

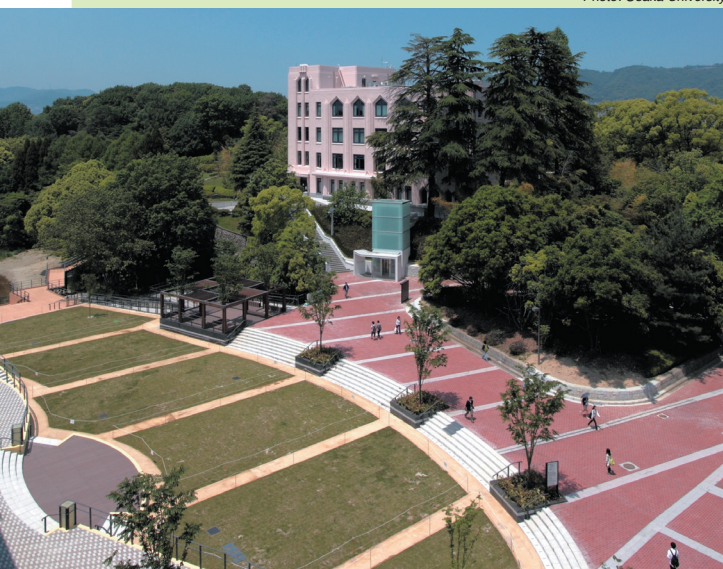
Initiatives & Challenges for Osaka University in Global Human Resource Development

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Photo: Osaka University



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What Do We Mean by Global Human Resources?

Although a university may aspire to numerous goals for internationalization or globalization, nonetheless, one of the most important goals must be the cultivation of global human resources. We could go on forever if we were to elucidate in detail the kind of human resources that we are referring to. But based on the compiled results of public meetings published June 22, 2011 as the "Overview of Global Human Resources Committee Interim Report" (International Committee of the Council for Science and Technology Stage 6, Appendix 2 [Part 4, H23, 7.12]), we can think of human resources, in general, as people who have the following three characteristics:

1. Proficiency in languages and communication skills.
2. Independence; assertiveness; willingness to meet challenges; cooperation; flexibility; sense of responsibility; sense of mission.
3. Understanding of cross-cultural issues and identity as a Japanese national.

Although the target group in this case is Japanese students, the above criteria can fit international students if we change number three to "Understanding of Japanese culture." From here on, the above three elements will be the basis upon which I will cite and discuss concrete examples of the initiatives taken by Osaka University. The ultimate objective of the university is to deploy into the world outstanding global personnel, whether they are Japanese or international students.

Language Education at Osaka University

Osaka University classifies the undergraduate freshman year and the first half of the sophomore year as general education, during which it offers compulsory language education.

There are slight differences in the number of units or courses

required for graduation depending on the educational policy of the 11 departments. The following is a list of courses the university offers:

1. First foreign language: English is compulsory for all students.
2. Second foreign language: must select one of the following: German, French, Russian, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, or Italian.
3. Elective foreign language: to be selected by some Humanities Department: German, French, Russian, Greek, or Latin.
4. Special foreign language: optional for all undergraduate students: Cantonese, Mongolian, Thai, Burmese, Hindi, Arabic, Turkish, Swahili, Hungarian, Danish, Swedish, or Portuguese.

Instructors at the Old Osaka University of Foreign Studies, which merged with Osaka University four years ago, are appointed to teach the special foreign language classes. As Osaka University is the only national university in Japan with a School of Foreign Studies, we are particularly proud of these classes.

A total of three sessions a week are offered in two undergraduate Japanese courses ("Comprehensive Japanese" and "Advanced Japanese") to officially enrolled international students. While there are no department specifications, in principle, one course should be selected each semester. In addition, there is a special program for students from overseas universities concluding a student exchange agreement with Osaka University. In this program called the Osaka University Short-term Student Exchange Program (OUSSEP), these students from overseas can study at Osaka University only in English. "International Exchange Subjects" is among the courses in this program offered to all Osaka University students, including non-degree international students. A Japanese language course is offered as well in this course. Additionally, Japanese language courses are offered in several programs aimed at international students at the Center for Japanese Language and Culture.

Specific English Language Course Education (Part 1: undergraduate level)

Requirements for Receiving Intermediate English Credits

Certification Examinations	Criterion
Test in Practical English Proficiency	Grade Pre-1 or above
TOEIC	630 or above
TOEFL (PBT)	520 or above
TOEFL (IBT)	68 or above

Requirements for Taking Advanced English

Certification Examinations	Criterion
Test in Practical English Proficiency	Grade Pre-1 or above
TOEIC	730 or above
TOEFL (PBT)	550 or above
TOEFL (IBT)	80.2 or above

School of Foreign Studies

The School of Foreign Studies offers a slightly different curriculum for English than other departments. To begin with, first-year students are assigned Comprehensive English. There are no particular restrictions for taking classes. In addition to completing Comprehensive English, the following are prerequisites for receiving credits in English language classes at the Intermediate and Advanced levels as advanced education courses from the School of Foreign Studies.

Specific English Language Course Education (Part 2: graduate level)

Graduate School of Engineering

The Department of Engineering has introduced e-learning, which offers Engineering English classes of a caliber not seen anywhere else. The course's objectives and a description are provided below. In addition, the science graduate schools at Osaka University offer many courses in English, starting with the Graduate School of Engineering.

School of Engineering Master's Program 1-year allotment

* Engineering English I (first semester), Engineering English II (second semester): two credits each.

Purpose: Learn Engineering English through an individualized learning support system via the Internet; learn the fundamentals of science and technology thesis-writing through an online submission system; apply the knowledge and research skills gained at the Graduate School of Engineering in the international arena.

* Engineering English II

Purpose: Cultivate the fundamental communication skills in English required to give presentations and discuss research results at international conferences, in addition to writing and reading papers in the student's field of expertise.

1. Should be able to write an abstract for a conference proposal or a journal paper about their research.
2. Should be able to give a 10-minute presentation describing their research to peers in other fields.
3. Should know how to continue improving their language skills for professional communication.

Examples of Cross-Cultural Education

The course "Cross-Cultural Understanding Exercises" is offered as an elective for all students as a specialized subject by the School of Foreign Studies and the above-mentioned Cross-Cultural Education. So far, we have a total enrollment of 85 students in the spring 2011 semester, and 80 in the fall 2011 semester. A class description is provided below. Relative to the size of the university, the number of students enrolled in the course "Cross-Cultural Understanding Exercises" and the number of classes it offers may appear small, but it is considered a model for future cross-cultural education.

"To think about the conflict and difficulties that arise when people communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. Hopefully, by the end of this course students will have developed the critical thinking skills and awareness of cross-cultural ideas that are necessary for successful communication across cultural divides."

Current Situation for International Students

The university has accepted a total of 1,780 international students as of May 1, 2011. The vast majority of them—more than 80%—are from Asia. By contrast, only 179 students, or slightly less than 10%, are from Europe. Students from North America number 36, or just 2%. The

countries of origin for students from Asia, in descending order, are: 615 students from China, 254 from South Korea, 99 from Thailand, 88 from Vietnam, and 82 from Indonesia.

If we compare these figures with a university outside of Japan, we see that 11% of Oxford's officially enrolled undergraduates are international students and 58% of graduate students are from abroad. These figures are, respectively, 1.54% and 11.8% for Osaka University. However, compared to other domestic national universities, this ratio is not particularly unfavorable; in fact, other universities have roughly the same ratio. An important challenge going forward is to raise the percentage of international students.

The current situation for study-abroad students

	Undergraduates	Graduates	Total
Number of students	15,865 (246)* ¹	7,924 (936)* ¹	23,789 (1,182)* ¹
Number of study-abroad students	407(265)* ²	220	627
Percentage	2.6%	2.8%	

Notes: The parentheses in *1 shows the number of international students; the figure in *2 indicates the number of students from the School of Foreign Studies. The number for study-abroad students is from fiscal 2010; the number of students shown is as of May 1, 2010.

International students comprise less than 3% of the entire student body, whether at the graduate or the undergraduate level: 2.6% for undergraduates and 2.8% for graduates. This is true not just for Osaka University. It is a trend seen in recent years throughout the entire student population of Japan. We must do everything we can as early as possible to turn the thoughts of undergraduates to horizons beyond Japan and foster their drive to seek the challenges of studying abroad.

New Venture

With assistance from the Japanese government, Osaka University has recently developed and implemented exchange programs, and admitted a variety of short-term international students. The university has been actively participating in a variety of programs aimed at moving students and researchers from Europe across the borders. Among Japanese universities, our track record is outstanding. In addition, Osaka University has developed a highly acclaimed proprietary program, FrontierLab@OsakaU. International students from Europe and America focus on coursework even at the Master's course level. This program provides a forum for them to acquire research experience, including hands-on laboratory experience.

We have also launched the so-called G30 program, which started in 2010 and was created to provide an education in English for international students. The program offers two undergraduate and two graduate courses taught in English. Starting in 2011, in cooperation with Kobe University, Kansai University, and Kansai Gakuin University, the program includes a variety of activities.

Furthermore, Osaka University has instituted two Leading Programs in Doctoral Education this year. Their intention is to "instill students with creativity and broaden their perspective so that they may serve as international leaders in the global arena in academia, business, and government." All of these programs are intended to nurture global personnel. As a university, our mission and our duty is to give back to society by implementing these enterprises.

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