

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: 2021	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.1.2022 – March 31, 2029)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Soka University

Overview

The founding spirit of Soka University is to “be the highest seat of learning for humanistic education,” “be the cradle of a new culture,” and “be a fortress for the peace of humankind,” and it defines its purpose as “to impart knowledge broadly, to teach and research arts and sciences in depth, to promote holistic human development, and to contribute to the development of culture and the welfare of humankind.” In order to fulfill its founding spirit and purpose, the University has drawn up a medium- to long-term plan, “Soka University Grand Design 2021–2030,” and is working to enhance its educational and research activities.

Regarding internal quality assurance, the “Internal Quality Assurance Promotion Committee” (“Promotion Committee”), chaired by the President, is positioned as the body responsible for internal quality assurance, and a system has been established to oversee all educational activities conducted in accordance with the three policies (degree award policy, curriculum design and implementation policy, and admission policy), and to manage improvements and enhancements based on checks and reviews conducted by the “All-University Self-Assessment Committee.” It is hoped that going forward, this internal quality assurance system will be made functional and that appropriate revisions of the system will be made to improve learning outcomes.

Regarding education, curricula have been appropriately organized based on the degree award policy (diploma policy) and the curriculum design and implementation policy (curriculum policy). In addition, for undergraduate education, faculty members take a class design training course to promote class creation that incorporates active learning, and workshops with standardized content are held by each department. In addition, three “assessment gates” are established before graduation, and students engage with their own learning based on rubric evaluations in designated assessment courses, while faculty members also work to visualize learning outcomes by examining students’ reflections on their work. These initiatives have resulted in an increase in student study time, which is highly commendable.

In addition, the University’s faculty development (hereinafter “FD”) activities are highly commendable for their systematic and continuous development of multifaceted training activities in line with the issues involved. For example, in

accordance with organizational positioning by the “School for Excellence in Educational Development,” the “All-University FD/SD Committee” and its implementing body, the “Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning” (CETL) work together to conduct FD activities in an organized and multifaceted manner. This includes not only FD that incorporates training camps involving measures for promoting active learning, but also FD for class improvement based on the introduction of teaching portfolios. In student support, particularly study support, the provision of services that lead to effective learning and improvement of academic writing skills is commendable. These include study support services such as paper writing, note-taking, and study counseling at the “Student Performance Acceleration Center” (SPACe), which provides comprehensive support for student learning, and the paper tutoring and diagnosis services offered at “learning seminars” conducted by faculty members who teach the university-wide compulsory Academic Writing course and graduate student tutors.

However, there are issues to be improved, especially at the graduate school level. Some graduate schools’ degree award policies do not indicate the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other learning outcomes appropriate for the relevant degrees, and some graduate schools have low ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap. This should be improved.

Going forward, the JUAA would like to see the University make greater progress by resolving these issues through internal quality assurance efforts and further developing its distinctive initiatives.

Notable Strengths

Mission and Purpose

- At the beginning of the academic year, a briefing session for faculty members is held in which the President himself gives explanations of the medium- to long-term plan, “Soka University Grand Design 2021–2030,” and the “President’s Vision,” which defines specific action plans for each academic year, ensuring that the plans are understood and shared throughout the University. It is also commendable that, based on a common understanding among the University’s members, it is not only working systematically to fulfil its philosophy and purpose by implementing the medium-term plan, but is also constantly monitoring its progress in order to further enhance the plan, leading to early realization of the plan and other positive results.

Educational Program and Learning Outcomes

- In principle, all faculty members in the undergraduate program take “Class Design Training,” which promotes the creation of classes incorporating active learning, and training sessions with standardized content are conducted in each faculty. In addition, three “assessment gates” are established before graduation, and students engage with their own learning based on rubric evaluations in designated assessment courses, while faculty members also work to visualize learning outcomes by examining students’ reflections on their work. Furthermore, the results of student class surveys are commented on by faculty members and made public within the University, helping faculty members to improve their classes and students to select classes. These efforts are commendable as they stimulate student learning by increasing students’ out-of-class study time.

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- Close cooperation between the University-wide FD/SD Committee and its implementing body, the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), takes place in accordance with organizational positioning by the Undergraduate Curriculum Education Organization. In addition to FD that includes training camps involving measures for promoting active learning, multifaceted training activities that meet the needs of each issue, such as FD for class improvement based on the introduction of teaching portfolios, are being conducted in a systematic and continuous manner, which is commendable.

Student Support

- The Student Performance Acceleration Center, an organization that provides comprehensive support for student learning, offers learning support services such as advice on paper writing and note-taking, as well as study counselling at the counter (help desk). In particular, the “learning seminars,” conducted by faculty members who teach the university-wide compulsory Academic Writing course and graduate student tutors, have been used by a large number of students and are commendable for contributing to effective student learning, improved academic writing skills, and increased study time.

Education and Research Environment

- In accordance with its policies, such as the founding spirit and educational goals,

the University has established a “Policy on the Improvement of the Environment for Education and Research,” and based on its medium- to long-term plan, “Soka University Grand Design 2021–2030,” it has committed to campus development as a measure to strengthen its operating base. This includes a medium- to long-term financial plan and a campus development plan that reflects student input. In addition, the plan sets targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in order to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is commendable that, in accordance with this plan, the University is actively promoting energy optimization and energy conservation in existing buildings, while enhancing the network environment and developing the Learning Commons.

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- While developing various partnerships with private companies, various research institutes, local communities, and elementary and junior high schools, in recent years, the University has been working with researchers in developing countries to solve local environmental problems, and has contributed to research activities in the Asia region by holding international symposia and seminars at its overseas offices established in four Asian countries. It is commendable that under its medium- to long-term plan, the University has been conducting multifaceted joint research not only with the local community but also internationally, and has shared its research results with the international community.

Suggestions for Improvement

Educational Program and Learning Outcomes

- The degree award policies for the Master’s and Doctoral Programs in Sociology at the Graduate School of Letters do not indicate the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other learning outcomes appropriate for the relevant degrees. This should be improved.

Student Enrollment

- The ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap for the Doctoral Program at the Graduate School of Law is low at 0.22. This should be improved to ensure proper graduate student quota management.