

# **International Joint Accreditation**

**by JUAA and TWAEA**

## **The Accreditation Report For Akita International University**



Date of On-site Visit: 22 February, 2019

Date of Report: 20 June, 2019



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**Japan University Accreditation Association  
(JUAA)**

**Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association  
(TWAEA)**



## 1 Accreditation Status: Accredited

Validity Period: 1 October, 2019 to 30 September, 2025

On the evidence considered by the Review Team, Akita International University meets International Joint Accreditation Standards which is set by the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) and the Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA).

This report is to certify that the accreditation is conferred based on the related regulations of "International Joint Accreditation Standards." For Akita International University, the achievement of the six standards is shown in Table 1 and Figure 1.

Standard 1: Mission, Goals & Strategy	5	Standard 4: Faculty	3
Standard 2: Internal Quality Assurance	5	Standard 5: Social Connection	4
Standard 3: Teaching & Learning	4	Standard 6: Governance	4

Table 1: The achievement results of each standard

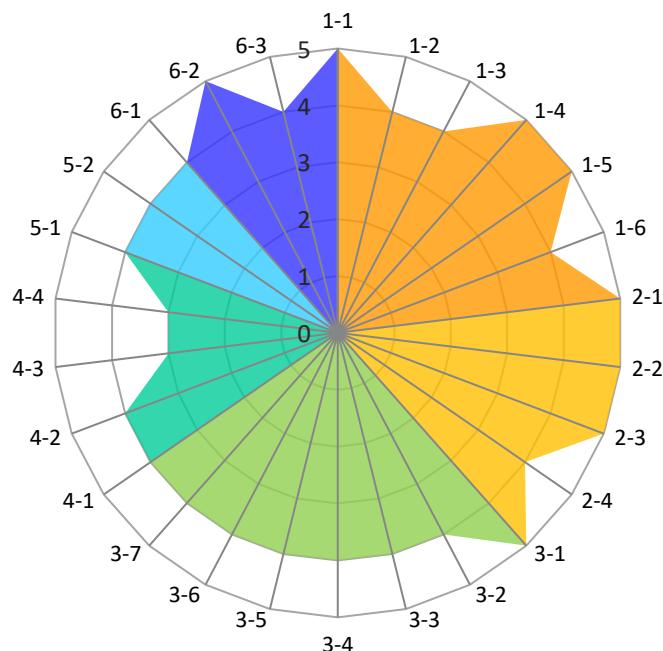


Figure 1: The achievement results of each indicator

Performance Level		Reference Standard
5	<b>Excellent</b>	Results are excellent and distinctive in every aspect. The HEI fully achieves its visions and goals, and its performance is outstanding.
4	<b>Very good</b>	Results are excellent and distinctive, and there is appropriate evidence.
3	<b>Good</b>	The implementation of the basic requirements of the university is effective and has sufficient evidence to prove it.
2	<b>Requiring improvement</b>	The implementation situation has not reached the basic requirements for operating a university, or the implementation results have not met the standards, or the supporting information is insufficient.
1	<b>Insufficient</b>	There is a significant gap between the implementation situation and the basic requirements for operating a university, or there is no specific planning or action, or there is a major lack of implementation.

## 2 Executive Summary

Akita International University (AIU) is inaugurated as a public university corporation with a mission to educate people to be capable of leading the global community. As the first Public University Corporation founded in 2004, AIU is mainly subject to the Local Independent Administrative Agencies Law. Faculty of International Liberal Arts (Global Business Program and Global Studies Program) and Professional Graduate School are created to pursue the missions and goals based on the University Regulations.

The Mid-Term Targets of AIU is a six-year plan from 2016 to 2022 with two goals: (1) to improve the quality of its international liberal arts education to a globally competitive level and also offer more learning (global and local) opportunities, and (2) to promote the globalization and invigoration of the region and also help address issues by utilizing various educational resources, while the University Long-Term Vision is a 10-year plan from 2014 on, takes on the challenges to change the higher education landscape in Japan.

Mission and goal of the university are clearly determined and all the strategies and processes to achieve the goals are well scheduled for both the Faculty of International Liberal Arts toward producing leader candidates for the global community and Professional Graduate School toward training highly competent professionals to play significant roles in the global community. The globalization initiatives have shown effective commitments, such as teaching all classes in English, all undergraduates to study abroad

for one year, international partnerships, and adopting external examinations as assessment standard.

AIU has university-wide internal quality assurance policies and procedures required herein are clearly defined and established by the Mid-Term Targets and Plans. University committees are setup to oversee levels of internal quality assurance and the internal quality assurance system has worked effectively. The appointment of “non-Japanese” members on the committees is closely related to the AIU missions and goals and can increase the effectiveness of the system.

AIU has set policies on degree award, curriculum design and implementation, and student admission on regulatory bases and these policies are related each other. Bidirectional classes, Project-Based Learning (PBL) courses, flipped classroom are well developed for better and in-depth teaching and learning. Studying abroad for one year is required to complete the undergraduate course, which is effective in cultivating global leaders in both global studies program and global business program. On average, an AIU student will receive 26 credits from the partner university during the Study Abroad Program (C- or higher). Students have been receiving high-quality education, and growing English proficiency, advanced knowledge and skills of multiple subjects before they study abroad. The average TOEIC® TEST score is 893. The result proves that AIU has successfully equipped its students with outstanding English language skills.

All new first-year students at AIU are required to live in the dormitory. Therefore, the culture, history and perspectives can be shared among students from different countries. Living in a dormitory is an integral part of international liberal arts education and it allows students to manage the study and life balance. Besides the dormitory life, it is also great to have a library which is open for 24 hours to help students who are working late at night.

The Professional Graduate School attentively coordinates with the community by effectively using the products and results of the internal or university-industrial joint research projects, and offers new learning opportunities to the students. Since many graduates of the English Language Teaching Practices (ELT) program strongly hope to find their jobs in public schools and the Graduate School, the Graduate School often receives the requests from local or regional education committees across the country to include the placement talks in their training programs. The ELT planning team not only offers the placement talks, but also keeps close connections with these regional education committees year-round.

The Japanese Language Teaching Practices (JLT) program's research commitments include the university-industrial joint research projects with 8 Japanese universities, 8 governmental-private Japanese language institutes, and 39 overseas universities and institutions where AIU graduates work in 16 countries and one region. The JLT program has the reciprocal visiting and interview plans with the above Japanese and overseas institutions.

To maintain and enhance the coordination with the practitioners in journalism, public relations, and commercial sectors, and positively include the research products and survey results of these sectors in the teaching content as part of the "Introduction to International Public Relations" and "International Journalism," the Global Communication Practices (GCP) program team conducts on-site inspection, visits the main public relations agencies in Tokyo and the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan (FCCJ), attends the meetings of the Japan National Press Club, and communicates with the professional practitioners.

AIU has a support system for faculty members in Faculty Development, Sabbatical System etc. AIU's recruitment, hiring and promotion system of faculty members functions well. Hiring, promotion, and tenure system are working well according to related regulations, especially personnel policy. Performance-based faculty salary system is impressive. The university has set up the Faculty Development Committee and Related Initiatives. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Learning Management System (LMS) are used to facilitate the teaching. The policies of teacher's eligibility and organization of faculty are consistent with the university's visions.

Despite the fact that AIU has a well-designed, on-going faculty development system, the use of research outcomes and the cooperation with industry have not been widely achieved due to its being a liberal arts university. But there have been some prominent activities, such as the close coordination between the Professional Graduate School and the community by effectively using the results of the joint research projects and offering new learning opportunities to the students; the university-industrial joint research projects with 8 Japanese universities, 8 governmental-private Japanese language institutes, and 39 overseas universities and institutions; the survey conducted to enhance the coordination with the practitioners in journalism, public relations, and commercial sectors and its research products and survey results used in teaching.

AIU works with society on the basis of its policy on social cooperation. PBL and Commercially Funded Courses are good practices. ELT students get training experience by

working with schoolteachers to provide administrative and teaching services to the “English Village” for junior and high school students. AIU faculty members participate in the “Teachers Seminar” program which helps training elementary schoolteachers across Akita Prefecture in foreign language education. Collaboration with JR East to establish “sustainable Heritage Tourism in Tohoku Region” is the unique and effective project to achieve the mission of AIU.

AIU is a publicly-funded university to be established as a corporation to promote more efficient and streamlined organizational management. Staff evaluation is conducted through personal interviews between the “inspectors” and the “inspectees”. Goals, recommendations and other opinions are considered in the interviews. Therefore, staff evaluation is not only an approach to determine an employee’s salary, but also the assistance in improving the employee’s professional performance and developing an expansive career path.

AIU is fully run and managed according to applicable rules and laws, including the Local Incorporated Administrative Agencies Law, Bylaws, Industrial Practices Statement, and Articles of Internal Management. These regulations have been evaluated internally and externally, including a thorough examination on the implementation and consideration by the institutions, University and Professional Graduate School Self-Evaluation Committee, External Evaluation Committee, and Local Incorporated Administrative Agency Evaluation Committee. The evaluation results are returned to the management of the university for continuous improvement of its performance.

Generally speaking, AIU is being managed in an absolutely appropriate way. However, there are rooms for improvements and allows the university to work its way up.

First, in regard to the Internal Quality Assurance System, it would be better to cultivate professional faculty members and staffs to act leading roles in the related works. AIU’s responsibilities related to the evaluations become greater than usual due to the necessity of cross coordination, diversity and frequency of the evaluation plans.

Second, as the trend of “Big Data” has attracted the attentions from both the industries and technical fields recently, the higher education is also motivated by “Big Data” and empirical information to commence the Institutional Research (IR) for management. IR analysis on advancing teaching, research and administration help the university move one step further.

Third, in order to allow for the cultivation of skillful global leaders in line with societal requirements and the University's strategy, it would be advisable to have a system to increase University income from private industries.

Regarding the administration and facility support provided for students, more financial support and better financial management instructions are needed to help ensure students receive quality, meaningful, and needed services. The housing capacity of the student apartments is not sufficient to accommodate all students who wish to live on campus. Moreover, some facilities and equipment constantly need repair and updating to operate effectively and efficiently.

As AIU expands its reputation worldwide, it is good to work with the local community as well as the prefecture to exemplify its missions and goals. There are rooms to broaden the level of cooperation. Industry-academic collaboration is effective in some cases, but it may be better to expand to collaboration with more number of industries.

Finally, with the amendment to the "Local Incorporated Administrative Agencies Law" published recently, internal governance shall be furnished accordingly as soon as possible.

The globalization initiatives of AIU have shown effective commitments and help pave the way for long-term success. With the effort put together towards achieving the targets, it is expectable that AIU will be of increasing international visibility and receive reputation gains both domestically and internationally.

### 3 Strengths, Specialties and Recommendations

#### 3.1 Strengths and Specialties

##### (Standard 1) Mission, Goals and Strategy

- AIU defines appropriately its mission and goals in the University Regulations and the Graduate School Regulations. Moreover, AIU makes the Mission Statement that declares the philosophy of AIU on the basis of these regulations. AIU also sets the Long-Term Vision and the concept paper of Top Global University Project in parallel to promote its strategy on internationalization.
- All the strategies and processes to achieve the goals are well scheduled for both the Faculty of International Liberal Arts toward producing leader candidates for the global

community and the Professional Graduate School toward training highly competent professionals to play significant roles in the global community.

- University missions and goals are defined and published in AIU Total Management System (ATOMS) intranet, official websites, school brochures, student application information, and student handbooks, to get well informed and understood by the members of the university and the general public.
- The globalization initiatives have shown effective commitments, such as teaching all classes in English, all undergraduates to study abroad for one year (187 students for the Faculty of International Liberal Arts), international partnerships (177 foreign students, 55% of the full-time Faculty are foreigners), and adopting external examinations (TOEFL®, IELTS) as assessment standard.

### (Standard 2) Internal Quality Assurance

- AIU has university-wide internal quality assurance policies and procedures required herein are clearly defined and established by the Mid-Term Targets and Plans. Internal quality assurance system of the University has been well established and worked effectively including the External Evaluation Committee with non-Japanese members. Along with External Reviewing systems, it allows the University to continuously take advantages in the global education field as a global standard.
- Collaborations are seen and implemented among the University Management Committee, the Management Deliberation Committee, the Academic Affairs Executive Committee, the Graduate School Management Committee, the University and Professional Graduate School Self-Evaluation Committee, the External Evaluation Committee, and the Administration Office. Their respective duties of supervision and review are clearly determined. Each Committee will provide the internal quality assurance on a regular basis.
- The IR Specialist analysis of (1) pre-admission and post-admission performance to help re-designing the entrant selection program, (2) student course evaluation and satisfaction survey to improve the quality of teaching and university management, are good and effective examples to support internal quality assurance system.

### (Standard 3) Teaching & Learning

- AIU has set all three policies on regulatory bases and these policies are related each other. AIU has a system to examine appropriateness and integrity of these policies. AIU has a good system of supporting student learning, for example Academic Advising System,

Research Paper Assistance. AIU also has a system to assess Student Learning Outcomes by using a Collegiate Learning Assessment.

- A student will receive a BA degree from AIU that: (1) the student has studied at AIU for a minimum of four years and has completed all the required academic courses to earn a total of 124 credits or more, (2) the student has attained a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.00 or greater, (3) the student has completed his or her study abroad requirement. Half of the undergraduate students took more than four years to graduate, which shows that AIU's persistence in nurturing the students achieving the educational goals.
- Studying abroad for one year is required to complete the undergraduate course, which is effective in cultivating global leaders in both global studies program and global business program. The required course ECN401 taken after study abroad spans the learning before, throughout, and after the overseas experience demonstrates the proficiency of educational goals of the Global Business (GB) program.
- The University provides EAP program at the first year, which is required and intended to nurture "the capability to use English and/or other languages to interact with people from diverse culture and linguistic backgrounds and work with them in an effective manner." The students are assisted to acquire the English language proficiency required to receive and understand academic teaching given in English, and also to communicate their thinking effectively in spoken and written forms.
- Group discussion and other self-initiated learning activities are extensively adopted in the courses in the Faculty courses. The small-group instruction in the Faculty of International Liberal Arts and the student Academic Grade Group allow the faculty members to pay closer attention to individual students.
- To support the internship program (a required elective course) in the GCP program, coordination with the local cable TV company, banks, and businesses in Tokyo area is maintained and increased to assure acceptance of AIU interns on a continuous basis.
- All the first-year students at AIU are required to live in the dormitory, 80% students live on campus, and 60% of graduate students live in the Graduate House. Most of the students reside in the University campus, which allows ones to relatively manage his or her study-to-life balance. Living in the dormitory is an integral part of International Liberal Arts education.

#### (Standard 4) Faculty

- Hiring system of faculty members is well conducted to recruit and hire ones with advanced professional knowledge, strong teaching skills and high motivation to contribute to the education provided by the University, which is at the level of global standard.

- For better quality of education, each year FD sessions for teaching practices workshop are planned for all AIU faculty members. Use of ICT and LMS are also included. In 2018, 6 sessions have been completed.
- Faculty annual evaluation covers categories in education, research and service. The faculty report is reviewed by their director or supervisor and the Annual Evaluation Review Committee. The Vice Presidents present the committee recommendations to the President, and the President's recommendations are presented to the University Management Committee for formal and final approval. The procedures and practices at AIU aim to be a fair, transparent, and comprehensive, based on multiple sources of information, and clearly stated expectations.
- The industry-academia joint research projects of the JLT program include the joint initiatives with 8 Japanese universities and 8 governmental-private Japanese language education institutions as well as with 39 overseas universities and institutions in 16 countries and one region where AIU graduates work. The products and findings are used to increase education and training opportunities for the students.

#### (Standard 5) Social Connection

- PBL course held in rural villages in Akita Prefecture and Thailand is unique and effective practice, in which students can learn actively and with autonomy about regional issues such as depopulation and the difficulty in keeping the local traditional culture and the potential roles that green tourism can play such as supporting sustainable maintenance of the “satoyama” landscape, which is well adapted to the mission of the University.
- The University is actively engaged in exchange programs with young residents in Akita Prefecture including schoolchildren, junior high and high school students as well as preschoolers. In academic year 2017, a total of 897 exchange students participated in 156 exchange sessions with schools and preschools in municipalities in the Prefecture, greatly contributing to accelerate multicultural understanding in local youth.
- The Institute for Asian Studies and Regional Collaboration has started from the academic year 2016, a JR East funded course “Sustainable Heritage Tourism in Tohoku Region” under cooperation agreement with the JR East Akita Branch Office. The course includes field work focusing on the effective use of cultural and other heritages found in Akita Prefecture, findings from which are presented by students in an open project report meeting. This is an effort to take an in-depth academic look into the possible forms of tourism promotion that can benefit Akita Prefecture in a meaningful manner.

### (Standard 6) Governance

- AIU has a good governing and management system based on its policies to realize its mission and to reach its goals. Its employee evaluation system functions well not only in determining the amount of salary but also in helping each employee to seek ways to improve his or her professional performance and to develop wider career paths.
- The chairman of the Board and the President who supervises corporation management and university management, respectively, are the same person, which enables the University to be steered under the leadership of the chairman of the Board/President.
- The University focuses on obtaining external input and appoints non-Japanese members to the committees, which is significantly related to the mission and goals of the University, to guarantee the maximum effectiveness of the system.

### 3.2 Recommendations

#### (Standard 2) Internal Quality Assurance

- It might be better to cultivate professional faculty members and staffs who have well experienced to act leading roles in the administration works and quality assurance works.
- Good management of the External Evaluation Committee will be required after completion of Top Global University Project.
- Overall, the university will receive various evaluations, including self-assessment and evaluation, institutional evaluation, certification evaluation, and external evaluation. Each evaluation requires different steps and documents, and specific awareness. Although multiple evaluations are important to the value and context of the university's operation, AIU's responsibilities related to the evaluations become greater than usual due to the necessity of cross coordination, diversity and frequency of the evaluation plans.
- Issues in advancing teaching, research and administration can be tasks for IR analysis. The institutional evaluation will include improvements from the previous review and move forward.

#### (Standard 3) Teaching & Learning

- Several teaching pedagogy approaches are used to improve learning outcomes, such as PBL and flipped classroom. Student learning portfolio can be collected and analyzed to show the performance advancement. Teachers can also use the findings to further refine the courses.
- Few students are suffering inferior financial conditions, and are not eligible for applying for the exiting funding programs due to various reasons. Some students are lacking financial

management and fail to repay their student loans and control the increasing amount. To solve these problems, more financial support and better financial management instructions are necessary.

- Some facilities and equipment at the school, such as the facilities in the student dormitory (Komachi Hall) and the apartments (University Village), are showing wear and tear, and need repair and updating.
- The housing capacity of the student apartments is not sufficient to accommodate all students who wish to live on campus. Although the school has been admitting more students, the dining hall remains the same size, and is unable to satisfy the students' needs. It is necessary to review and improve the fundamental facilities and the operation thereof. About 80% of the students are living at school, including many overseas students. Taking into account that the campus' location is away from the urban area, it is critical to put in the best efforts to provide a safe, happy and convenient campus environment to the students.

#### (Standard 4) Faculty

- In order to teach the students of Teacher's License Program (TLP) program to solve academic and research problems, as well as the issues arising from teaching practices, TLP teachers shall have high school teaching experience. Those who have served any administrative positions in high schools will be preferred during the recruitment.
- It may be better to have a system to increase University income from private industries, for allowing cultivation of skillful global leaders according to social requirement and strategy of University.
- As AIU expands its reputation worldwide, it is good to work with the local community as well as the prefecture to exemplify its missions and goals. There are rooms to broaden the level of cooperation.

#### (Standard 5) Social Connection

- It may be better to make connections with private companies in the field of data science area to develop innovating scientific fields of "open innovation" along with co-cultivating interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary global people.
- As a university emphasizing its global feature, it is key to show its presence to work with the industry and the society. The Mid-Term Targets can specify the expectations for the university to accomplish.

### (Standard 6) Governance

- The amendment to the “Local Incorporated Administrative Agencies Law” is effective as of April 2018. AIU is required to establish the “internal governance system” to ensure and audit their compliance with all regulations. AIU has made the “Internal Control Regulations,” and engaged in the discussions of taking actions quickly with the Internal Governance Committee, and other supervisory agencies. Internal governance shall be furnished as soon as possible.
- Due to the requirement of English proficiency for properly performing the administrative duties, AIU has met some difficulties in hiring qualified employees. Hiring AIU’s own graduates, or attempt to train AIU students, for these positions might be an effective solution to this problem.



## Appendix A: The Performance Indicators

<b>Standard 1: Mission, Goals &amp; Strategy</b>	
1	The goals of the university and each school and department are clear and specific, and the goals of each school and department can meet the goals of the university.
2	The university can set the strategy based on its mission and goals, and implement it.
3	The university can set the development goals and a mid- and long - term plan based on the analysis of their goals and internal condition and external environment.
4	The university goals are clear, and the development plans are specific and effective, and can be implemented.
5	The university can set a strategy on internationalization that meets its own conditions and implement it.
6	The university informs the university rules and institution information to academic and administrative staff and students, and publicizes to society.
<b>Standard 2: Internal Quality Assurance</b>	
1	The university sets the policy and procedures for internal quality assurance.
2	The university establishes internal quality assurance system and operates it.
3	The university reviews and improves the effectiveness of internal quality assurance system.
4	The university informs academic and administrative staff and students about information related to internal quality assurance and appropriately publishes it to society.
<b>Standard 3: Teaching &amp; Learning</b>	
1	The information disclosure about “teaching and learning” such as degree awards policy, curriculum design and implementation policy, and admission policy.
2	Rationality of curriculum planning for each degree program.
3	Rationality of the policy of faculty organization and the actual staffing in each schools and departments.
4	The academic staff provides the appropriate teaching methods and assessment methods for classes.

5	Assessment and evaluation of learning outcomes.
6	The support systems for student learning outcomes and its implementations.
7	Resources (software and hardware) such as campuses, buildings, space, and equipment can meet the needs for academic staff's teaching and research activities and student learning.
<b>Standard 4: Faculty</b>	
1	Faculty Development (FD) programs to promote for enhancement of academic staff's professional knowledge and teaching effectiveness.
2	Appropriateness of regulations such as appointment, promotion, and evaluation for academic staff, etc.
3	Academic staff's research and the results of industry-academia collaboration.
4	Return of faculty's research and educational achievement of industry-academia collaboration to education.
<b>Standard 5: Social Connection</b>	
1	Community cooperation, social service, and their implementation.
2	University contribution to society.
<b>Standard 6: Governance</b>	
1	Sustainable development strategy and its implementation.
2	Administration, academic organizations and various committees can be set up and operated in accordance with the needs of university operation and development.
3	The promotions of various growth activities of administrative staff that help improve administrative efficiency.

## Appendix B: Review Team

Name	Organization	Title
Shen-Li Fu*	I-Shou University	Honorary President & Distinguished Chair Professor
Yusuke Hori	Kanazawa University	Professor
Akinori Kimura	Tokyo Medical and Dental University	Vice-President
An-Chi Liu	Feng Chia University	Chair Professor/Former President
Yan-Kuin Su	Kun Shan University	Chair Professor/Former President

\*Chair

