

**Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for
Professional Graduate Business School**

The Major in Entrepreneurship in the Graduate School of Commerce
at the Otaru University of Commerce



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: National	Location: Hokkaido, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2013	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.01.2014 – March.31.2019)	

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The Major in Entrepreneurship Program (hereafter, MIE Program) in the Graduate School of Commerce at the Otaru University of Commerce was founded with the unique purpose “to foster students’ deep knowledge and excellent abilities that allow them to take responsibility in professions requiring a high degree of specialization, and to cultivate persons of talent who can make contributions to regional economies and cultural developments.” The MIE Program as an academic program has operated by the only business school in Hokkaido, Japan. The MIE Program explains the notion of entrepreneurship and its educational purposes as follows. First, it defines entrepreneurship as an awareness and ability to pursue a wide range of “innovations.” Innovations here include new business developments in the existing corporations and organizational reforms in the companies and municipal governments. Then it states that its educational purposes are to cultivate “business leaders with abilities to increase the knowledge and skills in business management and to create business opportunities” and to foster “business innovators who can conceive plans for new business models and develop them into entrepreneurial projects.”

The MIE Program has made unique efforts appropriate for its own purposes, one of which is to foster persons of talents in the area of practice. It is important that the MIE Program hopes to make contributions to the regional developments by cultivating persons of talents who can confront squarely with various challenges Hokkaido’s economy has faced and who can deal with them. In particular, in order to cultivate such human talents, the MIE Program offers “Business Workshop” that allows students to analyze, strategically examine, and make plans in relation to business practices, responding to the challenges corporations in Hokkaido face.

It is also commendable that the MIE Program institutionalizes the educational methods that are effective in enhancing the teaching quality. In particular, in order to improve the quality of its classes, the MIE Program has instituted a system in which students evaluate classes by writing freely about the aspects of the classes they most appreciate and aspects they feel in need of improvement. The student evaluations are unsigned and take place before they receive grades. The responses are immediately given to the faculty, and the faculty members make efforts to improve their teaching methods and content in the next module they teach.

Furthermore, it is commendable that the MIE Program has devised a good plan concerning the venues where classes are held. In particular, while its base is at the Otaru main campus, the MIE Program established satellite classes offered in the building in front of the Sapporo railroad station, very convenient to students who have jobs to commute and take classes. At the same time, by offering satellite classes in Sapporo (which is the center of Hokkaido’s economy and business activities), the MIE Program has made efforts to further enhance the cooperation between regional industries, governments, and academia. It is important for business schools to cooperate with businesses. Thus, it can be said that the MIE Program’s holding satellite classes in Sapporo is effective in the joint research it conducts with local corporations as well as in inviting guest lecturers from business and other communities.

There are some matters to be improved in order for the MIE Program to offer better education. First, it is necessary to revise its plans for vision, strategy, and action.

The current plan is already eight years old; since then, there have been changes in the business environment that necessitates new action plans. Moreover, the MIE Program's faculty members are the main force behind the "business model workshops" (through which its strategic policies are made); however, it is more desirable to establish a system that can actively incorporate voices and ideas of other stakeholders such as businesses and students.

Second, it is necessary to put the diploma policies (policies to grant degrees) in a statutory form. Based on the university-wide mission currently in the process of being written, the requirements for MIE Program completion should be written up clearly. Moreover, Learning outcomes and standards at the point of program completion need to be clarified, reflecting the MIE Program's purpose of fostering the persons of talents.

Third, an enrichment of the curriculum is needed. For example, in the curriculum reforms scheduled for the near future, it is desirable to strengthen the educational content to cultivate professional ethics. Moreover, in order to prevent overlapping or gaps in educational content, it is necessary to expand opportunities for faculty members actually teaching MIE classes to coordinate class content appropriately. In particular, there is an issue of classes in which some subject matters (including the collaborative course offerings with Northwestern University) are offered based on personal connections of the particular faculty member in charge. Thus, it is urgent for the MIE Program to address the issue systematically and to build a system that can sustain itself without the faculty member in charge.

Fourth, it is necessary for the MIE Program to enhance the services provided at the Sapporo satellite site. Currently, no full-time staff members are stationed there. It has to be said that services for students are not sufficient. Students cannot use the satellite site on Saturdays and Sundays, which is inconvenient for students who wish to engage in group-work to prepare for classes. Measures should be taken to improve the situation. In addition, library collections should be further developed further to improve learning environment for those studying at the satellite site.

Fifth, it is necessary to revitalize and enhance efforts for student support. Recently, there have been some results of such efforts: the annual meeting of the "MBA Association," one of the alumni organizations, and questionnaires filled by the graduates. However, the MIE Program has not established a system in which current students and graduates, together as stakeholders, can continuously be involved in the MIE Program's educational activities. Such a system, if created, would add a sense of belonging among students and graduates, and can be an effective means for the MIE Program to incorporate outside perspectives in deciding its directions. Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) would like to suggest that the MIE Program consider creating such a system.

Overall, individual faculty members in the MIE Program engage in educational activities seriously with a high quality of teaching, and it has attained a high satisfaction rate among the students. However, in order to further develop the MIE Program as a business school, it is urgent to organize individual faculty members' efforts. As the only business school in Hokkaido, the MIE Program also needs to further enhance its presence and contributions to the regional economy. It needs to conduct continuous reforms in order to contribute to Hokkaido's economic developments. JUAA hopes that the MIE Program will further develop itself by extending its strengths.