Dear colleagues and friends,

I am delighted to be able to offer a few words of welcome to you this evening, as we mark visits to the University by several very important delegations from Japan.

Some of you, but perhaps not everyone, will know that as Vice Chancellor of the University of East Anglia, I am also Chair of the Management Board of the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures. I made my first visit to Japan last November in this joint capacity, and had the opportunity to meet many of our Japanese friends and partners, as well as enjoying some wonderful Japanese hospitality. And so I am particularly pleased to be able to welcome our visiting Japanese colleagues to Norwich this evening.

The Centre for Japanese Studies here at UEA plays an important role in leading and coordinating Japan-related teaching and research at the University, and also provides a bridge between the University and the Sainsbury Institute which, as many of you know, has its headquarters in the Cathedral Close in the city centre. Over the coming few years, we are looking to further enhance collaboration between the University and the Sainsbury Institute, as we prepare for the Institute’s move to the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, hopefully in time for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics in 2020. Events such as this, which bring
together the various interests we have in Japan across the campus, including our Japanese degree students and the University’s Japan Society, with Japanese visitors to the University and the Sainsbury Institute, provide important opportunities for us to realise the synergies of the University’s own Japan programmes with those of the Sainsbury Institute.

While I was in Tokyo, I was pleased to be able to unveil a series of online programmes, produced by the University’s own IT services in conjunction with the Sainsbury Institute, introducing some of the treasures of East Anglian cultural heritage. These programmes were designed as a prelude to the first in what is to be an annual series of Winter Programmes, giving undergraduates from the Faculty of Letters at the University of Tokyo direct experience of British archaeology and cultural heritage, in the company of some of the best of their international counterparts.

This evening it is my great pleasure to welcome the participants in this Winter Programme to the University. I understand that you have enjoyed some of the highlights of what our region, and Britain as a whole, has to offer in this area: from going down the Neolithic flint mines of Grime’s Graves to seeing the remarkably preserved ancient wheel at ongoing excavations at the Bronze Age settlement at Must Farm, the Pompeii of the Fens. Even more remarkably, I understand that you have had only one rainy day!

I know that this programme has involved a wide range of partners in the heritage sector across the country, including the British Museum, English Heritage, and the Historic Environment Services of Norfolk County
Council. We are grateful to them all. I am pleased to note that some of our own UEA students in the area of art and cultural heritage have benefitted from the companion Summer Programme in Japanese Archaeology and Heritage which began two years ago. This is also a nice opportunity to welcome back to Norwich Dr Akira Matsuda, formerly our university lecturer in Japanese Artistic Heritage, and now in the Department of Cultural Resource Studies at the University of Tokyo, who I know has worked tirelessly on these programmes, in conjunction with our own Dr Sam Nixon.

Our University is keen to further enhance our international profile in many areas. It is wonderful to once again welcome a delegation from Niigata University Health and Welfare. There has been a relationship with our School of Health Sciences since 2011, which builds on a preceding link with Centre for Interprofessional Practice since 2006. The main aim is to forge links between our two universities, by hosting visits by students and staff, by sharing best nursing education and practice, and the experiences of the two universities’ interprofessional learning.

To date 38 Japanese nursing students have spent time with us in Norwich. We are working to extend the collaboration for further five years, and to enrich this collaboration with further exchange and new projects that relate in particular to care of the elderly in the home environment.

While I was in Japan I visited Ritsumeikan University in the beautiful old capital of Kyoto, where I was pleased to meet President Yoshida and a number of colleagues representing different parts of the University. Ritsumeikan not only hosts some of our own Japanese language degree students during their third year Study Abroad, but is now sending us
groups of undergraduates who are spending a month getting to know about Norwich while improving their English language skills. I am delighted to welcome this group, and hope that this programme can continue through the good offices of our International Programmes Office and the School of Politics, Philosophy and Culture and Communication Studies.

Last, but by no means least, we welcome three distinguished visitors from Kokugakuin University in Tokyo, a long-term research partner of the Sainsbury Institute. Kokugakuin is the main centre for Shinto studies in Japan, and has a magnificent University Museum, which I hope I may be able to visit one day. I understand that you had the opportunity to visit our own university museum, the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, this afternoon, and I hope you enjoyed our own small but very special collection of art objects relating to Shintoism. There is no doubt that art has played an important role in fostering religious literacy through the ages, and we look forward to further developing our research collaboration in these areas with you.

I am looking forward to hearing from some of the participants in these programmes, and to talking with you this evening. But I would just like to close by saying how delighted I am at the diversity of links we are forging with Japan. Japan is one of five countries and regions on which the University is focusing its international activity, and we look forward to celebrating further fruits of these and other collaborations with our Japanese colleagues.

Thank you.