

Overview

Quality Assurance System
in Higher Education

JAPAN

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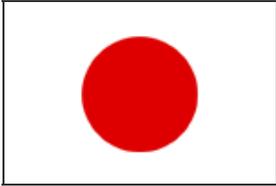
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I. Basic information on the country/region

| Name of country/region | Japan | |  | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|-----|-------|-------|---------|-----|-------|-------|--------|---------|-------|-------|
| Capital | Tokyo | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Major language | Japanese (Primary teaching language: Japanese) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Population* | 127,780,000 (10th largest in the world) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nominal GDP** | 4,375,546 Million USD | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nominal GDP per capita** | 34,252 USD | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Public spending on education as a percentage of the total government spending*** | All levels of education: 9.8% (OECD average: 13.4%) | HE level: 1.8% (OECD average: 3.1%) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Public spending on education as a percentage of GDP*** | All levels of education: 3.6% (OECD average: 5.4%) | HE level: 0.7% (OECD average: 1.3%) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Spending per student at higher education level*** | 12,193 USD | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Public spending on higher education per student*** | 5,024 USD | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Progression rate into higher education**** | <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 30%;"></th> <th style="width: 10%;"></th> <th style="width: 30%;">Overall higher education¹</th> <th style="width: 30%;">Universities/ junior colleges</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>FY 2007</td> <td>(a)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">77.6%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">54.6%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>FY 2000</td> <td>(b)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">71.9%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">49.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Change</td> <td>(a)-(b)</td> <td style="text-align: center;">+5.7%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">+4.8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>¹Indicates the progression rate into university undergraduate programs, junior colleges, fourth-grade programs at colleges of technology, and professional training colleges.</p> | | | | | Overall higher education ¹ | Universities/ junior colleges | FY 2007 | (a) | 77.6% | 54.6% | FY 2000 | (b) | 71.9% | 49.8% | Change | (a)-(b) | +5.7% | +4.8% |
| | | Overall higher education ¹ | Universities/ junior colleges | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FY 2007 | (a) | 77.6% | 54.6% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FY 2000 | (b) | 71.9% | 49.8% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Change | (a)-(b) | +5.7% | +4.8% | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organization of education system*** | (6-3)-3-4 * See II-2. Diagram of the Japanese educational system. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Cycle of academic year*** | April to March | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Source:

* *Total Population as of October 1, 2007, Chapter 2: Population and Estimation, World Statistics 2008*, Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

** *Nominal GDP in FY 2006, Chapter 3: National Economic Accounting, World Statistics 2008*, Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications

*** *International Comparison of Education Statistical Indicators FY 2008 Edition*, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and technology (MEXT) (2008)

**** *International Comparison of Education Statistical Indicators FY 2008 Edition and FY 2003 Edition*, MEXT (2008, 2003)

II. The higher education system

1. Historical overview

The Japanese modern school education system originated with the promulgation of the Educational System in 1872. The system was changed to reflect the democratization policies in education immediately following the end of WW II. With the establishment of the Constitution in 1947, the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law were enacted to ensure equal opportunities in education. The higher education system was consolidated into “universities” in line with the formulation of the 6-3-3-4 school education system.

Subsequently, the Law on the Establishment of National Schools was established 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 secondary school graduates in response to increased need for diverse human resources brought by industrial and economic development. In 1964, 2 or 3-year junior college programs which were temporarily established in 1950 were provided as a permanent system under the School Education Law.

The Japanese higher education has made a quantitative expansion very rapidly, which is an unprecedented worldwide expansion. Private universities played a central role in this expansion. National universities accounted for 31.6% of all universities in Japan in 1955 but the percentage decreased to 14.4% in 2002.

The percentage of students who go to universities or junior colleges, which was 16.1% in 1966, increased to 38.6% in 1976. In the context of the universalization of higher education in the 1970's, a major political challenge was raised about how to maintain and enhance the quality of higher education. The Central Council for Education, set up in the Ministry of Education, reported on reforms of the entire school education system in 1971. The report recommended that the government should secure quality by classifying higher education institutions, managing the size of all higher education institutions, and taking fiscal measures. In response to the recommendations, the government introduced the Private Education Institution Aid System and developed a plan for higher education in 1975.

The Provisional Council on Educational Reform, which was formed in 1984 as the Prime Minister's advisory panel, recommended that the government should take actions to make the existing educational systems and laws which regulate them more flexible. As a means of ensuring the academic quality of Japanese higher education and fostering its individualization, sophistication, and diversification as a government educational policy, the Council submitted some proposals including deregulation of the Standards for Establishment of Universities, thereby enabling each institution to develop its distinctiveness under its missions and objectives and be more actively involved in “evaluations of universities” and “disclosure of its information”.

In response to the recommendations, the Council for Higher Education was set up in the Ministry of Education in 1987 and conducted reviews of the entire higher education system from three perspectives: “sophistication of education and research”, “individualization of higher education”, and “activation of university organization”.

The Council for Higher Education published a report on a flexible graduate school system in December 1988. It then recommended actions in February 1991, which were: deregulation of the University Act to promote individualization of learning contents and methods, revision of the academic degree system, implementation of self-assessment, managing graduate schools from quantitative approaches, and establishing new degree-awarding organizations. These efforts promoted university reforms.

Due to the shift to a knowledge-based society in the late 1990s, high expectations for university education and research were expressed by society. Nevertheless, there was a major concern regarding how the quality of higher education could be secured against the background of the universalization of higher education with a rapid decline in the college-age population and the diversification of upper secondary school education.

To address this concern and propose a comprehensive reform plan, the 1998 Council for Higher Education Report stated the definition of the role of university education as “cultivating a problem-finding ability in learners”. It also recommended expansion of universities’ discretion to enable the development of distinctive education and research, creation of a management system at their own discretion and responsibility, and development of a multi-factorial evaluation system.

In response to the report, the government policies were formed, as the basis of ongoing university reforms, including restructuring of undergraduate programs by limiting the number of credits and encouraging faculty development (FD), development of a professional graduate school system, formation of a firm management system and a president’s advisory group, and establishment of a third-party evaluation organization. They implemented structural reforms, and in 2004, a national university corporation system and a municipal/prefectural university corporation system were commenced, and the Private School Law aimed to develop the school corporation system was revised.

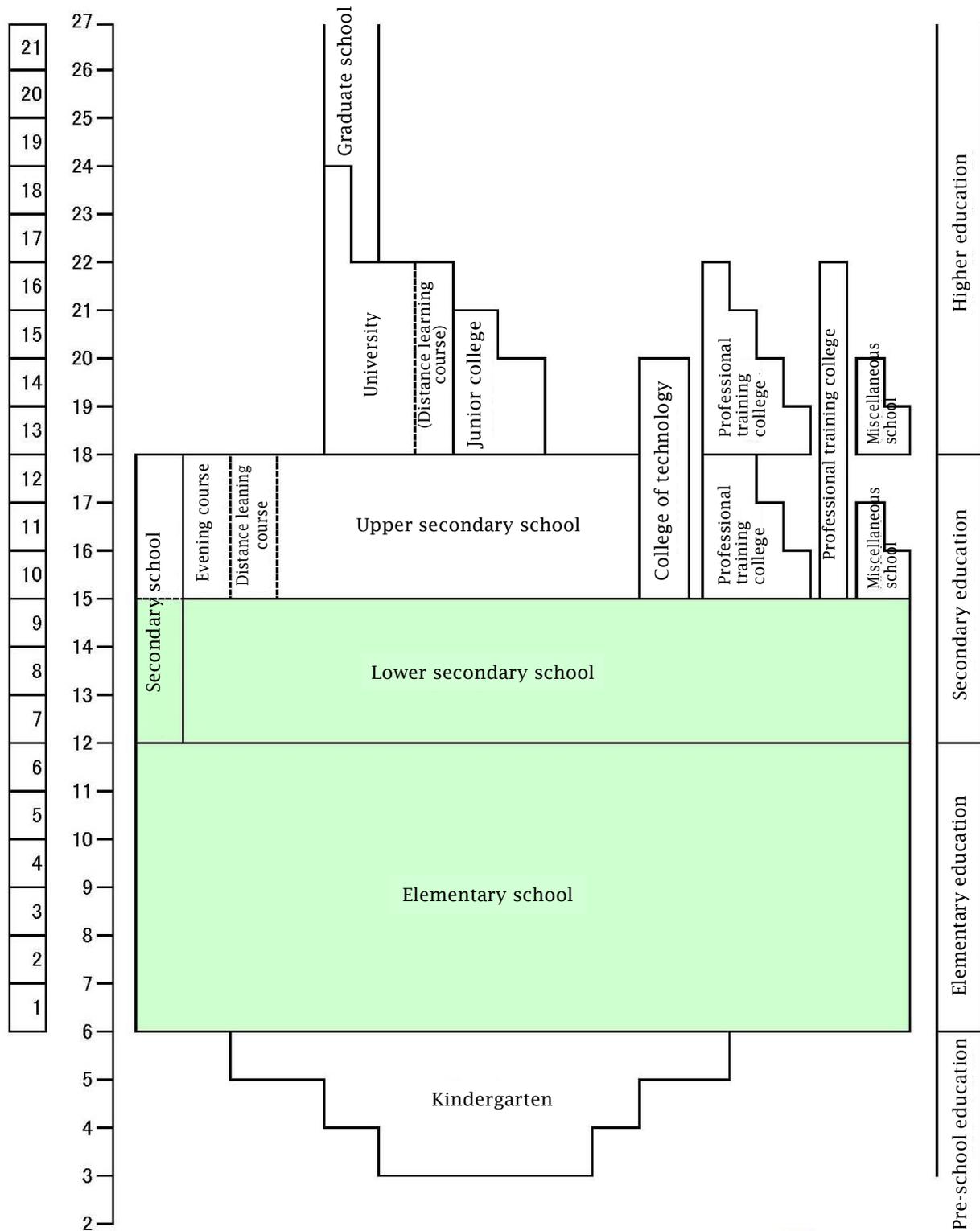
The Central Council for Education published the reports “A Vision for the Future of Higher Education in Japan” in January 2005 and “Graduate School Education in the New Age: Towards the Development of Internationally Attractive Graduate School Education” in September 2005. They recommended the introduction of more rigorous criteria for student assessment and to improve the content of graduate school education.

The government took actions to improve education in response to these recommendations in April 2008, e.g., clarifying assessment criteria and making FD activities mandatory.

In December 2006, the Fundamental Law of Education was revised substantially for the first time in about 60 years, and the definition of a university has been newly established.

2. Diagram of the Japanese educational system

Grade Age



* School education is compulsory in elementary schools and lower secondary schools (between the ages of 6 and 15).

3. Types and sizes of major higher education institutions

1) Types and definitions

| |
|--|
| <p>Universities (Paragraph 1 of Article 7 of the Fundamental Law of Education)</p> <p>Universities, as centers of science, shall cultivate advanced learning and specialized skills, while contributing to the development of society by pursuing the profound truth of things, creating new knowledge, and disseminating their outcomes throughout society.</p> |
| <p>Universities</p> <p>Universities, as centers of science, are designed to impart knowledge broadly, teach and study arts and sciences deeply, and to develop intellectual, ethical and practical abilities. (Paragraph 1 of Article 83 of the School Education Law)</p> |
| <p>Graduate Schools</p> <p>Graduate Schools are designed to teach and study academic theories and applications, and inquire deeply into them or cultivate knowledge and outstanding ability in depth to engage in professions which require advanced expertise, while contributing to the development of culture. (Paragraph 1 of Article 99 of the School Education Law)</p> |
| <p>Professional Graduate Schools</p> <p>Within the category of graduate schools, schools which are designed to teach and study academic theories and applications, and cultivate knowledge and outstanding ability in depth to engage in professions which require advanced expertise are defined as professional graduate schools. (Paragraph 2 of Article 99 of the School Education Law)</p> |
| <p>Junior Colleges</p> <p>Junior colleges can be designed to teach and study arts and sciences deeply and to develop abilities required for occupations or practical life. (Paragraph 1 of Article 108 of the School Education Law)</p> |
| <p>Colleges of Technology</p> <p>Colleges of technology are designed to teach arts and sciences deeply and to develop abilities required for occupations. (Paragraph 1 of Article 115 of the School Education Law)</p> |

2) Number of higher education institutions by establishment type (as of May 1, 2008)

Unit: Institutions

| | National | Municipal/ Prefectural | Private | Total | Percentage of private schools |
|------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| Universities (Graduate schools) | 86 (85) | 90 (76) | 589 (443) | 765 (604) | 77.0% |
| Junior colleges | 2 | 29 | 386 | 417 | 92.6% |
| Colleges of technology | 55 | 6 | 3 | 64 | 4.7% |
| Total | 143 | 125 | 978 | 1,246 | 78.5% |

3) Number of students by establishment type (as of May 1, 2008)

Unit: Students

| | National | Municipal/ prefectural | Private | Total | Percentage of private schools |
|------------------------|----------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| Universities | 623,789 | 131,977 | 2,079,476 | 2,835,242 | 73.3% |
| Junior colleges | 52 | 10,565 | 162,109 | 172,726 | 93.9% |
| Colleges of technology | 53,162 | 4,162 | 2,122 | 59,446 | 3.6% |
| Total | 677,003 | 146,704 | 2,243,707 | 3,067,414 | 73.1% |

4) Number of staff by establishment type (as of May 1, 2008)

Unit: Persons

| | National | Municipal/ prefectural | Private | Total | Percentage of private schools |
|------------------------|----------|---------------------------|---------|---------|----------------------------------|
| Universities | 123,146 | 24,526 | 217,684 | 365,356 | 59.6% |
| Junior colleges | - | 1,103 | 15,126 | 16,229 | 93.2% |
| Colleges of technology | 6,473 | 479 | 213 | 7,165 | 3.0% |
| Total | 129,619 | 26,108 | 233,023 | 388,750 | 60.0% |

5) Standard course terms and school age

| | | Standard course term | Standard school age |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Universities | | 4 years (6 years) | 18 to 21 years old |
| Graduate schools | Master's program | 2 years | 22 years old - |
| | Doctoral Program | 3 years | 24 years old - |
| | Professional degree program | 2 years (12 to less than 24 months) 3 years for law schools 2 years for teacher education | 22 years old- |
| Junior colleges | | 2 or 3 years | 18 years old - |
| Colleges of technology | | 5 years | 15 to 19 years old |

4. Student selectivity

Basically, Japanese higher education institutions offer individual entrance examinations to select students based on their own student admission policies.

With regard to the selection of students for university undergraduate programs and junior colleges, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) provides the “Guidelines for University Entrance Examinations” every year to promote appropriate student selection and further improvement of selection methods. Each university selects students based on the Guidelines.

The Guidelines offer guidance on the methods and timing of the selection process and represent the use of the National Center Test for University Admissions (Center Test) which is designed to assess applicants’ basic academic abilities at upper secondary school level.

All universities can use the Center Test, but it is not mandatory for university admission. Consequently, there are a variety of student selection methods, e.g. the Center Test only, combination of the Center Test and an original examination and interview, and an original examination and/or interview only.

The Center Test is comprised of computer-scored paper tests (and an English listening comprehension test) in 33 subjects of 6 subject areas. Universities are allowed to select subject areas and subjects as their application requirements.

5. University graduation (completion) and degree awarding requirements

1) Number of credits

Subjects are categorized into lectures, exercises, experiments, practical training or skill sessions. Classes are included in any of these forms or in a combination of them, and credits are conferred for successful completion of the classes.

The number of credits for each subject is determined at institutional level based on the standardized credit system in Japan. Under the system, one credit is considered to be generally composed of a total of 45 hours of studying (15 to 30 hours for lectures and exercises and 30 to 45 hours for experiments, practical training and skill sessions). In the case of artistic fields which require personal guidance in performing arts training, graduation theses and graduation studies, the number of study hours for one credit may be flexibly arranged. Each class runs for a 10 or 15-week term.

2) Graduation (completion) requirements

(1) Universities

A minimum of 4 years of study with 124 or more credits

- * 6 years with 188 or more credits for medicine and dentistry
- 6 years with 186 or more credits for pharmacy
- 6 years with 182 or more credits for veterinary medicine

(2) Graduate schools

Master's programs: A minimum of 2 years of study with 30 or more credits, receiving necessary guidance on research, approval of a final dissertation or specifically assigned study, and success in an examination.

Doctoral programs: A minimum of 5 years of study (including 2 years of study at a Master's program) with 30 or more credits (including those collected at a Master's program), receiving necessary guidance on research, approval of a final thesis, and success in an examination.

- * Doctoral programs may consist of a two-year first stage program and a three-year program thereafter.

Professional degree programs: A minimum of 2 years of study with 30 or more credits and completion of necessary academic programs.

- * 3 years with 93 or more credits for law schools
- 2 years with 45 or more credits for teacher education

(3) Junior colleges

2-year junior colleges: A minimum of 2 years of study with 62 or more credits

3 or more-year junior colleges: A minimum of 3 years of study with 93 or more credits

3) Degree awarding requirements

An academic degree is awarded to students who successfully complete a university undergraduate program, a graduate program, and those who graduate from a junior college.

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| University (undergraduate program) | Bachelor's Degree |
| Graduate school | Master's Degree or Doctoral Degree |
| Professional graduate school | Professional Degree |
| Junior college | Associate Degree |

As a degree-awarding system additional to graduating (completing) the regular courses at a university and junior college, the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) awards academic degrees (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees), and universities offering doctoral programs award academic degrees comparable to a Doctoral Degree to students by reviewing a final thesis.

4) Degree-awarding authority

Universities and junior colleges are authorized to award academic degrees when the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology approves the establishment of the institution as having adequate quality as a degree-awarding institution. Once the Minister approves the establishment, the right to award academic degrees rests with each institution. In addition to universities and junior colleges, NIAD-UE is also authorized to award academic degrees.

5) Unified national examination and assessments of learning outcomes

In respect of the individualization of universities and that each university has the right to award academic degrees, there is no unified national examination or assessment of learning outcomes at graduation.

6. Agency responsible for higher education

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)

3-2-2, Kasumigaseki, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, 100-8959

TEL: +81-3-5253-4111 URL: www.mext.go.jp

MEXT is responsible for the development of creative people with rich character through promoting education and lifelong learning, the promotion of academic, sports and cultural activities, the comprehensive advancement of science and technology, and is also in charge of administrative affairs regarding religions. (Article 3 of the Law on the Establishment of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)

Department in charge of quality assurance (evaluation) of higher education:

Higher Education Policy Planning Division, Higher Education Bureau

7. Major university/college associations

- The Japan Association of National Universities (www.janu.jp)
- The Japan Association of Public Universities (www.kodaikyo.org)
- Association of Private Universities of Japan (www.shidaikyo.or.jp)
- The Japan Association of Private Universities and Colleges (www.shidairen.or.jp)
- Japan Association of Public Junior Colleges (<http://park16.wakwak.com/~kotan819/>)
- The Association of Private Junior Colleges in Japan (www.tandai.or.jp)

8. Student participation in university administration and student organizations

There is no nationwide student union associated with university management.

9. Tuitions and admission fees*

1) Universities

Unit: JPY

| | Total | Admission fee | Tuition | Other |
|--------------------------|-----------|---------------|---------|---------|
| National** | 817,800 | 282,000 | 535,800 | - |
| Municipal/prefectural*** | 935,589 | 399,351 | 536,238 | - |
| Private**** | 1,298,726 | 273,564 | 834,751 | 190,410 |

2) Junior colleges

Unit: JPY

| | Total | Admission fee | Tuition | Other |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------|---------|
| National** | 559,200 | 169,200 | 390,000 | - |
| Municipal/prefectural | Not available | | | |
| Private**** | 1,111,170 | 253,116 | 672,490 | 185,564 |

* Tuition: Yearly fee / Admission fee: At school entry (only for the first year)

** Indicates the standard amount the government sets out.

*** Indicates the average amount for FY 2007.

**** Indicates the average amount for FY 2007.

10. Student aid – major scholarship program (for FY 2009)

| | Scholarship provider | Applicable institution | Annual amount per student (Unit: JPY) | Allowance or loan |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Interest-free loan | Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) | University | 540,000 to 768,000 | Loan |
| | | Graduate school: master's program | 600,000 to 1,056,000 | Loan |
| | | Graduate school: doctoral program | 960,000 to 1,464,000 | Loan |
| | | Junior college | 540,000 to 720,000 | Loan |
| Interest-bearing loan | | University | 360,000 to 1,440,000 | Loan |
| | | Graduate school: master's program | 600,000 to 1,800,000 | Loan |
| | | Graduate school: doctoral program | 600,000 to 1,800,000 | Loan |
| | | Junior college | 360,000 to 1,440,000 | Loan |

11. Attendance status

Types of student attendance status consist of “Full-Time Students” who take a formal academic degree program to obtain a qualification, and “Part-Time Students” including “Non-Degree Students”, and “Research Students”.

12. Higher education laws

1) Laws governing higher education

- Fundamental Law of Education (2006, Law No. 120)
- School Education Law (1947, Law No. 26)

2) Laws and regulations related to an approval of the establishment of Japanese higher education institutions

- School Education Law (1947, Law No.26) Article 3
- Standards for the Establishment of Universities (1956, Education Ministry Ordinance No.28)
- Standards for the Establishment of Distance Learning Program at Universities (1981, Education Ministry Ordinance No.33)
- Standards for the Establishment of Junior Colleges (1975, Education Ministry Ordinance No.21)
- Standards for the Establishment of Graduate Schools (1974, Education Ministry Ordinance No.28)
- Standards for the Establishment of Professional Graduate Schools (2003, MEXT Ordinance No.16)
- Standards for the Establishment of Colleges of Technology (1961, Education Ministry Ordinance No.23)

3) Laws and regulations related to degree-awarding authority

- School Education Law (1947, Law No.26) Article 104
- Rules for Degrees (1953, Education Ministry Ordinance No.9)

III. The quality assurance system

1. Introduction

As stated in the Fundamental Law of Education (Paragraph 1 of Article 6, Clause 1) that “the educational institution that is established by law has a public character”, all of the Japanese educational institutions (kindergartens, elementary schools, schools for secondary education including lower secondary schools and upper secondary schools, special support schools, i.e., schools for children with special needs, universities, and colleges of technology) are required to perform roles as public institutions and only limited bodies (the government, local public organizations/prefectural governments, and school corporations) are authorized to set them up. In addition, an institution that wishes to operate as an educational institution has to be approved for establishment by undergoing assessment. These ex-ante quality assurance measures throughout the system for approval of the establishment of institutions are complimented by various ex-post quality-related systems for guaranteeing the quality of Japanese higher education.

The mission of universities is stipulated in the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law.

The Fundamental Law of Education states the ultimate roles of universities: “Universities, as centers of science, shall cultivate advanced learning and specialized skills, while contributing to the development of society by pursuing the profound truth of things, creating new knowledge, and disseminating their outcomes throughout society.” (Paragraph 1 of Article 7). This means that universities are required to provide educational and research outcomes and to demonstrate their performance to society. This law also provides the academic autonomy of universities: “The autonomy, independence, and nature of education and research of universities should be respected.” (Paragraph 2 of Article 7).

The School Education Law also declares the ultimate mission of university as follows: “Universities, as centers of science, are designed to impart knowledge broadly, teach and study arts and sciences deeply, and to develop intellectual, ethical and practical abilities.” (Paragraph 1 of Article 83). This law also states that “universities should contribute to social development by carrying out educational research to accomplish this mission and disseminating their outcomes throughout the society.” (Paragraph 2 of Article 83).

To ensure the quality of Japanese universities suitable for their mission stipulated in such laws, several quality assurance frameworks have been legally established including:

- The approval system for establishment of universities (Article 4 of the School Education Law)
- Certified evaluation and accreditation (Paragraph 2 of Article 109 of the School Education Law)

The certified evaluation and accreditation system was adopted in accordance with revision of the School Education Law in 2003 and has been enforced since April 2004.

Before launching a major review of its education policy, the government applied a “control policy” concerning the quantitative scale of universities, and, therefore, did not allow institutions in principle to establish new campuses in the central areas of big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka and increase the total capacity of students (control policy concerning the establishment of universities). In response to the recent reform of regulations, however, the control of the establishment of new universities was deregulated in all subject areas excluding those related to doctors, dentists, veterinarians and seamen, to allow universities to build flexible organizations so that they promote their individualization and take account of social and economic changes.

As a result of deregulation, the policy in approving the establishment of universities has been reexamined and the deliberation procedures have become simpler. Firstly, simple conformance with related regulations has become the basic principle of the approval assessment. Thus, the establishment of a university may now be approved if judged that it fulfills the basic requirements stated in laws such as the Standards for the Establishment of Universities. Secondly, reference points for the approval assessment have been streamlined. Previously, “internal regulations” prescribing strict rules concerning athletic fields, the number of books in the library, and the age of the academic staff, etc. have been referred to besides the Standards for the Establishment of Universities. However, these rules have been abolished in the course of deregulation thereby making requirements for approval much simpler. Thirdly, a notification system was adopted replacing the previous policy that advanced deliberations were mandatory for establishing every faculty or department. In this system, it is not necessary to undergo the approval process, and a simple notification of the changes is all that is required in the case of the establishment of faculties or departments that do not greatly deviate from the existing academic fields.

These policy reforms and deregulation processes regarding university establishment facilitated preparation of ex-post facto checking systems for assuring the quality of universities. Besides a systematic self-assessment, certified evaluation and accreditation was added as a major quality assurance system. In addition, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology was authorized by law to take corrective actions in his/her capacity against a university if it fails to meet laws and regulations. The actions include a recommendation for improvement, an order to change, and an order to close a department or an entire institution.

To summarize, ‘ex-post checking/evaluation’ may now be taken into account as well as ‘ex-ante restrictions’ as an approach to assure the quality of universities.

Incidentally, seeing the need to create educational institutions that meet the needs of students as consumers, the Japanese government began to allow stock corporations to establish universities following the enactment of the Designated Structural Reform Districts Law. So far, six universities have been established and operated by private stock corporations.

It is true that as a part of the ongoing review of Japanese higher education, drastic reforms of the quality assurance system for universities have been carried out and put into practice since 2003, a lot of issues and problems have been raised as the globalization of higher education is advancing

and the number of higher education institutions is increasing due to the government's deregulation policy.

For example, the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has given recommendations to some newly established universities operated by stock corporations pointing out that their lesson content was nothing more than that employed at preparatory schools.

Higher education institutions have been facing difficulty in recruiting students widely. Specifically, 67.5% of universities and 47% of junior colleges have not reached their fixed enrollment capacities in FY 2008.

Thus, as types of higher education institutions diversify due to the government's deregulation policy, there has often been concern regarding the quality of their teaching and research performance, casting doubt on their ability to achieve the ultimate mission of universities stated in the Fundamental Law of Education and the School Education Law.

In order to address these issues, extensive discussion is in progress in the Subdivision on Universities of the Central Council for Education, focusing on the future of Japanese university education. Its panel members have recognized the necessity to establish an official and comprehensive quality assurance framework which is comprised of university self-assessment, the Standards for the Establishment of Universities, approval system for the establishment (of universities), certified evaluation and accreditation, and public funding system for enhancing the quality of Japanese universities.

2. Types of major quality assurance systems in Japanese higher education

- Approval system for establishment of universities
- Corrective actions taken if a university fails to meet laws and regulations
- Self-assessment (mandatory under the School Education Law)
- Certified evaluation and accreditation
- National university corporation evaluation

Besides these legally-determined systems, there are several non-legally-stated voluntary initiatives developed by organizations outside the higher education institutions such as Accreditation System for Engineering Education in Japan.

1) Approval system for establishment of universities

Purpose and roles

The approval system is undertaken by the government. Its purpose is to protect students' rights to study, and to assure the quality of every university is adequate as an institution which awards internationally-compatible academic degrees. In the case of a newly-established university, approval is granted if it is judged to meet certain standards.

Scope of approval

Approval by the government should be gained for:

- Establishment of a graduate school (academic unit/major)
- Establishment of a university (faculty/department)
- Establishment of a junior college (department)
- Establishment of a college of technology (department)

In the case of the establishment of faculties or departments that do not greatly deviate from the existing academic fields, it is not necessary to undergo the above approval process, and a simple notification of the changes is all that is required.

Frequency

No expiration date or frequency of the approval is determined.

Process

An application for the establishment of an institution such as a university is submitted to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. In response to the consultation from the Minister, MEXT's Council for University Chartering and School Corporation examines the application in light of relevant standards such as the Standards for the Establishment of Universities. Examination results are notified to the Minister, and the Minister makes a final

decision regarding approval.

The Council for University Chartering and School Corporation, comprised of approximately 400 academics and experts possessing abundant knowledge and experience, undertakes the investigations.

The investigations are carried out by the Council's subcommittees: the subcommittee on university chartering examines education and research, and the subcommittee on school corporation examines financial and management systems. In the case of the establishment of a university, the examination process runs for approximately seven months through document analysis, interviews, and site visits. For approval of newly-established departments, the process usually takes about five months.

Examination criteria

As for examining aspects of teaching and learning, the Standards for the Establishment of Universities are mainly employed. The Standards comprise:

| | |
|---|--|
| Chapter 1 - General provisions | Chapter 6 - Academic programs |
| Chapter 2 - Educational and research structure | Chapter 7 - Graduation/completion requirements |
| Chapter 3 - Academic staff organization | Chapter 8 - Facilities and equipments |
| Chapter 4 - Eligibility criteria for academic staff | Chapter 9 - Administrative organization |
| Chapter 5 - Student capacity | Chapter 10 - Miscellaneous provisions |

Follow-up

In order to contribute to the maintenance and improvement of the academic level of each university and encourage its spontaneous improvements, the Council monitors if it conducts education and research as planned until the year in which it produces its first graduates via written report, interview, or site-visit. The monitoring includes requesting a university to provide progress reports concerning the recommendations previously pointed out at the time of its approval, and give information about its academic courses/programs, academic staff organization, and progress of other establishment plans. In the case the Council identifies improvements that need to be made, it will notify them to the university and encourage necessary actions. The progress of newly-established universities is made public through MEXT's official website.

Publication of results and measures for ensuring transparency

Applications and results of examinations are made public through MEXT's official website.

In the approval process, applicants have an opportunity to revise their original plans against the comments from the Council and make further explanations.

2) Corrective actions taken if a university fails to meet laws and regulations

Overview (purpose, roles)

Following the revision of the School Education Law of 2003 and other related regulations, the authority was given to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to take corrective actions in his/her capacity against a subject higher education institution if it fails to meet laws and regulations including the School Education Law and/or the Standards for the Establishment of Universities. The traditional single action of issuing an order for the closure of an entire institution has been replaced by three gradual measures: 1) a recommendation for improvement, 2) an order to change, and 3) an order to close a department or an entire institution.

Applicable unit

The entire institution or academic unit (e.g. faculty, department)

Frequency

No expiration date or frequency of actions is determined.

Process

The autonomy of universities should be fully taken into account when taking any actions. Prior to actions, the Minister should consult with the Council for University Chartering and School Corporation. The Council, with abundant knowledge and experience, considers necessary actions in a fair and careful manner.

Publication of results and measures for ensuring transparency

The Minister may request a university to submit reports and materials as documentary evidence in considering necessary actions.

Information on corrective actions is made public through MEXT's official website.

3) Self-assessment

Overview (purpose, roles, process, publication of results, and measures for ensuring transparency)

Self-assessment is a systematic assessment for universities and other higher education institutions to check the progress in light of their own goals and objectives, discover areas of excellence or areas in need of improvement, and enhance the quality of their activities based on published assessment results. Self-assessment was first stipulated as a task which universities should strive to implement under the revised School Education Law of 1991. In 1999, self-assessment and publication of its results became mandatory. (Regulations concerning self-assessment and publication of its results are now stipulated in the School Education Law following its revision in

2002.) The scheme of self-assessment has been developed against a background of the expectation that universities would have the prime responsibility for assuring the quality themselves under their academic autonomy.

Applicable unit

Although the School Education Law states that every university, junior college, and college of technology is obliged to conduct self-assessment and publish its results, no applicable unit is legally determined. Each institution conducts self-assessment at institutional level and, where needed, at academic unit level.

Frequency

No expiration date or frequency of self-assessment is determined.

4) Certified evaluation and accreditation

Overview (frequency)

A mandatory evaluation system in which evaluation and accreditation organizations certified by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (called certified evaluation and accreditation organizations) conduct evaluation of the progress of education and research of universities, junior colleges, colleges of technology, and professional graduate schools, based on their own standards for evaluation and accreditation. Universities, junior colleges, and colleges of technology are obliged to undergo the evaluation at least once in every seven years, and professional graduate schools at least once in every five years.

Purpose and roles

- To develop education and research of universities and other higher education institutions and to assist in demonstrating their performance to society through periodical third-party evaluation.
- To contribute to the individualization of education and research by reviewing based on individual criteria developed by evaluation organizations.

Applicable Unit

Institutional level: University, junior college, and college of technology

Academic unit level: Professional graduate school

Process, publication of results, and measures for ensuring transparency

The certification process begins with applications from organizations which wish to be certified evaluation and accreditation organizations. After reports from the Central Council for Education, the Minister confers certification as an evaluation and accreditation organization when the applicant body is judged to fulfill certain criteria concerning their standards, methods, and

framework for evaluation. Information on certified organizations is made public through government newspapers.

Evaluation and accreditation results are notified to targeted institutions and the Minister, and made public to society.

Targeted institutions have an opportunity to make remarks/objections about evaluation results prior to finalization of the process.

Judgments on the evaluation process

Each organization creates its own evaluation standards and uses these standards in judgment. While the standards are required to meet the basic/minimum stipulations stated in related laws to ensure a fair and appropriate evaluation process, how they are exercised in each evaluation is left to the discretion of the organizations.

Follow-up

In light of the purpose of certified evaluation and accreditation, necessary actions in response to evaluation results depend upon the self-initiative of each institution. However, the Minister may take corrective actions if the university is judged to fail to meet laws and regulations based on unsatisfactory evaluation standards and request it to submit reports and materials as documentary evidence in considering necessary actions. The actions include a recommendation for improvement, an order to change, and an order to close a department or an entire institution.

Reference: List of certified evaluation and accreditation organizations (as of May 1, 2008)

Institutional certified evaluation and accreditation organizations

| | |
|---|--|
| National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) | Universities (Certified on January 14, 2005) |
| | Junior colleges (January 14, 2005) |
| | Colleges of technology (July 12, 2005) |
| Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) | Universities (August 31, 2004) |
| | Junior colleges (January 25, 2007) |
| Japan Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE) | Universities (July 12, 2005) |
| Japan Association for College Accreditation (JACA) | Junior colleges (January 14, 2005) |

Certified evaluation and accreditation organizations for professional graduate schools*

| | |
|---|---|
| Japan Law Foundation | Graduate law schools (Certified on August 31, 2004) |
| NIAD-UE | Graduate law schools (January 14, 2005) |
| JUAA | Graduate law schools (February 6, 2007) |
| | Management courses (April 8, 2008) |
| ABEST 21 | Management courses (October 12, 2007) |
| Japan Institute of International Accounting Education | Accounting courses (October 12, 2007) |
| Japan Institute of Midwifery Evaluation | Midwifery courses (April 8, 2008) |

* In the case some academic areas of professional graduate schools do not undergo evaluation for particular reasons, (because related evaluation and accreditation organizations for the specific fields do not exist in Japan, for example), they are required by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to take the following actions:

1. To be assessed by overseas evaluation organizations which the Minister designates as internationally recognized organizations conducting fair and appropriate evaluations, make evaluation results public, and report them to the Minister.
2. A review regarding results of self-assessment and evaluation of subject professional graduate schools is to be carried out periodically by external persons. Its results should be made public and reported to the Minister.

5) National university corporation evaluation

Overview

Performance-based evaluation of national university corporations and inter-university research institute corporations in respect of their attainment of mid-term objectives, mid-term plans and annual plans for education, research and management. The National University Corporation Evaluation Committee is entirely responsible for this evaluation. The committee appoints NIAD-UE to undertake evaluation on their attainment of mid-term objectives for education and research.

Purpose and roles

National universities have traditionally played a central role in the well-balanced development of Japanese higher education and academic research by: promoting academic research and organizing graduate schools; developing talented people considering the balance of development in academic fields; providing higher education to both urban and local areas; and contributing to regional development and ensuring access to higher education.

However, national universities, formerly positioned as internal organizations of MEXT, were faced with some challenges e.g., it has become difficult to respond to the rapid growth of society because they were not independent bodies and were unable to make decisions individually. To address these challenges, all national universities were incorporated with the beginning of the national university corporation system in April 2004. National universities are expected to develop their individuality and competitiveness within higher education as autonomous, independent and flexible organizations.

The purpose of the national university corporation evaluation is to demonstrate the progress of national university corporations to society, and to use results of evaluation in allocating financial resources to the corporations appropriately.

Frequency

Conducted every fiscal year and at the end of a six-year mid-term objectives period.

Process

The national university corporation evaluation committee is comprised of up to 20 experts appointed by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. The Committee may set up subcommittees and working teams. It conducts reviews on the progress of mid-term plans for corporations based on their performance reports submitted every fiscal year. Then, their attainment of entire mid-term objectives is evaluated in respect of results of reviews and features of each corporation.

In particular, the Committee delegates NIAD-UE, as a professional body for evaluation of education and research in higher education, to conduct evaluation of their attainment of education and research at the end of mid-term objectives period.

Judgment on the evaluation process

Each national university corporation's mid-term objectives vary according to their features and characteristics. The Committee therefore conducts reviews and makes judgment about university corporations individually.

Follow-up, publication of results, measures for ensuring transparency

The results of the annual review notified at the end of the fiscal year are used in identifying a corporation's strengths and improvements and enhancing their activities. Evaluation results of all mid-term objectives are used in developing the next mid-term objectives. The rate of governmental grants allocated during the next mid-term objectives is affected by the results of the national university corporation evaluation.

Evaluation and review results are made public. Information on the evaluation including meeting agendas, minutes and evaluation reports are also available from MEXT's official website.

6) Accreditation system for engineering education

Overview

A professional accreditation system under which an external body (the Japan Accreditation Board for Engineering Education: JABEE) conducts examinations as to whether engineering education programs offered by higher education institutions fulfill the level which society expects, and confers the status of accreditation to successful programs.

Purpose and roles

- To accredit programs which are judged to reach the certain level of quality and successfully develop human resources with the knowledge and ability necessary to work as engineers.
- To secure the comparability of engineering education between Japan and oversea countries, and to demonstrate the fact that graduates from accredited programs have completed their studies necessary to work as engineers.

Implementing body and process

JABEE, an implementing body of the accreditation system, became a member of the Washington Accord in June 2005, and has established mutual recognition of engineering accreditation systems among 12 member countries including the US, Canada, and the UK to ensure the comparability of engineering education.

Applicable unit

This is program-level accreditation system.

Frequency

In general, accredited programs are conferred a six-year accreditation. They are required to notify the desire to continue the accreditation status every fiscal year after initial accreditation. Programs which wish to renew the status should be reexamined.

Publication of results and measures for ensuring transparency

JABEE has developed criteria for accreditation. The examination process is based on the rules and procedures of the Washington Accord. The criteria are made public through JABEE's website. Accredited programs are conferred a certificate, and are also made public.

3. History of the Japanese quality assurance (evaluation) system

April 1947 The new university system was launched upon the enforcement of the School Education Law.

July 1947 The Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) was established under the sponsorship of universities, based on guidance given by the CIE (GHQ Civil Information and Education Section). Its University Standards were developed.

January 1948 The University Establishment Committee was set up within the Ministry of Education.

June 1952 JUAA conducted evaluation of the qualification of universities, and approved 38 universities for membership.

October 1956 The Standards for the Establishment of Universities were developed.

April 1986 The Provisional Council on Educational Reform Report 'The Second Report on Education Reform' requested universities to carry out self-assessment.

February 1991 The Council for Higher Education Report 'Improvement of University Education' was compiled. It requested the government to: deregulate the University Act to make regulations on subjects, graduation requirements, and academic staff organizations more flexible; and introduce a self-assessment system.

June 1991 The Standards for the Establishment of Universities were revised. The University Act was deregulated making the university approval system more flexible. Self-assessment was stipulated as a task which universities should strive to implement.

October 1998 The Council for Higher Education Report 'A Vision of Universities in the 21st Century' requested: the enhancement of the existing self-assessment system (need for publication of assessment results and verification by external persons); and introduction of a third-party evaluation system (with the establishment of third-party evaluation organizations).

September 1999 The Revised Standards for the Establishment of Universities stated self-assessment and publication of assessment results as mandatory and verification by external parties as a task which universities should strive to implement.

April 2000 National Institution for Academic Degrees was reorganized as NIAD-UE.

July 2000 (to March 2004) NIAD-UE conducted trial university evaluation of national and municipal/prefectural universities.

August 2002 The Central Council for Education Report 'Establishment of a New System pertaining to the Quality Assurance of Universities' requested: the conducting of reviews of the existing approval system for establishment; and the introduction of a new third-party evaluation (certified evaluation and accreditation) system and corrective actions against universities failing to meet laws and regulations.

November 2002 The Revised School Education Law brought forth the review of the approval system, the introduction of the certified evaluation and accreditation system, the development of regulations concerning corrective actions and of a professional graduate school system. (The certified evaluation and accreditation system was initiated in April 2004.)

As a result of the major revision of laws concerning the establishment of a university (e.g. the Standards for the Establishment of Universities), simple conformance with related regulations has become the basic principle of the approval assessment. It was also decided that the additional standards which had thus far been prescribed as internal regulations in the Ordinance of the Council for University Chartering and School Corporation should be abolished and that approval should be based on laws above the level of notification.

March 2003 The standards for establishment of professional graduate schools were developed.

July 2003 The National University Corporation Law was enacted and national universities were incorporated in April 2004.

April 2004 The certified evaluation and accreditation system was introduced.

January 2005 The Central Council for Education submitted Report 'A Vision for the Future of Higher Education in Japan' requested: the classification of universities by their functions, appropriate use of the approval system; and enhancement of the certified evaluation and accreditation system.

September 2005 The Central Council for Education Report 'Graduate School Education in the New Age: Towards the Development of Internationally Attractive Graduate School Education' requested: enhancement of learning contents in graduate schools; and assurance of their quality by introducing a new evaluation system.

December 2006 The Fundamental Law of Education was revised to specify the basic roles of universities.

April 2008 - NIAD-UE conducts the evaluation of education and research of national university corporations and inter-university research institute corporations, commissioned by the MEXT's National University Corporation Evaluation Committee.

April 2008 - The National University Corporation Evaluation Committee conducts performance-based evaluations of national university corporations and inter-university research institute corporations during the mid-term objective periods.

4. Laws and regulations pertaining to quality assurance (evaluation)

- Fundamental Law of Education
- School Education Law
- School Education Law Enforcement Ordinance
- School Education Law Enforcement Regulations
- Rules for Degrees
- Standards for the Establishment of Universities
- Standards for the Establishment of Distance Learning Programs at Universities
- Standards for the Establishment of Graduate Schools
- Standards for the Establishment of Professional Graduate Schools
- Standards for the Establishment of Junior Colleges
- Standards for the Establishment of Distance Learning Programs at Junior Colleges
- Standards for the Establishment of Colleges of Technology
- Ministerial Ordinances which Provide Details Required to Apply Standards Provided in Paragraph 2 of Article 110 of the School Education Law
- The law on Coordination of Graduate Law School Education and the National Bar Examination
- National University Corporation Law
- Act on the General Rules for Incorporated Administrative Agency
- Act on the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation
- Private School Law
- Act on Organization and Operation of Local Education Administration
- Act on Local Incorporated Administrative Agencies
- Act on Special Zones for Structural Reform
- Measures pertaining to Exceptions of Ministerial (MEXT) Ordinance Provided in Paragraph 3 of Article 2 of the Act on Special Zones for Structural Reform and Ministerial Ordinance which Provide Applicable Projects
- Law on the Establishment of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
- Ordinance of the Council for University Chartering and School Corporation

5. Other topics

1) University ranking

There are rankings of higher education institutions in the private sector of Japan, e.g., the university ranking based on the level of difficulty in passing entrance examinations of universities released by the entrance examination supporting service sector, and the subject level ranking developed by the media. Meanwhile, the public sector has traditionally voiced negative opinions toward university rankings. Some universities, however, began to react to the world university rankings positively from the viewpoint of international competitiveness.

2) Stakeholders related to quality assurance affairs other than government agencies, higher education institutions, and quality assurance (evaluation) organizations

- Japan Society for the Promotion of Science
- Japan Science and Technology Agency
- Japan Student Services Organization, etc.

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