

FAQ Guide for International Civil Engineering Students and Professionals in Japan



International Civil Engineer Support Group
Japan (ICES)

Japan Society of Civil Engineers (JSCE)

Version 1.0



International Civil Engineer Support Japan

ICES - JSCE International Civil Engineer Group

Welcome

We are pleased to present this FAQ guide for international students and professionals in the field of civil engineering. Our aim is to support you in navigating your career path and achieving your professional goals in Japan.

Visit Us

- Website: <https://committees.jsce.or.jp/kokusai13/node/7>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61560484611508>

1. Steps to Secure Employment at a Japanese Company

I am currently studying civil engineering at a university in Japan and hope to secure employment at a Japanese company. What steps should I take to achieve this goal?



1-1 Steps and timing of job hunting

a. Flow and timing of job hunting:

Many Japanese companies follow the hiring process in line with the new graduate recruitment season. There are primarily two recruitment periods, with the majority of new hires starting in April and October. International students should plan their job-hunting activities accordingly during these times. For detailed information on the job-hunting process, including timelines and key activities, please refer to the following website.

<https://job.rikunabi.com/contents/howto/10144/>

b. Choosing a career path:

International students have various career options available to them. First, it is essential to conduct thorough research on both the industry and specific companies. In the civil engineering field, career paths include design firms, general contractors, construction consultants, and research institutions. Choose a career path that aligns with your major and interests.

- industry research :
<https://job.rikunabi.com/contents/industry/2489/>
- company research :
<https://job.career-tasu.jp/guide/study/company-try/>

c. Employment period:

There are options for both long-term and short-term employment. Long-term employment offers greater stability, while short-term employment provides more opportunities to gain diverse experience. International students should choose according to their personal goals.

d. Contact information:

Employment information can be obtained from university career services, job search websites, and job fairs held in Japan. Additionally, job postings can be found on the websites of Japanese companies.

e. Written exams (such as the SPI exam):

The written exams for job applications vary depending on the company. Examples include the SPI, Tamatebako, GAB/CAB, general knowledge questions created by the company, and essay exams. Check the application requirements of the companies you are interested in and prepare in advance. For more information, please refer to the following website:

<https://shukatsu-mirai.com/archives/24037>

f. Recommendation letter:

Recommendation letters are not commonly used in the selection process. However, if required, they can be highly important documents for companies. Recommendations from professors or supervisors at part-time jobs can be particularly valuable. It is advisable to request these letters in advance from reliable individuals and to make efforts to leave a good impression.

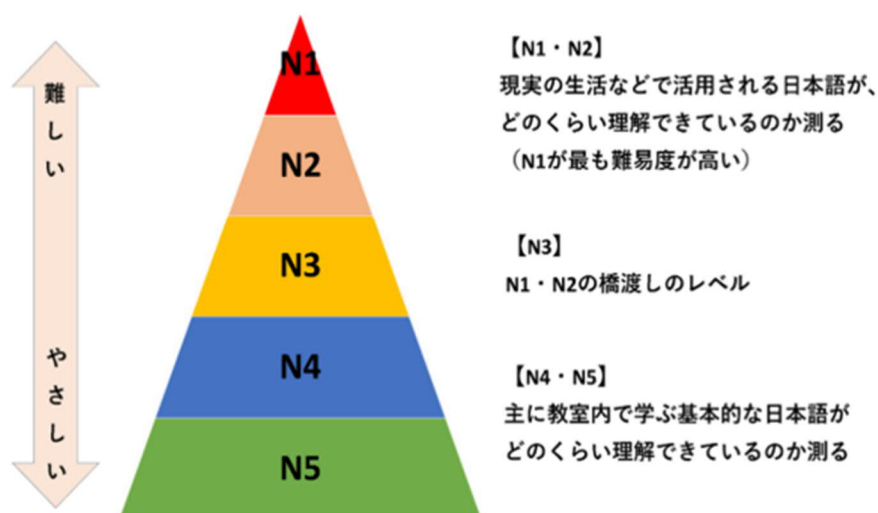
g. Networking:

In job hunting in Japan, networking is also important. It is recommended to actively build connections with people in Japan, such as university friends, seniors, and colleagues from part-time jobs. Additionally, participating in activities organized by JSCE (Japan Society for Civil Engineers) is also recommended.

1-2 Language Skills:

- To work in Japan, Japanese language proficiency is crucial. To ensure language is not a barrier, let's improve our Japanese language skills. It is generally recommended to have a Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) level of N2 or higher (i.e., N2 or N1). Additionally, understanding the Japanese work environment and culture is also important. (Ref. <https://www.jlpt.jp/>)
- Language skills other than Japanese, such as English, can be highly valued depending on the job, especially for roles related to international projects. In such cases, proficiency in other languages is advantageous. There are also English-based jobs in foreign companies, so it is recommended to search for opportunities that align with your preferences. Furthermore, some companies provide support for Japanese language training, so please consider these options as well.

N1～N5：認定レベルの目安



1-3 About Internships

- In Japan, internships are available in both short-term (1 day) and long-term (1 month, etc.) durations. Companies may have specific application procedures, such as pre-application, so it's important to confirm the internship period with your desired company. In Japan, long-term internships often provide a salary, the level of which varies depending on the industry and company.
- Internships offer students the opportunity to experience the actual work environment and activities of companies they are interested in. They also serve as a chance to showcase their skills and appeal to potential employers. Therefore, it is recommended to apply for internships at companies that interest you.

2. Appealing Aspects of Being an International Civil Engineer in Japanese Companies

What are the appealing aspects of being an International Civil Engineer in Japanese companies? Is it possible to work overseas or primarily in English?

2-1. Benefits of being an International Civil Engineer

- Benefits of International Civil Engineers for Japanese companies:

Benefits include bringing creativity and innovation from diverse cultures and perspectives, facilitating smooth international communication through multilingual skills, and exploring new business opportunities through the expansion of global networks.

- Benefits of working as an International Civil Engineer in Japanese companies:

Japan is prone to various natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, and heavy rains, which have spurred significant advancements in civil engineering technology to effectively address these challenges. Furthermore, cutting-edge technologies in limited and narrow spaces, such as construction in urban centers, are continuously evolving. By applying the knowledge of civil engineering acquired at university, International Civil Engineers can greatly enhance their technical skills and establish international competitiveness. Additionally, experience in Japanese companies contributes to improving cross-cultural communication skills and expanding global networks, providing a significant advantage for future career prospects.

2-2 About Overseas Work

Many companies actively engage in various overseas assignments such as construction sites, branch operations, and consulting services abroad. However, it is important to inquire with HR personnel during your job hunt about whether the desired company handles international projects or offers the possibility of overseas assignments based on individual preferences.



2-3 Japanese Language Proficiency in the Workplace

This answer explains the required level of Japanese language proficiency for employment and work in Japanese companies. For specific Japanese language requirements for each company's recruitment process, please contact the respective company's recruitment personnel directly.

- ▶ **Speaking and Listening Skills:** Generally, Japanese is used for communication, except in special circumstances. It is important to improve Japanese language skills to have smooth communication with colleagues.
- ▶ **Reading and Writing Skills:** Specialized guidelines and instructions related to design and construction are mostly created in Japanese only, and email and report writing also use Japanese as the primary language. Relatively high Japanese language skills are required for smooth execution of work tasks.

Depending on the workplace or department, there may be opportunities to use languages other than Japanese, such as English. However, if you aim to pursue a managerial position in the future, improving your Japanese language skills is necessary.



3. Employment Conditions and Career Path in Japanese Companies

When working in a Japanese company, could you please provide information on whether the employment conditions are equivalent to those of Japanese employees, if the evaluation process is fair, and if there is a clear career path?

3-1. Employment Conditions

Employment conditions are free from racial discrimination and are equal for all individuals. However, specific conditions may vary depending on the company and the type of contract (such as long-term or short-term employment). During job hunting, it is important to review the employment contract and personnel regulations to understand the specific conditions of each company.

3-2. Performance Evaluation and Career Vision

- In companies, work performance is commonly evaluated through biannual personnel assessments, which do not discriminate based on race, or other factors.
- As a foreigner, you possess advantages that Japanese engineers may not. Highlight your unique abilities as a International Civil Engineer, such as language skills and different perspectives, to stand out.
- If you aspire to become a manager (team leader or higher) and lead an organization, as well as engage in frequent external negotiations, it is essential to improve your Japanese language skills.



4. Managing Religion, Culture, and Socializing in Japanese Companies

When working as an International Civil Engineer in a Japanese company, how are matters such as religion, culture, and socializing typically managed?



4-1. Consideration for religion and culture

Japanese companies generally have a corporate culture that respects religion and culture. If you have colleagues or superiors who may not understand certain religious rituals, it is important to provide thorough explanations to foster an atmosphere of understanding. Recently, there has been more flexibility in work arrangements, such as telecommuting and flexible work hours, which can be effectively utilized to bridge any gaps caused by religion or culture.

4-2. Socializing outside of work (such as drinking parties or interacting with colleagues)

Depending on the company, there may be circles or groups for activities such as marathon running, hiking, or music appreciation, allowing individuals to engage in non-work-related activities based on their personal interests. By taking advantage of these opportunities, it is possible to enjoy a more fulfilling work-life balance. Conversely, individuals who prioritize their personal lives may choose to prioritize their own activities outside of work. Regarding drinking parties and meals, it is a culture that respects each individual, so you can participate at your own pace without worry.

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5. Improving Communication Skills and Understanding Specialized Terminology

I lack Japanese language skills. What can I do to improve communication with colleagues and understand specialized terminology better?

a. Improving everyday Japanese language skills:

- Prioritize daily communication. Engage in activities such as shopping at supermarkets, conversing with friends, and participating in local events to improve your language skills.
- Enjoy conversations and speak actively without fear of making mistakes to build confidence.
- Please refer to JSCE's activities.

b. Understanding specialized terminology:

- Learning specialized terminology related to your industry or profession to improve work efficiency through on the job training or work-related books. Understanding industry-specific vocabulary is key.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions to your colleagues and supervisors and make an effort to familiarize yourself with specialized terminology.

c. Improving email writing skills:

- Emails are integral to business communication and require accurate, clear expressions. Learn email writing style by referring to other emails and business documents.
- Before sending an email, check grammar and expressions to avoid mistakes.
- Many books and online resources offer tips for email writing; research and study how to create appropriate content based on your purpose. For example, basic templates for business emails are available. Refer to the example below:

<https://business-mail.jp/mail-writing/10587>



d. Learning methods:

- Consider language schools, Japanese educational institutions, classes, tutoring, and online courses. These courses cater to a wide range of levels, from beginner to advanced.
- Additionally, if your company has an internal education system, you can take advantage of it to learn specialized terminology and business Japanese.
- Usually, it is also important to familiarize yourself with Japanese by regularly exposing yourself to Japanese news, books, and other materials.

e. Use of English:

If your Japanese skills are lacking, it is also important to seek opportunities to communicate using English. Many international companies and universities use English as a common language. However, improving your Japanese skills is important for working in Japan, so please make an effort to acquire them.



6. Visa, Housing Purchase, and Social Insurance When Employed at a Japanese Company

If you get a job at a Japanese company, what will happen to your visa, housing purchase, and social insurance?

Please refer to the following link for information gathered by the International Civil Engineers' group of the JSCE. Please visit the following website for reference.

<https://committees.jsce.or.jp/kokusai13/node/7>





7. Work-Life Balance, Overtime, Paid Leave, and Counseling Services

What about work-life balance, overtime, paid leave, and counseling services?

a. Improving work-life balance:

- The construction industry in Japan generally tends to have a high tendency of working overtime. To improve work-life balance, it is necessary to adhere to the legally mandated working hours based on the Labor Standards Act.
- Some companies prioritize work-life balance and implement measures such as reducing overtime and introducing flextime systems. It is advisable to confirm the company's policies before joining.



b. Overtime and paid leave:

- In the civil engineering industry, there may be instances of emergency overtime due to project deadlines. However, it is important to ensure that you do not exceed the legally mandated working hours and to confirm the payment of overtime wages.
- Paid leave is a legal right and should be utilized appropriately. Taking paid leave allows for refreshment and helps maintain work-life balance.

c. Consultation services:

- Consultation services for foreigners are important resources that can address questions related to working conditions and rights. To protect the rights of foreign workers, it is important to confirm the availability of consultation services in languages such as English, even if Japanese language proficiency is limited.
- As an example, there is a consultation hotline specifically for foreign workers.

<https://www.check-roudou.mhlw.go.jp/soudan/foreigner.html>

d. Support from the JSCE:

- You can consult with senior members and mentors from the JSCE to receive advice and support for success in the industry.
- In addition, the JSCE provides opportunities for seminars and research presentations, serving as a catalyst for continuous improvement of specialized knowledge.



8. Necessary Qualifications for Working in Japanese Companies

Is it necessary to have qualifications to work in Japanese companies? Which qualifications should be obtained, and are overseas qualifications such as PE recommended in particular?



Most companies encourage self-improvement through obtaining qualifications. However, unless a specific qualification is essential for the job, it is not forcibly imposed. Some common qualifications that can be obtained include Construction Management Engineers, who can manage construction sites, and Professional Engineers (Japan), who can demonstrate advanced specialized skills. Qualification acquisition requirements typically depend on the field of specialization and years of experience, so it is important to check the examination guidelines in advance. Recommended qualifications may vary depending on the company and job role, so it is necessary to thoroughly confirm and plan accordingly. While overseas qualifications such as PE may have limited utilization within Japan, possessing such qualifications can showcase technical expertise and broaden the possibilities for involvement in international projects. For information gathered from the International Civil Engineers Group of JSCE, please refer to the following link.

<https://committees.jsce.or.jp/kokusai13/node/7> (e. 資格関連 Qualifications)

