You chose to study in the United Kingdom. You are beginning to think about what your options are after graduation. Building on an excellent international education you are returning to your home country, Japan. You stand at the beginning of an exciting career, but what are the steps you need to take in order to find a suitable job, and where do you find the information you need?

This careers profile provides you with practical advice about returning to work in Japan to help you make a successful start in your career in the Japanese labour market. Included are key facts about current trends and jobs in Japanese industry, advice about seeking employment in Japan, hints and tips for making a successful application, and helpful information sources.

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Japan has the third largest economy in the world after the USA and China. Industry-government cooperation, strong work ethics and being a technological leader has helped Japan advance rapidly into its current economical position.

During the 1960s an amazing annual economic growth of 10% on average made Japan one of the fastest growing economies in the world. However, Japan's economic growth plunged between 1986 and 1990, leaving it with an average annual growth of just 1.7% during the 1990s.

Nowadays, Japan faces two major problems. In 2008 Japan entered the worst economic recession population (-0.319%), Japan faces a major aging population issue. In December 2009, the Japanese government ratified a law to freeze future sales of JapanPost shares (the 6th largest company in the world). This way, the Democratic Party stopped the process of privatisation initiated by previous Liberal Democratic Party governments. Discussions over restructuring of the Japanese economy and the effects of such a reform still continue. Besides the aging of the population, Japan faces another long-term problem, namely the high level of debt which reached US$2.132 trillion in June 2009.

**KEY FACTS: The Japanese economy**

- GDP real growth 2009: 5.5% (est.)
- GDP per capita: US$32,600 (2009 est.)
- Labour force 2009: 65.93 million
- Unemployment rate 2009: 5.1% (est.)
- Major sectors of occupation: Services (68%), Industry (28%), Agriculture (4%)
- Main trading partners: China, USA, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Australia, Indonesia, UAE.
Country profile

Currently the Japanese labour market is facing major unemployment problems caused by the global economic downturn. Most Japanese believe the economic crisis will last for a long while. Combined with the lack of a social safety net and the paternalism in company cultures, this makes the labour force even more vulnerable as a result of the downturn. In order to sustain economic growth while facing an aging population, labour migration remains an important issue for Japanese politics. Hence, Japanese students returning home after a period of international study are rather welcome.

**KEY FACTS: The Japanese graduate labour market**

- **Average age at graduation:** 22 years
- **Average graduate starting salary:** US$28,000 annually
- **Annual working week:** Monday to Friday, approximately 40 hours (full-time)
- **Holiday entitlement:** 20 days annual leave, 15 days public holiday
Benefits

Benefits of a UK qualification

Possibly the largest benefit which all international students receive when studying at one of the over 100 universities in the UK, is the fact that UK universities have some of the most renowned and prestigious histories of higher education in the world. Even if a graduate does not study at one of the more famous institutions, the graduate can return to their home country safe in the knowledge that no matter where they look for work, their qualifications will be highly respected. This is also useful in job interview situations, in which your study in the UK can come into conversation as a point of interest and as an example of experience in situations of teamwork, cultural awareness, when possibly you were outside of your comfort zone. Furthermore, your experiences in writing and reading English are extremely valuable in the job market. As an added benefit, you will no doubt have been exposed to a variety of accents and dialects during your study stay, making you more open to the English language than you may have realised.

Graduating: Searching for work

Not long ago, student life and job finding was a far simpler procedure. Graduates would simply leave university, either looking for work through friends and family, a large company or a local business, and often step into a full-time job after an interview. These days, a wider variety of options exist which match the wider variety of jobs and the ease of travel which is available to the worldly student. As the number of students increases, so does the quality of the competition.

It’s tough out there. Many graduates having just left university know this, whilst others are soon to find out. Since so many new university leavers have a career path in mind which they may have had for many years, the competition is fierce in many of the desirable graduate schemes. This is more the case in the UK then almost anywhere else. However, one benefit which you as an international student have is that you have a home country to which you can return. The lack of vacancies in the UK has led to many British students leaving for work further afield, often with little experience of the language in that country outside of the native English speaking countries. For example, in China whilst there are some international companies which accept English-only students, the vast majority will prefer a candidate with some basic Chinese. If you are returning to your home country with a firm grasp of English as well as your mother tongue, you already have an advantage.

It can be difficult to come across vacancies in graduate jobs, full-time occupation is hard to find without experience and most find that internships can involve heavy competition. All is not lost however! Most graduates find that the main issue is simply knowing where to look, and this guide hopes to point you in the right direction.

Check out the ‘More Information’ section to see handy links with tips and advice in the search for work.
Main routes to employment

Getting started

When searching the Internet for job offers and vacancies, it is advisable to bookmark webpages and re-visit them regularly. Make use of email alert services offered by online resources to stay updated with the newest jobs.

There are many specialist career websites that focus on university students and graduates and therefore your first action should be to register on all of the main websites. Depending on the website, there are options to search for jobs by field of business, area of work, location, and so on. Initially you should choose keywords that fit your interests and search for positions and companies using those keywords to stay updated with the newest jobs.

Online recruitment and vacancy websites:

- American Chamber of Commerce in Japan (ACCJ): [www.accj.or.jp](http://www.accj.or.jp)
- Ecentral: [www.ecentral.jp](http://www.ecentral.jp)
- Japanese Jobs: [www.japanesejobs.com](http://www.japanesejobs.com)
- Jobs in Japan: [www.jobsinjapan.com](http://www.jobsinjapan.com)
- RECRUIT: [www.recruit.co.jp](http://www.recruit.co.jp)
- Tokyo Connections: [www.tokyoconnections.com](http://www.tokyoconnections.com)
- Work in Japan: [www.workinjapan.com](http://www.workinjapan.com)

Social networking

Social networking has become an increasingly common and important part of seeking work, especially with the social media generation. Sites such as Facebook.com and LinkedIn.com have flourished into everyday use for graduates and employers alike, in order to find the right person for the job. Graduates looking for work in their home nation may already be aware of the value of such sites, and may be aware of specific sites which are specialised in their own country. Graduates can place details of themselves including their job experience, education level, home/current university as well as a photo if preferred. On some of these sights they can also search for jobs according to their specific interest or area of study. What is clear is that graduates should certainly take the time to discover the potential job opportunities which these sites offer, both socially and at a socio-professional level.
Main routes to employment

The following list of examples is not exhaustive, and contains websites with varying emphasis on professionalism and social networking.

**Sites worth checking out (global):**

- [www.ecademy.com](http://www.ecademy.com)
- [www.efactor.com](http://www.efactor.com)
- [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)
- [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)
- [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com)
- [www.plaxo.com](http://www.plaxo.com)
- [www.ryze.com](http://www.ryze.com)
- [www.spoke.com](http://www.spoke.com)
- [www.ziggs.com](http://www.ziggs.com)

As a graduate looking for work in Japan, you should use a variety of strategies. Newspapers are a helpful starting point when it comes to the job-hunt.

**Key newspapers to look for:**

- Daily Yomiuri [www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy](http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy)
- Japan Times [www.japantimes.co.jp](http://www.japantimes.co.jp)
- Nikkei weekly [http://e.nikkei.com/e/fr/freetop.aspx](http://e.nikkei.com/e/fr/freetop.aspx)
- Yomiuri Shimbun [www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy](http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy)

**Magazines:**

- Be-ing
- Japan Inc.
- Tech Be-ing
- Tokyo Classified
Main routes to employment

One of the best ways to find a job is through somebody you know, and therefore networking skills are key. Be aware that networking in Japan is a lot more subtle than the country where you went to study; be polite, remember modesty is a virtue and try to avoid the forward way of presenting yourself you may have become used to.

On the other hand, Japanese recruiters have become more internationally focused. When you participate in company presentations, you will be asked to complete your personal details and in general there will be areas for ‘self-introduction’ and ‘reasons for applying’. Do prepare yourself for these questions as they will usually be asked during a job interview too, and although you should present yourself in a less forward manner compared with the UK, you will need to explain your strengths and weaknesses – a key strength being your international study experience.

Alternative sources of information on jobs and companies:

- MYNAV[www.mycom.co.jp](http://www.mycom.co.jp) a network of employment information centres
- The Yellow Pages[www.yellowpage-jp.com](http://www.yellowpage-jp.com) Online and in print

When searching for a job in Japan, it is important to attend company presentations and job fairs. Company presentations are held by single companies and are announced on company websites, whereas job fairs are organised on a larger scale and will enable you to visit a number of companies in one location. Make sure you are punctual, dress neatly and try to make contact with new individuals and organisations.

Company presentations are held from late January through to end of March. Most companies try to have their annual recruitment finalised by early April. For job fair information, visit: [www.jobfair.jp/jp](http://www.jobfair.jp/jp) regularly.

It is advisable to register with any employment agency up to one year before the date of your return to Japan. Applications for a specific role, however, should be sent no sooner than one month before your scheduled arrival back in Japan. For many, registering with a recruitment agency has proven a successful method for getting a job in Japan. However a word of warning is essential here; although most of these agencies are genuinely interested in helping you to find a job, there are some who do not genuinely have your best interests at heart.

Another strategy that has proven successful is to send open applications to companies you are interested in directly or via a recruitment agency. An open, or speculative, application is an application that does not respond to a particular vacancy. It signals a degree of creativity and your willingness to take initiative.
Main routes to employment

The right skills and competencies

In a country where organisational hierarchy, gender and social status play an important part in society, employers are interested in people who they can develop based on their educational background rather than on their existing experience. Emphasise your strong educational background and internationally recognised degree.

Most wanted:

- A positive attitude.
- Strong communication and negotiation skills.
- Leadership qualities as well as the ability to work in a team.
- Time management and organisational skills.
- Loyalty and determination.
- Respect for hierarchy.

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The application letter

An application letter should attract the recruiter’s attention. It should make the potential employer want to look at your application in more detail, read your CV and hopefully invite you for an interview.

Japanese application letters should be printed or handwritten on quality paper and include the date, contact name, title, company name and complete address. Your educational background, personal attitudes and attributes will be more closely examined than your special skills and experiences.
Main routes to employment

Rirekisho

In Japan, a CV is more commonly referred to as rirekisho and is an important part of the application.

The traditional rirekisho is two to three pages long. Generally speaking, it should include personal details, education, employment history, relevant skills and extracurricular activities. You need to provide a summary of both your educational past, and your plans for the future. An employer wants to hear what a prospective employee thinks they will be able to contribute to the company. If you are able to explain what your goals are (e.g. “I want to do X”, “Achieving Y is my dream”, or “I want to develop technology Z”), you have mastered the skill of presenting yourself. Present your experience and skills before future ambitions.

After submitting your application wait between two to three weeks before following up in case the employer had not yet had time to review your application. Following up shows determination and the willingness to take initiative, but make sure you provide the employer with enough time to respond first.

Digital applications

Digital application forms have become more common. The Internet is considered a fast medium of communication but completing an application form online requires the utmost attention – always check your submission before pressing send.

If you are making your application via email, write a concise application email with your rirekisho attached. Applicants should always remember to use formal language when submitting an online application or applying via email.
Main routes to employment

The job interview

Depending on the employer the structure of the selection procedure may vary, but the interview is considered the most important aspect of the selection procedure. During the interview candidates are assessed on their educational background, their capabilities, their character and way of thinking.

The number of interviews given depends on the company, but there will usually be three or four interviews. It is likely that each interview will be conducted by different people, usually starting with human resources, followed by the department head, with the final interview conducted by an individual in an executive role.

One-to-one interviews used to be most common, but group interviews are becoming increasingly common in Japan. During group interviews it is not all about displaying leadership; you will be judged by various standards such as your ability to present ideas and your communication skills.

Preparing for the interview:

- Think in advance about questions that might be asked.
- Find out the objectives of the position and the skills required.
- Research the organisation’s background.
- Be clear about your skills, abilities, personal qualities and experience.
- Prepare your own questions to ask the employer.
- Make sure you arrive on time for the interview. If you are unfamiliar with the location it might be worthwhile checking it out in advance.

Some employers set entrance tests to enable them to judge more clearly each candidate’s suitability for the job. These tests are mostly related to general abilities, aptitudes and interests related to the job itself.
Where will your career take you?

Research from the i-graduate International Student Barometer study tells us the following about the main career drivers for Japanese graduates:

**Major career drives for Japanese graduates:**

1. I want to develop myself.
2. I like to be recognized for my achievements.
3. Future job security is important to me.

©International Student Barometer Summer 2009

**Top 3 future plans of Japanese students about to graduate from UK HE Institutions:**

1. Employment in Japan.
2. Still undecided.
3. Short term employment in the UK.

©International Student Barometer Summer 2009

Lifetime employment is still very common in Japan. Japanese companies prefer to hire ‘fresh’ graduates in order to train them with the company culture from the very beginning of a career. Remember, graduates who do not start their career straight after graduation will need a good excuse for why they did not start working immediately.
Current career prospects

With a declining and aging population Japanese companies must realise that even in midst of a recession, lay-offs and ceasing hiring may generate future labour shortages when the economy starts to grow again. Although the global recession has hit the Japanese economy hard, some companies have indeed learned from the 1990s recession when many companies did not hire any permanent employees (this period is often referred to as the ice age of employment.) The Japanese government has proposed a US$16 billion aid package in order to ensure companies refrain from major job cuts and to help the unemployed.

Where are the opportunities?

Accounting and finance

Japanese Post provides not only postal services but is also one of the biggest banks in the world with almost $1.96 trillion assets and soon to become privatised. Efforts to reduce the government's influence and encourage more investment in the private sector are in conflict with the traditional Japanese economy. While government influence is growing in many parts of the world, for the Japanese finance sector privatisation is a way to increase competition and create a free market.

Advanced manufacturing

The humanoid robot sector is helping the Japanese robot industry to grow in popularity and fame. However, most industry sales derive from industrial robots such as car manufacture electronics and other products, and this sector has been hit hard by the financial crisis. Other growing sectors are nanotechnology and alternative energy.

Agriculture

Japan’s self sufficiency has dropped for several years in a row. To fulfil its domestic needs Japan is highly dependent on the import of goods. As a consequence the agricultural sector is highly protected and subsidized by the Japanese government. In 2010, the government is hoping to raise the self-sufficiency rate to 35%. In order to achieve this goal, securing farmland, having a stable workforce, improving the agriculture infrastructure, development and dissemination of new technologies and promoting agricultural production is essential. This offers job opportunities for agricultural and food engineers.
## Current career prospects

### Biotechnology

Japan’s vision is to make its biotechnology industry the leading biotechnology cluster in Asia. The market is expected to grow and reach US$287.9 billion in 2010. Work opportunities particularly lie in the field of pharmacogenomics, protein engineering, glyco-engineering, tissue engineering, bio-informatics, genome medicine and preventive medicine.

### Energy

With only 16% energy self-sufficiency and without any natural resources of gas or oil, Japan is one of the biggest energy importers in the world. Job opportunities currently exist in the fields of energy engineering, construction and management services.

### Engineering and automotive

Environmental performance, safety and comfort are the trends in the automotive market. As the biggest car manufacture industry in the world, Japanese companies always try to create cutting edge technology. Fuel cell engineering is one growing market in Japan. However, Japanese education nowadays faces a rikeibanare, a phenomenon where students prefer to study more creative or better paid areas such as arts, medicine or finance. Due to this the engineering industry in Japan is expected to have a shortage of qualified people; this offers opportunities for those who are interested in job in engineering and/or car manufacturing.

### Environmental

The issues concerning global warming have created a new market in the Japanese environmental sector. It is predicted the environmental market size will be US$66.9 million over 2010. It is also supported by private and public sector companies realising the importance of strong environmental policies. Work opportunities particularly lie in the fields of waste recycling, fuel cells, solar cells, hybrid automobiles and photo voltaic system.
Current career prospects

Fisheries

The Japanese fish industry has a 30% market share worldwide. The industry has been in decline since 1989 because of the aging labour force; more than 36.4% of the workers in the industry were 65 years or older. However government reforms have recovered some of the fish industry’s former glory.

Food processing

Food processing is becoming a major sector. As the Japanese market demands ready-to-eat food rather than home cooking, the future of the food processing market looks bright. The aging population has increased the demand for health and functional foods.

Health and medical care

The aging population has caused the health and medical care sector to expand. The Japanese government recently allowed private organisations into the (high-care) hospital sector. Work opportunities exist in the field of hospital and home medical services, drug manufacturing, medical waste, medical devices, facilities management and medical management.

ICT and e-commerce

E-commerce’s impact on the Japanese GDP has risen by 10% between 2004 and early 2009. The government continues to provide incentives for IT companies in order to stimulate growth in the sector. Specific market segments with good prospects include mobile phone services, IC card/ RFID, visual communications, online affiliate marketing, and the gaming industry.

Retail

The Japanese retail market is the second largest in the world after the USA. The trend in the Japanese retail market is in the establishment of large scale shopping centers. In recent years the retail market has fluctuated considerably, however, given Japanese consumer preferences, the future of the retail market is looking rather bright. The global economic downturn is likely to have an effect, but the market is likely to grow in the long term.
Where to find more information

General information

www.jetro.go.jp Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)
www.mofa.go.jp Japanese government information and services
www.stat.go.jp Japan Statistic Bureau and Statistic Centre

Advice and tips on Careers Fairs, CVs and general job seeking

www.articlealley.com/article_1547972_36.html - An article for those in the nursing profession.
www.collegegrad.com/articles/dont-give-up.shtml - An article on staying positive throughout the work search process
www.employmentblawg.com/2010/job-seeking-tips-for-college-graduates - Further tips in the competitive field of employment seeking graduates
www.fpef.org/Education/Tips.htm - Some good tips on networking
www.thegraduate.co.uk/static_generic.cgi?a=tmg_jobboards - Link with good information for those still considering staying in the UK after study
www.graduateopportunities.com/career_advice/graduates_with_disability - A link providing useful tips and stats for graduates with a disability
www.londongradfair.co.uk/autumn - The Guardian’s annual job fair for graduates. It is located in London.
www.marketoracle.co.uk/Article1277.html - Tips on how to work out your finances post-study.
www.online-graduate.co.uk/tipsforgrads.html - Further tips for graduates seeking work experience.
http://www.prospects.ac.uk/international_students.htm - Information for international students
Where to find more information

Books and Articles

Special report: Japan's changing labour market; Jetro

How to succeed in a Japanese Company: Strategies for Bridging the Business and Culture Gap; How, Jina (Citadel Press)


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Disclaimer

Whilst all efforts have been made to ensure the information in this Country Guide is correct at the time of writing, readers are advised that procedures and information sources may change regularly.
Appendix 1 : Rirekisho

履苓国

*・F広& 鉄♂（男）
国据・Fカナダ
遂誰兼・F1957年4月
カナダ、BC州、バンクーバー
Tel & Fax: (604)…–….(反騒• j
E-mail: …hotmail.com

学苓：

• 代*W学部:
1977年9月・ 1981年7月
中国 拢忲 拢忲航天航苦1・W航苦・戦・営学部
(仙偽：航苦3dq工学)

• 代*W院:
1985年9月・ 1986年7月
中国辰/ts 吉更・H挙上^W代^W院 擠q工学部
「応用電q技術助闌 i・v修m忲2・w
(仙偽：冗騒/ 擠刀Vスチーム推,・j
1994年4月・ 1996年3月
理工学挙掩鉛・A修m忲2・/A>r関絡7br>
(仙偽：冗騒#Vスチーム工学、挙掩テーマ：戦除処理)

職苓：

• 1996年7月・ 月・F
CTF Systems Inc. ソフトウェアエンジニア s□/ 数-Windows GUI
ソフトウェアv・ 減"関J魔・ 仮②・ Bアジア・ マーケティング技術サポート担当。
Appendix 1: Sample CV

- 1994年4月～1996年3月 w代院理工学薬学機械工学部A
  HREF="http://www.ritsumei.ac.jp/se/re/sugimotolab/"杉本薬学
  理学薬学機械工学部A
  講義・指導・研究

- 1996年3月～1996年7月 w代院薬学機械工学部A
  講義・指導・研究
  部外者

- 1991年2月～1994年3月 w代院
  テクニカルインターナショナル株式会社
  インテリジェントビル
  筆記・計算
  電気工学、電気技術
  テクニカルインタ

- 1985年9月～1991年2月 w代院
  院薬学部
  電気工学、電気技術
  システム

- 1981年9月～1985年9月 w代院
  院薬学部
  電気工学、電気技術
  システム

全套51チャンネル脳・図 / 脳電図(MEG/EEG)遂刺激C計槽システム
Windows GUI ソフトウェア

従来 "順順順順顺順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順順顺
1. CADソフトウェア、ドウウェア、AD、RCアクティブフィルター。
2. タ・条厳・V・ステム、ドウェア。
3. 資源開、備・倉、データ、V・適AA/D、D/A変換、システム2、Aシミュレーション。
4. ローカルコンピュータ、ネットワーク。
5. PIDZ法。
6. HTML file, PS file

件雁筆観\u:

- 極悟・F-L勤・A記述覧I/A卒8b願"・激xル・坂
- 英悟・F-L勤・A記述覧I/A卒8b願"・c激xル
- 中国悟・F勤拒悟

コンピュータースキル:

- 件雁・F-C、C++、HTML、JAVA(JavaScript, JavaApplet), Perl, PASCAL, アセンブラ

オペレーティングシステム: UNIX(HP、LINUX、Solaris), Windows NT, Macintosh 9.0

- F-UIM/X, CGI Scripting, LaTex s-AMS-Tex, Canvas 6.0, Photoshop

5.0、AVS、XV、GNUPLLOT、GUI、Tcl/Tk、Purify、PureCoverage、Web Publication。

コースワーカ: UNIX, X-

Windows, 炊心 s・・L・ープンシステム、クライアント / サーバーシステム、携用
及 y #Aプリケーションソフト開発"刀pッケージ拉3薬模o漬"・ゆ・A
HTML/JAVA s "療vログラミング捜薬経済"院L1・Bインターネット u0損・・著WWサーバーv±ルメディア峨船口関著・・Rンテツ薬紙覚済"関指・B