

SCHOOL SYSTEM (See also, Graduate School)

In Japan, there is a three-tier education system: primary, secondary and higher education. Primary education and the 1st stage of secondary education are mandatory; the 2nd stage of secondary education and higher educations are optional.

Primary Education Elementary School (Sho-gakko, Age 6-12)
Secondary Education Junior High School (Chu-gakko, Age 12-15)
 Secondary School (Chuto Kyoiku Gakko, Age 12 -18)
 High School (Koto-gakko, Age 15-18)
Higher Education University, undergraduate (Daigaku, Gakubu, Age 18-22)
 Junior Colleges (Tanki Daigaku, Age 18 – 20)
 Technical Colleges (Koto Senmon Gakko, Age 15-20)
 Specialized Training Colleges (Senmon Gakko, Age 18-)
 University, graduate (Daigakuin, Age 22-)

(1) Elementary School and Junior High School

Because primary education and the 1st stage of secondary education are mandatory, all municipalities (cities, towns and villages) establish elementary and junior high schools for residents. There are 21,713 elementary and 9,982 junior high public schools in Japan.

The National Government is not responsible for the management of elementary and junior high schools, but there is 74 national elementary schools and 75 national junior high schools, mainly attached to national universities. Concerning schools attached to private universities, there are 213 elementary

and 758 junior high schools. Most of these are located in the Tokyo and Kinki (Osaka) regions of Japan. Chuo University has two attached junior high schools, one in Tokyo and one in Yokohama.

(2) High Schools

Though high school education is not mandatory in Japan, 98% of junior high school graduates enter high school. There are 3,780 public, 1,321 private, and 15 national high schools.

(3) Secondary Schools

A new secondary school system was introduced in 1998 by amending the School Education Act. Secondary schools now offer 6-year secondary education for ages 12 to 18. Children who graduate elementary school can enter secondary schools instead of junior high schools. However, since there are still only 4 national, 28 public, and 16 private secondary schools, most children enter junior high schools.

(4) Higher Educational Institutions

There are several types of higher education institutions, including universities (daigaku), junior colleges (tanki daigaku), specialized training colleges (senmon gakko), colleges of technology (koto senmon gakko), and others.

- (a) Universities (daigaku) are four-year post-secondary academic research and educational institutions. Article 83 of the School Education Act defines the purpose of universities: “As the center of arts and sciences, to teach a wide range of knowledge, and to develop intellectual, moral and advanced abilities through educating and researching specialized arts and sciences deeply.” Some “Daigaku” use the English term “college,” and though there is no legal regulation of English names for “Daigaku”, institutions which have only one faculty tends to use the term “college.” 48% of graduates from secondary education entered universities in 2010.
- (b) Junior Colleges (tanki daigaku) are two-year or three-year post-secondary schools. Article 108 of the School Education Act defines the purpose of

junior colleges: “to foster vocational abilities or abilities which are needed for real life by educating and researching specialized arts and sciences deeply.” 6% of graduates from secondary education entered junior colleges in 2010.

- (c) Specialize Training Colleges (semon gakko) are schools whose purpose is “to foster vocational abilities or abilities which are needed for real life, or to improve students’ minds.” There are many kind of specialized training colleges, including cooking, design, engineering, fashion, fine arts, healthcare, ICT, language, music, secretarial training, sports, welfare-service, and others. At least one year of education is required in training college programs. 16% of graduates from secondary education entered specialized training colleges in 2010.
- (d) Colleges of Technology (koto senmon gakko) are five-year schools whose purpose is “to foster vocational abilities by educating specialized arts and sciences deeply.” These are the only exception in the post-secondary education system, because graduates from junior high school, not high school, are eligible to enter college of technology.
- (e) University Graduate Schools
(See, “Graduate Schools”)