JAYD 1ST COHORT REPORT

Strategic Roadmap for a Sustainable Japan-Arab Youth Dialogue

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the achievements of the 1st cohort and invites student leaders in the GCC region to join the next stage of Japan-Arab Youth Dialogue (JAYD).

BACKGROUND & MISSION

Historically, Japan-Arab relations have centered on energy trade. Today, both regions share modern challenges like decarbonization and technology innovation, yet platforms for youth-led strategic dialogue remain scarce. JAYD bridges this gap through a student-led international initiative, designed as a sustainable, long-term platform for continuous youth engagement between the two regions.

JAYD operates on three core missions:



Designing Deep Mutual Understanding: Moving beyond surface-level cultural exchange to build authentic trust and dismantle stereotypes through deep, multi-faceted engagement in social, cultural, and historical contexts.



Action-Oriented Output via Co-Creation: Turning dialogue into proposals and action plans, co-created by students from both sides.



Advancement of Japan-Arab Bilateral Relations: Cultivating next-generation leaders and enduring networks to strengthen the bilateral long-term bond.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The evolution and operational foundation of JAYD are outlined below:

- **Establishment & Vision:** Founded in March 2026 as a student-led initiative centered around The University of Tokyo and Zayed University to build a permanent dialogue platform between Japan and the Arab region. Operating as a fully online platform at no cost, JAYD eliminates geographical barriers to profound engagement.
- **1st Cohort Milestone:** In July 2026, JAYD's 1st cohort successfully hosted its debut conference. The initiative was supported by the Embassy of the UAE in Japan and relevant organizations, guided by university professors serving as academic advisors.
- **Current Position & Expansion:** JAYD is now entering a phase of staged expansion. Starting with universities across the GCC region, JAYD invites student societies to establish JAYD branches at their own universities, with the long-term aim of growing into a platform for the wider Arab region.

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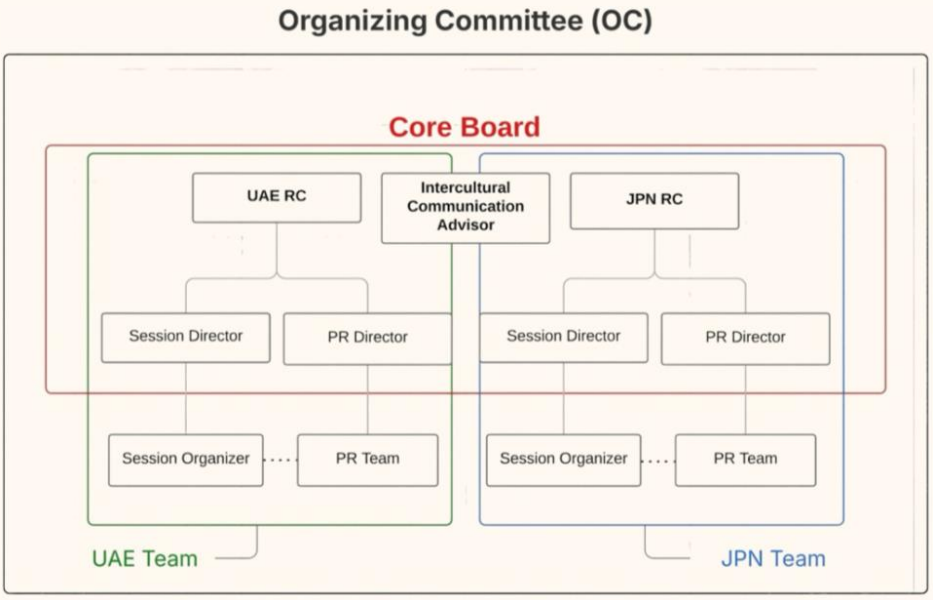
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Organizing Committee (OC) operates under a symmetric, co-managed bilateral structure between Japan and the UAE. Executive governance is led by **the Core Board,** which currently consists of 7 members: the Regional Coordinators (RCs), Session Directors, PR Directors, and the Intercultural Communication Advisor (ICA). The Core Board expands as JAYD welcomes new regions, each contributing its own RC and directors. Academic advisors support the program through guest lectures and operational advice.

Operations are executed by mirrored teams:

- **Regional Coordinators (RCs):** Lead regional teams and manage the entire strategy.
- **Session Directors & Session Units:** Session Directors oversee overall curriculum coherence. Under their guidance, cross-border Session Units (joint Japan-UAE pairs of session organizers) co-develop content and facilitate the sessions.
- **PR Directors & PR Teams:** Manage outreach, media, and recruitment independently.
- **Intercultural Communication Advisor (ICA):** Acts as a bridge between the Japan team and the UAE team to foster and evolve smooth cross-cultural collaboration.

Session Units form the primary horizontal axis, enabling direct peer-to-peer co-creation between organizers from Japan and the UAE.



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ACADEMIC ADVISORS

Four distinguished academic advisors delivered guest lectures, providing the core academic foundation for the following student-led sessions.

*Note: Due to a sudden illness, Dr. Ahmad Aljanadbah's lecture was replaced by a "Cultural Café" session.



Dr. Seiko HAMADA

(Project Assistant Professor, Center for Foreign Language Education and Research, Keio University)

"Perceptions of Japan in the Medieval and Modern Arab World"



Dr. Hiroyuki SUZUKI

(Project Associate Professor, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, The University of Tokyo)

"The History and Future Outlook of Economic Relations between Japan and the UAE"



Dr. Antoine ABI AAD

(Associate Professor, College of Arts and Creative Enterprises, Zayed University)

"Reinterpreting Tradition: Bridging Arabic Calligraphy & Typography Through Japanese Logomarks"



Dr. Ahmad ALJANADBAH

(Associate Professor, College of Interdisciplinary Studies, Zayed University)

"Arabic and Japanese: What Do These Two Languages Reveal About Their Cultures"

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1ST COHORT ACHIEVEMENTS

METRICS & REACH

The 1st JAYD conference in July 2026 welcomed **42 student participants (16 from the Japan side and 26 from the UAE side), which was planned and executed by a 24-member Organizing Committee.** Japan-side participants and organizers represented leading institutions, including The University of Tokyo, Osaka University, Waseda University, Keio University, and NYU Abu Dhabi, alongside high schools nationwide, while UAE-side participants were from Zayed University. Participants were recruited through social media and partner organizations, with applications submitted via a free web form.

PARTNERSHIPS

JAYD received the support of the Embassy of the UAE in Japan. JAYD also worked with specialized organizations, including Hala Cultures, an international organization for Japan-UAE cultural exchange that supported our outreach, and Arab culture associations based in Japanese universities.

PROGRAM ARCHITECTURE

JAYD, operating as a fully online conference, pairs academic grounding through a structured **Input-Output model.** Each theme opens with a guest lecture by academic advisors (introduced on p.5), feeding directly into the content in student-led sessions. To eliminate regional silos, participants are integrated into **culturally mixed "Buddy Groups,"** which serve as the base units for discussions and activities throughout the conference.

All activities strictly adhere to **JAYD's Code of Conduct.** The governance protocol enforces mutual cultural respect, explicitly avoids sensitive political debates, and protects participant privacy to guarantee a safe, constructive dialogue space.

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STUDENT-LED SESSIONS

All student-led sessions (75 minutes each) were fully designed, facilitated, and executed by the session organizers to foster active dialogue and co-creation.

Pop Culture Session



Following Dr. Seiko Hamada's guest lecture, this session examined **the bi-directional reception of media content**—analyzing Japanese anime/manga in the UAE and emerging UAE content. Buddy Groups evaluated market potential and strategic opportunities for cross-regional creative industries.

Common Cultures Session



Following a "Cultural Café" session (a casual free-talk session on daily life and traditions), participants engaged in **a comparative analysis encompassing food, clothing, housing, and ceremonies** to identify both similarities and differences, fostering mutual understanding of our shared values.

Language Session



Following Dr. Antoine Abi Aad's guest lecture, this session analyzed **the historical evolution of Arabic and Japanese.** Through unique idiomatic expressions and linguistic structures, participants discussed how distinct languages shape fundamental perceptions of objects, time, and worldviews.

Economic Relations Session



Following Dr. Hiroyuki Suzuki's guest lecture, participants reviewed **bilateral economic history centered on energy trade.** Buddy Groups evaluated modern collaborative models—such as green energy, AI, and advanced tech—delivering presentations on future strategic partnerships.

Final Session: Deconstructing Stereotypes



In this workshop, participants reviewed prominent academic theories on the origins of cultural stereotypes. Drawing on their shared experience, participants formulated **actionable strategies to dismantle external biases and promote authentic mutual understanding.**

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FEEDBACK

JAYD evaluated its performance through a post-conference participant and organizer survey (n = 20) and operational reflections to ensure continuous program refinement, with an overall satisfaction rating of **9.0 / 10.0.**

Key insights from evaluations highlight the qualitative impact of the initiative:

> *"Going beyond simple cultural exchange, I engaged in **deep discussions on diverse themes** including economics, social issues, and linguistics. It was a refreshing, enjoyable, and invaluable experience."* — UAE Participant
>
> *"In Japan, there is a lack of communities where students studying the Arab region or Arabic language can gather and share insights. I strongly felt that **JAYD serves as a pioneering platform in this field.**"* — Japanese Participant
>
> *"Although communicating in English was a significant challenge, **the support from the student organizers helped me participate without hesitation** by the second day. Everyone was exceptionally kind, creating an easy environment to connect."* — Japanese Participant
>
> *"Communication among the two regional teams was seamless, creating a reassuring environment where **everyone felt completely comfortable sharing their perspectives freely.**"* — Organizing Committee Member
>
> *"**My interest in the Arab region grew even stronger**, inspiring me with a great desire to study the Arabic language and Islamic culture far more deeply."* — Organizing Committee Member

REFINEMENT

Based on post-conference evaluation from participants and organizers, JAYD enforces a structured feedback loop to optimize future cohorts:

- **Facilitation & Language Accessibility:** Expanding dedicated bilingual facilitators to ensure participants with varying English fluency participate actively without pressure.
- **Structured Agenda Design:** Incorporating standard 10-minute intermissions between 75-minute sessions and diversifying Buddy Group rotations.
- **Workflow Standardization:** Aligning pre-conference preparation timelines and task distribution across Japan and the UAE.

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ROADMAP FOR EXPANSION

Following the 1st cohort, JAYD is expanding in stages, beginning with universities across the GCC region with high academic standards.

RATIONALE FOR EXPANSION

The 1st cohort showed strong initial momentum among Japanese and UAE youth for structured academic dialogue. **Expanding JAYD across the GCC allows us to incorporate fresh, region-specific perspectives into our existing foundation.** By establishing a student-driven network in which every region organizes itself in the same way, we connect high-achieving student societies and Japan Clubs (Japan-related student clubs) across borders, empowering young leaders to co-manage international programs while building lasting academic and personal networks.

BRANCH INTEGRATION

Our collaboration model is student-centric and requires no formal institutional agreements. Student leaders and members of Japan Clubs and student societies are invited to register a JAYD branch at their university and to take part as follows:

- **Regional Team Formation & Core Board Participation:** Branches in the same region form a regional team, which selects its own RC and directors in the same way as the Japan and UAE teams. The RC and directors join the Core Board as equal partners to co-design session curricula, manage event logistics, and moderate online discussions.
- **Campus & Community Outreach:** Branch organizers serve as primary local hubs, leveraging their campus networks to introduce JAYD, share participant registration opportunities, and encourage peers to join the annual conference.
- **Academic Advisor Engagement (Optional):** Organizers are welcome to introduce their club advisors or university professors to join JAYD as academic advisors, helping enhance JAYD's operations and content.

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NEXT MILESTONES & TIMELINE

JAYD operates on **an annual cohort cycle,** renewing its team structure at the start of each calendar year. In addition to the annual conference, JAYD plans to hold small-scale exchange events on an irregular basis to sustain engagement throughout the year. All the sessions and meetings remain fully online to ensure accessible, borderless participation, while the organization works long-term toward securing foundation support and corporate sponsorship for future in-person convenings:

Phase 1: Initial Contact & Branch Onboarding (Q4 2026)

- **Outreach & Introduction:** Present JAYD's framework to student leaders and Japan Clubs at target GCC universities.
- **Branch Registration & Regional Team Formation:** Welcome interested student organizers to register their university's JAYD branch, form a regional team, select its RC and directors, and join the Core Board.

Phase 2: 2nd Cohort Launch & Curriculum Architecture (Q1 2027)

- **Annual Transition (Jan):** Formally renew the cohort leadership and establish functional teams and units. Outgoing leaders may continue as alumni supervisors as capacity allows.
- **Program Co-Design:** Finalize conference structure, draft session themes, and onboard invited academic advisors.

Phase 3: Participant Registration & Orientation (Q2 2027)

- **PR & Local Outreach:** Roll out targeted promotional campaigns and share participant registration opportunities across participating universities.
- **Session Preparation & Lecture Coordination:** Finalize session flow, align discussion agendas, and coordinate pre-conference briefing with guest speakers.
- **Pre-Conference Engagement:** Host online orientation workshops and distribute preparatory reading materials.

Phase 4: Conference Execution & Reporting (July 2027)

- **Main Event:** Execute the multi-day JAYD conference online.
- **Post-Conference Deliverables:** Collect participant feedback, issue leadership certificates, and publish the official report of the 2nd cohort.

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GET IN TOUCH

We share updates and respond to inquiries through the channels below.

Email: jayd.japanteam@gmail.com

Inquiry: https://forms.gle/XH6sFnFx7JFskPqX8

Instagram: @jayd.japan / @jayd.arabia

Inquiry

Instagram (@jayd.japan)

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JAYD 1st Cohort Report, Version 1.0 | October 2026

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Disclaimer: JAYD is a student-led initiative. This report reflects the views of the JAYD organizing committee and does not represent the official positions of any university, government body, or organization mentioned. Figures reflect the 1st cohort (July 2026).

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