A smiling man in a blue uniform is holding a white basket filled with various cleaning supplies. The basket contains a large orange brush, a pink bottle of cleaning solution, a green spray bottle, a green hose, and a pair of yellow gloves. The background is a bright, clean indoor space with decorative yellow and teal circles and dotted lines. At the bottom of the image, there is a green silhouette of a city skyline.

# Specified Skills System

(For Sending Organizations)

## Introduction

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It is an extensive undertaking for Japan to accept foreign workers to solve the country's serious labor shortage. In April 2019, a new status of residence called "Specified Skills" was established with the purpose of accepting foreign workers with a specific level of expertise and skills who are ready to work immediately. Soon, it will be two years since the establishment of this new status.

As part of an initiative commissioned by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), we conducted the "Project to Study the Appropriateness of the System for Accepting Foreign Workers in the Building Cleaning Field" in order to create basic materials for publicizing the purpose of the program and studying measures for accepting foreign nationals with specified skills. This project includes the creation of this guidebook. This guidebook summarizes the key points that those involved in the business of sending foreign nationals overseas under the Specified Skills System should know, based on interviews with host organizations, sending organizations, and registered support organizations, as well as discussions held at the project's six review meetings.

We hope this guidebook will be useful for organizations assisting foreign nationals in their transition to work in Japan.

Fourth Valley Concierge Corporation





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## I . Specified Skill System

### 1. Specified Skills No. 1 and No. 2

There are two types of specified skills: "Specified Skill No. 1" and "Specified Skill No. 2."

For the Japanese language proficiency portion, passing either the "Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese" or the "Japanese-Language Proficiency Test" at N4 level or higher is required.

Applicants will also need to pass a proficiency test in the relevant subject area.

Skill evaluation in the field of building cleaning is determined by the Building Maintenance Association of Japan's "Building cleaning Management skills No. 1 evaluation test."

If the applicant has successfully completed Technical Intern Training No. 2 in the building cleaning field, the applicant does not need to take either the Japanese language test or the skills evaluation test. However, those who have completed the Technical Intern Training in other industries must pass the skills evaluation test for the building cleaning field.

### 2. Specified Skills and Technical Training

The purpose of the Specified Skills System is to provide an environment designed for the proper acquisition, proficiency, or mastery of skills. Additionally, the program is intended to support trainees so that they can concentrate on their technical training.

#### Comparison of Technical Intern Training (Group Supervision Type) and Specified Skills No. 1 Systems

	Technical Intern Training (Group Supervision Type)	Specified Skill No.1
Related Laws and Regulations	Appropriate Implementation of Technical Intern Training for Foreign Nationals and Protection of Technical Interns Laws/Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act	Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act
Visa Status	Status of Residence "Technical Intern"	Status of Residence "Specified Skilled Worker"
Period of Stay	Technical Intern Training No. 1: within 1 year, Technical Intern Training No. 2: within 2 years, Technical Intern Training No. 3: Within 2 years (maximum 5 years in total)	5 years in total
Skill level of Foreign Nationals	None	Considerable knowledge or experience is required
Examination at the time of entry into Japan	None (N4 level CD Japanese proficiency requirement at the time of entry is required only for nursing care occupations)	Confirmation of skill level and Japanese language proficiency level through examinations (Those who have successfully completed Technical Intern Training No. 2 are exempt from examinations)
Sending Organization	Institutions Recommended or Accredited by Foreign Governments	
Supervising Organization	Yes (Non-profit cooperatives conduct audits and other supervisory services for training providers. Permission required by a competent minister)	
Supporting Organization		Yes (An individual or organization provides support to foreign nationals with specified skills, such as securing housing, on behalf of the receiving organization. Registration is required by the Immigration and Residence Management Agency)
Matching Foreign Nationals with Host Organizations	Usually accomplished through the supervising organization and sending organization	The host organization can directly conduct recruitment activities overseas or recruit through domestic and international mediation agencies
Number of People at the Host Organization	Quota based on the total number of full-time staff	No quota (except for nursing care and construction fields)
Activities	Based on the technical training plan, activities to engage in work requiring skills (item 1), etc. based on the technical training plan (items 2 and 3) (non-vocational and technical fields)	Activities to engage in work that requires skills that require a considerable degree of knowledge or experience (professional and technical fields)
Transferring and Changing Jobs	Not possible However, in the case of unavoidable circumstances such as bankruptcy of the training provider, or when transferring from No. 2 to No. 3, transfer is possible	Job change is possible within the same job field or between job fields when skill levels are confirmed to be in common through testing

Source:Ministry of Justice



The main differences between the Specified Skills System and the Technical Intern Training System are as follows:

- Need to confirm skill level and Japanese language ability
- No need for the conditions attached when transferring to Technical Intern Training No. 3, and the total period of stay is 5 years
- No limit on the number of people accepted
- Possible to change jobs

### 3. Bilateral Agreements

Under the Specified Skills System, a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding is made between the sending country and Japan. In countries where there is a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding, it is necessary to check the procedures for each country.

	Number of People Receiving Technical Intern Training Per Year (2019)	Bilateral Memorandum of Understanding	Status of Development of Sending Out Procedures	Whether or not a sending organization is required (whether or not it is possible to hire local workers directly)	Other Special Notes
Philippines	13,839	○	○	○	There is a certified sending organization
Cambodia	4,216	○	○	○	There is a certified sending organization
Nepal	190	○	○	Unnecessary	-
Myanmar	6,460	○	○	○	There is a certified sending organization
Mongolia	1,124	○	○	○	Sent out through government agencies
Sri Lanka	344	○	N/A	N/A	-
Indonesia	15,746	○	○	Unnecessary	Registration recommendation to IPKOL
Vietnam	91,170	○	In progress	○	There is a certified sending organization
Bangladesh	92	○	N/A	N/A	-
Uzbekistan	12	○	N/A	N/A	-
Pakistan	15	○	N/A	N/A	-
Thailand	4,813	○	○	Unnecessary	-
China	34,685	N/A	N/A	N/A	-

Source: Prepared by Fourth Valley Concierge Corporation from the Ministry of Justice

The details of the agreements with each country and the overall flow of procedures, including sending procedures, can be found on the Immigration and Naturalization Service website below:  
[http://www.moj.go.jp/isa/policies/ssw/nyuukokukanri05\\_00021.html](http://www.moj.go.jp/isa/policies/ssw/nyuukokukanri05_00021.html)



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## 4. Testing Information

### Japanese-Language Proficiency Test

The Japanese language proficiency required for Specified Skill No. 1 is at least N4 level in the "Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese" or the "Japanese-Language Proficiency Test."

(2021 Testing Guide)

### The Japan Foundation Test for Basic Japanese

<https://www.jpf.go.jp/jft-basic/schedule/index.html>

### Japanese-Language Proficiency Test

<https://www.jlpt.jp/guideline/testsections.html>

### Proficiency Test

The "skill level" in the building cleaning field is determined by the "Building cleaning Management skills No. 1 evaluation test" conducted by the Japan Building Maintenance Association.

Details about the "Building cleaning Management skills No. 1 evaluation test" can be found on the website of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare or the Japan Building Maintenance Association.

### Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

Acceptance of New Foreign Workers in the Building Cleaning Field (Status of Residence "Specified Skills")

[https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/newpage\\_09221.html](https://www.mhlw.go.jp/stf/newpage_09221.html)

### Japan Building Maintenance Association

#### About the "Specified Skills" Status of Residence

<https://www.j-bma.or.jp/qualification-training/zairyu>

(2021 Testing Guide)

### 2021 Schedule for Domestic Testing

- Fourth Domestic Test: April - May
- Fifth Domestic Test: November - December

### 2021 Schedule for Overseas Testing

Examinations will be administered starting with countries where the environment for implementation is safe based on the status of coronavirus infections.

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## 5. Introduction to Specified Skill No. 1 Building Cleaning Management

In the building cleaning field of Specified Skill No. 1, cleaning management work includes cleaning tasks inside buildings (floors, ceilings, interior walls, toilets, washrooms, etc.). "Bed making work excluding guest rooms" can be performed as a related job description.

The Japan Building Maintenance Association introduces the building cleaning industry in the YouTube video below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbUmdavDmwM&t=6s>

## II .Status of the Use of the Specified Skills System by Sending Organizations Compared with the Technical Intern Training System

In this survey, we interviewed a total of 14 sending organizations in Indonesia, Vietnam, and Cambodia about their current activities and use of the Specified Skills System. Since all of the companies included in the survey have a history of sending their employees through the Technical Intern Training System, we will compare the roles of sending organizations under both systems, and organize the roles of sending organizations under the Specified Skills System.

### 1.Sending Organization Results under the Specified Skills System

All of the organizations surveyed are sending their workers out under the Technical Intern Training System, and of these, about half are sending their workers out under the Specified Skills System.

As of February 2021, at the time of the survey, only one organization was sending out people who had passed specified skills tests (nursing care and agriculture) overseas.

The results of sending out individuals under the Specified Skills System were as follows:

	Number of Surveyed Organizations	History of Sending Out Workers Under the Specified Skills System
Indonesia	7	4
Vietnam	4	2
Cambodia	3	1
Total	14	7



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## 2. Comparing the Two Systems in Recruitment and Sending

In the survey, we confirmed the role of the sending organization in the Specified Skills System, comparing it with the sending process under the Technical Intern Training System, which already had a large number of achievements.

### ① Sending Out Individuals Under the Technical Intern Training System

1. Recruitment of foreign workers for employment in Japan through social networks and flyers, etc.
2. Studying the Japanese language at an affiliated Japanese language school
3. Receipt of technical intern training job information from the supervising organization
4. Application screening and interview
5. Offer of employment
6. Studying the Japanese language and, if necessary, receiving skills training
7. Support for sending procedures
8. Send-out

Under the Technical Intern Training System, sending organizations recruit foreign workers in advance through non-urban administrative agencies, Japanese language schools, education and training schools, or social networks. Foreign workers who have passed the examination to belong to the sending organization will start Japanese language education.

The sending organization receives the job order from the receiving organization through the supervising organization and arranges an interview between the foreign worker undergoing Japanese language education and the company.

When foreign workers are hired as technical interns, they will receive Japanese language training at the sending organization until they enter Japan. (In some industries, some sending organizations conduct their own skills training at the request of the receiving organization, as is the case in the building cleaning field).

When the procedures for entry into Japan are complete, the foreign workers are sent to Japan. It takes about six months to one year from the time of application to the time of entry into Japan.

### ② Sending Workers under the Specified Skills System

#### Technical internship sending out procedure:

1. Receives information on job openings for foreign nationals with specified skills from host institutions, supervising organizations, and registered support organizations
2. Introduction to Technical Intern Training Program
3. Offer of Employment
4. Support for sending procedures
5. Send-out

#### Procedure for sending out students who have passed specified skills tests (JLPT and skills training):

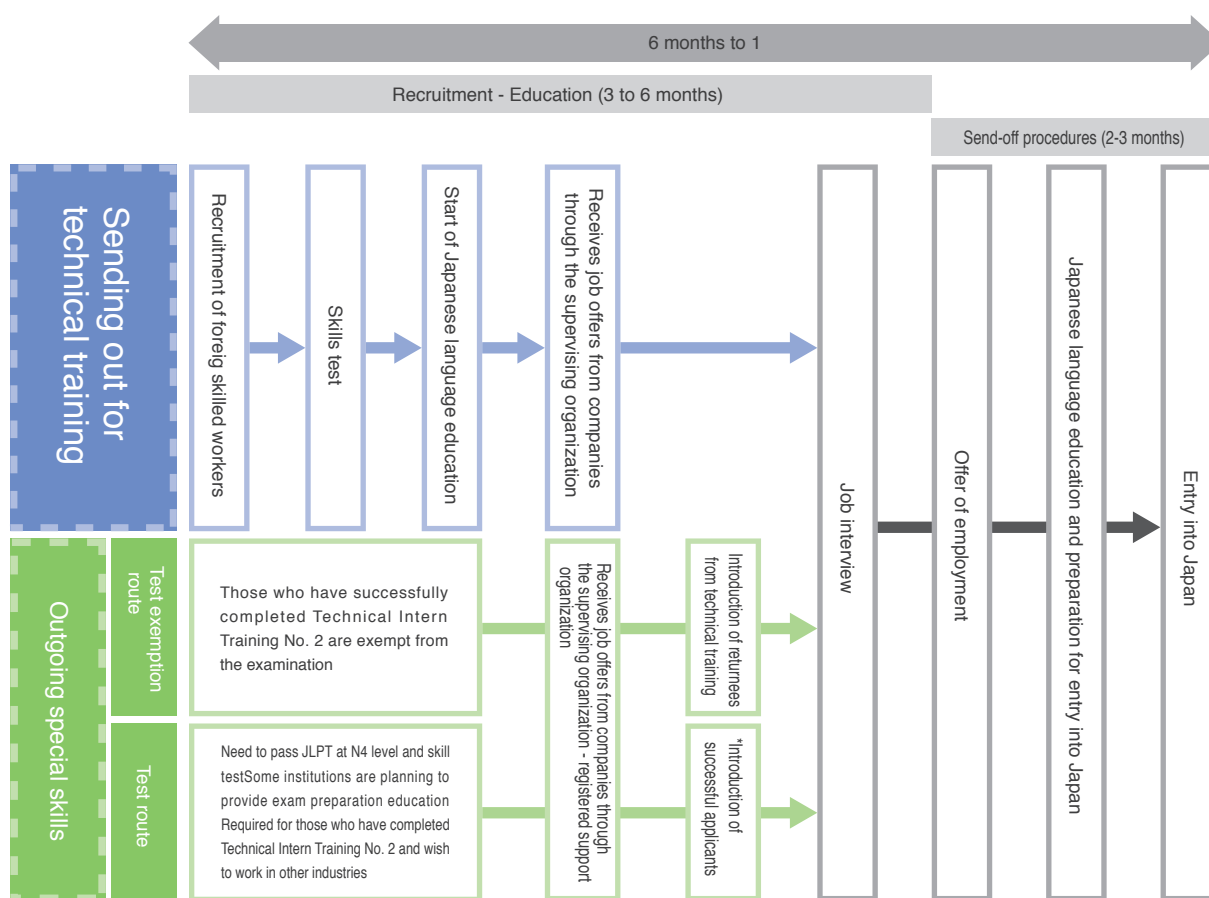
1. Receives information on job openings for foreign nationals with specified skills from host institutions, supervising organizations, and registered support organizations
2. Introducing those who passed the specified skill tests "JLPT" and "Technical skill test"
3. Offer of employment
4. Support for sending procedures
5. Send-out

There are very few cases of foreign workers being recruited and trained under the Specified Skills System compared with the Technical Intern Training System. Instead, we receive information on job openings for specified skills from the host institution or registered support organization, and introduce and send former students of technical internships or those who have passed overseas examinations who wish to use the Specified Skills System to the host institution in Japan.





## Flow Chart Showing Sending Process Under the Specified Skills System and Technical Intern Training System:



Source: Prepared by Fourth Valley Concierge Corporation using research from interviews

Some sending organizations were also found to be implementing measures for specified skill tests. However, it is difficult for sending organizations to provide education for foreign workers who have not yet been assigned to work in Japan.

In addition, it is difficult for foreign workers to take the time to study in Japan when their employment in Japan is not certain, and the Technical Intern Training System, which allows them to work in Japan more easily, tends to be preferred. As a result, it was noted that it is difficult to introduce people who have passed specified skills tests.



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## 3. Revenue of the Sending Organization

### ① Income generated by the Technical Intern Training System:

- Commission from foreign personnel (breakdown: Japanese language education, dormitory, meals, application for residence status)
- Pre-education costs from the supervising organization
- Supervision fee from supervising organization

In many cases, foreign workers do not have money, so they borrow money to pay the sending organization. In some cases, sending organizations introduce partner financial institutions to prevent foreign workers from borrowing at high interest rates.

### ② Income generated by the Specified Skills System:

- Handling fees from foreign personnel
- Referral fees from host organizations

Since there are no costs for Japanese language education and support such as dormitories and meals, the price is lower than that of technical training.

## Comparison of Earnings Under Technical Intern Training System and Specified Skills

Item		Indonesia		Vietnam		Cambodia	
		Technical Intern Training System	Specified Skills System	Technical Intern Training System	Specified Skills System	Technical Intern Training System	Specified Skills System
From Foreign Workers Commission	180,000 ~ 30,000	180,000 - 30,000	50,000	360,000 - 500,000	50,000	350,000 - 440,000	150,000
From the supervising organization Pre-education fee/per person Supervision fee/per person	10,000 ~ 50,000	10,000 - 50,000		15,000 - 30,000		15,000 - 30,000	
	2,500 ~ 10,000	2,500 - 10,000		5,000 - 10,000		5,000 - 10,000	2 ~ 3,000
From Registered Support Organizations and Host Institutions Referral fee			200,000		1 to 3 months salary		

Source: Prepared by Fourth Valley Concierge Corporation using interviews and research





# III. Views on the Technical Intern Training System and the Specified Skills System by Sending Organizations in Each Country

According to the interview survey, sending organizations in each country tended to choose the Technical Intern Training System, partly because their understanding of the Specified Skills System was not as advanced.

## 1. Indonesia

- ① Views on the Specified Skills System
  - Số lần tổ chức kỳ thi ở nước ngoài ít.
  - The number of overseas tests is limited
  - There are no supervision fees
  - Technical intern training returnees do not receive the necessary documents to apply for specified skills status from the sending organization where they were enrolled
  - The government's recommendation of the "Labor Market Information System (IPKOL)," an agency for Japanese host organizations and foreign personnel, makes the role of sending organizations unclear
  - Passing the specified skills test and working in Japan as a foreign national with specified skills is not easy because the requirements are different from the Technical Intern Training System.
  - There is no license to deal with the Specified Skills System separately from the Technical Intern Training System.
  - We believe that by basing our approach on a provisional job offer before passing the specified skills test, the number of foreign
  
- ② Views on the Technical Intern Training System
  - Organizations have experience and are familiar with the procedures involved with sending out technical trainees
  - Under the Technical Intern Training System, support can be provided by the sending organization while the foreign workers are in Japan

## 2. Vietnam

- ① Views on the Specified Skills System
  - The number of overseas tests is limited
  - There are no supervision fees
  - There are few returnees from technical training and few foreign workers to send out
  - The payment of consulting fees equivalent to the referral fee cannot be divided into installments, which places a heavy burden on individuals
  - In some non-urban areas of Japan, supervising organizations do not utilize specified skills, and it is not possible to obtain the necessary documents to change residence status
  - In some cases, the salary offered in the job posting and the salary at the time of contract were different
  
- ② Views on the Technical Intern Training System:
  - Because there is a risk of changing jobs with the Specified Skills System, and because some Japanese host institutions have voiced doubts about whether passing the specified skills test alone will enable them to perform the work required of them, many host institutions want to utilize the Technical Intern Training System

## 3. Cambodia

### ① Views on the Specified Skills System:

- Reaching "JLPT" N4 level is too high, and there are not many people who want to work with specified skills.
- In some cases when trainees have asked for help due to the poor working environment at the host organization in Japan, the Specified Skills System did not provide the same support for foreign workers as the Technical Intern Training System.
- The amount of technical interns is also small, so there are few returnees and not many success stories
- No supervision fee

### ② Views on the Technical Intern Training System:

- Foreign workers who wish to work in Japan feel that the N4 level requirement for the "Japanese-Language Proficiency Test" in the Specified Skills System is too high, and so they choose to work as technical interns even if the salary is lower

Source: Prepared by Fourth Valley Concierge Corporation using interviews and research

## IV. Examples of Cooperation between Sending Organizations and Other Organizations under the Technical Intern Training System and the Specified Skills System

### 1. Examples of Cooperation between Sending and Receiving Organizations

- The company uses the manual prepared by the Tokyo Building Maintenance Association as the company's own technical training specification for those who have been offered a job, and asks the sending organization to have them study the manual until they leave Japan.
- A supervising organization has been set up with several host organizations, and partnerships have been formed with local sending and receiving organizations. Several local staff members of the sending organization have acquired building cleaning skills and are instructing foreign personnel at the local sending organization and supervising organization.
- In accepting employees who have passed overseas specified skills tests, the company conducts all recruiting on its own.
- The working environment for foreign workers is observed through regular company visits. Local staff from the sending organization take care of foreign workers to prevent their disappearance.

### 2. Examples of Cooperation between Sending Organizations and Supervising Organizations (Registered Support Organizations)


- Japanese language education for foreign workers is provided by the sending organization. However, the supervising organization will monitor the progress and level of Japanese language education and will share the information with the receiving organization so that the foreign workers will not have trouble working in Japan.
- After accepting foreign workers, the supervising organization provides interpretation through videoconferencing and other means to understand the feelings of the foreign workers and help them to settle in, thereby preventing them from leaving the company.
- The sending organization and the registered support organization have created a system to quickly gather information on job openings at the host organization and to immediately respond to the human resource needs of the host organization.
- By having a Japanese branch office that is also a sending organization and a registered support organization, and by approaching the receiving organization directly, it is possible to quickly introduce appropriate personnel. If the host organization does not utilize a registered support organization, an agreement will be made with the Japanese branch.

Source: Prepared by the Fourth Valley Concierge Corporation using research from interviews



# V. Interview with Foreigners with Specified Skills

## Case 1: Working non-urban/building cleaning with specified skills

	<b>name</b>
	Srisophon Somphon (nickname is Mr. Man)
<b>Natio nality</b>	Thailand
<b>Age</b>	32 years old
<b>Stay in Japan</b>	3 years, 10 months
<b>Work Location</b>	1-2-1 Edago, Ogaki City, Gifu Prefecture, Japan
Transitioned from Technical Intern to Specified Skills in April 2020	

### Coming to Japan as a technical intern

Mr. Sisupong Somporn came to Japan as a technical intern. After a month of training in Nagoya, they are now working for Shenzhen Co. In April 2020, he changed his status to "Specified Skills" and has now been in Japan for 3 years and 10 months.

### Japan is safe, Gifu is a nice place

Before I came to Japan, I was worried about the environment in Japan, which is different from my home country, such as Japan's food, temperature and earthquakes. I studied Japanese thoroughly at the local sending and receiving organization. I didn't have any trouble coming to Japan because the sending organization took care of the Japanese immigration procedures. After I came to Japan, I was still worried about the cold Japanese winters, but I didn't have to worry about my job. At the current host organization, two or three people are

basically assigned to a site, which includes floor sweeping. Support is provided, including driving to and from the site, so there are no problems with work.

### Worried about the cold, afraid of earthquakes

Before I came to Japan, I was worried about the environment in Japan, which is different from my home country, such as Japan's food, temperature and earthquakes. I studied Japanese thoroughly at the local sending and receiving organization. I didn't have any trouble coming to Japan because the sending organization took care of the Japanese immigration procedures. After I came to Japan, I was still worried about the cold Japanese winters, but I didn't have to worry about my job. At the current host organization, two or three people are basically assigned to a site, which includes floor sweeping. Support is provided, including driving to and from the site, so there are no problems with work.

### I haven't studied Japanese much

I do not have plans to take the Japanese language test at the moment. I have passed the building cleaning skills test. Information about the skills test was provided by the supervising organization, and we practiced using study videos and other resources. The scope of my work has expanded a little since I switched to a specified skill.

### I wouldn't change my building cleaning job for anything

I have connections with friends through social networks, and I exchange information about Japan and exams with my friends who are also working in specified skills (agricultural field). We talk about each other's work, but I've never thought about changing my job as a building cleaner. I am happy with my current building cleaning job and my salary. I sometimes receive advice from my Thai friends who want to work in Japan, and I answer that the salary is good in Japan.

As part of a company event, I went on a trip to Mino Kokubunji Temple, Ise Shrine, Hikone Castle, Lake Biwa and Kusatsu Onsen. I also went on a private trip to Kyoto. Next time I want to climb Mt. Fuji.

Daily Schedule	
6:30 AM	Get out of bed
7:30 AM	Report for work
8:00 AM- 5:00 PM	Work
5:30 PM	After returning home, I cooked for myself (Thai food)
11:30 PM	Go to bed

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## I want to work in Japan for a long time, but I don't know the future yet.

I would like to go back to my country, but if I can work in Japan, I would like to work for a long time. I would like to be able to work as a cleaner in Thailand, but I don't know what the future holds yet.

### Case 2: Urban area, building cleaning, working with specified skills

	<b>Name</b>
	Tran Ich Hiep Hoang The Long Nguyen Thi Thu Thuy Le Thi Xuyen Nguyen Thi Trang
<b>Natio nality</b>	Vietnam
<b>Work Location</b>	Công ty Chiyoda Bldg. Kanzai Co.,Ltd. 1-3-7 Nihonbashi Kayabacho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo
<b>Route</b>	From exchange students to specified skill workers: 4 people From technical training to specified skills: 1 person

Mr. Hiep, Mr. Long, Ms. Thuy, and Ms. Xuyen who work at Chiyoda Building Kanzai Co., transitioned to specified skills as exchange students, while Mr. Trang who works at the same company transitioned to specified skills as a technical intern.

### I didn't think of any other place to study than Japan

I couldn't think of any other place to study than Japan, so I studied at a Japanese language school. From Japanese language school, I went on to a business-related technical school (Mr. Long).

I considered Korea as a place to study besides Japan, but I chose Japan because my younger brother was already living in Japan and I felt safe there (Ms. Thuy).

### I exchange information with friends who are already working in Japan.

All of them had already learned about Japan (life, school rules, etc) from their friends and family who work in Japan before coming to Japan, and they had decided to live with their friends, so they didn't have much to worry about. All of us are still living in the same room. After I came to Japan, I was worried about unfamiliar life, such as not being able to speak Japanese very well, whether I would have enough money that I brought from Vietnam, and how I would get around (Ms. Thuy).

### Building cleaning jobs aren't too difficult

I was introduced to a job at Chiyoda Building Kanzai Co. by the Japanese Language Center in Vietnam, and my friend had already been working there (and is still working there). I chose to work as a building cleaner because it was a job that I could do even if I couldn't speak Japanese very well (Mr. Hiep). I heard from a friend that building cleaning can be done even if you don't speak Japanese very well, and that Chiyoda Building Kanzai Co. has supportive Vietnamese employees who can translate for you, so I felt peace of mind when choosing this job (Ms. Xuyen).

The work hours have increased since the transition to specified skills, but the work tasks are almost the same. As a senior worker, I have a sense of responsibility because I sometimes teach newcomers on-site. I have told many of my friends in Vietnam about the Specified Skills System. They haven't come to Japan yet, but there are many people who want to come (Mr. Long).

### I haven't studied Japanese much, but I'll take the skills test

None of us plan on taking the Japanese language test. Mr. Hiep, Mr. Long, Ms. Thuy and Ms. Xuyen are willing to take the skills test for the job if they have time and they hope to work for Chiyoda Building Kanzai Co. for a long time.

### You should study Japanese a lot in Vietnam

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If something happens at work, you may have to respond to the building manager in Japanese, so those who are considering the specified skills program should study Japanese as much as possible before coming to Japan. (Ms. Thuy)

I don't like Japanese food (ramen, natto, rice) (Mr. Long). On weekdays, everyone cooks for themselves and makes Vietnamese food. There are also shops that sell Vietnamese foods, so it is not difficult to cook for yourself (Mr. Long). Everyone goes back to Vietnam at least once or twice a year except for Ms. Xuyen. When I was an exchange student, I was so busy that I didn't have time to go anywhere, but now that I've become a specified skilled worker, I have more time on the weekends, so I want to go to Nikko (Ms. Thuy). I went on a trip to Shizuoka (Ms. Hiep). I want to go to Okinawa (Ms. Xuyen). I want to go to Osaka (Ms. Trang).

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