

Program Guidance 2027 for Japan-Syria Language School Pathways

1. Program Outline

This program is to offer an opportunity for youth with refugee backgrounds to study or work in Japan through assistance of Japanese private schools supporting companies, NGOs and local communities. From 2017 to 2026, 58 Syrian youth were admitted to Japan. The selected participants can obtain student status in Japan and study at a Japanese language school with its tuition fee free for two years, the minimum required period to reach academic or business level.

It offers an opportunity to resettle in Japan and study the Japanese language, which is essential to live in this stable and secured country in Asia. However, since it is a private sponsored program and the support participants can get is rather limited, if an applicant needs to have a determination to study and work hard to make her/his own way for the future. The program can open up a way for a successful career for a motivated applicant.

The support recruited students will be offered include:

- Support for visa issuance and residence permit
- Pre-departure Japanese language classes before traveling to Japan
- Airfare to Japan
- Two years of Japanese language education offered by one of the partner Japanese language schools of PJ (worth USD15,000)
- Stipend for the first six months
- Introduction of part-time job opportunities and housing
- Educational and career consultation every three months to enter university or find employment

*Please note that students are expected to work part-time to cover their rent and living expenses.

*After completion of the program, students are expected to enter universities or find employment and extend their legal status in Japan.

For April 2027 recruitment, we will offer around 5 scholarship opportunities for Syrian applicants to this program.

<For High school graduates>

After students improve their Japanese language skills and score sufficiently in the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU), one can apply for universities in Japan. The program will give regular consultation on your preparation for exams. However, scholarship for universities is not guaranteed and it will be on students' own responsibility. After graduating from a university or a vocational school, they will have a good opportunity for being employed in Japan. When they get employment, they can obtain a resident status with a work permit in Japan.

<For University graduates>

If the students have already obtained a university certificate, they can find a job and obtain resident status with work permit after completion of Japanese language study. It

is normally required to have a business level of Japanese language to find a job in Japan, even if one is fluent in English. It is also possible that after accumulating some savings through a few years of work, they may apply for a Master's degree with some partial scholarship opportunities.

2. Implementing organization and schools

Implementing Organization

●Pathways Japan (PJ):

It is a Japanese non-governmental and non-profit organization, supporting people with refugee experience abroad to be admitted to Japan and get higher education and employment. PJ succeeded Language School Pathways Programme from Japan Association for Refugees (JAR) on 1st July 2021.

<https://pathways-j.org/>

●Japan ICU Foundation:

The [Japan ICU Foundation \(JICUF\)](#) is a US non-profit organization based in New York. Since 2016, JICUF has partnered with JAR, and later with PJ, to administer the [Syrian Scholars Initiative \(SSI\)](#), a scholarship program for Syrian students to study at International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo, Japan. JICUF currently provides funding to administer Language School Programs for Syrians, Afghans and Ukrainians. It also manages Japan Education Pathways for refugee-background youth living in Japan to access a scholarship to study at universities in Japan.

Japanese Language Schools In 2027, around ten language schools are planning to admit youth with refugee backgrounds to learn Japanese language for 2 years from April 2027 to March 2029. You can refer to the website of one of the partner schools.

Japan International Institute of Cybernetics (JIIC) (previously known as Meisei Institute for Cybernetics(MIC)) Japanese Language Department

<https://www.nkk.ac.jp/japanese/>

*The school is located in Chiba Prefecture within walking distance of the station of Shin Matsudo, about an hour by train from the city center of Tokyo. It is a suburb of the Metropolitan Tokyo area.

*The school is suitable for students who want to live and study in an area close to the capital city of Tokyo, with the population of 1.2 million, to get access to variety of groups of people, companies, events and information.

School Curriculum

*The school will offer Japanese language courses for two years at maximum

* To prove your Japanese proficiency, especially for job-hunting, you will need to take and pass N2 level of Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) preferably within two years of your study.

JLPT: <https://www.jlpt.jp/e/index.html>

*To be eligible to apply for undergraduate programmes in universities in Japan, you will have to take the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU) and mark sufficient scores for each university and faculty.

For those who would like to major in humanity or social science fields, you will need to take Japanese and "Japan and the World" (social studies of Japan). For those who

apply for faculties in natural science or engineering etc. you need to take Japanese, mathematics and science (chemistry and physics) EJU:

<https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/ryugaku/eju/index.html>

School life

Below is an example from JIIC on campus life.

<https://www.nkk.ac.jp/japanese/en/campus-life/>

3. Eligibility

Below are eligibility criteria for JSLP 2027.

1. Must be a Syrian national
2. Must live outside of Syria as a refugee, or in a refugee-like situation with reasonable grounds of being unable to return to Syria
3. Must be single without accompanying families (The Japanese government does not issue visas for accompanying family members for language students.)
4. Must have completed 12 years of school education, or be expected to complete 12 years of school education by March 2027 (This is a requirement to obtain a student visa in Japan.)
5. If you are a high school graduate, you must be 26 years old or younger; if you are a university graduate, you must be 33 years old or younger.
6. Must have studied or been studying Japanese.
7. Must agree to work part-time at an entry-level job to cover your own living expenses in Japan.
8. Must NOT have a financial obligation to support family members (Students should expect part-time work to cover only their own living expenses, and not to support their families.)
9. Must be able to submit the required documents
 - a) Document describing your refugee background (e.g. letter explaining the reason for the difficulty of returning to your home country, issued by an NGO or an expert. If this cannot be obtained, the candidate can write his/her own statement.)
 - b) Either of the document to indicate your refugee background
 - a. UNHCR Protection Card issued in the country of residence
 - b. Temporary Protection Card or equivalent ID document issued by the country of residence
 - c) Passport copy (If you do not currently have a valid passport, you must renew it by January 2027 or obtain one newly by October 2026)
 - d) High school graduate certificate or equivalent document
 - e) High school transcript for grades 10-12 or equivalent document
 - f) (If you are a university student or graduate) University certificate and transcript for registered terms
 - g) Recommendation letter (*A letter should not be written by anyone who is your family members, relatives or friends. Someone who knows your personality, and/or academic and life background will be appropriate.)

4. Resident Status in Japan

1) Status of language school student

* You will stay in Japan with a “student” status for 2 years. Please note that you will not obtain “refugee” status by joining this programme.

* Being a student, you can legally work part time within 28 hours per week during school semesters, and 40 hours during school holidays. It is required for you to work part time to support yourself financially and also recommended to do so to help you improve your language skills and get accustomed to local culture and people.

2) Status after graduating from Japanese Language School

<high school graduates>

• By entering university, you can extend student status for four years. (If you enter a vocational school, it will be two years.)

• After graduation from a university or a vocational school, you can apply for a resident status with a work permit, if you get full-time employment.

• It is not allowed in Japan to get a work permit without a university or vocational school certificate (except getting designated skills status by passing certain language and skill exams.)

<university graduates>

• After graduation from your language school, you can apply for a resident status with a work permit, if you get full-time employment.

• If you enter the graduate program of a university after graduation from language school, you can extend your student status for another two years, before getting employed.

3) In case of not getting any scholarship/employment

<Temporary protection status for both high and university graduates>

* In case of failing to renew your student/employment status, you can change to Designated Activities status which can be regarded as temporary protection based on humanitarian concerns. PJ can give technical assistance but students have to be primarily responsible for their own resident status.

<high school graduates>

• In case you fail to get a scholarship and enter any university/vocational school within two years of study period at a language school, you can try again in the following year to apply for a scholarship. You may study by yourself with a volunteer tutor assigned by PJ, or attend some courses, while working part time. As preparation, it is recommended you will need to have some savings during two years of language study.

<university graduates>

• In case you fail to get employment during the two years at language school, you can still stay in Japan, working part-time, by applying for “temporary protection” status as explained above and may continue your full-time job hunting.

5. Living cost in Japan

In this program, you will need to work part time to pay for your room rent and food upon your arrival in Japan. In practice, language students in Japan from any country usually work part time for their living and study costs. For your part-time job hunting, the school and PJ will assist you to find a job.

While your Japanese language skills are basic, you can get only basic “survival” jobs that are not related to your education or experience, – for example, dish-washing at restaurants, food-processing factories, freight distribution centers or hotels for cleaning. After your language skills are improved, you can find a job in the customer service industry, like chain restaurants and 24 hour open “convenience stores (super markets)”. The minimum payment for part time workers in 2026 is JPY 1,121(USD 6-7) per hour. You will need to study at school half a day, and work part time for another half a day, in the evening, early morning or holidays. For the average income and expenditure of foreign students, you can refer to the link below.

Student Guide to Japan of JASSO

<https://www.studyinjapan.go.jp/en/life/livingcost-price/>

6. Japanese language

Japanese has an archaic writing system that originated from Chinese and requires at least two years to memorize all characters for reading and writing.

To be fluent in speaking at intermediate level may take just 6 months to a year, but it will certainly take at least two years to master over 1,000 characters and grammar to reach business or academic level required for university education and job opportunities.

As the writing system is very different from other languages and is time consuming with a repetitive memorizing process, the programme recruits only those who have already learned at least its basics. In your application, an applicant will need to explain how she/he is well-prepared and motivated for studying the language with her/his basic knowledge of grammar and writing system.

Therefore, for those who would like to apply, we strongly encourage you to start studying the basics using the online study sites as below.

- 1) NHK World on simple Japanese in Farsi: The site is good to know about the language in Farsi. <https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/fa/learnjapanese/>
- 2) Erin's Challenge; If you would also like to know about Japanese culture, the site Erin's Challenge can be recommended. <https://www.erin.jpf.go.jp/>
- 3) Minato: If you would like to learn and improve systematically, the site offers an opportunity. <https://minato-ij.jp/>
- 4) TSUNAGARU: A site offered by the Ministry of Education for the people who are starting a new life in Japan. It offers a variety of movies from different settings in daily life in Japan which will be helpful for new comers to know its society and culture, too. https://tsunagaru.jp.mext.go.jp/?lang_id=EN
- 5) Irodori: This is the site most lately developed for the Japanese learners who want to study systematically. <https://www.irodori.jpf.go.jp/en/starter/pdf.html>
There is also an online learning site. <https://www.irodori-online.jpf.go.jp/>

7. Society, culture and housing

Society

Japan is not a traditional immigrant nation such as Canada or Australia, so the social support system for foreign residents is still limited compared with those immigrant nations. Though the number of foreign residents is increasing in Japan,

they still comprise only 3.4 % of the society. The biggest foreign populations are from Korea, China, and other East Asian countries and Muslim population is limited, so an applicant will need to be physically and mentally prepared to live in a non-Muslim country with huge cultural and social differences.

Cultural issues and climate

It will be inevitable for any applicant of JSLP to be ready for going through cultural shocks and adaptation processes in a culture and society which are totally different from your own, especially before you become fluent in Japanese for communication. In addition, the climate is also quite different from the Middle East. Japan is known for its humidity and in the hottest months from July to September, it recently reaches 38-40C. The country is also known for natural disasters caused by earthquakes or typhoons.

Housing

Living costs in Japan are relatively high. Moreover, as a large population is densely inhabited, housing costs are rather expensive and rent rooms in urban areas are usually very small, compared with other countries.

You can watch a video below as an example of a typical apartment in the suburban area of Metropolitan Tokyo. Note that Japanese apartments are usually extremely small, considering the rent fee, and you will have to adapt to this condition.

https://drive.google.com/open?id=11Rm44wIkSyf9-fr2yu2pkHcHx4bcs_Zd

*Most partner language schools will offer a rental room within a commuting distance and assist you to adjust to the society and neighborhood. The rent may be around 40,000 - 55,000yen per month (water and electricity NOT included) for a person in a single room.

*When a partner language school does not offer a rent room, PJ can assist our students to find a room at a shared house or an apartment with the range of 35,000 – 60,00 JPY for monthly rent based on request.

8. Family reunion and social welfare

Family Reunion

The programme does not support the family reunion logistically and financially, so to realize a family visit or meeting, it will be necessary for the students to have some savings to plan a trip to any other country to meet their families by arranging the visa and covering the travel on their own. And as described in the eligibility criteria, the Government of Japan does not issue a dependent family visa for a language student. Therefore, applicants need to be prepared that they will be separated from their families for several years or even more once they join this programme.

Social Welfare

In Japan, foreign residents can and have to participate in the national social welfare system and 70% of the most of the medical treatment cost will be covered. Students will need to pay the social welfare premium monthly out of their salary for part time work.

9. Career options after graduation

Applicants can find the information on scholarships and job-hunting support available after the completion of their language education.

1) Scholarships for universities

a. Japan Education Pathways Program (JEP)

JEP offers scholarship opportunities for refugee-background youth living in Japan through its network of universities, Japan Education Pathways Network (JEPN). Previously, JEP offered scholarships of 5-6 universities per year with the full-support of tuition fee, accommodation and monthly stipend support.

<https://www.reedjapan.org/jep>

b. UNHCR Refugee Higher Education Programme (RHEP)

UNHCR Japan provides a programme called Refugee Higher Education Programme (RHEP) for refugees determined by GoJ or those who has a refugee-background living in Japan. After your arrival in Japan, you will be eligible to apply for some of the member universities in RHEP. RHEP is a full scholarship programme.

https://rhepalliance.org/en_home

c. Philoxenia Scholarship by JELA

Japan Lutheran Evangelical Association (JELA) offers a refugee assistance scholarship for those people with refugee backgrounds residing in Japan. After your arrival in Japan, you will be eligible to apply. A student will need to apply and pass the exam of any university in Japan on one's own choice to get the scholarship. It is a partial scholarship to cover the tuition fee.

<https://www.jela.or.jp/refugees/philoxenia/>

d. Toshizo Watanabe International Scholarship (TWIS)

PJ offers its own scholarship programme for refugee-background youth living in Japan to attain higher education since 2022, based on a generous donation by Mr. Toshizo Watanabe. An applicant can study at any universities in Japan by passing the exams on their own and winning a full scholarship of TWIS. Although TWIS targets all the refugee populations in Japan, Language School Pathways students can also apply for this program.

<https://pathways-j.org/en/twis>

e. Other scholarship opportunities

There are other organizations which provide scholarships to international students in Japan. It can be referred to in the site of Study in Japan below.

<https://www.studyinjapan.go.jp/ja/planning/scholarships/>

2) Scholarship for vocational schools

Some graduates of Language School Pathways are admitted to vocational schools in Japan. There are a variety of fields including IT, graphic/game designing, animation, physical rehabilitation and so on.

UNHCR, JELA and Wesley Foundation offer Refugee Vocational Education Program (RVEP) to support people with refugee backgrounds to study at vocational education schools. It is a partial scholarship.

<https://www.jela.or.jp/refugees/rvep/>

Below is an example of an affiliated vocational school of JIIC
Japan International Institute of Cybernetics
<https://www.nkk.ac.jp/ib/>

3) Employment

For those who have university certificates in or outside Japan, you are eligible to find a permanent job and get resident status with a work permit. From among alumni of JALP in the past who sought employment in Japan, most of them got a full-time employment in fields like IT, logistics and social welfare. Japanese language skills are mandatory for employment in Japan and some working experiences outside Japan, part time job experiences in Japan and English proficiency can also be of your advantage.
PJ offers job-hunting support for students seeking employment in JALP like job-hunting info session, mentorship, Japanese training and group interviews with companies.

10. Useful links for student life in Japan

You can refer more to general information on foreign students in below links.

Japan Student Services Organization(JASSO)
https://www.jasso.go.jp/en/ryugaku/study_j/index.html
Japan Study Support
<http://www.jpss.jp/en/>
Study in Japan
<https://www.studyinJapan.go.jp/en/>
Japan Navigation
<https://www.jpnavi.com/>

11. Application Procedure

Please refer to the JSLP website below.
<https://pathways-j.org/en/jslp2027>

Required documents

- 1) Document describing your refugee background (e.g. letter explaining the reason for the difficulty of returning to your home country, issued by an NGO or an expert. If this cannot be obtained, the candidate can write his/her own statement.)
- 2) Either of the document to indicate your refugee background
 - a. UNHCR Protection Card issued in the country of residence
 - b. Temporary Protection Card or equivalent ID document issued by the country of residence
- 3) Personal information forms (Please download the forms on the application form)
- 4) International passport copy (If you do not currently have a valid passport, you must renew it by January 2027 or obtain one newly by October 2026)
- 5) High school graduate certificate or equivalent document
- 6) High school transcript for grades 10-12 or equivalent document

- 7) Recommendation letter (*A letter should not be written by anyone who is your family members, relatives or friends. Someone who knows your personality, and/or academic and life background will be appropriate.) (Optional)
- 8) (For university graduates only) University Bachelor's degree certificate
- 9) (For university graduates only) University transcript
- 10) (For Master's or Doctor's degree holders only) Degree certificate
- 11) Foreign language examination certificates such as IELTS, etc.
- 12) Other reference documents (certificates, awards, works etc.)

Selection Criteria

- 1) Planning for the future
- 2) Academic performance
- 3) Aptitude for mastering Japanese and current proficiency
- 4) Adaptability to Japan
- 5) Employability after completion of education

Note: Policy Change Regarding the Required Japanese Language Proficiency

The Government of Japan has recently introduced a new requirement for students enrolling in Japanese language schools from October 2026 onward.

However, if you have a university certificate issued in the countries designated by the Government of Japan [in the list here](#), including Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and UAE, the A1 certificate described below will not be required.

So, for those of you who do not possess a university certificate issued in the countries listed above, please follow the instructions below.

Under this policy, applicants must demonstrate Japanese language proficiency equivalent to **CEFR A1** or higher at the time of the entrance assessment. This requirement also applies to applicants for the Pathways Japan program. The assessment will be conducted by the Japanese language school during the admission interview. Applicants who are assessed as not yet having reached the required A1 level will need to continue studying Japanese and may be asked to postpone their enrollment until **July 2027** or **April 2028**.

Applicants who have already obtained an A1 or higher level qualification through one of the approved Japanese language tests in a table attached below or by graduating a Japanese language faculty of a university, may use the certificate as proof of their Japanese language proficiency.

If it is possible for you to take one of the approved tests before the interview, we strongly encourage you to do so.

12. Application Timeline

2 (Sun) Aug 17:00-18:30 JST,(11:00-12:30 Turkiye time)	Online Info Session
22(Wed)Jul –14(Thu)Aug	Application Period
28 (Fri) Aug – 10 (Thu) Sep 2026	Document screening
11 (Fri) Sep 2026 (Planned)	Announcement of Document screening result (first screening)
13 (Sun) Sep, 19 (Sat), 20(Sun)	Trial Japanese language classes (online)
14(Mon) Sep – 25(Fri)Sep 2026	Interview (online) by Pathways Japan (second screening)
8 (Thu) Oct 2026 (Planned)	Announcement of second screening result
23(Fri)Oct – 30(Fri) Oct	Interview (online) by Japanese language schools (third screening)
6 (Fri) Nov 2026 or later	Announcement of final results

List of Japanese Language Exams as a proof of A1 level or higher upon application

Exam Name	Website	Test implementing country * Details should be checked on the website.
① JLPT 日本語能力試験	https://www.jlpt.jp/index.html	Pakistan (Islamabad, Karachi), Kazakhstan Ukraine (Kyiv, Lviv – <i>both test locations are available only in December</i>), Western and Eastern Europe Türkiye, Jordan (<i>July only</i>), Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Iran, Egypt
② BJT ビジネス日本語能力テスト	https://www.kanken.or.jp/bjt/	Southeast Asia, India, Nepal France, the United Kingdom (UK), Germany, Italy
③ J.TEST	https://j-test.jp/	China, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam, Mongolia, Nepal, Myanmar, the Philippines, Brazil, Indonesia
④ NAT-TEST	https://nat-test.jp/	China, Vietnam, Nepal, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Cambodia, Bangladesh, the Philippines, India, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan
⑤ STBJ	https://www.ajlea.net/	China, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar Taiwan, Thailand, and South Korea.
⑥ TOPJ	https://www.topj-test.org/	China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, Bangladesh
⑦ J-CERT 生活・職能日本語検定	https://www.j-cert.org/	Mainly available in Southeast Asia and China Uzbekistan, Pakistan
⑧ JLCT-JCT5 外国人日本語能力検定	https://jlct.jp/jlct/about/about/ https://jlct.jp/jlct/schedule/	Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Indonesia, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, China, Myanmar, the Philippines, Pakistan, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia
⑨ PJC Bridge 実践日本語コミュニケーション検定	https://www.sikaku.gr.jp/c/pjc/bridge/	China, Vietnam, Taiwan, the Philippines

⑩JPT	https://www.jpctest.jp/	Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong and Macau, Taiwan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Cambodia
⑪JPT Elementary	https://www.jpctest.jp/about/jptel.php	Nepal, Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Philippines
⑫JOT	https://jot.gispa.jp/	Not clarified