

2026 MEXT Research Scholarship – Frequently Asked Questions

Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago (last updated October 21st, 2025)

Table of Contents

All ToC links are clickable and will directly take you to the answer in the document.

1. [What is the MEXT Research Scholarship?](#)
2. [What are the benefits?](#)
3. [What fields of study are acceptable for the MEXT Research Scholarship?](#)
4. [Do I need to have majored in the Field of Study I intend to pursue in Japan?](#)
5. [Who is eligible to apply?](#)
6. [What if I am not a U.S. citizen or a resident of a state in the Chicago Consulate's 10-state area?](#)
7. [I am a resident of a state in the Chicago Consulate's 10-state jurisdiction, but I currently live outside of the jurisdiction. Can I apply through Chicago but test at a different Consulate?](#)
8. [What is the application timeline?](#)
9. [I live abroad. Can I apply for the MEXT Scholarship?](#)
10. [The Application asks for a copy of my senior thesis, what if I did not write a senior thesis?](#)
11. [How detailed should I make my Field of Study & Research Program Plan?](#)
12. [Is it required to obtain a degree while on the MEXT Research Scholarship?](#)
13. [What is the difference between an Embassy/Consulate Recommendation and a University Recommendation?](#)
14. [Where can I find information about universities/professors in Japan?](#)
15. [Can I interview and take the exams online?](#)
16. [What exams must be taken for the Research Scholarship?](#)
17. [Do I need to know Japanese to get the scholarship?](#)
18. [Is it required to take the 6-month intensive Japanese language course upon arrival in Japan?](#)
19. [Can I bring my family with me?](#)
20. [Can I have my application materials returned to me?](#)
21. [How many copies of the application materials do I need to submit?](#)
22. [Where do I send my application?](#)
23. [Do my Letter of Recommendation writers need to use a Letter of Recommendation form?](#)
24. [My Letter of Recommendation and/or transcripts came sealed, should I open them to make copies?](#)
25. [The application requests both original documents and copies, but what constitutes an "original" version of my degree?](#)

PLEASE READ! Important Note from the Chicago consulate: We have updated our policy on document copies for the application process. Please review [question 21, page 5](#) for more details.

What is the MEXT Research Scholarship?

The Ministry of Education, Culture Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT; Monbukagakusho) Research Scholarship is a Japanese government scholarship that allows U.S. citizens to study in a Japanese university.

What are the benefits?

MEXT will provide roundtrip airfare to Japan, full tuition and any university entrance fees, along with a monthly stipend: ¥143,000 (non-regular/preparatory education students); ¥144,000 (master's students); ¥145,000 (doctoral program students). An additional ¥2,000 - ¥3,000 monthly stipend may be provided to those students doing field research in designated regions. (As of the 2025 Japanese fiscal year. The amount of the stipend is subject to change).

What fields of study are acceptable for the MEXT Research Scholarship?

Any field! In the past, we have sent MEXT Research Scholars doing research in fields as diverse as medicine, fine arts, astrophysics, computer programming, business, ancient Japanese literature, sociology, Japanese hip-hop, ecology, calligraphy, and more.

Do I need to have majored in the Field of Study I intend to pursue in Japan?

Yes. Applicants must apply for either (a) the field of study they majored in at their university or (b) a field of study closely related to their major.

Who is eligible to apply?

To apply through the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago, applicants must:

- (a) Be a United States citizen.
- (b) Born on or after April 2, 1991.
- (c) Have a bachelor's degree by April or September, 2026 (determined by your departure date).
- (d) Be a resident of a state in the Chicago Consulate's 10-state Midwest jurisdiction. [IL, IN, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD, WI]. Please see the [guidelines](#) for more detailed information.

What if I am not a U.S. citizen or a resident of a state in the Chicago Consulate's 10-state jurisdiction?

You can still apply for the MEXT Scholarship, but you will need to do so through the Japanese diplomatic mission responsible for your country/area. Find your nearest Embassy/Consulate-General/Consulate Office, here: https://www.mofa.go.jp/about/emb_cons/mofaserv.html

I am a resident of a state in the Chicago Consulate's 10-state jurisdiction, but I currently live outside of the jurisdiction. Can I apply through Chicago but test at a different Consulate?

Due to the way test materials are distributed to the consulates, it is strongly recommended that you take the test at the consulate you are applying through. While you can request take the test at another location, it is often only granted in special circumstances. Please contact mextinfo@cg.mofa.go.jp to arrange this.

I live abroad. Can I apply for the MEXT Scholarship?

You can apply for the MEXT Scholarship from abroad. However, keep in mind that those who select “Japanese” or “Japanese or English” for question 23 on the application form must take the Japanese language exam in-person at the Chicago Consulate office.

What is the application timeline?

April 2025	May 23, 2025.*	Mid-June 2025	June 18, 2025*	Early August 2025
MEXT scholarship application documents available	Application submission deadline. <i>Applications received after this date will not be accepted.</i>	Interviews for applicants who successfully pass the document screening stage.	Exams (if applicable). <i>Exams are done in-person and the test date is not negotiable.</i>	Notification of results for the first screening. <i>Applicant start reaching out to universities to obtain Letters of Provisional Acceptance.</i>
January 2026	February 2026	March 2026	April 2026	Sept/Oct 2026
Notification of results for the secondary screening	Scholarship recipients notified of university placement	Scholarship recipients travel arrangements are made.	Depart for Japan! (departure date is determined by the university you will attend).	

Applications open a year prior to departure. *Exact date changes from year-to-year.

The Application asks for a copy of my senior thesis, what if I did not write a senior thesis?

We are aware that many American college students do not write a senior thesis. Instead, we ask that you submit a copy of an abstract of a major paper or project you have completed that relates to you intended field of study in Japan. Please limit your abstract to **no more than 3 pages**.

How detailed should I make my Field of Study & Research Program Plan?

The Research Program Plan should be something you would feel comfortable submitting as a Research Proposal to a graduate school in the U.S. You should give us a specific account of your intended research topic, methodology, how it fits into the current research being done, and why this research must be done at a Japanese university. You are not required to use the provided form, but make sure it is formatted similarly and answers the same questions. **It cannot exceed 2 pages** (1 double-sided page or 2 single-sided pages).

Is it required to obtain a degree while on the MEXT Research Scholarship?

Yes. Anyone applying must work to obtain a master’s or PhD while on the scholarship. Section 3 of the guidelines states, "Those who have no intention of obtaining a degree in Japan [are not eligible]."

What is the difference between Embassy/Consulate Recommendations and University Recommendation?

University Recommendations for the MEXT Scholarship are when a university in Japan recommends a student for the scholarship. This is a separate application and acceptance track from the Embassy/Consulate recommendations. Since the U.S. consulates are not directly involved in University Recommendations, you will need to directly contact a university in Japan to inquire about them.

Where can I find information about universities/professors in Japan?

You can begin by searching or browsing the [Research Map of Japan](#), which lists researchers in Japan by name, field university and location. You can also look at the [Programs for Leading Graduate Schools](#) (in Japanese), which lists programs endorsed by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (it also promotes humanities and social science programs). Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) and Japan Study Support are also good resources.

Can I interview and take the exams online?

The interviews are usually held online via Zoom. Exams are held in-person at the Chicago Consulate office. Exams must be taken on the assigned day for all U.S. Consulates, no exceptions.

What exams must be taken for the Research Scholarship?

Research applicants will need to take a Japanese language exam if their field of study requires Japanese language proficiency, or they selected “Japanese” or “Japanese or English” for question 23 on the application. Those who select “English” for question 23 on the application form will not take any exams.

Do I need to know Japanese to get the scholarship?

It depends on your intended area of research. We do not necessarily require any Japanese language knowledge for candidates who are applying solely to programs with classes taught in English. Candidates looking to do research in fields like Japanese literature, history, etc., will need high levels of Japanese language proficiency to be considered. All applicants are expected to study and learn Japanese language and Japanese culture.

Do all Scholarship recipients take the 6-month intensive Japanese language course upon arrival in Japan?

Your university in Japan will decide if they want you to take the Japanese language course before beginning your research term.

Can I bring my family with me?

Yes, Research Scholarship recipients may bring their families with them. However, most universities will be unable to provide or arrange housing for families, so you will need to find housing on your own. Additionally, we strongly encourage you to have your family join you a month or so after your own arrival so you can have housing and other arrangements settled by the time they arrive.

Can I have my application materials returned to me?

Unfortunately, no. Once application materials have been submitted to us at the Consulate-General of Japan in Chicago, they cannot be returned under any circumstances. **This includes your degrees!** Please read [“what counts as an “original” degree?”](#) for guidance on what to send us for your application.

How many copies of the application materials do I need to submit?

In an effort to reduce paper waste, the Chicago consulate is asking applicants to only send one completed original application and one digital/scan of your application to our email. Applicants who successfully pass the first screening will be asked to send in the additional 2 copies per the MEXT guidelines, so please be prepared to send your additional copies to us as soon as first screening results come out.

Where do I send my application?

Please send your application to the following locations

completed <u>original</u> , physical application	Completed application scan
<p style="text-align: center;">Japan Information Center ATTN: MEXT Scholarships 737 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 1000 Chicago, IL 60611</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">mextinfo@cg.mofa.go.jp with the subject line “[first name, last name] – Completed 2026 MEXT Research Application*”</p>

*Please keep in mind that our email cannot accept attachments over 10MB. If your application attachments exceed 10MB in total, please send us your documents in 2 parts/emails or upload them to a cloud-based server like Google/One Drive and send us a link so we can download the documents from there.

Do my Letter of Recommendation writers need to use a Letter of Recommendation form?

No. Letter writers can simply submit a signed letter (on letterhead) instead of the form. Since Letters of Recommendation should be given to you sealed per the guidelines, please direct your recommender to scan the signed letter on letterhead (or Letter of Recommendation Form) and email it to us at mextinfo@cg.mofa.go.jp and we will add it to your digital/mailed application for you.

My Letter of Recommendation and/or transcripts came sealed, should I open them to make copies?

Please leave any sealed documents unopened and mail them to us as is. We can open them and make the copies needed for your application here at our office.

The application requests originals and copies. What constitutes an “original” version of my degree?

There are a few ways you can obtain an official version:

1. Have your registrar’s office sign a photocopy of your degree. We prefer the photocopy be in color.
2. Request a copy of your degree from you registrar’s office directly. This option comes with a cost and usually takes 6-8 business days. *Processing time will vary by university!*
3. Get a digital degree via a certified platform, such as Accredible, and send us the email link.*

*Please keep in mind that documents from these platforms may be password protected so we may be unable to print them. If that is the case, we will reach out and request you use a different method.

For more information, please see the [2026 MEXT Research Guidelines](#) posted on our website. If you have further questions, please contact the MEXT Scholarship Coordinator at mextinfo@cg.mofa.go.jp or call 312-280-0430.