

My Dual Degree Adventure: Studying International Business in Maastricht and Brisbane

I am Natalia, a Polish student who embarked on an extraordinary academic adventure through the Dual Degree Programme at Maastricht University (UM) and Queensland University of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane, Australia. My educational journey began with a bachelor's degree in International Business at Fontys University of Applied Sciences, where an eye-opening exchange program in Shanghai fueled my passion for global experiences. Subsequently, I pursued a master's degree at UM, specializing in Strategic Marketing.

The allure of Australia, with its rich culture and breath-taking landscapes, motivated my application for the Dual Degree program. After meticulous research, I chose this path, aiming to turn my dream of exploring Australia into reality. Despite the challenges of balancing a full-time job during the application process, my relentless pursuit paid off when I received that acceptance letter, making my childhood dream come true.

The academic journey was enriching, with UM offering theoretical depth and QUT providing a practical edge for real-world scenarios. An unexpected difference was the shift from group work in Dutch education to individual assignments at QUT. This change challenged me positively, enhancing my ability to work independently and adapt to diverse educational approaches.

Visa arrangements and documentation proved to be stressful due to the late acceptance notice. My advice: start early. Housing was another hurdle, but staying at an Airbnb initially helped me find suitable accommodation. The university's support in the housing search is invaluable, and contacting them upon arrival is highly recommended.

While juggling work and studies at UM, my time in Australia was dedicated to exploration. From Queensland to Sydney, Melbourne, Tasmania, and Cairns, every moment was a new adventure. The friendships formed during the intro week became the cornerstone of my experience. Traveling with them created memories that will last a lifetime.

Living in Australia, the land of koalas and kangaroos, was a dream realized. So much so that, post-graduation, I decided to extend my stay, finding a job and applying for a new visa. Australia is now my home, and I couldn't be more grateful for this life-changing opportunity.

To future students considering this program, my advice is simple: don't hesitate, apply! It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Some tips to make the most of your experience:

- 1. Explore as much as possible during weekends and free days.*
- 2. Attend the Intro Week: it's your gateway to lifelong friendships.*
- 3. Connect with HIQ in Brisbane for any queries; they are an invaluable resource.*
- 4. Also feel free to reach out to me for advice or questions about staying in Australia, as mentioned I'll surely be there for longer :)*

Thank you, SBE, for this incredible opportunity. This year has been the highlight of my life, opening doors for a longer stay in the beautiful land Down Under.

Nathalia Ziarkowska, SBE Maastricht