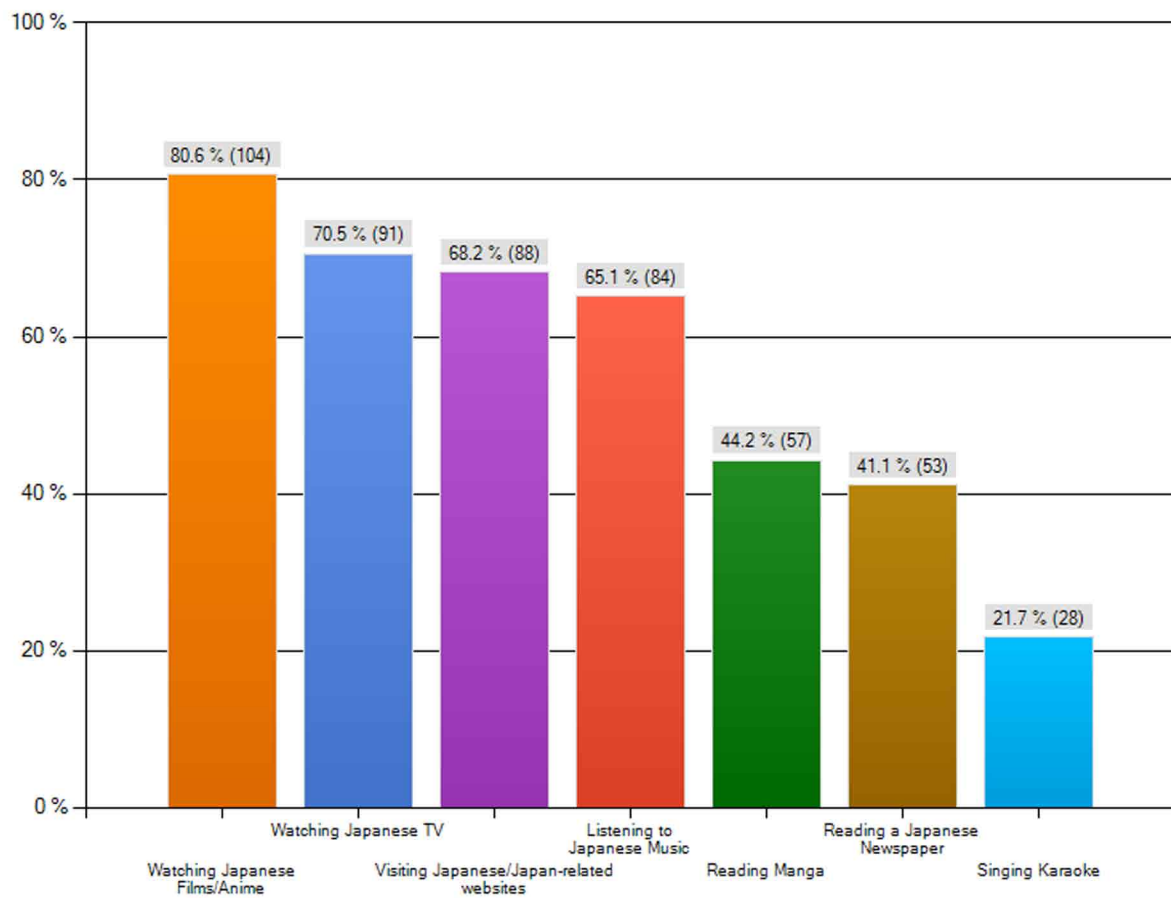
## Q9. How would you find the idea of a Japanese Studies course that didn't include study of the Japanese Language?



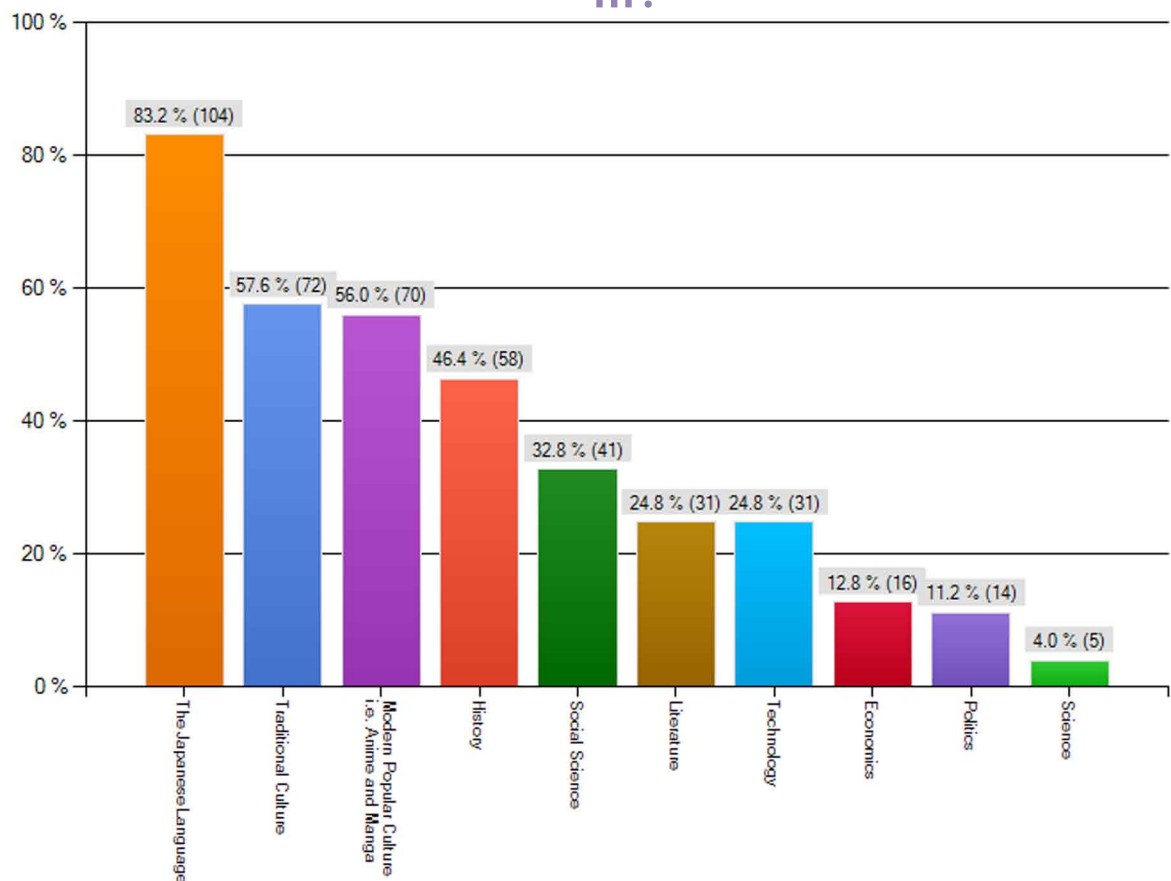
It is perhaps interesting to compare the response to Questions 7 & 8 about what is challenging or important about studying the Japanese Language to the more open-ended responses for Questions 16 & 17.

While the rejection of the idea of a Japanese Studies course without Japanese Language study is fairly emphatic for Question 9, it is probably also the case that opinion on this question has been somewhat self-selecting i.e. people who might be interested in such a course may not have received this survey.

## Q10. Please select any of the following activities that you find helpful to do alongside your course



## Q11. What areas of Japanese Studies are you most interested in?



## Q12. When did you first become interested in doing a Japan-related course at University?

The most popular answer focused around the period of being at Sixth Form College/ aged 16-18 (55). Next was the stage of Taking GCSEs / aged 14-16 (28), followed by Lower High School / aged 11-14 (11), with the smallest group being those who became interested Upon arriving at University (8). It is also important to point out a large selection of Other (13) responses to this question, reflecting the status of mature students, for example.

“...when I first began studying it at the beginning of Secondary School...”

“...when I was living in Tokyo...”

“...after holidaying in Japan...”

“...I had been interested in Japan for a while but it wasn't until I began looking at options for university that I realised I had the opportunity to study the language and culture seriously...”

“...as soon as I realised such a course existed...”

“...I actually transferred courses after about two weeks at University...”

“...Due to my rapidly expanding interest in and love for Japan, I began to look for ways to live and work in Japan as soon as I returned from my holiday there in 2004. I soon discovered the immigration requirements, which eventually led to my enrolling on my Japanese and Cultural Studies undergraduate course at Newcastle University in 2006. My reasoning was that I'd kill three birds with one stone - satisfy working visa requirements for university level education, get a grounding in Japanese language, and spend a year living in Japan as part of the course by way of performing a sort of extended 'dry run'...”

# Q13. Why did you choose to pursue a Japan-related course at University?

The most popular answers focused on a **General interest in Japan (53)** and a **desire To learn the language (51)**. Next came reasons relating to a **Future job or career (26)**, followed closely by a general wish to **Do something different in order to Broaden horizons (23)**. The desire for **A challenge (13)** also had many responses, similar in popularity to wishing to be able **To access Japanese culture (10)**, and the prospect of **Spending a year in Japan (11)** as part of the course. The final grouping of answers were: **Wanting to live in Japan (7)**, **General future benefit (6)**, **The multi-disciplinary nature of the course (5)**, and, **Having already been to Japan (4)**.

“...while I can always teach myself a European language, to become fluent in Japanese requires full-time study and a year abroad...”

“to combine a personal interest with the study of culture...”

“...something different and challenging...”

“...Japanese Studies enabled me to combine my interest in language, history and literature...”

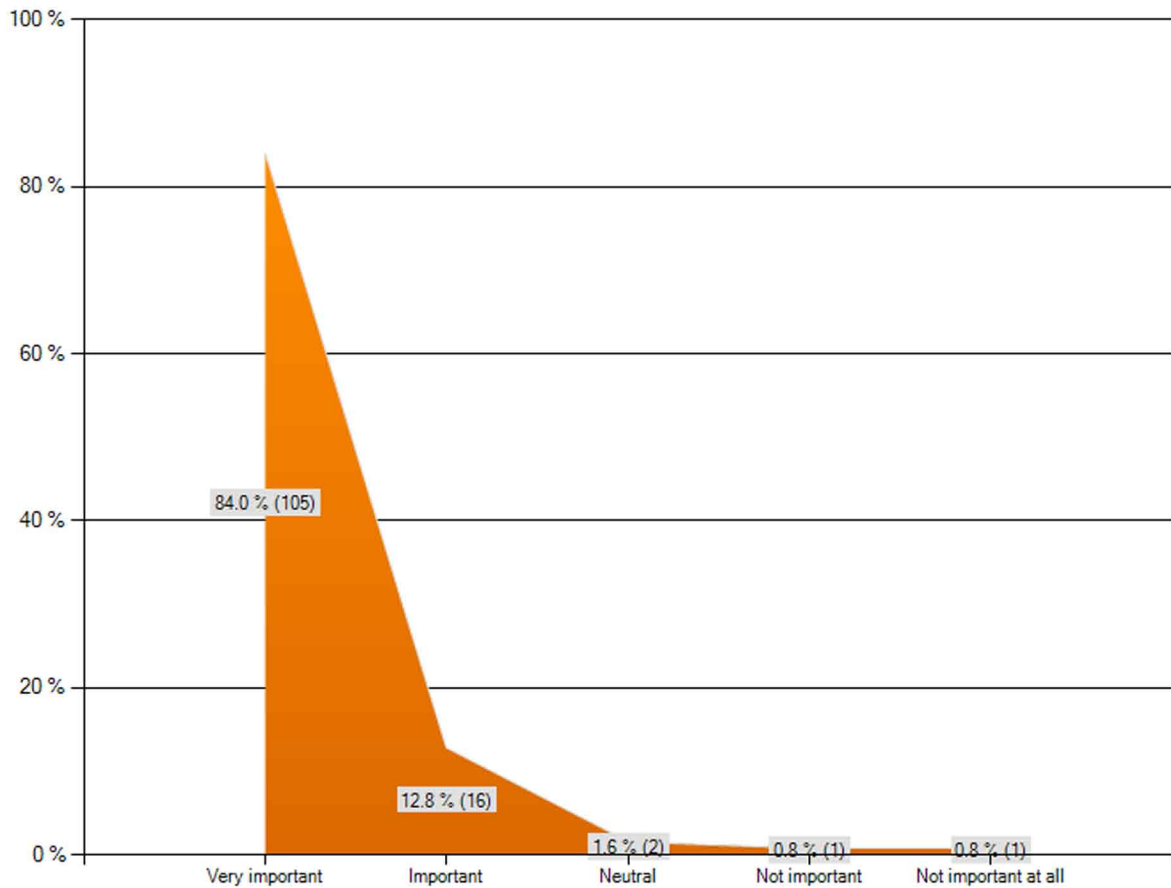
“...I watched the film Tokyo Drift. The next day I saw the link for International Business and Japanese and thought, ‘yes, that’s the course for me!’...”

“...I wanted a non-European second language and Arabic and Chinese didn’t interest me...”

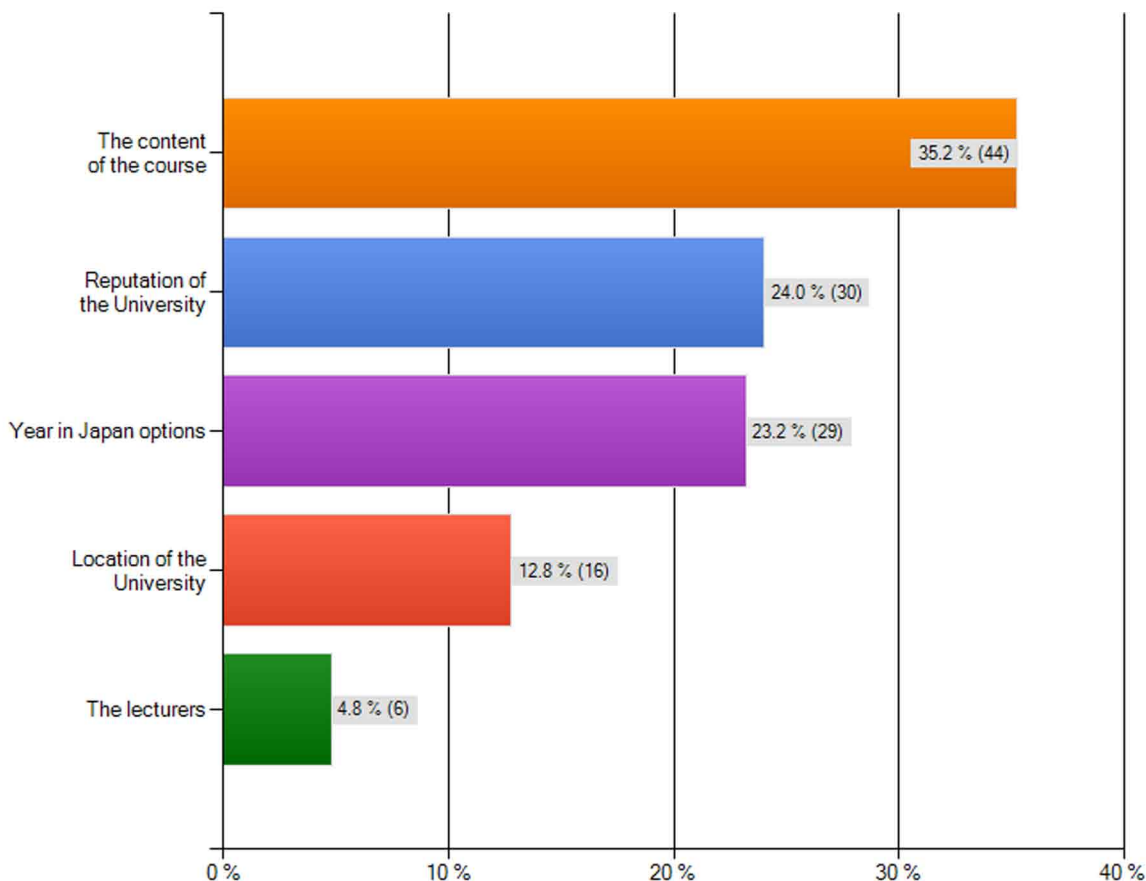
“...the simple answer is; I love everything about Japan...”

“...because I think as far as work is concerned, turning your hobby into your job is the highest achievement...”

## Q14. How important is it to you to be able to spend a year in Japan as part of your course?



## Q15. What was the most important factor in your choosing to enrol on the Japan-related course at your University?



## Q16. What do you find most challenging about your current Japanese Studies course?

Unsurprisingly, the top answer by some distance here was **Kanji (48)** .

The next most challenging aspect was **Speaking confidently in conversation (23)**. The **Quick pace (10)** of the course was commented on by a good number of students, equivalent to the number who found **Grammar (10)** the hardest thing. A **Heavy work-load (8)** was mentioned by a similar number, alongside problems with **Listening in Japanese (9)**. Other concerns mentioned more than once were: **Juggling dual-honours study (4)**, **Lack of spoken Japanese teaching (5)**, **Self-study(3)**, **Essay-writing (3)**, and **Translation (2)**. Individual students had problems with: **The standard of language teaching**, **Being unsure about their year abroad**, **Classical Japanese**, **The jump between years**, and **Their dyslexia not being recognised during their year in Japan**.

“...All of it! It’s a difficult language to learn...”

“...I find all the homonyms in Japanese makes it much more difficult to remember words and their meanings...”

“...the need to constantly keep up with current affairs vocabulary...”

“...having a much higher work load than other courses...”

“...the gap between the type of Japanese we learn in university and the daily use, spoken Japanese found in Japan has proved a great challenge...”

“...the listening and speaking components as we don’t have much time to practice either supervised in lectures...”

## Q17. What do you find most enjoyable about your current Japanese Studies course?

The most popular answer focused on the qualities of Teachers (30). Next came Learning the language (22), closely followed by The experience of a new culture (17). The Year-abroad in Japan (15) was the choice of a significant number, although obviously necessarily limited to respondents in their 3rd or 4th year. The Range of study (10) and Enjoying conversation in Japanese (10) was another large area of choice, alongside Small class sizes (9), Meeting Japanese students (7), Fellow students on the course (7) and A sense of achievement from accomplishing something difficult. (7) Smaller numbers chose, sometimes in contradiction to the previous question: Kanji (4), Translation (3), Self-study (2), Job prospects (2), Classical Japanese (2), Fast pace (1), Composition (1), and Dissertation (1).

“...the feeling that there is so much more to learn about Japan and it’s history...”

“...it allows a lot of scope: aside from the compulsory language and history modules, there is also the choice of politics, society, literature, film, classical Japanese and linguistics modules...”

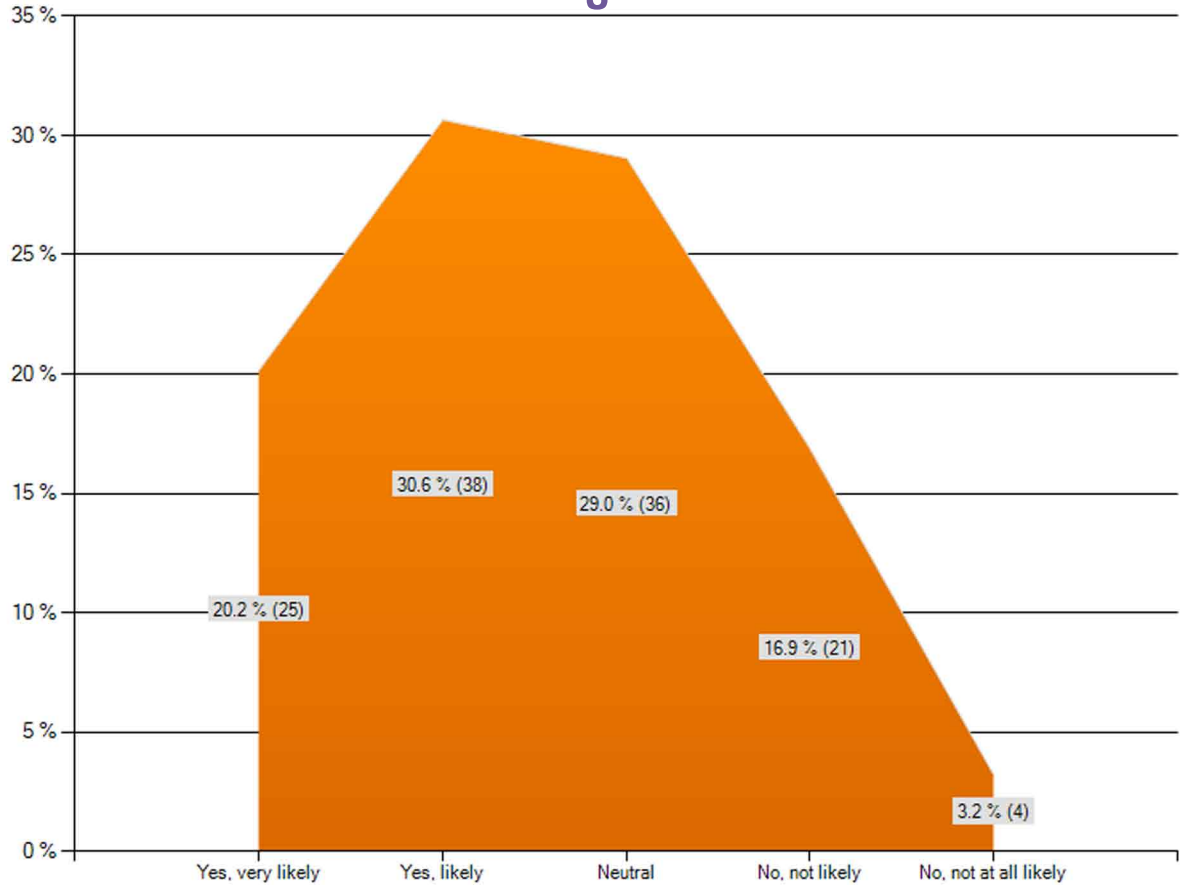
“...I feel there is a camaraderie among us...”

“...the smaller classes also allows for more one-on-one teaching and interaction from the teachers...”

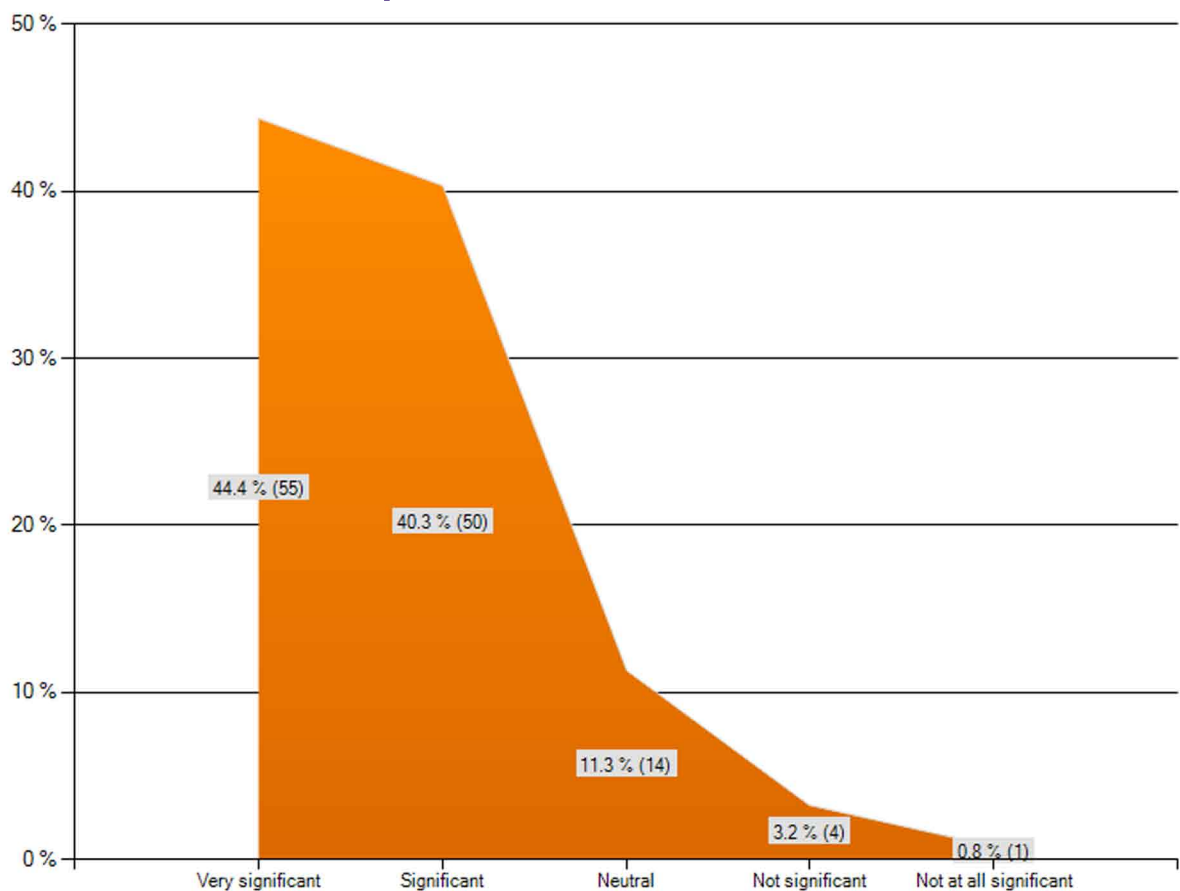
“...I found the interaction with Japanese exchange students to be very beneficial and fun, as well as interaction with other foreign students learning Japanese. Making friends around the world who are in the same boat as you was most enjoyable...”

“...gradually being able to know a Japanese world...”

## Q18. Do you think it is likely that you will pursue Japanese Studies at Post-graduate level?

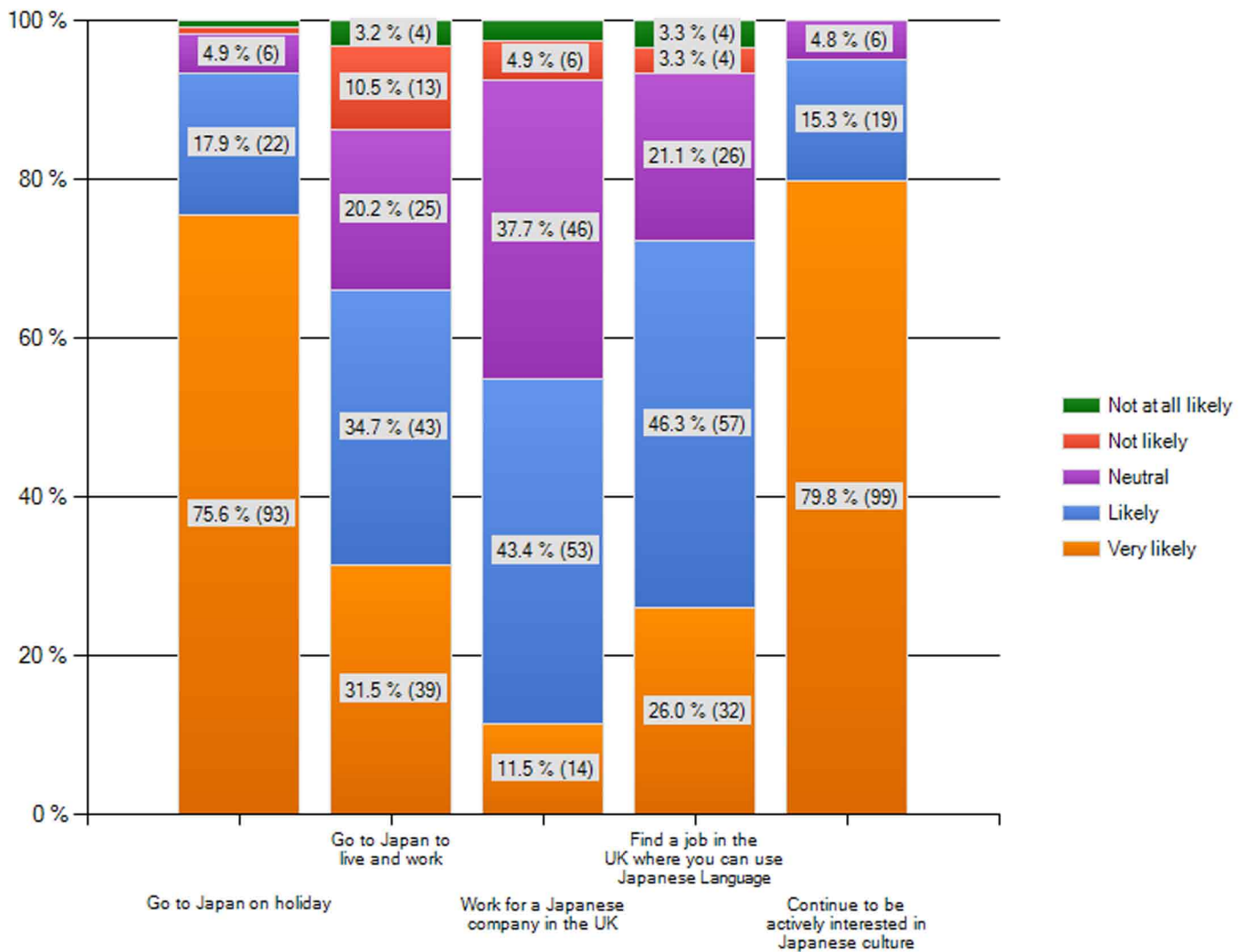


## Q19. How significant do you think your Japanese Studies degree will be in your future career choices?





## Q20. How likely do you think you are to do any of the following things in the future?



A limited amount of further information about the activities of Japanese Studies students after graduation is available through the surveys of University Careers Services on behalf of Government.

In the future, we would be interested to see what other information might be accessible through various alumni networks that respective Japanese Studies departments may already maintain, or working together to encourage this type of activity for keeping in touch with Japanese Studies students after they graduate. Harnessing this type of information could provide crucial evidence for demonstrating the long-term value and impact of graduating with a Japanese Studies degree.

## Some Concluding remarks:

- the much-celebrated 'Pop Culture' mediums of Anime and Manga are the most popular hooks for getting respondents interested in Japan initially, but it seems that over time their interest broadens, as shown in Question 11. It is probably worth stressing the finding that the Japanese Language and Traditional Culture register more interest than Popular Culture in responses to this question.
- also on the point of Anime and Manga being the first initial hook, it is perhaps worth asking whether the same density of this material is as accessible to children in this country now as it was for the generation of respondents returning this survey. For example, in the realm of children cartoons, where previously there may have been a deluge of animated material originating from Japan, now this space may well have been filled by imitation programmes made elsewhere,, and therefore not offering the same invitation to becoming interested in Japanese culture.
- relating to Question 4, the number studying Japanese independently seems to be significantly large, but then again, perhaps also is the even larger proportion who have done no study of Japanese before. It will be interesting to compare the other columns in this graph as well in future years, reflecting the rise in the teaching of Japanese in UK schools detailed by the Japan Foundation Japanese Language Study Survey to be published shortly, with this increase hopefully filtering through to the next generation of Japanese Studies University students.
- in Question 10, there appears to be a clear preference for 'watching' type activities over 'reading' type activities, although visiting websites in third place is perhaps somewhere in between on that spectrum.
- looking at responses to Questions 13 and 17, it is possible to extrapolate a set of attractive selling points for the subject of Japanese Studies, such as

Do something different

Gain access to another culture

Spend a year in Japan!

Enjoy a wide-range of multi-disciplinary study

Experience the satisfaction of overcoming a challenge

Learn and make friends easily in small classes

Broaden your horizons



For more information about Japan Foundation Japanese Studies Support Programmes, please visit

[www.jpf.org.uk/japanesestudies](http://www.jpf.org.uk/japanesestudies)

or contact Neil Cantwell

T: 020 7436 6695 E: [neil.cantwell@jpf.org.uk](mailto:neil.cantwell@jpf.org.uk)