



## Japan: Update on new types of vocational education institutions - “Professional University” and “Professional College”

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Japan’s Diet passed in May the proposal to amend the School Education Law in order to allow the establishment of new types of vocational institutions, “professional university” and “professional college” (tentative names) to deliver high quality vocational education at tertiary level. This is the first major change since 1964 when junior colleges (two-year higher education institutions) were introduced to the education system, and the amended law will be enforced in April, 2019. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) is finalising details of establishment standards for these institutions, and plans to start accepting applications for establishment around October 2017.

As described in the [brief](#) prepared in March 2017, needs to provide practical vocational education at higher level are increasing. However, the current education framework is not most suitable to offer such vocational courses to a large number of students. Colleges of Technology (“kohtoh-senmon gakko”) offer high quality vocational education for five years mainly targeting lower secondary school graduates. However, these schools are developed to provide an integrated program at secondary and tertiary level for 5 years and are not prepared to receive students only for the tertiary vocational education part. On the other hand, professional training colleges (“senmon gakko”) are established in more flexible establishment standards, and there is no quality assurance framework for these institutions yet. These reasons led the government to amend the relevant education law and to establish a new type of vocational institution for higher education. The government also aims to ease the entrance requirements for mature-aged students to facilitate re-skilling and life-long education at “professional university/college” as the Japanese economy changes.

In order to differentiate from current higher education institutions offering academic courses, It is expected “professional universities and colleges” will have strong focus on practical training, including intensive internships and/or training in industry. In addition, they will have different requirements for academics in order to bring teachers with practical experience from industry. These new institutions are expected to acknowledge working experience and provide credits accordingly to facilitate faster graduation and encourage mature-aged entry.

Experts said that universities and junior colleges with strong focus on vocational education might apply to offer dual education- vocational and academic education. Some professional training colleges with certified vocational and practical courses are also interested in applying. These new vocational institutions will definitely be another option for upper secondary school graduates and people interested in re-skilling and lifelong education. This creates new partnership opportunities for Australian institutions such as VET colleges, TAFEs, and dual sector universities.