

# LETTER



Contents

- 1: Career Paths of 2019 Graduates
- 2: APO Internship Report (Sarah Frances Strugnell)
- 3: Student Interview (Ichiro Umeda)
- 4: Shift to Online Classes (Daiji Kawaguchi, Professor, Graduate School of Public Policy)

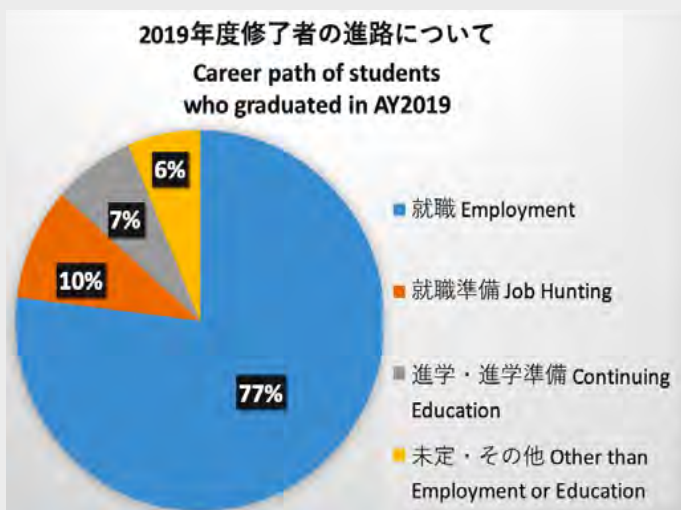
## Career Paths of 2019 Graduates

The career survey results of students who completed the professional degree program in Department of Public Policy in the 2019 academic year has been made available on the GraSPP website. This survey is conducted annually and covers all graduates. A total of 126 people from the 2019 academic year were surveyed, having graduated in August / September 2019 and March 2020.

“Employment (including graduates who returned to their former place of work)” was the most common response (97 people, 77% of all graduates). Other responses were “Job Hunting” (12 people, 10%), “Continuing Education” (9 people, 7%), and “Other than Employment or Education” (8 people, 6%). In percentage terms, these results are roughly the same as the previous academic year.

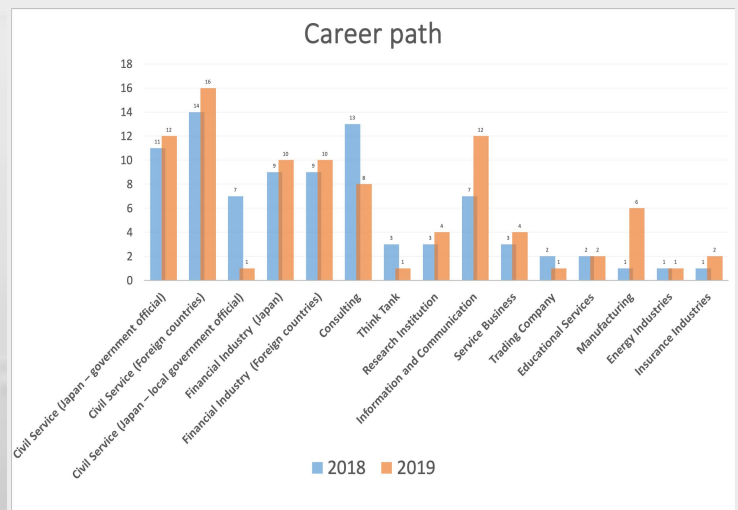
As in previous years, the public sector, either in Japan or overseas, was the most common employer, with 16 people working in the “Civil Service (Foreign countries)” sector and 12 in “Civil Service (Japan – government official)” sector. This was followed by “Information and Communication” with 12 people, five more than the previous academic year, and “Financial Industry (Japan)” and “Financial Industry (Foreign countries)” with 10 people each, numbers similar to the previous academic year. Only 8 people were employed in “Consulting”, 5 fewer than in last year’s survey when this was the second highest industry category.

Further information, including a list of corporate employers and past survey results, is available from the web page indicated below. Current and prospective GraSPP students are urged to take a look.



Career path of students who graduated in AY2019

<http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/en/news/2020-07-08-25677/>



Admission results / Career after graduation

<http://www.pp.u-tokyo.ac.jp/admissions/admission-results/>

# APO Internship Report

## Sarah Frances Strugnell (MPP/IP, 1Year)



In February 2020, I joined the Agriculture Division at the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) as a Winter Intern from GraSPP. Given my formal undergraduate study in microbiology, I was excited to be assigned to the Agriculture Division so I could learn about the multi-country end-to-end process and assist with

an APO project titled, 'Workshop on Shaping the Future of Rice Value Chains and Policies' held in Tokyo. As an intern working in the Agriculture Division, I was able to combine my background in science, together with my graduate studies in policy and past work experience at a research centre in Australia, to develop my skills across several different projects and initiatives at APO. Having the opportunity to learn from the incredibly experienced staff at APO complemented what I was learning in the classroom at GraSPP and enabled me to apply my theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting.

During my time as an intern at APO, I was able to contribute to internal and external research publications, be involved in project planning activities and contribute to other internal projects. I was also involved in the behind of the scenes support before, during and after six APO Productivity Talks. Before each Productivity Talk, I was involved in anything from scriptwriting, editing, or practising, to checking and providing feedback on PowerPoint slides and attending 'dry runs' (practice sessions) as an observer. I even had the opportunity to communicate internally with other divisions at APO, including IPR and IT, and externally with an expert in the field of agricultural productivity in Asia. During the Productivity Talks, I copied questions from the YouTube chatbox, selected, transcribed and submitted the questions to APO staff to then deliver to the expert. Usually, after helping with each Productivity Talk, I assisted with transcribing the Q&A section as a snapshot summary of the things that were

discussed during the session. In my final week as an intern at APO, I was honoured to go live to present questions from the viewers to an expert during the Productivity Talk on Tuesday, June 23, 2020. This APO Productivity Talk was advertised throughout the GraSPP community on the GraSPP Bulletin Board. The support I received during this session was reflective of the ongoing help and mentorship I received throughout my time at APO. From day one I felt welcomed by all APO staff members. And, despite COVID-19 influencing many of the activities I was initially meant to be involved in, being an intern at APO exceeded my expectations.

Other than completing my studies at GraSPP, working at APO gave me a purpose to work hard and maintain motivation throughout the semester. The activities I was engaged in had local or international significance, and those activities had short, medium and long-term impacts on the lives of others. During my time at APO, I was also given every opportunity to learn and contribute to many projects. Whenever I asked if I could be involved, there was always someone willing to act as a mentor to teach me within APO. Finally, the work I was involved in every week was exciting, and the nature of the work I was doing was different and often challenging. I was allowed to help with new projects, help solve new challenges, and help with the next five years of project planning at APO. I will always remember this experience as one of the most rewarding components of my time at GraSPP.



▼ Giving a final presentation to the APO staff members



▼ A scene from Productivity Talk





## Ichiro Umeda

(Professional Degree Program,  
Public Management / 2nd Year)

### — How did you come to study at GraSPP?

I had been thinking for a few years prior to stopping work that I would like to knuckle down to study one more time. I am currently employed as Chairman of the Institute for New Era Strategy (INES), a think tank where we engage with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare as well as researchers and politicians to debate and put forward policy proposals on the societal challenges facing Japan in the 21st century. While I have considerable business experience, having spent 38 years working for a global pharmaceutical company, I am always conscious of my lack of knowledge and understanding of fields such as economics and social security. It was when I looked around for somewhere to study that I discovered GraSPP. My interest was further piqued by attending a presentation for prospective students. When I looked into it after returning home, I found that I satisfied the criteria for taking the entry examination. Having resolved to take up the challenge, I subsequently sat the examination and was fortunate enough to pass.

### — What was the reaction of those around you when you told them you were going back to study?

Everyone was very supportive, and my overseas friends thought it was wonderful and were envious of me. When I made my tuition fee payment, the teller at the bank was very surprised, saying “Are you really going back to university? Congratulations!” In Japan, opportunities for further study after graduating don’t go much beyond an MBA, and it is very rare for someone like myself who has been working for such a long time to go back to university. This is one area where I feel that Japan lags behind overseas countries.

### — How are you getting on now that you have started at GraSPP?

To be honest, I was unsure at first about whether I could sit down and listen to a lecture for 105 minutes at a time. Once I started attending classes, however, I found all of the lectures to be fascinating. Many classes at GraSPP deal with case studies of events that have happened in real life, including some that I had been involved with through my past work. It may be that the more life experience you have the easier it is to understand what is being taught, and I can honestly say that, in all the time since starting in April 2019, I have never once felt sleepy in class.

After focusing on the Economic Policy course in my first year, I switched to Public Management in year 2 out of a desire to study more widely. The classes are invariably stimulating, and while I feel that my ability to understand has not diminished, it is not unusual for

something that made perfect sense to me in class to slip out of my mind immediately afterwards. I suppose there is nothing I can do about a poor memory... (smiles wryly)

I spent nearly 40 years working at a company in the specialized field of pharmaceuticals, and while I have experience in that area, my impression now is that it was a narrow niche, as if I were the proverbial frog in a well. As for the debates that take place at the think tank, I am conscious that there is a world of difference between my understanding of these now and what it was before I started at GraSPP.

The teaching staff at GraSPP are all highly regarded, making for a very productive environment. I really feel that it would have been better if I could have come here in my forties, but regardless of that I have been given a precious opportunity and I recognize that I have a duty to put my current studies to good use in the future.

### — Tell us about your visions and dreams for after you graduate.

If you think in terms of 100-year lifespans, as in the book “Life Shift”, then you can expect to spend a very long time after graduation as part of the workforce, approaching 80 years. Over the course of a long life, I believe it is very important to have times that you can devote to self-improvement by acquiring new skills at a university, research institution, or in the community. As a society that is facing a very low birthrate and elderly demographics, Japan can look forward to increasing fiscal pressure as social security costs rise. It will be vital for everyone to be able to maintain good health, enjoy their work, and contribute to society by remaining in the workforce for as long as possible. To this end, I believe it is up to those people who have the willingness and understanding to take the lead so that we can move toward becoming such a society.

I will turn 68 this year and I hope to continue making a contribution to society as an experience-rich senior who, thanks to my study at GraSPP, is equipped with the latest information and new ideas. (Interview and text by the editor)



Umeda-san at the Institute for New Era Strategy (INES) think tank where he is Chairman.

# Shift to Online Classes

Daiji Kawaguchi

Professor, Graduate School of Public Policy, The University of Tokyo



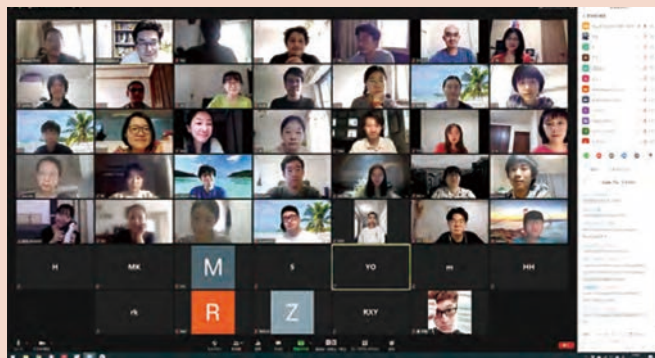
A decision was made by the University of Tokyo in late March, 2020 to continue holding classes in the S1S2 period from April to July without any changes in schedule, doing so online using Zoom and other simultaneous/bidirectional communication tools. Despite the tight timeframe for making the shift to online teaching, preparations proceeded smoothly with the Online Class/Web Conference Portal Site @ the University of Tokyo getting up and running quickly, providing quick and easy access to the necessary information. A very short video uploaded to the portal proved very effective, quickly informing people of what they needed to know.

My own responsibilities were the Econometrics for Public Policy classes held in English and the Japanese-language case study work. The Econometrics for Public Policy classes have about 50 students and in past years I have taught these with the aid of a whiteboard. I worried that using slides to present material that includes a lot of mathematics would invariably result in covering the subject matter too quickly, making it harder for students to grasp the significance of the various individual equations. As I wanted to stick with the

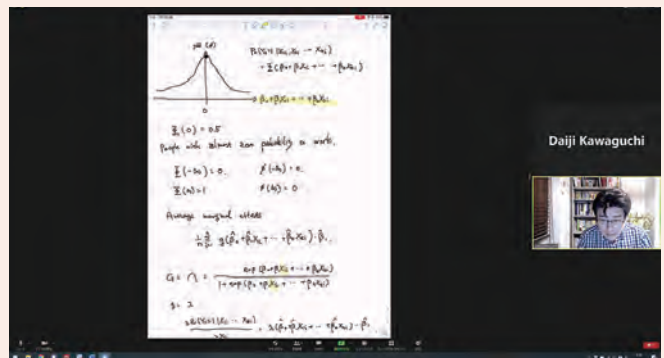
whiteboard-based approach even when teaching online, the problem became one of how this could be accomplished. While I started out by using a camera to video myself giving the class in front of a whiteboard, I switched along the way to instead using an iPad app called Natability that allows you to write using Apple Pencil. For one particular class, I gave the first half by camera and the second half using the iPad, then used the voting function of Zoom to get feedback as to which was better. Two-thirds of students replied that they preferred the iPad.

While I also worried about how to hold the mid-semester and final exams, we were able to have an open book test just as in past years. Students were asked to turn their cameras on in order to verify that they did not receive assistance. Looking back, I believe that I covered all of the material covered in past years and, based on the mid-semester exam results, that there was no drop off in student learning.

I encouraged students to ask questions when the online classes reached a natural break in the subject matter and they did so enthusiastically, using audio and chat for this purpose. This sharing of questions and answers went smoothly. On the other hand, despite this positive sign, what I felt was lacking this time around was the sense of unity with students that, in previous years, had been fostered at such times. I suspect it also did little to bring students closer together. I can't help but wonder what other significance exists, beyond the transmission of information, in the traditional learning environment in which students gather in one place to listen to their teacher. We have just completed a social experiment that sheds light on this question. Given that measurement of the peer effects that people have on one another is a major research topic in the fields of economics, sociology and education studies, I expect we will see some progress in this area.



Students who have just completed their final test (only those who volunteered to do so left their cameras on, with names also being changed)



Sharing an iPad screen over Zoom

## Editor's Postscript

Following the University of Tokyo guidelines, GraSPP adopted online teaching for the S1S2 period from April to July 2020. The faculty members took a variety of steps to make this possible, preparing classes with originality. While we can look forward to further difficulties as the coronavirus pandemic makes the future uncertain, the situation will also give rise to new things by its very nature. We will keep moving forward a step at a time, treating it as an opportunity for change and for taking on new challenges. (Editor)

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