Trends in Reform of University Admissions System

Director of Office for University Entrance Examinations,
University Promotion Division

Higher Education Bureau,
Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

Taizo Yamada
Population trends

Due to an aging population and decreasing birth rate, Japan’s population is forecast to decrease by 30% in 50 years, with persons 65 or older making up 40% of the population.

Advance of globalization

- Japan’s decreasing share of Global GDP (5.8% in 2010 → 3.4% in 2030 → 1.9% in 2050)

65 percent of today’s grade-school kids may end up doing work that hasn’t been invented yet
Cathy Davidson (Professor, The Graduate Center, City University of New York)

There is a high probability that around 47% of work will be automated in the next decade or two.
Michael A. Osborne (Associate Professor, University of Oxford)

We will only need to work fifteen hours a week by 2030
John Maynard Keynes (Economist)

Many current jobs will disappear

Trends in working-age population

The working-age population will continue to decrease; it is forecast the working-age population in 2060 will be half what it was 2010.
Admission Quotas and Entrant [Long-term Trend]

- Admission quotas are increasing for 4-year universities, but decreasing for junior colleges.
- Applicant multiples and quota overflow rates are both in decline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>18-year-old population</th>
<th>High school graduates</th>
<th>Admission quota</th>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Applicant multiple</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Quota overflow rate</th>
<th>Admission quota</th>
<th>Applicants</th>
<th>Applicant multiple</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Quota overflow rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>2,491</td>
<td>1,557</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1,543</td>
<td>1,325</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1,564</td>
<td>1,384</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>637</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>407</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2,049</td>
<td>1,807</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>920</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>1,363</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1,411</td>
<td>1,235</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>722</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>598</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,366</td>
<td>1,203</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>604</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1,326</td>
<td>1,172</td>
<td>562</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>1,147</td>
<td>567</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>1,237</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1,212</td>
<td>1,065</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,216</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>619</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>675</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>613</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1,191</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>664</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>605</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td>1,071</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,181</td>
<td>1,064</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>1,200</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>666</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>1,092</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>665</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The number of applicants is the total number of graduates of upper secondary schools and latter courses at secondary education schools (excluding correspondence). * The number of enrollees is the total number of graduates of upper secondary schools and latter courses at secondary education schools (excluding correspondence), graduates of overseas schools, graduates of upper courses of specialized training colleges and other (such as recognition of high school graduation).

(Source: Created based on Basic Survey on Schools, List of Nationwide Universities and List of Nationwide Junior Colleges)
Entrance Examination Methods (in the Guidelines for Implementing Selection of University Enrollees)

○ Admissions Office (AO) Entrance Examination
(Overview)
An entrance examination method for comprehensively determining an applicant’s skills, aptitude, motivation to learn and goal awareness by combining a detailed document review with careful interviews conducted over time.

(1) Open application system where applicants apply of their own accord.

(2) Excessive weight is not placed on the state of acquisition of knowledge and skills as a selection criterion.

(3) It is necessary to use one of the following to determine the state of basic academic ability required for receiving university education.
   a. Results of tests (written, practical and oral examinations, etc.) conducted by each university
   b. Results of examinations by National Center for University Entrance Examinations
   c. Results of qualification and certification examinations
   d. GPA of high school subjects

(4) When using a. to c. in (3), it is preferable to actively use a report such as combining them with (3) d.

(Timing)
- The application period is from August 1
- The examination dates when an academic examination is conducted are from February 1.

○ Entrance Examination by Recommendation
(Overview)
An entrance examination method that waives the academic examination in principle based on a recommendation by the principal of the applicant’s high school and uses a report as the main material for making a determination.

Attention is given to the following points when using this method.

(1) Use the GPA of high school subjects as a requirement for application (guideline for application) and for determining pass or fail and state this in the application guidebook.

(2) If it is difficult to determine the applicant’s skills and aptitude based on the recommendation and report alone, it is preferable to also use at least one of the steps in (3) a. to c. of the AO Entrance Examination process.

* The number of positions is specified within 50% of the admission quota for each admission unit such as faculty.

(Timing)
- The application period is from November 1
- The examination dates when an academic examination is conducted are from February 1.

○ General Entrance Examination
(Overview)
An examination method that performs a multifaceted and comprehensive evaluation and determination of the applicant’s skills, motivation, aptitude, etc. based on the content of the report, academic examinations, essays, interviews, group discussions, presentations and other tests of skills and aptitude, etc., activity reports, statement of reason for applying for admission to university, learning plan, results of qualification and certification examinations, etc., and other materials deemed to be appropriate by the university.

(Timing)
- The examination period is from February 1 to April 15
Characteristics of University Admissions System in Japan

(1) Selection of Entrants in Each University
- Each university implements AO entrance examinations, entrance examination by recommendation and individual academic examinations according to the Admissions Policy based on the education philosophy of each university.

(2) The National Center Test
- The examinations are jointly implemented by the National Center for University Entrance Examinations and each university to determine the level of achievement of basic learning. It is taken by around 500,000 people.
- It uses a mark-sheet format of multiple choice questions.

Example of a multiple choice question

Contemporary Society

Q3. Choose one of (1) to (4) below that most appropriately describes the technological innovation concerning underlined section (C).

(1) The economic cycle of 50 to 60 years caused by technological innovation is called the Juglar Wave.
(2) A society in which information can be easily accessed from anywhere at any time due to the innovation in information technology is called a mass consumption society.
(3) The industrial revolution that began in the second half of the 18th century caused a shift to the new production method of factory machinery industry due to technological innovation.
(4) Japan’s main source of energy shifted from hydro to coal due to the energy revolution that occurred in the second half of the 20th century.
Compared to FY2000 (the first year of AO entrance examinations), there has been a significant increase in the number of enrollees via AO entrance examinations and entrance examinations by recommendation as entrance examination methods have become more diverse.

**Overview of the State of Implementation of University Admissions System in FY 2017 (Comparison with FY2000)**

FY2000

- General entrance examination: 65.8% (389,851)
- Entrance examination by recommendation: 31.7% (188,083)
- AO entrance examination: 1.4% (8,117)
- Other: 1.1% (6,827)

(Total number of enrollees: 592,878)

FY2017

- General entrance examination: 55.4% (341,459)
- Entrance examination by recommendation: 35.2% (216,995)
- AO entrance examination: 9.1% (56,030)
- Other: 0.3% (2,100)

(Total number of enrollees: 616,584)

(Note) Other: Entrance examinations for specialized schools and integrated courses graduates, entrance examinations for adults, entrance examinations for children returning to Japan after living overseas, and children of repatriates from China.
Around 40% of private universities have fallen below their admission quotas since FY2006. Universities that have fallen below their admission quotas have a higher rate of use of recommendations and AO, and greater diversity in selection methods.

Transition of Fulfillment of Admission Quotas in Private Universities

- Number of schools with 100% or more of quota
- Number of schools with 80% to 100% of quota
- Number of schools with 50% to 80% of quota
- Number of schools with less than 50% of quota

Rate of Entrance Examinations by Recommendation and AO Entrance Examinations in Private Universities in FY2017

- Fulfillment rate of Admission Quota
- Recommendation
- AO

Created based on “FY2017 Private University and Junior College Applicant Trends” by the Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools of Japan.
Reform of University Admissions System

Outline of reform
◆ Switch to entrance exams that evaluate the three elements of academic abilities (below) of students’ with multilateral and comprehensive assessments: 1) Solid acquisition of knowledge, skills; 2) Power of critical thinking, judgement, self-expression; 3) Willingness to learn from cooperation with diverse range of people, with self-direction
◆ Promote reforms of selection of university applicants
◆ AY 2020 Introduce Common Test for University Admissions *With essay questions and assessment of four English skills
  AY 2024 Implement further changes based on the New National Curriculum Standards

Current System

Common exam (currently the National Center Test)

- Multiple choice questions only
- Introduce essay questions
- English test: reading and listening only
- Switch to assessment of four skills

System after academic year 2020

- National Center for University Entrance Examination will create and decide the test questions. The Scoring will also be done by the Center, and the center may utilize the private sector to facilitate scoring processes.
  - Japanese: about three questions including a question of 80 to 120 characters
  - Mathematics: about three questions including formulae and problem solving
  - Should introduce in academic year 2024 essay questions in geography, history, civics and even in science

- Assess four skills of English – reading, listening, speaking, and writing, using private-sector English assessment tests.
  - The Center will certify tests appropriate for university admissions after evaluating the content of the tests and the system for implementation. Universities will decide which tests to use for admission. (up to twice for high school seniors).
  - The English section of the National Center Test will continue to be implemented through academic year 2023.
  - MEXT will request that testing agencies to reduce testing fees, and that each university use as many certified tests as possible in consideration of the applicants’ financial costs.

Individual admissions by Institutions

- For admissions office and recommendation-based entrance exams, make either essays, presentations, course/subject tests, or the Common Test for University Admissions mandatory.
  - Improve the content of student credentials
  - Change the start of the application period for admissions office exams from August to September
  - Set new rules so that application results for admissions office exams will be published no earlier than November, and for recommendation-based entrance exams no earlier than December.
**State of Efforts to Use Models for Selection of University Entrants Utilizing ICT to Evaluate “Independence, etc.”**

**“JAPAN e-Portfolio” High School-to-University articulation Portal Site** (Commissioned Program for Promoting Reform for Selection of University entrants by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology’s Committee for Promoting Reform of Selection of University Entrants (Independence Area))

- High school e-Portfolio and university application portfolio site being created with the aim of being a mechanism that can be utilized in the selection of university entrants.
- Activities related to a student's independence, etc. are recorded in “JAPAN e-Portfolio”.
- It is aimed to contribute to the realization of multifaceted and comprehensive evaluation by appropriately evaluating the three elements of academic ability, especially “attitude for independently learning by collaborating with wide variety of people.”
- The decision to participate in efforts aimed at the commissioned project (independence, etc.) is made by each high school and each university.

---

**The use in high school education**

- **Students**: Recording and reflection upon “data on learning”
  - “Metacognition” of active learning leading to the next step by reflecting on own learning activities
  - Recording and reflection upon own learning activities
  
- **Teachers**: Referral to and tracking of “data on learning” by students
  - Utilized in the creation of “reports” and “learning guidance records”
  - Utilized in evaluation of education and the review of teaching methods

**Internet application**

**Linking data with JAPAN e-Portfolio**

**Selection of University Entrants**

- Internet application system
  - Application information
    - Preferred faculty and department
    - Preferred schedule and subjects, etc.
  - Basic student information

**Determinations of pass/fail**

- General entrance examination
  - Determination of pass/fail
    - Using “General examination” evaluation indicators and standards, etc., based on each faculty’s AP

- AO/Recommendation
  - Determination of pass/fail
    - Using “AO examination” evaluation indicators and standards, etc., based on each faculty’s AP

- Utilization of AP evaluation indices and criteria, etc.
  - Verification of three policies

**University education**

- Finalization of enrollees
  - Implementation of systematic and organized education based on Curriculum Policy (CP)
  - Development to satisfy Diploma Policy (DP)

**Utilization of data before and after admission to check the three policies (IR)**

- Various data used in selection of enrollees

- Data on academic results and results of various activities, etc. after admission to university

---

**Web application portal**

- Public and private universities nationwide
  - Link to Web application site
- Registration of basic student information
  - Name, telephone number, address, guarantor name, high school name, etc.

---

**Report: Items added and changed from FY2021**

- Behavior characteristics, special skills, etc.
- Club activities, volunteer activities
- Study abroad/overseas experience, etc.
- Specific content of efforts, period, etc.
- Qualifications and certification examinations obtained
- Content of qualifications and certification examinations, score obtained, time obtained, etc.