

*MEXT 2023 Scholar as a Research student at the Graduate School of Environmental Policies of Kyoto University*



“Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country” this famous sentence of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, expressed more than sixty years ago, was resonating in my head as I was about to apply for the Monbukagakusho (MEXT) scholarship. As a prestigious grant, it was clear for me that if I will benefit from tuition-waiver and monthly stipend, it will be my responsibility to work towards bridging my country and Japan. In this small report I will detail the reason of this application as well as my experience in Japan.

I would like first to go back to the background and reasons of this application. I graduated from the UCLouvain University in Belgium in 2021 with a master’s degree in business engineering and a minor in innovation management. As part of this degree, I was already able to have a first experience in Japan as an exchange student at Sophia University in Tokyo in 2018. This trip was my first contact with the Japanese society and this developed my willingness to evolve professionally in a Japanese

environment. After obtaining my degree in 2021, I worked for a year for corporate as a consultant in Amsterdam, Netherlands. While developing my knowledge in Finance and delivering consulting services for multinational, I did not lose my objective to evolve professionally in Japan.

Conscious of the rapidly changing society and the challenges that our society and companies are facing, I realized the potential of environmental studies in order to shape companies’ strategies and seize business opportunities. Following a new master’s degree on this thematic appeared like the best choice to leverage the knowledge of my previous business school master’s with sustainable transitions methods. I was also willing to get back to the academic world and get to know research qualitative and quantitative methods which can be applied in both the academic and professional world. As for Japan, the nation has for long raised awareness about the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nation. It had become a recurrent preoccupation for the government and, especially, in the domain of education. For all those reasons, studying in Japan appeared like the best option to shape the next step in my career.

Passionate by Japan, its people, its culture but foremost its potential, I decided that this would be the perfect opportunity for me to go back in the country that moved me so much a few years ago. Hence, I applied for the master’s in environmental studies of Kyoto University, the most prestigious Japanese university alongside Tokyo University. At the time of writing this report, I am proud to announce that I passed the entrance exam and will be part of the master’s in environmental management in 2024.

As a university city, Kyoto is probably one of the best place to study in Japan with a lot of institutions concentrated in the North-East of the city. The Kamogawa river is also quietly snaking in the middle of the valley where Kyoto takes place. The city in itself is surrounded by mountains which give a lot of hiking possibilities and create a fabulous postcard landscape. Rich of more than a thousand year of history, Kyoto remains at the heart of Japan. Thanks to a central position in the Kansai region, I also had the opportunity to travel to Nara, Kobe and Osaka. The city has a vibrant international community

and organizes a lot of events to connect Japanese and foreign nationals. I could connect with many locals and could even participate in the Yoshida Shrine Festival in October, a unique experience for a foreigner. Among locals, I was carrying the relique of Yoshida Shrine around the city in an afternoon full of traditions and celebrations. I can only recommend Kyoto to whoever is looking for a prestigious and quiet environment to study while enjoying vibrant traditions.

If you read this article, you are probably already thinking of coming to study in Japan and may be considering applying for the scholarship. I can only advise you to give yourself a chance and take actions. It is for sure competitive but also very prestigious and it will speed up your studies and career in a whole new country full of opportunities. More than a strong line on your resume, it will also be a professional and personal life changing experience. As the third economy in the world, Japan has a lot to offer to whoever will open his heart to this fabulous country. It may seem difficult at first as Japanese is an extremely difficult language, but it is not a prerequisite to start your journey and applying for the scholarship. I personally just started Japanese after my arrival in Japan and could speed up my level in a few months by practicing with locals and following classes at the university with the objective to become bilingual within two years.

Receiving the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology scholarship has not only been an honor but a life changing opportunity to leverage my professional future. I see it not only as an opportunity but a responsibility to work towards bridging my country and Japan. I will always be grateful to the embassy, the university and Japan in general for offering me this chance.