

After all, the many academics working in restaurants to pay the bills do not list “Food Service” as their current position.

3. **The job market is a cartel. Don’t let it consume you.** No greater waste of time exists than the academic job market. (Actually, let’s refrain from calling it a “market”; it is a buyer’s cartel with purchasers of labor enjoying a near monopoly.) Yet, it remains seductive to imagine that pouring countless hours into tweaking the minutia of an application will make the difference in landing that dream job. I once spent a whole day tinkering an application for a job I later learned was an inside hire, one that needed a national search only for window dressing.

Because the cartel wants only publications, maximizing writing time is imperative. This requires limiting the hours sacrificed to the application-process abyss. For me, I limited my job applications to Mondays, when I would scour recent job postings, download relevant ads, update spreadsheets, tweak cover letters, modify materials, upload documents, and make the occasional mad dash to the post office. On Monday evening, I set it all aside until the following week. Also, avoid the gossip blogs; nothing good comes from that nonsense.

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4. **Not all tenure-track jobs are worth taking.** The sense of desperation that accompanies applying for academic jobs often culminates in a reflexive impulse to accept any full-time job that comes along, no matter how poorly paid, overworked, or dislocating. However, depending on the circumstance, *not* taking a job might open more possibilities than accepting one that would prove personally, emotionally, and economically debilitating. Some tenure-track positions actually create fewer openings and possibilities than, say, staying another year in your graduate program or picking up a few classes in a location where your research will be supported by proximity to talks, libraries, mentors, and friends. Sometimes simply rolling the dice again makes the most sense.
5. **Don’t make life wait.** The normalization of academic contingency means that we often put major life decisions—forming meaningful romantic relationships, getting married, and having children—on hold. If hard work actually guaranteed secure, lasting employment, then delaying such decisions for one’s career might make sense. However, in this industry, no such guarantees exist. I recommend having an academic plan but also cultivating a “Plan B”—one in which things other than the academy take priority. Use this Plan B to measure what is being sacrificed and whether those sacrifices are actually worth it.

Self-care and survival tips, of course, take us only so far. Faculty caught navigating contingency should receive solidarity from all faculty, including those in tenured and tenure-track positions. Our profession needs frank and public conversations about academic labor and the sacrifices we, our friends,

and our colleagues are required to make. We should organize against the hierarchies and indignities that have become the grinding norm in securing academic employment. Departments, disciplines, and professional organizations should take the lead in making the training and hiring process more humane. Moreover, seizing the problem at its root, we must organize and unionize to resist those underlying economic trends driving expanded contingency.

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FOREIGN FACULTY IN JAPAN

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Japan is perhaps a unique case when considering the situation of adjunct university faculty. The robust economy and relatively high educational standards have ensured a strong academic presence; however, long-held notions of ethnic and cultural homogeneity historically have limited long-term employment prospects for non-Japanese faculty to short-term, contract-based work. Yet, with one of the world’s most rapidly aging societies, Japan must confront a gamut of issues including university education. The shrinking pool of domestic students and faculty has forced universities to diversify, aiming to broaden their academic specializations, as well as expanding outreach and recruitment outside of Japan. As a result, doors appear to be slowly but increasingly opening to foreign faculty in Japan—a situation perhaps at odds with that of contingent faculty in the United States. Although the range of adjunct positions and arrangements is broad and exceptions at individual institutions abound, this article focuses on the employment of non-Japanese faculty in national (*kokuritsu*) universities, highlighting some of the issues adjunct and foreign faculty in Japan are facing.

The Japanese government began allowing foreign faculty to teach in national and public universities in 1982; by 2004, 1,474 foreign faculty were dispersed throughout 92 national universities. Suh (2003, 275) estimated that 57.3% worked under limited-term contracts. Because visa regulations require having a full-time employer, most faculty admitted under the “professor” category are tied to a single university full-time in a fixed contract, usually lasting two to five years. New academics in Japan often

enter under “lecturer” and “assistant professor” positions, generally with little possibility for advancement. These positions are considered contingent because of their limited duration and responsibilities, particularly because they have no input in departmental and administrative decisions (Kawaguchi, Kondo, and Saito 2016, 1437).

universities had a system in place for foreign-faculty recruitment (MEXT 2008). Most foreign faculty members were concentrated in lecturer and assistant professor positions, with relatively few attaining the rank of tenured full professor. By 2016, the Ministry of Education reported a total of 2,753 foreign faculty in national universities, most occupying assistant and associate professor

The data show a clear increase in the number of foreign faculty, a progression toward higher-position attainment, and a reduction in the number of foreign (i.e., contingent) lecturers. Despite this positive trend, foreign faculty remain a minority in Japanese institutions, and retention can vary considerably.

According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, foreign faculty comprised 3.4% of total university faculty across national and public universities in 2007; only 46% of national and public

positions (cited in Cabinet Office of Japan 2017). Table 1 lists the number of foreign faculty, their positions, and relative percentages in national universities from 1990 through 2016.

Table 1

Foreign Faculty in Japanese National Universities, by Number and Percentage of Total Faculty, 1990–2016

Year	President	%	Vice President	%	Professor	%	Associate Professor	%	Assistant Professor	%	Lecturer	%	Total	% of Total Faculty
1990	0	0	0	0	20	3.31	59	9.75	111	18.35	415	68.60	605	1.1
1991	0	0	0	0	21	2.90	87	12.00	178	24.55	439	60.55	725	1.3
1992	0	0	0	0	29	3.54	105	12.82	220	26.86	465	56.78	819	1.5
1993	0	0	0	0	41	4.14	141	14.24	320	32.32	488	49.29	990	1.8
1994	0	0	0	0	52	4.39	186	15.71	408	34.46	538	45.44	1,184	2.1
1995	0	0	0	0	62	4.73	259	19.74	463	35.29	528	40.24	1,312	2.3
1996	0	0	0	0	70	4.87	273	18.98	512	35.61	583	40.54	1,438	2.5
1997	0	0	0	0	94	6.02	322	20.63	534	34.21	611	39.14	1,561	2.7
1998	0	0	0	0	99	6.19	368	23.00	507	31.69	626	39.13	1,600	2.7
1999	0	0	0	0	109	6.72	396	24.41	502	30.95	615	37.92	1,622	2.7
2000	0	0	0	0	107	6.56	424	25.98	491	30.09	610	37.38	1,632	2.7
2001	0	0	0	0	115	6.98	426	25.87	495	30.05	611	37.10	1,647	2.7
2002	0	0	0	0	134	8.32	408	25.34	466	28.94	602	37.39	1,610	2.6
2003	0	0	0	0	129	8.03	451	28.08	463	28.83	563	35.06	1,606	2.4
2004	0	0	0	0	167	11.33	493	33.45	421	28.56	393	26.66	1,474	2.5
2005	0	0	0	0	191	12.36	565	36.57	413	26.73	376	24.34	1,545	2.5
2006	0	0	0	0	239	15.90	619	41.18	389	25.88	256	17.03	1,503	2.5
2007	0	0	0	0	273	17.69	616	39.92	417	27.03	237	15.36	1,543	2.6
2008	0	0	0	0	293	19.04	620	40.29	441	28.65	185	12.02	1,539	2.5
2009	0	0	0	0	324	20.05	635	39.29	478	29.58	179	11.08	1,616	2.7
2010	0	0	0	0	357	20.52	689	39.60	509	29.25	185	10.63	1,740	2.9
2011	0	0	2	0.11	381	20.79	730	39.83	526	28.70	194	10.58	1,833	3.1
2012	0	0	2	0.10	404	20.59	755	38.48	598	30.48	203	10.35	1,962	3.2
2013	0	0	2	0.09	433	20.53	792	37.55	654	31.01	228	10.81	2,109	3.4
2014	0	0	2	0.09	469	20.58	827	36.29	758	33.26	223	9.78	2,279	3.6
2015	0	0	2	0.08	534	21.06	882	34.78	852	33.60	266	10.49	2,536	4.0
2016	0	0	2	0.07	556	20.20	905	32.87	1,013	36.80	277	10.06	2,753	4.3

Source: Compiled from Cabinet Office of Japan (2017).

The data show a clear increase in the number of foreign faculty, a progression toward higher-position attainment, and a reduction in the number of foreign (i.e., contingent) lecturers. Despite this positive trend, foreign faculty remain a minority in Japanese institutions, and retention can vary considerably. Several issues can affect the status of and long-term prospects for foreign adjunct faculty, including their qualifications and publications, grants received, English-speaking ability, and Japanese-reading and -speaking proficiency. Although the most common arrangement appears to be a fixed-term contract for a predetermined number of years, Japanese-language ability in particular can significantly affect marketability. Because Japanese universities also use international publications, primarily in English, as a measure of their rankings, foreign faculty who publish in English have an advantage in this regard.

Due to changes in Japanese labor law in 2013 (Carlet 2017), adjunct faculty can work on a fixed contract for a maximum of five to ten years, after which they must be given a permanent (i.e., tenured) job or are forced to leave their position. It appears that most adjunct faculty, including non-Japanese faculty, are not granted permanent employment after this period (Okunuki 2016). Foreign faculty face additional hurdles because they often are perceived as working on the periphery of Japanese academia, largely unincorporated in university administration and decision making (Whitsed and Wright 2011). Concerns remain about the degree to which foreign faculty are utilized in the Japanese-university context; some perceive them as largely cosmetic, used as an “internationalization” selling point to encourage enrollments or to pad university rankings with English-language publications.

As the Japanese population ages, international-student enrollments increase, and English-language programs expand, the

long-term prospects for non-Japanese adjunct faculty appear to be positive. Despite the hurdles that foreign faculty face and their relatively small numbers, there appears to be a growing emphasis on internationalization in Japanese academia, with foreign faculty becoming increasingly important. This favorable outlook, with the door slowly opening to long-term employment for heretofore adjunct foreign faculty, creates an interesting contrast to the more negative trends in American academia. The Japanese case perhaps has value in demonstrating the countervailing pressures promoting the retention of permanent faculty, despite contrary trends elsewhere. ■

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