

Measuring the Accessibility of Study in Japan Utilizing International Admissions Procedures of English-taught Degree Programs

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Abstract. The “300,000 International Students Plan” called for a significant increase in the number of international students in Japan, from 140,000 to 300,000. It was announced by the Japanese government in 2008 and the Global 30 Project, implemented as part of the Plan, has triggered the growth of English-taught degree (hereafter “ETD”) programs in Japanese universities. In this paper, the application guidelines and procedures of 20 universities which offer ETD programs for undergraduate students were collected and examined. Comparative analysis revealed that the admissions quotas for those ETD programs are, in general, limited to a small number of students and that their growth does not, therefore, necessarily lead to easier access for international students. The results of the analysis also indicated that the larger the international student admissions quota for an ETD program, the higher the accessibility of international admissions procedures provided by the respective university.

Keywords: International students, English-taught degree (ETD) program, international admissions procedures, pre-departure admissions

1. Introduction

In 2008, the Japanese government launched its 300,000 International Students Plan, which aimed to double the number of overseas students in Japan to 300,000 by 2020. As well as being driven by the need to make Japanese universities more globally competitive, the policy was designed to compensate for the shrinking domestic population of 18-year-olds, the result of a falling birthrate, by recruiting overseas students. Five core policy elements were laid out: (1) “Attracting international students to Japan”, (2) “Improving access: admissions, enrollment, and immigration procedures”, (3) “Internationalizing universities”, (4) “Developing the student environment”, (5) “Opening up society

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to international graduates” (Outline of the 300,000 International Students Plan, 2008). Elements (2) and (3) included calls to expand the provision of programs enabling students to graduate by taking classes taught in English alone, a policy which would remove the Japanese-language barrier, one of the main factors limiting access to study in Japan, and open up a route to attract exceptional overseas students who had not formerly shown an interest in Japan (Ashizawa, 2013).

Under the Project for Establishing a University Network for Internationalization (hereafter “Global 30”), a grants program implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) as part of the 300,000 International Students Plan over a five-year period beginning in the 2009 fiscal year, the 13 universities selected were required to introduce English-taught degree (hereafter “ETD”) programs allowing students to obtain a degree solely via courses taught in English¹. They were to establish at least one such program at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. This prompted the increasingly widespread introduction of similar programs at other universities. According to the “Survey of English-Taught Degree Programs” conducted by the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO), which targeted all universities nationwide, the provision of such programs at the undergraduate level was restricted to just six universities (one local public, and five private) in 2008, the year in which the survey was first conducted, and to 47 universities (35 national, three local public, and nine private) at the graduate level. By the 2014 academic year, however, these figures had risen to 28 universities at the undergraduate level (4.7 times the 2008 figure) and to 76 universities at the graduate level (1.6 times the earlier figure). In their review after the Global 30 conclusion, MEXT also evaluated the growth of ETD programs positively, stating that “the confirmation of their effective role in addressing the language issue, hitherto an impediment to study in Japan, can be said to have been a major success of this project” (MEXT, 2015).

On the other hand, the number of international students at Japanese higher education institutions leveled off after peaking at 142,000 in 2012; there were 139,000 for the 2014 academic year (JASSO, 2015a). In other words, it remains unclear whether or not the establishment of ETD programs has, in fact, led to greater enrollment of international students at each university. This paper focuses on matriculation at the undergraduate level in Japanese universities. It considers whether or not the expansion of ETD programs has improved the accessibility of study in Japan through an examination of the admissions procedures for these programs.

2. Previous studies

2.1 The Japanese language as a barrier to international student recruitment

¹ MEXT and the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science use the expression “courses through which degrees can be obtained solely via classes taught in English (English courses)” in their descriptions of the Global 30. In order to avoid confusion with the American English term “course” meaning “one subject of study”, this paper uses the words “English-taught degree programs” or “ETD programs” throughout.

Besides insufficient provision of scholarship and a shortage of accommodations for international students, the Japanese language itself has repeatedly been cited as a factor limiting access to study in Japan. A “Survey of Student Exchange” commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2003 pointed out that “the greatest study- and research-related issue for students from ASEAN countries is the Japanese language”, mentioning also that there were many “comments from students currently in Japan that they would like more classes taught in English”. In particular, it is hard for students from countries where Chinese characters are not used to acquire a sufficient level of Japanese-language competency to allow them to follow university-level classes by the end of their secondary education. As a result, a distinctive “Japan study model” has emerged in which international students first enter a Japanese-language school in Japan, studying there for one to two years before continuing on to university². This requirement for one or two years of prior Japanese study, in addition to the minimum study period required to obtain a degree, imposes an even greater burden on international students in terms of both time and money, making Japan comparatively less attractive as a study destination (Ota, 2011).

On the other hand, the establishment of ETD programs at higher education institutions in non-English speaking countries has become a global phenomenon (Dearden, 2015). In Europe, the volume of English-taught programs has increased, mainly at the graduate level, in line with the growth of the Erasmus Program, which aims to foster student exchange within the European region. Malaysia³, China⁴, and other Asian countries have made it a national strategy to attract overseas universities, and higher education institutions from English-speaking countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have developed offshore programs. In South Korea, Japan’s neighbor, the teaching of around 30% of all university specialized courses in English has become recognized as an indication of internationalization, leading many universities to strive toward this goal in order to meet society’s expectations (Bradford, 2012). As the global higher education market becomes ever flatter through the adoption of English as a universal medium, Japan, which has long clung to Japanese as the sole language of instruction, is fast becoming isolated from the global mainstream. Initiatives to break down this substantial language barrier are an urgent priority for higher education in this country.

2.2 English-taught degree (ETD) programs in Japan

² Of the international students enrolled at Japanese-language teaching institutions, around 80% go on to study in university or other programs in Japan (JASSO, 2015b).

³ Monash University, which has set up an overseas satellite campus in Malaysia offering the same degree programs as those at its Australian campus, is one example (Sugimura, 2011).

⁴ One such case is New York University Shanghai, established in 2013 through a partnership between New York University and East China Normal University.

Shimauchi (2012) has classified ETD programs at Japanese universities according to such aspects as their curriculum structure and composition of the student body. According to this research, there are three types: the “virtual study abroad for Japanese students” type, which focuses mainly on the development of graduates equipped to work globally and enrolls almost entirely Japanese students; the “intermingled and interactive study” type, in which Japanese and international students learn together; and the “study in Japan in English” type, which is aimed exclusively at international students. The “virtual study abroad for Japanese students” type, aimed primarily at Japanese students, is the most prevalent of the three.

The existence of many ETD programs that effectively exclude international students by requiring a certain level of Japanese-language proficiency in order to enroll suggests a disconnect between the Japanese government’s much-touted policies of internationalization and openness to overseas students, and the situation on the ground at universities (Brown & Iyobe, 2013). On the other hand, many of the newly established ETD programs at national universities under the Global 30 are, in principle, only open to international students. It has been pointed out that teaching international students, who study in English, completely apart from their Japanese peers leads to the erection of a new “wall” within universities (Burgess et al., 2010). Moreover, after interviewing staff involved in running English-taught programs, both degree-awarding and non-degree awarding, at eight universities which were not selected for the Global 30, Brown (2014) stated that “there is a sense among EMI (English as a medium of instruction) stakeholders that if an EMI program were to grow too much or become too successful, it could be seen as a threat to the Japanese identity of the university,” concluding that growth in the provision of ETD programs was unlikely to lead directly to an increase in overseas students.

3. Research questions and methods

Given the increasingly widespread acceptance of English as the *de facto* international language of higher education, establishing ETD programs means gaining access to the global student market. The entrance examinations used in Japan for international students thus far have generally required to come to each university in person in order to take that university’s own written examination and undergo an interview. This is based on the assumption that international students have already arrived in Japan and are studying at Japanese language schools; it is extremely inconvenient for those living outside the country. In order to secure overseas applicants for ETD programs, it is necessary to make application and selection procedures more convenient from the point of view of international students, which is to say, more accessible. If study in Japan is relatively inaccessible to those living overseas at the initial point of entry, the admissions stage, then applicant numbers cannot be expected to grow even if the language of instruction for many courses is switched from Japanese to English.

This paper views the admissions procedures of each university with ETD programs as indices of

accessibility, going through them to identify the elements which made it easy to apply from overseas, such as the existence of fall enrollment or an online application system. The relationship between the above and the ratio of the “admissions quota allocated to international students” to the overall admissions quota for the faculty or department running ETD programs was also investigated. The “admissions quota allocated to international students” is the quota for which international students can apply with application instructions solely in English⁵. Even if all the programs in the faculty or department use English as their language of instruction, a large number of places reserved exclusively for Japanese students will make this ratio low. Each university’s application procedures were obtained online or in printed format between November, 2014 and March, 2015, and any aspects which were unclear were verified by telephone.

4. Comparison and examination of applications procedures: Format and framework

The universities included by this research are listed in Table 1. There are a total of 39 ETD programs at 20 universities: five universities which already had ETD programs before the Global 30 (Pre-G30), all the 13 universities selected for the Global 30 (G30 universities), and four universities which were not selected for the Global 30 but which introduced ETD programs at the same stage or later (Post-G30). Two of the private universities selected for the Global 30 have been classified in both the Pre-G30 category for the ETD programs which they had implemented before their selection (University B and University D), and in the G30 Universities category for the programs implemented afterwards (University B* and University D*).

“University size” refers to the overall undergraduate enrollment capacity for each university. The survey included six universities with 20,000 undergraduates or more; seven with between 10,000 and 20,000 undergraduates; five with between 5,000 and 10,000 undergraduates; and two with fewer than 5,000 undergraduates, indicating that the establishment of ETD programs has expanded particularly at larger universities. Another finding of note was that while private universities tended to develop ETD programs in social science departments with the word “international” in their names, at national universities, English-taught programs were much more prevalent in natural science and engineering departments.

4.1 Structural model of program

ETD programs can be roughly classified into four models according to the format of their establishment. The distinguishing features of each, along with the universities assigned to each

⁵ Some ETD programs recruit students using the same requirements without differentiating by nationality. In these cases, Japanese students, mainly returnees who have been educated abroad, are also included in this same quota.

Table 1. Universities covered by this research and admissions quota for ETD program

	Type	University	University size (undergraduate enrollment capacity)	Study field of ETD program	Establishment year of ETD program	Admissions term	(a) Admissions quota allocated to international students in ETD program	(b) Overall admissions quota for faculty or department	(a)/(b)
Pre-G30	L	A	5,000 or less	Social Science	2004	Spring	Variable [#]	175	8.6%
						Fall	5		
	P	B	10,000 - 20,000	Social Science	1949	Spring	64 [§]	186	78.5%
						Fall	82 [§]		
		C	5,000 or less	Interdisciplinary	1953	Fall	90 [§]	620	14.5%
						Spring	100 [§]		
G30	N	F	5,000 - 10,000	Natural Science	2011	Fall	Approx. 10	324	3.1%
				Engineering			Approx. 10	810	1.2%
				Natural Science			Approx. 10	150	6.7%
				Natural Science			Approx. 15	250	6.0%
		G	5,000 - 10,000	Social Science	2010	Fall	Approx. 10	160	6.3%
				Natural Science			Approx. 3	37	8.1%
				Interdisciplinary			Approx. 30	140	21.4%
		H	10,000 - 20,000	Humanities	2012	Fall	Limited [#]	125	8.0%
				Social Science			Limited [#]	150	6.7%
				Social Science			Limited [#]	205	4.9%
				Natural Science			Limited [#]	270	3.7%
				Engineering			Limited [#]	740	1.4%
				Natural Science			Limited [#]	170	5.9%
		J	10,000 - 20,000	Engineering	2011	Fall	Maximum of 30	955	3.1%
		K	10,000 - 20,000	Social Science	2010	Fall	a small number [#]	137	7.3%
				Natural Science			small [#]	255	3.9%
		L	10,000 - 20,000	Engineering	2010	Fall	Only a limited number [#]	798	1.3%
				Natural Science			Only a limited number [#]	228	4.4%
	P	D*	20,000 or more	Social Science	2010	Fall	85	900	9.4%
				Social Science			20	630	3.2%
				Science and Engineering			35	535	6.5%
				Science and Engineering			25	595	4.2%
				Science and Engineering			15	540	2.8%
		M	20,000 or more	Interdisciplinary	2011	Fall	30 [§]	850	3.5%
		B*	10,000 - 20,000	Science and Engineering	2012	Fall	30	250	12.0%
							10		
		N	20,000 or more	Social Science	2011	Spring	10	350	5.7%
						Fall	10		
		O	20,000 or more	Social Science	2011	Spring	50 [§]	4,035	1.2%
						Fall			
		P	20,000 or more	Social Science	2011	Spring	7	305	6.6%
						Fall	13		
Post-G30	N	Q	10,000 - 20,000	Social Science	2015	Spring	20	525	3.8%
		R	5,000 - 10,000	Interdisciplinary	2013	Fall	Approx. 10	380	2.6%
	P	S	10,000 - 20,000	Social Science	2011	Spring	Approx. 4 [§]	50	16.0%
						Fall	Approx. 4 [§]		
		T	20,000 or more	Social Science	2011	Spring	15	300	5.0%

- Source: Compiled by the authors on the basis of each university's admissions guidelines or information on their websites
- Type: N = National, L = Local public, P = Private
- Two universities are classified in both the "Pre-G30", for the ETD programs which they implemented before their selection (Univ. B and Univ. D), and in the "G30", for the programs implemented afterwards (Univ. B* and Univ. D*).
- Admissions quotas indicated by § include places available for Japanese students (these universities recruit students using the same requirements, without differentiating by nationality).
- In consideration of the fact that the admissions quotas for English-taught degree programs are stated in English in the admissions guidelines, they have been listed here using the original English expressions.
- The "Interdisciplinary" programs listed under the study fields of English-taught degree program offer a curriculum including course from both the arts and sciences fields, or integrating the two fields.
- English expressions for admissions quotas indicated by # were considered to be equivalent to the Japanese for "some/a few"; a figure of 10 was used for "(a) admissions quota" in order to calculate (a)/(b).

category, are shown in Table 2. The four models are: (1) universities which have implemented English-taught programs as a matter of institutional policy (Institutional focus model); (2) universities with multiple faculties which have introduced ETD programs involving two or more different faculties (Cross-faculty model); (3) universities at which all the classes offered by a whole faculty, or department, including to Japanese students, are taught in English alone (Whole faculty model); and (4) universities at which ETD programs aimed at international students, or at international students and Japanese returnee students, have been added to an existing faculty (Faculty add-on model). Of the 20 universities surveyed for this research, three followed the Institutional focus model, three the Cross-faculty model, three the Whole faculty model, and 13 the Faculty add-on model.

Table 2. Format of establishment

Model	Universities	Distinguishing features
Institutional Focus Model	A, C, E	ETD programs are established as an institutional policy. All three universities incorporated ETD programs into their institutional design at the time of the university's establishment.
Cross-Faculty Model	M, O, Q	Two or more different faculties jointly put together ETD programs. Multiple faculties collaborate to set up the implementing body for each program.
Whole Faculty Model	B, D, S	Almost all the courses offered by a whole faculty (or department) are taught in English. In some cases, the majority of places are reserved for Japanese students.
Faculty Add-on Model	F, G, H, I, J, K, L, D*, B*, N, P, R, T	Programs aimed at international students are added to existing faculties. Most of the programs newly established under the Global 30 are of this type.

Source: Compiled by the authors based on information from each university's website etc.

- B and D (Pre-G30): ETD programs implemented before G-30 selection
- B* and D* (G-30): ETD programs implemented after G-30 selection

These various formats of establishment show that the high degree of faculty autonomy which is a characteristic of Japanese university organization is also reflected in ETD programs. Of the 20 universities surveyed, 16 follow either the Whole faculty model or the Faculty add-on model, and since student application and selection procedures are administered separately by each faculty or department, several different admissions procedures exist at the same university, which is highly inconvenient for applicants⁶.

⁶ At universities in the United States and other foreign countries, one university-wide admissions process for international applicants to undergraduate programs is the norm. The shared use of a single online application system by several universities (Common Application) is also becoming widespread.

4.2 Admissions quota

As can be seen in Table 1, the number of places allocated to international students at each university is limited. Excluding the four private universities which were offering ETD programs before the start of the Global 30, the majority of universities have quotas of around 10 to 20 places. There are also some universities, mainly national, which use expressions such as “limited”, “a small number”, or “only a limited number” to indicate their quotas. These are presumably translations of the Japanese expression which encompasses “some/a few people”, but stating that the number of places available is extremely low surely creates a psychological hurdle for international students. Furthermore, it will be difficult for such universities to gain a reputation as internationalized and open to overseas students. This kind of admissions quota was particularly notable among Global 30 universities.

A total of 29 new ETD programs were established at the 13 universities chosen for the Global 30, yet only one of these programs had an admissions quota corresponding to 10% or more of the departmental total at the undergraduate level. The majority of programs had quotas representing between 3% and 6% of the total, while four of the programs had quotas of just 1%.

4.3 Application fees

Application fee levels were divided into three categories:

- (1) Universities using their standard application fee (around 17,000 yen⁷ at Japanese national universities and 35,000 yen⁸ at private universities)
- (2) Universities charging different fees to those applying from within Japan and from overseas, or to Japanese students and international students
- (3) Universities which had introduced a completely different fee for ETD programs

Category (1) included six universities, category (2) included five, and category (3) included nine (Table 3). All the universities in category (2) were private; three of them charged the standard application fee of 35,000 yen to those applying from within Japan, but charged 5,000 yen⁹ to those applying from overseas. Application fees at American universities, which receive the largest global share of international students, are around 30 to 50 US dollars¹⁰, and so it can be thought that the application fees for overseas applicants were based on these. In category (3), where a completely different fee was established for the ETD programs, one university charged no application fee, while five charged 5,000 yen to all applicants, making application more accessible to students from countries with much lower economic levels.

⁷ 140 US dollars (1 US dollar = 121 Japanese yen)

⁸ 289 US dollars (the same rate above)

⁹ 41 US dollars (1 US dollar = 121 Japanese yen)

¹⁰ Application fees at American universities were taken from the following website:
<http://www.ryugaku.com/ugrad/basis/expenses.html> (Sakae Institute of Study Abroad).

Table 3. Application Fees

	Type	University	Application fees (Yen)	Category
Pre-G30	Local public	A	17,000	(1)
	Private	B	35,000	(1)
		C	22,000	(1)
		D	Application from overseas: 5,000 Application from within Japan: 35,000	(2)
		E	Application from overseas: 5,000 Application from within Japan: 35,000	(2)
G30	National	F	Free of charge	(3)
		G	1st Screening: 4,000 2nd Screening: 13,000	(1)
		H	5,000	(3)
		I	5,000	(3)
		J	17,000	(1)
		K	17,000	(1)
		L	10,000	(3)
	Private	D*	Application from overseas: 5,000 Application from within Japan: 35,000	(2)
		M	Application from overseas: 5,000 Application from within Japan: 35,000	(2)
		B*	30,000	(1)
		N	15,000	(3)
		O	15,000	(3)
		P	5,000	(3)
Post-G30	National	Q	5,000	(3)
		R	5,000	(3)
	Private	S	Application from overseas - International students: 22,500 - Japanese students: 37,500 Application from within Japan: 35,000	(2)
		T	Application from overseas: 25,000 Application from within Japan: 35,000	(2)

- Source: Compiled by the authors on the basis of each university's admissions guidelines
- B and D (Pre-G30): ETD programs implemented before G-30 selection
- B* and D* (G-30): ETD programs implemented after G-30 selection
- Categories are defined as follows:
 - (1) Universities using the standard application fee charged to applicants for other programs.
 - (2) Universities charging different fees depending on the applicant's location (within Japan or overseas) etc.
 - (3) Universities charging a completely different fee for ETD programs.

5. Comparison and examination of applications procedures: Selection methods

Each university bases its selection procedures for ETD programs on the screening of documents, in

order to implement pre-departure admissions. Broadly speaking, there are six documents required of applicants by all universities: (1) a certificate of completion of twelve years of school-level education (e.g. a high school graduation certificate); (2) a high school transcript; (3) an official English-language test score such as TOEFL; (4) scores from each country's standardized university entrance test; (5) an essay in English stating the candidate's motives for applying, and (6) references. The selection methods used by each university, as described below, are outlined in Table 4.

5.1 Interviews and written examinations

Although document screening is the principal basis for the selection of applicants, 13 universities, more than half of the 20 surveyed, also required an interview. Candidates living within Japan are interviewed on the university campus; candidates living overseas are interviewed at in-country test centers; and where it is difficult for candidates to reach any of these venues, interviews are carried out via the Internet. It is noteworthy that all the national universities chosen for the Global 30 call the document screening the "first-stage examination" and the interview the "second-stage examination". Two of these universities require applicants to take a written examination in addition to the interview¹¹, making their requirements equivalent to those of conventional entrance examinations for international students.

5.2 High school grades

Universities in Europe and the United States accord great importance to applicants' high school grades, with highly competitive institutions requiring a specific GPA score or the study of particular subjects as part of their entry qualifications. Only one institution among the 20 included in this study, a national university, went so far as to specify a particular grade, giving their recommended GPA as 3.0 or above. All the other universities simply required the submission of a transcript. In the conventional selection process at Japanese universities, the high school transcript is viewed primarily as a means of confirming that the candidate meets the application requirement of having graduated from, or being expected to graduate from, senior high school, with acceptance or rejection being entirely dependent on the score obtained in the entrance examination. In Japan, in recent years, other selection procedures which do not rely solely on written examinations have become more common, such as "admissions office selection", in which candidates are assessed on a variety of criteria determined by the individual university, or admission based on recommendation; nevertheless, even in these cases the results of interviews and essays written by the applicants are emphasized. In other words, the practice of scrutinizing and evaluating the high school grades in the transcripts of

¹¹ Candidates living overseas sit the examination at the overseas test center, while those living in Japan sit it on the university campus.

university applicants has not yet been adopted in Japan. For ETD programs, too, the survey results show a tendency to treat these grades as evidence that applicants meet application requirements for the program rather than to use them for screening.

Table 4. Selection methods

	Type	University	Selection procedures	Standardized university entrance tests			References: number of references if required
				Test results	Tests and conditions	EJU	
Pre-G30	L	A	documents	♥	designated 7 countries' standardized test/IB	X	1
	P	B	documents	♠	SAT/ACT/IB		2
		C	documents	♠	designated 9 countries' standardized test/IB		2
		D	documents	♠	designated 21 countries' standardized test/IB/EJU	X	Not required
		E	documents, interview	♣	submit if taken any		1
G30	N	F	documents, interview, written exam	♠	SAT/GCE-A Level/IB/EJU	X	Not required
		G	documents, interview	♣	submit if taken any		1
		H	documents, interview	♠	designated 13 countries' standardized test/IB		3
		I	documents, interview	♠	designated 16 countries' standardized test/IB	X	2
		J	documents, interview	♠	strongly recommend to submit EJU score	X	Not required
		K	documents, interview	♠	designated 17 countries' standardized test/IB		1 to 2
		L	documents, interview, written exam	♣	strongly recommend to submit	X	Not required
	P	D*	documents, interview [†]	♠	designated 18 countries' standardized test/IB/EJU	X	1 to 2
		M	documents	♣	strongly recommend to submit	X	2
		B*	documents	♠	SAT/ACT/IB/EJU	X	2
		N	documents	♠	designated 19 countries' standardized test/IB/EJU	X	1
		O	documents, interview	♥	mandatory if high school diploma is not issued		1
		P	documents, interview	♥	mandatory if high school diploma is not issued		1
		Q	documents, interview	♣	strongly recommend to submit		1
Post-G30	N	R	documents	♦	Not required		1
	P	S	documents	♠	SAT/ACT/GCE-A Level/IB etc.		2
		T	documents, interview [‡]	♣	strongly recommend to submit		1

- Source: Compiled by the authors on the basis of each university's admissions guidelines
- Type: N = National, L = Local public, P = Private
- B and D (Pre-G30): ETD programs implemented before G-30 selection
- B* and D* (G-30): ETD programs implemented after G-30 selection
- Selection methods: † = Four out of the five faculties use interviews; ‡ = Interviews are used only for applicants from within Japan
- Submission of the results of standardized university entrance tests: ♠ = Required; ♠ = Recommended, or to be submitted where such a test was taken; ♥ = To be submitted only by applicants from certain countries, ♦ = Submission not required
- Abbreviation of tests: IB = International Baccalaureate [IB Organization], SAT = Scholastic Assessment Tests [U.S.A.]
- ACT = American College Testing [U.S.A.], GCE-A Level = The General Certificate of Education Advanced Level [U.K.]
- EJU = Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students [Japan]
- X: EJU is acceptable as a standardized university entrance test.

5.3 Results of standardized university entrance tests

The greatest variation between the practices of each university was observed in their handling of standardized university entrance tests, academic ability tests required of applicants by universities in each country (Table 4). 12 programs at 10 universities required the submission of such results as a general rule; six universities did not require them, but stated that they were “recommended” or should be submitted where applicants had taken such a test; one university did not require their submission at all; and three universities required their submission only from applicants in certain countries where high school transcripts were not issued. Even among those universities which generally required their submission, some universities required applicants from countries in which standardized tests were not held to take the United States Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT), while others asked applicants who had difficulty in submitting such results to send a written explanation of the reasons for this instead.

In this context, it is interesting that 10 out of the 20 universities include the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU)¹² among acceptable standardized tests. Since there are restrictions on EJU test venues and dates, it would be difficult for this examination to be used universally; however, it allows applicants to be examined on various subject areas in English, and these results are suggestive of its potential for even more widespread use by ETD programs in the future.

5.4 References

In many countries, such as the United States where university selection procedures are based primarily upon written documents it is common to submit references; however, there was a wide range of practices among the 20 universities surveyed, with some faculties or departments (programs) within a single university requiring their submission while others did not. 32 programs at 17 universities, out of the 39 programs surveyed at 20 universities, required the submission of between one and three references. Of the seven programs which did not require any, six were offered at three of the national universities selected for the Global 30. As well as guaranteeing an applicant's identity, references play a role in revealing their character through the evaluation of a person in authority who knows the applicant well. However, it would appear that they do not necessarily conform well to the traditional selection procedures at Japanese universities, which emphasize the results of evaluations, such as written examinations and interviews, carried out by the university itself. Almost all of the universities specified that references should be written by “teachers or other staff of

¹² The Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU) is used to evaluate whether international applicants who wish to study at the undergraduate level at universities or other such higher education institutions in Japan possess the Japanese language skills and the basic academic abilities needed to study at those institutions (JASSO, 2016).

the high school most recently attended”. Only three universities, two national and one private, none of which were chosen for the Global 30, added that “references may also be written by workplace supervisors”, showing a readiness to widen their admissions to encompass international students who had already started their careers.

6. Examination of accessibility

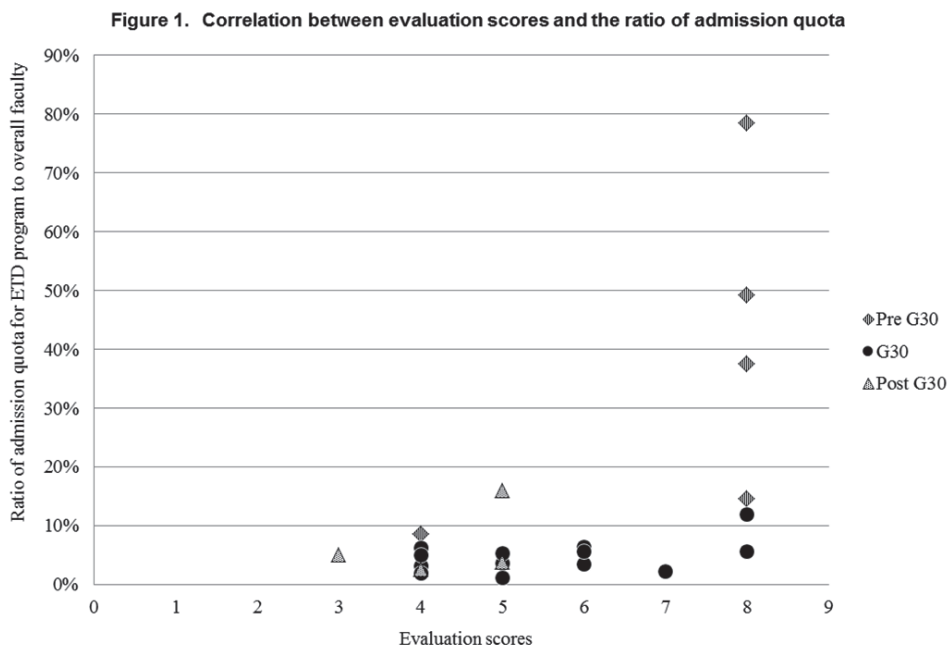
Nine items which can be used to measure accessibility were extracted from the admissions procedures (Table 5). Where a measure was in place, one point was awarded, whereas where a measure had not been implemented, zero points were awarded in an attempt to give each program a score. Of the nine items, “7. Inclusion of information about scholarships” and “8. Inclusion of information about accommodation” are not directly related to the selection of applicants, but they are issues of particular concern for students who are hoping to come directly from their home countries to study at a Japanese university, and so they were added to the evaluation criteria based on the understanding that including information about them in the admissions procedures improves accessibility. Item “9. Transfer students are accepted” was included in order to evaluate a university’s willingness to admit a wide variety of students, bearing in mind its degree of connection with other higher education institutions around the world.

Table 5. Items used for evaluating accessibility as seen in admissions procedures

- | |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Admissions procedures take place using the document screening method alone. 2. Fall entry (intake) is available. 3. Application fees are set at around 5,000 yen (41 US dollars) or less. 4. Application fees can be paid by credit card. 5. Online application is available. 6. Multiple application deadlines (terms) are available. 7. Information about scholarships is included. 8. Information about accommodation is included. 9. Transfer students are admitted. |
|---|

Universities with eight points or more were judged to have “high” accessibility, those with five to seven points, “medium”, and those with four points or less, “low”. The results show four universities in the “high” category. All were private universities. Two had both programs established before being chosen for the Global 30 and programs introduced afterwards, each of which fell into this category, bringing the total number of programs to six; nine in the “medium” category (four national or local public and five private universities); and seven in the “low” category (six national or local public and one private university). The correlation between these evaluation scores

and the ratio of the number of places available for the ETD programs, which includes international students, to the overall admissions quota for the faculty or department at each university is shown as a scatter diagram in Figure 1. Some degree of correlation was observed between the admission quota ratio and accessibility (correlation coefficient: $r = 0.57$).



Each of the universities with a “high” degree of accessibility had introduced ETD programs before the start of the Global 30. A distinguishing characteristic was that with the exception of one program established after selection for the Global 30, places for which international students were eligible to apply comprised between 12% and 78% of the total available, a relatively high proportion in comparison with other universities. The involvement of the institution as a whole is essential in order to create a recruitment system and study environment which will attract sufficient international students to make up more than one-tenth of the total intake of the faculty or department, and to run an ETD program on that scale. There is a link between the scale of these admissions quotas and each university’s firm resolution and commitment to attract international students.

Nine universities, including seven of the 13 chosen for the Global 30, fell into the category of “medium” accessibility. The universities chosen for the Global 30 received government grants, creating an environment in which it facilitated moving forward with the various measures needed in order to recruit international students. Nevertheless, there was wide disparity between the items implemented at each university. The proportion of places available for international students was low, leading one to infer that the establishment of ETD programs has been unable to propel the

universities as a whole in the direction of further internationalization¹³.

Among the universities chosen for the Global 30, five national or local public universities were found to have a “low” degree of accessibility. Many of the universities in this category made 5% or fewer of their places available to international students, and even where all the programs offered by a department were taught in English, almost all of the places available were for Japanese students.

7. Implications and questions for further research

ETD programs can appeal not only to those who have already studied the Japanese language, hitherto the main target group for study in Japan, but also to the much broader group of prospective students who have not had an opportunity to study Japanese. In this way, they have the potential of providing access to new student markets. However, in the context of vociferous calls from society for the internationalization of universities, it appears that the possession of ETD programs acts as a means of branding or window-dressing in the competition among Japanese universities, and that the most important aim is not to recruit more international students but to gain a competitive edge over domestic rivals. These circumstances are surely helping to distort the responses of the nation’s universities to internationalization through the creation of ETD programs with international student admissions procedures which omit “the viewpoint of the international student applying from overseas, the degree of convenience and user-friendliness for the applicant, and which “are not open to the world”. Understanding the leading role which ETD programs have to play in promoting internationalization at each university, clarifying the strategies for doing so before investing resources in them, and putting in place solid student admissions and support systems are likely to lead to improved accessibility for international students.

This paper has examined the accessibility of ETD programs at Japanese universities through their admissions procedures. The establishment of ETD programs is a global trend, however, and Japan has been late to enter the field. A study of the relationship between the establishment of ETD programs and international student recruitment practices in countries whose higher education systems have grown to maturity teaching in a single language other than English, such as South Korea, Taiwan, or parts of Europe, is particularly likely to yield some useful lessons for the ongoing development of ETD programs in Japan. We intend to address these issues in future research.

¹³ At universities with a medium or low degree of accessibility, some examples were found of online course registration systems and syllabus search systems which were unable to cope with English.

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