

# Graduation Thesis on Graduation Thesis

A Review of Research on Graduation Thesis in Japan

2025 JAPAN-TAIWAN JOINT CONFERENCE:  
SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

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# I. Introduction: Why Focus on Graduation Thesis

Japanese universities have faced mounting pressure to demonstrate their utility to society (MEXT, 2015).

➡ As one of the countermeasures, Japanese universities have been required to assure the quality of education (MEXT, 2020).

Japanese universities have traditionally required students to write a graduation thesis.

- 96.8% of Japanese universities treat it as a formal course (MEXT, 2020)

➡ Graduation thesis represents a key component of higher education quality and warrants deeper investigation.

I classified research on graduation thesis in Japan into the following three categories:

A) Research on the Usefulness of Graduation Thesis

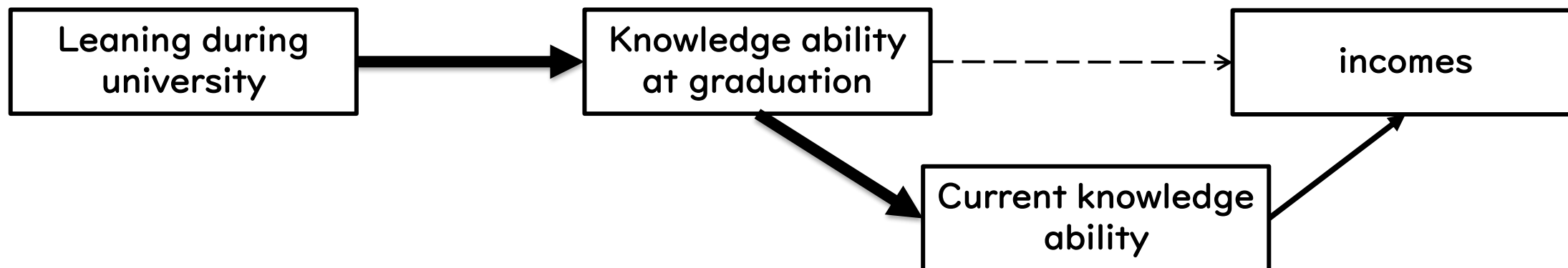
B) Research on Student Perceptions toward Graduation Thesis

C) Research on Evaluation of Graduation Thesis

➡ Through summarizing research on graduation thesis, I will discuss issues for future.

## “practice of learning” hypothesis (Yano, 2009)

Learning during university improves knowledge ability at graduation, and this experience continues after graduation, which improves current knowledge ability and results in higher incomes.



Writing graduation thesis requires a significant amount of learning.

➡ “Practice of learning” hypothesis suggests that students who work seriously on their thesis will ultimately succeed.

- High school graduation research contributed to students’ later autonomy in the workplace by fostering lifelong learning habits (Araki, 2020).
- Prior learning attitudes, even before university, influence how much students feel they grow through their thesis (Tanimura, 2013; Nakaseko, 2014; Nakano, 2015).

### Professional Relevance of Education (Honda, 2005; 2009)

To design education to include the perspective of usefulness to the profession.

➡ Through education, students should be given knowledge and skills that will enable them to enter professional careers.

The experience of writing graduation thesis is considered useful even in professions.

- Writing a thesis trains students in logical reasoning and specialization, forming a foundation for life decisions (Shirai, 2013).
- Through interviews with young professionals, confirms that many see the thesis experience as valuable training in communication, writing, and expertise (Ninomiya, 2018).

The graduation thesis is a major presence for students.

- Students frequently cite their thesis experience as central to their academic development (Michita, 2003; Mizuma, 2006).
- By the third and fourth year, thinking about or engaging with the thesis boosts class motivation (Ozaki & Matushima, 2006).
- Although students often felt insecure about their abilities, they showed positive attitudes toward their engagement with the thesis (Hashimoto, 2011).
- Lower levels of depression were associated with more positive views of thesis progress, and students described a duality of joy and stress (Hashimoto, 2011).

## 4. Research on Evaluation of Graduation Thesis

Despite being formally recognized in most universities, graduation thesis is not always evaluated under standardized criteria.

- In humanities and social sciences, only 31% of departments use unified assessment standards, and only 16% utilize rubrics or checklists (Nishino, 2022).

➡ Establishing a consistent and transparent evaluation framework is an urgent need.

➡ Nishino (2023) attempted to synthesize diverse approaches into a comprehensive framework, categorizing evaluation criteria into three areas: research ability, research process, and research output.

### 1. Differences by Discipline

- To examine whether different disciplines have different perceptions and approaches to students' graduation thesis.
- Some universities and faculties do not require a graduation thesis.

### 2. Is the graduation thesis really the culmination of university studies?

- Students do not always perceive their graduation thesis as the culmination of their learning (Nishino, 2022; Hamanaka & Kuzuki (eds.), 2024; Kuzuki, 2025).
- Need to consider including a possible alternative instead of the graduation thesis.

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