

**Results for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation
for Professional Graduate Public Policy School**

Graduate School of Public Policy, Tohoku University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: National	Location: Miyagi, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2022	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2028)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for the Graduate School of Public Policy, Tohoku University

The unique purpose of the Graduate School of Public Policy of Tohoku University is to train public policy professionals with the skills to identify critical policy challenges and formulate, evaluate, and communicate the public policies to address them. With a strong focus on a field-centered approach, the Graduate School offers as its flagship course the Public Policy Workshop, which provides practical experience in achieving concrete objectives through close interactions with parties involved in policy development or those directly affected by the policy. Launched at the start of the Graduate School's opening, the workshop is a collective activity with four teams of students conducting research and developing policy recommendations by working closely with the communities in Sendai and other areas in Miyagi Prefecture and beyond in the Tohoku region. The goal of the workshop is to develop the necessary skills to identify specific challenges and devise feasible policy recommendations in light of the situation in Japan and the wider world. The Graduate School plays a leadership role in the local community by leveraging its world-class research and education, engaging in various initiatives aligned with local needs, conditions, and opportunities, such as exchanging opinions with local stakeholders through the Curriculum Coordination Council, forging a partnership agreement with the city of Yokote, Akita Prefecture, and participating in local community activities and policy development through the Public Policy Workshop. These activities reflect the Graduate School's firm commitment to building the foundations for sustainable development in the Tohoku region.

The Graduate School places the Public Policy Workshop at the core of its education. To achieve the objective of equipping students with the practical skills to formulate pragmatic public policies, the Graduate School pursues a consistent policy in all activities from curriculum development and teaching methods to student selection and faculty organization, including the hiring of practitioner instructors. A notable strength of the Public Policy Workshop is the smooth integration of theory and practice, with Level I of the course being team-taught by practitioner and academic instructors, and Level II being instructed by a research paper instructor with a focus on close communication with students. In addition, the Workshop Steering Committee has been established to systematically track and monitor the activity and progress of each student, and to ensure effective information-sharing

among the teaching staff. These notable features demonstrate that an institution-wide structure is in place to implement experience-oriented public policy education.

Also of note is the substantial financial support programs backing up the educational concept of the Public Policy Workshop. Such support includes generous financial assistance for students to cover their policy research expenses and the distribution of funds to the workshop Level I project team teachers for bulk-purchasing books and related course materials, providing incoming students with the necessary resources upon entering the Graduate School.

For the Public Policy Workshop to be successful, the quality of its teaching and management methods needs to be assured on a consistent basis. Maintaining the quality of practitioner instructors especially is a key challenge, as many are loaned from government offices, making on-going support for academic teachers and guidance to practitioner teachers imperative. The workshop is already cumbersome to operate, but in addition to teacher quality assurance, allocating adequate research time and balancing the burdens among teachers are also challenges that need to be addressed on a continual basis.

The curriculum structure is a distinctive feature of the graduate program. The Public Policy Workshop is at the heart of the curriculum, and the workshop is complemented by core and applied courses that cover theoretical and practical contents required of public policy professionals. More specifically, there are mandatory courses designed to complement the workshop's experience-oriented public policy education, and core courses like Basic Theory of Public Policy and Advanced Public Policy that cover fundamental academic theories and basics on the various areas of real-life public policy challenges. Increasing the course offerings as described above would allow the Graduate School to enhance its students' practical skills by building their theoretical foundation, which in turn would amplify its strengths. Going forward, the institution is advised to develop and improve its educational programs by continually innovating its curriculum.