

APPLICATION GUIDELINES
JAPANESE GOVERNMENT (MEXT) SCHOLARSHIP FOR 2026
YOUNG LEADERS' PROGRAM (YLP) STUDENT (SCHOOL OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE)

I OUTLINE

1. Objectives

The Young Leaders' Program (YLP) aims to contribute to the fostering of future national leaders in Asian and other countries. Moreover, the YLP seeks to contribute to the establishment of friendly relations among various countries and to improve policy planning activities by forming a network among national leaders through the deepening of their understanding of Japan. The YLP is one of the Japanese Government (MEXT*) Scholarship Programs.

*MEXT: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

2. Eligible Participants

Participants should be young public administrators and government officials who are expected to play active roles in the future as national leaders in their home countries.

3. Host University

National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS)

4. Number of Students

Approximately 10 students

5. Recruitment and Selection

(1) Method of Recruitment

Recruitment will be conducted through the recommending authorities of each eligible country. Please ask the Japanese Embassy for further information.

(2) Screening Procedure

- ① First screening by the recommending authorities
- ② Second screening by GRIPS
- ③ Final screening by the YLP committee organized by MEXT

6. Curriculum (please refer to "Curriculum Guidelines")

(1) Basic Concepts

The curriculum is designed to train and cultivate young leaders in their respective fields of government, who are seeking to take advantage of Japan's experiences of interaction with both Western and Asian countries and also to establish a human network through various activities, such as special lectures, colloquium, independent study, workshop, etc.

(2) Course Duration and Degree

Course duration is one year, resulting in the conferral of a Master's Degree in Public Policy by GRIPS.

(3) Language

All lectures are conducted in English.

7. Commencement of the Program

October 2026

II INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS

MEXT will offer scholarships to foreign students who wish to study at GRIPS as YLP students in local governance for the academic year 2026 under the MEXT Scholarship Program. The application conditions are described below.

1. Field of Study

Local Governance

2. Qualifications

(1) Nationality:

Applicants must be nationals of countries participating in the YLP (School of Local Governance). An applicant who has Japanese nationality at the time of application is not eligible. However, persons with

dual nationality who hold Japanese nationality and whose place of residence at the time of application is outside of Japan are eligible to apply as long as they choose the nationality of the other country and renounce their Japanese nationality by their arrival in Japan (the acquisition of student status).

- (2) Age:
Applicants must be, in principle, under 40 years of age as of October 1, 2026 (i.e. born on or after October 2, 1986).
- (3) Academic background:
Applicants must hold a Bachelor's degree or equivalent from a recognized/accredited university or college, and have achieved excellent academic performance.
- (4) Work experience:
At least 3 years of full-time work experience in total as of October 1, 2026, in public administration (preferably 5 years or more).
- (5) English ability:
One of the following test scores is required:
 - ① TOEFL iBT
 - ② IELTS Academic
 - ③ Other equivalent testAdmission priority will be given to applicants who have a TOEFL iBT score of 79 or higher, or an IELTS Academic score of 6.0 or higher, or other equivalent test scores.
- (6) Health:
Applicants must be judged to be physically able to pursue study in Japan by an examining physician, who must issue a prescribed certificate of health for the applicant.
- (7) Arrival in Japan:
In principle, applicants must be able to arrive in Japan during the period specified by GRIPS, usually within two weeks before or after the first day of the course conducted by GRIPS. If the applicant cannot arrive in Japan during the specified period for personal reasons, travel expenses to Japan will not be paid.
- (8) Visa requirement:
Applicants shall, in principle, newly obtain a "Student" visa at the Japanese diplomatic mission located in the applicant's country of nationality and enter Japan with the status of residence as "Student." If the applicant resides in Japan in an exceptional case before acceptance, the applicant must change or renew his/her status of residence to "Student" by the end of the month prior to the installment of the first scholarship payment. Even if the applicant originally held a status of residence such as "Permanent Resident" or "Long-term Resident", he/she should be aware that the original status might not be necessarily regranted after the expiration of the status as a MEXT Scholarship student.
- (9) Return to home country and resumption of work after the scholarship period:
In accordance with the objectives of the YLP, after the scholarship period, applicants are expected to make efforts to build friendly relationships among various countries, including Japan, by creating human and intellectual networks among leaders in countries across the world. To this end, applicants should, in principle, return to their home countries by the end of the final month of the scholarship period and resume their work at the recommending authority or the organization designated by the recommending authorities among others.
- (10) Non-Eligibility:
Applicants who fall under any or all of the following categories are not eligible. If identified as doing so after acceptance of the scholarship grantees, the applicants will be required to withdraw from the scholarship:
 - ① Those who are military personnel or military civilian employees at the time of their arrival in Japan or during the period of the payment of the scholarship;
 - ② Those who cannot arrive in Japan by the last date of the period designated by GRIPS;
 - ③ Those who are already enrolled in a Japanese university or other institution with a residence status of "Student" or who are going to be enrolled, or plan to enroll, in a Japanese university or other institution as a privately-financed international student from the time of application to the MEXT scholarship program in the applicant's country until the commencement of the period for payment of the MEXT scholarship. However, this stipulation does not apply to privately-financed international students who, even though they are enrolled, or are planning to enroll, in a Japanese university, verifiably complete their studies before the start of the scholarship payment period, return to their home country at the time of the scholarship application, and newly acquire the "Student" residence status and come to Japan;
 - ④ Those who are currently also applying to another program under the Japanese Government Scholarship

system. This includes the programs for which scholarship payments will begin in FY2025, although their final selection results have not been decided yet, and the programs for which scholarship payments will begin in FY2026;

- ⑤ Those who are planning to receive other scholarships or fellowships from the Japanese government, a Japanese government-related organization or others after the start of the scholarship payment period;
- ⑥ Holders of dual nationality at the time of application who cannot verify that they will give up Japanese nationality by the time of the arrival in Japan (the acquisition of student status);
- ⑦ Those who change their residence status to that of other than “Student” after their arrival in Japan;
- ⑧ Those who plan, from the time of application for the MEXT scholarship program, to engage in long-term research (such as fieldwork or internship) outside Japan or plan to take a long-term leave of absence from the host university;
- ⑨ Those who will lose their status as a public administrators or government official subsequent to the time of application or before completion of the program.

3. Period of Scholarship

One year, from October 2026 to September 2027

4. Scholarship Benefits

(1) Allowance:

242,000 yen per month. Due to the situation of the Japanese Government’s budget, the amount of payment may be subject to change each fiscal year. The scholarship will not be paid to a grantee who is long absent from GRIPS.

(2) Travel costs:

- ① Transportation to Japan: In principle, MEXT stipulates the travel schedule and route, and provides an economy-class airline ticket from the international airport nearest to the grantee’s home address (in principle, the country of nationality) to Narita or Haneda International Airport. The grantee shall bear at his/her own expense all costs related to domestic travel from his/her home address to the nearest international airport, airport taxes, airport usage fees, special taxes necessary for travel, travel expenses within Japan (including airline transit costs), travel insurance expenses, carry-on luggage, or unaccompanied baggage expenses, etc. The grantee shall also bear, at his/her own expense, travel and lodging costs incurred in a third country in case there are no direct flights from the grantee’s country of nationality to Narita or Haneda International Airport. In such cases, MEXT will provide an economy-class airline ticket from the grantee’s country of nationality to the said third country, and from the third country to an international airport in Japan used on the normal route to the host university. The present address in the country of the grantee’s nationality stated in the application form is in principle regarded as the recipient’s “home address”. If, however, the address stated in the application form will be changed at the time of leaving from his/her country, the changed address (limited to within the country of nationality) will be regarded as the “home address”. For cases of travel to Japan from a country other than the grantee’s country of residence due to the grantee’s personal circumstances, MEXT will not provide an airline ticket. If a grantee will arrive in Japan before or after the specified period stated in “2. (7) Arrival in Japan”, travel expenses will not be paid.
- ② Transportation from Japan: In principle, based on the application by the grantee, MEXT will provide an airline ticket to grantees who shall graduate from GRIPS and return to the home country by the end of the final month of the period of scholarship (See “3. Period of Scholarship”) designated by MEXT. MEXT, in principle, shall provide an economy-class airline ticket from Narita or Haneda International Airport to the international airport (in principle, in the country of nationality) nearest to the returning grantee’s residence. The grantee shall bear at his/her own expense all costs related to travel from the grantee’s residence in Japan to Narita or Haneda international airport, airport taxes, airport usage fees, special taxes necessary for travel, travel expenses within the country of nationality (including airline transit costs), travel insurance expenses, carry-on luggage, or unaccompanied baggage expenses, etc.

(3) Education Fees:

Fees for the entrance examination, matriculation and tuition are waived.

(4) Accommodations:

In principle, grantees may reside at residence halls provided by GRIPS, which plans to arrange accommodations at TIEC (Tokyo International Exchange Center Residence Hall). Please note that, due to TIEC policy, an

accommodation is limited to the grantee and (a) spouse, or (b) spouse and child/children.

5. Suspension of Payment of Scholarship

Payment of the scholarship will be stopped for the reasons given below. Should any of the following reasons apply, the grantees may be ordered to return a part of, or all of, the scholarship paid up to that time. Payment of the scholarship may also be stopped during the period up to the decision on the disposition of the matter.

- ① A grantee is determined to have made a false statement on his/her application;
- ② A grantee violates any article of his/her pledge made to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology;
- ③ A grantee violates any Japanese laws and is sentenced and imprisoned for an indefinite period or for a period of exceeding 1 year;
- ④ A grantee is suspended from his/her university or receives other punishment, or is removed from enrollment as a disciplinary action in accordance with school regulations of the accepting institution;
- ⑤ It has been determined that it will be impossible for a grantee to complete the course within the standard time period because of poor academic grades or suspension or absence from the university;
- ⑥ A grantee came to Japan without newly acquiring the “Student” residence status, or his/her residence status changed to one other than “Student”;
- ⑦ A grantee has received another scholarship (a scholarship or fellowship from the Japanese government, a Japanese government-related organization or others) not approved for acceptance in conjunction with the MEXT Scholarship;
- ⑧ If a grantee’s government and/or other state institutions request such cancellation.

6. Selection

- (1) Based on the recommendation of authorities, GRIPS will select initial candidates from among applicants by means of a review of the submitted documents and an interview. The evaluation of the submitted documents will determine whether the applicant will proceed to an interview. An interview will be conducted by either of the following; face-to-face in the applicant’s home country, by telephone, or through the internet.
- (2) Those who have been selected initially by GRIPS will be put forward to the YLP committee established by MEXT for the final selection.
- (3) The final result will be notified to applicants through the Japanese Embassy/the recommending authorities.

7. Education at GRIPS

All lectures and practical training are conducted in English.

8. Application Documents Required

Applicants may only apply to GRIPS once in an academic year.

Note: application for more than one GRIPS program is not permitted.

- ① Application form for the School of Local Governance Course (1 original; use the designated form)
Please paste the photograph or insert the digital image (e.g., JPEG) onto the Application form.

- ② Recommendation letter from the recommending authority (1 original)

- ③ Two (2) letters of recommendation (1 original for each letter; use the designated form)

Your letters of recommendation must be written by faculty members or job supervisors who are familiar with your academic and/or professional abilities. At least one and preferably two should be written by your immediate superiors at work.

You are required to obtain the letters from your recommenders using the designated form and submit them. Each of your letters must contain the four A4 pages provided. Letters submitted that do not use our designated forms will not be accepted. They must be submitted in sealed, unopened envelopes signed across the flap by the recommender.

- ④ • ⑤ Official transcripts of academic record and graduation/degree certificates (1 original for each document)

You are advised to show the instructions below to registrars at each of the universities that you attended when you request issuance of transcripts/certificates in accordance with our requirements.

You must submit official transcripts of academic record and graduation/degree certificates from all undergraduate and graduate institutions that you attended/graduated from. These must be documents issued by the university and

bearing the seal or signature of the registrar, and they must be submitted in sealed, unopened envelopes with the university logo and address noted; the envelopes must be signed or stamped across the flap by the issuing school authorities.

④ Official transcripts of academic record

Official transcripts should contain the following information:

- Name of the degree program/course
- Enrollment period
- Names of all courses taken and grades received
- Grading scale including the maximum grade point/score

If you are currently attending a university, please submit your most recent transcript.

⑤ Official graduation/degree certificates

Official certificates should state the name of your degree and the date the degree was awarded. Provisional or temporary graduation/degree certificates are not acceptable. DO NOT send your original diploma, as documents will not be returned.

If you are currently attending a university, you must submit an authorized statement certifying the specific date of graduation and the title of the expected degree.

Important notes

- Photocopies of transcripts/certificates that have been verified by a notary public are not acceptable.
- If a university has a policy not to issue more than one official transcript/certificate, you may submit official photocopies verified by the university. To be official, these must bear the institution's official stamp or the signature of the registrar. They must be submitted in sealed, unopened envelopes with the university logo and address noted; the envelopes must be signed or stamped across the flap by the issuing school authorities.
- If a university cannot issue an official English version of your transcript/certificate, you are required to submit both:
 - The official transcript/certificate (photocopies are not acceptable), written in its original language and bearing the institution's stamp or the signature of the registrar, and
 - An official verbatim English translation of the document, prepared by an accredited translator.

⑥ Official evidence of English ability (1 original)

One of the following test scores is required:

1. TOEFL iBT
2. IELTS Academic
3. Other equivalent test

Admission priority will be given to applicants who have a TOEFL iBT score of 79 or higher, or an IELTS Academic score of 6.0 or higher, or other equivalent test scores.

Please note that English test scores are valid for two years from the test date, and therefore, tests must have been taken within two years of the time of enrollment at GRIPS. If you submit the results of a different test of English proficiency, please submit a conversion of the score to TOEFL or IELTS.

How to apply for a waiver of the English language proficiency requirement

There are two categories in our English test exemption policy.

Category 1: Applicants who have completed or expect to complete an undergraduate or a graduate degree at an accredited institution located in the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or Ireland will be automatically exempted from submitting an English test score.

Category 2: Applicants who have completed or expect to complete an undergraduate or a graduate degree at an institution where the language of instruction is English may request a waiver of the English language proficiency requirement. If you wish to apply for such a waiver, you must submit official documents issued by the educational institution you attended, certifying that your undergraduate or graduate education was conducted entirely in English. If the official transcript of your academic record or graduation/degree certificate includes that information, you need not submit a separate document. This document must bear the seal or signature of the registrar, and it must be submitted in a sealed, unopened envelope with the university logo and address noted; the envelope must be signed or

stamped across the flap by the issuing school authority. You are advised to show these instructions to the registrar at the university that you attended when you request issuance of the document in accordance with our requirements.

⑦ Copy of your passport (1 photocopy)

You must submit a copy of the page(s) with your name, nationality, date of birth and photo. If you do not possess a passport, please submit a copy of your family register or certificate of citizenship.

⑧ Essay explaining applicant's aspirations and future plans following program completion (1 original)

You must submit a 3-page essay describing your reason/motivation for applying, future plans and expectations from the program as well as future career goals.

⑨ Answers to the essay questions (1 original)

⑩ Certificate of health (1 original, use the designated form)

A certificate of health must be issued by the medical institution designated by the Japanese Embassy; all items must be completed, and all comments must be written in English in block letters. If there is a change in your health condition (including any serious changes relating to your life plan) after you have submitted your health certificate, please promptly notify the Japanese Embassy of the details since it concerns the acceptance system of GRIPS and the Japanese medical institution.

Notes for application documents

- (1) Please note that if you provide any false or misleading statement or incomplete or inaccurate information in your application, your application may be rejected from screening, you may be denied admission to GRIPS, or, if you have been admitted, you may be dismissed from GRIPS.
- (2) A complete set of your required application documents must reach your recommending authority by the designated deadline. Incomplete applications or applications received after the deadline will not be considered.
- (3) All materials submitted by an applicant become the property of GRIPS and will not be returned. Please make sure to keep one copy of your application for your records.
- (4) All documents must be in English. If the document is prepared in other languages, an English translation by an accredited translator should be provided.
- (5) Application documents to be prepared solely by the applicant, should be typed by computer wherever possible (A4 size paper and single-sided printing are preferable). If circumstances require, documents legibly handwritten with a ballpoint pen are acceptable.
- (6) If your name as written in your application is different from that on the document(s) you submit, and if there is some reason (e.g. marriage) for the difference, please submit official documentation of that reason (e.g. marriage certificate).
- (7) Photocopies will not be accepted.
- (8) Digital copies sent by e-mail will not be accepted.
- (9) Number the documents from ① to ⑩ (the items numbered in the list) in the upper right corner of each document.

9. Unavoidable Circumstances

In the event of unavoidable or unforeseen circumstances, the Japanese Government reserves the right to change or cancel the arrival date, scholarship, and contents of the application guidelines herein provided, at any time before or after notification of the results of the final selection.

Unavoidable circumstances are defined as events whose effects could not reasonably be prevented or controlled by MEXT or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including embassies and consulate generals of Japan) including but not limited to acts of God, acts of government (including local government, hereafter referred to as government), acts of government authorities (including limitations on travel or immigration enacted by the Japanese government or other foreign countries' government due to the outbreak of infectious disease), compliance with law, regulations or orders, fire, flooding and torrential rain, earthquakes, acts of war (regardless of a declaration of war), revolt, revolution or rebellion, strike, or lockout.

10. Notes

- (1) If you plan to have your family members join you in Japan as dependents, after you arrive in Japan you need to apply for a Certificate of Eligibility (COE) for Dependent Visa (which covers only your dependent spouse and

children) at the Tokyo Regional Immigration Services Bureau on behalf of your family members. For more information, please visit: [Residence status "family stay" | Immigration Services Agency](#)

Depending on individual circumstances, there were cases where dependent family members' visa applications were delayed, or even rejected. We advise you to think very carefully about bringing your family to Japan, by taking all matters into consideration.

- (2) Before departing for Japan, the grantees should acquire information about Japanese weather, climate, customs, university education, and conditions of the university to be attended in Japan, as well as about the difference between the Japanese legal system and that of his/her home country. The grantees are also recommended to learn the Japanese language necessary for their daily life.
- (3) As the first installment of the scholarship payment will be made from one month to one and a half months after the grantee's arrival in Japan, the grantee is recommended to bring at least approximately US\$2,000 with him/her to Japan to cover immediate living expenses and other necessary expenses.
- (4) The scholarship payments will be transferred to the bank account at Japan Post Bank (JP Bank) opened by each grantee after the arrival in Japan. MEXT will not transfer the scholarship payments to other accounts.
- (5) Grantees who have tested positive for infectious diseases including tuberculosis following a medical exam must be treated before arrival in Japan. Grantee's arrival in Japan will not be approved if he/she is not fully recovered by the time of arrival.
- (6) Grantees must enroll in the National Health Insurance program (Kokumin Kenko Hoken) at his/her own expense upon arrival in Japan.
- (7) It is suggested that grantees acquire an "Individual Number Card (My Number Card)" upon arrival in Japan.
- (8) Information regarding the MEXT Scholarship recipient (name, gender, date of birth, nationality, accepting university/graduate school/undergraduate school, field of specialty, period of enrolment, career path after completion of scholarship, contact information [address, telephone number, e-mail address]) may be shared with other relevant government organizations for the purpose of utilization by overseas students programs implemented by the Japanese Government (support during period of study in Japan, follow-up survey, improvement of the overseas student system).

Information regarding MEXT Scholarship Students (excluding date of birth and contact information) may be included in publicity materials prepared by the Japanese Government for promoting the acceptance of overseas students in Japan, particularly in order to introduce former MEXT Scholarship Students who are playing active roles in countries around the world.

These terms and conditions are included in the Pledge stipulating rules and regulations which MEXT Scholarship recipients must comply with and submit when they have been granted the Scholarship. Those who consent to this treatment will be admitted as MEXT Scholarship Student.

- (9) In principle, receiving another scholarship from an organization (including a government organization of the home country) other than the Japanese government (MEXT or other Japanese government organization) is permitted. However, applicants should consult with the Japanese Embassy in the home country in advance, since some scholarships may not be combined.
- (10) If an applicant is judged not to meet the conditions for landing in Japan, he/she may be rejected.
- (11) All personal information that we receive from applicants will be used only for the purposes of admissions screening, collecting statistical information, student registration, and educational affairs.
- (12) The English texts attached to the Application Guidelines and the Application Form are for complementary use only. English expressions do not change the Japanese content.
- (13) If there are any questions about the content of the written text in this Application Guideline or any other matters, applicants/grantees should inquire at the Japanese Embassy in the applicant's country and follow their instructions.
- (14) In addition to the regulations stipulated in this Application Guideline, any regulations that are necessary to implement the Japanese Government Scholarship programs shall be determined by the Japanese Government.

Young Leaders' Program (School of Local Governance) Curriculum Guidelines

I Basic Concepts

1. Each subject will deal with theories based not only on the experiences of the so-called modern Western World, but also on those concerned with the historical experiences of Japan and other non-Western countries. While analyzing commonalities in the modernization process along with its various possibilities, the courses seek to find the most desirable method for each country's modernization. (Comparative Approach)
2. Through modernization, our thoughts and ideas undergo deep transformations. However, the curriculum will not be concerned with modern ideas alone, but will also incorporate basic premises from the classical civilizations and ideas of the great thinkers. (Emphasis on liberal arts education aiming at self-relativization and critical thinking)
3. Going beyond instruction that is related to skills and knowledge, the curriculum will emphasize the fostering of students' ideas; identifying problems; and developing the ability to arrive at their own solutions. (Emphasis on discussion and self-study)
4. Through encounters with leading figures from all areas (including other promising young students), the curriculum aims to create human networks and further understanding about Japan.
5. As decentralization progresses in line with a country's economic development, the demand for local governance and government that is capable of responding to various regional issues such as education, health, welfare, and local development rises. This program aims to cultivate leaders and core personnel for such local governance in their respective countries by equipping them with advanced theories on local governance and practices in Japan.

II Students

The course is designed for young public administrators and government officials who are expected to play active roles in Asia and Central Europe as future leaders in local governance.

III Courses (Courses offered are subject to change)

1. Required Courses (7 credits)
 - The World and the SDGs
 - Local Government System and Finance
 - Local Governance in the Changing World
 - Introduction to Japan
2. Recommended Courses (at least 6 credits)
 - Microeconomics I
 - Essential Microeconomics
 - Economic Development of Japan
 - Government and Politics in Japan
 - International Relations
 - Structure and Process of Government
 - Leadership and Knowledge Creation
 - GRIPS Forum I
 - GRIPS Forum II
3. Elective Courses (Credits for the graduation requirement)
 - Macroeconomics I
 - Government and Market
 - Data Science for Public Policy
 - International Trade
 - Development Economics

- East Asian Economies
 - Japanese Foreign Policy
 - International Security Studies
 - Human Resources Management
 - Social Security System in Japan
 - Small and Medium Enterprise and Technology
 - Introduction to Data Science I
 - Introduction to Data Science II
 -
4. Colloquium (2 credits) (Required Course)
This course will provide an opportunity to participate in lectures by, and discuss various issues with, many distinguished government leaders and business executives. The colloquium will be organized fifteen or sixteen times a year, from the fall to the spring terms.
 5. Independent Study (4 credits) (Required Course)
Students will produce a research paper on a topic of their choice that pertains to local governance, with a perspective of comparison between their home country and another, such as Japan. Designated advisors will provide them with writing instruction/guidance.
 6. Workshop (2 credits) (Required Course)
A Workshop, including a field trip on local governance in Japan, will be conducted in association with several local governments and NPOs.
 7. Other Educational Activities
Japanese Language Class:
All lectures are conducted in English, making it unnecessary for students to master Japanese. However, Japanese language courses will be offered to students who wish to further their knowledge of Japanese language and culture.

IV Further information

For more information on GRIPS, please visit: <https://www.grips.ac.jp/en/>