

Maiko Kusakabe

Name: Maiko Kusakabe

Field of study in Japan: Bachelor of English literature

University in Japan: Sagami Women's University

Field of study in Australia: English IELTS preparation, Business (Cert IV), Marketing (Diploma)

Institute in Australia: Kaplan International College Manly, Milton College, and TAFE NSW

Year started/finished study in Australia: 2010 - 2013

Length of stay in Australia: 3 years

Highest level of qualification Japan or Australia: Diploma

Current status (work or study): Working full time.

Self-described current status: Student Exchange Officer with JASSO (Japan Student Services Organisation).



Best thing about studying in Australia: Improving my confidence and making new friends.

What is the one thing you would change to make it easier for others to study in Australia: Lower the cost.

A combination of living and studying in Australia helped Maiko Kusakabe build her confidence as an English language speaker and land a great job as a student exchange officer.

“The first time I went to Australia I went to Melbourne to study English at Monash University for spring vacation during my third year at university. I had considered Canada but decided on Australia as I had an Aunty who lived there. She convinced me it was a really nice place to study and had lots of activities for me. I really loved it and decided to go back after I graduated university.

I stayed for almost a year at Kaplan International College in Sydney after graduation in Japan. I decided to go to the Manly campus because I heard that there were not many Japanese students there and there weren't many Japanese at all. I made lots of friends from all over the world like Korea and Europe.

I also made friends with Australians but not from school. I organised my own accommodation and ended up staying with my English teacher. She was really nice and she introduced me to lots of people.

After one year at the English college I stayed in Australia for a working holiday. I could have come back to Japan but I thought I would lose my English so that's why I decided to stay there.

I continued to study at TAFE NSW. Originally I wanted to study a master's degree but I couldn't get a high enough IELTS score. But I had high enough for TAFE. And I wanted to study with Australian students. I did two courses. I got a certificate IV in business and a diploma in marketing.

The lifestyle in Australia is very different to Japan. Australians are very easy going. My friends are working very hard but also they have free time. They enjoy both working and free time. This was very surprising to me and now I also try and enjoy both work and free time.

Before I went to Australia I thought that Australians wouldn't know about Japanese culture and I thought some people don't like Japanese or Asian cultures. But I thought they would be friendly too. And actually I met really good people in Australia. My Japanese friends say that I am lucky. They know my Australian friends helped me out a lot with English study.

My time in Australia has changed me a lot. Studying overseas has helped me become more independent. Before I went to Australia it was really difficult for me to make decisions, I always asked someone else, my mother or my friends. Now I think when I need to decide something I can decide by myself.

A few of my friends say I've changed as well, in a good way! Before I was a shy person but when I was studying in Australia my friends and class mates encouraged me to talk more. They say, speak more, speak more! It was a bit of pressure for me but now I know that it was good. I am definitely more confident.

When I went to Australia I wanted to get a good job. I decided to come back to Japan and I wanted to use English for my job. I am now working in a job where I can use English and I am helping students who come to Japan.

Now I am back in Japan I also am thinking of going back to Australia at some time to do a master's degree.

I think it is more important now for Japanese to study overseas because we started to study English from when we are little kids, from kindergarten. We study English for six years or more but don't get a chance to speak it enough because of a lack of opportunity. Studying in Australia will help us to get better at speaking English."