

Japan-WCO Human Resource Development Programme
(Scholarship Programme)

[Strategic Management and Intellectual Property Rights]
2027-2028

ADMINISTRATIVE PROVISIONS

Introduction

1. The major objective of the Japan-WCO Human Resource Development Programme (Scholarship Programme) is to provide scholars with the conceptual understanding and technical competence essential for excelling as leaders in the area of taxation and Customs. Scholars are expected to return to their home Customs administrations to apply the knowledge and skills acquired through the programme and disseminate them within the administration.
2. The Scholarship Programme provides a grant covering travel, subsistence, admission, tuition, and other approved expenses to enable promising young Customs officers from developing countries to undertake Master's level studies at Aoyama Gakuin University (AGU) in Tokyo, Japan.
3. The following administrative provisions govern this Scholarship Programme. Request for clarification should be addressed to the Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate of the WCO Secretariat before the Scholarship is accepted.

Implementation and Capacity Development Directorate,
World Customs Organization,
Rue du Marché 30, 1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel : + 32 2 209 92 17
e-mail: akihiko.fukuzono@wcoomd.org

Conditions of candidacy and selection

4. The candidates must be nationals of active WCO Member administrations, preferably below 40 years of age as of 1 April 2027. They should be in good health to productively pursue studies in Japan.
5. The recipients of Scholarships under this Programme will enroll in the Graduate School of Business (GSB) at Aoyama Gakuin University (AGU) and study for a degree of **Master of Arts in Business Administration, specializing in Strategic Management and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)**.
6. This Scholarship is for one academic year starting from April 2027. There will be a preparatory course in March 2027 for a few weeks before the start of the Programme. The Scholarship period cannot be extended.
7. Candidates should be Customs officers **fully proficient in English** (a minimum TOEFL score of internet Based Test (iBT) 79 / TOEFL iBT home edition or IELTS Academic Module 6.0, to prove their language proficiency). They should have a university degree or equivalent qualification. Starting January 21, 2026, the TOEFL iBT has discontinued paper score reports, and the scoring system has been revised.

Candidates who submit scores from a test taken on or after January 21, 2026 are required to print out their downloaded score report and submit it. In addition, they are required to designate DI code “G314” and have their scores sent directly.

8. Candidates should have at least **2 years** of work experience in Customs and should have assessed potential for advancement. In the selection, preference will be given to candidates who have experience in IPR border enforcement, and who are expected to work in the IPR-related section of their Customs administration after this Scholarship Programme. Those currently serving in a management role may be given preference.
9. Individuals who have already been awarded a scholarship under the Japan-WCO Human Resource Development Programme in the past will not be entitled to apply for this Scholarship Programme.
10. Dual enrolment at AGU is strictly prohibited. Candidates who are currently enrolled in another degree programme must officially graduate from or withdraw from that programme prior to enrolment at AGU. Candidates must submit an official Certificate of Graduation or an official Letter of Withdrawal clearly indicating the exact date of graduation or withdrawal, by the date requested by the AGU Admissions Committee. Alternative documents, such as a “Statement of Results”, will not be accepted. Failure to submit the required official documents by the prescribed deadline will result in the immediate cancellation of admission and the associated scholarship.
11. Candidates should be eligible to participate in this Programme according to the rules and regulations of the home administration and relevant authorities.
12. After the completion of the Programme, **the candidates should continue to work in their home Customs administration for at least 3 years**. For monitoring purposes, they are kindly requested to inform the AGU and the WCO beforehand, in the event that they plan to leave their home administrations.
13. Candidates will be selected by the WCO in consultation with AGU. AGU shall inform the candidates about their selection or otherwise. The WCO will send a congratulatory letter to the administrations whose candidates have been selected.
14. In accepting a Scholarship, a candidate must:
 - Fill out and submit to the WCO the acceptance of the Scholar Guidelines, which will be shared later.
 - Undertake to work as a full-time graduate student on the assigned Programme. It will not be possible to undertake other activities not related to the Programme.
 - Undertake to comply with the laws and show due respect for the culture and way of life of the host country.

Application Procedures

15. The application process for candidates is as follows:

Access to the admissions page

(https://www.aoyama.ac.jp/faculty/graduate_business/smiprp/admissions/).

Scroll down and follow the Application Procedure Steps 1 through 5. Application forms and required documents are available on the same page.

- NOTE: The Application Forms are only available for download beginning from **early June 2026** and ending on **24 August 2026**.
- Complete the **Application Forms** and **submit them with all supporting documents** (including the Nomination Form from their administration, which is downloadable from the website). All documents **must reach AGU by 24 August 2026** to the AGU Master's Programme Admissions Office at the address indicated below.
- Please refer to Annex 2 for details of the application procedures. Any related inquiries should be directed to the AGU Master's Programme Admissions Office at: info_smiprp@busi.aoyama.ac.jp

16. **The original set of Application Forms with all supporting documents, including the Nomination Form from the candidate's administration**, should be completed and returned to:

Master's Program Admissions Office
 Graduate School of Business
 Aoyama Gakuin University
 4-4-25 Shibuya, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8366, Japan
 Telephone : + 81 3 3409 6239
 Fax : + 81 3 3409 4575
 e-mail: info_smiprp@busi.aoyama.ac.jp
 Website: https://www.aoyama.ac.jp/faculty/graduate_business/smiprp/

with the envelope marked, "Application for the WCO Scholarship".

17. A duplicate set of the Application Package will be forwarded to the WCO Secretariat by the AGU Admissions Office. Therefore, candidates are not required to send a duplicate set to the WCO Secretariat.
18. Please note that **applications received after the deadline will not be considered**. Late submissions, including supporting documents such as proof of English proficiency, are not acceptable. Applicants and nominating Administrations are encouraged to prepare the required documents well in advance.
19. If costs are incurred by failure to follow the application rules such as late notification of non-acceptance, the WCO will charge the costs to applicants or to the organization to which the applicants belong.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Accommodation and living allowance

20. An all-inclusive allowance of 147,000 Japanese yen per month will be granted to cover the cost of accommodation, meals, and incidental expenses for the study period. The amount of the allowance is subject to change according to the decision of the Japanese Government. (The allowance will be paid in Japanese yen.)
21. The Scholars will be offered assistance by AGU to find residential accommodation at a reasonable rent.

22. Candidates should note that the allowance will not be sufficient to cover the expenses of any accompanying dependants. No family-related expenses will be paid or added to the monthly living allowance.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

Travel costs

23. The cost of travel (return trip) between the Scholar's place of residence and Tokyo will be borne by the Programme budget. For this purpose, an economy class pre-paid air ticket by the shortest and most economical route will be provided to the Scholars. Local transportation costs between the Scholar's place of residence and departure/arrival airport should be borne by the Scholars.
24. Any additional costs entailed with the changes of the pre-arranged itineraries or cancellation of the flight without reasonable grounds after the issuance of the e-ticket should be borne by the Scholar or their home administration.

Insurance

25. No insurance coverage is provided by the WCO in respect of personal accidents or damage to or loss of personal effects during transport to or from Tokyo.

Passports - Visas

26. Persons entering Japan must hold a valid passport and visa. Vaccination requirements vary depending upon nationality, and the Scholars are personally responsible for complying with those requirements. AGU will provide the selected candidates with a letter certifying enrolment in the Scholarship Programme to enable them to apply to the Japanese Embassy in their home country for a **student visa**, authorizing temporary residence in Japan for the duration of the Programme.

Health certificate

27. The Scholars selected will have to undergo a comprehensive medical examination and submit a certificate from a licensed physician **certifying that they are free from any medical condition that would impair their studies during the Programme.**

COMPLETION OF THE PROGRAMME

28. Scholars are expected to complete the Programme as scheduled. Early repatriation may be authorized only on medical grounds or for other similarly important reasons. If a Scholar withdraws from the Programme before the commencement of the Programme or before its scheduled completion, they shall not be entitled to any benefits from the date of the decision. The WCO may request the Scholar to refund any expenses that are incurred from his/her withdrawal. In case a refund is requested, if the scholar cannot afford this for any reason, the organization to which the Scholar belongs should undertake the obligation.

29. If the WCO is informed by the AGU that a Scholar is unable to complete the course in accordance with the standard terms due, for example, to poor academic performance or suspension, the Scholarship may be terminated even during the academic year.
 30. In the event of a Scholar failing to complete the Programme, a request for partial refund may be sent to the Scholar. If a refund is requested and the Scholar cannot afford this for any reason, the organization to which the Scholar belongs should undertake the obligation.
 31. On completion of the Programme, Scholars are required to go back to their home country without delay. In the event of no return, the WCO may request the Scholar or the organization to which the Scholar belongs to refund the scholarship. The WCO will pay travel costs, as described above, for the Scholar's return journey from Tokyo to the point of first departure. Entitlement to return travel expenses shall cease if the Scholar does not leave Tokyo within two weeks of completion of the Programme, unless they have any compelling reason for extending their stay.
 32. After half a year and 3 years respectively from completion of the Programme, Scholars should report to the WCO and AGU indicating the post they occupy in their home administration and how they have been utilizing the knowledge, skills and experience they acquired in Japan.
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