

My name is Megan Murata and I graduated UCSD as an undergrad at the end of Winter Quarter in 2019 with a major in Japanese Studies.

My interest in Japanese stems from my father, who is Japanese. Growing up, I thought it was so cool that he could translate manga to read to me on the fly and I wanted to be able to do that, myself. Unfortunately, he was quite busy when I was growing up, so I didn't learn the language from him. None of the grade schools I attended offered Japanese, so I set my sights on learning in college if at all possible. With UCSD's 5th year Japanese classes, along with the business Japanese series, and in addition to falling in love with the campus, I knew I wanted to spend my college career at UCSD.

Overall, I really enjoyed the professors and the flexibility of the Japanese Studies course — there are a number of really cool classes, of which my favourites were definitely JAPN190 with Professor Turner and the Japanese Politics course. I learned a whole lot in both and I felt both were very well taught. The language skills as well as cultural awareness I gained from the program has really ensured that I've thrived in my post-college positions and have gotten me significantly closer to that ever-elusive personal goal of native-level Japanese fluency.

As for my current employment and career path, I am once again fully back in the education sphere and am currently work as a Specialist Contract Employee within the Outreach and Research Office of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, in Beppu, Oita, after working at the Japan Foundation, Los Angeles (JFLA). Before working at the JFLA, I spent 3 years on the JET Programme in Yamaguchi Prefecture from the summer of 2019 through summer of 2022.

To current students, I would like to say: times are tough, but friends are everywhere and it's always possible to build a community and space for yourself, wherever you are. I believe UCSD and the Japanese Studies program sets you up to have a solid basis not only in Japanese, but also for whatever you happen to do next. I've found that the Japanese language learning world is both much bigger, and much, much smaller, than you think, so go ahead and grab lunch with someone from your class, go to office hours, take that course you've been waiting to take, and don't forget to ask your friends if they need help...and for their help.