

JET Program Info Forum



Above (right): Alisa Tobin informing a crowded room what it takes to be a successful JET applicant

On September 24, 2014, the East Asia Institute hosted a JET Information Session given by Ms. Alisa Tobin, JET Program Coordinator from the Consulate General of Japan at Houston. More than 50 students were in attendance. While they were listening to the presentation, they were also treated to Japanese *Chirash-zushi* (scattered sushi), rice crackers and candies.

JET Program stands for Japan Exchange and Teaching Program. This 27-year-old program gives English native speakers the opportunity to teach the English language and their country's customs and cultures in Japan while learning about Japan and its society. The program's goal is to promote international exchange at a local level. The JET Program offers two types of positions: Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) and Coordinators for International Relations (CIR).

Most JET participants work as ALTs. An ALT is usually placed at a specific school or will visit many schools by working from a board of education. ALTs do not need to be fluent in Japanese since they will be assisting the Japanese teacher of English although some proficiency in Japanese would prove

to be beneficial. They may have to design lessons and activities or grade exams. They may also be asked to help with foreign language clubs, school festivals, or speech contests. They could even be asked to teach adult or community English classes. ALTs' mission is to motivate their students to study English and other countries.

"Only about 10% of JETs are CIRs," said Tobin. "CIRs work in prefectural or municipal offices and are required to speak Japanese fluently to do their work." CIRs have many duties including translating documents, interpreting for overseas visitors or local officials, giving presentations, and coordinating sister-city relations. However, similar to ALTs, CIRs still teach. The requirement to become a CIR is to pass the N2 level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test. They may teach English in schools or they might provide language instruction for employees and residents.

Candidates interested in applying must be adaptable, have an outgoing personality, a sense of humor, creativity, patience, humility, initiative, a desire to teach, and a desire to learn about Japan. Having a teaching certification also looks good, but again is not



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- Alisa Tobin



mandatory. One student said, “Personally, I’ve always wanted to work in Japan, and an understanding of foreign cultures is very beneficial to a wide range of majors. I can’t wait to apply myself!”

“Despite how fun living and working in Japan may be, the JET Program is a job,” said Tobin. “It is a one-year contract and can be renewed up to four times.” Qualified candidates will be employed by a contracting organization/school - not the JET Program. The program only manages and facilitates in the hiring process. The annual salary of JETs is approximately 3,360,000 yen (\$30,800) for the first year depending on the type of contract and the exchange rate. Afterwards, the amount gradually goes up. JETs are covered by health, accident, pension, and employment insurance. Their flights to and from Japan (upon fulfillment of their contracts) are also remunerated for them.

Generally, JETs work 35 hours a week, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Saturday and Sunday are usually days off. Participants get at least 10 days of paid holidays and 15 days of paid national holidays per year. “JET Program provides a great opportunity for our UTSA students to immerse themselves in Japanese language and culture full time,” said Erina Romanowich, Japanese Lecturer and Program Coordinator of the East Asia Institute. “At the same time, the experience our students will get from working in an international community will be critical for those that would like to engage in international business, foreign affairs, and education.”

For more information please see the official JET Program website at <http://jetprogramme.org/> or visit the homepage for the Japanese Embassy to the United States at <http://www.us.emb-japan.go.jp/jet>

To be eligible for either position candidates must possess the following qualifications:

- Have a strong interest in Japan and Japanese Culture
- Have at least a bachelor’s degree by July 1st in the year before being dispatched to Japan
- Have excellent verbal and written English ability
- Be healthy physically and mentally
- Be a U.S. citizen (Non U.S. citizens must apply through their nation’s Japanese embassy)
- Be under 40 years of age
- Not have lived in Japan for more than 6 of the past 10 years
- Not have participated in the JET Program in the last 3 years
- Have not declined a position in the program in the last year



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