

University Accreditation Results
(Results for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation for university)

Seinan Gakuin University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Fukuoka, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2017	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.01.2018 – March.31.2025)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Seinan Gakuin University

Overview

Seinan Gakuin University (hereafter, the University) was established in 1949 in the city of Fukuoka, Fukuoka Prefecture. Originally founded in 1916 as the private academy Seinan Gakuin, the University carries out education and research activities with an emphasis on character building based on Christian values. At the time of its opening, the University had one undergraduate Department of Liberal Arts, but now has seven, including the Departments of Theology, Literature, Commerce, Economics, Law, Human Sciences and Intercultural Studies, along with master's and doctoral courses that build on the undergraduate studies for each discipline in the Divisions of Theology, Literature, Business Administration, Economics, Law, Human Sciences, and Intercultural Studies. With the creation of the Clinical Psychology Master's Course in the Division of Intercultural Studies in 2016, the University's graduate level offering has increased to eight courses in seven divisions. In addition, the University has the School of Law dedicated to training legal professionals.

After its accreditation review by Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) in 2010, the University submitted an improvement report in 2014 detailing the actions taken to address the issues identified. This report and the FY2016 Self-Study Report submitted prior to this latest review show that the University has been tackling issues related to its curriculum, teaching methods, and faculty; however, problems remain in a number of areas, including the degree award policy and enrollment management.

In December 2014, the University developed the long-term "Seinan Gakuin Vision 2016-2025" designed to support the institution's progress beyond its centennial milestone, as well as a mission statement and the "Medium- to Long-Term Plan 2016-2025." These documents are made available to the university community and used as a guideline on governance and activities.

In terms of internal quality assurance, self-study is conducted annually by individual inspection units, each with an assigned audit area, and the units include the "Basic Issues Inspection Committee" and the "Undergraduate School Inspection Committee." The audits are carried out in accordance with the "Seinan Gakuin Self-Study Procedures," "Seinan Gakuin Self-Study Regulations," and other related rules, and performed against the institution's own achievement targets that take into account JUAA's evaluation criteria. The area-based self-study results are examined by the university-wide inspection and evaluation

board and then verified by the university-wide inspection and evaluation committee.

The review commends the Department of Law's support framework designed to develop self-directed learning skills. Other commendable features include the scholarship program voluntarily funded by the University's faculty and staff members aiming to increase scholarship opportunities for students; systematic learning assistance for students with disabilities; Seinan Children's Plaza, a social contribution activity that embodies support for parents and child caregivers; and a strong staff development program aiming to improve the capabilities of the administrative staff.

Weaknesses were identified in the degree award policy (diploma policy), the curriculum design and implementation policy (curriculum policy), and the admission policy at the graduate level. The University is also advised to make improvements to ensure the doctoral curriculum offers a suitable combination of research work and course work; revise the maximum number of credits a student can enroll in per year, which is currently too high for the Division of Childhood Education in the Department of Human Sciences; and improve its enrollment management for some of the undergraduate and graduate programs.

It should be mentioned that the School of Law underwent the Japan Law Foundation's certified evaluation and accreditation for professional graduate schools this fiscal year. This review therefore does not include evaluations for criteria No. 4 "Educational content, methods, and outcome" for the School of Law, and the criteria results are as given in the professional graduate school evaluation report.

Notable Strengths

Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome

- The Department of Law's learning support framework designed to develop self-directed learning skills is worthy of mention. In particular, the student assistant (SA) program and library tutors who critique assignments and offer writing support to first year students are fine learning support programs. Group work and other forms of active learning are effectively promoted by having SAs participate in small foundation course classes.

The SA system is a commendable component designed to benefit tutors as well as students. Attention is paid to the development of a strong team of tutors, with rigorous training delivered to all tutors-to-be in both general and role-specific training programs. With its success recognized across the University, the learning support framework has

become a model education initiative impacting institution-wide policy making, and similar programs are being considered and partially implemented in other departments as well.

Student Support

- After a series of discussions among related organizations on ways to strengthen assistance for students with disabilities, the University compiled the “Learning Assistance Guide for Students with Disabilities.” The booklet explains the procedures to identify students who may be eligible for assistance and determines their need for assistance. When determined that a student requires assistance, the specific details of the assistance are discussed and decided upon, a request for assistance is made, and afterwards a post-assistance evaluation is completed. It is commendable that on-going assistance is provided in a systematic manner, with faculty and staff of the relevant units working together and sharing information throughout the process.
- The University offers strong student financial support programs, such as scholarship programs and financial aid programs for study abroad and language proficiency exams. The “Scholarship Program funded by Faculty and Staff” to increase scholarship opportunities for students is especially notable. Given the limited funds available to assist students, the distribution of money donated by faculty and staff represents a unique model of scholarship.

Education and Research Environment

- The “Education Incubate Program” is designed to enhance education by advancing unique initiatives undertaken by different departments; the program accepts applications from short-term projects, seminar groups, and administrative units, and has supported various initiatives in the past. The “Research Incubate Program” was established to assist individual research projects and collaborative research involving multiple researchers by securing external research funding, such as Grants-in-Aid for Scientific Research. Projects that received funding from the Research Incubate Program for a period of time were in fact successful in securing the government grant. The review recognizes the program, which provides funding to selected projects based on the project period, as an effective tool for enhancing the quality of education and research.

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- The Volunteer Center offers a broad range of activities, including natural disaster volunteer work, overseas volunteer work, and the student supporter program. The Center publishes the “Volunteer Guidebook,” which introduces activities carried out in collaboration with government bodies, social welfare councils, other universities, or NPOs, along with projects organized by student groups. The booklet is a valuable source of inspiration for students, faculty, and staff to take their first step into social contribution. The Center is a widely known resource on campus, as demonstrated by the large number of student sign-ups. Seinan Gakuin strives to make the university-sponsored volunteer experience a learning opportunity by encouraging students to reflect on their work after completing their activities.
- The Seinan Children’s Plaza is a long-running child-rearing support project operated in collaboration with Fukuoka City. Deeply ingrained in the community, the Plaza is visited by numerous infants and their parents. The activities of the Plaza are supported not only by student volunteers but extra-curricular groups or teams as well. The Plaza offers activity opportunities not only for student volunteers but also for students who participate through classes and extra-curricular groups or teams, and hosts various events such as specialized counseling or lectures by faculty members. The community contribution program highlights the University’s unique strengths and is commendable.

Administration and Finance

- The University is commended for its active promotion of staff development under the systematic leadership of the “Staff Training Steering Committee,” evidenced by an extensive array of training programs offered on a variety of topics designed to enhance the skills of administrative staff. As part of this staff development effort, the University established the “Attributes and Attitudes Expected of Staff,” a code of conduct for university personnel, and published it in the Staff Training Guide 2016. It also encourages staff to participate in training programs across organizational boundaries.

Suggestions for Improvement

Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome

- The University is advised to define the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve at the end of their study in the degree award policy of the Master's and Doctoral Course in the Divisions of Theology, Literature, Business Administration, and Intercultural Studies.
- The curriculum design and implementation policy of the Master's Course in the Division of Theology merely explains the current curriculum, and the Master's Course in the Division of Intercultural Studies only provides the goals for dissertation writing. These divisions are advised to state the basic philosophy and principles of education content and methods in their policies.
- The combinations of research work and course work offered in the doctoral course curriculums are not appropriate. All graduate schools are advised to make improvements to ensure their education programs are suitable and in line with the purpose of the program-based graduate school system.
- The Division of Childhood Education in the Department of Human Sciences sets the maximum number of credits per year at 50 for first- and second-year students, 55 for third-year students, and 60 for fourth-year students. The division is advised to revise the upper limits, which are all higher than optimal, in consideration of the credit system.

Enrollment

- The University is advised to establish a separate admission policy for the Master's and Doctoral Courses of the Division of Law; Division of Business Administration; French Literature Course in the Division of Literature; Human Sciences Course in the Division Human Sciences; and Division of Intercultural Studies.
- The Department of Human Sciences is advised to address the disparities between enrollment and capacity, as the average ratio of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap over the past five years and the ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are high at 1.20 and 1.24, respectively, while the ratio of transfer students

to the transfer student enrollment cap is low at 0.45. The ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap is high at 1.25 in the Division of Intercultural Studies in the Department of Intercultural Studies, and should be lowered.

- The ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap should be higher in the following programs: Master's Course in Law, Division of Law (0.20); Master's Course, Division of Literature (0.43); Economics Course, Division of Economics (0.36); Doctoral Course, Division of Law (0.22); and Doctoral Course, Division of Economics (0.22).