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## 1,000 Asian students to receive scholarships to study abroad in Japan with AFS

*Government of Japan invests in expanding educational exchanges in Asia*

NEW YORK, NY (13 April 2018): AFS Japan has been appointed by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) to implement a new scholarship program focused on facilitating intercultural exchange and understanding between teenagers in Japan and 20 other Asian countries.

[Prime Minister Shinzo Abe created the initiative](#) to strengthen relations between Japan and the rest of Asia. The program, called Kakehashi (Japanese for "building bridges"), will provide full scholarships for 1,000 Asian high school students to study in Japan's public and private high schools over the next five years. Together with 40,000 Japanese teens, these students will improve their global competence skills and learn more about each other's countries.

In 2017, there were almost 270,000 international university students studying abroad in Japan, which is an 11,6% increase compared to the year before, according to the Japanese Student Services Organization. For the fifth year in a row, international student numbers have grown in Japan, placing it on track to reach a national goal of hosting 300,000 university students by 2020. The numbers of international students in Japan at the secondary school level are drastically lower, with a little over 3,000 students attending college preparatory courses annually. Most international students in Japan come from other Asian countries, predominantly from China and Vietnam.

"AFS is honored to welcome teenagers who are so enthusiastic to study in Japan yet due to their economic difficulties were not able to reach such opportunity so far," says Akiko Kato, AFS Japan's board chair. "We thank the Government of Japan for appointing AFS to run the Kakehashi project, as we are eager to boost the internationalization of

Japanese schools and prepare youth from all over Asia for the challenges of today's globalized world.”

“We commend Prime Minister Abe’s vision for investing in youth and educational exchanges as a way to build bridges among diverse populations across Asia,” said Daniel Obst, President and CEO of AFS Intercultural Programs. “This program provides an important opportunity to foster global competence and intercultural understanding in young people, and a sign that national governments see a need in investing in preparing their youth for living and working in an increasingly diverse world.”

The first 100 students will arrive in Japan in August 2018 for a six-month high school program. AFS Japan will manage all aspects of the program, including identifying volunteer host families and dorms for student placement, providing intercultural orientations and supporting students as they transition to living in a new country. Students will be selected based on their high academic achievement, financial need, interest in the Japanese language and culture, as well as their potential to be the future leaders of positive change in their own communities.

AFS organizations from China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand will identify and select students from their countries as well as from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, Korea, Laos, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Vietnam.

For more information, please visit <https://afs.org/kakehashi-program-in-japan>.

#### **About AFS:**

AFS Intercultural Programs is an international, voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit education organization that provides intercultural learning opportunities to help people develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to create a more just and peaceful world. Each year around 12,000 young people take part in the AFS Programs that are supported by over 50,000 volunteers and staff in 60+ countries worldwide.

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