

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

Tokyo Union Theological Seminary



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Tokyo, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2019	
Accreditation Status: Accredited (Accreditation Period: April 1.2020 – March 31.2027)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary

Overview

The Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (hereinafter referred to as the “Seminary”) clearly states its intention to “nurture ministers of the United Church of Christ in Japan” in the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary Act of Endowment (hereinafter referred to as the “Act of Endowment”). Based on the Act of Endowment, the Seminary states as its mission and purpose “to nurture ministers (pastors and missionaries) who study Christian theology and engage in evangelization.” The Seminary consists of the Bachelor of Divinity Program in the Faculty of Divinity and the Biblical Theology Program and Systematic Theology Program in the Graduate School of Divinity, features the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary Research Institute, and has formulated the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary Basic Plan for Campus Improvement with the aim of making its campus more appealing. However, the Seminary has not established a mid- to long-term plan for the future development of its educational and research activities. A plan should be formulated.

With regard to internal quality assurance, the Seminary established an internal quality assurance structure centered around the Internal Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee in AY2018. However, the cooperative relationship between organizations is unclear, and sufficient measures for improvement have not been implemented based on the results of self-study. Going forward, the Seminary should develop an appropriate internal quality assurance system and ensure that it functions effectively.

As for education, the Seminary focuses on training ministers through an integrated educational system incorporating an undergraduate and master’s program, and has organized systematic curricula for its faculty and graduate school. The Seminary provides extensive learning-related advice to students. Homeroom teachers assigned to each grade interview all students individually and respond to their individual needs in a meticulous manner. The Seminary uses academic grades and theses as indicators for measuring the learning outcomes that students have attained through the aforementioned educational system, and uses common benchmarks designed to partially correspond to the learning outcomes indicated in the degree award policy when assessing individual subjects and theses. However, the Seminary should make further improvements in order to measure learning outcomes in a more diversified manner.

As part of student support, the Seminary promotes extracurricular church

activities such as the Summer Missionary Internship and Seminary Day Church Mission, and provides students with the opportunity to develop practical experience as ministers under the organizational leadership of the Church Training Committee. These are remarkable endeavors. The Seminary offers a variety of scholarship programs, of which the designated scholarship program is particularly notable. This program has promoted cooperation with various churches through requests for support from faculty members, presentations and services performed by recipient students, and other means, increased its supporters and funding, and provided scholarships to many students. This is a highly commendable endeavor.

On the other hand, the Faculty of Divinity is not gathering enough students, and has thus failed to fulfill its quota. Although measures have been taken to promote student recruitment, they have not yet led to tangible results. Therefore, the Seminary urgently needs to work on improving the situation. Issues with policy formulation, specification of research supervision plans, and faculty development (hereinafter referred to as “FD”) activities, among others, are especially apparent in the graduate school. Therefore, the Seminary should implement measures for improvement.

Going forward, we hope the Seminary solves these issues through its internal quality assurance system, and accelerates its many distinctive initiatives for further enhancement of education quality.

Notable Strengths

Student Support

- The Seminary conducts extracurricular training programs at various churches, including the Summer Missionary Internship and Seminary Day Church Mission. Faculty members of the Church Training Committee gather information on the training details from the churches, provide participant students with guidance and advice prior to, during, and after the training based on that information, and also offer guidance on preaching. In this way, the Seminary provides active support to churches and students according to their individual situation. It is commendable that the Seminary has developed close ties with students and churches and provides students with a variety of opportunities to develop practical experience in churches.
- Each year, the Seminary provides multiple scholarship programs such as the general scholarship program, designated scholarship program, auxiliary scholarship program,

and enrollment scholarship program, all of which are funded by donations. Efforts are made to maintain these programs. For example, in order to maintain the designated scholarship program, all full-time faculty members visit various churches to make requests and presentations to supporters and ask for donations. Furthermore, the Seminary has gradually increased program supporters and funding through asking recipient students to send thank-you letters to supporters, perform services at churches, and engage in similar activities. It is commendable that the Seminary carefully takes into account the circumstances of individual students when conducting scholarship recipient screening so that students who are in need are selected, and that many students have been able to receive a scholarship.

Suggestions for Improvement

Internal Quality Assurance

- The Seminary has established the Internal Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee as the organization responsible for implementing internal quality assurance policy and procedures and promoting internal quality assurance. However, since the Internal Quality Assurance Enhancement Committee, faculty council, and Self-Study Committee all take part in the formulation of measures for improvement based on the results of self-study, the relationship between and individual roles of these organizations are unclear. Moreover, such measures have not always led to satisfactory results. Therefore, the Seminary should ensure that its internal quality assurance system functions appropriately.

Educational Program and Outcome

- The Master of Divinity Program and Doctor of Theology Program do not present the basic ideas on curriculum organization in the curriculum design and implementation policy. This should be improved.

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- The master's programs do not conduct sufficient education-related FD activities independently. This should be improved.

Education and Research Environment

- Regular organizational efforts targeting faculty members, including the holding of research ethics-related workshops, are lacking. This should be improved.

Recommendations

Student Enrollment

- The Master of Divinity Program and Doctor of Theology Program have the same admission policy, even though the programs provide different degrees. This should be corrected.
- In the last five years, the average of ratios of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap and the ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap have been low at 0.36 and 0.59, respectively, in the Bachelor of Divinity Program in the Faculty of Divinity (i.e. the entire faculty). This should be corrected.