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How to **STUDY ABROAD** in

Japan



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Introduction

How to study abroad in Japan
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Are you one of the many students worldwide fascinated by this distinctive and highly developed country? Then you'll be pleased to hear that Japan is keen to keep increasing its international enrolments.

In 2014, a total of 184,155 international students were studying in Japan – an increase of almost 10% compared to the previous year – of which 67,782 were enrolled in universities. The government's aim is to see the overall number of international students rise to 300,000 by the end of the current decade.

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The world's third-largest economy, Japan is a global superpower in both the technological and cultural domains. Renowned for its leadership in the high-tech and entertainment sectors, the nation has also fascinated people around the world with distinctive cultural elements ranging from kimonos to karaoke, haiku to jujitsu, and sushi to anime.

Today, major cities such as Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto offer immersion in the eclectic fusion of traditional customs and modern innovations that comprise contemporary Japanese life. Yet these buzzing urban hubs are just part of the possible adventure. An archipelago comprised of 6,852 small islands, Japan offers large areas of relatively untouched and unpeopled space to explore, including the Japanese Alps, the mountains of Hokkaido, the coral reefs of Okinawa, the hot springs of Hyōgo and the forests of Kyoto.

Keen to spend your student years exploring Japan? Read on to find out how...

Higher education in Japan

Japan's higher education system is comprised of national, public and private universities. The nation's strongest global ranking position is claimed by **Kyoto University**, which is 38th in the QS World University Rankings® 2015/16. Close behind are the **University of Tokyo** (often known as Todai, 39th) and **Tokyo Institute of Technology** (56th), with a further 35 Japanese universities ranked among the world's best.

Most undergraduate programs at Japan's universities take four years to complete, with medicine, dentistry and veterinary science lasting six years. Master's degrees last for two years and doctoral programs take a minimum of three years, with the option of enrolling in a five-year PhD program in lieu of a master's degree. Alternative places of study include special training colleges, junior colleges and colleges of technology; these offer more vocational programs of a shorter length, ending in graduation with a diploma.

Driven by internationalization targets, Japan is currently undergoing a number of higher education reforms in order to become more internationally competitive.

Driven by internationalization targets, Japan is currently undergoing a number of higher education reforms in order to become more internationally competitive. In 2014, the government announced additional funds of ¥590 million (US\$5.4 million) to be divided between Japan's 37 leading universities over the next 10 years, to improve financing options for internationals and increase the number of foreign language programs.

With each institution in charge of its own international development, project-related initiatives are expected to multiply across the sector, leading to improved international engagement, higher numbers of student and faculty exchange, more transnational study opportunities, improved joint research and further development of branch campuses. According to Education Minister Hakubun Shimomura, if the 37 leading universities reach their targets, as much as 50% of teaching staff will come from abroad and 20% of classes will be taught in English by 2024.



Admission requirements, applications & visas

Rather than submitting a GPA (grade point average) or other assessment grades, students applying to universities in Japan are required to take entrance examinations. The 'Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU)' is the standardized test for foreign students, designed to test basic academic skill in areas of science, mathematics and 'Japan and the world'. Some 95% of national universities, 65% of public universities and 44% of private institutions require the EJU for entrance.

Many universities also require incoming students to take an additional examination. Although the EJU can be completed at test centers across Asia, prospective students must often travel to Japan to take these institution-specific tests. Fees for the tests range between ¥6,960 and ¥12,920 (US\$57-107) and test-takers have just one chance to pass each academic year.

In addition to the entrance examinations, applicants are likely to be asked to provide a completed application form, academic transcripts, proof of sufficient finances to cover tuition fees, academic references, a valid passport and a couple of passport-sized photographs.

International students intending to study for more than three months in Japan will need to apply for a student visa. To do this, you should first obtain a Certificate of Eligibility, which will be applied for on your behalf by the Japanese institution you have been accepted by. Once this has been issued, you will need to apply for your visa through your local Japanese embassy or consulate. As well as the original certificate of eligibility (and an additional photocopy), you will also need to provide a valid passport, a completed application form and a recent passport-sized photograph.



Working while you study

If you want to work in Japan while studying, you'll need to obtain 'Permission to Engage in Activity Other than that Permitted by the Status of Residence Previously Granted', which you can apply for at an immigration bureau once you arrive in Japan. As a general rule, this permission will entitle you to work up to 28 hours a week during term-time and eight hours a day during official holiday periods.

Language requirements

If you are enrolling in a program taught in Japanese and you are not a native speaker, you'll also be asked to provide proof of Japanese proficiency. The most common test used for this purpose is the Japanese-Language Pro-ficiency Test (JLPT), which costs ¥5,500 (US\$45). The 'Advanced Level' N1 grade is sometimes accepted in lieu of the Examination for Japanese University Admission.

If you are enrolling in a program taught in Japanese and you are not a native speaker, you'll also be asked to provide proof of Japanese proficiency.

Likewise, for English-language programs, non-native speakers will be asked for proof of proficiency in English, by providing results from a test such as the TOEFL or IELTS.



Tuition fees & living costs

Tuition fees in Japan, although some of the most expensive in Asia, still look very appealing in comparison to Western countries such as the UK or the US. Typically, you can expect to pay between ¥500,000 and ¥1,000,000 (US\$4,126-8,252) annually – but don't make the mistake of assuming the highest rates are charged by the highest-ranked institutions. For instance, the University of Tokyo and Osaka University charge annual tuition fees of ¥535,800 per year (US\$4,422) for most programs at undergraduate and master's level, plus an additional ¥282,000 (US\$2,327) for the 'admission fee'. There is also an additional yearly charge of ¥17,000-¥30,000 (US\$140-\$248) for examination fees.

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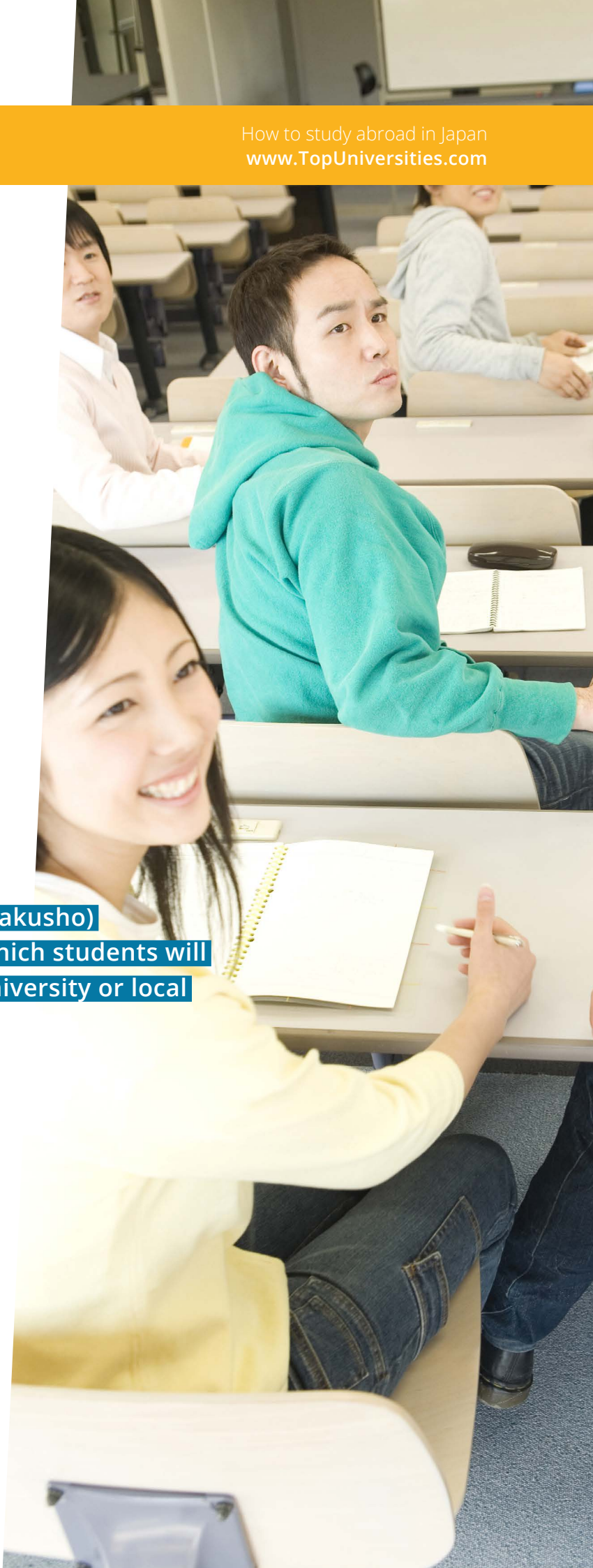
Funding opportunities

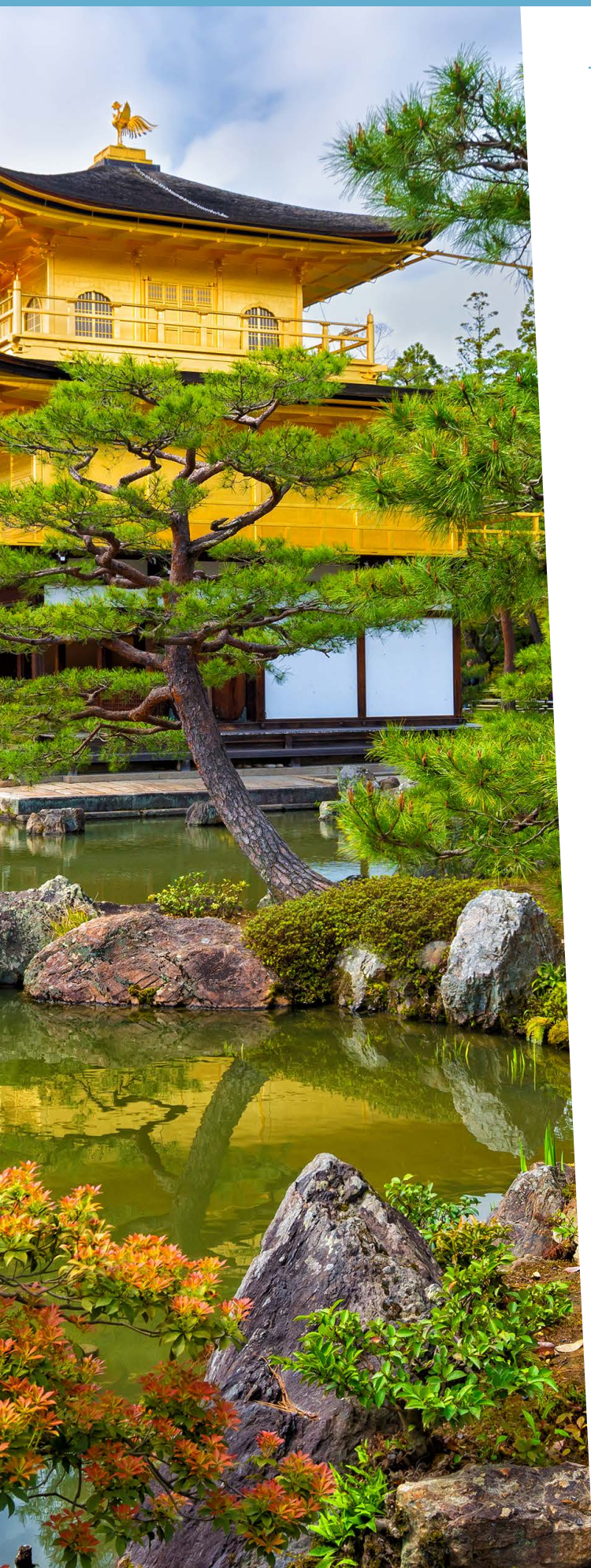
Thanks to Japan's ambitious reforms, international students now have more opportunities to gain funding than ever before. With the percentage of international students remaining well below the targets laid out by the CIEE, there are a range of government scholarships, grants and loan schemes open to outstanding international applicants.

The Japanese Government (Monbukagakusho) Scholarship is one such scheme, for which students will need a recommendation from their university or local Japanese embassy. Another government initiative is the Global 30 Project, which not only provides students with more options to study in English, but also offers financial support and visa advice.

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For more information on gaining funding, check out the information provided on JASSO's Gateway to Study in Japan website or search the online scholarship database provided by Japan Study Support (JPSS). Alternatively, contact the admissions department of your chosen university, or your local Japanese embassy or consulate.





TOKYO

Mention **Tokyo** and most people probably picture neon signs, congested traffic and, well, more neon signs. But there's more to Japan's capital than bright lights – though it certainly has lots of those. Away from the main highways and the non-stop turnover of new gadgets in Akihabara ('electric town'), there are more tranquil pleasures to be enjoyed: shrines and temples, traditional gardens and teahouses, noodle bars and fresh sushi.

There are also hundreds of colleges and universities in Tokyo, including the **University of Tokyo** and **Tokyo Institute of Technology**, currently 39th and 56th respectively in the **QS World University Rankings**.

Despite being ranked among the world's most expensive cities in the annual Mercer Cost of Living Survey, Tokyo does not have to be ridiculously bank-breaking. That is, as long as you avoid using taxis, eating out at Aragawa (one of the world's priciest restaurants) or spending too much time in the famous game arcades.

KYOTO

Now known as Japan's cultural capital, **Kyoto** was in fact the political capital for more than 1,000 years, up to 1868. Home to 17 UNESCO World Heritage sites, Kyoto is top of the list for those students looking to explore Japan's rich history – but that's not to say it stopped developing back in 1868. Today, historical sites are surrounded by thriving industry and business, as well as a year-round program of festivals and cultural events.

Kyoto University is Japan's highest ranked and second oldest university, placing 38th in the current QS World University Rankings. **Kyoto Institute of Technology** is also highly esteemed, and there are more than 30 colleges and universities in Kyoto to choose from in all. But even if you don't pick a university in Kyoto, it's still definitely a place to visit during your time in Japan.

OSAKA

As far back as historical records go, **Osaka** has been a place of meetings and exchanges – an international gateway for trade, politics and knowledge. Today, Osaka remains a key economic and cultural hub, with a large and diverse population and an economy bigger than some entire countries can boast. ‘Cultural capital’ Kyoto is only about 40km away, but Osaka itself is not short on art exhibitions, live music or drama, as well as being known for its excellent and varied cuisine. Universities in Osaka also hold their own, with Osaka University ranked 58th in the QS World University Rankings.



Working in Japan after graduation

Struggling to cope with supporting the world's most elderly population, Japan is keen to recruit skilled foreign workers to fill labor market shortfalls, and the government is working on measures to ease the transition for expats. Areas of high demand include engineering, sales, accounting and finance, IT and technician roles, health professionals, high-level managers and other highly skilled positions.

Across these sectors, there's high demand for graduates who are fluent in both Japanese and English, while speakers of Chinese and Korean are also highly valued. Businesses in Japan are also increasingly seeking employees who combine international experience and a global outlook with a good understanding of the local culture – making international graduates of local universities an attractive prospect.

While fluency in Japanese is required for many professional roles, it may be possible to find English-speaking positions across the corporate, IT and technology sectors. Other sectors in which it may be possible to find English-based roles include TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), banking and finance, and English-language journalism, publishing or media.

To stay in Japan after graduation you'll need to get permission to extend your 'Period of Stay' from the Japanese Immigration Bureau, approximately three months before your student visa expires. This will cost ¥4,000 (US\$33) and will require all the documentation listed for your visa as well as a completed application form, a certificate of enrollment at a Japanese university, grades and transcripts, student ID card, proof of financial support (such as a bank statement or scholarship receipt) and a residence card (if applicable).



More questions?

Got more questions? Get advice from the TopUniversities team and international students, in our [online forums](#).