
GUIDE FOR MEXT SCHOLARS

June 2020 Version

Prepared By:



MEXT SCHOLARS ASSOCIATION



FOREWORD

This guide is aimed at MEXT scholars who were/are a recipient of the MEXT scholarship.

As fellow scholars, we at MEXT Scholars Association (MSA) know that there often is not enough information for scholars – not just about the scholarship itself but also living in Japan, post-graduation paths and others.

MSA has therefore created a set of guide articles so that we can share the knowledge and experiences of current and former scholars for those who are new. We hope that this guide will lead to improving the lives of MEXT scholars in Japan as well as function as a link between fresh, current and former MEXT scholars.

These articles were compiled through collecting the nineteen most frequently asked 'Wish to Know' questions for MEXT scholars, through poll results collected from our social media and the guide team's evaluations.

If you have your scholarship confirmation or are a MEXT scholar already and have more specific questions also consider signing up [here](#) (or go to <https://msajunction.com>). You will be able to get access to a Facebook group filled with other scholars who will be happy to help you.

We hope that the following helps you! Lastly but not least, welcome to the MEXT family!

MEXT Scholars Association Guide Project Team

Acknowledgements:

We would like to thank all the members of the writing team, Jihyeon, Austin, Anastasia, Pedro and Techsrn for taking time to write the articles in this guide. Very special thanks also goes to Cheryl Ng, who designed the beautiful layout which you are seeing right now for this document.

We would also like to thank MEXT for reviewing the articles in this article (as of end 2017) to ensure as high a degree of accuracy as possible.

Disclaimer:

These guide articles are meant to be advice based on the experience of current and previous scholars. Given how situations may change depending on the school, region or year etc., we urge any scholars to approach the relevant authorities in your school if you have any doubts or concerns.



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ABOUT DAILY LIFE



WHO DO I APPROACH IF I NEED HELP?

Written by: Austin Zeng

SUMMARY

- Whatever difficulties you are facing, be aware that there is always support available
- These can include dormitory tutors, school student counsellors, anonymous counselling services etc.
- Please view the full article for a list of resources

Always keep in mind: You are not alone!

One thing that we all know is that living in a foreign country (especially when we don't speak the language!) is not easy. Daily life, social isolation, academic troubles are all things that many of us experience.

But be aware that there are people who can listen and who can help. Who you approach certainly depends on the topic but these are just some places which you can talk to if you need assistance.

PROBLEMS WITH JAPANESE LANGUAGE / DAILY LIFE:

- Many schools provide one-on-one or other forms of tutoring with a Japanese student. These can be of help when you are studying Japanese or you have to do paperwork in Japanese. Approach your student support office to ask if they have such a system.
- Similarly, if you are living in a dormitory many have tutors / Residential Advisor systems which you can utilize.
- The international interaction circles may also often have very helpful people if you need some help.

PROBLEMS WITH ACADEMICS / SCHOLARSHIP:

- Ask your student support office if you have **any** questions about academics or the scholarship.
 - Please remember that problems with administration may cause issues with your graduation and the scholarship so do ask the school administration if you have any issues.

STRESS / SOCIAL ISOLATION / MENTAL HEALTH

- Most, if not all schools will have a student counsellor (or in Japanese 学生相談室 or equivalent) and can be a first line of help if you are dealing with any personal / emotional issues.
 - An experience by someone who has actually approached them:



- I personally found the gakusei soudanshitsu to be useful, especially with regard to understanding the university credits system. On other occasions, I also visited the gakusei soudanshitsu to clarify some questions pertaining to academic matters and she helped to clear my doubts. They do give advice on everyday life and social issues too so it's nice to know I have somewhere to turn to when I encounter problems.

(University of Tokyo, Undergraduate Scholar)

- [Tell.jp \(NGO\)](#) also provides counselling in English, including distance counselling for those outside Tokyo.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS

- Stalking / harassment: many universities have special avenues for assisting harassment victims - their Japanese names are often ハラスメント相談室 (harassment *sodanshitsu*) or ハラスメント相談所 (harassment *soudansho*).
 - If you are facing such issues, please talk to these places.
 - This has happened before to some scholars and the advice from them is to gather as much evidence about the person as possible. Also, get evidence that you have told the person explicitly to leave you alone - this is necessary for the police to act.
- Crime: the police does use interpreters so if you are a victim of crime do not hesitate to call them at Tel. phone number 110.
- General health: most universities have a small in-university clinic (保健所, *hokensho*) and these are generally cheaper than external clinics / hospitals.
 - Most doctors are able to speak basic English - but do not hesitate to search for English-fluent doctors if you require specific medical attention.
 - Be aware that you will almost definitely be part of the national health insurance system and that you can use this to lower your costs for treatment.

Tell.jp has a [wonderful page](#) with lots of resources for various topics - including bullying, culture shock, anxiety etc.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST ...

Chances are if you are facing a problem, a scholar before you has faced the same thing before. Your fellow scholars therefore can really help you based on our own experiences.

Feel free to post on our [Facebook group](#) if you want help!



ARE THERE ANY COMMUNITIES WHERE I CAN GET FREE FURNITURE OR RID OF MINE

Written by: Nattanon Tharachai

SUMMARY

- Dormitories usually provide furniture, but rental apartments don't
- Ways of getting furniture (Beside buying first hand from shops, 100yen stores, websites)
 - *Personal connections, direct trade websites* - can be free if you are lucky, but usually you have to go pickup or arrange delivery by yourself
 - *Recycle shops, second hand websites* - not free, but still much cheaper than brand new ones. Usually has delivery service.
- Getting rid of furniture
 - Pay the government to come pick it up
 - Alternatively, use the above websites to give / sell your stuff away!
- List of resources at bottom

Let's start from the furniture culture in Japan. Usually universities' dormitories will also provide furniture but you may want some extra appliances etc., Commercial apartments only provide basic utilities like the toilet, kitchen, and lighting. **No beds, shelves, table, etc.**

Furthermore, to dispose of furniture in your possession, the traditional way is to have it picked up at a trash place near your home and usually you have to **pay**. Small pieces can be picked up for free, but for anything from the size of rice cooker trash pick up tickets have to be bought from local government. The size and rate for each area is different.

But worry not, people have come up with better ways to get and get rid of furniture. There are communities in Japan where people who want furniture and want to get rid of their furniture connect with each other via personal connections, SNS, direct furniture trade website, etc. and *indirectly* via recycle shops, second hand websites.

WAYS TO GET FURNITURE / DISPOSE OF THEM

PERSONAL CONNECTION:

1. Try joining groups / mailing lists of your nation's student association, your university's group etc. - you may have senpais who are about to graduate who want to get rid of their stuff.
2. Furniture trade Facebook groups
 1. [Tokyo Sayonara Sale](#)
 2. [Mottainai Japan](#)
3. If you happen to know a lot of people living in Japan, why not try asking them?



Pros: Easy to contact. More trustable if it's the person you know. People posting are likely to be people living near you, so delivery is easy. Get free stuff if you are lucky!

Cons: Offers get reserved fast. Hard to browse through.

DIRECT FURNITURE TRADE WEBSITES:

1. English site
 - [Sayonara Sale](#) - a lot of choices, easy to post offers, very few free items
 - [Gaijinpot Classifieds](#) - a lot of choices, easy to post offers, a lot of free items
 - [Craigslist Tokyo](#) - a lot of choices, easy to post offers, some free items, also provide other offers like jobs, housing, etc. Covers Tokyo, Nagoya and Sendai.
2. Japanese site
 - [JMTY](#) - has some free items.
 - [Yahoo Auctions](#) - an auction site. No free items.

Pros: Good if you are looking for a particular piece of furniture (the search function helps a lot). You can get free stuff if you are lucky!

Cons: Buyer has to go pick up or arrange delivery service.

RECYCLE SHOPS:

1. Local recycle (“リサイクル”) shops can be in a lot of places. They buy and sell second hand stuff and usually delivery services too.
2. Franchise stores like “Hard-off”.

Pros: Able to see the stuffs and choices yourself. They also usually deliver bought items.

Cons: No free items. Japanese staff usually don't speak good English.

SECOND HAND WEBSITE:

1. [Hardoff Website](#) - the website of “Hard-off”.
2. [Rakuten Second Hand Website](#)

Pros: Search from the comfort of your home. Usually has delivery and pick up service.

Cons: No free items.

Finally but most importantly, welcome to Japan!



WHAT WILL I BE SPENDING MY SCHOLARSHIP ON?

Written by: Anastasia Bender

SUMMARY

- There is usually no need to pay for anything related to studies/ research
- Most of your scholarship will be used to cover your living expenses (food, rent, transportation, health insurance)
- Moving is very expensive in Japan and should be planned in advance

THE MEXT SCHOLARSHIP

The MEXT scholarship pays for all your enrollment and tuition fees and provides you with a monthly allowance. While how much you will be spending is completely up to you, this article will inform you about what exactly you will (or will not) be paying for during your time as a MEXT scholar.

WHAT THE SCHOLARSHIP PAYS (OR DOES NOT PAY) FOR

In general, because your tuition is covered you do not have to spend on school per se and even get free access 24/7 to your very own working space in one of your department's offices in case you are a graduate student. That being said, especially undergraduate students and below may need to spend money to get their own textbooks. Furthermore, if you study a field which requires expensive miscellaneous costs, the scholarship may not be enough to cover both these and school expenses - a clear example of this being scholars studying art given the materials needed.

A significant part of your scholarship will be used for **rent and other living expenses**. That being said, rent especially varies a lot based on where you live. Living in dormitories instead of renting by yourself is generally cheaper. If you are renting by yourself though, Tokyo (apartments are often more expensive than 60.000 Yen per month) is far more expensive than many other parts of Japan.

Another thing you will need to pay for is the **national health insurance**, that you are obliged to enroll in as an international student in Japan. It costs about 20.000 Yen per year depending on the region you live in and you are can either pay the sum in installments or the whole sum at once.

CONSIDER SAVING UP SOME OF YOUR MONEY!

One other thing that we heavily recommend is saving up - particularly because **moving house in Japan is expensive**. Even if you decide to live in a dormitory, the period you can live there may not last until you graduate. If you plan on moving into an apartment, please keep in mind that moving in Japan is mostly handled by real estate agencies. After the deposit, the referral fee, the *reikin* and



other miscellaneous fees, it isn't rare to need to pay 3-4 times of a month's rent as a one-time fee when moving. That means that renting for example a 50.000 yen apartment may require you to pay more than 200.000 yen to move - and that doesn't include new furniture or the company you need to pay to move your stuff.

Speaking of which, it is also not easy to find furnished apartments in Japan, so you might save some money upfront to buy furniture and necessary electric appliances (washing machine, refrigerator etc). If you do not necessarily need to have brand new furniture for your apartment, there are lots of possibilities to lay your hands on used furniture (check our article on "how to get free furniture" for helpful links!)

If you want to find out more about how renting in Japan is, see [this article](https://bit.ly/3gu16jo) (url: <https://bit.ly/3gu16jo>) for a full explanation. MSA also has a partner real estate agent for which you get a discount of 30% on the agent fees – see the above article for more information.

SURVEY ABOUT MONTHLY EXPENDITURES IN JAPAN

By the way, the [Japan Association for Promotion of Internationalization](#) has conducted a survey in 2015-2016 which included a question which asked foreign students in Japan (not just MEXT scholars) about their monthly expenditures. The results are displayed below.

What these results suggest is that firstly, there is a whole range of expenditures in Japan and it really depends on the individual person and their circumstances. At the same time however, it also suggests that **as a MEXT scholar, you are highly likely to receive enough money each month to cover your expenses - especially if you are a graduate scholar.**

Avr spent each month	< 60k yen	60k – 80k yen	80k – 100k yen	100k – 120k yen	120k – 140k yen	140k – 160k yen	160k – 180k yen	180k – 200k yen	> 200k yen
% responding	8.0%	13.2%	19.0%	21.7%	18.5%	10.1%	4.1%	2.4%	3.1%

You are free to use what is left of your scholarship on whatever you want and you do not have to pay any tax, so **enjoy your life in Japan to the fullest!** Don't forget that if you want a bit more pocket money, part-time work is another option. See our article on part-time work for more information.



ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP



IS IT POSSIBLE TO GO ON EXCHANGE WHILE ON THE MEXT SCHOLARSHIP?

Written by: Pedro Couteiro

SUMMARY

- Yes, it is possible, but monthly allowance might be stopped while you are abroad and your scholarship term will not be extended.
- As a delicate issue, be sure to contact your supervisor and your office the soonest possible before applying to go abroad.

CAN I GO ON EXCHANGE AS A MEXT SCHOLAR?

As MEXT scholars, we are expected to stay in Japan during our scholarship term, but we might receive permission to go abroad for activities that relate to our fields **as long as it does not delay our expected graduation date**. That being said, please note that the general rule of not receiving monthly allowance if outside Japan still applies, so receiving permission to go abroad does not equal being able to receive the allowance when abroad.

HOW CAN I STILL CONTINUE RECEIVING THE SCHOLARSHIP WHILE BEING OUT OF COUNTRY?

Procedures for receiving the allowance abroad do exist, but these are **usually restricted** to cases where going abroad is not only directly related to your research but mostly unavoidable. Such cases include where your research needs data that can only be collected abroad or your academic advisor is temporarily in a university outside Japan. In case you think you qualify, you can contact your office and check the procedures.

Allowance aside, if you can afford an exchange study and do not mind losing some scholarship money for the period of your stay abroad, it is surely not forbidden and every year there are a couple of people doing it. **Get your advisor's permission, tell your office as soon as possible and good luck.**

Please note that the above are the general principles for going abroad while being a MEXT student and that in the very small minority of cases there may be exceptions.

MSA has created a translation of the official guidelines regarding proxy signatures for the scholarship which can be found [here](#).

However, we encourage all readers to please confirm any doubts with your foreign students' office.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF I CANNOT SIGN FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP

Written by: Pedro Couteiro

SUMMARY

- There are two monthly deadlines for signing each month. Even if you fail the first one, as long as you sign by the second, your allowance will just be delayed.
- Failing to sign for either the two deadlines will result in no allowance for that month.
- Repeated lack of signature should be notified beforehand to your office.

As MEXT scholars, we all must sign for our scholarship monthly at our universities, which is also generally called the ***Confirmation of Presence***. This confirmation shows that yes, we are in Japan and in our universities, and thus eligible to receive the monthly allowance.

But depending on your scholarship you are going to spend several years in Japan and it is natural that one might want to travel back home for longer periods or have other projects that might clash with the scholarship deadlines. In those cases, sooner or later we end asking ourselves, *what happens if I don't sign for it?*

HOW TO SIGN FOR YOUR SCHOLARSHIP

Before anything else, let's clarify the signing process. Every month there are two deadlines for signing. The calendar for that is by no means steady and is decided yearly, so you need to get yours with your university. The first deadline is usually in the beginning of the month while the second is by the very end of it. In principle, we are all supposed to sign until the first deadline, but in case you can only make it to the second, the only consequence is that instead of receiving the allowance by the end of the current month, you will get it by the middle of the following month.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU MISS THE DEADLINE?

In case you miss both deadlines, it still happens that the month ends and you haven't signed, **you will get no allowance**, simple as that. Wait until the next month.

In some extreme cases, one might fail to sign for more than one month in a row. How repeated failure to sign is handled depends on the university, but in the very worst case this could lead to scholarship termination.

So, if you really need to do so, please be sure to discuss *any* difficulties regarding the scholarship signing with your school's in charge beforehand. Given proper reasons, applications to MEXT can be done through the office and penalties other than not receiving the allowance money can be avoided.



HOW DO I EXTEND THE SCHOLARSHIP WHEN I END MY CURRENT COURSE AND WHAT ARE THE CONDITIONS?

Written by: Ly Techsrun

** This article will be divided into the following groups for the scholarship extensions for:*

A. Specialized training colleges to undergraduate courses

B. Bachelors to Masters' courses

C. Research students

The conditions for scholarship extension as below may be changed in the next application process (they were checked as of Dec 2017). Please be sure to check the conditions in the application guidelines in the year in which you wish to apply.

A. SPECIALIZED TRAINING COLLEGE TO BACHELORS

SUMMARY

There are two conditions which need to be met:

- Grades:
 - GPA of at least 2.8 of 3
 - Attendance rate of at least 95%
- Choices:
 - You only can apply for 2 choices:
 - Two universities; or
 - Two courses in one university
 - One additional condition for specialized training colleges to undergraduates:
 - You can only apply for schools which accept 3rd year transfers from specialized training colleges.

DETAILS

- Since only certain universities accept transfers, you should find this information by going to the website of the universities and find out information about transferring. (The relevant Japanese term is 大学 3 年次編入)



- We are not aware of books which collect the past papers of the different universities. These need to be collected by ourselves.
 - Some universities have them downloadable directly on their websites.
 - Some will send past papers by post if we ask for them.
 - Some require us to go directly to the university campus to get them.
- Prepare for the entrance examinations using books which have content directly applicable to the past papers.
 - E.g. If you want to transfer to a department of Economics or Commerce, I would suggest books called 速習ミクロ経済、マクロ経済 by 石川 秀樹。
- Some proficiency test might be required - in particular some universities require JLPT N1 and a certain score in the TOEIC. So please take these exams early enough.
- You also are required to submit the application and a personal statement.
 - This should not be very difficult. Sometimes you can ask your supervisor at your college to help you with this.
- Universities publish brochures about the transfer exam earliest around July. However, this varies with some universities doing it in September. This also means that universities organize the exam at different times.

B. BACHELORS TO MASTERS' COURSE

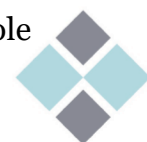
SUMMARY

There are two conditions which need to be met:

- Grades:
 - GPA of at least 2.5 of 3
- Choices:
 - You only can apply for 2 choices:
 - Two universities; or
 - Two courses in one university (See below)
 - When applying each COURSE counts as a choice even if they are in the same faculty / university.
 - I.e. Same university, faculty A, course X → Choice 1; same university, faculty A, course Y → Choice 2.)

DETAILS

- Finding past-year questions for the choices you are applying to is crucial to prepare for your examinations
 - E.g. For those applying to the University of Tokyo, make a trip down to the Tokyo U. co-op to buy past-year questions. The co-op sells a whole



collection of questions dating back to maybe 5 years. This is also probably applicable to other universities.

- Also, if you major in natural science, paying a direct visit to the lab you want to study at is believed to be very useful.
- Some universities also “strongly recommend” applicants to take the GRE. What this often means is that it is compulsory to take the GRE and get high scores if you want to be seriously considered.
- In addition to the application and personal statement, you also need 2 recommendation letters, preferably from your undergrad course coordinator/faculty head and thesis supervisor.
 - These will be about 1-1.5 pages long each.
- On top of that, you will also need to submit a research plan which clearly states what you intend to research in masters and how you will go about doing it.
 - This should be at least 2000 words long in Japanese, complete with proper references and a proper bibliography.
- The timeline for the undergraduate extension goes like this:
 - Early-mid Nov - Official information from MEXT arrives at the universities.
 - Early Dec - Deadline for all documents (i.e. forms, personal statement and recommendation letters)
 - Mid Dec - Interview
 - Early Mar - Announcement of results for scholarship extension.

C. RESEARCH STUDENTS

SUMMARY

- Schools should inform you about in a few months of entry about the procedure for extending your research term
- The process for the extension from research to Masters' / PhD however depend heavily on the school.
 - Most MEXT candidates do pass through this though.
- Choices:
 - You only can apply for 2 choices
 - When applying each COURSE counts as a choice even if they are in the same faculty / university.
 - I.e. Same university, faculty A, course X → Choice 1; same university, faculty A, course Y → Choice 2.)
 - If you are a MEXT scholar recommended by the Japanese embassy in your home country (大使館推薦) you are able to apply to 2 different courses in different universities.



- If you are a MEXT scholar recommended by your university (大学推薦), you can only apply within your university. (You are not allowed to change university)

DETAILS

Relevant scholarship extensions for research students can be divided into the extension of the research term (up till 2 years for spring enrollment students or 1 and half years for fall enrollment students) as well as the conversion into a full masters / PhD course.

The graduate school that you take your research course should inform you about the first within a few months after your arrival in Japan. The process might vary between graduate schools. This requires your academic advisor's recommendation, which is not too difficult to get.

The process to change your status from a research student to a regular graduate student is more complex. Every graduate school also has their own criteria and process for accepting graduate students, so we cannot generalize.

What we can share is that some grad schools only require you to submit your research plan whereas some others require candidates to take entrance exams like a written test and an interview or even ask for a presentation of the research plan.

However, in general, most of the MEXT candidates up to now have been able to pass this process from what we know about your seniors' experience these past years.

If any research student faces difficulties, they should consult their academic advisor. It is one of the advisor's duties to guide their research students through the process of becoming a regular graduate student. Graduate students work closely with their academic advisor and usually see them multiple times a week, so you should ask your advisor about anything you want to know.

One thing you need to be careful about is that you should confirm whether your courses will be done in English or Japanese. There have been cases that students did not confirm this before arriving to Japan - only finding out that they are required to do the courses in Japanese after coming to Japan. This can cause trouble if the student is not adequately equipped to study in Japanese.



HOW CAN I GET MORE INVOLVED WITH THE MEXT SCHOLAR COMMUNITY?

Written by: Jihyeon Kim

SUMMARY

- The easiest way to be more involved with the MEXT scholar community? Become a part of MEXT Scholars Association!
- Consider [joining Junction, MSA's own networking platform](#) and our [Facebook group](#).
- You can stay connected with other MEXT scholars through various regular events, learn something new, get useful information and meet new people.
- We are also always looking for people to help run the organization - see below for more details.

BECOME A PART OF MSA!

You can get more involved with the **MEXT scholars community** by being a part of MSA!

By joining MEXT Scholars Association, you can **stay connected** with other MEXT scholars through being informed of a range of regular events that bring you opportunities to meet former and current MEXT students from many different universities.

BENEFITS OF JOINING MSA

We hold regular events throughout Japan and forward information that include **internship, career support, seminars, conferences, and networking parties**. Of course we also do hold casual things like fireworks festivals visits and barbeques too!

Our goal by doing our activities is to allow every MEXT scholar make the best of the scholarship through making links with current fellow scholars as well as with MEXT alumni who have established a professional career in Japan and worldwide.

HOW TO JOIN

We usually send out information about such events through our **Junction**, our own networking platform which also functions as a **mailing list** which you can sign up for [here](#).

You can also join our **Facebook group** [here](#) (but please answer the questions so we know you're a MEXT scholar).

We also definitely need more people to help with the organization (we are all doing



this on a voluntary basis). If you are interested send us a mail titled “I am interested to help out!” and a brief explanation about yourself to info@MEXTsa.org. We always welcome more hands on board!



CAN I DO MY BA/MA AND PHD AT DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES?

Written by: Jihyeon Kim

SUMMARY

- Yes, You may be allowed to if you meet the following conditions:
- If there is no significant change in the research field or major in your college.
- And if there are 'reasonable' reasons for changing university for a MA's or Doctoral Program.

As a rule, MEXT students are expected to apply for a university that they majored in, but they may be able to change their university for two years of a Masters, professional's degrees or three years for doctoral courses if they meet the following conditions.

CONDITIONS

Applicants should apply for the field of study they majored in at their university, or a related field when applying for different universities. Your field of study must be a subject which you will be able to study, and take graduate-level courses in, at a Japanese university.

Since you need to pass the final screenings by MEXT for a scholarship extension to enter Masters or PhD courses, there should be 'reasonable' reasons for changing to a different university that is acceptable for MEXT. A 'reasonable' reason may include: professors' absence in university for personal reasons or any other justifiable reasons for doing research at different universities.



WORK AND CAREER ORIENTED



HOW DO I GET AN INTERNSHIP IN JAPAN?

Written by: Austin Zeng

SUMMARY

- Be aware that in Japan, “internship” can mean short work experiences of say a week or less
- Long-term internships are available if you know where to look
- Benefits include growing your networking, getting to “know” how it is to work in Japan and sometimes pay too
- If you are planning to do so it is recommended to start early
- Resources to find internships stated at the bottom

INTERNSHIPS IN JAPAN

Unlike in many other countries, **Japan does not have a strong culture of students doing internships**. That being said though, as a foreign student studying in Japan, internships can help you **not just for your career but also as a cultural experience** in itself.

The first thing though is to be aware when Japanese talk about “internships”. In the **typical Japanese *shukatsu* (job-search) schedule internships** often refer to week-long work experiences often limited to 3rd year undergraduates / 1st year masters students where a student has a work experience in a Japanese company for less than a week. Understanding this is key to not getting confused when talking to Japanese about internships.

There are a **growing number of long-term internships** around in Japan though - and many of them are looking for foreign students. This is especially true if you have a skill such as programming, or are fluent in English as well as Japanese.

BENEFITS OF DOING AN INTERNSHIP

Aside from being able to know more about Japan by working, internships also allow you to **expand your network**. If you are lucky you may be able to find your post-graduation workplace and shortcut the whole *shukatsu* process too. Many internships are also paid - but if you do a paid internship be aware that you probably need a work permit (refer to the part-time work article for more information).

HERE ARE SOME RESOURCES WHICH YOU CAN USE TO FIND YOURSELF AN INTERNSHIP

• [Doorkel Internship](#) is a good platform to find yourself an internship in Japan and many firms on it are looking for international interns. Other platforms include:



Big Japanese portal sites with some companies looking for foreign students
eg. [Rikunavi](#), [MyNavi](#)

Smaller more start-up (but internationally-oriented) based resources include [Active Connector](#) and [Justa](#).

- Personal connections are very important - ask senpais at school and maybe through MSA about whether they know any good opportunities.
- Most of the resources in the part-time work article also give information about internships - including the [Tomonokai mailing list](#) and of course [MSA Junction](#).



PART TIME WORK AS A MEXT SCHOLAR

Written by: Anastasia Bender

SUMMARY

- Work permit is needed for most part time jobs
- However, if you are looking for a long part-time job you need a work permit.
- You are limited to working up to 28 hours per week during term and up to 40 hours per week during holidays
- Working in some entertainment service establishments (discos/clubs etc) is prohibited
- For graduate students: Consultation with advisor before looking for part-time work is recommended
- Some resources for finding part-time jobs are also stated at the bottom

IS IT POSSIBLE FOR MEXT SCHOLARS TO HAVE A PART TIME JOB?

Yes, it is possible! Just as any other international student in Japan, **MEXT scholars are legally allowed to do part time work**. Some pocket money as well as experience in working in a Japanese environment can never hurt! The only things you would need in order to do part time work are time, energy and a work permit (with a few exceptions including work at your university eg. being a TA.)!

DON'T FORGET TO APPLY FOR YOUR WORK PERMIT!

However, the **student visa you have as a MEXT scholar does not automatically come with a work permit** (shikaku-gai katsudo kyokasho / 資格外活動許可書 / “Permission to Engage in Activity other than that Permitted under the Status of Residence Previously Granted”). Therefore, if you do not already have one, you would **need to apply for one at the local immigration bureau in the prefecture you live in.**

In order to apply, you need to fill out a form, which you can either receive at any immigration bureau or at the international student center of your university. All you need to do is fill out the form, bring your passport and residence card and submit your application at the immigration bureau! At this point of time (late 2017), you do not need to pay a single yen for the permit. From application to actually receiving your working permit it takes two to eight weeks, so be patient!

Once you have received your work permit, you are allowed to work for **up to 28 hours a week**. This increases to **up to 40 hours per week during holidays**. With this working permit, you are free to do part time work at any convenience store, restaurant, café, supermarket, you name it! The only thing you have to be careful about is that **as a student you are not allowed to work at some entertainment establishments such as nightclubs.**



We recommend that you play on the safe side if in doubt. Working without a permit, going over the hour limits and working in prohibited areas may cause you may break the law without wanting to - which may get you a warning at best and endanger your scholarship as well as your stay in Japan at worst!

PART TIME WORK AS A GRADUATE STUDENT

As for graduate students, it may not be recommended to do part time work, since graduate school in itself is a full-time job and takes up a lot of your time and energy. Thus, before looking for part time work, consider consulting with your academic advisor and getting their permission. In case you are asked to do part time work at your lab or as a Teaching Assistant or Teaching Fellow for your advisor's classes, you generally do not need a working permit, but since this might differ from case to case, you do not forget to reconfirm with your international student center!

As a last note we recommend that any scholar unsure about eligibility, conflicts with the scholarship or how to do the application procedures to approach their university student office. Part time work can be very rewarding but it is best to avoid possible problems when doing so.

PLACES THAT YOU MAY FIND PART-TIME WORK:

- Check the resources in the “How to find internships” article - some internships are paid and function as part-time work.
- Consider signing up for mailing lists such as [t-news global](#) (only in Japanese) which often sends out part-time work information.
- Our [mailing list through Junction](#) often has part-time information as well.
- Some services such as [Flamingo](#) and [Chezmo](#) allow you to not just do part time work while also getting to know Japanese people at the same time.

References

<http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/tetuduki/zairyuu/shikakugai.html>



WHAT JOB OPPORTUNITIES DO I HAVE WHEN I GRADUATE?

Written by: Austin Zeng

SUMMARY

- Your post-graduation plans will depend heavily on the following:
 - What career you want
 - What you can offer to potential employers
 - What kind of opportunities you get to know as student
- But in any case, overconfidence is a big no-no
- Starting to look for opportunities early also really helps
- A list of companies where some recent graduates are working at can also be found at the bottom of this article

In order to plan your career, you really need to be aware that your post-graduation career is pretty much decided by the following questions.

WHAT CAREER DO YOU WANT?

- Are you planning to work in Japan for a few years and then return home?
- What is the environment that you would prefer? Company size and whether the company is Japanese or international can make a big difference.
- What field do you want to work in?
- What is the minimum salary that you are willing to take as a fresh graduate?

WHAT CAN YOU OFFER TO POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS?

- What working experience can you show?
 - But also do note that many Japanese companies prefer hiring students *without* experience.
- How is your language fluency *especially* regarding English and Japanese?
- Do you have any concrete skills?
 - Technical skills, especially programming, can be heavily in demand
 - Note that some professions (e.g. design) will demand a portfolio too

WHAT KIND OF OPPORTUNITIES DID YOU GET TO KNOW AS A STUDENT?

- How are you getting to know companies and opportunities **beyond the typical channels such as job boards?**
- Are you closing yourself off unintentionally to sectors which may have good opportunities like for example SMEs?
- See the “how to job hunt in Japan” article for more information on this

Your answers to the above questions will probably give you a hint about what your first step after graduation will be. If you are still unsure though, do not hesitate to approach your MEXT senpais for advice!



BE REALISTIC AND PLAN AHEAD!

Anyway, a few general principles apply. Firstly **do not be overconfident** - especially regarding your language abilities. Remember that if you are aiming for the top-tier of companies you will be competing against the top-tier of Japanese talent - many of whom have native level fluency in both English and Japanese.

Another point is to **start early**. The earlier your career development, the more successful your first step post-graduation will be. You can develop your career through internship experiences, developing your own research portfolio, part-time work and general networking (view the other articles for more information about part-time work and internships).

For your reference, the following is a short list of companies in which some MEXT scholars who have graduated in the past 4 years (2014 - 2017) have entered for their first job. We hope this gives you an image of the opportunities open to you!

- AI Squared
- Amuse Inc.
- British American Tobacco
- Chuo University *as faculty*
- Customer Solutions Development Co
- DIRECT PUBLISHING
- IBM Japan
- INPEX Cooperation
- Konami
- Mitsubishi Research Institute
- Mitsubishi Co.
- Mitsui Chemicals Group
- Nippon Koei
- VISITS Technologies Inc.



JOB HUNTING IN JAPAN AS AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

Written by: Austin Zeng / Ly Techsrun

SUMMARY

- Be aware of the fact that the job hunting cycle is entirely different from most other countries in the world.
 - More specifically, job-hunting can start as early as the summer *two years before* you graduate if you graduate in spring.
 - The situation for students graduating in autumn is more complex.
- The typical Japanese job-hunting process is also long and complex - search for “*shukatsu*” (就活) for more information.
 - However, note that there are also increasing numbers of students who find jobs outside of the typical *shukatsu* process.
- Conversion from a student visa to a working visa is usually not difficult.
- There is also a so-called job-hunters visa for those graduating without a job offer.
 - However, it is far more difficult to find a job if one has already graduated.
- Also don't forget to take a look at other guide articles explaining available opportunities for more information on for example internships.

Working in Japan after graduation can be rewarding in many aspects - you get to deepen your understanding of Japan, develop your career and of course continue living in Japan. However, for this to happen you have to receive a job offer in the first place. Which brings us to this article - how does one go about job hunting in Japan?

This topic is too long and too deep to write about in full so we can only go through the basics. MEXT scholar Techsrun Ly has however, made a comprehensive guide to the process he went through for *shukatsu* and is attached to this article below.

JOB HUNTING IN JAPAN

First of all, be aware that the job-hunting process calendar is very different from the rest of the world. The earliest the job hunting process can start is the summer of two years before you graduate - that is, if you are for example graduating in the spring of 2020, your job hunting process starts in the summer holidays of 2018.

Of course, this does depend on the types of companies you aim at - the earliest tend to be the internationals while the big Japanese national companies start moving in the winter of the year before graduation. But please be aware to ensure that you are not caught off guard.

Also, if you are planning to graduate in autumn, things are a bit more complex. Some companies will ask you to wait for half a year in order to join the spring batch whereas some will welcome you to join in autumn. There is no clear rule regarding this matter and it differs from company to company.



THE JOB-HUNTING PROCESS

The typical job-hunting process in Japan is long and can involve multiple rounds of interviews, document screenings and standardized testing, which means that you might have to juggle school while job-hunting for a whole semester. Techsrn's write-up below may give you a more concrete idea of how the standard process works.

However, do note that an increasing number of people are getting hired directly or through ways aside from the typical *shukatsu*. In particular, internship recruiting is getting more common (see the guide article about internships for more information) and getting job offers from personal contacts etc. is not unheard of either.

WORKING VISA

It is also not difficult to change your student visa to a working visa as long as you have a valid job offer from a valid company. Statistics from the Ministry of Justice suggest that more than 90% of foreign students applying to convert their visas into a working visa are successful.

In case you were unable to get a job offer before graduation, though, you will have the option of changing your visa into a job-hunting visa, which grants you permission to stay in Japan and look for a job period for up to one year.

TRY LANDING A JOB BEFORE YOU GRADUATE!

However, do note that because of the employment structure in Japan it is far harder for someone to find a job as a graduated student than otherwise - only a small minority of companies open themselves to applications from students who have already graduated.

References:

http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanrio7_00111.html

ADDENDUM: SHUKATSU EXPERIENCE

Summary (Experiences and recommendations!)

- *Shukatsu* can be generally divided into six steps
- Registering at agencies like Global Leader or TOP CAREER might be helpful
- CV: Attending events organized by companies for getting a better idea about what those companies were like was useful for writing my CVs
- Group discussions: I would suggest that you mention that you are not a native speaker and reconfirm with Japanese students in case you could not follow the discussion



Self introduction and background

Nationality: Cambodia

Scholarship type: College of Tech. -> Undergraduate

Academics: Social sciences, bachelor's degree

Shukatsu period: 2016-2017

I started looking for a job not having any specific industry in mind.

I was planning on first trying to work and then see what my opportunities are in order to find what I really want to do in the future.

Editor's note: The following is a detailed explanation of the process that Techsrin followed and which is very typical of a "conventional" shukatsu in Japan.

① **First**, one usually starts by doing a so-called self-analysis (自己分析, SA). In Japan, during interviews you will not only be asked about your skills or your major at university but also about the factors that made you the person you are today, who your best friends are and who has made the biggest impact on you in your life. This is not something you have to submit anywhere, but I personally think that this is a helpful step in order to prepare for possible interview questions.

As for the SA, I think it can generally be divided into two parts.

The first part is about imagining your ideal future. For me, this part was really difficult and what I did was, when considering my life dream, I just researched websites and brochures of the companies that I applied for for their goals and visions. During interviews, I then stated that I had similar dreams.

The second part is about analysing yourself - mainly about your personal strengths and weaknesses. This could be confusing at times because what strengths and weaknesses are considered could differ between your country and Japan. For example, the willingness to work overtime until late at night could be viewed as a strength by Japanese companies. So I suggest that you do careful research about what is considered as a strength or weakness by Japanese companies.

② **The second step** is your CV. As an international student looking for a job in Japan, this was the most difficult part for me. One reason is that they require a lot of writing for each company and sometimes many deadlines for CV submissions for different companies overlapped.

As for me, I was very lucky to have a close Japanese friend. I told him what I wanted to write and he helped me translating it into formal Japanese. Sometimes he even



suggested me on what I should and should not write in my CVs. Another suggestion is to get help from the job hunting agencies I mentioned in the very beginning of this article.

Another important point is that it is very useful to mention that you are a MEXT scholar. I received a very positive reaction from many companies by doing so. Apparently, many companies regard MEXT scholars as outstanding individuals for them to be able to be granted this scholarship.

③ **The third step** is to go to company orientation seminars. Although formal seminars start in March one year before your graduation, many informal ones start in the preceding December. These seminars are a good opportunity for you to get to know what kind of business the companies are doing and also are a chance for you to get to know whether you generally like the company or not.

If you register for agencies like Global Leader or TOP CAREER, you will receive emails informing you about company orientation seminars set up specifically for international students. These seminars include in-depth explanations about the organizing companies' international businesses, and which countries they are aiming to expand their businesses to. Sometimes, foreign staff working at these companies will be present at the seminars too, so that we get to ask questions about their experiences as foreigners working for Japanese companies. However, not many companies organize seminars aimed at international applicants, so you might consider joining their general seminars aimed at Japanese applicants as well.

④ **The fourth step** is to take aptitude tests. Usually it takes international students longer to study and prepare for tests than it does for Japanese students. Most tests are in Japanese, but there also are a few companies, such as Honda, which allow international students to take the test in English.

⑤ **The fifth step** to take part in group discussions. This is the part of the screening process, where companies want to see how you work in a group. Usually, you would be allocated into a group of 4-8 people and assigned a topic to discuss. One problem we might face is that Japanese students speak better Japanese and thus take a leading role in the discussion and international students sometimes cannot follow and get left behind.

One strategy that I used is when I introduced myself at the beginning of the discussion I emphasized that I am not a Japanese native speaker. I also said "I am afraid I did not quite understand what you were saying, would you mind explaining it one more time?" in case I could not follow the discussion. For me, this worked most of the time, so I would suggest we should be brave enough to ask the group members to stop the discussion for a moment in case we lost track or did not understand what was being said.

Another strategy I used is to intentionally use a few English words in my arguments, because this can help by drawing the attention of the other participants and my argument become more persuasive this way. By the way, out of all the companies I applied to, only at NISSAN I was able to join the group discussion in English,



possibly due to the company's flexibility or the large number of international students applying.

⑥ **The sixth and last step** is getting interviewed. Personally, I would suggest to inform the interviewer that you are a MEXT scholar when you do your self-introduction. Among all the companies I was interviewed at, only NISSAN offered me the opportunity to do the interview in English.

