

FAQ regarding UNHCR-Refugee Higher Education Programme (RHEP) **(For candidates with sufficient language skills for pursuing a degree in English)**

Refugees have high potential to grow as competent personnel for the hosting community, and education is essential in preparing young refugees to rebuild their lives and to enable them to contribute their skills and knowledge to their new environment. The UNHCR Refugee Higher Education Programme (RHEP) purports to provide the basis of self-reliance for those who reside in Japan and are unable to enjoy sufficient rights and benefits because of their backgrounds as refugees and language barriers.

Here are some frequently asked questions that may provide more information relevant to you, as a refugee, or your institution, if your university is interested in participating in the Programme:

Q1. What is the Refugee Higher Education Programme?

The UNHCR-Refugee Higher Education Programme (RHEP) is implemented by UNHCR and Japan for UNHCR in partnership with fifteen universities in Japan, to grant scholarships to people with refugee background who live in Japan, to receive a higher education offered by the partner universities. Currently, many refugees in Japan have no option but to forgo the idea of pursuing higher education, primarily for socio-economic reasons. Accordingly, the employment opportunities for those refugees are severely limited compared to others who have completed some form of higher education. This Programme would provide essential opportunities for refugees to study and gain qualifications that would go a long way towards empowering them to make contributions to both the host community as well as the community of their country of origin.

Q2. Which universities may I apply to?

As of July 2025, the Programme has established partnerships with the following universities: Meiji University will not accept RHEP admissions applications for the 2026 academic year.

Undergraduate Courses

Kwansei Gakuin University	3 positions (Japanese Degree Programme: 2 positions; English Degree Programme: 1 position)
Tsuda College	1 position (Female candidate only, Japanese Degree Programme)
Soka University	1 position (Japanese Degree Programme)
Sophia University	1 position (Japanese or English Degree Programme)
Meiji Gakuin University	1 position (Japanese or English Degree Programme)
University of the Sacred Heart, Tokyo	1 position (Female candidate only, Japanese Degree Programme)

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Kansai University	1 position (Japanese Degree Programme)
Hiroshima City University	1 position (Japanese Degree Programme)
Teikyo University	2 positions (Japanese Degree Programme)
Tenri University	1 position (Japanese Degree Programme)
Yamanashi Gakuin University	2 positions (Japanese Degree Programme: 1 positions; English Degree Programme: 1 position)
Kanagawa University	1 position (Japanese Degree Programme)
Kyoto Koka University • Kyoto Koka College	1 position (Japanese Degree Programme)

Post Graduate Courses (Master and/or Doctor Degree Courses)

Waseda University	2 positions (Japanese or English Degree Programme)
Soka University	1 position (English Degree Programme)
Teikyo University	2 positions* (Japanese or English Degree Programme) *Maximum 1 student each in the Graduate School of Economics and Graduate School of Science and Engineering
Sophia University	1 position (Japanese or English Degree Programme)
University of the Sacred Heart	1 position (Japanese Degree Programme, the slot is shared with undergraduate course)
Kansai University	1 position*** (Japanese or English Degree Programme) ***1 position would be allocated to a candidate applying to PhD program who successfully completed a Master's degree at Kansai University with the present program (with recommendation from Kansai University) and wishes to continue his/her study immediately after.
Kwansei Gakuin University	2 positions (Japanese or English Degree Programme)

Q3. May I apply to more than one university?

A candidate is permitted to indicate more than one university of his or her choice at the time of the application for the Programme. However, if a candidate is selected for the Programme, he/she would be recommended to one university by the Programme. Additionally, it is not possible for a candidate to apply to both Japanese and English Degree Programmes because the examinations are set on the same time of a same date.

Q4. I am not confident that my Japanese ability is sufficient enough to understand Japanese courses at university. Is it possible for me to graduate only by taking English courses?

Both at undergraduate and graduate levels, English courses are offered at the following

universities: Kwansei Gakuin University; Sophia University; Meiji Gakuin University; Waseda University Soka University; Teikyo University; Yamanashi Gakuin University; and Kansai University. If a candidate wishes to complete a degree which can be achieved by taking English courses, he/she should consider these universities.

Q5. What are the eligibility criteria for the Programme?

To be eligible for the Programme, all of the following requirements must be satisfied.

A candidate must - :

- be a refugee with a recognized status by the Japanese authorities, or a person in a refugee-like situation with a residency permit;
- have either successfully completed or is scheduled to complete by March of the admission year, a twelve-year course (sixteen-year course in case of postgraduate degree) of formal education in Japan or another country, or is deemed by the university to have an education level equivalent to that of the average person who has completed such formal education;
- have no other means of support for university studies;
- understand that the objective of the Programme is for the selected candidate to commit to their studies diligently, and agree to maintain a satisfactory academic performance in their chosen undergraduate study course (the course duration will be a maximum of four years for undergraduate programme, two years for master's programme, and three years for Doctor's programme).
- have English language skills sufficient for pursuing a degree in English; and
- meet other criteria for applicants as stipulated by the university.

A candidate for the graduate course must - :

- have sufficient academic capacity to pursue studies at either Master or Doctorate course, that is in addition to the qualifications above.

Q6. Is there an age limit to the Programme? Is a working adult eligible?

There is no age limit to the Programme, thus, a working adult is eligible. Refugees of various age range have graduated from the Programme.

Q7. I came to Japan as a refugee but I am a naturalized Japanese citizen now. Am I eligible to the Programme?

The purpose of the Programme is to provide educational opportunities for refugees who are not eligible for other general scholarship programmes which mostly target Japanese and foreign

exchange students. As such, the Programme is applicable only to those who do not possess Japanese nationality.

Q8. My parent is a refugee. Am I, as a child of a refugee, eligible for the Programme?

A child of a refugee is eligible for the Programme. Such a candidate will be asked in the interview what circumstances he/she faces with regard to social or financial difficulty due to his or her family background. Additionally, the candidate will be required to submit a supporting document issued by a local authority which proves his/her family background, such as his or her parent's certificate of local residency (jyuminhyo)/certificate of resident registration.

Q9. I am currently applying for refugee status in Japan. Am I eligible for the Programme?

No, a candidate must be a legally recognized refugee or in a refugee-like situation, meaning a person in need of international protection with a residency permit granted by the Japanese authorities. This is because the purpose of the Programme is to support refugees residing in Japan.

Q10. I completed previous education in my country of origin, but I am unable to prove the fact because of the impossibility to obtain supporting documentation. What can I do?

It is understood that there may be candidates who are unable to submit the required documentation because he/she fled the country of origin without personal belongings. According to an official circular issued in 1982 from the Ministry of Education to universities, "a convention refugee who faces difficulties in getting documentations on the academic background can submit a letter explaining his/her academic background in place of such certificate ...". This position of the government is used as a base by the current partner universities for considering the eligibility of the refugees. In light of the circular, UNHCR and the university can, together, assess if the claimed academic background of the candidate is appropriate for pursuing higher education.

Q11. How does the selection process proceed?

The general selection process is as follows, but please make sure to refer to the website of the programme (<http://rhep.japanforunhcr.org/en>) because details may change every year:

Selection Process:

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| 1) Applications Opens | July |
| 2) Application period | July to August |
| 3) Application deadline | August |

4) Basis of selection screening, written examination, and Interview

- a. Document screening:
Application period: July to August (all the documents should be submitted by the deadline).
- b. Written examination for those applying to the program in Japanese:
Date: End of August (tentative)
Venue: Online
Contents: written exam and essay for those applying to the program in Japanese; no additional exam for those applying to the program in English (scores of the external exams (TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, etc.) would be considered).
- c. Interview:
Date: End of August or Beginning of September (tentative)
Venue: Online

Note: aside from the above mentioned procedures, potential candidates are requested to take exams that are offered by public institutions such as the Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) which has its own schedule for different examinations.

Q12. How is the selection concluded?

Decisions as to the candidates to be recommended by UNHCR and Japan for UNHCR to the universities will be made by a selection committee consisting of members such as UNHCR Representation in Japan, Japan for UNHCR, representatives from educational institutions, and representatives from language education institutions. The final decision will be made by the relevant partner university.

Q13. What is covered in the scholarship?

The decisions as to whether the scholarship should be granted or not, and the amount of the scholarship will be grounded on the relevant university's regulations. As a general rule, a refugee recommended by the Programme must complete all courses and examinations required by the relevant university within four years (two years for master's programme, three years for Doctor's programme) in order to graduate. Tuition and other fees that are usually incurred by students shall be covered by the relevant university in place of the refugee student who satisfies the conditions above. The universities provide additional livelihood support every month on its discretion (amount and conditions differ per university). Please note that in principle it does not offer housing expenses such as student dormitory fee. For further details, please consult the university once you receive the offer. If you wish to know more before and/or during the

application to RHEP, please contact the RHEP secretariat.

For the post-graduate studies at Waseda University, the candidate will need to undergo a separate process for monthly allowances (and/or possible opportunity to become teaching assistant to gain certain salary).

Q14. How many refugees have been granted the scholarships by the Programme?

From 2007 to April 2025, 122 refugees have received higher education, and 75 have graduated.

Q15. What are the prospects for the refugees after their graduation?

Graduates have chosen various paths, including employment in private companies, proceeding to graduate schools, and becoming entrepreneurs. Refugee students are also provided with internship Programmes and similar opportunities by major companies and other institutions. Through these opportunities, the refugees can access the job markets and expand their marketability in Japan.

Q16. Is there any support system following entrance into university?

Some of the partnering universities offer students-run tutoring or mentoring systems to refugee students, and there are refugees who are in fact supported by these systems. In addition to the above, since 2014, the Programme started organize regular follow up meeting, which is mandatory for the students to attend. Group/individual counseling assistance to the refugee students are provided through RHEP Counsellor and RHEP Supporter.

References

Selection Criteria:

- Definition of a Refugee for RHEP: A candidate is a legally recognized refugee or is in a refugee-like situation, meaning a person in need of international protection with a residency permit granted by the Japanese authorities.
- The candidate has no financial means to fund his/her own higher education: The candidate must submit documents indicating the income of all family members who contribute to the household finances, including the candidate's father, mother, any siblings who live with the family and contribute to the household income, and the candidate themselves (e.g. tax-income certificate, statement of earnings). This should be based on earnings from the year before application. The candidate should indicate

the amount of financial support he/she receives from persons under a duty to support, such as relatives (allowance etc.), and if relevant, the amount of scholarship, fellowship, private support, livelihood protection and/or social security payments being received.

- Admission Requirements for undergraduate schools: The candidate must have completed at least 12 years of primary and secondary education or an equivalent level of education. He/she must demonstrate the level of competence for the high standard of academic performance required to complete the undergraduate course.
- Admission Requirements for Graduate Schools: The candidate must have completed university level education. He/she must demonstrate the level of competence for the high standard of academic performance required to complete the postgraduate course. Candidate also is required have a well-established research plans.
- Japanese Language Proficiency: In general, a foreign student who wishes to pursue higher education in Japanese is required to obtain the first level certificate of the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (the “JLPT”).
- English Language Proficiency: In general, a refugee student who wishes to pursue higher education in English language through RHEP is required to have English language skills to the equivalent of the A level certificate of UN Association's Test of English (“UNATE”).
- Basic Academic Proficiency: A candidate must have sufficient academic proficiency in order to complete an undergraduate degree. In general, a foreign student who wishes to pursue higher education in Japan is required to prove that he/she has basic academic skills required for Japanese universities. The candidate must take the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (“EJU”) conducted by Japan Student Services Organization and submit his/her scores. In cases where a candidate has previously received education in Japan, requirements differ per university.