

# ASJA International

## 1. Background and Mission

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Based on Japanese policies, which reviewed the critical importance of the relationship between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Japan, the Japanese government in cooperation with Japan Alumni associations from respective ASEAN countries established a special ASJA scholarship system differing from the normal Japanese government scholarship system. The ASJA scholarship was provided to privately funded ASEAN students.

Asia Japan Alumni International (ASJA International) is an international organization which was established in Tokyo in April 2000, in order to manage this special scholarship system. It also acts as the Japanese counterpart to ASEAN Council of Japan Alumni (ASCOJA).

ASJA began its journey initially with the participation from 5 countries; Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Later in 2004, Myanmar joined, followed by Cambodia and Vietnam in 2007, Laos in 2012 and finally Brunei in 2013 which completes all 10 ASEAN countries.

### ◆ **ASCOJA (ASEAN Council of Japan Alumni)**

In 1974, under the initiative from the late Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda (Minister of Finance at that time), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited former ASEAN students to a “Reunion of South East Asian Graduates from Japanese Universities”. The participants who had deepened their relationships through the reunion, together established ASCOJA in June 1977 with the purpose to foster the relationship and exchanges among Japan Alumni associations from the respective countries.

ASCOJA acts as an umbrella body for Japan Alumni associations in ASEAN countries. Together with the Japanese embassy from each respective country, it also acts as a conduit to promote Japanese culture and Japanese language.

ASCOJA consists of 10 ASEAN countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines, Brunei, Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos. (In ascending order of joining ASCOJA)

With the support of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ASJA annually welcomes ASJA scholarship nominees from each ASCOJA chapter of the respective country. Apart from supporting recipients' undergraduate or graduate education, ASJA also provides recipients the opportunity to acquire proficiency in Japanese language, relevant knowledge on Japanese social, traditional, lifestyle culture and interaction with local Japanese people. Through such experiences, ASJA aims to nurture future leaders who will play an important role in bridging not only Japan but also fellow ASEAN countries.

As of March 2021, 197 scholars have completed their terms as ASJA students. In April 2020, ASJA International as an organization marked its 20th anniversary since its establishment.

A 15th Year Memorial Book was published in March 2015 to introduce ASJA and its 15 years running history.

## 2. Adapting to changes

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After the Democratic Party took over the government in 2009, the party began reviewing and screening its existing national projects and budget. As a result, the Government Revitalization Unit conducting the screening process sentenced ASJA to be abolished by March 2014. Following the result, ASJA ceased to accept new ASJA scholars as of Fiscal Year 2011. As a provisional measure, ASJA decided to accept Japanese Government (MEXT) scholarship students nominated by each Japan alumni association to participate some of the programs organized by ASJA.

In response to the above, ASJA Directors, ASCOJA governors, former and current ASJA students during the time, submitted a petition to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Japanese government for the continuation of ASJA.

Following the petition, ASJA secretariat presented its achievement as to dated, to related organizations and members such as Japanese business leaders, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other related stakeholders. With the cooperation of H.E. Former Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, Ambassador Takashi Tajima and involved members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ASJA was able to proceed with discussion for its future proceedings.

### 3. Renewal of ASJA

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Although the original ASJA scholarship system was abolished, as of Fiscal Year 2014, ASJA managed to secure its budget under the category of ‘ASEAN-Ryugakusei-Koryutou-Kyoshutsukin’ (Contribution to ASEAN international student exchanges) of the Japanese government budget. With the new budget, ASJA now implements programs for recipients of the Japanese Government (MEXT) scholarship.

ASJA places great emphasis in the importance of preparatory Japanese Language course. Hence, since April 2014, all postgraduate recipients have been to undergo a 6-month preparatory Japanese Language course at Tokyo Japanese Language Education Center, JASSO.

### 4. FY2021 ASJA Exchange Programs

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\*All scheduled dates are subject to changes where necessary

#### (1) Orientation & Welcome party for ASJA-MEXT students

◇ Orientation.....	1st Round	July 3rd - 4th
	2nd Round	November 12th - 14th
◇ Welcome Party.....	1st Round	September
	2nd Round	December

New ASJA students will join a 3-day 2-night orientation program, where students will deepen their knowledge about ASJA’s background and mission, its 21 years of history, program contents and characteristics. Raising the awareness of student’s duty as a selected scholar.

Also, an official welcome party will be commemorated with the presence of distinguished guests such as officials from the Japanese government (MOFA and MEXT) and ASJA stakeholders from other related organizations. Congratulatory messages from senior ASJA students and introduction speech by new ASJA students to be commenced as a hybrid event. The above event is commenced twice a year in line with the arrival of new ASJA students during April and October. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, dinner party with distinguished guests have been cancelled.

## (2) Network Building through Cross-Cultural Exchange

Programs to showcase of your culture, interaction and discussion with Japanese students or immersing in Japanese culture (e.g., Traditional Culture and Performing Art) are implemented annually.

### ① ASEAN Cultural exchange program (ASEAN Festival)

✧ Rehearsal..... November 27th

✧ Event day..... November 28th

All operations for this project will be planned and implemented solely by ASJA students. An online event to express one's home culture to stakeholders and the local public through activities such as presentation, dance, and fashion show. Program development centered around executive committee members are being implemented.

### ② Japanese Cultural Experience

✧ 1st Activity (Kabuki)..... Study session July 2nd

Viewing session July 27th

✧ 2nd Activity..... Activity to be decided December

The program provides an opportunity to experience Japanese traditional culture through one-day experience of Japanese culture. Some of our past activities includes: performing arts such as Kabuki, Bunraku and Noh, traditional culture such as Japanese tea ceremony, Edo Tokyo Museum tour, martial arts such as Sumo training room tour and Judo exhibition tour at Kodokan, and Japanese food culture such as Japanese dessert (Wagashi) making.

For the first activity of Fiscal Year 2021, Kabuki Study session and Kabuki viewing session will be held in July.

### ③ Japanese university students exchange program (Workshop)

As expected future leaders of ASEAN countries, ASJA students will participate in a 4-day 3-night English discussion session. The workshop will be held in the National Olympic Memorial Youth Center. Together with prospective local Japanese university students who will play a key role as future global human resources, students will exchange opinions on future issues and cooperation between Japan and ASEAN countries. This is also an opportunity to create networks and cultural understanding among fellow ASJA students and Japanese students.

For Fiscal Year 2021, due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be difficult to hold the workshop by conventional means. Hence, an exclusive

program to build an Alumni website is in place. The website will include posts contributed by past participants (Japanese students included) and universities. This will later serve as a tool to advertising and call for participants for years to come. We are also planning a hybrid reunion session for past participants.

The program development committee will be centered around past participants.

④ Global awareness Education, School Visit

ASJA students will be dispatched to local elementary, middle, or high schools as cultural ambassadors. This will help Japanese students not only to deepen their understanding of ASEAN countries, but also creating opportunities for young generations to learn about the diversity of cultures. We are expecting to have 4 sessions this fiscal year.

(3) Japanese lifestyle experience: Homestay Program.....**September 25th - 26th**  
(For 1st and 2nd year ASJA students)

Through a 5-day homestay program with local families, student will be able to experience the local lifestyle, culture, and daily routines of a typical Japanese household.

For Fiscal Year 2021, due to the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic, homestay program with local families have been cancelled. A visit to Oyama city will be held in its place.

(4) Prefectural local Industries and Cultural Study Trip.....**October 28th - 31st**  
(For 2nd and 3rd year ASJA students)

2nd and 3rd year ASJA students will be given the opportunity to go on a 4-day 3-night study trip to prefectures to experience the local cultures and to be introduced to the local industry leaders.

(5) ASJA Completion Ceremony.....**September 18th, 2021 & March 11th, 2022**  
Certificate awarding ceremony for ASJA-MEXT students who have completed their terms with ASJA.

(6) ASJA Student Online Network

Online gathering events and mail magazine projects will continue into this fiscal year. We will invite ASJA graduates as lecturers to provide webinars on a variety of topics.

(7) ASJA Development Camp

We are developing Gasshuku projects for current and graduated ASJA students who wish to be actively involved in the development and management of our ASJA community. We also expect participants to develop necessary knowledge to become immediate forces who may assist ASCOJA in their future endeavors.