

# Career Support for



however. International students face an uphill battle due to the unique nature of the job search process in Japan. These challenges include the early start of the job search, Entry Sheets, the SPI test (Synthetic Personality Inventory), group-discussion interviews, and the group hiring of new graduates for management-track positions. The job search process and its practices may be quite familiar to Japanese students, but each aspect constitutes a hurdle for students from overseas.

The problem of age cannot be overlooked either. Many international students

in graduate school have worked in their home countries or attended language school. A number of them are in their mid- or late twenties or even in their thirties. Some companies hesitate to hire new graduates in that age group.

Prof. Kazuyasu Ochiai, Executive Vice President for Education and Student Affairs, says: “Every year outstanding international students come to Hitotsubashi. Some of them have a perfect GPA of 4.0 (all As). They have not only earned the opportunity to study abroad at Hitotsubashi thanks to their superb grades but have also further improved themselves since enrolling at the university. We want to do whatever it takes to support these students. And we want to continue to attract outstanding people in the future from throughout the world—both from the East and from the West. To do that will require more than developing and reforming the “entrance” process for admitting international students through the provision of scholarships and other initiatives. We need to improve the “exit” process too, so that each international student is offered personalized career assistance. Just congratulating them on completing the program doesn’t enable these well-trained global human resources to make the most of their talents after graduation.”

In the 2011 academic year, the Career Support

## Enhancing the “Exit” Process: Giving Personalized Job Search Support to International Students

Today international students make up more than 10 percent of Hitotsubashi University’s undergraduate and graduate student body. This is a very high percentage for a Japanese university specializing in the humanities and social sciences. Moreover, the percentage of our international students seeking employment in Japan after graduation has been steadily rising. In a survey taken in the spring of 2013 of international students who enrolled in our master’s degree programs, 70 percent indicated an interest in finding a job in Japan. This suggests that students already had an interest in working in Japan at the time that they were accepted at Hitotsubashi University.

Lecturer Miki Miura at Career Support Office observes: “Our overseas students want to work internationally. They don’t necessarily insist on working in Japan, but because many global companies have their Asian office in Japan, and particularly in Tokyo, many international students do want to find employment here.”

Some barriers to success have become evident,

# International Students

Office opened the Graduate School Division, and this Division has successfully enhanced job search support for international students. In fact, the Division is attracting attention as the first of its kind in Japan.

In the beginning, the Graduate School Division did not specialize in services for international students. It was originally set up to fill the need for more career counseling services for graduate students due to the substantial increase in the number of such students when the university started placing more attention on graduate programs in the second half of the 1990s. International students are enrolled in both our undergraduate and graduate programs so the Graduate School Division is not the only division addressing international student needs. Since the Division's staff have developed expertise in supporting international graduate students, however, they became central in career counseling for all international students including undergraduates. The remainder of this article will describe Hitotsubashi's university-wide framework for job search support for international students and international alumni, focusing on the initiatives of the Career Support Office.

## **Assisting International Students in Dealing with Japan's Unique Job Search Process through the Many Initiatives of the Career Support Office**

As the Division specializing in supporting graduate students, the Career Support Office's Graduate School Division has two sections: the Career Guidance Section and the Professional Skills Development Section. The Career Guidance Section is further divided into Academic Career Support and Non-academic Career Support. Non-academic Career Support offers advice on obtaining a position at a corporation or other non-academic organization.

Japanese students can gain some impression of what a job search requires by listening to the stories of older students and watching what their friends do. The situation is completely different for international students, though. They can glean information from the Internet or from books on job hunting, but most of the information found in these sources is targeted at Japanese students. They thus contain little that is of use to international students, who end up having too little reliable infor-

mation and are at a loss about how to proceed.

Noticing this problem, the Career Support Office took an unprecedented step to address it. With the cooperation of Career Advisor Kenji Fujimoto, Lecturer Miura, who is in charge of Non-academic Career Support, produced *International Student Employment Handbook: How to Launch Your Career in Japan*. With 140 pages divided into nine chapters, the booklet was compiled by interviewing and collecting information from various sectors of society. Although the word "handbook" may give the impression of being small and cursory, this booklet has all the information that international students need.

"We wanted to create something that thoroughly addressed the needs of international students, including things they need to be careful about or need to put emphasis on because they are international students," says Lecturer Miura. True to this sentiment, the booklet is a specially tailored message to international students. By topic category, it explains the mistakes international students frequently make when completing Entry Sheets or being interviewed, talks about the level of Japanese language ability that companies require, and offers suggestions about how to respond to interview questions. The second half of the book features the stories of eleven Hitotsubashi graduates who took jobs at Japanese companies. By carefully reading this one booklet, international students can gain an understanding of the job search process in Japan—from starting the search to receiving a job offer—without looking on the Internet or poring through commercially available books, and more and more international students are doing just that. The handbook is filled with helpful information not available elsewhere, and anyone



can obtain a copy just by dropping in at the Career Support Office.

The work of the Career Support Office is not limited to this handbook, however. To offer even more personalized support, they have career guidance interviews with international students during their first year in one of the master's programs.

Lecturer Miura continues: "To understand the aspirations and concerns of international students who have just entered our graduate school, we reach out to them and interview as many as possible. About twenty minutes into the interview, though, it usually turns into a request for advice from the student! [Laughs] Through this, international students realize that the Career Support Office gives personally tailored advice on just about anything, and I think they will come to us if they are struggling in their job search later."

The Career Support Office also puts a lot of energy into holding events, including roundtable discussions among international students who have received job offers, and "Speaking from the Heart" sessions, where international student alumni recount their own stories about working at Japanese companies and recruiters from Japanese companies share candidly what they are looking for in international employees.

"In the academic year 2012-2013, we enhanced our lineup of events for international students. Some of the events were even held at one of the dorms on the Kodaira campus where many of our international students live. As a result, a larger percentage of students came to the Career Support Office for a private consultation. Looking just at international students enrolled in a master's program, only 12 percent of them used the Career Support Office in the academic year 2010-2011, which was before the Graduate School Division

was opened, whereas in the academic year 2012-2013 18 percent came to see us. It clearly is important that we offer support specially tailored to each international student," emphasizes Lecturer Miura.

*Offering Comprehensive Support  
Drawing on Our Internationally  
Minded Alumni and the Entire  
Hitotsubashi Community*

Job search support for international students has been positioned as a university-wide initiative, and the Career Support Office is not alone in its efforts in this area. For example, there are special courses for international students; "General Information about Japan I" and "General Information about Japan II" are offered during the summer and winter semesters, respectively. These courses feature talks by corporate recruiters and former international students who now work at Japanese corporations, and offer opportunities for students to enhance their understanding about Japanese companies and job searching in Japan. To help students enrich their understanding of business communication in Japan and gain valuable practice, training in interview techniques and presentation skills is also offered.

International students are advised to participate in internships in addition to these courses. These initiatives are aimed at encouraging international students to see Japan's job search process not just as something uniquely Japanese but as "an important opportunity to learn about the differences between each other's culture with humility," as Vice President Ochiai puts it. Hitotsubashi University's Josuikai Alumni Association is another key player in our job search support for international students. Many of our graduates have vast experience residing overseas and welcome international settings and interactions with non-Japanese.

"Our alumni dote on our international students. They invite the students to Josuikai events or Josuikai chapter events and share meals with them. I am very thankful for this. On campus, the students have access to classes and advice on job searching, and our alumni look after our international students outside the campus. With this teamwork, there is a spirit of supporting our international students as the 'Hitotsubashi Community' or 'All-Hitotsubashi,'" says Vice President Ochiai.

As mentioned at the beginning of



In addition to producing the International Student Employment Handbook, the Career Support Office has created a leaflet, in English and Japanese, encouraging prospective international students to select Hitotsubashi University for its outstanding career support. The leaflet is available in Japan and overseas. A Chinese edition is now being prepared.

this article, Hitotsubashi University already boasts an international student population that is markedly higher as a percentage of the student body than that found in the humanities and social sciences programs of other national universities. If we can further enhance the “exit” process or, in other words, job hunting through university-wide support in this way, Hitotsubashi will gain an even higher reputation overseas and even more trust will be placed in the university. Hitotsubashi will become a place where people who want to study and then work in Japan can come with the confidence that they will flourish.



  
***Creating Multinational Global Leaders by Educating Japanese Corporations and Society***

A major issue going forward is the need to enlighten corporations and society. No matter how much universities engage in reform and strengthen their job search support programs for international students, we will not be able to improve the “exit” process in the true sense unless we gain the understanding of and join hands with corporations and society, who are the ones that ultimately receive international students.

Career Advisor Fujimoto says: “If Japanese companies intend to adopt ‘The Japanese Way,’ in other words, to implement an HR strategy where they hire people not as specialists but as management-track employees and have them rotate to various positions for the first few years after entering the company, I think they should fully explain to international students that this is a common practice in Japan. The Career Support Office has contact with company recruiters so from time to time we ask the companies to be sure to explain this to international students.”

Vice President Ochiai points out the importance of taking action to foster a public debate about international students’ job search by joining hands with other universities: The Roundtable Meeting on Human Resource Development through Industry-Academia Collaboration (made up of 12 universities and 20 companies and established in response to a joint proposal by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) has discussed the issue of Japanese corporations’ hiring of international students. The member universities\* of the Roundtable Meeting all have many international students so these universities will continue to exchange views in the future about international students’ job hunting as global human resources. If this whole process is covered by major



newspapers, public debate on this issue may spread throughout the nation.”

Of course, this is not simply an empty gesture. We must think seriously about how to explain things to corporations and society so that they accept international students. Efforts on the university’s part are crucial.

“Hitotsubashi University has many outstanding international students. It is critical that we make an appeal on their behalf by offering concrete cases and explaining what a great loss it is for companies that they don’t hire international students even though they offer many merits, including logical thinking skills, language skills, and valuable experience,” emphasizes Vice President Ochiai.

Hitotsubashi University Plan 135 is a grand design for the university put forward by President Susumu Yamauchi. In that plan, the president makes a powerful call for the development of “smart and tough global leaders.” Hitotsubashi’s various initiatives related to job search support for international students are linked to that day when many “smart and tough global leaders” of every nationality will leave the nest of Hitotsubashi University and take flight into the world.

\* The member universities are Hitotsubashi University, Hokkaido University, Tohoku University, the University of Tsukuba, the University of Tokyo, Waseda University, Keio University, the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Nagoya University, Kyoto University, Osaka University, and Kyushu University.