

Presidential Address

Masao Ueno
President of Meiji University

To all of you who have studied at Meiji University and are graduating today—whether completing your degrees or other programs—please accept my heartfelt congratulations.

Your presence here today is a powerful reflection of your dedication. You have approached your studies with sincerity, supported one another through challenges, and persevered with determination. Today marks the culmination of your individual efforts—and I wholeheartedly commend you for all that you've achieved.

Among today's graduates, I would like to extend special recognition to the five students from Ukraine. Your home country continues to face profound challenges. In the midst of deep concern for the safety of your families and friends, you found the strength to rebuild your lives in a foreign land—Japan. You overcame linguistic and cultural barriers, committed yourselves fully to your studies, and now stand proudly on this celebratory stage. The difficulties you faced are surely beyond what many of us can imagine. I offer my deepest admiration for your determination and resilience. At the same time, I extend my sincere gratitude to your classmates, faculty, staff, and the many members of Japanese society who supported you throughout your journey.

To the families and loved ones who have warmly supported these graduates throughout their academic journey, this milestone must bring immense joy. Please also accept my heartfelt congratulations.

As you now take your first steps into society, you will encounter a world more complex than ever before—one saturated with information and shaped by a web of diverse and often conflicting values. The same event can be perceived in entirely different ways, depending on the individual, group, or nation observing it. Distinguishing fact from fiction has become increasingly difficult. While advances in information technology have brought speed and convenience, they have also enabled the rapid spread of misinformation and biased viewpoints. In such an environment, it is more important than ever to sharpen your judgment—and to cultivate the discipline to pause, reflect, and think critically before reaching a conclusion.

To navigate this world, two essential abilities are required: critical thinking and multifaceted thinking.

Critical thinking is the ability to question the information or assertions presented to you, seek evidence, and make judgments independently. It is not about rejecting the opinions of others, but about examining all assumptions, including your own, in pursuit of a more accurate and reliable understanding of the issue.

Multifaceted thinking is the mindset of imagining and striving to understand the perspectives of those from different positions or backgrounds. It is this very diversity of opinion that makes dialogue meaningful and gives rise to new insights, values, and solutions.

These two modes of thinking—critical and multifaceted—are not opposed; they complement and strengthen each other. Without critical thinking, we become vulnerable to falsehoods and narrow perspectives. Without multifaceted thinking, we risk believing too firmly in the absolute correctness of our own views, falling into the fault of self-righteousness. History—and the present world—remind us that such self-righteousness only deepens division and fuels conflict. That is why it is essential to cultivate both forms of thinking and to strive for a thoughtful balance between them.

Since its founding, Meiji University has upheld the spirit of "Rights and Liberty, Independence and Self-Government," fostering individuals who think, judge, and act for themselves. This spirit is not merely about asserting individual freedom; it also entails the responsibility to make that freedom meaningful within society and to work together with others toward a better future. Critical thinking and multifaceted thinking are indispensable tools for fulfilling that responsibility.

Today's graduation is not an end, but the beginning of a new journey. From this point forward, the questions you face in life will rarely come with ready-made answers or clear directions, as they sometimes did in the classroom. More often, you will encounter challenges without a single correct solution—ones that demand patience, reflection, and sustained effort. In those moments, the critical and multifaceted thinking you developed at Meiji University—through your studies and the guidance of your professors—will serve as a vital foundation.

Resist the temptation to seek easy answers or simplistic conclusions. Instead, listen attentively to the voices of others, especially those whose backgrounds and perspectives differ from your own. Do not shy away from dialogue or disagreement—embrace it as an opportunity to learn and grow. Through these continuous efforts, you will not only develop greater strength and maturity as individuals but also make meaningful contributions to a more inclusive and thoughtful society.

Today, you graduate from Meiji University. This is both a testament to your efforts thus far and a profound promise for the future. When you face hardships, remember the joy of this day. When you feel lost, recall the friends you made and the time you spent learning here. And always move forward—with courage—on the path you believe in.

Wherever you go, whatever you do, take pride in having studied at Meiji University—a university founded on the ideals of "Rights and Liberty, Independence and Self-Government." Let that pride continue to support, encourage, and propel you forward. No matter where you are in the world, you remain a part of the Meiji University family. We are always there for each other.

Stand tall and soar into your future. Dream boldly, and continue to challenge yourself in pursuit of those dreams.

I firmly believe the road ahead of you will be filled with hope.

Congratulations once again on your graduation and successful completion of your studies.