



JAPAN

Brief Background: In 2008, the Japanese government announced plans to bring 300,000 international students to Japan by 2020. The Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) reports that international students in Japan numbered over 267,000 in 2017, with significant growth in postsecondary and vocational enrollments. According to JASSO's annual survey of international students, there were 2,516 American students enrolled in Japanese higher education institutions in 2017; a 9% increase from the previous year.

There are hundreds of local and national universities in Japan, varying in size, reputation, and institutional control. The University of Tokyo (known as Todai) and the Kyoto University (known as Kyodai) are considered Japan's top two universities. They are among the country's so-called Ivy League institutions, referred to as the National Seven Universities or the former Imperial Universities.

Though English-taught programs have existed at Japanese universities for decades, the Japanese government has selected 13 universities as members of its Global 30 initiative, which aims to increase the number of programs taught in English as a way to attract more international students to Japan's most prestigious institutions. No Japanese proficiency is required at the time of admission to these programs. Note that most of these universities offer only a small number of places in just a few academic areas.

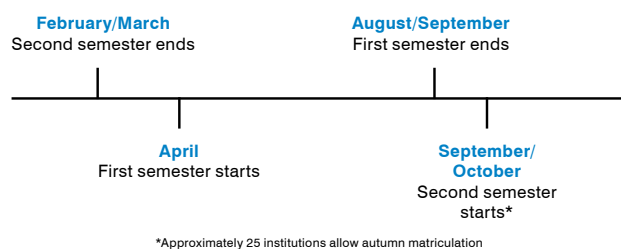
In 2014, the Japanese government announced special funding for 37 universities through its Top Global Universities Project, part of an effort to boost the presence of Japanese universities in global rankings. Most but not all of these universities offer courses taught in English; students should carefully check the departments at each university to determine whether English-taught programs are offered.

Good to Know: To earn a bachelor's degree, a student must study at a university for at least four years. There are no programs in medicine, dentistry, or veterinary science offered in English.

Despite the growth in English-taught programs, many students wishing to study in Japan enroll in a year-long Japanese language course before beginning their academic program. Some universities offer private language programs. Students also have the option of enrolling in separate language institutes. These programs typically educate students about Japanese language, society, and culture.

By law, Japanese universities cannot accept students who will be under age 18 on the first day of their freshman year. If the applicant will be under 18, it may be possible to apply to some universities as a non-traditional student.

Academic Calendar: Most educational institutions in Japan start their academic year in April. The long holiday seasons are usually in the summer (end of July to early September), winter (end of December to early January) and spring (February to March). There are approximately 25 universities in Japan at which students may matriculate in the autumn. Some institutions are moving to a quarter system to facilitate entry at various points throughout the year.



Students beginning programs in the fall who wish to work in Japan after graduation should be aware that companies typically hire new workers to begin in April. Considering this challenge, some programs offer a fast-track graduation plan, which means that students are able to start the academic year in September, graduate in March, 3½ years later, and then begin work in April.

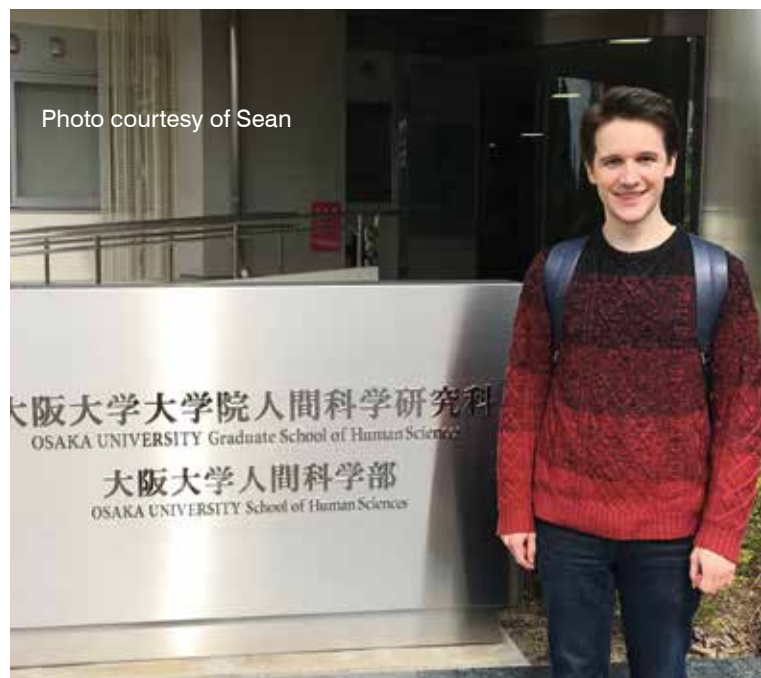
Search: Students can search for a degree program taught in English, with autumn matriculation, and with admission procedures and assessment standards similar to those in North America, through the [JASSO](#) or [Univ. In Japan](#).

Each faculty or department within a university typically has a profile or policy that details the requirements and demands of its program. These profiles may be useful in helping students evaluate their options.

Apply: Students must apply directly to a Japanese university and to the specific college or program within the university where they hope to enroll. Traditionally, the faculty of each program review and select applicants. However, some universities are beginning to adopt elements of a more holistic admission review process at the behest of Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). Additionally,

NATIONAL SEVEN UNIVERSITIES

- University of Tokyo
- Kyoto University
- Tohoku University
- Kyushu University
- Hokkaido University
- Osaka University
- Nagoya University



“The reasons I decided to come to Osaka University were that I wanted to live outside the US, I had attained quite a high level of Japanese before coming, and it made more sense financially to come to Osaka University.”

—Sean Zilka, Minnesota, Osaka University

applications to English-taught degree programs may be reviewed by an admission office dedicated specifically to international applicants, with input from faculty.

Many Global 30 schools require an interview component as part of the admission process, but this can be conducted virtually. Some universities also require additional tests; students should check with individual institutions for more details. The SAT or the ACT is accepted (and in many cases required) at almost all universities with English-taught programs.

Students within the Japanese secondary school system are selected based on their results on a competitive nationwide exam, but international students are exempt from this requirement. However, note that the English translations of admission procedures that appear on many university websites use the term examination to refer to all admission methods, which can be confusing.

International students can apply for admission to undergraduate professional degree programs, such as law or medicine, at Japanese universities. These programs are highly competitive and require a high level of Japanese proficiency prior to applying. These programs are not available at all institutions, students should contact universities directly for more information.

Students should be aware that application requirements vary depending upon the university and program. The requirements can be quite rigid, with the applicant having to follow a set format for completion of the forms or production of application essays. Failure to adhere to the published guidelines can result in an applicant being denied.

Deadlines: Deadlines vary greatly, and many universities have two or even three admission deadlines within the same academic year. If applying to multiple Japanese universities, students are advised to choose one application window and submit their materials to all institutions during that timeframe. Check with each institution to confirm its deadlines.

Application Fees: Application fees vary by institution, but the average fee is between 5,000 and 35,000 yen and is non-refundable. Additionally, if accepted, a student must pay an entrance/admission fee of between 200,000 and 300,000 yen, on average. The entrance/admission fee should be understood as a contribution to the university; it is not considered part of tuition fees.

Admission Requirements: By law, Japanese higher education institutions can only enroll students who have a high school diploma following 12 years of schooling. Many universities are familiar with the IB Diploma, but they will not accept exam scores for college credit. The same applies to AP exams. However, advanced classes and extracurricular involvement related to the desired program of study will strengthen a student's application.

Students applying to programs taught in Japanese will be required to pass an Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU). Administered by JASSO, it evaluates both Japanese language skills and other basic academic abilities.

Upon Acceptance: Students should follow the directions for accepting an admission offer provided by the university. Once accepted, there is a narrow range of dates within which a student must commit to entry, which includes paying a deposit equivalent to the entire tuition for the first semester. Once a student has committed, the university—most likely the international student office—will supply a Certificate of Eligibility to be used as part of the visa application process.

Tuition and Fees: Annual tuition at national and local public institutions typically ranges between 535,000 and 931,000 yen. Private university undergraduate tuition varies based on the course of study pursued, ranging anywhere between 1,108,000 and 4,189,000 yen. Tuition costs

for studies in medicine and other professional science fields are at the higher end of this scale. International students pay the same tuition and fees as domestic students.

International students can apply for scholarships from universities, private foundations, local governments, JASSO, and MEXT. It is important to note that students cannot receive a MEXT scholarship and a JASSO scholarship simultaneously. According to a 2016 JASSO Survey, 40.8 percent of international students receive scholarship funding to study in Japan.

In addition to scholarships, some universities also offer application fee waivers. Inquiries about these opportunities can be directed to individual universities.

Housing: While most international students choose to live in private apartments or homes, privately-run off-campus student dormitories tend to be a cheaper option—in part because most apartments are not furnished and in some cases appliances must also be purchased. A university's international student services office or admission representative can typically recommend housing options or connect students with area landlords or real estate agents. Some universities have on-campus dorms, however, only a limited number of students are able to live there.

According to the 2016 JASSO Survey, the average monthly rent paid by students is 31,000 yen, with the Tokyo metropolitan area being the most expensive with



rent upward of 35,000 yen. The average monthly cost of living for an international student in Japan, including rent, is approximately 141,000 yen.

Students staying in Japan for more than a year must register for national health insurance and pay yearly premiums of approximately 20,000 yen. Insurance covers 70 percent of medical bills with the remaining 30 percent the responsibility of the individual.

Visa and Other Permits: Students must apply for a visa before traveling to Japan and will need the Certificate of Eligibility issued by their institution to do so. Students planning to live and pursue university study in Japan for more than three months must obtain a residence card. They must carry their College Student Residence Status card with them at all times.

US citizens are exempt from paying all Japanese visa fees, including fees for student visas.

Students who want to work part-time while studying in Japan must submit an application to a regional immigration office. They may not begin part-time work until that application has been approved. Students may not work more than 28 hours a week (there is no maximum number of hours per day), but may work up to 40 hours a week (eight hours a day) during summer break or other vacation periods.

Following graduation, international students can work in Japan as long as they have a job related to their major and receive a salary equivalent to a Japanese national employee. Without satisfying both of these requirements, the student cannot change their status of residency (i.e., acquire a work visa). Students who do not secure a job immediately can remain in Japan for job-seeking activities for a maximum of one year following graduation.

Japanese universities pride themselves on their ability to help their graduates secure jobs in Japan, and much of a student's final undergraduate year is spent job-hunting, with comprehensive support provided by the university.

Advice from the Field: Since there are well-established and reputable universities offering September entry to English-taught programs, the start date should be an important criterion for students and counselors when selecting academic programs.

Japan is a relatively safe country with a low crime rate. However, prospective international students should be aware that drug laws are strict and equally applied to foreigners and Japanese citizens. Use or possession of even small amounts of a prohibited drug can result in a prison sentence of one to 10 years, as well as a fine. Individuals arrested in Japan may be held without bail for two to three months during a police investigation and legal proceedings.



“Personally, the best part of being a university student in Japan for me was the way the credit schedules were structured. In Japanese universities, you finish most of your credits in the first two years of school, so later you have a lot more free time to focus on what you want to research in the second half of your time at your university.”

—Sean Zilka, Minnesota, Osaka University

Japanese universities are looking to diversify, and American students are well sought after. Be aware, however, that English is not widely spoken in Japan, so basic knowledge of Japanese or a desire to learn the language is highly beneficial. The terms international or global appear frequently in some university course descriptions and publicity, but that is no guarantee that all students or professors are fluent in English. It is worth investigating how many professors have studied overseas or the percentage of students from outside Japan within a given university or program. Universities that include these statistics prominently on their websites have likely made a sincere effort to internationalize the education they provide.

Following graduation, international students can stay connected to their institution and fellow graduates by joining an alumni-initiated group in Japan, should they stay to continue their education or work in Japan, or an alumni-initiated group back in their home country or new country of residence. Some universities have designated offices operating in different countries. Students can contact these offices or the universities directly for more detailed information about available networks.