

ZEN University

An Online University, Born in Japan

Cutting-edge Education for Everyone

supported by The Nippon Foundation

Educational Institute of The Nippon Foundation and DWANGO

The Future of

ZEN University

ZEN University is a fully online undergraduate university based in Japan. We are committed to breaking down barriers such as income and location that often limit access to higher education. Our platform ensures that students with a desire to learn can achieve their educational goals anytime, anywhere. By prioritizing accessibility and flexibility, we aim to create equal opportunities for all learners.

Our Educational Philosophy

To harness the power of online education to create accessible and diverse learning opportunities for a global student body.

Our Core Mission

To cultivate competent individuals equipped to thrive in our increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.

Our Three Pillars of Education

- Democratizing Higher Education
- Personalizing the Learning Journey
- Thriving in the Digital Age



ZEN means

全

WHOLENESS

善

VIRTUE

然

NATURE

INFORMATION

Educational Institute of The Nippon Foundation and DWANGO

Headquarters : Zushi City, Kanagawa Prefecture

Undergraduate Degree : Faculty of Social Informatics

Opening : April 2025 Annual Tuition : 380,000 JPY

Initial Year Admission Capacity : 3,500 students (Total capacity: 14,000 students)

MESSAGE



Empowering the Future
Leaders in the Global
Community with Essential IT
Competencies and Decision-
Making Skills

Masato Wakayama

President

ZEN University is a new university dedicated to making a significant positive impact on today's global society. Through internships in collaboration with companies and seminars by project implementers, ZEN University offers students with diverse opportunities to organically connect with society. Regardless of the career paths students choose after graduation, face-to-face communication is crucial. Without it, social progress, human happiness, and a sense of fulfillment cannot be achieved. At ZEN University, students seeking to enrich their lives through an online environment will not only receive on-demand instruction from nationally and internationally recognized faculty members, but will also be guided through small-group discussions by faculty members who are also outstanding researchers. This educational environment will foster the acquisition of Japanese language proficiency and effective communication skills.

In today's world, where AI is ubiquitous, accurate information exchange is essential. There is an increasing demand for individuals who understand and can operate IT, including AI. Cultivating talents capable of fulfilling this role is what we at ZEN University consider our mission. By offering online classes, ZEN University will free up more time for students, allowing them to gain a variety of experiences with researchers and companies through which they will acquire a good balance of IT competencies and decision-making skills to tackle the complex challenges that arise in society. I believe that ZEN University is the place to acquire the true power to shape and take responsibility for the world of the 21st century.

Doctor of Science. After serving as an assistant professor at Tottori University, became a professor at Kyushu University, and a visiting professor at Indiana University in the United States and other universities. Currently holds positions as a Institute for Fundamental Mathematics, a Senior Advisor at the RIKEN Interdisciplinary Theoretical and Mathematical Sciences Program (iTHEMS), Specilly appointed Professor at Institute of Science Tokyo.



A University Globally
Recognized for Its Diversity

Shinichi Yamanaka

Chairman

A major feature of the university is that, unlike many other distance learning universities, we plan to welcome recent high school graduates rather than working adults. At ZEN University, students can receive high-quality university education from anywhere because classes are conducted online. Online learning expands opportunities for everyone to attend university. This includes those who wish to study online and challenge themselves at their own pace, as well as high school students in rural areas who may have given up on going to university because there are no universities nearby. Through regular communication with faculty and peers, students will acquire digital literacy skills.

Opportunities to participate in internships and social problem-solving projects across the country will provide students with the practical skills to tackle issues facing society after they graduate.

ZEN University is an online university originating from Japan. In an educational environment that values diversity, encapsulated in the word 'ZEN', meaning whole, good, and natural, students will not only acquire practical digital skills, including AI, but also interdisciplinary knowledge and abilities.

I look forward to the future of our students, who will be at the forefront of an information society advancing alongside AI.

After joining the Ministry of Education (now the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), served as a Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination (Deputy Director of the Education Rebuilding Council), Director-General of the Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau, and Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. Following his retirement, served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Bulgaria. Since 2018, he has been the Chairman of the Board of the KADOKAWA DWANGO Educational Institute.

COMBINING EXPERTISE

dwango

 日本 THE NIPPON
財団 FOUNDATION

- Subsidiary of KADOKAWA Corporation
- Media platform (niconico)
- Valuable network connection through N/S/R High Schools*, now the largest educational institutes in Japan (30,000+students)

*Online high schools established by KADOKAWA and Dwango in 2016



- Decades of experience in youth empowerment programming
- Sustainable solutions to social issues

Learner Benefits

**Gain practical
experience**

**Build global
perspectives**

**Develop
personal
strengths**

**Connect
with diverse
communities**

High tuition fees

Have a disability
or live in a rural
area

Limited time

Access
high-quality
education at an
affordable cost

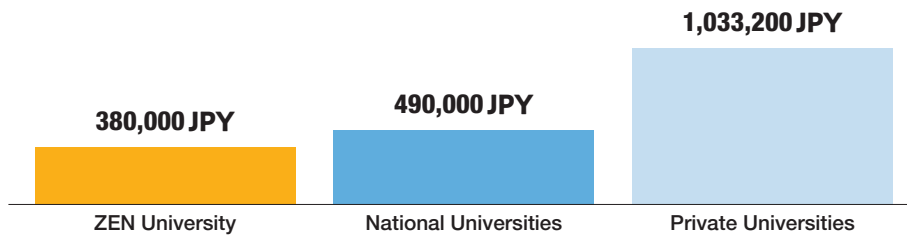
Study from any
location of your
choice

Study at your
own pace

SERVICE

Affordable Tuition

To improve access to higher education for students who might otherwise forgo it due to financial constraints or a lack of nearby universities, ZEN University has set its annual tuition at 380,000 yen.



Note: -The tuition fee data in the graph were calculated based on the 2020 Student Life Survey Results by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), and a cost progression simulation aggregated by DWANGO Co., Ltd. The 2020 Student Life Survey Results do not include the year of study, extracurricular activities fees, housing fees, and commuting costs.

SUPPORT

Comprehensive Student Support System

Specialized advisors provide individual support for everything from daily learning to university life and career development.

Class Coach

Academic Advisor

Career Advisor

Learning system “ZEN Study”

The ZEN Study learning system offers both regular and extracurricular classes. Students can choose from pre-recorded on-demand courses and live video sessions that provide real-time learning on the latest industry research, global trends, and more.

CREDIT SYSTEM

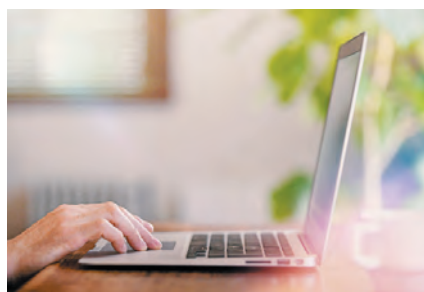
On-Demand Classes

Each class consists of six 10-minute videos.



Exam Credit System

After completing 15 classes, students take a credit exam.



Earning Credits

Credit will be awarded only upon achieving the required points in the credit accreditation exam.



CURRICULUM

Navigating an AI-Driven Society with Agility

ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR FUTURE PROFESSIONALS

The Faculty of Social Informatics empowers students to thrive in an AI-driven society by mastering AI, not just using it. Our curriculum covers six core fields: Digital Content Industry, Applied Informatics, Culture and Thought, Economy and Markets, and Mathematical Sciences. Our flexible structure enables students to explore both arts and sciences, tailoring their education to their interests. With over 250 courses offered, classes are primarily delivered as pre-recorded, on-demand sessions conveniently accessible online.



SIX KEY DISCIPLINES to Stay Ahead in the Modern Era

Unlike high school, university education extends beyond textbooks, challenging students to gather, interpret, and apply knowledge to real-world situations. Through the interdisciplinary exploration of six key disciplines critical to an AI-driven society, students cultivate essential skills, such as a global perspective, critical thinking, and effective information utilization.

12,400 Videos Ready by 2027

Opened in 2025, ZEN University has produced an impressive library of 6,480 ten-minute videos, giving students the freedom to explore their preferred subjects. By 2027, the university aims to expand its offerings to 156 subjects, with a total of 12,400 videos available.

279 courses

The Faculty of Social Informatics at ZEN University offers 279 courses within a single program. With nearly five times the number of courses required for graduation (61 courses), students have the flexibility to tailor their education to their personal interests and needs.

SIX KEY DISCIPLINES&FEATURED COURSES



Digital Content Industry



Applied Informatics



Culture and Thought



Economy and Markets



Society and Networks



Mathematical Sciences

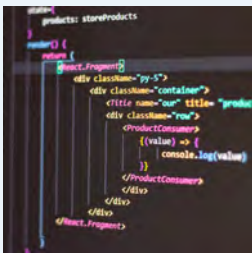
LEARNER-CENTERED EDUCATION

Learners craft their own learning path and create an educational experience that fits their individual needs and interests.

279 courses and 6,000+ video lectures



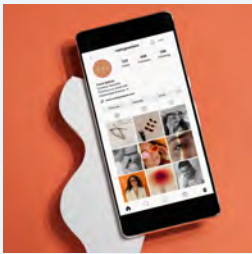
Manga Production



Programming



Psychology



Digital Marketing



Communication



Illustration



Data Science



Game Production



+ and more

LIFE-CHANGING PROGRAMS

Over 100 Joint Programs in Collaboration with Local Governments and Corporations

ZEN University is dedicated to enhancing students' practical skills through industry-government-academia collaboration. Throughout their time at the university, students will have numerous opportunities to participate in a variety of activities focused on the future.



DOMESTIC	Local government	ONLINE	Short term	Lectures, round-table discussions and workshops by experts/celebrities related to the region
			Medium term	Workshops and PBL (Project-Based Learning) internships in collaboration with local government
			Long term	PBL internships
		OFFLINE	Short term	Study tours, networking events, volunteering at local festivals
			Medium term	PBL internships
			Long term	Internships in local industries or municipal governments/ community revitalization teams
	Companies	ONLINE	Short term	Lectures, round-table discussions, and workshops with experts from global and overseas companies, as well as individuals active internationally.
			Medium term	Workshops and PBL internships in collaboration with companies
			Long term	PBL internships in collaboration with companies
		OFFLINE	Short term	Hackathons, ideathons, business contests
			Medium term	PBL internships
			Long term	internships at companies
OVERSEAS	Companies and Overseas universities	ONLINE	Short term	Lectures and round-table discussions by talent from global companies, overseas companies, and people active overseas
			Medium term	PBL focused on international co-creation, in collaboration with overseas universities, companies, and organizations
		OFFLINE	Short term	Study tours to advanced and developing countries
			Medium term	Summer programs at overseas universities, program-based internships at international companies, and internships in developing regions.
			Long term	Internships at overseas companies and development support organizations

Supported by The Nippon Foundation

ZEN University's regional and corporate partnership programs are designed to be accessible to a wide range of students. To support this goal, the university has set student costs as low as possible with the help of scholarships provided by The Nippon Foundation.



PROGRAMS

Creator



In collaboration with leading companies in the IT and VR sectors, this project challenges students to explore new creative expressions using the latest IT technologies such as the Metaverse and AI. The aim is to nurture creators who will lead the next generation. Though this program, students can:

- Mastery of the latest IT technologies
- Exploring innovative forms of creative expression
- Thriving as the next generation of creators

Overseas Cooperation Internship



In this program, students interact with and support educational activities for children in Cambodia, gaining firsthand insight into global affairs and international issues while developing awareness of the challenges of living in a global society. Through this program, students can:

- Acquiring knowledge on global affairs
- Gain hands-on experience in Cambodia
- Providing ongoing educational support to children

Further Opportunities

Hands-On Agricultural Learning in
Collaboration with Industry



Product Development Projects with
Major Retailers and Manufacturers

Online Study Tour to Explore Local
Food and Enhance Communication
Skills



STUDY ABROAD & INTER

INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES DURING UNIVERSITY: ONLINE AND IN-PERSON

To thrive in a global society, students need more than just language skills; they must also be able to communicate effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Experiencing different cultures and values broadens their perspective and equips them with the international skill sets necessary for success after graduation.

STUDYING ABROAD

Experience Diverse Cultures and Values

ZEN University offers a variety of study abroad programs, each tailored to students' individual visions of the future. Studying abroad enriches students' global perspectives by exposing them to diverse cultures and values.



STUDYING ONLINE

Experience Abroad from Home

While staying at home, you can have experiences that make you feel like you are in a foreign country. This allows you to experience different cultures while maintaining your current lifestyle.



BENEFITS OF STUDYING ABROAD

- Develop the Skills to Become a Global Talent
- Build a Network of Overseas Friends
- Adapt to and Flourish in Diverse Cultures and Perspectives



ONLINE SUPPORT

ONLINE SUPPORT FOR STUDYING ABROAD

Study abroad opportunities are regularly offered, with experienced advisors on hand to assist students.



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

Supported by The Nippon Foundation

ZEN University offers affordable regional, corporate, and study abroad programs thanks to the support from The Nippon Foundation. We aim to make these opportunities accessible to a wide range of students.



Students can choose from a wide range of programs that suit their needs, including options across different fields, regions, and program durations.

ZEN in Boston: Short-term English Language and American Culture Program (USA)

This program in Boston offers English language training and opportunities to learn about local business and culture. Through project presentations and field trips, students can gain valuable cross-cultural experiences. It is designed to be enjoyable even for those studying abroad for the first time.

Program Schedule and Duration: Spring (March 2026) , 2 weeks



Learning from Silicon Valley: the land of startups and opportunities (USA)

This program offers visits to IT and startup companies in Silicon Valley, as well as opportunities to interact with local entrepreneurs and innovators. It aims to deepen your understanding of the U.S. IT industry and startup ecosystem, while broadening your career options. This program is ideal for students eager to take on new challenges and explore diverse career paths.

Schedule and Duration: Spring (March 2026) , 8 days



Summer Session Programs in California (USA)

Experience Summer Sessions at UCLA/UC Berkeley alongside local students through programs provided by The Study Abroad Foundation (SAF).

*schedule and Duration: Summer (June-August 2026) , 6-8 weeks.



RESEARCH

Launch of Research Projects in Fields
Such as Mathematics, AI, and the Content Industry

The Second Matsuo Lab

Leveraging AI for real-world impact. A new research initiative in collaboration with Professor Yutaka Matsuo, a leading AI and Deep Learning scholar from the University of Tokyo.



Special Invited Professor

Yutaka Matsuo

HARC

The History Archive Research Center

Preserving Japan's cultural legacy, HARC is dedicated to capturing the stories behind Japan's iconic cultural trends – from gaming and anime to manga and internet culture.



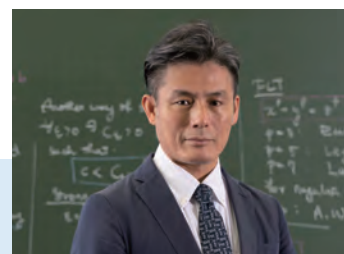
Professor

Koichi Hosoi

ZMC

ZEN Mathematics Center

Advancing modern mathematics by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration.



Professor

Fumiharu Kato



1



Leveraging AI in humanities and social science research

2



Supported by The Nippon Foundation and the Matsuo-Iwasawa Laboratory

3



AI Utilization and Research Grants

4



Open to students from all universities

FACULTY

name	specialty
Aka Akasaka	Manga
Akiko Ando	Editorial Engineering
Akina Gerber	Operations Research, Statistics, Microeconomic Theory
Akira Taira	Game Environment Artist
Daisuke Seshita	Mathematics Education, Data Science Education
DavideRyu Orihara	Programming, Informatics
Deep Blizzard	Drawing
Dohjin Miyamoto	Science Fiction, Virtual Reality
Fumiharu Kato	Mathematics, Algebraic Geometry, Arithmetic Geometry
Fururi	Illustration, Manga
Gouranga Charan Pradhan	Japanese Literature, Comparative Literature, International Japanese Studies
Hayato Saigo	Mathematical Physics & Noncommutative Probability Theory
Hernández Hernández Álvaro David	Sociology, Cultural Anthropology
Hirokazu Hamamura	Game Media
Hiroki Azuma	Philosophy, Information Society Studies, Cultural Criticism
Hiroki Takahashi	Video Production
Hiromi Fujisawa	Career Education, Human Resource Management & Development
Hirotaaka Sato	Mathematics, Physics, Applied & Engineering Physics
Hisanori Yoshida	Communication, Conversation Techniques
Ichiro Innami	Decision-Making & Negotiation
Ivan Fesenko	Pure Mathematics, Number Theory
Iwao Tanuma	Data Science, System Development
Jun Otsuka	Philosophy of Science
Junko Iwabuchi	Arts Administration
Junpei Tsuji	Social Simulation, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence
Kaisei Sakurai	Computer Graphics
Kaoru Sekiyama	Psychology, Cognitive Neuroscience
Kaoru Takeuchi	Science Communication
Kazu Yokoyama	English Language Education, Simultaneous Interpretation
Kazunari Fujisawa	Go AI Research, Integration with Other Fields for Go Professional Training
Keiichiro Tsukamoto	Data Engineering
Keiko Nakamura	Regional Society Studies
Keizo Yoshikawa	Television & Film Production, Producing
Kenji Tsukagoshi	Information Sociology
Koichi Hosoi	Cultural Resource Management
Koichiro Eto	Media Art
LeonardoKen Orihara	UI/UX, Front-End Web Development
Isao Murafuji	Corporate Finance, M&A
Makoto Kawano	Applied Machine Learning & Deep Learning
Makoto Mogi	History of Japan, World History
Masaru Ichihashi	Economics
Masato Taniguchi	Sociology, Social Movement Theory
Masato Wakayama	Representation Theory, Number Theory, Mathematical Physics
Masayuki Okada	Computer Networks & Information Security
Mayu Yamaguchi	Family Law, American Law
Megumi Taoka	Accounting, Cross-Cultural Understanding
Miki Katsuragi	Machine Learning, Data Analysis
Mito Asako	Preconception Health and Care, Maternal and Women's Medicine
Motoki Ono	Science and Technology Policy, China Studies
Munetaka Kawamoto	Information Science, Bioinformatics, Databases

name	specialty
Naoya Umezaki	Mathematics, Arithmetic Geometry
Naoyuki Sakumichi	Physics, Statistical Mechanics, Soft Matter Physics
Nobuo Kawakami	Marketing
Pyonta Takahashi	PC Gaming, Blockchain & Cryptocurrency
Rika Asakawa	Animation, Illustration, Character Design
Rokuban	Illustration
Ryota Hayakawa	Illustration, Character Design, Background Art, Art Direction
Ryuichiro Ban	Otaku Related Internet Planner
Ryusuke Hikawa	Anime Tokusatsu Studies
Sakae Suzuki	English Language Education
Satoshi Endo	Digital Technologies and Cultures
Satoshi Patten Watanabe	Labor Economics, Economics of Education, Applied Econometrics and Statistics
Shinichi Taira	Media, Journalism
Shinichi Takemura	Anthropology, Global Environment
Shinichi Ueyama	Management Consulting, City Management, Rural Development
Shinichiro Inoue	Entertainment Industry
Shinsuke Hosokawa	Zen Buddhism
Shota Seshimo	Community Studies
Shotaro Nakakuki	English
Shunya Yoshimi	Sociology, Urban Studies, Media Studies
Sketch Shimoda	Illustration
Soichiro Yoshimura	Web Development
Takahiro Tsuno	Web Development
Takako Akakura	Information and Computer Technology, Intellectual Property Technology, Educational Technology
Takao Yuyama	Theory of Computation
Takashi Chiba	Branding & Marketing, Data Science, Theoretical Physics, Management Consulting
Takashi Totsuka	Journalism, Media, Sports
Takayuki Fukatsu	Interaction Design
Takeshi Natsumo	Network, IT Management, Platform Design
Takuma Mitarai	Machine Learning System Development
Takuya Arakawa	Game Programming
Tamaki Saito	Psychiatry
Tatsuhiko Ikeda	Theoretical Physics, Quantum Information
Tatsuya Asano	Manga
Tomoyuki Arima	Graphic Design, Art Direction
Toshiaki Maeno	Algebra, Combinatorics
Tsuyoshi Hashimoto	Regional Revitalization
Yasuhide Yamanouchi	International Relations, Political Science, Studies on Information Society, Infosociomics
Yasunobu Kino	Project management, System development, Qualitative research methods
Yasunori Nomura	Theoretical Physics
Yasuo Deguchi	Philosophy
Yohei Sadoshima	Manga and Novel Editing
Yoko Hamada	psychoanalytic psychotherapy
Yoshiki Kojima	Web Design
Yoshinori Hamada	Game Design (2D/3D)
Yu Banno	Video production
Yu Otsuka	Illustration, Project Management
Yukito Iba	Statistics, Interdisciplinary Research
Yusuke Hoshide	Collective Creativity, Collaboration, and Workshop Design
Yusuke Kimoto	Conducting, Comparative Arts, Cultural Policy
Yutaka Matsuo	Artificial Intelligence, Deep Learning, Web Engineering

SUPPORT

Tailored Learning System and Comprehensive Student Support System

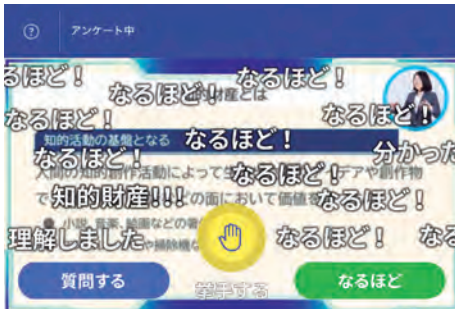
At ZEN University, students' learning and career development are supported by ZEN Study, our custom-designed learning system, along with guidance from professional advisors.

ZEN STUDY

Feature 1

Engaging Communication

ZEN Study includes a comment function that allows students to share insights, fostering a sense of community with peers in the same live video classes. Live video sessions also feature interactive tools such as hand-raising, polls, and a question button to enhance participation and engagement.



Feature 2

Streamlined Progress Management with LMS

Through the Learning Management System (LMS), students can track their class progress, test submissions, and cumulative study records, enabling effective learning schedule management. This data is also shared with faculty and staff, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of each student's academic journey and facilitating tailored support.



COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

Class Coach

The Class Coach serves as the primary advisor for students, providing support from admission to graduation. They assist with tasks such as course registration, daily study management, and navigating challenges in both academic and personal life.

Academic Advisor

The Academic Advisor delivers focused academic support to help students succeed in their studies. They address academic concerns, such as offering courses in prerequisite knowledge and supplementary on-demand lessons, ensuring students are well-equipped to meet their goals.

Career Advisor

The Career Advisor offers comprehensive career guidance through one-on-one and group sessions, beginning in the first year. By sharing career-related information and addressing post-graduation concerns, they help students explore and prepare for future career paths.



Fernando M. Reimers

Ford Foundation Professor of the Practice
in International Education
and Director of the Global Education Innovation Initiative
at Harvard University.

I find the concept of ZEN University to be bold and imaginative, potentially disruptive in addressing some enduring challenges faced by traditional higher education institutions such as barriers to access and the difficulty of helping students gain competencies which prepare them to solve vexing problems and to establish a solid foundation for lifelong learning. ZEN University plans to be an online university that leverages the power of digital tools and artificial intelligence to offer students the opportunity to gain mastery in mathematics and digital skills to solve complex problems. Through proposed partnerships with companies, public sector organizations and non-governmental organizations, students will benefit from apprenticeship based and online learning, therefore optimizing the opportunities to develop procedural as well as conceptual knowledge. More importantly, in a program that will be delivered to a great extent, online, students will gain the self-management skills to learn independently, in this way obtaining the essential skills

for lifelong learning. Of particular value is the fact that the courses offered by ZEN University will be available to students living anywhere in Japan, at a lower cost than the existing residential programs. This will democratize access to higher education, overcoming the barriers resulting from ability to pay, the need to earn a living and location of residence.

I have collaborated with some of the members of the founding team of ZEN University and, on that basis, believe that this ambitious undertaking will be executed with high levels of quality, and with great attention to establishing protocols that will ensure continuous and rapid improvement in search of delivering the greatest value to students, so that in gaining access to higher education, they can expand their own freedoms as well as gain the skills to collaborate with others in improving the communities of which they are a part. I salute the founders of ZEN University for this audacious idea and look forward to following up on its execution in the years to come.

FAQ

Q

What kind of degree can students obtain?

Upon meeting the graduation requirements and graduating, students will obtain a bachelor's degree.

Q

How are classes conducted?

Classes are conducted online, including on-demand classes that allow students to learn at their own pace through recorded lectures, live video classes, practical courses, and interactive seminars.

Q

What subjects are offered?

Courses focusing on social and digital themes are offered. Students can explore a variety of subjects, including humanities, communications and media, mathematics and physical sciences, computer science and information technology, creative and design arts, business and economics, social sciences and policy studies, as well as interdisciplinary and emerging fields.

Inquiries about offering study-abroad programs
for ZEN University students and other collaborative initiatives

international-gr@zen.ac.jp

Affiliated and Partner Schools

N High School group

Online high schools
established by KADOKAWA and Dwango



N Progressive School

Progressive new education in
collaboration with N/S High School



Both are operated by KADOKAWA DWANGO Educational Institute.
N Junior High School is not a middle school as defined by Article 1 of the School Education Act.
Students can study at N Junior High School while remaining enrolled in their own middle schools.

