Japan is on target for 100,000 overseas students by the year 2000. John Greenlees looks at the high cost of studying there.

Growing international interest in Japanese industry and finance has attracted more foreign students to business courses. At Waseda University in Tokyo, 34 of 92 first year students who enrolled for the university's graduate business course are from overseas. Wase- da, which is one of the country's most prestigious private universities, also has 50 foreign research students attached to its business school.

The lack of enthusiasm for postgraduate courses among Japanese students leaves many vacancies for foreign students. At the Tokyo Institute of Technology, a national university which specializes in science and engineering courses, 15 per cent of their students are undertaking doctoral courses are from overseas.

Courses at vocational schools also have become popular with foreign students, particularly those from developing Asian countries where graduates with knowledge of Japan's advanced technology are in considerable demand.

A ministry of the origins of Japan's foreign students shows that 90 per cent of them come from nearby Asian countries, including China, South Korea and Taiwan.

Despite recent increases, the number of Western countries remains low, however, with only a handful of Japanese studying in the West. Western students studying in Japan.

More than 25,000 Japanese students are in the United States while fewer than 1000 American students are in Japan.

A more balanced "brain-trade" is one of the aims of the Ministry of Education's policy of internationalizing universities.

Once their courses have been completed and they have satisfied the minimum English requirement to remain in Japan to work for Japanese companies. The Statistics Research Institute reports that 34 per cent of the foreign students it interviewed would like to find jobs in Japan.

Companies, faced with labour shortag., are keen to recruit foreign graduates, particularly those with qualifications in Japanese business and language skills, and are particularly useful to the growing number of Japanese companies with worldwide operations.

But although the revised Immigration Law makes it easier for foreign students to remain in Japan, there is still a reluctance to issue work permits to large numbers of foreign students. Government officials say the skills of Japan's foreign graduates are badly needed in Japan but stress that the country wants to avoid exploiting the intellectual talent other countries.