

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

Aomori University of Health and Welfare



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Public	Location: Aomori, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2016	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.01.2017 – March.31.2024)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Aomori University of Health and Welfare

Overview

Aomori University of Health and Welfare (hereafter, the University) opened in 1999 in Aomori City, Aomori Prefecture, as a four-year public university. The University's goal is to train professionals with fundamental knowledge and skills in health sciences who can adjust to comprehensive care systems and lead health, medical care, and welfare initiatives in Aomori Prefecture. The University began with the Faculty of Health Science and three departments: The Department of Nursing, the Department of Physical Therapy, and the Department of Social Welfare. The University added the Department of Nutrition to train administrative nutritionists in 2008, bringing the number of departments to four. In 2003, the Master's program in the Graduate School of Health Science began training practitioners with advanced expertise and broad knowledge aimed at improving the health, medical care, and welfare in Aomori Prefecture. In 2005, the University established a doctoral program and in 2008, ten years after its foundation, the University was incorporated and restarted as a public institution, Aomori University of Health and Welfare.

After its accreditation review by Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) in 2009, the University has addressed the reformation of the following areas: "educational and research organization," "educational content and methods," "research environment," "faculty organization," "administrative organization," and "books and electronic media," many of which have been found to meet the standards in this accreditation review. To implement these reforms, the University launched a committee for continuous quality improvement to address the problems caused by the vertically based, faculty- and section-centered setup by adopting a horizontally based, cross-school approach, thus developing a mechanism to run the PDCA cycles for continuous improvements.

Consistent efforts have been made to fulfill the University's objectives and philosophy. For example, a recently introduced strategy—the promotion of "health literacy," aligns with the measures of "Health Aomori 21 (the Second Stage)," initiated by Aomori Prefecture. The University is expected to undertake the strategic promotion of citizens' health through human resource development and research to further promote social contribution.

"Health literacy" has been introduced as a new strategy of education and research for undergraduates and graduates at the University, and the curriculum of the four departments and the graduate school will be revised under this basic strategy. Undergraduate students are expected to learn about issues that involve the local community and graduate students are to study issues reflecting the needs of the local community. These student efforts will spread positive effects throughout the area.

It is commendable that the University has actively engaged in faculty development to improve the quality of research and teaching. Its efforts include the use of Faculty Development (FD) Maps as a guide to help junior faculty members grow and develop, and to give them the opportunity for research presentations across departments.

Students at the University have found education and campus life highly satisfactory because the faculty is very close with students. The faculty has developed and maintained exceptional communication with students, and this reliable relationship has made it possible for a number of students supports to be implemented effectively. It is commendable that students are consistently supported from the time of admission through graduation, as well as in their pursuit of employment and training after graduation.

However, several problems have been identified. In terms of “faculty and faculty organization,” there are an insufficient number of professors in the University according to the Standard for Establishment of Universities. It is urgent that this issue be improved as soon as possible. Several other concerns that need to be addressed include: The policy on degree award in the Faculty of Health Science that states only the required number of years and credits for the course but fails to stipulate required learning outcomes; the ratio of transfer students to the transfer student admission cap that is low; the lack of regulations on credit transfers from other universities stipulated in the graduate school; and lack of definition and clarification of criteria for examining degree-seeking theses and dissertations. JUAA expects that hereafter; the University will make further efforts to improve these issues.

Notable Strengths

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- It is commendable that efforts have been made to enhance the talents of faculty members. In particular, the University uses the FD Map as a guideline to help faculty members grow and develop and to clarify their individual objectives. In addition, providing junior faculty members across faculties opportunities to present research leads to vitalization of research activities.

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- It is commendable that the University has made efforts to attain its objective of enhancing “health literacy” by sponsoring extension courses and providing training to develop human resources in local communities. These efforts satisfy the goals of “Healthy Aomori 21 (the Second Stage),” formulated by Aomori Prefecture, as a public university while collaborating with local governments and NPOs in Aomori Prefecture. It is particularly noteworthy that the University gives students an opportunity to become involved in “Aomori Nebuta Festival with Assistance,” where students help elderly and disabled individuals in wheelchairs enjoy the festival, learn volunteer activities, and play a part in the promotion of normalization.

Suggestions for Improvement

Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome

- In the Faculty of Health Science, the policy on degree award only states the minimum years of enrollment and required number of credits but does not indicate the required learning outcomes. This should be improved.
- In the Graduate School of Health Science, students may claim up to ten credits earned in other graduate schools prior to admission, but this is not stated in any regulations. This should be improved.
- In the Graduate School of Health Science, the criteria for examining degree-seeking theses and dissertations are not clearly defined. These criteria should be clearly defined and stated in the graduate student’s handbook to inform students.

Enrollment

- The ratio of transfer students to the transfer student admission cap is low at 0.25 in the Department of Social Welfare, 0.67 in the Department of Nutrition, and no transfer students in the Department of Physical Therapy. These numbers should be improved.

Area of Serious Concern*Faculty and Faculty Organization*

- In 2016, the number of the professors is insufficient to satisfy the Standard for Establishment of Universities. The University must hire another one professor.