



# JCCI Scholars

MEET THE 2025 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS FOR THE  
2026-2027 PROGRAMMES

**1. Could you briefly introduce yourself, including your school, field of study, and hobbies or interests you enjoy in your free time?**

Hi everyone! I am Jodie, a Year 3 Food Science and Technology (FST) student studying in the National University of Singapore (NUS). I am currently pursuing a minor in Japanese Language as well. In my free time, I enjoy playing with my cats, thrifting or finding good eats!



## Jodie Ong

One-Year Waseda  
Scholarship Recipient  
2026-2027

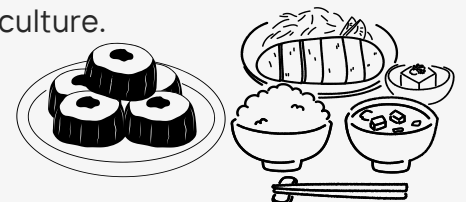
**2. What first sparked your interest in Japan, and how did this interest influence your decision to apply for the JCCI scholarship programme?**

What first sparked my interest in Japan is its food culture, which I value both as a consumer and as an FST student. Japanese food is unique, ranging from the delicate flavours of tensoba to the rich taste of curry rice.

Despite this wide variety, these dishes have one commonality: the pride the Japanese people take in their craftsmanship – monozukuri. This pride manifests as dedication and attention to the smallest details, which is reflected in their high-quality food products, distinctive in its taste and presentation. This extends beyond restaurants and food courts, where Japanese food products are synonymous with quality.

Many such products have even become household staples, such as Kewpie mayonnaise and Nissin instant noodles. I find this concept of monozukuri inspiring and fascinating, and I hope to learn more about it.

From an FST perspective, Japan's food industry stands out for its scale and diversity. I had the privilege of witnessing this firsthand last year when I attended a joint-school programme between NUS and Hokkaido University. During this programme, we had a short trip to Hakodate. There, I learned about the seafood supply chain, methods used to preserve the freshness of seafood, as well as the declining squid catches due to climate change. Additionally, I learned about and tried foods lesser known to tourists, such as funazushi and shiokara. These experiences deepened my appreciation for the history and uniqueness of Japanese food culture.

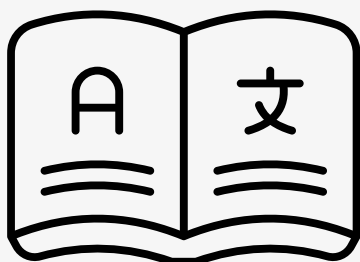


However, after being exposed to the complexities and depth of Japanese food culture, I realised that this short programme was not enough to understand and immerse myself in it. The JCCI scholarship programme will give me the opportunity to stay in Japan for a longer period of time to explore and appreciate its local food culture to a greater extent.

**3. What subjects do you plan to study in Japan, and why are they meaningful to you at this stage of your journey?**

As I am currently pursuing a minor in Japanese Language, I hope to enrol in more Japanese Language courses. I believe that by having a greater command of the language, I will be able to have greater confidence in speaking it and connecting with people more naturally.

Additionally, I would like to further my pursuit of humanities at the School of International Liberal Studies. By doing so, I hope to not only further refine my human skills, but also to deepen my knowledge of certain disciplines beyond my scope of study.



**4. This year marks the 60th anniversary of Singapore–Japan diplomatic relations (SJ60). What does this milestone mean to you as you prepare for your studies in Japan, and how do you see yourself contributing to this relationship in the future?**

This milestone is a testament to the collaboration and close ties between Singapore and Japan since Singapore’s independence. With this in mind, I will strive to maintain these ties by being a cultural vessel between Singapore and Japan during my studies. I intend to do so by possessing a willingness to learn about Japanese culture while having the ability to educate my peers on Singaporean culture.

**“Japanese food reflects the pride and craftsmanship of monozukuri.”**

As this program allows me to experience Japanese society over a prolonged period of time, there will be ample opportunities to learn about Japanese culture. Be it through interacting with the students, attending classes or simply being a member of society, I believe that I will be able to learn about Japanese culture.

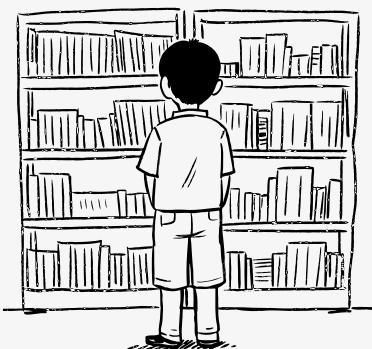
By experiencing everyday life in Japan, I will also be able to better grasp societal nuances and unspoken rules that may give greater insight into Japanese culture and history. More often than not, conversations are a two-way exchange of information. In conversations regarding Japanese culture, I believe that I will have the chance to share more about Singaporean culture as well.

Other than solely sharing about Singaporean culture, I would like to highlight the impact of Japanese culture in Singapore to emphasise the extent of Singapore-Japan relations. Additionally, there are student activity groups (circles) specially formed to facilitate international exchange in Waseda. By joining such circles, I will be able to learn about Japanese culture, and potentially share Singaporean culture, on a deeper level that cannot be achieved through casual conversation.



**1. Could you briefly introduce yourself, including your school, field of study, and hobbies or interests you enjoy in your free time?**

My name is Christopher Tjandra, I am studying Computer Science in SMU. My hobbies are gaming, running and Mahjong. I like to spend my time winding down playing games like Overwatch 2 with my friends, and more recently I have been playing Riichi mahjong at night. I was inspired to play by an anime I saw called Akagi, and it has encouraged me to learn more about the game.



**Christopher Tjandra**

One-Year Waseda  
Scholarship Recipient  
2026-2027

**2. What first sparked your interest in Japan, and how did this interest influence your decision to apply for the JCCI scholarship programme?**

I was interested in learning Japanese as I was an avid fan of anime, and a YouTube channel which does a lot of travelling around Japan showed me places around the countryside like Shikoku, Wakayama, and Mie. That really got me interested in Japan, the peacefulness of the countrysides, and a sensation of not rushing all the time.

I applied for the scholarship because I like Japan. The food, the language and the cultural differences that I want to know more about. I believed that a chance to study in Japan would ultimately allow me to learn more about what it is I could not learn as a tourist. In the future I hope to spend long periods of time in Japan, and an exchange gives me the opportunity to get a teaser very early in life.

**3. What subjects do you plan to study in Japan, and why are they meaningful to you at this stage of your journey?**

I plan to study the Japanese language, along with Japanese economics. Japan is one of the cornerstones of the global economy, holding over 1.2 trillion of US debt, and a hub to various forms of tourism.

As an investor, learning about a country's economy in detail, from a Japanese university directly, would be a very interesting. I also intend to take a course regarding aging population in Japan, as I would like to see how the Japan government plans to combat this. Singapore will no doubt be facing a similar issue very soon.



**"I want to learn what I could never discover as a tourist."**

**4. This year marks the 60th anniversary of Singapore–Japan diplomatic relations (SJ60). What does this milestone mean to you as you prepare for your studies in Japan, and how do you see yourself contributing to this relationship in the future?**

SJ60 represents 60 years of trust, exchange, and cooperation between Singapore and Japan, and that relationship has been built not only by governments and businesses, but also by students. This milestone feels meaningful to me as I am directly participating in continuing this diplomatic relationship. By not only understanding how Japanese society functions, but also learning about the education culture, public policies and economics,

I hope to engage with Japan and Japanese people on a more personal level, with more than just surface level understanding. I hope this can allow me to contribute to the Singapore-Japan relationship by strengthening the bridge between our countries, bringing back relevant insights such as education, organizational culture and aging societies, while also sharing Singaporean perspectives with the people I meet in Japan.

**Isabelle Zhu**  
One-Year  
International Christian  
University (ICU)  
Scholarship Recipient  
Aug 2026 – Jun 2027

**1. Could you briefly introduce yourself, including your school, field of study, and hobbies or interests you enjoy in your free time?**

Hello! My name is Isabelle, and I'm currently studying Supply Chain Management at Singapore University of Social Sciences. I really enjoy doing taekwondo as well as reading manga and novels in my free time. My personal recommendations would be Magi(manga) and The Midnight Library(novel)!



**2. What first sparked your interest in Japan, and how did this interest influence your decision to apply for the JCCI scholarship programme?**

I loved reading even as a child, and my interest was sparked by Japanese folktales I read, such as Kobutori Jiisan, and further by the enchanting world of Ghibli.

Motivated by my interest in Japanese culture, I took a minor in Japanese during the pandemic recovery to further my personal understanding. Textbook learning does not compare to an authentic immersion experience, which is something I wanted to experience when the pandemic restrictions were lifted. Thus, I grasped the opportunity to attend the JCCI sharing even as an ineligible first year student. I saw an incredible opportunity that connected to the meaning I was looking for. Being a supply chain student especially, I was excited to experience deeper intercultural learning in an increasingly globalised world. Henceforth, finding meaning both on a personal and professional level.



**3. What subjects do you plan to study in Japan, and why are they meaningful to you at this stage of your journey?**

My primary focus will be on studying Japanese. I strongly believe that language is a bridge which connects people. Some of my pain points are keigo and kanji. I aim to further hone my Japanese through school lessons and everyday conversations.

I am also interested in taking social science modules like Anthropology, Economics and Politics. The colourful aspects of culture and its intersection fascinate me. Researching further into societal architecture is key to developing a global perspective and honing critical thinking. I hope to utilize my skillsets to optimise systems and improve day-to-day life for others.



**“Cross-cultural exchanges are key to breaking down barriers.”**

**4. This year marks the 60th anniversary of Singapore–Japan diplomatic relations (SJ60). What does this milestone mean to you as you prepare for your studies in Japan, and how do you see yourself contributing to this relationship in the future?**

I am grateful for the development of Singapore and Japan’s diplomatic relations, as they provide a platform for people from both cultures to immerse themselves in each other’s cultures. Cross-cultural exchanges are key to breaking down barriers. I hope to be a proactive participant in this and build foundational relationships that will enrich both my personal life and my future career. This would mean being an active participant through clubs and seminars. Academically, I aim to share Singapore’s advancements in digitalisation, perhaps through research projects or presentations. Additionally, I also hope to serve as a cultural ambassador for Singapore, hosting gatherings to share our culinary heritage and multicultural traditions, thereby fostering a deeper, more personal connection between our two countries.



*From left: Christopher, Isabelle and Jodie received their scholarship award certificates at the JCCI Singapore Foundation Awards Presentation Ceremony held on 5 December 2025, attended by JCCI members, their families and friends in celebration of this proud milestone.*

**About the JCCI Scholarship**

*Established in 1995 by the **Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry Singapore Foundation**, the scholarship provides Singaporean students with the opportunity to study and live in Japan for a year, promoting cultural and educational exchange.*

***We thank all JCCI members for their generous donations in making this meaningful opportunity possible!***