

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

Soka University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Tokyo, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2014	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.01.2015 – March.31.2022)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Soka University

Overview

Soka University (hereafter, the University) was founded in 1971, and since then it has established several faculties, departments, and graduate schools and reorganized its academic and administrative units. In 2013, it consisted of seven faculties, the Faculty of Economics, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Letters, the Faculty of Business Administration, the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Engineering, and the Faculty of Nursing, four graduate schools, the Graduate School of Economics, the Graduate School of Law, the Graduate School of Letters, and the Graduate School of Engineering, and two professional graduate schools, the Law School and the Graduate School of Education. In addition, the Faculty of International Liberal Arts was established in 2014. The University has developed its research and educational activities based on its founding spirit, and its campus is located in Hachioji City, Tokyo.

Prior to this accreditation review, the Law School had already undergone professional graduate school accreditation review by the Japan Law Foundation (JLF) in 2012, and also the Graduate School of Education by the Institute for the Evaluation of Teacher Education in 2010. Thus, Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) reviewed the University this time by examining the improvements made after that time from the standpoint of University Accreditation (institutional certified evaluation and accreditation).

After its accreditation review by JUAA in 2007, the University has shown unique efforts in formulating and clearly stating learning outcomes for the university-wide common subjects, in identifying the correspondence and relationship between the subject matter and learning outcomes, and in conducting evaluations while developing evaluative indicators for achievements. However, there are some issues to address regarding educational content and methods in the graduate schools and the student enrollment. JUAA hopes that the University will further grow by making its internal quality assurance system more functional.

Notable Strengths

Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome

- It is commendable that the University has made university-wide efforts to improve teaching and learning with students. In particular, the syllabus for each subject contains the results of the previous year's student feedback and the general comments by the faculty member on the feedback. In so doing, the faculty members administer course evaluations, reflect on their teaching (based on the results), and make efforts to improve teaching and learning with students.
- It is commendable that the University has made original efforts to define and improve learning outcomes and indicators. For example, the University has formulated eight itemized learning outcomes which are related to three competencies: "knowledge base," which is what students know, "practical abilities," what students should be able to do, and "qualification as well-educated citizens," which identifies what students wish to do by using the knowledge and abilities they acquire. These learning outcomes are the embodiment of the educational purposes of university-wide common subjects, and they also show the relationships between and among the common subjects. The University also examines the associations between subjects and learning outcomes through the School for Excellence in Educational Development in order to develop indicators for student achievements.

This can be seen as a new frontier effort in learning outcomes.

Student Support

- It is commendable that the University has made significant efforts to involve students in the management of the University. In particular, it has set forth a “University-wide Conference” at which the board of trustees, faculty members, staff, and students discuss issues in university management. The Conference is held regularly at the university level as well as at each faculty level, and participants have discussed the matters related to student/campus life including the rise in tuition. By involving students in its management, the University implemented some improvements, such as a breakfast service for students for one hundred yen and a shuttle bus that runs between the University and central Tokyo.

Education and Research Environment

- It is commendable that the University has made efforts to enhance students’ use of the library. In particular, the library initiated the “Soka Book Wave,” a university-wide program to encourage students to read, in which students play a central role in holding lectures and exhibitions. It also involves graduate students in editing book reviews, which helps students improve their reading and writing skills. As a result of this initiative, the number of books borrowed from the library has constantly increased, indicating students’ effective use of the library and the University being successful in “reviving print reading material cultures.”

Suggestions for Improvement

Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome

- Curricula of the doctoral programs in the Graduate School of Economics, the Graduate School of Law, and the Graduate School of Letters do not appropriately combine research work and course work. Considering the purpose of the credit-based degree granting system, the doctoral program should offer appropriate educational content.
- In all of the graduate schools (except the professional degree programs), syllabi vary in their specificities in terms of course descriptions, schedule, content, and objectives. This should be improved.
- The Graduate School of Economics, the Graduate School of Law, the Graduate School of Letters, and the Graduate School of Engineering do not clearly state the research instruction plans to a sufficient degree. This should be improved.
- In the Graduate School of Engineering, requirements for program completion are clear, but are not disseminated to students before they undertake research. This should be improved by clearly stating the requirements in the “Graduate Student Handbook” and other handbooks.

Enrollment

- The ratio of enrolled students to the student enrollment cap is high at 1.22 in the Department of Humanities and at 1.23 in the Department of System Engineering. The ratio is low at 0.40 in the master’s program in the Graduate School of Economics and at 0.11 in the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Law. This

should be improved.