



**United Nations University**

*"advancing knowledge for human security and development"*

*Financial Assistance Programme*



2004/OCTOBER

## **FAP Outreach**

***What is the "United Nations University (UNU) - Financial Assistance Programme for Students from Developing Countries Studying in Japan (FAP)"?***

The "United Nations University (UNU) - Financial Assistance Programme for Students from Developing Countries Studying in Japan (FAP)" is implemented by UNU with financial cooperation by the Government of Japan and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). The Programme provides self-financed students from developing countries with funds necessary to study in Japan through universities where these students are enrolled. The Programme aims to assist the students in their life in Japan by alleviating the financial burden at the time of their enrolment and grade advancement at universities, thereby contributing to the human resources development in developing countries. The recipient students who are provided with funds via the Programme and the students shall reimburse the funds by monthly installments before graduation from the university to which they belong ("Cooperating University") in accordance with an agreed reimbursement schedule.

***Cooperating Universities:***

- **Bunka Women's University**
- **Ferris University**
- **Hokuriku University**
- **Kanazawa Seiryō University**
- **Kokugakuin University**
- **Kure University**
- **Maebashi Kyoai Gakuen College**
- **Obirin University**
- **Okinawa International University**
- **Okinawa University**
- **Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University**
- **Ritsumeikan University**
- **Tokyo Christian University**
- **University Of Marketing & Distribution Sciences**
- **Yokohama College Of Commerce**

Most of the recipient students are from Asian countries. The majority are Chinese, followed by Sri Lankan and Indonesian.



**Ms. Jacinta Tai**  
**Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Year**  
**Papua New Guinea**

FAP has helped me very much to build up my student life in Japan, confidently. While I was in my country I decided not to come to Japan for further studies even though I was selected to Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, because I knew that I couldn't afford my living expenses in Japan. It was at that time; the university contacted me and asked me for the reason for refusing the acceptance. Then, I told them about my difficulties in financial side. After taking to consideration about my status, the university introduced FAP to me and sent me an application. So I filled it with hope and sent it. The result was that money was waiting, even before I came to Japan. By the sake of the help I received from FAP, I managed to settle down in Japan and to afford my living expenses till my government sent me money to continue studies. I highly acknowledge and appreciate the help offered to International students from developing countries, by FAP.



**Ms. Tei Ki**  
**Ferris University**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Year**  
**People's Republic of China**

I did not have much interest in making use of FAP when I first entered Ferris University, because at that time I thought that, rather than a FAP loan, it would be better to receive some kind of scholarship. The reason for this was that I believed that instead of utilizing funds "borrowed" from FAP, ultimately it would be much better to be "given" a scholarship. However, although I was receiving scholarship money, it was difficult for me to pay for my large educational expenses all at once. I was unable to cover these expenses despite my efforts, and this became a source of stress. It was when I found myself confronted by this difficulty that the staff of my university kindly suggested once again that I apply for FAP funding. This time I did so. I believe that the merits of using FAP are that completing its application procedures is easy and recipient students can borrow a relatively large amount of funds at one time. In addition, I think it is easy to take advantage of this loan, since the borrower is required to repay only 10,000 a month until graduation. I became an FAP loan recipient from the second half of 2004. It gave me great peace of mind to be informed that I would be able to receive this loan, as I felt that I could now concentrate on my studies and enjoy living and studying in Japan without having to worry about my academic expenses anymore. I believe that there are many students who are still not making use of FAP. Therefore, I would like to have as many people as possible learn that this system of borrowing money is available and utilize it. Let's realize our respective dreams and ambitions by devoting ourselves to our academic pursuits and enriching our experience abroad as foreign students!

## *Let's visit "Nikko" in Autumn!!*

Nikko is one of Japan's most popular places due to its deep cultural and traditional values. Nikko, surrounded by a spectacular forest and a mountain range, is situated in the Tochigi Prefecture, three to four hours from Tokyo by train. Nikko is famous for its beautiful autumn scenery full of spectacular red leaves. Find out more about Nikko by reading this article.

### *-Red leaves in Nikko-*



There are many kinds of trees all around Nikko and the leaves of these trees turn a brilliant red during autumn. Viewing the color changes of the leaves has been a popular cultural activity of the Japanese for a long time. You can also enjoy the beauty and feel the magic of nature through the changes of the seasons by viewing the colored leaves around the traditional temples of Nikko. The main spots in Nikko are Kinugawa, Okunikou and especially Irohazaka.

### *-Nikko Toshogu-*

Nikkou Toshogu is the main temple in Nikko. In 1617, the second General Hidetada built the temple according to the will of Ieyasu. The temple is decorated with famous traditional arts and carvings.



It is one of the places where the true Japanese culture can be seen and experienced with your own eyes. This temple is famous not only among foreign tourists but also attracts a huge number of Japanese visitors.

### *-Kegonno taki-*



This is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Japan. It is 96 meters high and seven meters wide. The waterfall's surroundings are breath-taking as it flows so beautifully through the woods. It is also known as "shiwase no taki" meaning "the waterfall of happiness". This is one of the attractions that the visitors to Nikko should not miss.

For more information visit  
<http://www.city.nikko.tochigi.jp>

---

## *Stories Behind Japanese National Holidays*

The Japanese people celebrate a number of national holidays throughout the year. Let's have a look at some of the traditional national holidays celebrated in September, October and November. In this article we reveal the reasons for these celebrations.

In this article, we will look at the following national holidays for the year 2004.

- **September 20<sup>th</sup>** : Keiro no Hi (Respect for the Aged Day)
- **September 23<sup>rd</sup>** : Shubun no Hi (Autumnal Equinox Day)
- **October 11<sup>th</sup>** : Taiku no Hi (Sports Day)
- **November 3<sup>rd</sup>** : Bunka no Hi (Culture Day)
- **November 15<sup>th</sup>** : Shichi-go-san (not a national holiday but the most auspicious day of the year )

You might have heard the names of these holidays, not only once but many times during your stay in Japan. But do you know the actual meanings of these holidays? Understanding the concepts of these holidays gives an image of Japanese beliefs and culture. It also shows how the Japanese culture has changed. Let's have a close look at each of the holidays.

### [September 20<sup>th</sup>: Keiro no Hi \(Respect for the Aged Day\)](#)

As can be easily understood from the name of the holiday, this is the day set aside for showing gratitude to the elderly for their dedication and service to society, and the chance to bless them with a long life. On this day, the elderly receive gifts from their families, and also from the city governments. The occasion expresses one of the Confucian values of the Japanese culture. In the past, this day was

especially used to show respect to those older than sixty. The age sixty was important not only because it is an advanced age but also it is the age at which a person completes the cycle of the Zodiac in their lifetime (completion of 12 animal signs and 10 elements). However, with developments in medicine and technology, the life expectancy has increased and today the emphasis of this celebration has shifted to 70 from 60.

### [September 23<sup>rd</sup>: Shubun no Hi \(Autumnal Equinox Day\)](#)

There are two special events celebrated on this day that have different meanings. One is the celebration of the seasonal change and the other is known as the recalling of the ancestors. Celebration of the seasonal changes has been typical in the agricultural societies. This is the day when the day and the night are equal in length. After this day, the night hours will be longer than the day-time hours.

This day is also called the Higan no Chu Nichi, which means "the other side of the river". According to the beliefs of the Buddhist teachings, the two sides of a river are considered to be the separate worlds of the "living" and "dead". During Higan, there is a week-long Buddhist observance that is also called "Higan". The Higan begins three days prior to the equinox day and lasts until three days after the equinox day. During this period people recall their ancestors, and on the equinox most families visit the graves of those who have passed away. They weed the tombs, pay their respects and leave flowers (Higan flowers), incenses and a specially-made sweet called "ohagi". This round sweet is made from rice and soybean paste and round in shape. The sweet is round because the Japanese people believe that the spirits

of their ancestors prefer round food. For these reasons, Shubun no Hi is one of the most traditional Japanese holidays.

#### [October 11<sup>th</sup>: Taiku no Hi \(Sports Day\)](#)

Taiku no Hi (Sports day) was named as a national holiday in 1966, to commemorate the first summer Olympics held in Tokyo in October, 1964. It was the first Olympics held on the Asian soil. On this day, sporting events are held in almost all schools, businesses, area communities and towns around Japan. The events are filled with games ranging from easy bean-bag tossing to athletics. This is a day on which most people not only commemorate the Tokyo Olympics but try their best to make use of their full energy in sports.

#### [November 3<sup>rd</sup>: Bunka no Hi \(Culture Day\)](#)

This holiday is also known as a day on which two important occasions are celebrated. One is the annual celebration of the present constitution of Japan; the other is the giving away of the “Bunka Kunsho” Awards (Order of Culture Awards). On November 3, 1946, the present constitution of Japan took into effect. This holiday is used to commemorate the ideals of the constitution.

However, November 3 has been celebrated even before 1946, in honor of the birthday of the Meiji Emperor. Following the reign of the Meiji Emperor, this day was renamed as the “Culture Day”. Since then, every year, the Japanese government has been presenting the Bunka Kunsho Awards to a few people who have devoted their lives to promoting Japanese culture, and as well as to others who have gained high achievements in academic fields.

The award ceremony is held at the Imperial Palace. A special aspect of this award is that it is given to both Japanese and non-Japanese achievers.

#### [November 15<sup>th</sup>: Shichi-go-san \(Not a national holiday\)](#)

According to the traditional Japanese calendar, November 15 is the most auspicious day of the year even though it is not considered as a national holiday. This day was chosen as the day of “Shichi-go san”, which literally means “7-5-3”, in which parents with children aged seven, five and three years of age pray for long lives for their children. Boys and girls aged three, boys aged five and girls aged seven are taken to the Shinto shrines by their parents to have the prayers offered for them by the priests. This is the day on which the girl children first wear the “obi sash” with which they tie their kimono and boys aged five wear the “hakama trousers” for the first time in public. Girls and boys aged three stopped having their head shaved and are allowed to grow their hair. This is a custom which dates back to the Edo era. Present shichi-go-san customs are considered to have evolved in the Meiji era.



*shichi-go-san day*

## *Student Life & Culture Shock!!*

Culture shock is a common process experienced by everybody as a result of moving to an unfamiliar place from a familiar one. International students currently studying at universities all around Japan can experience various different actions, cultures, and customs which all leads to the one process known as culture shock. Of course, the experiences we have had are different, the ways in which we have experienced them differ, and the time we have experienced them differ from each other. But one thing for sure is that each one of us has experienced culture shock many times in many ways after arriving in Japan. It does not matter where you come from or what experiences you have. You are always exposed to culture shock.

Think of your first days in Japan. Do you remember those days when you felt that everything was different? The climate, food, language, dress, social roles and behavior are elements that contribute to culture shock. Being away from the environment you are used to and coming into a new environment, it takes time to forget the absence of familiar people, things, and activities before being able to adjust to the new environment.

Culture shock is considered to be a temporary phase. And it is important to control such situations. The best way to minimize the pressure of culture shock is to understand and expect that culture shock could affect you anywhere and anytime. You can prepare yourself beforehand in order to be able to face any culture shock situation. One of the most important ways to reduce the effect of culture shock could be positive thinking about the new environment and taking the new differences as a chance to experience lots of new things such as a new culture, customs, even a new life style as a student, especially if it is your first time living by yourself. It can be helpful if you try to make new friends, get to know the important places such as the nearest station,

book shop, post office, etc. It is also a good idea to participate in the club activities offered by universities. You might be able to find student circles made of people with the same interests as yours, so that it will be easier to make new friends within the university. It helps go on home stays, traditional events and introduced by the university. Because by participating in such events, you will get an opportunity to know more about the culture and customs of the new environment.

To put everything in a nutshell, your interaction with the new environment is the factor that will determine how far you can survive the culture shock.

### *Students' messages...*

*Asela Karunatillake*

*Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, 4<sup>th</sup> Year*

*Sri Lankan*

Culture shock is interesting. At first, it was hard for me to cope with it. I felt culture shock related to the food. I am used to having cooked food, so at first it was difficult for me to get used to the Japanese food culture that includes raw food. Now I do not feel uncomfortable at all to have Japanese food, instead, I enjoy the unique taste very much. It is the same with some of the daily customs including getting used to the hot springs ("onsen"). Getting into the ofuro without clothes seems strange in the culture where I come from. As a result, I was shocked and embarrassed when I had to use the ofuro for the first time. There was no other way than sharing the ofuro with others since there was no shower in the place where I had to stay. Because of that experience, I began to realize that we should be empathetic towards the host culture and try to adopt cultural aspects especially if we have to live in a new culture for a long time. If you do not, you will find yourself isolated from the majority, which would be a tremendous shock.

---

## *Students' Messages Continued*

***Jatos Suryatamtama***  
***Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University***  
***4<sup>th</sup> Year***  
***Indonesia***

In general, I think that student life in Japan is almost the same as it was in other places I have been to. We get plenty of freedom to do whatever we want in our own time. It is up to us to decide whether to invest our time in school, leisure activities or to earn extra income. The biggest challenge in adjusting myself to the student life in Japan was the high cost of living. I suppose almost every foreign student has to face this. Talking about effects of cultural differences in adjusting to the student life in Japan, I had only a few difficulties that I can remember. Being a student of an international university, I had a lot of leeway in finding the best way to assimilate the Japanese culture into my daily life. My Japanese friends are forgiving, the community and townsfolk where I live seemed to be used to having foreigners around. If I stay inconspicuous, that is to say not being brash or boorish on the streets or in public places, the people would basically treat me the same as they would treat any other local citizens. Fitting into the community was difficult without an adequate grasp of the Japanese language, but as I improved my communications skills, so did my efforts blend in.

***Safwan Hindawi***  
***Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University,***  
***4<sup>th</sup> Year,***  
***Syria***

I was never shocked during my stay in Japan because I knew almost everything about Japan before actually coming here. It was a lot of fun for me to realize that what I had read in books and learned from Japanese friends was correct. Well, of course, sometimes things were slightly different from what I had learned. The bottom-line is that it is useful to have prior knowledge about the culture which you are going to experience. Knowledge helps greatly in controlling culture shock and gives you the confidence to face the new life.

## *Job Hunting in Japan*

### **Foreign Students Recruitment Policy of JAL...**

In this segment, we feature the views of Japan Airlines System Corporation (JAL), a leading Japanese corporation, on the employment of foreign students.

For this interview, we spoke with Shingo Kawai, director of JAL's Human Resources Management Planning, and Taro Kawagoe, assistant manager in the same department.

JAL employs personnel for career-track positions (administrative, passenger compartment, and technical positions). Each year, JAL receives almost 15,000 applications (of which about 300 are from non-Japanese applicants — most of the foreign applicants are Chinese, followed by South Koreans). From these applicants, JAL hires only about 70 (60 of which are hired for administrative and passenger compartment positions and 10 of which are hired for technical positions), meaning the odds of getting a job are very low. Of the 70 yearly hires, one foreign student was employed through a work visa in 2002 and another in 2003. JAL plans to hire two foreign students in the coming year.

### **JAL's Stance on Employing Foreign Students Abilities JAL looks for when hiring:**

- (1) English ability judged by TOEIC, TOEFL, or the STEP Test in Practical English Proficiency (For foreign students, JAL considers Japanese writing ability and spoken communication ability in Japanese.)**
- (2) What candidates focused on in their school years and to what extent they gained or learned from their experiences.**

**(3) Because JAL is in the service industry, people who can see things from the customer's point of view.**

**(4) People who can set clear-cut goals and can work toward fulfilling their goals.**

JAL does not set any special criteria or conduct particularly rigorous interviews simply because a candidate is an overseas student or because he or she is not a Japanese national. Foreign students are evaluated on the same criteria as Japanese nationals. Consequently, JAL expects candidates to have a level of Japanese suitable for the workplace. The company seems to believe that hiring people of various nationalities brings a new perspective to the company and helps create a more diverse company.

### ***Getting a Job at JAL***

Next, we asked Zheng Liu, a former overseas student from China working at JAL (Liu was hired by JAL and is currently on temporary assignment at JAL Sales), about his experiences. Liu came to Japan from Beijing when he was 15. He attended a high school in Chiba Prefecture for two-and-a-half years and later graduated from the University of Tokyo. He began working at JAL in 2002. Hearing the story of Liu's student life and his thoughts on working in Japan should provide plenty of inspiration to any student beginning to look for employment.

**- Please describe your life as a student in Japan, Liu.**

**Liu:** I came to Japan to study when I was a high school student. Initially, I had a difficult time improving my Japanese, and the shock of a new culture was quite hard for me. Especially since my

high school was an all-boarders school, the language barrier often made me homesick and I cried sometimes. Even after I got a little more used to living in Japan and got better at speaking Japanese, I still sensed a large cultural barrier and I often disagreed with Japanese people. But I got through these experiences and I dedicated myself to studying. Now that I'm working and don't have as much free time, I think it would have been better not to have concentrated on studying so much and experienced other things such as volunteer work or an internship.

**- Even though you were homesick and ran into language and cultural barriers, why did you still want to find a job in Japan? Did you ever consider returning home?**

**Liu:** First of all, I was studying science in university, and many of the people around me elected to continue their research and become researchers. But for me, I didn't have the resources to continue studying because I was financing my own way as a foreign student. (In this regard, I think the FAP system is extremely good.) At the same time, I wanted to start working quickly so I could repay all the people who had helped me. So that's why I decided to look for work.

I think a large part of my decision to remain in Japan was that my life in Japan had gotten a lot better and that Japan had become like a second home to me. When I went back to Beijing for a visit, I was struck by how much Beijing is changing and how the thinking of my friends in Beijing had changed. Every time I went back to Beijing, I felt tense, whereas when I came back to Japan from Beijing I would feel at ease again. My friends would say, "You're the one who's changed".

When I heard this, it dawned on me that during my time in Japan, without realizing it, I really had changed from when I lived in Beijing. Furthermore, I had gotten to a point where I could understand both Chinese and Japanese culture and language, and both peoples' feelings through my time as an overseas student. So I wanted to work in Japan at a job where I could make use of this experience and where I could connect with the world.

**- Why did you choose to work at an airline and why, in particular, JAL?**

**Liu:** When I was a student, I heard of an incident where JAL handed out unheated meals to Chinese passengers. The truth to the story is that the JAL flight was delayed for long time so the JAL attendants, thinking that the passengers must be getting hungry, distributed meals to the waiting passengers. Unfortunately, in China, presenting cold food or uncooked food is extremely rude. Naturally, the Chinese passengers got angry and it turned into a big commotion. When I saw the story on the news, I thought if I had been there, I would have understood the feelings on both sides. In the end, after the Chinese passengers and the JAL staff talked through the problem, they were able to understand each other's position and resolve the dispute. This incident lead me to think about combining my experiences I had cultivated in Japan and my experiences gained from my education, culture, and customs in China where I grew up, and using them to assist people in the course of my job. I realized that the service industry requires you to consider the position of others, and I also realized that I wanted to work in a job where I could meet people from many different cultures. That's why I decided on airlines. I applied at JAL because it is particularly renowned for its international flights.

- Finally, do you have any message for students who are looking for work in Japan?

**Liu:** My wish for those students is that they strive to do their best and make decisions they can live with, whether they look for work in Japan or whether they decide to return home and make use of what they've learned here in their own country. If you decide to look for work in Japan, your nationality has no influence whatsoever on work. You will be evaluated and recognized simply on your own effort and abilities.

Furthermore, the experience of running into language and culture barriers and overcoming them during your student days is a valuable asset that only you have. I hope foreign students will take advantage of this asset to develop their own potential.

### Concluding the Interview (with the interns)

**Tei Ki:** Liu was very impressive. It makes me want to study harder and put my abilities to work at a company.

**Kojima:** That's true. I realized too, as Liu said, how important it is to turn your experiences into assets. It's a shame if you don't make use of the things you've experienced.

**Siyana:** I was surprised to hear that JAL doesn't set any special criteria for hiring foreign students.

**Tei Ki:** Yes, but that means they evaluate foreign students on par with Japanese.

**Kojima:** But, at the same time, they'll recognize the fact that you are utilizing your experiences and background to overcome that obstacle.

**Siyana:** So it's crucial to have Japanese proficiency and lots of experience as a student to get a job at a Japanese company.

**Tei Ki:** I've got to get more out of the rest of my student life and not have any regrets about these four years. By doing so, I feel I'll be able to put my studying-abroad experience to use and figure out what I want to do in the future. I'll do my best!

Photo caption:



At JAL headquarters (From the right, back row: Mr. Kawagoe, Mr. Kawai, and Mr. Liu)

---

## *Essay Contest & Academic Excellence Award*

### ***ESSAY CONTEST***

- Candidates:** The fund recipients of FAP
- Theme:** "The United Nations and myself" or "The global society and myself"
- Language:** English or Japanese
- Prizes:** Certificates and prizes will be awarded by the UNU.
- Entry Period:** 1 October - 30 December 2004
- For full details:** visit: <http://www.fap.hq.unu.edu>

***Share your experiences and win!***

### ***ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AWARD***

All students who have received funds from FAP have the chance to win the "Academic Excellence Award" upon completion of the following criteria. Students will be selected by their Cooperating Universities, therefore, no application will be necessary.

**Award:**

- An Academic Excellence Award, equivalent to 30% of the funds that have been reimbursed until the end of November, by the student.

**Eligibility:**

- Students who have reimbursed their funds without delay. AND
- Students who have reimbursed 2/3 or more of their funds OR who are enrolled in their final academic year as of November 2004. AND
- Students who have shown outstanding academic performance.

**Selection:**

- Each student has the chance to WIN the award **ONCE**.
- Winners will be selected by the end of November 2004.
- The selection results will be announced from the end of December 2004 to January 2005

**For full details:**

- Visit :<http://www.fap.hq.unu.edu>
- Contact your university

### ***Interns' Message.....***

By doing the internship at UNU-FAP, we experienced the gap that exists between students and professionals. During our work, we recognized a lot of weak points to overcome in the real workplace. During this internship programme, we were given the responsibility of creating a newsletter. We had to plan the whole process of implementing, organizing the contents, writing the articles, and translating the articles from English to Japanese and vice versa. We had to get up early in the morning every day to go to work even though it was during our summer vacation. It is an ordinary process for a working person to complete the assigned work responsibly and to submit it at the highest possible level by the due time. This was the most difficult part we experienced as we were not used to meeting deadlines except at the end of a semester when we had to submit reports. Talking about writing articles, it took more time to complete an article than expected. It was a challenging process, but we experienced the contentment of getting permission from people or organizations that we wanted to interview, and completing an article. We look forward to participating in more internship programmes in order to overcome our weaknesses and strengthen our skills.

**Siyana H. Samsudeen**  
**Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Year**

**Tei Ki**  
**Ferris University**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Year**

**Mayuka Kojima**  
**Ferris University**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Year**

### ***Editor's Message....***

I am delighted to tell you that we now have the first issue of UNU-FAP newsletter. As it is always the case with something new, it was extremely hard for us amateurs to determine the title, structure, and design of this newsletter, followed by interviews, writing, and editing. But in fact, we left most of this challenging work to student interns! Their efforts deserve an Olympics Games gold medal from Athens! Their smiles after completing everything were just like the winners', which makes me feel that we have had a truly valuable experience with these young students. I can hardly wait for the next issue to be with you next spring.

**Yoshinobu Onishi, Programme Officer**  
**FAP, UNU**

### ***Contact Information***

**United Nations University**  
**Financial Assistance Programme for Students From Developing Countries Studying in Japan**

**Address: 5 Chome 53-70, Jingu-mae, Shibuya, Tokyo 150-8925**

**Tel.: (03) 5467-1422/1431**

**Fax.: (03) 5467-1489**

**Homepage: <http://www.fap.hq.unu.edu>**