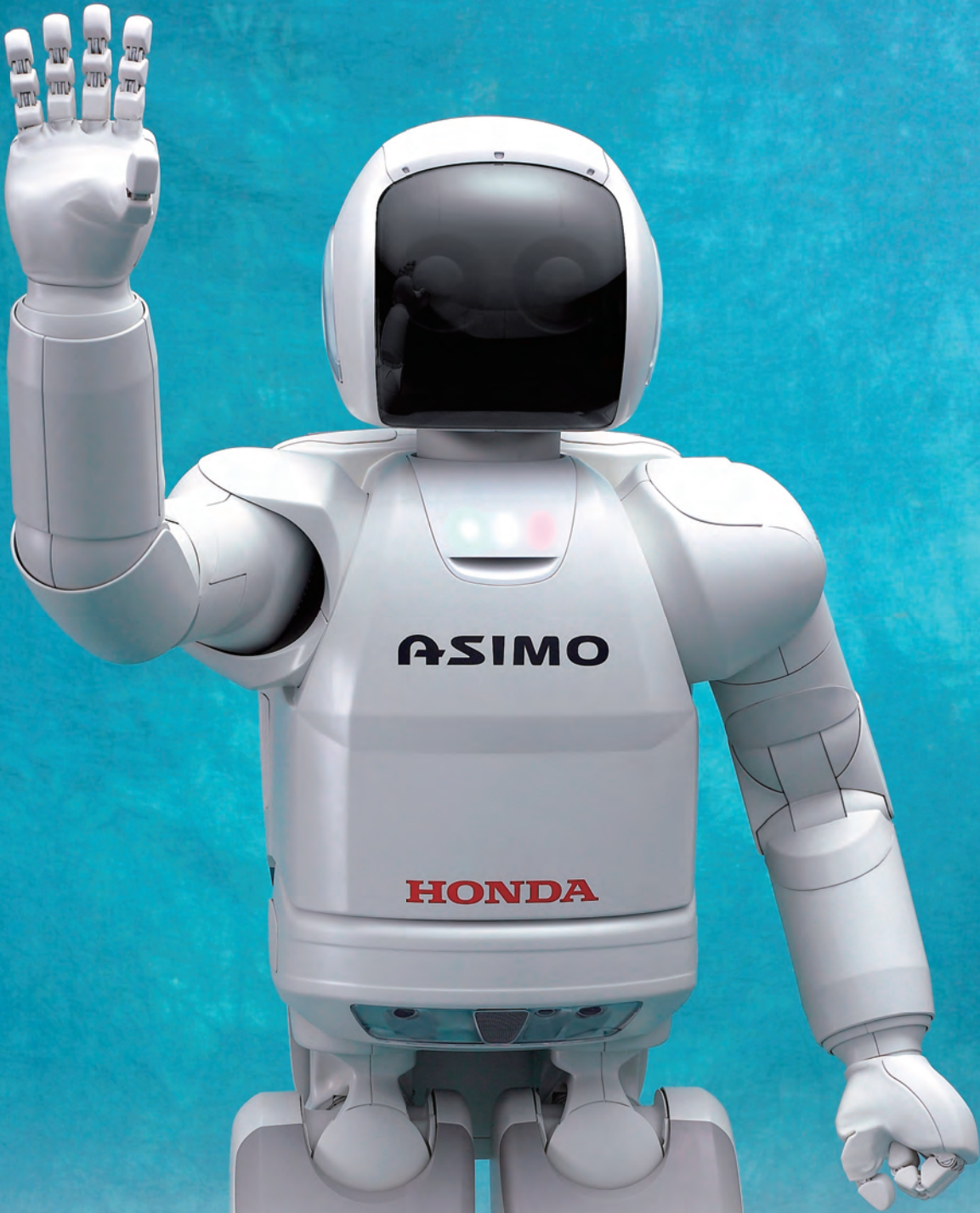


# Japan Panorama

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No. 01



On March 11, 2011, Japan was hit by a devastating earthquake of unparalleled intensity, and the tsunami that resulted from the temblor caused tremendous damage and loss of life. However, thanks in part to the warm expressions of sympathy and the donations received from around the world, we have already started on the long path to recovery. Japan is a small country with many active volcanoes, and we have seen more than our fair share of natural disasters. Each time one occurs, we learn a new lesson, which we apply to the areas and fields affected. Continuing improvements and endless efforts have resulted in a nation that's safe, worry-free, and beautiful. At the Japan Panorama, which is designed to show some of the more appealing aspects of our country, we are concentrating on the sciences, which are very much a part of our wellspring of strength, and sending information about studying in Japan and about some of the more interesting universities that have programs for international students. In addition, we offer an idea about our language and our culture, part of what will make your lives as international students in Japan so enjoyable.



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### "ARIGATO"

Our heartfelt gratitude

May we express our deepest appreciation for the support Japan has received from around the world after the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. Thank you so very much.

Again, we wish to thank those who sent expressions of condolence and a seemingly endless stream of help and assistance of every kind to the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. We were greatly encouraged and give strength through your prayers and your messages. Now, the whole country is rising to the challenge, and taking vital steps toward eventual total recovery.

Japan Center, Tokai University, Ritsumeikan University, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, Yamaguchi University, Sophia University, Sendagaya Japanese Institute, Japan Panorama editorial staff.



Memorial service for earthquake victims held at the Japan Center, Cambodia





# Shinkansen: Japan's Bullet Train of High Technology

*Japan is justifiably proud of its technological prowess. However, much of it comes from our takumi no waza system of masters and apprentices, the foundation of our tradition and history of constant improvement and innovation. The “Five S” system of Sorting, Setting in order, Sweeping up, Standardizing, and Sustaining discipline is well known, as is kaizen, which is understood everywhere. But our technology is not only in manufacturing. In Japan, natural disasters have helped us develop excellent disaster-prevention technology. Let us now introduce the technologies that helped make the Japan of today: railways, robots, and disaster prevention.*



On March 11, 2011, at 14:46, when the magnitude 9.0 Great East Japan Earthquake hit, 19 Shinkansen bullet trains of the Tohoku Shinkansen Line were on the tracks, and two were moving at some 240 km/h. Yet all 19 trains were able to slow and stop without a single injury. And for this reason, safety, Japan's Shinkansen are once more the focus of international attention.

Director Noriyoshi Yamagami, General Manager

of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Railway Bureau, International Strategy Office said, “We learned a lot from the Great Awaji-Hanshin Earthquake of 1995, which toppled bridges and elevated expressways, and we wrapped all the piers of our elevated Shinkansen tracks with steel for quake resistance. Then, in 2004, the Niigata-Chuetsu quake struck, and our measures were totally justified. We've built upon

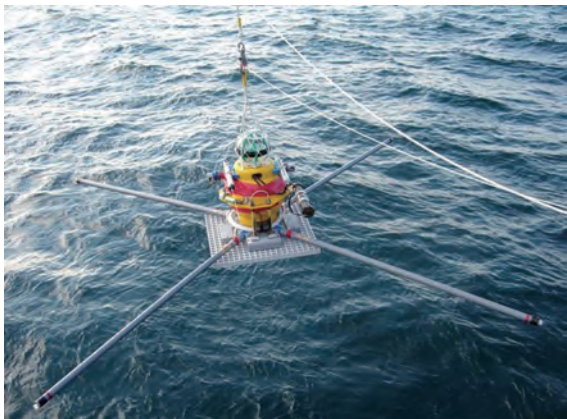
past experience to enable Shinkansen trains to withstand the effects of massive quakes.” Yamagami specifically praised the Earthquake Early Warning System. It sensed the very first small tremors of big quake and cut the power to the trains travelling at 270 km/h, and then engaged their emergency brakes, so when the big shake began some 70 seconds later, the trains had already slowed and accidents were completely avoided.

Japan was first to develop a high-speed train. The Shinkansen concept came in the 1950s, and the trains began running in 1964. Ten days later, people who had gathered in Tokyo for the Olympic Games, praised the “bullet” train. It first ran to Osaka, connecting Tokyo with western Japan and contributing to our economic growth. For 46 years now, Shinkansen trains have operated with no deaths and no late arrivals over one minute. Naturally, we are proud of our record of safety and reliability. Now, the Shinkansen network grows northward and southward and westward to connect the entire country with high-speed rail service. Yamagami says, “Railroads carry large numbers of people, arriving on time, regardless of the weather. The Shinkansen network does that at very high speeds with a superb safety record. This transportation network transformed our society, and it's an excellent example of Japan's technological prowess.”

Japan's urban rail infrastructure carries high-density traffic, safely and accurately. For example, 76% of all passengers transported in Japan each year go by rail. That's nearly four times the percentages of New York or London. Rail transport is vital to the lives and businesses of people in Tokyo. A good rail system emits little CO2, uses little power, is gentle to the environment, and is safe for children and the elderly alike. Such systems help a city grow and support additional development, as well as information and business exchanges, and they connect people to people. Yamagami said, “Building a railroad system is like building towns and cities, and like building a dream.” ■

## Technology to Help Our Nation Cope with Natural Disasters

On March 11, 2011, the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami caused tremendous damage in Japan. “But we have not given up,” says Yoshimori Honkura, Professor Emeritus at the Tokyo Institute of Technology. Beginning 10 years ago, Japanese scientists have been measuring crustal changes on the sea floor with the aim of developing technology that can predict the size and position of future tsunami, and at last, the technology is about to be realized. “As an engineer, I never want to see this kind of damage happen again. I hope we can help minimize the impact of tsunami in the years to come.”



A Turkish-Japanese research team studies the edge of a tectonic plate located offshore south of Istanbul. The team is placing an electromagnetic instrument on the sea floor.

Japan is an island nation with an undulating topography that is prone to floods and landslides, yet technology has helped preserve and protect this beautiful country. Japan sends its knowledge abroad

and works to build human and technological networks. And since Japan has been the victim of some terrible natural disasters, people look to us for answers in some cases and for assistance in others. ■

## A New Tomorrow with Robots

Robots are the amalgamation of the dreams of many sciences. For example, on the assembly line, robots can take the place of people where heavy lifting is necessary, and they can do inspections and repairs in dangerous environments. In advanced societies, where labor is scarce, robots can do the dirty, dangerous work instead of people. And in emerging economies, they can help ensure better and more stable quality.

Recently, development of robots to help enhance people's quality of life and act as their partners has continued apace. Honda began working on a human-like robot in 1986, and announced Advanced Step in Innovative Mobility (ASIMO) in 2000. ASIMO proved that robots could walk on two legs, something that had proved elusive before. New improvements come every year as researchers seek produce a robot that looks human and acts human and has the intelligence to act on

its own. As a global leader in robotics, Japan hopes to develop systems in which humans and robots can coexist and complement each other to bring about something new in the future. ■







Japan: A Nation of Soft Power

Experience COOL JAPAN through Comics

Almost everyone in the world is aware of COOL JAPAN, whether via comics, anime, games, J-Pop, fashions, or food, and our pop culture sets global trends.



Animight Akihabara, a popular anime shop in the middle of Akihabara

Tsuyoshi Shimizu, GM at Animight Akihabara, a popular anime shop in the middle of Akihabara, Japan's generator of pop culture, had this to say: "Japan's comics have their very own universes, and their worlds are tremendously varied. And part of their popularity also lies in

the techniques used in positioning the frames and in setting up the characters."

Many international students in Japan first became interested in Japanese through comics. In fact, you might say that comics are the first chance many people have to experience Japanese culture and real Japanese language. *Naruto* and *One Piece* are hits in Japan and abroad, for example. Shimizu says, "Neither of

An international student on Japanese anime

Miguel Jose Solano Romagosa (Costa Rica)



I was raised on anime like *Saint Seiya* and *Dragonball*, and older kids urged me to read comics so I started reading them at about 14. The great thing about *manga* comics are their story lines and careful setups for the characters. The drawings are also very well done. Also, I was able to learn about Japanese culture and food by reading *manga* comics. In Costa Rica, we have no place like Akihabara where stores that deal only in comics or games are all lined up one after the other. I was so excited the first time I went to Akihabara.

these works deal with the real world, which may be part of the reason for their popularity." He suggests *Berserk*, a comic scheduled to be turned into a movie. "The creator, Kentaro Miura, does a marvelous job of detailing his universe. It's much different than comics aimed at youth audiences, and is new and stimulating."

Japanese culture, mentality, language, cityscapes, eras . . . you'll find all of COOL JAPAN in Japanese comics.

Working in Japan

Many of the non-Japanese who are planning to study in Japan also hope to work here. We asked Kaori Taguchi, an international consultant at DISCO Inc., a company that holds employment events for foreign students in Japan, to tell us what the employment situation for them is like.

In late June 2011, DISCO Inc. conducted a survey on employment activities at some 17,000 companies in Japan. We received answers to our questionnaire from more than 1,000 companies, and from the results of the survey, we concluded that the number of companies seeking to hire non-Japanese graduates is on the rise. In last year's survey, 16.2% of responding companies indicated that would probably hire new non-Japanese graduates in fiscal 2011. In the current survey (for FY2012), that percentage jumped significantly, to 20.9%. Many companies are looking to establish businesses in emerging economies, especially in Asia, and are aggressively hiring students from Asia who have studied in Japan. A wide range of companies are expecting to hire non-Japanese graduates, including those in IT and software, marketing, research, development, and engineering.

The most important skill Japanese employers look for in new hires is communication ability. Taguchi says, "Rather than each individual's skill level, Japanese companies look for individuals, both Japanese and non-Japanese, who can work well as a team and move forward to expand the business." That said, if students can learn Japanese culture and Japanese values, ways of thinking, and business customs, they will have that a real advantage in their job search. Fully 99.5% of companies in Japan are small and medium-sized businesses, and a great many of them boast world-class technology, which is something non-Japanese students should be aware of. This is a very important point that can help students find the kind of job they really want to do.

In recent years, more and more companies have participated in DISCO Inc.'s Career Forum for Non-Japanese Students, while an increasing

number of international students plan to pursue careers in Japan. Japanese companies are actively seeking to hire new non-Japanese graduates, so now is the time to seriously consider finding a career in Japan.



Career forum for international students

A message from Ibragimov Shohruhbek (Uzbekistan)

Yanmar Co., Ltd.  
Graduated from the University of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU)

I went to work at Yanmar because a great many people in my country, Uzbekistan, make their living by farming, and I felt that by selling Yanmar's agricultural machinery to them, I could help them achieve more prosperprosperous lives. Also, I wanted to make a difference on a large scale.

Right now, I'm working in logistics services, but at Yanmar, I'm able to gain experience in many departments within a short time. Yanmar's new employee training program is very good, and has taught me a great deal about being a member of society as well. As a student at APU, I was able to meet and get to know other students from many different countries, and that helped me gain a very broad point of view during my studies. At the same time, I gained a network of friends that now circles the globe, and I think that network will be invaluable in my future business.

Looking ahead, I want to be an executive who can be effective anywhere in the world, and I hope to expand Yanmar business to Central Asia, too.



Shohruhbek is at the right



# Pursue Your Dreams: Study in Japan

Japan has produced Nobel Laureates in chemistry, physics, medicine, literature, and other fields. And most people are aware of world-leading Japanese technology in the form of Shinkansen bullet trains and automobiles, of anime and video games. Naturally, Japanese institutes of higher learning are the ideal places to master the latest technologies in these sectors and many others. Here, we'll provide some information on choosing the right school as well as introduce university research groups that welcome non-Japanese students.



## Important points to consider when choosing a university

As of May 1, 2010, there were 141,744 international students in Japan. The Japanese government has an aggressive program to attract international students, and expects to see aims to accept up to 300,000 international student by the year 2020. In 2008, the government designated 13 universities as specialists in curricula for international students. As a result, the number of universities that allow students to obtain academic degrees by studying only in English has increased, and foreign students now have a much broader choice.

Institutes of higher education that accept international students include universities, junior colleges, graduate schools, and colleges of technology and special training colleges—more than 1,000 in all. It might be advantageous to note that

many international students enroll in Japanese language schools to learn the language before they pursue their long-term educational goals.

Toshio Yoshino of Japan Student Services Organization, which provides support for international students, says, "One of the most important points to consider when choosing an institute of higher education is to plan your period of study carefully. For example, if you plan to become a researcher, you'll want to study at graduate school; if you want to become a technician, then a college of technology or a special training school would be best. So the best school to attend depends on your study objective and the kind of knowledge and skills you will need. That's why I urge you to think carefully about what you want to achieve by studying in Japan."

In addition, you might find it important to gather information from school Web sites. Many

schools require Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Student (EJU) or a minimum score on the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. Some also conduct admission interviews for students or ask them to submit application essays; the requirements vary with the institution. You'll also need to know about the curriculum, the school terms, admission requirements, tuition and fees, and so on. In recent years, more and more schools have sent teams abroad to interview prospective students. See if the school of your choice does that. Yoshino adds, "If a school accepts many students from your country, you can assume it understands your country's customs and culture, and such schools should be among your top choices."

Be sure to ask for assistance, as you can apply for some scholarships and grants before leaving your country. Talk to the professors at the school, gather information, and make the most of your learning experience. ■

## Online Information on study in Japan

- Gateway to study in Japan:  
<http://www.g-studyinJapan.jasso.go.jp/en/>
- JUMP New study opportunities in Japan:  
<http://www.uni.international.mext.go.jp/>
- Study in Japan:  
<http://www.studyJapan.go.jp/jp/index.html>
- Scholarships for Study in Japan:  
[http://www.jasso.go.jp/study\\_j/scholarships\\_e.html](http://www.jasso.go.jp/study_j/scholarships_e.html)



## Sophia University

Contact: Admissions Office

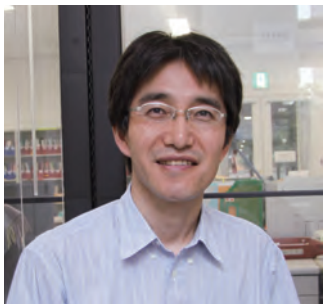
Tel: 81-3-3238-4018

Email: [admission-u@cl.sophia.ac.jp](mailto:admission-u@cl.sophia.ac.jp)

URL: [http://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/e\\_top/admissions](http://www.sophia.ac.jp/eng/e_top/admissions)

## Science knows no borders

### Educating world-class environmental scientists and engineers



Department  
of Engineering and  
Applied Sciences

**Professor  
Tomi OHTSUKI**

Founded in 1913, Sophia, a private university, has a history of leading-edge study and research. Sophia's programs to internationalize the curriculum led to its listing among "Global 30," more effective international universities in Japan by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. New programs starting in 2012 include a BS in green science as well as one in green engineering, both taught in English.

Global warming and other environmental issues have made the development of eco-friendly technology an international concern, and environmental industries will soon be important markets. Sophia's courses will prepare new environmental scientists and engineers to contribute to these emerging fields.

Bachelor candidates in the green science program learn environmental issues at the atomic and molecular levels and study the eco-friendly material properties. Bachelor candidates in the green engineering program learn electrical and mechanical engineering skills to help develop energy conservation technology, efficient power generation, and more effective distribution and transmission of power.

Professor Tomi Ohtsuki says, "In this major, students are expected to learn broad fields of science and technology related to environmental issues." First, students learn the basics of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology, as well as information science. Then they move on to environmental issues, including technology, sociology, political science, and economics, to widen their view points. Courses are taught in English at Sophia's Liberal Arts Faculty as well. Both the liberal arts and the science and technology faculties are conveniently located at the Yotsuya Campus.

Each major requires students to enhance their skills in specific subjects. Sophia's Science and Engineering Departments have professors focusing on various fields of science and technology,

offering highly specialized courses. Students are also encouraged to advance to the Graduate School programs, which are also taught in English.

Entrance is based on high school grades, SAT, ACT, or IB scores, letters of recommendation, essay, and TOEFL or IELTS scores. In addition to existing scholarships, a new scholarship for these programs will also start. Professor Ohtsuki says, "We want to train experts with a good understanding of scientific basics, who can view the environmental issues from a broad perspective, and can lead future research and technology." ■

International students in class at







# Tokai University

Contact: Office of Admission Service for International Student <OASIS>

Address: 4-1-1 Kitakaname, Hiratsuka-shi, Kanagawa, 259-1292 Japan

Tel: +81-463-58-1211 / Email: oasis@tokai.ac.jp

URL: <http://www.u-tokai.ac.jp/international/index.html>

## Study the advanced technology needed to design and build long bridges

Learn Japan's latest civil engineering technology and use it to help your country



School of Engineering  
Department of  
Civil Engineering

**Professor  
Shunichi  
NAKAMURA**

Tokai University is a private institution that offers 90 disciplines, majors, and courses in 21 schools. Non-Japanese account for about 600 of our 30,000 students. They come from China and Korea, from Malaysia, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian nations, and from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and other Middle Eastern countries.

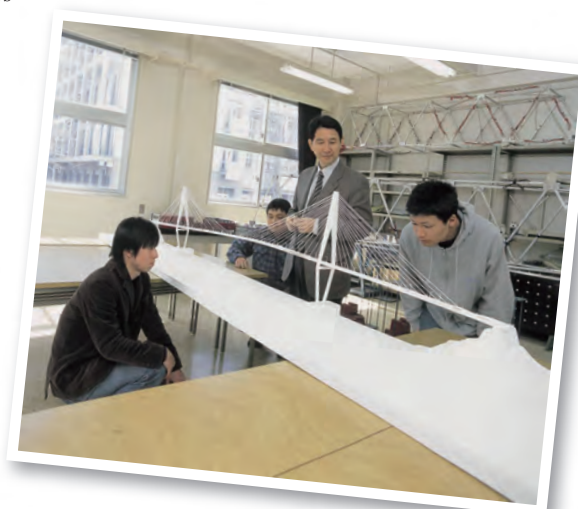
In April 2011, several of our graduate schools introduced majors that can be completed with courses taught only in English. We also offer a course in English called "Japanese Studies for Global Citizens" to help international students understand Japanese culture and society. This can be taken as part of a student's minor.

In particular, we wish to introduce the research laboratory of Professor Shunichi Nakamura in the Civil Engineering Department of the Graduate School of Engineering. The laboratory's study focuses on the design of large, long bridges, which are not only beautiful to the eye but also require some of the world's most sophisticated engineering. Professor Nakamura was a member of the engineering teams that created the Akashi Straits Bridge and the Aqua Line Bridge, and he draws on these experiences in teaching his classes.

"Large, long bridges tend to flex in the wind," Professor Nakamura says "In fact, some bridges have even been destroyed by wind. So they must be able to stand such flexing, and that will require a very high level of engineering. We'll study ways to deal with flexing caused by wind or earthquakes. Ways to make bridges last longer are also part of our study."

Courses cover topics such as theories of applied dynamics and theories of structural vibrational sciences, all in English.

Professor Nakamura continues: "In our research lab we'll study methods of designing civil engineering structures, and students will learn the standards set by national and local authorities as well as academic theory. Japan's latest construction technology can be used in any country, and if the country doesn't have relevant regulations, Japanese standards may serve as a model. Come and join us. Learn what you need to help your own country." ■



# Yamaguchi University

Contact: Graduate School Section, Graduate School of  
Economics, Yamaguchi University

Address: 1677-1 Yoshida, Yamaguchi-shi, Yamaguchi

E-mail: [ec191@yamaguchi-u.ac.jp](mailto:ec191@yamaguchi-u.ac.jp) / TEL: 083-933-5597

FAX: 083-933-5514 / URL: <http://www.yamaguchi-u.ac.jp/english/>

## Good governance is a global trend

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Department of  
Law & Economics,  
Faculty of Economics,  
&  
Chairperson of steering  
committee for Public  
Administration Course,  
Graduate School of  
Economics

**Associate Professor  
Eri HABU**

Yamaguchi University, a national university founded in 1815, has produced some of Japan's greatest leaders, including those who conceived and implemented the nation's modernization after the end of the feudal system in 1867.

The Graduate School of Economics offers a Public Administration Course entirely in English aimed at helping foreign students learn fundamental theories and advanced, practical skills in public administration, based on Japanese experience in policy development and administrative reform.

Central and local governments around the world are working to strengthen their ability to enact administrative reform and fight corruption – urgent issues in achieving good governance.

Yamaguchi is a regional prefecture that went

through several administrative reforms in Japan's decentralization strategy. During these processes, faculty members have gained unique skills in research and advisory roles to local governments. Yamaguchi University stands out among national universities with capability to provide solutions to local and regional governments.

The course curriculum is carefully designed to give students a solid foundation in the theory and practice of public administration and public economic policy as follows:

- To nurture an objective and logical capacity to evaluate practical administrative affairs through an understanding of major theories of public administration,
- To acquire expertise specific to government reform in local administration and decentralization,
- To develop practical ways to cope with corruption and evaluate administrative projects applying good governance.

Students also have the opportunity to do hands-on research with national and local



International students visit the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

government agencies in Japan, and get an inside look at the structure and institutions of Japanese public administration.

Graduates of the program are now back in their home countries applying traditional and modern theories of public administration, helping shape their nation's futures while building their own leadership skills.

More than 320 international students from 32 countries are studying at Yamaguchi University. Japanese language courses are available free of charge to international students, along with up to one year of tutoring and a range of other scholarship and support programs. ■





# Ritsumeikan University

Contact : International Center at BKC, Ritsumeikan University  
Address : 1-1-1 Noji Higashi, Kusatsu, Shiga, 525-8577, JAPAN  
TEL: +81-77-561-3946/E-mail: cger-bkc@st.ritsumei.ac.jp  
URL: <http://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/eng/>

## Robots take their cues from living creatures

### Nurturing researchers and engineers who excel in both theory and execution



Biomimetic Intelligent Mechatronics Laboratory,  
Department of Robotics  
Graduate School of Science  
and Engineering

**Professor  
Shugen MA**

Ritsumeikan is a century-old private university with its main campus in Kyoto, Japan's ancient capital. We aggressively promote internationalism, and are among the 30 universities chosen by the Ministry of Education for its internationalization program. Students can earn degrees through courses taught entirely in English, and we currently have more than 1,000 international students in bachelor and graduate courses. The Department of Robotics in the College of Science and Engineering is one that offers degree programs entirely in English. Here, we would like to introduce the Biomimetic Intelligent Mechatronics Laboratory in the Graduate School of Science and Engineering.

"We can learn from animals and the natural world," says Professor Shugen Ma. "That will

help us build robots that are based on very simple principles, yet can move quickly and flexibly in varied and difficult environments. We want to build robots to help society." Consider, for example, the snake-like robot Professor Ma holds in the picture. It was developed after analyzing how snakes can move over mountainous terrain or through jungles with complete ease, and slip through very tight places. He is also thinking of using the robot in rescue situations, such as saving people who are buried beneath rubble.

Professor Ma says, "Students in my laboratory must be energetic self-starters." When beginning a research project, the student must consider the project's novelty, its theoretical practicality, and its likely impact on society. In the laboratory, probable movements can be simulated with the computer, and we can build actual robots if an idea looks promising. The laboratory concentrates on hands-on teaching and learning. Students are expected to present papers in school and to academic societies, and they will gain the real-world knowledge and skills researchers and engineers need. More than half of the laboratory

members are non-Japanese.

The laboratory expects students to have an active intellectual curiosity. "We want our students constantly to ask 'Why?' They should think up their own research objectives, and thereby grow and learn the necessary skills to take part in decision-making in a corporate or research institution setting," says Professor Ma. Graduates from our Department of Robotics now do leading-edge robotics work at world-class corporations such as Toyota, Fujitsu, and Kawasaki Heavy Industries. ■

## Voice

### A comment from Ho Anh Van (Vietnam)

I decided to study here because my supervisor at Hanoi University of Technology, who holds a PhD in robotics from Ritsumeikan, praised the quality of the department and its diverse, world-class faculty. State-of-the-art laboratory equipment and easy access to books and other resources really help me pursue my research. My professor is always supportive and offers advice on my current research and future plans. I have interned at two major corporate research centers and hope to further my career in Japan – eventually, I would love to join the faculty here at Ritsumeikan.



# Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

Contact: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Admissions Office  
Tel: +81-977-78-1119 Fax: +81-977-78-1121  
[Undergraduate]  
URL: <http://admissions.apu.ac.jp> E-mail: [welcome@apu.ac.jp](mailto:welcome@apu.ac.jp)  
[Graduate]  
URL: <http://www.apu.ac.jp/graduate> E-mail: [apugrad@apu.ac.jp](mailto:apugrad@apu.ac.jp)

## Learn leadership. It's vital to any business.

### Learn to think logically and act on your own initiative



International Management,  
Organizational Alignment,  
Organizational IQ,  
Philosophy-based  
Management

**Professor  
Kanichiro SUZUKI**

Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) is a private university with both undergraduate established in 2000 and graduate schools in 2003 with the ideal of "nurturing international people for a global age." Our enrollment is about 6,000, with international students from more than 80 countries making up more than half of that total. More than half of the professors are also non-Japanese. APU is truly a global university.

We have two schools, the College of Asia Pacific Studies and the College of International Management. Most of the classes are taught in both English and Japanese. At the graduate school, however, all of the courses are in English, and students can earn MBAs and

master's degrees in Pacific and Asian Studies.

APU graduates have achieved a 95% hiring rate as some 400 companies from Japan and overseas come to APU to introduce their firms and interview future managers and executives.

Classes that emphasize logic and practical applications are an APU specialty. For example, in leadership and organizational theory, a seminar in international management taught by Professor Kanichiro Suzuki, students learn basic leadership theory and the structure and functions of corporate organizations while analyzing and comparing the management systems practiced by several different companies.

Professor Suzuki spent more than 20 years at one of Japan's major research/consulting companies and then established a biotech venture company. He's also done research and development work in China, the U.K. and the U.S. Now his storehouse of experience and knowledge can be accessed in his APU

seminars. In particular, Professor Suzuki's work in "knowledge creation" is at the leading edge in Japan, and many executives throughout the world are watching with great interest.

"What's important in business is to think for yourself and to take action," says Professor Suzuki. In addition to the curriculum, students get involved in business competitions, plan activities, and so forth. Every day during their studies at APU, they practice thinking logically and acting on their own initiative. ■





# Learning Japanese

More and more people, both inside and outside Japan, are using Japanese in everyday life, for purposes ranging from school to employment and even the subculture of games and anime. We turned to the Sendagaya Japanese Institute, one of Japan's most established language schools, to find out why Japanese has come to gain so much worldwide attention.

## Set greetings contain the essence of Japanese culture

*Mottainai* (what a waste). This Japanese word is now used throughout the world when talking about protecting our environment. It encompasses not only the "reduce, reuse, and recycle" concepts of environmental conservation, but also respect, something we cannot do without if we expect to save our natural world. "There are many interesting and beautiful greetings in Japanese," says Masanori Yoshikawa of the Sendagaya Japanese Institute. "For example, the expression we use before eating also contains the essence of thankfulness."

Greetings, for want of a more precise word, are part of Japan's traditional manners and a result of our culture. In Japan, before eating, we say *Itadakimasu*. Then, after we finish our meal, we say *Gochiso-sama*. The verb *itadaku* is a polite term used when receiving something from someone or something who ranks above you. When partaking of the bounties of nature, and taking the precious lives of the plants and animals that provide our food, we use *itadaku*, a "greeting" that includes thankfulness. The *gochiso* of *gochiso-sama* refers to all the trouble someone went to in gathering the ingredients and preparing the food. In Japan, such expressions of thankfulness are used many times each day.

## Cushion words oil the cogs of human relations

Another peculiarity of Japanese is the large number of "cushion words" that show concern

for others. For example, when making a telephone call to another person there are a number of cushion phrases that can be used. *Asa hayaku kara moshiwake arimasen* (I'm sorry for calling you so early in the morning) or *Isogashii tokoro ni moshiwake arimasen* (I'm sorry for interrupting you when you are busy). Using these cushion phrases is part of good manners. Instead of blurting out whatever it is you want to talk about, you first use a cushion phrase to oil the relationship with the person you are calling, which links the conversation to the next step.

When giving a gift, you say *tsumaranai mono desu ga* (This is really nothing) before handing the gift to its recipient. This phrase expresses your caring for the person to whom you are giving the gift. In Japan, people are often pleased to receive a gift, but at the same time worry about what to give in return (one always gives a gift after receiving a gift). According to Haruhiko Kindaichi, a linguistic scholar of Japanese, use of the phrase *tsumaranai mono desu ga* is used to help lift the load of responsibility to give a return gift from the shoulders of the recipient. In Japanese, there are seven phrases used when giving or receiving gifts. Which of the seven phrases to use depends on

whether the subject is the giver or the receiver, whether the other person is socially ranked above or below, and whether the gift-giving takes place between relatives or not. This is just one indication how seriously Japanese take gift-giving.

In the same manner, *chotto* (a little) can be a cushion word in an expression. Instead of using the bald expression *ikenai* (can't go), we say *chotto, ikenai* (we-e-ell, I can't go) or *kyo wa chotto . . .* (today is . . .), and in that way, can gently refuse. Linguist Kindaichi says, "It resonates with the listener in a different way from just using negative phrases. It's the same when asking someone for a favor. *Chotto* is an expression of amount or degree, but this *chotto* carries a different meaning, so I imagine many non-Japanese are confused by its use. In Japan, it's another of those words used to lubricate human relations."

## Learning Japan is a shortcut to learning Japanese

Instead of seeing Japanese as being made up of words and sentences, why not learn to respect Japanese culture and learn the background of many of its sayings, and use that knowledge as a shortcut toward making the Japanese language your very own?

According to research conducted by the Japan Foundation, there were more than 3.65 million people studying Japanese overseas. What's more, the numbers are increasing every year. And more than 1,600 educational institutions in Japan teach Japanese. The institutions vary from private language schools to universities, and they offer both short-term and long-term courses. Of course, learning Japanese gives you an advantage in going on to university, and truly learning Japanese culture, such as the cushion words and phrases mentioned earlier, will help when it comes time to seek employment at a Japanese company. If you are interested, please take up the challenge.



## Comments of an exchange student

Pham Hong Thuy  
(Vietnam)

I am studying Japanese in preparation for study at a Japanese graduate school, because I think Japan leads the world in terms of international management. I became interested in Japanese and the Japanese ethos when Japanese companies started setting up operations in Vietnam, and I realized Japan was an advanced country and a tremendous economic power. Japanese is a language that becomes ever more interesting the longer a person studies it. For example, the word *sumimasen* sometimes means "I'm sorry," and sometimes means "thank you." Its meaning changes with the situation.

In the future, using the knowledge I gain in pursuing my graduate degree in international management, I hope to make use of the things I see and learn in Japan to contribute to the economic growth my own country, Vietnam.



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# Quake and Disaster Information

## The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami as seen by international students

The Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami, which was of unparalleled scale, occurred on March 11, 2011. The mammoth quake, which registered 9.0 on the Richter Scale, also caused a huge tsunami, which ravaged the eastern coast of Japan's Tohoku region, taking away many precious lives. The scale of the quake and tsunami was such that experts say such an event happens only once in a thousand years, and the scars left by the tsunami and earthquake are still raw all across the stricken area. Still, recovery has begun. A great many international students have returned to Japan and are busily engaged in their courses of study. Here we would like to introduce some students who experienced the earthquake and watched the tsunami and are still pursuing their studies here in Japan.



### Turganzhan Kassymov (Kazakhstan) Tokai University

I decided to come to Japan because of the country's well-known achievements in IT, the subject I'm majoring in. I also was interested in Japanese language and culture. Now I'm studying at Tokai University's School of Engineering, and my student life is great. Most of my teachers have vast practical experience in the subjects they are teaching.

I learned about the earthquake on TV in Kazakhstan. I was so shocked and tried to call my friends in Japan to make sure they were OK. However, I know that Japan has great experience in rescue operations because of its frequent natural disasters, and I'm sure the nation will overcome this catastrophe.

Every day I heard awful news but I soon understood the news agencies always show the most sensational information that wasn't fully correct. My parents worried about me and tried to talk me out of going, but, I explained the real situation that I've learned from my Japanese friends, and finally they agreed.

I strongly believe Japan is a very nice place to study because of its rich culture, well-preserved and interesting traditions, and kind and friendly people. I'm sure you'll have some amazing memories of student life in Japan. ■



### NGO Hong Vu (Vietnam) Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University

I decided to study in Japan because I wanted to go explore an indigenous Eastern culture rather than studying abroad in the West.

Now I study at Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). Most of the students are from overseas, and the facility is well equipped so I can concentrate on research in an international environment.

The 3.11 earthquake and tsunami struck while I was in Japan. However, my university is quite a distance from the areas directly affected by the quake and nuclear breakdown, so I stayed here, and became convinced that it is safe. I saw with my own eyes how Japanese were dealing with the disaster and its aftermath. I deeply impressed with the Japanese people's calmness, orderliness, sympathy, and mutual care. Those experiences captured the true situation of Japan more clearly and truthfully than reading the news at home.

If you worry about studying in Japan because of concerns about earthquakes, I urge you to come and see what it's really like. Sitting passively at home is more dangerous than going out to explore the world for yourself. ■



Hong Vu is in the center.

### Zhang Chunlong (China) Sendagaya Japanese Institute

I remember March 11 very well. Shortly after 2:40 p.m., perhaps the biggest earthquake in Japan's history struck. At the time, I was taking a test, and as I know a bit about architecture, I was not too alarmed at the time. I knew earthquakes often occurred in Japan, and that Japan's buildings are the best in the world when it comes to withstanding quakes.

Later, I went to Ishinomaki in Miyagi Prefecture as a volunteer. It was only for a day, but I was able to tell many victims that the prayers of people all over the world were with them, and I tried to be of a little help to them. The victims I met were very positive-minded about their lives, and I felt that the Japanese have a great strength of spirit. If I have the chance, I hope to be the first to represent my country in helping them.

GANBARE NIPPON. A better future awaits. ■



Volunteer activities in the disaster area

### Useful Information on Disasters from Various Organizations

- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT)
  - Post-quake Interview with an international student in Japan: <http://www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/1307512.htm>
  - Regularly updated environment radioactivity data: <http://radioactivity.mext.go.jp/en/>
- Ministry of Justice (Immigration Bureau of Japan)
  - Information from the Immigration Bureau related to the Great East Japan Earthquake: [http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri01\\_00017.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/nyuukokukanri/kouhou/nyuukokukanri01_00017.html)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/j\\_info/visit/incidents/index.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/incidents/index.html)
- Japan Meteorological Agency
  - Earthquake Information: <http://www.jma.go.jp/en/quake/>
  - Tsunami Information: <http://www.jma.go.jp/en/tsunami/>

- Others
  - TUFS-Multilingual Disaster Information Service by the Center for Multilingual Multicultural Education and Research: [http://www.tufs.ac.jp/blog/ts/g/tufs\\_disaster\\_information/](http://www.tufs.ac.jp/blog/ts/g/tufs_disaster_information/)
  - Osaka University multilingual mega earthquake information: <http://riwl-disaster.info/>
- Tokyo Fire Department
  - 10 ways to prepare for an earthquake: <http://www.tfd.metro.tokyo.jp/eng/119/119-05.html>
  - How to protect yourself: <http://nip0.wordpress.com/>

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# Japan Center

For more information, contact the Japan Center in your country  
Vietnam: <http://www.vjcc.org.vn/>  
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Mongolia: <http://www.japan-center.mn/index.php/en>  
Uzbekistan: <http://www.ujc.uz/?pid=4>

Kazakhstan: <http://www.kjc.kz/jp/>  
Kyrgyz Republic: <http://www.krjc.kg/jp/>