

The education system of

# Japan

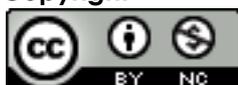
described and compared with  
the Dutch system

This document provides information about the education system of Japan. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Japan for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

### Disclaimer

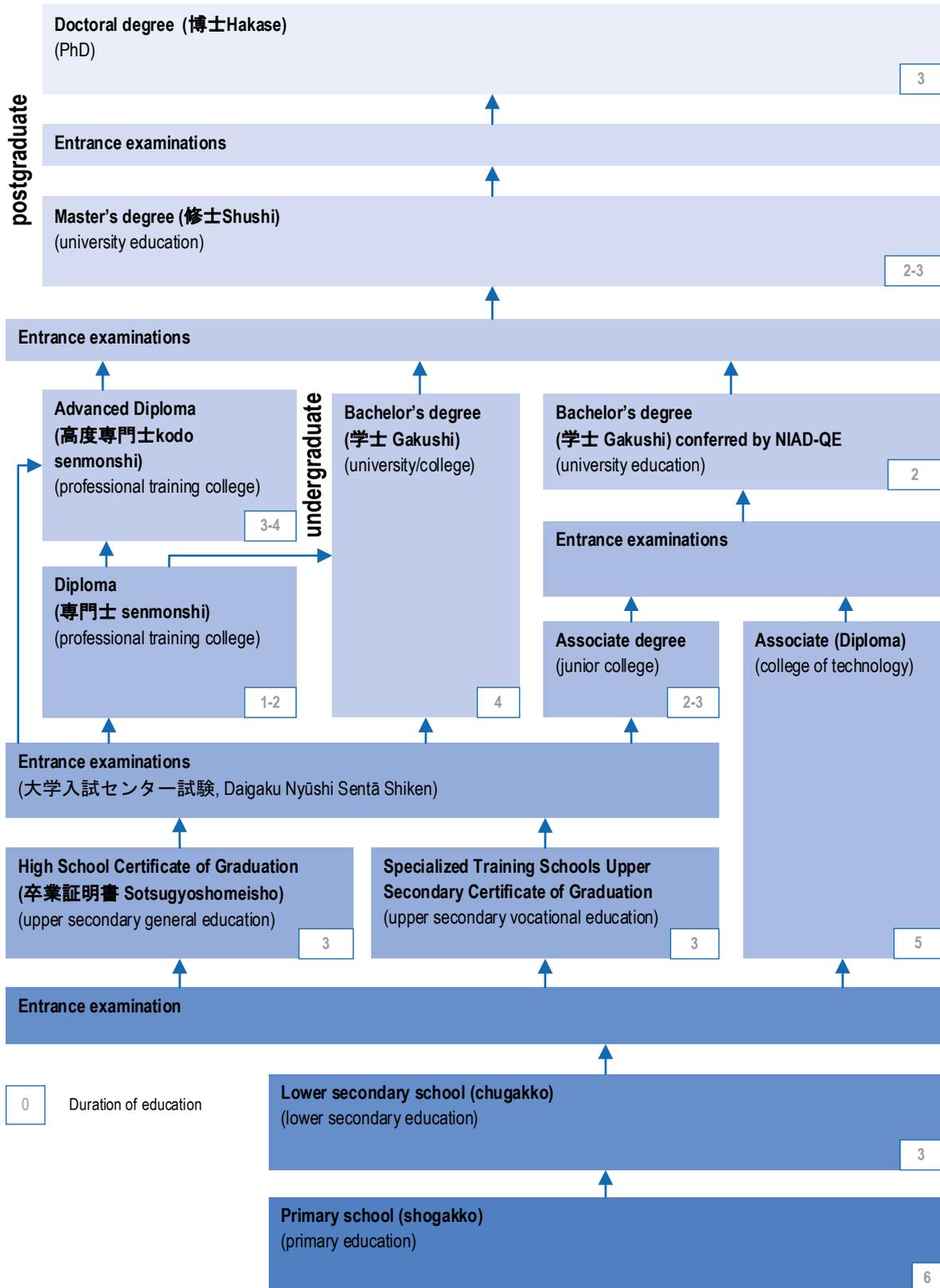
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■ Flow chart: education system Japan



## Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the most common foreign qualifications applicable to admission to higher education. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level	EQF level
High School Certificate of Graduation (卒業証明書 <i>sotsugyoshomeisho</i> )	HAVO diploma	4
Associate degree obtained at a junior college (2 years)	2 years of HBO	5
Associate degree obtained at a junior college (3 years)	3 years of HBO	5
Associate (Diploma) obtained at a college of technology (5 years)	2 years of HBO	5
Diploma (専門士 <i>senmonshi</i> ) obtained at a professional training college (2 years)	2 years of HBO	5
Advanced Diploma (高度専門士 <i>kodo senmonshi</i> ) obtained at a professional training college (4 years)	HBO bachelor's degree	6
Bachelor's degree (学士 <i>gakushi</i> )	HBO or WO bachelor's degree	6
Bachelor's degree conferred by NIAD-QE (学士 <i>gakushi</i> )	HBO or WO bachelor's degree	6
Master's degree (修士 <i>shushi</i> )	WO master's degree	7

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- [NLQF](#) = Netherlands Qualifications Framework. [EQF](#) = European Qualifications Framework.
- The EQF/NLQF level is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.

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- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [education and diplomas the Netherlands](#).
- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

## ■ Introduction

**Japan (日本 *Nihon*) is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary government. It has an emperor who effectively acts as head of state. Japan consists of approximately 3,900 islands and is divided into 47 prefectures which are subdivided into cities and villages.**

The Japanese education system set up right after World War II has remained more or less the same ever since (6+3+3+2/4). Subsequently, the Law on the Establishment of National Schools was implemented in 1949 as a new framework for national universities. The system for colleges of technology was established in 1962 to provide a unified 5-year period of education for lower secondary school graduates in response to increased need for diverse human resources brought by industrial economic development. In 1964, 2 or 3-year junior college programmes which had been temporarily established in 1950 were provided as a permanent system under the School Education Law. The early 1960s saw the introduction of colleges of technology, see [Higher professional education](#), with the 1990s marking the introduction of unified secondary education schools.

The system was influenced by both the German education system (faculties) and the US system (broad general education at the higher education institutions). In the 60s and 70s the number of higher education institutions increased considerably, showing a strong growth of the private sector (junior colleges).

### **Internationalisation of higher education**

Since the 1980s, Japan has focused on internationalising its higher education. International students studying in Japan were formerly required to complete a Japanese language test, as all education was provided exclusively in Japanese. This situation is currently changing, with a gradually increasing number of study programmes being offered in English, due to the recent internationalisation strategies at both government and university levels. See also [Higher education](#), Top Global University project.

### **CAMPUS Asia**

Another project in the field of internationalisation is CAMPUS Asia, an exchange project between Japan, China and South Korea to increase student mobility. In the project mutual recognition of credits is stressed as well as academic recognition. The project includes 3 modes. Mode 2 was completed with the report: [CAMPUS Asia Monitoring+ Joint Monitoring Report](#). More information about mode 3 is available on the [NIAD-QE website](#).

CAMPUS Asia is part of the Reinventing Japan project, that is focusing on the internationalisation of educational programmes. The purpose is to facilitate more cooperation between Japanese HEI and foreign HEI.

### **Ministry of Education**

The [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology \(MEXT\)](#) is responsible for all education in Japan. The ministry makes decisions on the establishment of new education institutions and determines the budgets for all national education institutions and grants for private institutions. Primary and secondary schools are established by the education committee or governor of each prefecture. The ministry is also directly responsible for overseeing a number of research organisations. The Japanese education system has a centralised structure. MEXT publishes guidelines for the national curriculum of primary, lower and upper secondary school Education. This applies to both pre-school education up until the upper grades of secondary education and special education programmes.

### **National University Corporation Law**

In 2003 the National University Corporation Law was adopted, with all national universities converted into corporations on 1 April 2004. The process was designed to improve the education institutions' level of independence and autonomy. Universities have since been authorised to make independent decisions on various issues, including staffing and the allocation of budgets. This option is also open to local public universities.

### **Compulsory education**

Compulsory education is comprised of primary education (6-year period) and lower secondary education (3-year period), lasting a total of 9 years. Although lessons are conducted in Japanese, an increasing number of higher education programmes are available in English. The language of instruction in Japanese is Japanese, but more and more higher education programmes are offered in English

### **Academic year**

Most higher education institutions have an academic year of 2 semesters (April-September and October-March). A number of institutions have an academic year with 3 trimesters or 4 quarter terms. Although the academic year starts in April, more and more institutions allow students to start in another month. The Japanese government is conducting talks to start the academic year in September to attract more international students and to align the academic year to that of foreign universities.

## ■ Primary and secondary education

Primary and secondary education is based on the School Education Law. The national curriculum guideline is set but revised approximately once every decade. The national curriculum is comprised of 3 fields of study: various subjects, moral education and extracurricular activities.

### **Primary education**

Primary education is provided by primary schools (小学校 *shogakko*), which lasts 6 years and is intended for children of ages 6 to 12 (Grade 1-6). Pupils can enter the system if they have reached the age of 6 as of 1 April.

The curriculum consists of Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science, life studies (a combination of social studies and science, only offered in Grade 1 and 2), music, arts and handicrafts, homemaking, and physical education. In addition, a great deal of attention is devoted to moral education.

### **Secondary education**

Primary education is followed by the 3 lower grades of secondary education (lower education) at lower secondary schools (中学校 *chugakko*, also known as a junior high school). The curriculum consists of the following subjects: Japanese, social studies, mathematics, science, music, arts, physical education, industrial arts and home making, foreign language, elective subjects and moral education. This is an important period for Japanese pupils, as their school results determine whether they will be accepted to a good upper secondary school in the 3 upper grades of secondary education (高等学校 *kotogakko*).

After finishing lower secondary school, pupils have completed their 9-year compulsory education and receive the Lower Secondary School Leaving Certificate. Most pupils then opt to take high school entrance exams. In terms of prefectural/municipal high school examinations, the contents of this exam are carried out by the prefectural/municipal Board of Education where the public upper secondary school is located. In terms of private school examinations, each school decides examination methods or other tasks to determine selection such as asking for junior high school academic records.

### **Final examinations**

Pupils take final examinations in 5 subjects: Japanese, mathematics, social studies, science and English. The higher their final score, the better the chance they have of being admitted to a good upper secondary school and subsequently being admitted to a good university.

The 3 upper grades of secondary education, or upper secondary education, are generally regarded as the most strenuous school period (age category 15 to 18) and are provided by high schools (高等学校 *kotogakko*). The curriculum consists of

the following subjects: Japanese, geography and history, civics, mathematics, science (including physics, chemistry, biology, and earth science), health, arts, foreign language (English), homemaking, information technology and general studies.

In order to complete the upper grades of secondary education, a pupil must obtain at least 74 credits, after which he or she will receive the Certificate of Graduation (卒業証明書 *Sotsugyoshomeisho*). Over the course of this period, most students attend a cram school (*juku*), where they receive additional lessons on the teaching material dealt with. The *juku* also serves as preparation for the higher education entrance examinations.

These examinations are generally administered from January to March. Successful completion offers the chance of admission to Japan's most prestigious education institutions. The entrance examination is primarily designed to assess the general academic level of pupils in the process of completing the final upper grades.

In terms of level, a *High School Certificate of Graduation* (卒業証明書 *Sotsugyoshomeisho*) is comparable to a HAVO diploma.

### **Secondary vocational education**

In the Japanese education system secondary vocational courses are provided at upper secondary specialized training schools (高等専修学校 *koto senshu gakko*) and in colleges of technology (see [Higher professional education](#)).

There are about 460 upper secondary specialized training schools offering courses relating to professions such as engineering, business and agriculture. Yet those who have finished these courses with a [duration](#) of at least 2 years and mostly 3 years (2,589 hours of study) are also entitled to go to university in different disciplines with their Specialized Training Schools Upper Secondary Certificate of Graduation.

The courses offered by the Colleges of Technology are more specialized and go into more detail than the courses provided by the upper secondary specialized schools.

### **Specialized Training Colleges (専修学校 *Senshu Gakko*)**

*Specialized Training Colleges* (専修学校 *Senshu Gakko*) focus on practical vocational education and specialized technical skills. These colleges are approved by local authorities if they meet the national requirements for the establishment of Specialized Training Colleges determined by [MEXT](#).

Based on the admission requirements, there are 3 different types of Specialized Training Colleges:

1. **Professional Training College (postsecondary programmes) (専門学校)**

A Specialized Training College provides postsecondary education called *Professional Training College*. *Professional training college* is higher education and graduates can transfer to universities or *graduate schools*. See also under [Higher professional education](#).

Japan has around 3,000 *professional training colleges* with a total number of students of about 5,700,000. Admission requirements is an educational background equivalent to a *high school diploma* or a completed *Upper Secondary Specialized Training School* 3 year programme. The programmes have a [duration](#) of 1 to 4 years. Not all *professional training colleges* offer both the *Diploma* programmes and the *Advanced Diploma* programmes

2. **Upper Secondary Specialized Training School (upper secondary programmes) (高等専修学校 *Koto Senshu Gakko* (*Senshu Gakko Kohtokatei*))**

This type of Specialized Training College offers an upper secondary programme called Upper Secondary Specialized Training School.

Upper Secondary Specialized Training School offers practical vocational education based on senior secondary education.

Admission requirement is the diploma of lower secondary education (lower secondary school leaving Certificate). There are about 460 recognised schools of this type with around 39,000 students.

Graduates of a programme with a duration of more than 2 years and more than 2,589 study hours have the right to enroll into university.

3. **Specialized Training College, General Course (専修学校一般課程 *Senshu Gakko Ippankatei*)**

Training colleges at this level are open to everyone. There are no admission requirements. Many different programmes are offered, for example Japanese/western dressmaking, arts and design and cooking. There are about 190 Specialized Training Colleges with General Courses for around 33,000 students.

## ■ Higher education

Higher education is provided at various types of institutions:

- universities;
- (undergraduate) junior colleges, graduate schools;
- colleges of technology;
- professional training colleges;
- educational institutions operated by government ministries and agencies.

Universities (大学 *daigaku*) offer bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes. Junior colleges provide educational programmes with a professional focus to lead to an associate degree, whereas colleges of technology admit lower high school graduates to their 5-year programmes with a professional focus. The specialized training colleges offer 1 to 4 year practical courses.

In 2018 Japan counted:

- 1113 *universities*
- 57 *colleges of technology*
- 2776 *professional training colleges*;
- 3 *educational institutions operated by government ministries and agencies*.

### **National, public and private institutions**

The higher education institutions may have 3 different statuses, namely national, public and private universities, with national universities held in the highest regard. Public universities are local institutions managed at prefecture and municipal level.

The national universities have traditionally enjoyed the best reputation, especially the National University of Tokyo and the National University of Kyoto. However, various universities in Japan's large higher education private sector also offer education of an extremely high standard.

The Open University of Japan has been offering distance education for all (without entrance examinations excluding a full-time master's program) since the early 1980s by means of liberal arts programmes on television and radio and through other media.

### **Top Global University project**

After completing the Global 30 project in 2014, which aimed to attract international students to English-taught undergraduate programmes in Japan, MEXT launched the [Top Global University project](#). For this new internationalisation programme, Japan has selected 37 top universities that are committed to the globalisation of Japanese higher education. The project's goals are:

- establishing partnerships with top international universities;

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- mobilising international students to study in Japan;
- encouraging Japanese students to study abroad;
- offering more English-language programmes;
- implementing educational reforms within the universities, for example by recruiting or training multilingual staff.

The selected universities are divided into 2 types:

Type A (Top Type)	Type B (Global Traction Type)
Hiroshima University	Chiba University
Hokkaido University	Tokyo University of Foreign Studies
Keio University Waseda University	Tokyo University of the Arts
Kyoto University	Nagaoka University of Technology
Kyushu University	Kanazawa University
Nagoya University	Toyohashi University of Technology
Osaka University	Kyoto Institute of Technology
The University of Tokyo	Nara Institute of Science and Technology
Tohoku University	Okayama University
Tokyo Institute of Technology	Kumamoto University
Tokyo Medical and Dental University	Akita International University
University of Tsukuba	The University of Aizu
	International Christian University
	Shibaura Institute of Technology
	Sophie University
	Toyo University
	Hosei University
	Meiji University
	Rikkyo University
	Soka University
	International University of Japan
	Ritsumeikan University
	Kwansei Gakuin University
	Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

More information about the project is available on the MEXT website: [Top Global University Japan](#), including [a flyer](#) about the project.

## ■ Admission to higher education

Students with a High School Certificate of Graduation seeking to study at a national university must take 2 entrance examinations:

- one is national – the National Center Test for University Entrance Admissions (Center Test, 大学入試センター試験 *Daigaku Nyūshi Sentā Shiken*), organised by the National Center for University Entrance Examinations (NCUEE), a body under the direct supervision of the MEXT; and
- the other is an entrance examination administered by the institution itself.

For a long time, admission to a private institution only required successful completion of the institution's own entrance examination, but now many private institutions also require the Center Test.

Students that were unable to secure a place at the institution of their choice may opt to try again next year and prepare for the entrance examination at a *yobiko*, a private school, in the meantime. This intermediate year is known as the *ronin* year.

### Center Test

The Center Test consists of the 6 subject areas: Japanese, social studies, geography and history, mathematics, science, and foreign languages. In addition to the entrance examination, new methods have been developed since the 1990s in order to ensure that student selection is not entirely dependent on examination results. Some private education institutions also base their selection procedures on interviews, assignments and practical tests or factor in the student's extracurricular activities such as participation in the student council, clubs or competitions. Some institutions also apply admission by recommendation, which exempts the student from taking an entrance examination.

The Center Test (administered by the NCUEE) has been applied by all national and public universities and – to a more limited extent – Japan's private higher education institutions since 1990. The test is also known as the University Entrance Center Examination (UECE) and is administered nationally at various locations throughout the country on the same days in January.

### Common Test for University Admissions

The NCUEE administers these tests in collaboration with all universities, whereby the institution applies its own test criteria by selecting specific subject areas and subjects. This allows for the test to be tailored to the specifications of the

institution. The Center Test will be replaced in 2020 by the Common Test for University Admissions (大学入学共通テスト) with a focus on English language skills (several tests per year) and the testing of analytical and problem solving skills.

### **Institutional examination**

In addition to the national entrance examination, the institution is entitled to apply various methods such as interviews, essays, and practical skills tests in order to assess students' suitability for the type of study programmes it offers. This institutional examination is regarded as more challenging and difficult than the Center Test. The University Entrance Qualification Examination is taken by students without a high school diploma in order to determine whether their academic standard equals that of the diploma. The test consists of 17 subjects, of which the student must successfully complete 9.

### **Law schools**

The Japanese education system has included law schools since 2004. Since 2003, admission to these law schools has been regulated through the Japan Law School Admission Test, a national test designed to assess candidates' knowledge of the law as well as their analytical, communication and judgment skills. The test is administered at various locations in June and July and is intended for university graduates with a (relevant) Bachelor's degree. Candidates who obtained a Bachelor programme in another field than law, have to complete a nominal 3 year programme at the law schools, while the programme lasts 2 years for candidates with a Bachelor's degree in law.

## ■ **University education**

University education consists of the following 3 cycles:

- Bachelor (學士 *Gakushi*)
- Master (修士 *Shushi*)
- Doctor (博士 *Hakase*)

### **Bachelor (學士 *Gakushi*)**

The universities offer bachelor's degree programmes with a [duration](#) 4 years. Students are able to obtain a Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science or bachelor's degree followed by the name of the specialisation, such as Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Education. Most medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary programmes last 6 years. In order to complete a 4-year programme, students are generally required to obtain 124 or more credits, with the figure set at 188 or more in medicine and dentistry, and with 182 or more in veterinary medicine regarding 6-year programmes.

It is typical for bachelor's programmes that many general subjects are followed in the first 2 years, following the American system.

In terms of level, a *bachelor's degree* (学士 *Gakushi*) is comparable to an HBO or WO bachelor's degree, depending on the type of study programme and specialisation.

The National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) has also been issuing academic degrees since 1992 (Bachelor, Master, and PhD). Such degrees are issued on the basis of credit-accumulation or the completion of a NIAD-UE approved programme.

Since 2016, the NIAD-UE has been called NIAD-QE: National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education. The NIAD-QE was created through a merger of the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) and the Center for National University Finance and Management (CUFM).

As regards the obtainment of credits, students must have completed a previous education programme at the level of an associate degree or the equivalent thereof (see below) and subsequently obtain at least 62 credits from a university over the course of a 2-year programme in order to be eligible for a bachelor's degree.

Students can also complete a NIAD-QE-approved programme that falls under the jurisdiction of a ministry other than the MEXT. For more information on the NIAD-QE, please see [Quality assurance and accreditation](#).

In terms of level, a *bachelor's degree* (学士 *Gakushi*) conferred by NIAD-QE is comparable to an HBO or WO bachelor's degree, depending on the type of study programme and specialisation.

### **Master (修士 *Shushi*)**

Obtainment of a master's degree takes 2 years and requires 30 or more credits, whereby students spend half their time on the study itself (including examinations) and the other half preparing the final paper. The curriculum also focuses on the methods involved in conducting scientific research.

In order to be admitted, students must have a bachelor's degree and take an entrance examination. Master's degrees are generally awarded by higher education institutions and in some cases by research institutes.

There is a distinction between a research master and a professional master. The professional master's programmes generally last 2 years (such as teacher education) while law school master's programmes have a [duration](#) of 2 to 3 years.

In terms of level, a *master's degree* (修士 *Shushi*) is comparable to a WO master's degree.

### **Doctor (博士 *Hakase*)**

In order to be admitted to the Doctorate (PhD), students must have a master's degree, take an entrance examination and provide a recommendation from at least 2 professors, lecturers or senior lecturers from the relevant discipline. The process of obtaining a Doctorate degree takes 3 years and can be completed in 3 different ways. A combination between a 2-year first stage programme (master's programme) followed by a 3-year second stage programme, an uninterrupted 5-year programme known as a consistent 5-year system or a second stage programme.

The student must obtain at least 30 or more credits over the course of the programme. The terms for doctoral programmes in medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and certain parts in pharmacy are stipulated as 4 years.

## ■ Higher professional education

As stated above, Japan's higher education system also features programmes that do not result in obtainment of an academic title. These programmes are practically-oriented and are provided by professional training colleges and colleges of technology. Junior colleges confer the Associate degree since 2005. From 1991 to 2004 junior colleges awarded the title of Associate, which was at that time not a degree.

### **Junior college (短期大学 *tanki daigaku*)**

The junior colleges offer 2 and 3-year Associate degree programmes of a practically-oriented nature. In order to be admitted to these programmes, students must have a high school diploma and take an entrance examination. The 2-year programmes require the obtainment of 62 credits, while the 3-year programmes require a total of 93. The vast majority of these colleges are private and are mainly attended by female students due to the nature of their programmes, which include home economics, teaching, nursing and arts. Graduates from these colleges can enter university bachelor's programmes as transfer students on the basis of exemptions.

In terms of level, a junior college *Associate degree* following a 2-year programme is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

In terms of level, a junior college *Associate degree* following a 3-year programme is comparable to 3 years of higher professional education (HBO).

Junior colleges (not all) also can offer 2-year advanced programmes, approved by NIAD-QE and recognised as equivalent to a university Bachelor degree.

### **Colleges of technology/technical colleges (高等専門学校 *koto senmon gakko*)**

The colleges of technology provide 5-year technical programmes with a professional focus, intended for junior high school students. These programmes require at least 167 credits and offer the option of entering university programmes in the third academic year as a transfer student. However, about 60% of the students do not go on to take part in further education after completing the programme. The programmes consist of both practical (training and experiments) and theoretical lessons.

In terms of level, an *Associate (Diploma)* obtained at a college of technology following a 5-year programme is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO) in engineering/technology.

Since the beginning of the 90s the *colleges of technology* can also offer *advanced courses*, leading to a Bachelor degree, if the study programme has been approved by the *National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation* (NIAD-QE).

### **Professional training colleges (専門学校 *senmon gakko*)**

These colleges provide post-secondary *Diploma* and *Advanced Diploma* courses with a [duration](#) of 1 year to 4 years, intended for students with a high school diploma or for students graduated from an upper secondary specialized training school. Not every professional training college offers both the *Diploma* programmes and the *Advanced Diploma* programmes.

The *Diploma* courses leading to the qualification of specialist (専門士 *senmonshi*) have a duration of 1 to 2 years.

The 2-year programmes are considered comparable to an Associate degree as obtained at a junior college. Transfer to university programmes is a possibility.

In terms of level, a *Diploma* (専門士 *senmonshi*) of a 2-year programme, obtained at a professional training college is comparable to 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

The Advanced Diploma courses leading to the qualification of advanced specialist (高度専門士 *kodo senmonshi*) have a [duration](#) of 3 or 4 years. The Advanced Diploma of a 4-year programme is considered to be equivalent to a bachelor's degree and the holders of an Advanced Diploma are entitled to apply for graduate school.

In terms of level, an *Advanced Diploma* (高度専門士 *kodo senmonshi*) obtained at a professional training college following a 4-year programme is comparable to an HBO bachelor's degree.

## ■ Assessment systems

### Secondary education

High schools apply a grading system ranging from 5 to 1:

Numerical grade	Description
5	Excellent
4	Very good
3	Good
2	Poor
1	Fail

### Higher education

Higher education institutions issue a *Certificate of Graduation* featuring the student's personal and educational data along with the name of the degree. The student will also receive a Transcript (of Academic Records).

An explanation of the assessment system is generally featured at the bottom of the transcript or on the reverse side of the document and may differ depending on the education institution.

The various options you may encounter are featured here:

Numerical grade	Letter grade	Description
100-90	S	Superior
89-80	A	Above average
79-70	B	Average
69-60	C	Below average
59-0	F	Fail

Numerical grade	Letter grade
100-80	A
79-60	B
59-50	C

Numerical grade	Letter grade
100-90	A
89-80	B
79-70	C
69-60	D
59-0	F

In addition, 50% of universities have adopted a Grade Point Average system as of 2008.

### Quality assurance and accreditation

The current quality assurance and accreditation system was introduced in Japan in 2004, with the MEXT designating which organisations are qualified to implement the system and in compliance with MEXT requirements.

These organisations have all been issued with the same tasks:

- Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA);
- National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education (NIAD-QE), before 2016 known as National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE);
- Japan Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE);
- Japan Association for College Accreditation (JACA).

Professional organisations such as the Japan Law Foundation, Japanese Institute of International Accounting Education and Japan Institute of Midwifery Evaluation also play an important role in assuring the quality of education in their own discipline.

The system comprises various aspects, designed to assure the quality of education:

- **Approval system for the establishment of universities:** the application for the establishment of an institution such as a university, a graduate school, a junior college or a college of technology is submitted to MEXT, Council for University Chartering and School Corporation, which examines the application in the light of the Standards for the Establishment of Universities. The Minister makes the final decision regarding approval.
- **Certified evaluation and accreditation:** the evaluation of education and research at higher education institutions by the organisations designated by the MEXT as of April 2004. Higher education institutions are obliged to undergo this evaluation at least once every 7 years, while professional graduate schools are obliged to do so every 5 years.

- **Evaluation of the national university corporations:** the universities were previously part of the MEXT rather than independent institutions capable of making independent decisions, rendering them unable to respond to social changes with any degree of flexibility. Since they have been allowed to operate with a greater degree of independence, the MEXT assesses the quality of their education from a distance.
- **Self-assessment:** self-assessment has been mandatory for higher education institutions since 1999; the institution assesses the quality of its own education and publishes its findings.

More information about quality assurance in Japan is also available on the [MEXT website](#).

### Recognised institutions

To find out if a higher education programme or institution is recognised, you can consult the database on the [website of the National Information Center for Academic Recognition Japan \(NICIP\)](#).

## ■ Checking documents

### Secondary education

After having graduated from high school, pupils receive:

- an English Certificate of Graduation; and
- a transcript stating their academic results.

These results are categorized on the basis of the relevant curricular subject areas (Japanese language, social studies, mathematics, science, health & physical education, arts, foreign language, home economics, special subjects of English course, others). The Transcript also states the total number of credits to have been obtained. The Certificate of Graduation is a statement from the school featuring the student's date of graduation. All students are also issued with an official diploma and grade list in Japanese.

### Higher education

Higher education graduates receive a Certificate of Graduation and grade list, available in both Japanese and English.

The English version of this diploma is a summary of academic information, including:

- the start date of the programme;
- the graduation date;
- study programme; and
- degree to be issued.

### Credential evaluation

Nuffic evaluates qualifications according to the principles of the [Lisbon Recognition Convention](#) (1997). A practical implementation of these standards can be found in the European [EAR manual](#).

## ■ Overview of higher education institutions

Recognised higher education institutions are available on the English [website of the National Information Center for Academic Recognition Japan \(NICIP\)](#). The NICIP is part of the [National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education \(NIAD-QE\)](#).

## ■ Useful links

- The [website of Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology \(MEXT\)](#) including [information](#) about higher education in Japan.
- The [National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education \(NIAD-QE\)](#) offers general [information](#) and a comprehensive [overview of quality assurance](#) in Japan.
- The [National Center for University Entrance Examinations](#) (Japanese only). English information about NCUEE and the National Center Test (2017) is available in document '[National Center for University Entrance Examinations, 2017 Fiscal Year](#)'.
- De [Japan Society for the Promotion of Science](#) with information about the Top Global University project.
- The [Japan Student Services Organisation \(JASSO\)](#) with information about studying in Japan.

## ■ Glossary

- **Duration:** The official length of the full-time programme (not part-time) without study delay.
- **Graduate programme:** A programme after completion of a programme in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of higher education (1<sup>st</sup> cycle, i.e. a bachelor's degree programme).
- **Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC):** The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region, was drafted in 1997 by the Council of Europe and Unesco to facilitate and promote fair recognition among Parties of the Convention. Read more on the [website of the Council of Europe](#).
- **Undergraduate programme:** A programme in the 1<sup>st</sup> cycle of higher education, such as a bachelor's degree programme.