

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

Hirosaki Gakuin University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Aomori, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2017	
Accreditation Status: unaccredited	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results For Hirosaki Gakuin University

Overview

The University Standards of the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) states “As an institution of higher education and pivotal organization in academic research that respects academic freedom, the mission of the university is to advance science and contribute to social development by fostering capable human resources possessing a strong sense of humanity, enhancing the creation and application of knowledge and technology, and preserving and passing on the arts and sciences. Each university is mindful of this mission, maintains standards appropriate to an institution of higher education and strives to realize its own mission and purpose by continual self-regulation of its organization and activities to improve and enhance its organizational potential.”

As a result of the evaluation based on the above university standards, JUAA found that Hirosaki Gakuin University (hereafter, the University) has a number of material issues including the following.

First of all, with respect to faculty members and faculty structure, a lack of full-time faculty members was indicated in the previous accreditation review by JUAA. Although the number of full-time faculty members required under law was satisfied at the time of the re-review, the full-time faculty members in the university as a whole was short by 1 in 2016 and the number of graduate school assistant supervisors at the Japanese Literature Master's Course at the Graduate Course of Liberal Arts was short by 1. Moreover, as of May 1, 2017, the number of full-time faculty members was short by 6 (3 of which were professors) in the University as a whole, and the number of research supervisors was short by 1 at the Japanese Literature Master's Course at the Graduate Course of Liberal Arts and by 2 at the Master's Course of Human Welfare at the Graduate Course of Social Welfare. A professor was hired at the Faculty of Nursing in October 2017, which resulted in a lack of five full-time faculty members (two of which were professors) across the University as a whole, but there is still a shortage of research supervisors at the Japanese Literature Master's Course at the Graduate Course of Liberal Arts and at the Human Welfare Master's Course at the Graduate Course of Social Welfare. Recruitment including open recruitment has started to improve the situation, but the lack of full-time faculty members is affecting the placement of faculty members and educational activities and needs to be rectified as soon as possible.

Secondly, issues with respect to student enrollment were pointed out in the previous accreditation review, and despite signs of improvement at the time of the re-review, it was pointed out that fundamental reforms are required. As a result, the former Strategy Council was renamed the New Strategy Council, in which faculty members consistently conduct activities including analyzing the results of admission exams each year, verifying the modality of entrance exams by commendation and the effect of the media strategy, and visiting high schools. Despite those efforts, the enrollment numbers at faculties and graduate courses other than the Faculty of Nursing are still significantly below the enrollment quota. Due to this, the ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap of the University as a whole was low in both 2016 and 2017, so the University needs to make efforts to fulfill the quota.

Thirdly, with respect to administration and financial affairs, following the indication related to financial affairs in the previous accreditation review and the re-review, the University has made efforts to reduce labor costs and expenses and made the corporation-wide balance between operational revenue and expenditure positive since 2013, but it has not been able to establish a financial basis sufficient to conduct education and research. The university also established the “Four-Year Plan (from 2013 to 2016) Marking the 130th Anniversary of the Foundation of Hirosaki Gakuin University” and worked for improvement, but since the completion of that plan, no mid- to long-term financial plan has been formulated. The University is currently taking measures such as reducing tuition fees to enhance the admission of students, so it needs to formulate future financial plans with a proper grasp of the current situation to consolidate its financial basis.

Based on the above, the University is expected to use the recent accreditation review as an opportunity to ensure that all of its faculty members and staff work together to bring about dramatic improvements. Further, the University stated in January 2017 that it will formulate a mid-to-long-term goals implementation plan (2017-2019) under the New Strategy Council and will confirm annual plans based on that implementation plan and implementation status in connection with self-study. However, since the implementation plan mainly relates to goals for the improvement of issues in educational aspects at each faculty and graduate school, it is desirable that the University will formulate drastic improvement plans based on personnel and management plans examined by the corporation and work for improvement.

Notable Strengths

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- In addition to the University's signature Foreign Missionary Residence and the chapel, which are open to the public, the hand bell choir made up of volunteer students and faculty members under the Religion Department performs at university entrance and graduation ceremonies, open campuses, university festival concerts, church services and Christmas, as well as at churches, missionary stations, schools, hospitals and other facilities, and that provides opportunities for cultural exchanges with local and other community residents. These activities are commendable as a contribution to society based on the school founding spirit rooted in Christianity.

Suggestions for Improvement

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- No FD activities have been conducted other than the improvement of courses, and it is desirable the University will conduct FD activities to improve the quality of faculty members.

Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome

- No degree award policy or curriculum design and implementation policy has been established at the Graduate Course of Liberal Arts or the Graduate Course of Social Welfare. This issue should be addressed. .

Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome

- The maximum number of credits for which students can register in a year is as high as 50 credits at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and 52 credits at the Faculty of Social Welfare. This issue should be addressed in light of the purpose of the credit system.
- No systematic training courses or research, etc. are provided for academic staffs at the Graduate Course of Liberal Arts or the Graduate Course of Social Welfare that are

designed to improve the educational programs and methods of those graduate courses. This should be rectified.

Enrollment

- With respect to the ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap in 2017, there were no enrolled students at the Graduate Course of Liberal Arts and the enrollment ratio at the Graduate Course of Social Welfare was low at 0.15. This needs to be addressed.

Education and Research Environment

- The University has regulations related to research ethics such as the “Hirosaki Gakuin University Code of Ethics” and the “Hirosaki Gakuin University Rules related to Administration of Public Research Spending,” but it has no provisions related to dealing with research misconduct and no systematic efforts are being made such as providing workshops for full-time faculty members and students. This issue needs to be addressed.

Internal Quality Assurance

- Of the information required to be disclosed under the Ministerial Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act, the criteria for assessment of learning outcomes and certification of completion at graduate courses is not made public on the University’s website or elsewhere. This should be rectified.

Area of Serious Concern

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- As of October 2017, the University’s overall full-time faculty members are short by five, including two professors required in principle under the Standards for Establishment of Universities. Moreover, the research supervisors required under the Standards for Establishment of Professional Graduate Schools are short by one at the Japanese Literature Master’s Course at the Graduate Course of Liberal Arts, and two at the Human Welfare Master’s Course at the Graduate Course of Social Welfare, and that must be rectified.

Enrollment

- As of 2017, the average of ratios of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap over the last five years and the ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are low at 0.72 and 0.71 respectively in the University as a whole, both 0.68 at the Faculty of Liberal Arts, 0.56 and 0.55 respectively at the Department of English Language and Literature, 0.79 and 0.82 respectively at the Department of Japanese Language and Literature, and 0.58 and 0.55 at the Faculty of Social Welfare. These ratios must be improved.

Administration and Finance

- Although the University has been in a situation for some time where the ratio of the Excess Expenditure Carried forward to the Next Year to Operational Revenue (imputed income) is extremely high and the “ratio of financial assets to the required reserve account” is extremely low, since the Four-Year Plan (from 2013 to 2016) Marking the 130th Anniversary of the Foundation of Hirosaki Gakuin University ended in 2016, no mid- to long-term financial plan has been formulated. The University needs to formulate a plan as soon as possible and work to improve its financial status.