

## Kumamoto Companies Recruit Across Borders as Demand for Diverse Mandarin-Speaking Professionals Surges

Campus focus

A coalition of companies from Japan's Kumamoto region, organized under the Kumamoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry, once again partnered with the Department of Japanese at Tamkang University to host the Kumamoto Companies Job Fair. Held on May 14 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at HC105 in the Hsu Shou-Chlien International Conference Hall, the event attracted students from various departments across the university.

Following the establishment of TSMC's plant in Kumamoto, the region has become increasingly international, with a notable rise in Taiwanese nationals residing there. This trend has turned Kumamoto into a new hotspot for cross-border employment and internships between Taiwan and Japan. The job fair, attended by representatives from Tsuruya Department Store, Shinsan Jutaku, Higo Bank, and Saishunkan Pharmaceutical, featured 2-3 staff members from each company, including Taiwanese employees who explained the positions in detail. Akihito Kawata, Assistant General Manager of General Affairs at the Kumamoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry, stated, "We wanted to make students feel more at ease," and announced plans for another job fair later this year.

The event began with a cultural lecture led by Shinji Hamamoto, Representative Director of the Chamber, who returned after delivering last year's keynote. He discussed cultural differences between Taiwan and Japan and emphasized the importance of service quality in Kumamoto companies. Following the lecture, four companies took turns presenting and sharing information on their industries, language requirements, salary and benefits, and more. Due to trends in business diversification, the companies welcomed students from all academic backgrounds, not just related majors. However, Japanese proficiency remains essential, and in light of TSMC's operations, there is an urgent demand for talented people fluent in Mandarin with Japanese interpretation and translation skills. Tsuruya and

Shinsan Jutaku require JLPT N1, while Saishunkan Pharma and Higo Bank require at least N3.

Due to the trend of diversified operations, companies are recruiting students from non-related majors, offering employment opportunities to students from various academic disciplines. Shinsan Jutaku, focused on real estate, offers diverse roles in interpreting, translation, marketing, and online promotion. Saishunkan Pharmaceutical is known for its skincare brand Domohorn Wrinkle and promotes traditional Chinese medicine principles, emphasizing zero waste and refined management. Tsuruya is Kumamoto's only large department store, long favored by Tamkang graduates, and offers roles in customer service, translation, and guided tours, prioritizing brand image and customer experience. Higo Bank, a local bank with a Taiwan office, offers positions in banking, securities, insurance, and trust services.

In terms of salaries and benefits, Tsuruya emphasizes etiquette and professional training. In addition to personal capabilities, the company strongly values internal training. New employees receive a base monthly salary of ¥220,000, biannual bonuses (in July and December), a pension plan, and approximately 116 days of paid time off annually. Working hours are scheduled in shifts. Higo Bank also offers diverse subsidies for family, commuting, and fieldwork.

Yung-Ching Ho, a Tamkang Japanese Department alumna who graduated two years ago and now works at Shinsan Jutaku, returned to share her experience. Starting with her study abroad in Tokyo during her senior year, she participated in working holidays after graduation in Taiwan and Japan, and has already tried nine different jobs. Her experience in various service roles helped her realize her preference for diverse, dynamic work. She advised juniors: "You need to try things you don't like before you know what you want." Now handling interpreting, documentation, and digital marketing, she finds her role fulfilling. She also designed the recruitment posters and videos for this event, is preparing for the national exam, and is pursuing permanent residency in Japan.

Yu-Chang Yu, a senior in Chemical and Materials Engineering, set his sights

on Saishunkan Pharma after the event, impressed by the comprehensive benefits, including employee meals, housing, and holiday bonuses. He noted, “This broke the stereotype that only liberal arts students pursue such jobs and offered a new direction for STEM students.” Although his Japanese proficiency is not yet at N3, he plans to improve and apply for it.









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