The System and Internationalization of Japanese Higher Education

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Specialist, Office for International Planning, Higher Education Bureau, MEXT-Japan
1. Overview of Higher Education System in Japan
# Basic Information about Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Japan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Language</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population (2019)</td>
<td>126,309,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land area</td>
<td>377,900 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefectures</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP (2017)</td>
<td>4,872 billion USD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP per Capita (2017)</td>
<td>38,220 USD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organization of the School System in Japan

- Pre-primary Education
  - Kindergartens

- Primary Education
  - Elementary Schools
  - Lower Secondary Schools
  - Upper Secondary Schools
    - Post-secondary Courses
      - Correspondence Courses
      - Universities (undergraduate)
        - Correspondence Courses
      - Junior Colleges
      - Specialized Training College Post-secondary Courses
      - College of Technology
    - Part-time Courses
    - Compulsory Education Schools
      - (Lower Div.)
      - (Upper Div.)
  - Upper Sec. Dept.
  - Lower Sec. Dept.

- Secondary Education
  - Graduates Schools
    - Professional Graduate Schools
    - Professional and Vocational Universities
    - Professional and Vocational Junior Colleges
  - Post-secondary Courses
    - Correspondence Courses
  - Schools for Special Needs Education
    - Upper Sec. Dept.
    - Lower Sec. Dept.
  - Miscellaneous Schools

- Higher Education
  - Universities
  - Junior Colleges
  - Upper Secondary Schools
    - Part-time Courses
    - Correspondence Courses
  - Colleges of Technology

Notes:
1. * indicates advanced courses
2. Upper secondary schools, upper division of Secondary Education Schools, universities, junior colleges, and upper secondary department of Schools for Special Needs Education can have separate courses with course terms of 1 year or more.
3. A child aged from 0 to 2 years old can attend the center because it functions as school and child welfare.
4. Age and admission requirements for Specialized Training College General Courses and Miscellaneous Schools are not defined uniformly.
### Information about Higher Education

- **Number of Higher Education Institutions (2020)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Those with Graduate Schools</th>
<th>Junior Colleges</th>
<th>Colleges of Technology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,175</td>
<td>795</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>323</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Number of Students (2020)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Undergraduate</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,080,686</td>
<td>2,623,900</td>
<td>254,585</td>
<td>202,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1,193,537</td>
<td>83,008</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female Ratio</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Number of Faculty Members (2020)**

Universities: **189,498**

Source: School Basic Survey FY 2020 (Bulletin results)

*excluding “major course,” “special course” and “other courses” students.*
Information about Higher Education

● Academic year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Semester</td>
<td>Spring Semester</td>
<td>Fall Semester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarter</td>
<td>1st Period</td>
<td>2nd Period</td>
<td>3rd Period</td>
<td>4th Period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

● Standard Periods of Degree Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bachelor's</th>
<th>Master's</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>5 years*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Some doctoral programs divide their curriculum into the first two years' Master's level and the following three years' Doctoral level.

● First-Time Entry Rates by Tertiary Level (below the age of 25, 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Junior College Level</th>
<th>Undergraduate Level</th>
<th>Master's Level</th>
<th>Doctoral Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>72.6%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: OECD, Education at a Glance 2020
Information about Higher Education

- **Field of Study of Undergraduate Students (2019)**

  - Humanities: 14%
  - Social Sciences: 32%
  - Engineering: 15%
  - Natural Sciences: 7%
  - Agriculture: 3%
  - Medicine & Dentistry: 3%
  - Pharmacy: 3%
  - Health & Welfare: 7%
  - Education: 3%
  - Arts: 3%
  - Others: 15%

- **Career of Undergraduate Students after Graduation (2019)**

  - Regular Employment: 75.3%
  - Graduate School: 10.5%
  - Non-regular Employment: 2.8%
  - Others: 11.4%

- **Total expenditure on tertiary educational institutions per student (2017)**

  - 18,839 USD

Source: School Basic Survey FY 2019
OECD, Education at a Glance 2020
2. Internationalization of universities and promotion of student mobility
Promotion of student exchanges and the internationalization of universities for the fostering of global human resources

1. Strengthening the global capacity of university education

   (1) Internationalization of university system
       (FY 2020 budget: 3.302 billion yen)

   **Top Global University Project**
   Support to Japanese universities leading internationalization in order to improve the international competitiveness of Japanese higher education and foster global human resources.

   (2) Internationalization of education programs
       (FY 2020 budget: 1.196 billion yen)

   **Inter-University Exchange Project**
   Support for initiatives to form collaborative international educational programs and networks promoting student exchanges with academic quality assurance.

   - **Africa**
     Collaborative Programs 1.3 million US$ for 5~7 NEW programs
   - **Asia**
     Collaborative Programs 3.8 million US$ for 25 programs
   - **EU**
     Joint Master Degree Programs 1.4 million US$ for 3 programs
   - **USA**
     Collaborative Programs using COIL-style education 2.0 million US$ for 10 programs
   - **Russia, India etc.**
     Collaborative Programs 2.2 million US$ for 11 programs

2. Enhancement of university student exchange programs

   (1) Support for university student exchange programs
       (FY 2020 budget: 7.951 billion yen)

   In order to give all young people with the desire and capability an opportunity to study abroad and double the number of Japanese students studying abroad (from 60,000 to 120,000 students), MEXT is promoting the activities of the "Tobitate! (Leap for Tomorrow)" program, a campaign for fostering the desire of young people to study abroad, as well as providing financial support to students aiming for a long-term study abroad to obtain a degree.

   (2) Strategic acceptance of excellent international students
       (FY 2020 budget: 26.106 billion yen)

   To secure excellent international students and realize the "Plan for 300,000 International Students," MEXT is promoting the acceptance of international students by supporting initiatives contributing to international students' employment in Japan while thoroughly ensuring their enrollment at universities, etc., based on the "Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance and Coexistence with Foreign Nationals," as well as by strengthening efforts for publicizing overseas the attractiveness of studying in Japan.
The needs for inter-university exchanges with Africa are high, and already collaboration and exchange agreements between universities are advancing. In order to accelerate these moves, it will be important to strategically promote these inter-university and student exchanges with quality assurance between Japan and Africa.

Aiming to develop human resources who will contribute to the creation of international inter-university networks in Africa and their sustainable growth.

- Contribute to improving university research capabilities by promoting exchanges at the undergraduate and graduate level.

**Inter-University Exchange Programs**

**Project period up to 5 years (FY 2020–FY 2024)**

**Type A (exchange type)**

- **Start-ups**
  - Starting inter-university exchanges with Africa or supporting efforts just started and developing and conducting education/research programs with quality assurance.

- **Accelerating, advancing programs**
  - Further advancing inter-university exchanges that have already begun, and building high-quality and advanced education/research programs.

**Type B (exchange type, platform-building type)**

- Taking on secretariat functions for the exchange of information, networking and strategic dissemination of outcomes.

**Outcomes**

- Creation of international inter-university networks
- Development, establishment of quality-assured education programs
- Increase in numbers of students who wish to become researchers or join international organizations

**Impact on society**

- Creation of human networks
  - Activities of global HR contributing to growth of world

- Impact on society and economy
  - International exchanges leading to international joint research and creation of science and technology innovation
  - Business-level exchanges, development of business bases
  - Contribute to exporting of government infrastructure, etc.

- Strengthening of ties with important countries, regions, promotion of mutual understanding among citizens
Total number of students: 312,214
(As of May 1, 2019)

Source: Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO)
International Students Studying in Japan

As of May 1 in each year

※In accordance with the unification of student visas, the total number of international students including Japanese language institutes is also drawn since 2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>The number of International Students (Last year)</th>
<th>Year over Year</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>The number of International Students (Last year)</th>
<th>Year over Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>124,436 (114,950)</td>
<td>9,486</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>6,756 (6,277)</td>
<td>479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viet Nam</td>
<td>73,389 (72,354)</td>
<td>1,035</td>
<td>Myanmar</td>
<td>5,383 (5,928)</td>
<td>△545</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>26,308 (24,331)</td>
<td>1,977</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>3,847 (3,962)</td>
<td>△115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>18,338 (17,012)</td>
<td>1,326</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>3,527 (3,640)</td>
<td>△113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>9,584 (9,524)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>36,933 (36,313)</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>7,240 (8,329)</td>
<td>△1,089</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>312,214 (298,980)</td>
<td>13,234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO)
The majority of international students are undergraduates and from Asian countries, whilst national universities have more graduate students.

Around 35% of them find a job in companies in Japan after graduation or completion.

**Situation of international student exchange (Inbound)**

According to the survey on international student enrollment (JASSO), the majority of international students are undergraduates and from Asian countries, whilst national universities have more graduate students. Around 35% of them find a job in companies in Japan after graduation or completion.

**Country of origin (2019)**

The pie chart shows the distribution of international students by country of origin in 2019. China leads with 40%, followed by Vietnam at 24%, and Nepal at 8%. Other countries such as Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia have a smaller percentage. Each segment of the pie chart represents the number of international students from that country.

**Career trends of graduates**

The chart illustrates the career trends of graduates from 2011 to 2019. Here’s a breakdown of the trends:

- **Number of those employed in Japan**: 27% in 2011, 27% in 2012, 28% in 2013, 31% in 2014, 35% in 2015, 36% in 2016, 35% in 2017, and 35% in 2018.
- **Number of students bound for a graduate school in Japan**: 27% in 2011 and 2012, 28% in 2013, 31% in 2014 and 2015, 35% in 2016, 35% in 2017, and 35% in 2018.
- **Number of those employed or enrolled in the home country**: 6% in 2011, 6% in 2012, 8% in 2013, 2% in 2014, 1% in 2015, 1% in 2016, 1% in 2017, and 1% in 2018.
- **Others (Preparation for job hunting or further education, etc.)**: 11% in 2011, 13% in 2012, Others in 2013, 1% in 2014, 2% in 2015, 2% in 2016, 2% in 2017, and 2% in 2018.

※Others includes junior college, colleges of technology, specialized training colleges, university preparatory courses and Japanese language institutes.
Japanese Students Studying Abroad
(Number of Exchange Agreements and Japanese Students Studying Abroad)

Total number of students: 115,146

(FY2018)

Source: Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO)
The number of Japanese students studying abroad based on an exchange agreement has increased more than threefold in the last 10 years. However, the majority are short-term which is less than 6 months.

**Outbound**

- **Source**: survey for Japanese student studying overseas (JASSO)

**Destination (FY 2018)**

- USA 32%
- China 25%
- Taiwan 14%
- Others (unknown inclusive) 16%
- Others (unknown inclusive) 7%
- Language School 5%
- University extension programme (language centre etc.) 26%
- Graduate School 7%
- Undergraduate/ Junior college 45%

**Study Programme (FY 2018)**

- Graduate School 7%

**Reference: No. of Japanese student enrolled at university etc. overseas**

There were 58,000 Japanese students enrolled at overseas universities aiming to obtain a degree in 2017 and the number remains at the same level in recent years. More than half of the students choose to stay in the USA or China as their destination.

Sources: OECD, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, IIE, MOE China, MOE Taiwan
Expansion of Student Exchange within Africa

Source: Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO)
Encouraging Int’l Students to Study in Japan
- Further Promotion of International Students

Providing information to international students

- **Study in Japan Global Network Project**
  
  Established Study in Japan **Regional Offices** in 6 regions to promote
  
  • Information collection and dissemination for study in Japan;
  
  • International student recruitment; and
  
  • Networking of former international students in Japan

  <Sub-Saharan Africa (Hokkaido University office in Lusaka, Zambia) >
  
  https://www.studyinjapan-africa.com/

- **Website development**

  Cooperates with JASSO (Gateway to Study in Japan) and MOFA to provide some information about Student Exchange Programs

  https://www.studyinjapan.go.jp/en/
MEXT Scholarships

- Provide a wide range of scholarship programs for mainly degree seeking students (covers full duration necessary for the degree)
- Mainly graduate school level
- FY 2020 budget: 18.5 billion yen, 11,473 students
- 117,000 yen-145,000 yen/month ※The amounts is different depending on the level of study and the area.

MEXT Honors Scholarships for Privately Financed International Students

- Provide grants for privately financed students with good academic records for 1 year
- FY 2020 budget: 3.5 billion yen, 7,400 students
- 30,000 yen-48,000 yen/month ※The amounts is different depending on the level of study.

Student Exchange Support Program

- For students on exchange programs (up to 1 year)
- FY 2020 budget: 1.6 billion yen, 5,000 students
- 80,000 yen/month
Encouraging International Students’ Employment in Japan

Program for Enhancing Employment of International Students

< Current problems and challenges for international students >

- Language barrier
- Lack of information on Japanese companies
- Lack of experience of Japanese companies employing international students

- 12 projects have been adopted and received financial support from MEXT (from 2017FY)
- Each projects include Japanese-language education, career education, internship opportunities, etc.

Japan Revitalization Strategy 2016

“ Aiming to increase the proportion of international students who find jobs in Japan from 30% to 50% “

Trends

Source: Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO)
3. Responses of Higher Education under the COVID-19 pandemic
Impact on International Student Exchange Due to COVID-19

**INBOUND**

International students:

312,000  
(1st May 2019)

- All foreigners with mid- to long-term residence status*, including new immigrants, can now enter Japan (starting from Oct. 1).  
  *Professor: Working visa, Student: General visa

- PCR testing in principle*¹, and a 14-day quarantine period*² with support by universities are required.
  
  *¹: PCR testing after entry is not required in principle for entrants from specific countries.  
  *²: Entrance exam is excluded as special case.

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[Reference] Overseas Travel Safety Information  
As of 30th Oct, 152 countries / regions have reached a risk level of 3 “Avoid all travel”, and the rest are on level 2 “Avoid Non-essential travel”.
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**OUTBOUND**

Japanese students

Overseas:  
(mainly short term)

115,000  
(FY 2018)

- Many Japanese students and universities changed their plans involving study abroad program such as suspending or postponing.

※Student Exchange Support Program (Scholarship for Degree Seeking Students) allows those who wish to go to a foreign country with an infection risk level of 2 or 3 to be dispatched after confirming the infection control measures of the receiving institute, etc. (from November).
Responses of Higher Education under the COVID-19 pandemic

Emergency Student Financial Support for Continuing Studies

(Budget by MEXT : About 502 million US$)

With students experiencing a significant economic impact due to heavy reductions in household income and income from part-time, the program provides a cash handout.

**Eligibility:** Students attending universities (including graduate schools), junior colleges, technical colleges, vocational schools, etc. in Japan, including international students.

**Learning Support at Universities**

- Postponement of tuition payments
- Support for the exemption from tuition and other payments by individual universities
  (Supplementary budget by MEXT : 6.5 million US$)
- Necessary measures such as supplementary lectures

**Use of Distance Classes**

- Flexible application of the limits for Credits granted by online classes as an exception
- Ensuring learning opportunities by accelerating setting up of environment for distance classes at universities.
  ※Including mobile communication device for online classes
  (Supplementary budget by MEXT : 95 million US$)
Policy on the Autumn semester classes

Almost all the universities conduct **face to face (F2F) classes**, 80% of them plans to conduct both F2F and online.

- 849 schools (80.1%)
- 205 schools (19.3%) Others

In the last survey (as of 1st Jul), 20% F2F only, 60% combination and 20% online only

- 19.0% F2F only
- 20.4% hybrid
- 24.6% others
- 25.0% others

N=1,060 schools

Availability of facilities

All the universities are planning to **open their facilities** from the Autumn semester, whilst those that are fully open will be about 30%.

- 696 schools (65.7%)
- 359 schools (33.9%)
- 5 schools (0.5%)

N=1,060 schools

Ratio of F2F and online classes combined

60% universities applying hybrid style learning are planning to implement F2F style for more than half of the classes.

- 19.0% mostly F2F
- 70% F2F
- 11.6% relatively F2F
- 11.6% 30% F2F
- 18.3% mostly online

N=849 schools

Ratio of students commuting to campus more than 2 days in a week

60% Universities answered almost all students are able to commute to campus more than twice a week in the Autumn Semester.
### Consideration of class style (F2F / online)

Many universities implement experiments and practical lessons (90%) and small-sized seminars (60%) in face-to-face style, whilst large-sized classes are taught online (30%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Depending on the situation</th>
<th>2. F2F for experiments and practice</th>
<th>3. Online for large class</th>
<th>4. F2F for seminars</th>
<th>5. F2F for lectures carefully</th>
<th>6. F2F and online at the same time</th>
<th>7. Depending on the effectiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>230 schools (27.1%)</td>
<td>747 schools (88.0%)</td>
<td>276 schools (32.5%)</td>
<td>529 schools (62.3%)</td>
<td>393 schools (46.3%)</td>
<td>429 schools (50.5%)</td>
<td>163 schools (19.2%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=849 schools

### Response to first year students

70% of universities provide opportunities for first year students to communicate with lecturers and other students and/or enhance consultation support for anxiety relief.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>457 schools (53.5%)</td>
<td>578 schools (67.6%)</td>
<td>598 schools (69.9%)</td>
<td>37 schools (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=855 schools

### Awareness promotion for students

70% of universities posted notices in prominent spots, 60% applied a direct approach to reach individuals such as sending emails.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>675 schools (63.7%)</td>
<td>725 schools (68.4%)</td>
<td>226 schools (21.3%)</td>
<td>730 schools (68.9%)</td>
<td>81 schools (7.6%)</td>
<td>377 schools (35.6%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=1,060 schools

### Care for students’ mental health

90% of universities established student consultation services, 80% work with specialists such as counsellors and doctors and accept consultations through phone and emails in order to care for students’ mental health.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>991 schools (93.5%)</td>
<td>883 schools (83.3%)</td>
<td>866 schools (81.7%)</td>
<td>351 schools (33.1%)</td>
<td>650 schools (61.3%)</td>
<td>75 schools (7.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=1,060 schools

※Multiple answers
Inter-University Exchange Project
Supporting exchanges with US universities using COIL-style education

Support inter-university exchanges between Japan and US based on the **Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) method** in cooperation with the American Council on Education (ACE).

**Project scheme**
- Development for COIL-type leading programs
- Management/operational to share programs
- Student exchanges in collaboration with COIL

**Education method**
- **Practice language online** and continue upgrading before and after studying abroad.
- Understand **cultural differences** and approaches.
- Conducted according to various class aims, sizes.

**Expected outcomes**
- Collaboration **regardless of their location**.
- Cross-cultural adaptability.
- **Continuous networks** of the partner country.
- **Synergistic effects** that will multiply and continue the outcomes of overseas study.
- Capabilities and qualities in global era.
- Internationalization of **entire university**.
- **FD** through activities.

**Selected projects:** 10

*Chiba U, U of Tokyo, Tokyo U of Foreign Studies (in collaboration with International Christian U), Tokyo U of Fine Arts, Kagoshima U, U of the Ryukyus, Osaka City U, Sophia U (in collaboration with Ochanomizu U, U of Shizuoka), Nanzan U, Kansai U

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**No. of exchange students (2018)**

**Dispatched:** 214, **Received:** 217

(subsidy period: 2018-2022, FY 2020 budget: 2.0 million US$)
Example of online international exchange at Japanese universities during the COVID-19 pandemic

Tokyo University of the Arts: COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning)-Based Education Programme

- **Obtaining objective feedback with high expertise**
  
  Participated in the Game Expo online hosted by USC in LA and got feedback from a well-known streamer, also hosted an online game course exhibition in Japan and obtained feedback from professionals.

- **Setting efficient objectives through online joint work**
  
  Visualize the each other’s role and importance of each step by utilizing the Burndown Chart which USC applies for game education in order to get sound progress.

University of Tsukuba (UT): Course Jukebox (CJ) Initiative

This system enables University of Tsukuba (UT) and its overseas partner institutions under Campus-in-Campus initiative to interchangeably provide courses to each other’s students by numbering courses like on a jukebox.

**Current Situation**

- Number of the courses with studying abroad
  - UT: 1,270
  - Partners: 1,605
- Number of the online courses
  - UT: 175
  - Partners: 53
- Start preparing new courses for virtual studying abroad

Campus-in-Campus (CiC) partner universities

Focus on Online classes, COIL method contents and Blended Learning courses

Rebuilding for new era
Thank you for your attention!

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