

An introduction to the Chinese Flagship Nanjing Center

The Flagship Center's aim is to support direct enrollment for all participating Chinese Flagship students from around the United States while building relationships with Chinese professionals. In addition, the Center seeks to provide an enhanced learning environment toward attaining the highest levels of Chinese language proficiency and cultural understanding.

Introduction

The Nanjing Center is unlike traditional Study Abroad programs in China; it is *not* an extension of a summer intensive language study program. This program was designed for high level, motivated, and highly autonomous learners who have clear academic and professional goals. Whereas most language programs in China focus almost exclusively on linguistics, this program, as the statement above says, has four main areas of focus—direct enrollment, developing professional relationships, increasing your language proficiency, and developing cultural competence. This is done through various components, as explained below.

The Nanjing Center program assumes that students have solid language skills (minimum ACTFL Advanced Low) and focuses more on language learning strategies rather than memorization and repetitive practice of grammar patterns or idioms. The focus then is on specialization and professionalization within a context of high level Chinese language skills. The tools employed in initial language learning are no longer the priority. Students are forced to break free from the Chinese they are comfortable with and use higher level, academic and professional vocabulary, structures, idioms, and cultural references.

The purposes of the courses offered through the Nanjing Center is *not* to continue adding language building blocks, but to professionalize, streamline, and give a channel by which students may specialize their Chinese language and cultural skills. The program is also intended to provide deep acculturation to the local area, and enhance in-depth understanding of day-to-day Chinese life, perspectives, and other factors that will increase cultural and social awareness and language proficiency.

1. Direct Enrollment

Purposes

- a. To further familiarize students with the content of their chosen discipline.
- b. To provide networking opportunities with faculty and students within their chosen discipline.
- c. To better understand the Chinese education system and how native Chinese are educated within various disciplines.
- d. To increase general Chinese language skills.

Students generally enroll in 2 courses at Nanjing University. Students are free to select courses they feel will best meet their academic and professional goals. Nanjing Center staff is available to make suggestions and help with the selection process. Students will often sit in on various classes at the beginning of the semester to help them select the best classes for them.

What to expect

Direct enrollment classes are regular Nanjing University classes. Flagship students are expected to complete all homework, assignments, exams, and papers as any other student enrolled in the class. Some classes are very traditional with faculty lecturing the entire hour and students quietly taking notes. Other classes are more interactive with student participation, question and answer, student presentations, small group work, and so on. You will learn a great deal about the Chinese education system through the various pedagogical approaches you may encounter in these courses.

Chinese classes tend to be less structured than university courses in the U.S. You may not have a textbook or assigned reading; there may not even be a clear syllabus. Attendance may not be mandatory and the bulk of your grade may be on a final exam or final term paper. Engaged Flagship students will seek out the professor or classmates to get supplemental readings to help them better understand the lectures. There are many learning resources available but you are expected to be proactive and seek them out on your own. To a large extent, you will get out of the direct enrollment course what you put into them. Take them casually and don't do much work, then don't expect to learn much.

2. Flagship Language Courses

Purposes

- a. Professionalize your Chinese language skills through reading, formal presentation, and formal writing.
- b. Learn to write in a variety of professional and academic contexts using literary Chinese 书面语.
- c. Increase your understanding of how Chinese media works in China and the language of media.
- d. Support the direct enrollment courses through intense language study.

Flagship students enroll in three courses—Advanced Composition, Advanced Chinese Media and Society, and Mandarin Improvement.

The *Advanced Composition* course provides training, practice, and feedback on academic and professional writing. This is similar to an advanced writing course required by many foreign students studying at U.S. universities.

The *Advanced Chinese Media and Society* course exposes you to various aspects of media in China, both print and broadcast. Issues may include historical development of media in China, issues of censorship, film, television, newspaper, and Internet media issues. Students prepare and present oral presentations in this course as well as a written paper.

The *Mandarin Improvement* course is designed to prepare students for the HSK and provides advanced grammar review in order to improve high level language acquisition. Although the course itself is not set up to specifically prepare students for the ACTFL proficiency exams, its syllabus and grammar rules support high-level language learning.

What to expect

These three courses will require more time and energy than your direct enrollment courses. The reason for this is that to some extent they are patterned after Western University models where homework is assigned, required readings are expected, feedback is provided, and participation is mandatory. Students write papers, do oral presentations, have weekly homework assignments, and are expected to come to class fully prepared to participate. Depending on how you were prepared in your domestic program, these courses may be significantly more demanding, or close to what you have come to expect in advanced-level Flagship level courses.

3. Peer Tutoring

Purpose

To assist students with their language learning, cultural understanding, and professional development.

What to expect

When you arrive in China you will be assigned a peer tutor. Every effort is made to assign you a tutor with a like or related major. Tutors are full-time Nanjing University students. In most cases your tutor will also be your roommate. In order to make the best use of your tutor, it is advised that you have clear objectives of how you want them to help you. If you do not have a plan, time can easily be wasted in idle chit-chat. Do not hesitate to give your tutor assignments to prepare for the next session. Remember that your tutor has free room and board through your shared apartment, and has specifically applied for this position to work as your tutor. So it is completely acceptable to have specific expectations for them.

Single Flagship students receive a subsidy each month for utility and rent after the confirmation of completed monthly tutoring hours with your roommate. For married students whose tutors do not live with them, there is no subsidy. Instead, the tutor will be given a subsidy once monthly after confirmation of completed monthly tutoring hours.

4. Community Practicum

Purpose

To allow students the opportunity to get away from the academic community and interact with and provide service to individuals or groups around the city.

What to expect

Students select a community service project based on their interests and provide service for the duration of Fall semester. Service projects in the past have included teaching English at a school for migrant children, working at an animal shelter, working with handicapped adults, playing with children at an orphanage, and so on.

Conclusion—Tips for a successful experience

- The program will not dictate to you how to spend your time or what your goals will be or how you will reach them. It will not force you to progress. That is up to you. It *will* provide the resources for you to succeed, but *you* must take the initiative.
- Make the program your own. Because this program is less restrictive than traditional study abroad programs, you have the flexibility to dig deeper, and have a richer learning and cultural experience.
- At this point in your studies, you should already know how to learn and progress, what your goals are, both academically and professionally, and have a pretty good idea of how to get there. The Nanjing Center will provide all the support and resources you need to obtain your goals.
- If you come to Nanjing full of expectations with the program, but few if any expectations for yourself, you will likely be disappointed.
- Take advantage of the many opportunities around you to experience Chinese culture and society on a deeper level. Don't sit in your room all day. Get out and experience campus and city life. Be an active participant and not just a spectator.
- Network. Get to know your classmates, your professors, your roommate and their network of friends and associates. Nanjing is a top university in China and you are rubbing shoulders with some of the brightest minds in China. Down the road, these contacts may be very beneficial.
- Learn as much as you can about Chinese history, politics, society, pop culture, and so on. This will allow you to be a full participant and understand the references that come up in conversation and in the media on a daily basis.

The following is an excerpt from an essay written by a former Flagship student.

You create your Flagship experience. Yes, you will enroll in normal university classes at 南大 as well as be enrolled in a couple required Flagship classes. Do you want to use your direct enrollment classes as a springboard for learning a professional vocabulary? Do it. Do you want to boost your reading speed by doing all the course reading required for your classes, or do you prefer to spend more time out of class reading newspapers, talking to real people, or singing karaoke (great way to up your reading speed)? You can! Do you want almost unlimited one-on-one instruction from teachers and fellow students? You can have it! Do you want to follow a strict language study regimen? Then do it! Do you want to spend time at the senior care center or hospital, developing your 听力 in a whole new way? Great!