

# Points System Aims to Attract Foreign Talent to Japan

As the number of foreign workers in Japan reached a record high of 1.08 million in October 2016, the Japanese government is making significant efforts to facilitate employment of foreign professionals with particularly high-level skills, in order to spur Japan's economic growth and strengthen its international competitiveness.

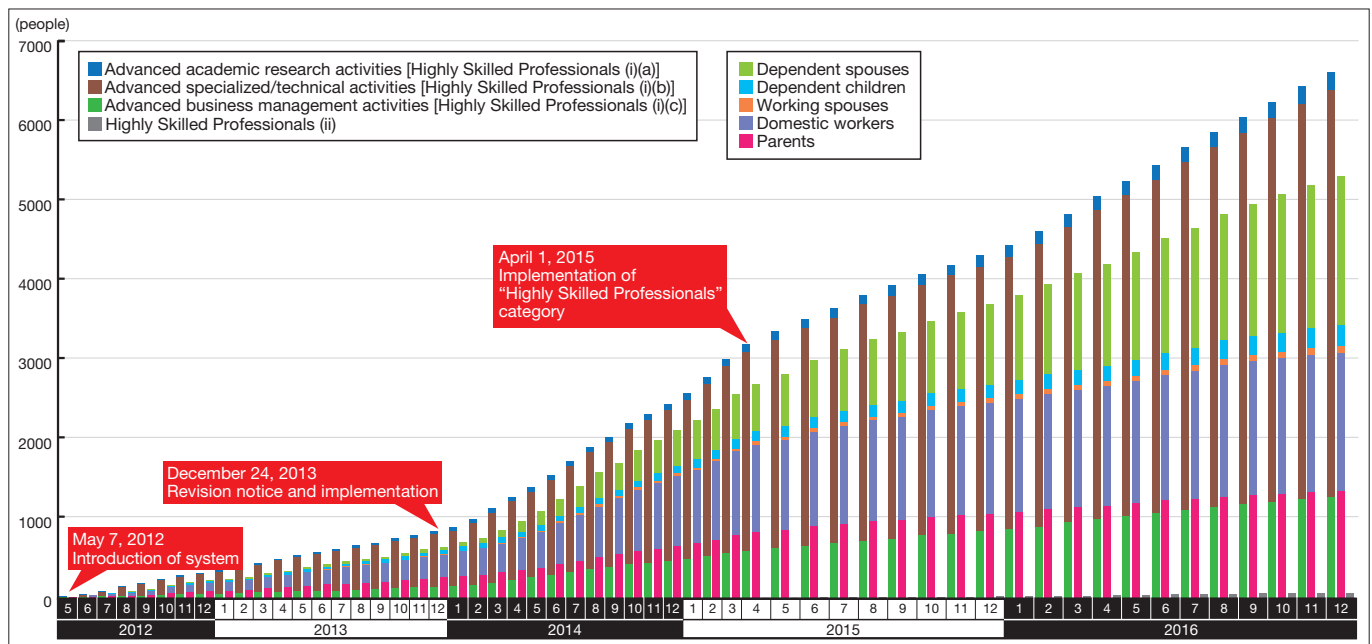
“Highly skilled foreign professionals” are officially described as “quality, unsubstitutable human resources who have a complementary relationship with domestic capital and labor,” and “human resources who are expected to bring innovation to the Japanese industries, to promote development of specialized/technical labor markets through friendly competition with Japanese people and to increase efficiency of the Japanese labor markets.”

To promote hiring of highly skilled foreign professionals, the government introduced the “Points-based System for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals” (PBS) in 2012. Eligible candidates are workers from outside Japan who are in “advanced academic research activities,” “advanced specialized/technical activities” or “advanced business management activities.” According to criteria such as academic background, professional career history, annual salary and so on, points are awarded to each candidate, and preferential immigration treatment is granted to candidates who score point totals equal to or above a predetermined number.

A conventional working visa does not allow the holder to stay in Japan longer than five years, nor authorize him or her to do a job other than what is stipulated in the visa. Beneficiaries of the PBS, on the contrary, have the possibility to extend their stays up to an indefinite period in some cases, and simultaneously engage in multiple activities that fall under different visa categories.

To take things further, the Japanese government is introducing a “Japanese green card for highly skilled foreign professionals” in 2017. Foreigners who are regarded as especially highly skilled will be able to apply for permanent residence after staying only one year in Japan, instead of five years as before. By means of these systems, the government expects to attract large numbers of foreign professionals who will play active roles in the Japanese economy.

Cumulative Totals of Admitted Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals and Accompanying Families, etc.



\*The term “Highly Skilled Professional” has been in use since April 1, 2015.

Source: Ministry of Justice

## Comments from workers benefitting from the Points-based System (PBS) for Highly Skilled Foreign Professionals

The three persons featured below are employees of Rakuten, Inc.<sup>(\*)</sup>

Human Resources Supervisor

**François Bergeron** Engineer Recruiting Group, Recruiting Section, Global Human Resources Department

In 2011, when the PBS was not yet introduced, the percentage of employees of foreign nationality at Rakuten was only about 4%, but due also in part to the transition to English as the official language within the company, it's now more than 20%. As a company that mainly provides internet services, Rakuten recruits a large number of engineers from overseas who have specialized IT skills. The PBS is enabling us to employ these highly capable foreign professionals for longer periods. This is very advantageous for our business operations. Recently, more and more Japanese companies are recruiting foreign workers overall. I think that this tendency will grow in the years to come.

**Craig Olinsky** Data Analytics Section, EC Data Analytics Department, E-Commerce Company

I had worked in Japan for a total of twelve years before working for three years in Germany, and I came back to Japan this year. The PBS is allowing me to build a longer and more stable relationship with the company than I had before, and it lets me concentrate on my work without worrying about visa procedures.

I think working in Japan has become more comfortable. I find Japan to be a great place to live —there's an excellent transportation system with reliable railways and a robust health care system. I'd love to work long-term in Japan, under the PBS.



**Zhang, Qi** Business Data Platform Group, EC Business Empowerment Section, EC Marketplace Business Support Development Department E-Commerce Company



What's wonderful about the PBS is that it not only grants you a longer stay, but there's also thoughtful consideration for workers' families. Under certain conditions, the spouses of workers benefitting from the PBS can also work in Japan, and the workers can even bring their parents. It creates a good environment that allows you to work long-term in Japan while having peace of mind. I studied in a university in Japan and started working here directly after graduation. I find that Japanese companies have very effective training programs for new graduates. I recommend that foreign students in Japan as well as students overseas work in Japan after they graduate.

<sup>(\*)</sup> Rakuten, Inc. was founded in 1997 and operates Japan's largest online marketplace. It offers e-commerce, fintech, digital content and communications services to more than 1 billion members around the world. It employs 14,202 people (as of Mar. 31, 2017).

### Points-Based Preferential Immigration Treatment

Status of residence for employment	Preferential treatment for highly skilled professionals
Bringing one's dependent parents is generally not permitted	⇒ Bringing parents to accompany the highly skilled professional is permitted
Bringing domestic workers is only permitted in exceptional circumstances	⇒ Bringing domestic workers is permitted
Residence permit has to be individually renewed in units not exceeding five years (e.g. five years, three years, one year)	⇒ - Residence permit is granted for the maximum of five years (Highly Skilled Professionals (i)) - Granted an indefinite period of stay (Highly Skilled Professionals (ii)) - Preferential processing of entry and residence procedures (Highly Skilled Professionals (i))
Only allowed to engage in the activities permitted under a single status of residence	⇒ - Permission for multiple types of activities (Highly Skilled Professionals (i)) - In addition to the activities permitted Highly Skilled Professionals (i), nearly all forms of employment are permitted (Highly Skilled Professionals (ii))
More than 10 years of residency are generally required before permanent residency is granted	⇒ The residency requirements for permanent residency are relaxed
The spouse's employment is not generally permitted	⇒ A highly skilled professional's spouse is permitted to work

\*Points are awarded based on educational and professional career history, yearly salary, and other factors, and a total of 70 points or more permits categorization as a Highly Skilled Professional (i). Highly Skilled Professionals (i) who have engaged in activities as such for at least three years can become Highly Skilled Professionals (ii).