

Results for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation for Law School

Hosei University Law School



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Tokyo, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2022	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2028)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation for Hosei University Law School

The mission and purpose of Hosei University Law School (“the Law School”) are the development of “legal professionals with strong moral values and expertise, capable of responding to the evermore complex legal issues of today’s society in a flexible and appropriate manner, and the creative skills to shape the law through actual cases.” The Law School also conducts its education activities in accordance with the unique goal of Hosei University’s professional graduate schools, which is “to impart profound academic knowledge and superior skills required of highly specialized professions.” Based on its mission and purpose, the Law School has established two educational objectives to ensure the students: (a) thoroughly learn the basics of the theory and practice of jurisprudence, and (b) acquire the skills to properly apply the basics of the theory and practice of jurisprudence, and to respond flexibly and creatively to new legal issues that arise in the contemporary world, with the aims to produce (i) civic legal professionals who provide legal counseling on issues close to people’s everyday lives, and (ii) legal professionals with expertise on increasingly complex corporate activities, business-to-business relationships, and international commerce. These goals and objectives are in line with the purpose of the law school system, and the stated mission, purpose, and educational goals are communicated to teachers, staff, and students in an appropriate way.

It is commendable that to achieve the mission, purpose, and educational goals mentioned above, the Law School offers personalized small group instruction. Especially notable are the Learning Portfolio and Learning Chart created for first-year students with no legal studies experience. These items serve as effective learning management tools, helping the homeroom teacher to grasp the learning status of each student. Also, the Law School has made various improvement efforts to better meet student needs. One example is the syllabus format upgraded to include tips and pointers from the previous year’s students to improve course content. Also, the Law School ensures that mandatory courses are scheduled at certain periods to accommodate students’ self-study time.

There are a number of areas for improvement in the educational programs and outcomes, however.

The first involves the school’s confidentiality policy for clinical course externships. While students are asked to submit a confidentiality pledge when signing

an externship agreement with an externship provider, this requirement is not written in the university regulations. From compliance and educational standpoints and to ensure students are informed in advance, confidentiality rules should be clearly documented even if they are general rules.

Secondly, the Seminar on Criminal Law class places so much emphasis on preparing questions (exam answers) for criminal law and the Codes of Criminal Procedure that the class appears to be an exam preparation course. The Law School is advised to review and improve the course content.

The third area for improvement is grading. The letter grades “S” and “A” are awarded to almost all students in some non-mandatory courses in the basic law category, which calls into question the robustness of the Law School’s grading process. Discussions among the teaching staff are being held to address this issue and develop a more stringent grading standard. Going forward, the Law School needs to consider introducing a grading policy for courses with a small number of students as well as formulating grading standards for all courses as soon as possible.

The fourth area for improvement is the decision-making for advancement from first to second year. Current advancement requirements are (a) earning a set number of credits in the basic law category which targets first-year students, (b) meeting the grade point average (GPA) requirement, and (c) taking the Common Achievement Test for Law Schools. Nevertheless, students who fail to meet the GPA requirement are promoted to the next level as long as they place above a certain rank in the Common Achievement Test, which only covers the three subjects of the Constitution, Civil Law, and Criminal Law. This creates the problem of advancing students to the next level as long as they perform well enough in these three subjects, even if their grades in Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure are sub-standard. According to the Law School, the use of the Common Achievement Test score is already under review. We advise the institution to swiftly address this issue, such as making test results a promotion requirement independent of the GPA.

The fifth area for improvement is the process for students to inquire about their grades. The Law School offers a grade appeal process for only some courses, and does not respond to student inquiries on how grades are awarded; it also lacks a process for students to reappeal the outcome of a first appeal. To ensure fairness and robustness of its grading, the Law School is advised to put in place a process to reappeal pass-fail decisions, especially for the basic law courses that determine advancement to a higher level, and have teachers other than the course instructor involved in the grade review process.

The sixth area for improvement is the Type A entrance examination. As the Law School does not administer an essay-style examination on the Codes of Civil and Criminal Procedure, the current examination is inadequate to determine an applicant's writing skills in these subjects. This area should be improved.

The seventh area for improvement concerns the role of specially appointed instructors, a position occupied by alumni lawyers. It is important that the instructors' roles and responsibilities are clearly defined to ensure their instruction does not give the impression of focusing too heavily on test-taking skills for the bar exam. It is desirable for the school regulations to explicitly state that the Law School does not embrace teaching focused excessively on exam-taking skills, and that a mechanism is in place for course instructors to advise and supervise the activities of the specially appointed instructors.

Aside from the issues in educational programs and outcomes, the Law School is advised to address the age and gender imbalance and promote diversity in the faculty organization. At present a majority of the full-time teachers are aged 60 or older and only two are women.

The Law School was denied accreditation in the AY2017 certified evaluation and accreditation, but has subsequently been on the path of improvement, with the Professors Council Executive Branch taking leadership in making serious efforts to rectify the issues identified. The latest review, however, still found areas for improvement that need to be addressed. The Law School should enlist the support of all teachers and staff involved in education to continue its improvement efforts.