



## **PLEA FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION CONCERNING GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS (MEXT SCHOLARS) UNABLE TO RETURN TO JAPAN SINCE MARCH 2020**

A Survey Report authored by MEXT Scholars Association (MSA)

On April 1st, 2020, JASSO issued a document titled "About Handling of Scholarships of Government-Sponsored International Students from April onwards, in wake of Coronavirus<sup>1</sup>" to address the concerns of international students who are currently outside Japan and unable to return. On behalf of our international community of scholars, the MEXT Scholars Association (MSA) would like to sincerely express our gratitude to MEXT for its prompt action in supporting scholars currently affected by the coronavirus pandemic and the hindrances it has imposed on all of us.

Over the last week our organization has received an overwhelming number of messages from scholars who have been prohibited from returning to Japan due to reasons including coronavirus-related travel restrictions by overseas governments, and Japan's immigration bureau rejecting some foreign nationals from entering Japan. Some of these measures were enacted as early as February.

To better assess the needs of international students, MSA conducted an online survey requesting more detailed information on monthly fixed expenditures. We would firstly like to share the results. The online survey was conducted from March 30th 2020 to April 5th, 2020 and was shared within the MSA network and various social media platforms. We received 93 responses from students currently receiving the MEXT scholarship.

Based on the findings, **we strongly request that JASSO and MEXT consider providing a special exception for students who were unable to sign for their monthly scholarship payment in the month of March. We also wish to request for this consideration to be extended to scholars who are still unable to return to Japan and who do not qualify for the current special measures regarding scholarship payment.**

We found that at least 50 students were unable to sign for their scholarship payment in March. The real number is likely to be multiple times this. Since that time, many students have been unable to return to Japan due to increasing travel restrictions enacted by either the government of their home country or by the Japanese government. In addition there were many who made the decision to refrain from international travel and shelter in place in order to secure their safety, ensure the safety of others as well as under the directions of their university.

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<sup>1</sup> Title: 新型コロナウイルス感染症に係る国費外国人留学生の4月以降の奨学金等の取扱いについて ([http://www.jasso.go.jp/.../04/01/kokuhi\\_corona0401\\_1.pdf](http://www.jasso.go.jp/.../04/01/kokuhi_corona0401_1.pdf))

Summary of survey results:

- 1.) 100% of participants expressed high levels of concern for not being able to cover basic living expenses (rent, utilities, and health insurance) as many were/are unable to return to Japan due to COVID19-related travel restrictions in February and March. In addition, some respondents raised the possibility of being evicted from their current residences as a result of not being able to pay rent. All such respondents were not able to sign for their scholarship payment in the month of March and April.
- 2.) 64.9% of survey participants were unable to receive a scholarship payment for the month of March.
- 3.) 50% of participants are studying at universities within the Kanto region, where reported monthly expenses (rent, utilities, national health insurance) range from ¥39,000 - ¥95,700
- 4.) 17.5% of respondents reside in the Kansai region, where the reported range is ¥33,000 - ¥69,600. All other respondents reported from other regions including Chugoku, Hokkaido, Tohoku, Kyushu and Chubu regions.

Please find the attached graphs and pie charts<sup>2</sup> to see a more detailed explanation of the breakdown of responses from MEXT scholars who are currently unable to return back to Japan due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

Request:

Based on the concerns of students who have been unable to return to Japan since March, we hope that JASSO/MEXT will strongly consider granting an exception regarding the payment of scholarships for scholars affected by travel restrictions related to COVID-19 during the months of February and March. We also kindly ask that a similar exception be considered for scholars who are unable to return to Japan and who do not qualify for the current special measures regarding payment of scholarships announced for April and after.

We hope that JASSO and MEXT will consider at least a partial payment of the scholarship in order to cover the unavoidable costs that such students faced despite their original plans to return to Japan within the scholarship signing period.

We thank you for your time and hope to receive your kind consideration,  
Executive Committee, MEXT Scholars Association

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the 93 survey respondents, MSA organized and made adjustments for incomplete responses. Therefore the graphs and charts are based on 80 respondents.

[Attachment]

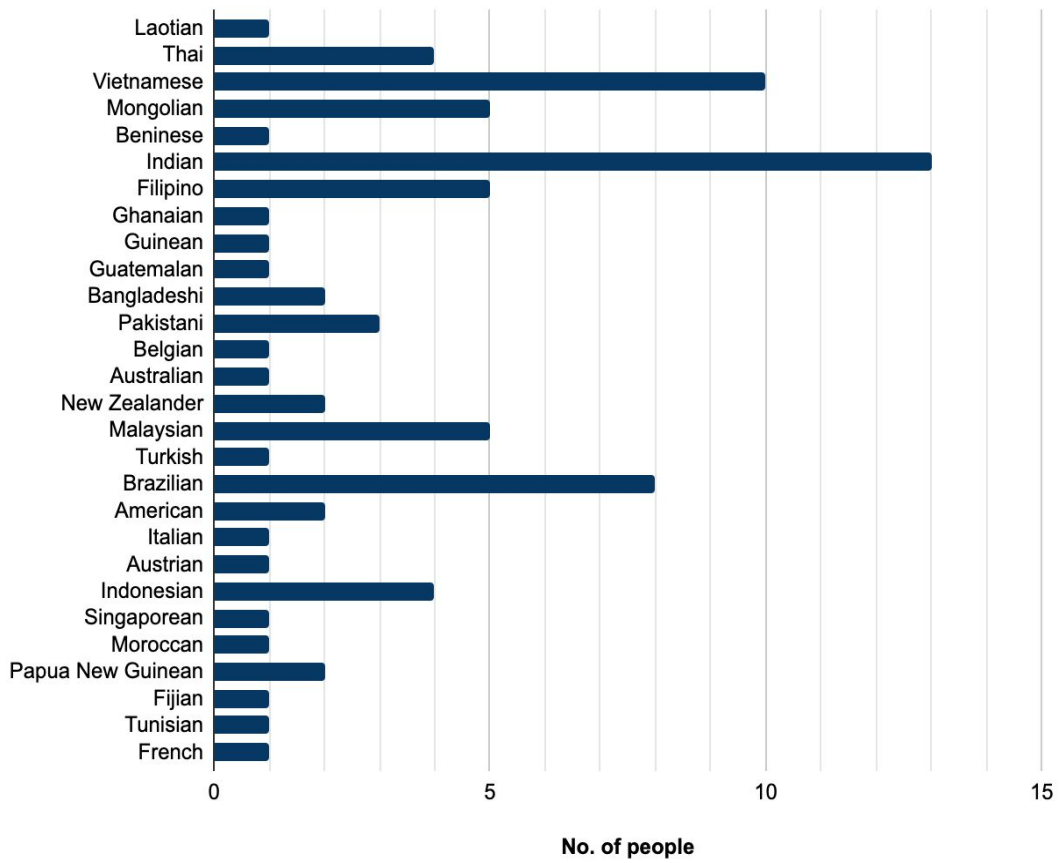


Figure 1: Nationalities of survey respondents

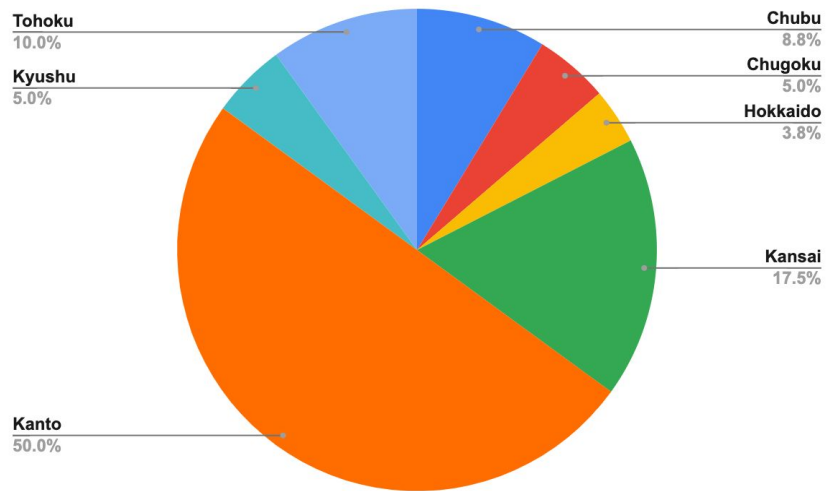


Figure 2: Pie-Chart showing region-wise (in Japan) distribution of survey respondents

Regions in Japan ( No. of respondents)	Universities ( No. of respondents)
Kanto (40)	Tokyo Institute of Technology (13), Yokohama National University(7), Waseda University (3), Hitotsubashi University (1), National Graduate Institute of Policy Studies (1), Rikkyo University (1), The University of Tokyo (3), Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology (1), Tokyo University of the Arts (1), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (4), University of Tsukuba (1), The University of Electro-Communications (1), Keio University (3),
Kansai (14)	Kobe University (1), Kwansei Gakuin University (1), Osaka University (4), Ritsumeikan University (6), Seian University of Art and Design(1), Kyoto University(1)
Tohoku (8)	The University of Aizu (2), Tohoku University (5), Akita University (1)
Chubu (7)	Nagoya University (4), National Institute of Technical Toyota College (1), Shinshu University (1), Shizuoka University (1)
Chugoku (4)	Hiroshima University(4)
Kyushu (4)	Nagasaki University (1), Kagoshima University (2), Kyushu Institute of Technology (1)
Hokkaido (3)	Hokkaido University (3)

Table 1: Universities of survey respondents grouped by the regions in Japan

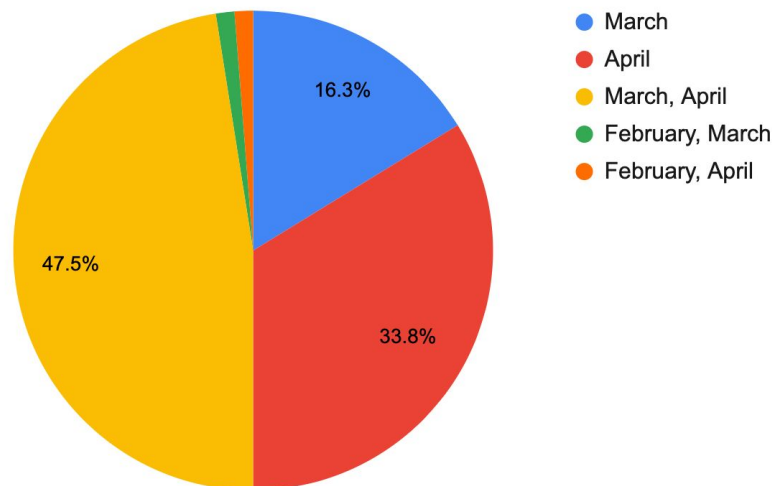


Figure 3: Pie-Chart distribution of months during which scholarship(s) was missed or will be missed

Region ( No. of responses)	Minimum Monthly Fixed Expenses <sup>3</sup> (¥)	Maximum Monthly Fixed Expense(¥)
Kanto (40)	39000	95700
Kansai (14)	33000	69600
Tohoku (8)	17500	70000
Chubu (7)	38000	85000
Chugoku (4)	45100	61300
Hokkaido (3)	39092	46000
Kyushu (4)	34000	51000

Table 2: Region-wise range of monthly fixed expenses in Japan

<sup>3</sup> Monthly Fixed Expenses include: Rent, Utilities, Health Insurance, and Cell-phone/Wifi Internet expenses. These are essential monthly expenses that impact MEXT scholars.