

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

Iwaki Meisei University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Fukushima, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2018	
Accreditation Status: suspended	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Iwaki Meisei University

Overview

Iwaki Meisei University (hereafter, the University) is a private university established by the school corporation Meisei Gakuen in the city of Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture. Since its establishment, the University has strived to cultivate graduates who can contribute to society by promoting its founding educational philosophy of “the Japanese spirit of ‘*wa*’ (harmony)” and “healthy, earnest, and hardworking.” In September 2015, a new school corporation was established with a change of the founding body. The current educational philosophy needs to be reviewed, but to realize its traditional educational philosophy, the University revised the Medium-term Operational Policy (FY2016-FY2020) formulated in fiscal 2015 to the FY2017-FY2021 version in the following fiscal year to include the University’s future vision of a university that perpetually grows and contributes to the local community.

The Medium-term Operational Policy features measures to implement educational reforms and improve student satisfaction. It is highly commendable that the Faculty of Pharmacy has introduced “Ignite Education” and other programs to its curriculum to help students develop their potential on their own. It is also notable that the University has adopted a tutoring system supported by faculty members and formulated guidelines to further improve the system, while conducting student surveys on campus life satisfaction and questionnaires by graduates to provide students with comprehensive support. Rooted in the local community, the University has contributed to regional development by participating in reconstruction activities following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and by managing a human resource development network of regional companies, governments, and other organizations.

However, as mentioned earlier, the University is in the process of changing its founding body after the establishment of a new school corporation. The Board of Trustees has also decided to stop accepting applicants for the Faculty of Liberal Arts in fiscal 2018. The University is expected to become a medical sciences university comprised of three faculties – the remaining Faculty of Pharmacy, the Faculty of Nursing, and the new Faculty of Health Sciences, scheduled to open in fiscal 2019. The University is expected as well to change its name to Iryo Sosei University in the same fiscal year. This process suggests that the University is currently undergoing a major transition.

This situation poses serious challenges to student enrollment and faculty

organization (graduate schools). First, the University's total student enrollment remains low due to the long-standing, remarkably low ratio of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap in the Faculty of Liberal Arts. To address this challenge, the University is working on improvements aimed at raising student enrollment by halting admission to the Faculty of Liberal Arts, preparing for the completion year of the Faculty of Nursing, and establishing a new faculty. In the coming years, the University needs to complete the faculty reorganization to secure more students with educational quality assurance in mind.

Next, the graduate schools face a serious problem with their faculty organization, with some academic units progressively lacking the appropriate numbers of research supervisors and supervisor assistants required in the Standards for Establishment of Professional Graduate Schools as well as the number of professors required in principle in the same standards. In response to this problem, the University adopted procedures to promote its faculty members and managed to meet the standards for some academic units in November 2018. Improvements are also expected in the near future, with plans underway to reorganize the academic units to fill the shortages. The University presently faces financial challenges resulting from the change of its founding body and enrollment problems, and needs to work toward stabilizing its financial foundation in line with its management improvement plans.

Meanwhile, despite the change of the founding body following the establishment of a new school corporation, some faculties continue to state their objectives based on the former founding body's educational philosophy. It is therefore necessary that the University review its educational mission and purpose as well as the objectives of each faculty and graduate school. The graduate schools also face issues with insufficiently monitoring and evaluating the learning outcomes stated in their degree award policies, in addition to failing to formulate research guidance plans and effectively manage student quotas. These issues should be improved appropriately alongside reorganization of the graduate schools.

Addressing these challenges requires the development of an effective internal quality assurance system for the University to independently improve the quality of various activities centered on education and research. Since fiscal 2017, the University has developed an internal quality assurance system jointly managed by the University-wide Educational Committee and Self-Study Committee. However, the roles and responsibilities of the related committees are not fully specified, and the outcomes of self-study led by faculties do not necessarily lead to concrete improvements in education. The University should improve its administrative systems and other functions to assure its

quality as a university and review its educational philosophy in light of shifting to a medical sciences university, thereby appropriately implementing self-study in each faculty and graduate school and establishing a PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle.

As mentioned above, there are several problems that involve important issues, but the University has put forward initiatives and plans to improve them. Therefore, the accreditation decision has been suspended with improvements expected in the near future. While undergoing major reform, the University is expected to continue its educational reform efforts, overcome the challenges with an awareness of educational quality assurance, and design new educational programs that include new faculties to promote further development.

Notable Strengths

Educational Program and Outcome

- The Faculty of Pharmacy offers “Ignite Education” as a unique educational program outlined in its curriculum design and implementation policy. It is a three-step program designed for first- to third-year students to develop the basic skills necessary for independent pharmacists. This program promotes active learning based on group lessons using team-based learning (TBL) and project-based learning (PBL) methods that help students study themes through research, discussions, and presentations. It also provides the first-year students with small group lessons, including campus life support, joined by upper-year students and tutors, while introducing technical topics to help students develop the academic abilities necessary to understand specialized subjects. In addition, the faculty employs a rubric for its evaluation methods that respond to the academic abilities described in its degree award policy, and actively seeks to further improve its educational methods and approaches based on the outcomes. It is commendable that with the combination of first-year and specialized education aimed at acquiring a range of such skills as self-directed learning, communication, project-based learning, and problem solving, the faculty’s educational approaches have proven effective as seen in the pass rate of national examinations.

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- The Regional Collaboration Center, set up in 2016 to contribute to regional

reconstruction support, continues research projects related to radiation and radioactivity measurements and archive projects for the earthquake and tsunami disaster as the “Disaster Archive Room.” These projects were previously led by the Iwaki Community Reconstruction Center, established in October 2011, in cooperation with Iwaki City and other organizations. In addition, the Center manages the Regional Cooperation Council formed by regional companies, governments, and other organizations to serve as a human resource development network; it helps cultivate human resources who can actively participate in their communities by, for example, planning and organizing training programs, including “Joint New Employee Training Sessions,” in cooperation with many local companies and high schools. It is commendable that the Center undertakes social contribution and cooperation activities to return education and research outcomes to society in accordance with the University’s objectives and policies.

Suggestions for Improvement

Mission and Purpose

- With faculties reorganized and newly established in the process of founding a medical sciences university after changing to a new school corporation in fiscal 2015, the educational mission and purpose of the University and the objectives of each faculty and graduate school are not fully consistent with these changes. The Faculty of Pharmacy’s objectives in particular continue to be based on the former school corporation’s founding educational philosophy. The mission, purpose, and objectives should be reviewed.

Internal Quality Assurance

- The University’s internal quality assurance system does not explicitly state the cooperation and role allocation of the University-wide Educational Committee, Self-Study Committee, Self-Study Committee in each section, and other committees. The systems of faculties and graduate schools, excluding the Faculty of Pharmacy, are also inadequate in connecting the results of self-study to improvements. The University-wide Educational Committee as the organization promoting internal quality assurance should play a central role in providing the necessary support to ensure self-study in all faculties and graduate schools, thereby enhancing internal

quality assurance based on the results throughout the University.

Educational Program and Outcome

- The learning outcomes of the two graduate schools are measured based on the evaluation of theses and dissertations, but the learning outcomes stated in their degree award policies are not sufficiently monitored and evaluated. This issue should be improved with learning outcomes effectively measured and the results reflected in improvements in educational content and methods.

Student Enrollment

- The ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are low at 0.21 in the Masters Course of the Graduate School of Science and Engineering, 0.22 in the Masters Course of the Graduate School of Humanities, and 0.17 in the Doctoral Course of the Graduate School of Humanities. These ratios should be improved with the graduate schools' student quotas thoroughly managed.

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- Faculty development (FD) as the graduate schools' primary function is not conducted. This issue should be improved so that FD can be implemented appropriately.

University Management and Finance

- The University's personnel expense ratio is high compared with the average of private universities with multiple faculties including pharmacy, while the balance sheet ratio for operating activities is low. The ratio of financial assets to the required reserve funds has also been low since fiscal 2016, following the establishment of a new school corporation involving the change of the University's founding body. Efforts should be made to establish a solid financial foundation in line with the Iwaki Meisei University Management Improvement Plan FY2017-FY2021, while carefully considering the education and research environment standards and educational quality assurance.

Recommendations

Educational Program and Outcome

- The research guidance methods and schedules as research guidance plans are not defined in the Graduate School of Science and Engineering and all programs in the Graduate School of Humanities. This situation must be corrected with these items defined and clarified to students beforehand.

Student Enrollment

- The average of ratios of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap over the past five years is low at 0.61 in all undergraduate courses, and the ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are also low at 0.73 in the Department of Pharmacy, Faculty of Pharmacy, and 0.67 in all undergraduate courses. This situation must be corrected with the faculties' student quotas thoroughly managed.

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- The number of research supervisor assistants required in the Standards for Establishment of Professional Graduate Schools in fiscal 2018 was two short in the Masters Course and the Doctoral Course of Japanese Literature of the Graduate School of Humanities, respectively. In addition, the number of research supervisors required in the same standards was one short in the Masters Course of British and American Literature of the Graduate School of Humanities. Moreover, the number of professors required in principle in the same standards was one short in the Masters Course and the Doctoral Course of Japanese Literature of the Graduate School of Humanities, respectively. This situation must be corrected with the faculty appropriately organized.