

Study Tour Japan

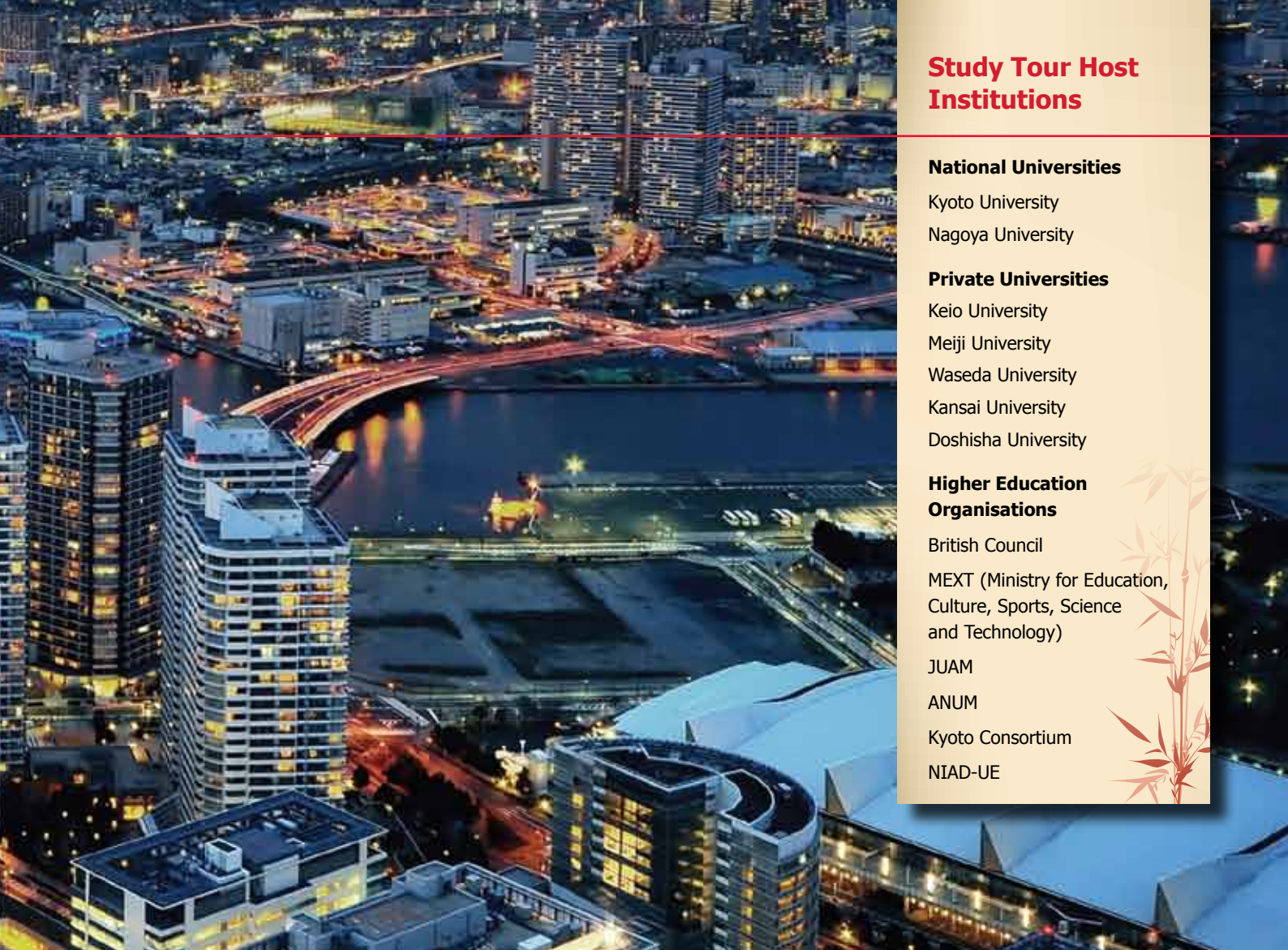
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Contents

Introduction	3
Internationalisation and the Student Experience	6
Employability and the Graduate Job Market	10
Quality Assurance and Enhancement	14
Points for Reflection and Learning	20
Appendices	22



Study Tour Host Institutions

National Universities

Kyoto University
Nagoya University

Private Universities

Keio University
Meiji University
Waseda University
Kansai University
Doshisha University

Higher Education Organisations

British Council
MEXT (Ministry for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology)
JUAM
ANUM
Kyoto Consortium
NIAD-UE

Introduction

A group of 10 AUA members from various UK higher education (HE) institutions visited Japan between 23 October and 4 November 2011 visiting a total of 14 institutions and organisations. Our travels took us to Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and Nagoya where we combined our study visits with tantalizing glimpses of Japanese culture and tradition. The majority of institutions visited were large, wealthy universities with an interest in making international contacts and sharing best practice. We often met with staff from international offices and although they offered us insight into all our research themes this was inevitably through a lens of internationalisation. We visited institutions that were thriving examples of higher education in Japan and this report demonstrates our findings within this context.

The group was made up of delegates from a number of institutions across England and Wales and represented a significant breadth of higher education experience. The party split into three working groups looking particularly at the following research themes:

- Internationalisation and the Student Experience
- Employability and the Graduate Job Market
- Quality Assurance and Enhancement

Japan has long held a fascination for many western tourists who have gained an appreciation of the culture and history through various media. Some long to visit the quiet tranquility of countryside temples and experience the traditions of the tea ceremony whilst others seek to engage with 'Cool Japan' enjoying manga and anime and the unique youth cultures of

'cosplay' and 'gyaru'. The earthquake and tsunami of March 2011 had a profound and far reaching effect not only on the economy and society of Japan but also detrimentally affected the numbers of tourists visiting the country. Tourism is seen as particularly important in Japan as it increases efforts to globalise. A running theme throughout the visit was their effort to internationalise which aimed to increase its competitiveness on the global stage. In a country where a mere 2.7% of the population is non-Japanese, the Japanese strive for globalisation is seen as a key factor in the country's future economic security. Although internationalisation itself was one of the themes studied, it permeated to a great degree the entire study and provided the main focus of much of the tour.

The role of the University Administrator

Many Japanese institutions are seeking to professionalise their administration, and managers and administrators are increasingly being headhunted from the private sector replacing the traditional role of the academic within the senior management team. The Japan Association of University Administrative Management (JUAM) was established in 1998 to strengthen links between university administrators and managers and to provide a forum for developing skills. The Association of National University Management (ANUM) was established in 2005 as a forum for discussing new strategy and practice within HE management.

University administrators can be broadly divided into 'generalists' who undertake general administrative work and rotate around different departments within a university and 'specialists' who are employed to undertake a specific role (e.g. accountant) and are often licensed to practise. The group met with a great many administrators both at university visits and also at professional development events offered by the JUAM and ANUM. There appeared to be a great variety of

opportunities offered to administrative staff, with larger institutions encouraging the development of skills through further study. Some administrators felt that with the increasingly difficult economic situation facing Japanese universities they needed to focus more than ever on the development of their skills. Bespoke professional development qualifications such as that offered by the Kyoto Consortium are available and focus on the skills and knowledge needed to run an international institution.

Gaining employment within university administration is very competitive and is seen as desirable amongst graduates, many of whom will apply for positions within their own institution. A third of new staff at Kyoto and Tokyo Universities are their own graduates. A number of the administrators do not expect to move from one institution to another and it is felt that those who are able to make significant commitment to their organisations through long working hours would get recognition through promotion.



Tokyo University



Dinner with hosts at Kyoto



Japanese Gardens



With students at Waseda University



Tokyo University

Higher Education Landscape

There are currently 752 universities in Japan. 591 of them are private, meaning they are run by private education corporations and have a great degree of freedom in terms of the fees they charge and the style of education they employ. The government provides some subsidy to these institutions but the majority of government funding for higher education goes to the 86 national institutions. The remaining 75 institutions are public, established and funded by local prefectural governments.

The large number of institutions is not the result of demand from an increasing population of potential students. In 1992 when the number of 18 year olds peaked at 2,500,000 there were 523 universities. In 2011 the population of 18 year olds was 40% less at 1,200,000, yet the number of universities was 752. Similarly, funding for higher education has dropped. It was reported to the group that in the 7 years between 2004 and 2011, the operational grant for national universities has fallen from 2,242 billion Japanese Yen (JPY), which is about £18.4 billion, to 1,153 billion JPY (£9.5 billion). In the same period, subsidies to private universities have dropped from 326 billion JPY (£2.7 billion) to 322 billion JPY (£2.2 billion). The 2007 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report gives the average OECD spend on higher education as 1% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) whilst in Japan it was just 0.5% of GDP. It appears that an inevitable consequence of this drop in funding is that some universities will go bankrupt over the next few years, especially as demographic pressure means competition to attract

student numbers is increasing. Although efforts to grow overseas intake have increased, none of the universities visited were making significant efforts to inflate the numbers of mature students and where 75% of 18 year olds already participate in HE, there seems to be little scope for further expanding that participation rate.

Given the high numbers of institutions and decreasing pool of 18 year olds, it was evident to the group that Japanese institutions operate very much in a market place and that this is becoming more acute year on year. Each year, a survey of Japanese high school students is taken by a private company, 'Recruit', to ascertain how positively the brands of the various universities in the country are viewed and what influences choice of institution. In the current economic and demographic climate, this survey is becoming increasingly important and influential as universities strive to ensure they are communicating effectively with the next cohort of potential students. Universities pay a great deal of time and attention to their brand and undergraduates feel a profound sense of allegiance towards their institution. Of the large, private institutions visited, Waseda and Keio had gift shops. Nagoya University, a public institution sold traditional Japanese cakes with the face of the Vice-President stamped on and Ritsumeikan University, another private institution, had recently introduced a line of University branded sandwiches.

Increasing their global presence, responding to the market and student voice and remaining competitive were messages that were repeated at all of the institutions visited.

University Admissions

Entrance exams are the most common means of entering Japanese universities and high school students generally take different exams for different institutions. They tend to be extremely difficult and entry into the top institutions is very competitive. Keio University, for example, has between 10 and 25 people applying for each place. Exams commonly test English language, maths and essay writing skills as well as other subjects depending on the faculty applied to. Each faculty has a quota of allowed international students.

Institutions including Meiji, Keio and Waseda have an 'escalator hyoshiki' system of entry whereby universities also run high schools, junior high schools, primary schools and in some instances nurseries in association with the university. On graduating high school, if students are not successful in applying for another place, they are guaranteed a place at the institution linked to their high school.

Internationalisation and Student Experience

Japanese higher education and internationalisation

Global 30, the project for establishing core universities for internationalisation, propelled internationalisation to the forefront of Japanese higher education strategy. The project is funded by the Ministry for Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and in 2009, 13 universities were chosen for the programme. The universities selected to take part are each striving to recruit between 3000 and 8000 international students by 2020 and are receiving financial assistance of between 200 and 400 million JPY (£1.6 – £3.3 million) per annum to help achieve this goal.

In addition to supporting international recruitment, the Global 30 project aims to:

- Develop more degree programmes (as well as short courses) that are taught in English, thus making these more accessible for international students;
- Improve the support available to Japanese students going abroad;
- Improve the support available for international students coming to Japan (e.g. Japanese language classes, cultural sessions);
- Promote the development of more long term relationships between Japanese HE institutions and universities around the world (e.g. double degrees); and
- Develop a network of overseas offices that would represent Japanese HE around the world.

Why do universities want to internationalise?

Japanese universities are directed and influenced by government policy to a great degree. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology launched the Global 30 project in response to pressure from industry and the changing Japanese economy. Staff at Meiji University explained that while the Japanese economy was strong in the past, it is no longer homogeneous. Employers therefore, now require their graduates to be able to deal with new markets which require knowledge of different people and cultures.

As the majority of Japanese universities are private, the income generated from fees is fundamental to their survival and the declining birth rate is a threat. International students pay the same fees as home students and international recruitment may provide a vital source of income for many Japanese universities in the future.

Staff at Kansai University noted that the benefits to Japanese students of studying abroad were language proficiency, experience of a different country and culture and personal development. However, the main emphasis in all discussions was the benefit of studying abroad in order to improve the individual's ability to speak and write English. Chinese and Korean students interviewed at Waseda University commented that studying in Japan and learning Japanese at the same time as English made them even more employable when returning to their home country. At Meiji University, English Language programmes cross all disciplinary boundaries consequently highlighting the importance of English language skills.



Paper cranes

How do Japanese universities internationalise?

Internationalisation in Japanese universities is focussed predominately on bringing international students to Japan. In addition, many of the universities the study tour visited were engaged in joint or dual degrees as a method to internationalise their academic programmes and Meiji University also had joint campuses in Malaysia and Egypt. Institutional partnerships are subject to very specific criteria. Usually they are initiated by personal contact and collaboration between individual academics. This is followed by a careful examination of a potential partner's programmes, academic standards, ideology and ranking. Finally the institution must have confidence that their students will have a good experience educationally and personally.

Off-shore programmes, branch campuses and virtual education (distance learning with IT) are not major features of Japanese higher education or the internationalisation strategy.

To recruit international students to Japan, the universities visited by the study tour targeted specific markets. For example, many of the Japanese universities target China and South Korea whereas Nagoya University targets the emerging market of Uzbekistan. Meiji University has international offices in the emerging markets of Tunisia, Laos and Vietnam. Many of the Japanese universities that the study tour met had opened international offices in different countries to recruit new students. Offering degrees in the English language is used to attract a wide range of students.

AUA presentation at Keio University



To a lesser degree, Japanese universities also engage with internationalisation by providing Japanese students with an international experience. Many of the universities visited participate in 'study abroad' fairs where Japanese students can talk to university representatives about studying abroad and receive information on practical arrangements such as finances and cultural differences.

Incoming students to Japanese universities are often provided with Japanese language courses and cultural lessons to help them integrate with the Japanese community. Nationally, the TV station JIBTV runs a programme called Manabiya, providing information to international students wishing to live and study in Japan. There are also multi-language estate agents specialising in accommodation for international students who will assist with visiting properties and the legalities. Some universities will sign as guarantor for rented accommodation. Japanese 'buddies' are partnered with international students and accompany them to fill in all paperwork and help them settle in. Where possible, international students are accommodated with Japanese students to encourage social mixing of cultures and to facilitate linguistic development. The campus facilities that the study group viewed were outstanding and some campuses had their own museums, medical care, shops, hairdressers, gymnasiums, parks and psychological counselling.

Varying degrees of assistance were offered to Japanese students studying abroad ranging from providing orientation sessions prior to departure to providing students with a mobile phone and sending a staff member to bring the student home if they were experiencing difficulties adjusting to their study abroad placement.

How has internationalisation affected the student experience?

From the universities visited, the Japanese student experience includes participating in organised clubs and societies; 'circles' which are informal clubs and societies; and student support centres and counselling. Kansai University noted that international students often get involved in circles and societies which help to enrich their student experience.

Japanese students are used to a different teaching method: the Sensei is the authority figure and disseminates wisdom (and plentiful hand-outs) to support student learning. When international students enter the classroom the Japanese students are often very surprised to find that they will challenge the lecturer with their own ideas and questions. International students may then begin to demand an active two way exchange of ideas and information and while some academics will find this disconcerting and disrespectful, a greater academic debate can enhance a student's intellectual experience.

How successful has internationalisation been?

At Kansai University, in a recent survey which asked employers to rank the importance of personal attributes, communication was ranked at 86% but speaking another language was only ranked at 6%. Many of the universities visited also noted that Japanese companies prefer to recruit new graduates and then provide in-house training on internationalisation. It would appear that whilst companies state that they wish to recruit students with awareness of international economics, culture and business, to be original thinkers and possess the ability to be motivational and innovate, they also wish to ensure that employees adopt their company ideology.

We might surmise therefore, that students with experience of study abroad and a strong sense of 'self' might be viewed with some caution.

There are also financial implications associated with studying abroad. Waseda University highlighted that cost is a big issue for parents. Kansai University noted that parents usually encourage their children to study abroad unless they are financially unable to support their offspring.

Some of the universities that the study tour visited noted Japanese students' lack of confidence meaning that they are increasingly struggling to develop relationships with peers. Many Japanese students live at home therefore they are often very nervous about the prospect of living and studying abroad. Some students take short study courses abroad and we were told they are good way to build confidence of Japanese students in their ability to undertake international study; they also sit more easily with the recruitment cycle. A number of institutions believe that, on the whole, Japanese students are more reluctant to venture abroad than those from other countries.

Conclusion

The study tour queried the longevity of Japanese University and government commitment to internationalisation when the Global 30 project funding ceases in 2020. Current suggestions are for employers or alumni donations to continue to fund internationalisation however, no firm arrangements had been agreed with any of the universities that the study tour visited. It would seem inevitable that the Japanese economy coupled with an ageing population will dictate that a global initiative of some kind will continue and that some Japanese universities may close due to a lack of student numbers.



Student canteen at Doshisha University

Nagoya University library



Doshisha University campus



Halloween zombie student at Kansai University



International Friday Lounge

ともだちを つくりましょう!
おひるごはんをたべながら、はなしませんか。

World meets Japan
Cultural Exchange at Hongo Campus
Make friends with Japanese/international students and staff!
Let's have lunch and chat together!

12:00 - 13:00 Every week

かようび Tuesday
Oct.18-Jan.31

Students Support Center 3F
(Next to Gotenshita Gym)
学生支援センター3階
(御殿下ジムの前)



きんようび Friday
Oct.14-Feb.3

Engineering Building #11
2F (Above Starbucks)
工学部 11号館 2階
(スタバの上)



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International cultural exchange

Employability and the Graduate Job Market



Ki Zu Na international lounge at Kyoto University



Keio University campus

The graduate job market in Japan is quite different to that of the UK. Despite the impact of the economic climate and the recent natural disaster, the job market remains relatively buoyant. Entering higher education is viewed as almost the first step to a guaranteed career path, and the decision about which university to study with is of paramount importance in determining the quality of the company that the graduate will enter.

Graduate Job Market

The Fukushima earthquake and tsunami in March 2011 were a massive shock to Japan. In the immediate aftermath supply lines were severed and manufacturing was massively disrupted or halted altogether. As a result, companies have been less inclined to recruit which has had a negative impact on the employment rates of the latest graduating cohort (March 2011). However, there are signs of recovery and the picture for the graduating class of March 2012 is believed to be much more positive.

Although there have been many concerns raised within the media about the growing graduate unemployment and under-employment rates, several universities stated that they were finding that their graduates were adapting to this changing market by seeking employment in smaller sized companies or working in different sectors, such as media or advertising, and in some cases even setting up their own businesses.

The Japanese economy and employment markets have suffered from what has been described by some as “two lost decades” of recession and stagnation. The traditional electronics and car industries remain the

bedrock of the Japanese economy, but have been hit hard by the high yen and competition from new foreign manufacturers, particularly Korea and Taiwan.

The Japanese cultural industries including tourism, computer games, and music have shown remarkable growth in recent years. However, they still account for only a tiny fraction of total employment and economic output.

Heavy industries such as steel and ship building as well as bio-science have shown signs of growth. This is partly as a result of growing demand from China, and Japan is geographically well positioned to take advantage of new markets in what most predict will soon be the world's largest economy. Kansai University recommends to students the advantages of working in manufacturing or financial companies, due to the continued strength and development of these sectors.

Despite Japanese and foreign companies hiring fewer graduates, the Japanese unemployment rate (5.1%) remains lower than in other developed countries. However, the numbers of part time workers or ‘freeters’ has increased in the constrained economic conditions of

recent years, and it could be said that these workers mask what is actually a much higher unemployment rate than the headline figure.

As is also the case in the UK, there are regional variations to the employment picture in Japan. The economic disparity between Kanto and Kansai has widened in recent years. Tokyo is the seat of the Japanese government, the largest metropolitan economy in the world, and a global financial centre. It boasts diverse employment opportunities for graduates, with large public, financial and service industry sectors.

Meanwhile, Osaka has a much heavier reliance on manufacturing industries for jobs, and has been hit hard by the recession. Yet as a city of 8 million, and for all intents and purposes Japan's second city, it remains a magnet for job seeking graduates from Kansai and Western Japan more widely.

Alumni networks have been very powerful and particularly important among small and medium sized companies as a means of sourcing staff, though these networks are becoming less important than they once were.



Tokyo



Traditional lunch

Reputation, Reputation, Reputation

Although its importance is decreasing, most of the universities we visited reported that corporate companies continue to place massive importance on university reputation.

Many companies have a list of preferred institutions from which they like to draw their next graduate intake. Likewise, company brand is of great importance to a student when they are selecting their employer. Japanese students generally feel that employment with a larger company and the corporate 'salary man' path remains the route to long term job security and career success.

Those students who have managed to navigate the competitive Japanese high school system and university entrance exams to enter one of the more prestigious universities enjoy a huge advantage and frequently have the luxury of several offers of employment. This in itself can be a problem for companies, as they do not know how many offers a student provisionally accepts and consequently companies are sometimes left with unfilled positions.

The graduate employment picture in Japan is beginning to change with increased emphasis on work experience and placements. Japanese students' experience of university has in the past been characterised as a so called 'leisure land' experience, sandwiched between years of dedicated study at high school and the long hours and years in company service, but that too appears to be changing.

Additionally, university brand is perhaps less important among smaller companies, and many new graduates seek to set up their own company, rather than work for a larger firm.

The Global Jinzai

The creation of a 'Global Jinzai' (talent) is the buzz word in Japanese universities. They have come under criticism from employers for not producing graduates who are able to function in a global society. As a result the government initiated the Global 30 initiative (see Internationalisation section).

Companies in Japan are increasingly hiring foreign workers, and with ever increasing globalisation it is necessary for Japanese graduates to be able to work within multicultural workplaces. Proficiency in another language (typically English) or experience of living abroad is often seen as an advantage within such a competitive job market, and employers would prefer their employees to enter with these skills and experiences. For example, in 2010 Google Inc. recruited all eight of its graduate intake in Japan from the School of International Liberal Studies (SILS) at Waseda University, testimony to the highly qualified and globalised students this course produces.

The Kaidan (Japanese Federation of Industry) has introduced a new sponsorship system for those students wishing to study abroad and organise employment fairs specifically targeted at students returning from studies overseas.

Tokyo University is also considering changing its academic year to start in September rather than April. This initiative

would be partly aimed at attracting more International students but also at encouraging Japanese students to take up study opportunities abroad. Should this succeed then based on the prestige of Tokyo University, others would expect to follow suit.

There is a difference between the skills sought by foreign companies based in Japan and traditional Japanese companies. Foreign employers tend to stress to the universities the importance of presentation skills, a positive attitude, the ability to work independently and the confidence to express their opinions in a group environment.

It is apparent that these skills are more evidently provided in those universities with a high proportion of international students, for example, the SILS school in Waseda. This may be due to the Western teaching style that has been adopted which offers more opportunities to develop these skills through presentations and small seminar group discussions.

The Recruitment Process

Companies in Japan recruit new graduates through a fixed schedule known as the Rikunabi process. This job hunting schedule determines which activities students should be undertaking at the correct time in order to secure a position post-graduation, and students must follow the process rigorously. Most companies will recruit a new intake of employees in the April of each year, a month after graduation. This allows them to systemise their graduate intake and all new starters to be trained together and thereby moulded into the company ethos.

In the December of their third year, students begin gathering information and researching companies. Following this, students contact a selected group of employers to request further information and then shortlist which companies they will either visit or meet with at a job fair.

They will then start completing entry sheets, which contains all of their basic information, and if they are successfully shortlisted by a company, they will go through a selection of written examinations and interviews in February and March.

Students generally apply to approximately 20 or 30 companies during this intensive process. Successful applicants will then obtain a job offer in the June of their fourth year and commence employment in the April after their March graduation.

As the application and selection process takes place within year 3, it clashes with most study abroad opportunities thus reducing the numbers participating. Employers have recognised the benefits that studying abroad offers in developing a more globalised human resource and as such are responding to the requests of government and universities in developing a more flexible system.

Due to the fixed recruiting schedule and the preference of companies to employ graduates straight from university, those who have not secured employment by the time they graduate are often at a disadvantage and can encounter problems in securing suitable full-time employment later in life.

Some students who are unable to secure a position instead decide to re-enrol at university for another year in order to stay within the recruiting system, despite having enough credits to graduate.

Careers Support

A number of the top universities that were visited, such as Keio and Meiji, have adopted a western ethos of 'individuality' and 'empowering independence' in their students. Consequently they do not enforce careers support upon their students in the form of compulsory attendance at seminars and advice meetings. Instead students are encouraged to research opportunities themselves, and universities only offer support should they seek it.

Japanese universities do not promote the variety of careers support to the extent that is seen in UK universities. Marketing materials tend to focus on the achievements of alumni rather than the proportion of graduates who are in employment. The graduate employment rate is so high in Japan that it doesn't offer much of a unique selling point.

Each of the universities visited offered a slightly different provision to their students in terms of careers support, and whilst all offered individual consultation meetings with careers advisors, the focus is predominately on supporting students through the Rikunabi process, or organising events such as careers fairs. The University of Fukui offers support through collaboration between their Careers Service Office and Career Support Committees of faculty members.

The presence of alumni on campus is also common across a number of the universities visited. They either provide careers guidance and advice or talk about the nature of their businesses, so that current students are better prepared for the interview process.

Nihon University has a portal site which provides information about job offers and seminars. These seminars are aimed at enhancing the employability and basic knowledge of their students and take place from the first year of study.

Postgraduate Education

Postgraduate education is becoming a more popular route for students unable to find suitable employment. Several universities think that a postgraduate qualification in the fields of Engineering and Natural Sciences remains an advantage and is actively encouraged by employers.

However there is apparently some stigma attached to further study in the Humanities or the Social Sciences, with a perception that these graduates are instead over-qualified and may actually put themselves at a disadvantage in the job market.

The postgraduate education market is popular with international students, and in particular Chinese and Korean students, who progress on to study an MBA which is viewed as an advantageous qualification in their home country.

Conclusion

Due to the decreasing student population and the challenging economic climate, the nature of careers support at Japanese universities is changing. Employers are becoming increasingly more vocal regarding the skills and abilities of Japanese graduates and are placing pressure on the government to instigate reforms. It is evident that the introduction of the Global 30 project, and the funding associated with participation in this initiative, is resulting in greater linguistic ability and global awareness of Japanese students. However, until changes are made to the Rikunabi process to ensure that students studying abroad in their third year are not disadvantaged in terms of their employment prospects, it is unlikely that there will be the significant increase in study abroad students that the government and industry desire.

Japanese lanterns



Local temple in Kyoto



Quality Assurance and Enhancement

History of quality assurance in Japan

External quality assurance (QA) evaluation is closely linked to accountability in terms of the funding background of the institution. In Japan the 86 national universities receive 55% of their income from the government, whereas the 591 private universities receive only 11% and are much more reliant on student fees and private funds. The effect is that affluent students entering the most prestigious universities are heavily subsidised. Despite the wide variation in government funding between national and private universities, the new national external system for university evaluation applies equally to all types of institution.

The School Education Law 1947 (which still applies) stipulated that higher education institutions should undertake self-evaluation and try to improve their quality. In doing so they were expected to recognise their own areas of excellence and their own issues which might need action. So, until 2004, universities were responsible for their own quality and the results were confidential. Ministerial control was limited to approval, through the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA), of applications for the establishment of brand new universities and colleges. The standards which new institutions were expected to meet for approval were set out in the Standards for the Establishment of Universities (SEU) which prescribed the academic courses to be taught and the names of their departments, the student-staff ratio, and the space per student both within buildings and outside them.

If a university wishes to establish a new department or faculty it has to be chartered by MEXT. The process is lengthy, and includes establishing whether there is a market.

Other MEXT quality initiatives include the 'Support Programme for Distinctive University Education' and 'Support Programme for Contemporary Educational Needs'. These involve the selection and funding of particular projects and academic programmes which offer good practice across the sector.

Nagoya University explained that although there were compulsory forms to be completed, MEXT did not approve international exchange programmes.

According to MEXT the current set of regulations is intended to strike a balance between promoting the establishment of new universities, protecting learners from poor provision, and maintaining the international validity of Japanese degrees.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement today

The fundamental reforms of HE in 2004 were partly an attempt to bring in a national system of quality control in response to a perceived decline in teaching quality. The standards for establishing a new university were simplified and, at the same time, it became mandatory for institutions to undergo a seven year periodic external certified evaluation and accreditation.

Three organisations are certified to conduct the mandatory evaluations:

- National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE)
- Japan Institution for Higher Education Evaluation (JIHEE)
- Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA)

NIAD-UE is leading QA of Japanese universities and is the only organisation certified to evaluate any type of institution. NIAD-UE have worked with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the UK as well as QA bodies in other countries. The QAA signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NIAD-UE in 2007.

It is thought that more evaluating organisations may be established as government policy is to celebrate the differentiation between types of HE institutions rather than to standardise. The institution chooses the evaluating body to which it feels it is best suited and the criteria for evaluation are set by the particular evaluating organisation.

The university is sent a substantial questionnaire (a 'self-evaluation report') to complete and return together with documentation. The evaluating organisation scrutinises the evidence and arranges a visit to the university. The visit includes some observation of teaching as well as a meeting with a group of current and recently graduated students. The visiting team will include several experienced personnel from other universities who are seconded to the evaluating organisation for a year.

Lunch with British Council and ANUM



Geisha tins





Evaluation and Accreditation Standards

Purpose of the university	Effectiveness of institutional performance
Education and research structure	Student support
Academic staff and education supporting staff	Facilities
Student admission	Internal quality assurance system
Academic programs	Finance
	Management

Standards for evaluation and accreditation specify aspects, elements or principles for judging the quality of education and research. In its self-evaluation report, each university has to comment on each of standards. The standards comprise eleven items that are considered necessary for every university and college to satisfy.

Each standard is accompanied by 'viewpoints'. Viewpoints are reference points and example data listed under each evaluation standard for subject institutions to refer to when implementing self-assessment. The evaluating university refers to these viewpoints when judging whether an institution's performance meets the standards or not. As well as the viewpoints set out by the evaluating body, the university can add its own viewpoints if it wishes.

In the case of NIAD-UE, judgement on whether the university has met the standards is done by committee: the Committee for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities which holds deliberations concerning evaluations of the overall condition of education and research activities at the University. The committee is comprised of up to 30 individuals, each being a university president, professor, or person with knowledge and experience in fields related to universities, such as society, economy, and culture.

In the case of NIAD-UE a report is produced to the University identifying good practice and making recommendations for improvement, and the report is published on the NIAD-UE website. The University draws up its own action plan. This is not dissimilar from the review method deployed by the QAA in the UK. Once they have been judged to meet all the standards they are given the status of 'qualified institution'. In cases where the institution receives a poor report, there are usually found to be other problems such as low recruitment or financial difficulties.

In discussion with the universities visited it was difficult to ascertain which evaluating organisation had been selected in each case. However, staff at Doshisha University supposed that they had been evaluated by JUAA because a private university cannot choose NIAD-UE (though this is not consistent with information published on the NIAD-UE website or in the OECD report). Some staff at Doshisha thought that the evaluation was bureaucratic but they were pleased to get good results. This lack of clarity regarding evaluating bodies is typical of the information gleaned throughout the visit, perhaps because the staff met were from International Offices.

As well as the seven year evaluations, all incorporated institutions (national universities and junior colleges) have to report annually to MEXT their progress

against their own six year plans and NIAD-UE has a role in the teaching and research aspects of this. These reports are made public in order to establish a high level of trust in higher education among the general population in Japan.

MEXT imposes corrective measures to any institution whose evaluation report is critical. Since the first cycle of university evaluations was only completed in 2011 it is rather early to say whether they have been successful.

Some staff consider that the mandatory self-evaluation is of limited use because the process circumvents specific issues. Some believe it is bureaucratic with a large amount of documentation to produce, and there is no demonstrable improvement in the quality of teaching as a result. This may be a result of the over-riding resistance to state intervention in HE overall.

It is pointed out by the 2009 OECD review that the establishment of several evaluating organisations does not offer the right environment for sharing of good practice across different parts of the HE sector, and the intention of MEXT to certify more of these bodies will exacerbate this unless the evaluating bodies start communicating with each other.

One of the evaluation standards is the university's internal quality assurance system. Universities are expected to review their academic programmes by collecting data, and staff, student and stakeholder opinions and using these to make improvements and to train academic staff.

Those universities visited did not seem to have their own dedicated QA staff. At Keio University, when questioned about introducing new degrees, the response was that the faculties are autonomous and that quality assurance is the responsibility of the faculty. Several universities mentioned that they have a committee which is responsible for internal QA. At Waseda it is run by the academic affairs division and it has a member from each faculty.

The study tour gained the impression that there is considerable resistance to increasing the level of internal quality assurance. A delegate at the NIAD-UE forum in October 2011 stated that evaluation results in box-ticking and a lot of paperwork, and does not improve quality. It appears that academic autonomy is jealously guarded and interference in how they teach is unwelcome. Administrators would not consider telling a lecturer how to do their job. One academic made the point that universities can be trusted to maintain quality because competition between them is so fierce. He was of the opinion that QA is 'probably a waste of time'. Doshisha,

however, confirmed that they do have internal QA systems operating between the external evaluations.

Staff within some institutions indicated that, as long as students entered with high grades, quality was automatically ensured. Some believed that universities should be trusted to provide a quality education without interference from the evaluation organisations. The evaluation process tended to be shrugged off as a box-ticking exercise which was unlikely to have any effect on quality. These findings are supported by the OECD which was of the opinion that quality assurance would have to continue to be externally driven for the near future.

Apart from NIAD-UE evaluation teams which include members from other universities, there was not much evidence of formal peer review or external examining. When asked about comparing standards between institutions, Keio University said that they did talk to other universities through various consortia, particularly in specific subject areas such as engineering.

Student feedback

Feedback from students individually is not approached as it is in the UK, which is normally via surveys, evaluations and presence at committees.

NIAD-UE expressed their interest on how we engage students in QA, and have been in touch to find out how they can put students at the heart of their QA systems. At an institutional level, universities have their own methods. At Waseda University, students are asked to give feedback on their programmes and lecturers anonymously, after assessment has taken place, and changes are made as a result. There is an independent student experience survey at Fukui University which has a large response rate and asks detailed feedback on courses, but also independent study time, eating habits, etc. One professor also mentioned that a particular university asks students for any feedback on their university experience, which goes straight to the President (equivalent to Vice Chancellor) of that institution.

Student representation through elected course representatives and sabbatical officers via Student Unions are not present in Japan.

It should be noted that there are cultural differences here that play a part, which international students addressed. Japanese students tend to be far less participative and outspoken than international students at the same institution. This in turn means they do generally not give feedback without being asked.



Visiting MEXT



Golden Temple in Kyoto



AUA presentation

Kansai University campus



Japanese lanterns



Mount Fuji from Lake Ashi



Bullet train



Dual degrees

Many Japanese universities have introduced dual degree programmes in order to promote international links. By 2008, 84 universities had established dual degree programmes, 9 of them with EU countries including the UK.

Keio has four undergraduate and two postgraduate dual degrees in science and technology with French universities. They select partners very carefully and build up the relationship gradually, starting with exchange visits. Waseda has 74 students on dual degrees with China (including a doctoral programme with Peking University), other parts of Asia, and one in the US in Japanese literature. Doshisha has dual degrees with a number of French Grandes Écoles (Paris, Lille, Lyon, Nantes, Marseille) and a new one with Politecnico di Milano, the largest technical university in Italy. Lille University has a special Masters for their foreign dual degree students called a Mastère Spécialisé (Specialised or Advanced Masters). These students (who spend two years at each partner and may choose to do their Masters in either French or Japanese) are also awarded Master of Engineering by Doshisha. The French part of the degree is taught; the Japanese part is research based so it suits both future academics and those who want to go into industry.

So far, MEXT has not been directly involved in the QA of dual degrees. It is thought that regulations nationally might insist that a dual undergraduate degree would last five years, and the acceptability of one thesis for two PhDs is also likely to be questioned.

International sharing of QA knowledge and practice

Japanese certified evaluation organisations are collaborating with quality assurance and accountability bodies in other countries, as demonstrated by international study trips as well as conferences and publications through initiatives such as Campus Asia. The NIAD-UE forum demonstrated a clear wish on the part of Japanese national bodies to move quality assurance onto a comparable footing with other developed countries such as the UK. It is also clear that the drive to internationalise Japanese universities may help this agenda at the institutional level.

Demographics and their effect on QA development

The 2009 OECD review of Japanese higher education makes the point that the falling number of 18 year olds in Japan could either hasten or slow the development of quality assurance in Japan. On the one hand, as institutions compete for a

shrinking pool of applicants they are forced to improve their quality in order to attract students. On the other hand, less able applicants may be able to gain entry to more prestigious institutions, potentially diluting their quality. The review suggests that MEXT could encourage quality improvement through competition between universities by ensuring that the ones which do not promote good teaching and learning to attract new students are not allowed to remain in the market.

Conclusion

The importance of assuring quality and standards in Japanese higher education cannot be overestimated. The 2009 OECD review stated that Japanese HE institutions are 'demonstrably well-managed, efficient, of high quality and competitive in an emerging global - and not just national - marketplace'. In particular the kosen, the Colleges of Technology, are praised for their high levels of quality assurance, developed in response to local rather than national needs. However, in some instances, the quality of the education being offered is often called into question, both by public opinion and by institutions themselves.

Points for reflection and learning

The study tour visit to Japan resulted in a great deal of learning about the higher education system and individual institutions. The group as a whole were impressed at the fantastic facilities provided along with the demonstrable commitment to internationalisation and continuous improvement of the service provided. The drastic demographic changes mean that amendments to many facets of the HE system are necessary and the study tour group found that the following measures in particular were noteworthy examples of these efforts:

- The establishment of the Global 30 project to increase the numbers of international students studying within Japan as well as producing 'Global Jinzai' by encouraging domestic students to spend time abroad. This project has resulted in the establishment of numerous exchange agreements as well as short summer courses for international students;
- Synchronisation – in an effort to facilitate international exchange, some universities are considering changing the academic year to run from the autumn. Tokyo University for example has announced this intention;
- Awareness and strengthening of brand and reputation alongside the monitoring of brand perception amongst potential undergraduates;
- Engagement with the student experience;
- Continual improvements to internal and external quality measures including engagement with overseas institutions and learning from best practise;
- Administrators and managers are increasingly seeking to professionalise their own service and engage with continuous career and skills development.

As with the HE sector in the UK, the Japanese HE sector has to respond in the short term to ensure the health of the sector in the long term.

Laura, Susan and Ilze



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Laura, Mark and Harriet



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Jill

Useful Links

Higher Education Organisations

British Council

www.britishcouncil.org/japan.htm

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

www.mext.go.jp/english/

JUAM

juam.jp

ANUM

anum.jp

Kyoto Consortium

www.consortium.or.jp/

NIAD-UE

www.niad.ac.jp/english/index.html

National Universities

Kyoto University

www.kyoto-u.ac.jp/en

Nagoya University

www.nagoya-u.ac.jp/en/

Private Universities

Keio University

www.keio.ac.jp/

Meiji University

www.meiji.ac.jp/cip/english/

Waseda University

www.waseda.jp/top/index-e.html

Kansai University

www.kansai-u.ac.jp/English/index-e.htm

Doshisha University

www.doshisha.ac.jp/english/

Other links

Campus Asia

studylink-japan.blogspot.com/2010/04/campus-asia-launched-first-japan-china.html/

Global 30

www.uni.international.mext.go.jp/global30/

Japan Times

www.japantimes.co.jp/works/career_development.html

Jib TV 'Manabiya'

jibtv.com/info/manabiya/

OECD Review of Tertiary Education: Japan (published 2009)

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/12/42280329.pdf

QAA and NIAD-UE

www.qaa.ac.uk/AboutUs/corporate/Documents/NIADUE.pdf

Glossary

ANUM	Association of National University Management
Campus Asia	The Japan-China-Korea Committee for Promoting Exchange and Cooperation among universities
Escalator hyoshiki	A system of entry whereby universities also run high schools, junior high schools, primary schools and in some instances nurseries in association with the university, which guarantee students a place at that university
Freeters	Part time workers
Global 30	A Japanese government project for establishing core universities for internationalisation
Global Jinzai	Global talent
Grandes écoles	French higher education institutions outside of the normal university system
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HE	Higher education
JIBTV	A Japanese national TV station
JIHEE	Japan Institution for Higher Education Evaluation
JUAA	Japan University Accreditation Association
JUAM	Japanese Association of University Administrative Management
JPY	Japanese Yen
Kaidan	Japanese Federation of Industry
Kosen	Colleges of Technology
Manabiya	A programme run by JIBTV providing information to international students wishing to live and study in Japan
Mastère Spécialisé	French specialised or advanced Masters
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
NIAD-UE	National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Politecnico di Milano	The largest technical university in Italy
QA	Quality assurance
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for higher education
Rikunabi	The recruitment process employers use to select graduates
SEU	Standards for the Establishment of Universities
SILS	School of International Liberal Studies, Waseda University



Behaviours developed to underpin effective performance and achievement of tour objectives

Achieving results

- Writing the report (writing collaboratively)
- Meeting the brief set
- Acquisition of knowledge about Japanese HE and three key themes
- Acquisition of knowledge about UK HE in other institutions through networking
- Ability to extract information from meetings through developing effective questioning techniques suitable for cultural context
- Establishing networks
- Use of social media (wikis, blogs, twitter) – measuring the number of 'hits'/followers to ascertain impact

Delivering excellent service

- Ambassadors for the AUA and our institutions
- Sharing best practise with JUAM/ANUM colleagues
- Enhancing the profile of the AUA and individual members

Embracing Change

- Appreciating and being sensitive to cultural differences. Adapting our approach as appropriate to get the most out of meetings
- Independent learning in an unfamiliar setting
- Change of lifestyle, working hours and working patterns (face to face collaboration)
- Use of social media (wikis, blogs, twitter)

Providing direction

- Pre-meeting briefings
- Report will potentially provide direction to people relevant to change in the future
- Organising the tour

Managing self and personal skills

- Cultural Awareness
- Using skills of individual participants in three subject areas
- Using knowledge of individuals in team
- Working effectively as a team and being aware of behaviour as individuals and as a group

Using resources

- Use of social media (wikis, blogs, twitter)
- Extracting information from written material in a critical way
- Being aware of the limitations of the information.
- Making sense of a variety of forms of information (written, visual, verbal, web etc) and synthesising into the usable and helpful format
- Conducting interviews with Japanese colleagues through interpreters
- Use of each others knowledge
- Establishing a directory of contacts in Japan

Developing self and others

- Increasing knowledge of HE in a Japanese context and also gaining knowledge of UK HE in different contexts
- Presentation skills
- Report writing skills
- Disseminating information about the tour and encouraging potential future participants
- Confidence building
- Engaging with professional development events for JUAM members and administrators from individual institutions
- Demonstrating the activities of the AUA to JUAM members

Working with people

- Working effectively as a tour group
- Working with people from different types of institutions and backgrounds
- Working with colleagues in Japanese institutions
- Networking
- Building an effective team quickly
- Building lasting relationships with team members for future collaborations
- Collaborative writing to produce report

Finding innovative solutions

- Use of social media (wikis, blogs, twitter)
- Arranging ad-hoc meeting with students at Waseda (networking)

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