

Japanese university ends seal-stamping custom to promote telework (Kyodo News article)
<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2020/06/7924020ac8f0-japanese-university-ends-seal-stamping-custom-to-promote-telework.html>

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[KYODO NEWS](#) - Jun 1, 2020 - 20:30 | [All](#), [Japan](#), [Feature](#)



Hanko

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A national university in northeastern Japan on Monday ended in principle the long-standing custom of requiring documents be stamped with seals, in a bid to promote workplace efficiency and teleworking among its staff.

With the abolishment, Tohoku University said more than 100 documents will no longer require "hanko" seals and administrative work will be reduced by 80,000 hours a year.

The university in Sendai, Miyagi Prefecture, said it will switch over to online procedures in stages by the end of this year, with an official saying, "We will thoroughly review what we have previously perceived to be 'administrative norms' in the wake of the new coronavirus."

Although a number of companies across Japan have begun to abolish the custom as part of labor reforms, the practice is still common among universities.

Tohoku University said the abolishment will enable its approximately 1,600 administrative employees to work more flexibly and give them the choice to work remotely. Furthermore, the university plans to introduce online procedures and support for students in the future.