

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: 2024	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2032)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Hirosaki Gakuin University

Overview

Hirosaki Gakuin University sets forth the educational policy of “providing education based on the Christian faith and cultivating individuals who live truthfully before God, humbly seek the truth, listen reverently to God’s Word, and actively fulfill their responsibilities for others and society with a spirit of awe for God and love for others to value all people” based on its founding spirit. The University states the purpose of fostering human resources with the wisdom and ability to identify and resolve problems independently through proper understanding with global perspectives as an educational and research community upholding the principle of “awe for God and love for others” to serve God and people, and contribute to society under the Hirosaki Gakuin Educational Policy. To achieve its founding spirit and purpose, the University strives to enhance its educational and research activities under the Phase III Medium- to Long-Term Goal Implementation Plan (AY2023-AY2025, revised in May 2023; hereafter “Phase III Mid-to Long-Term Goal Implementation Plan”) and the Phase II School Corporation Hirosaki Gakuin Management Improvement Plan (AY2023-AY2027, revised in September 2023; hereafter “Phase II Management Improvement Plan”).

Regarding internal quality assurance, the Hirosaki Gakuin University Educational Promotion Meeting (hereafter “Educational Promotion Meeting”), organized to promote university-wide internal quality assurance, deliberates on reports from the University FD Committee in charge of monitoring, inspecting, and assessing the student learning outcomes for lessons, educational programs, and different university levels. After discussions at the Hirosaki Gakuin University Educational Quality Assurance Liaison Council (hereafter “External Evaluation Meeting”) composed of outside experts, feedback on the inspection and assessment results is provided along with guidance and instructions for improvement. But most improvement efforts based on the inspection and assessment results are undertaken by each division, and this issue should be addressed to ensure the proper functioning of the main organization promoting university-wide internal quality assurance.

As for education, the University has systematically designed its curricula under the three diploma, curriculum, and admission policies based on its founding spirit and purpose, and aims to advance its own education programs through such means as

requiring all admitted students to submit reports in light of the high school and university articulation system, and providing the Hirogaku Liberal Arts Lecture to all new students as part of the first-year education. To monitor student learning outcomes, the University specifies the evaluation indicators for different organization, curriculum, and lesson subject levels in the Learning Outcome Evaluation Policy (Assessment Policy).

The Social Cooperation Promotion Meeting actively engages in extracurricular activities, such as the Daisan (Dementia) Cafe aimed at deepening the understanding of dementia prevention and health promotion and encouraging interactions with local residents through student group activities. The Information Release and Sharing Platform for Social Cooperation and Contribution Projects was created to summarize and disseminate these activities. These publicity efforts are highly commendable in terms of sharing information on campus and off and making social contributions.

There are several major issues the University needs to address, however, regarding student enrollment and finance. To improve student enrollment, the school corporation set in place the Management Improvement Implementation Meeting and the New Strategy Meeting, but the University's student quota fulfillment has been insufficient since JUAA's previous certified evaluation and accreditation. All faculties and departments continue to fall short in fulfilling the freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap, resulting in remarkably low rates of student quota fulfillment. Corrections need to be made to thoroughly manage the faculties' student quotas. Student quotas also remain unfulfilled in the master's programs of all graduate schools, and should be improved as well. As for university management and finances, the University's operating balance sheet has been in the red due to the ongoing insufficient quota fulfillment, while the school corporation's expenditures continue to be heavy, indicating insufficient financial assets. To establish the financial base necessary to sustainably conduct its educational and research activities, the University is recommended to improve its financial condition by steadily implementing various measures for student recruitment, external funding acquisition, human resources policy, personnel cost reduction, and other items presented in the Phase II Management Improvement Plan.

As mentioned earlier, the University's internal quality assurance efforts highlight the inadequate functioning of the Educational Promotion Meeting as a main promotion organization. This inadequacy is attributed to the long-standing challenges of attracting students and improving school management, prompting the school corporation to set up meetings to address each case, as well as different types of learning required for specialized fields and qualifications in each faculty and department. Still, continued educational reform efforts are expected to make the University attractive, with importance

placed on improving the faculty organization and the educational and research environment, and strengthening student support. In the years ahead, the University is expected to review the role of the main internal quality assurance promotion organization and the process of improvement support for each faculty and department, thereby operating the improvement mechanism more effectively based on the university-wide inspection and assessment results.

The University has a long history with a well-established tradition as a regional higher education institution. Under the president's leadership, the University is expected to address various issues, such as stepping up efforts to attract students amid Japan's declining birthrate, by upgrading the internal quality assurance system for more effective operation, and by striving further to live up to the expectations and trust of local communities as an indispensable institution in the region.

Notable Strengths

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- The University encourages students, faculty, and staff to participate in community activities based on the social cooperation and contribution policy. For example, the student group Regional Revitalization Circle promotes local specialties, while another group, Hirogaku Inclusion, collaborates with a comprehensive regional support center to provide the Daisan (Dementia) Cafe as a place offering support for dementia prevention, nursing care, healthcare, rehabilitation, and other types of care, as well as opportunities to interact with local residents. These initiatives contribute to promoting the understanding and awareness of community welfare, with the cafe activities regularly organized in collaboration with students of junior and senior high schools established by the school corporation. It is commendable that these activities are summarized on the Information Release and Sharing Platform for Social Cooperation and Contribution Projects to share the information more widely across campus, thereby enhancing students' self-directed and practical learning and helping to resolve regional challenges.

Suggestions for Improvement

Internal Quality Assurance

- The Educational Promotion Meeting, established as an organization responsible for promoting internal quality assurance, is tasked with promoting the internal quality assurance system at the faculty, graduate school, and university-wide levels. But inspections and assessments as well as improvement efforts based on the results are undertaken by each faculty, department, graduate school, and division, revealing the meeting's inadequate support and feedback for improvement. This issue should be addressed by reviewing the roles and coordination of the Management Improvement Implementation Meeting and other bodies in charge of improving student enrollment, and the Educational Promotion Meeting, discussing ways to provide the faculties, departments, graduate schools, and other organizations with support for improvement, and implementing effective university-wide self-studies to make improvements based on the results.

Student Enrollment

- The ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are low at 0.25 in the Graduate School of Liberal Arts and 0.05 in the Graduate School of Social Welfare. These ratios should be improved with the graduate schools' student quotas thoroughly managed.

Recommendation

Student Enrollment

- In AY2023, the average ratio of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap over the past five years and the ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are low at 0.79 and 0.82 in the Faculty of Liberal Arts; 0.62 and 0.66 in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Liberal Arts; 0.88 and 0.89 in the Department of Social Welfare, Faculty of Social Welfare; and 0.84 and 0.80 in the Department of Nursing, Faculty of Nursing. The ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap in all bachelor's degree programs is also low at 0.83. These ratios must be corrected with the faculties' student quotas thoroughly managed.

University Management

- The ratio of next fiscal year's excess of carry-over expenditures to operating income has been high over the years, while the ratio of financial assets to the required reserve fund has trended downward to a remarkably low level. With student enrollment posing a challenge to the University and other schools established by the school corporation, the University is making improvement efforts in response to JUAA's previous certified evaluation and accreditation results as well as supplementary review results, but has failed to improve its financial status. The University is recommended to improve its financial conditions by steadily carrying out initiatives that include fulfilling student enrollment, acquiring external funds and other resources, and reducing personnel costs under the Phase III Mid- to Long-Term Goal Implementation Plan and the Phase II Management Improvement Plan.