

**Results for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation
for Professional Graduate School of Global Communications**

**Akita International University Professional Graduate School,
Graduate School of Global Communication and Language,
Graduate Program in Global Communication and Language Practices**



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

**Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results
for Akita International University Professional Graduate School,
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The purpose of Akita International University Professional Graduate School is “to provide the kind of education and research opportunities in advanced theories and practices of communication suitable for meaningful contribution to (today’s) globalized world” and to develop “teachers and professionals with advanced knowledge, communication capabilities, and teaching skills.” The institution strives to impart in its professional degree programs the deep academic knowledge and superior skills required of highly specialized professionals. With the mission “to prepare students for careers in professional communication fields that make positive contributions to today’s global society” by developing theoretical and practical knowledge and skills required for advanced communication in English and Japanese, the Graduate Program in Global Communication and Language Practices (GSGCL) offers discipline-specific education for the three sub-programs under its purview: English Language Teaching Practices (ELT), Japanese Language Teaching Practices (JLT), and Global Communication Practices (GCP).

Education in each sub-program centers around integrating theory and practice to ensure students acquire specialized and practical knowledge and skills. With the exception of the JLT specialized courses, all GSGCL courses are conducted in English, a key characteristic of this program, with the aim of producing highly-skilled professionals who can succeed in the globalized world using English. The GSGCL curriculum consists of common core courses, in which students learn the basics of global communication, and advanced and practical discipline-specific courses. All sub-programs emphasize practical training that prepare students for their post-graduation careers and require a practicum or internship under the supervision of faculty members with extensive work experience. It is commendable that each sub-program cultivates practicum partners and provides strong individual counseling that suits their respective student needs. On the other hand, the Graduate School should further build the capability to meet the needs of the growing number of international students who require careful, personalized counseling with course selection, internship application, and other areas that prepare them for their future careers.

All courses in the ELT program are taught in English with the goal of preparing students to be able to teach English (using English) immediately after graduation. In addition to imparting theoretical context, the ELT program is designed to develop practical English language skills of non-native speakers of English. By enrolling both people who have no teaching experience and current English teachers, the program offers an environment where students with different experience levels can share knowledge and experience. Such a learning environment promotes effective learning and is one of the notable features of the ELT program. Furthermore, teacher training includes opportunities outside the class to teach English at local junior and senior high schools to nurture skills other than teaching, and a teacher employment exam preparation course. The required teaching practicum at junior and senior high schools is effectively developing the skills required as an English language teacher through having students experience the whole teaching process from lesson preparation and delivery to observation and reflection. In the future, the training sites should be expanded to include a wider range of educational institutions, such as elementary schools and technical colleges. There is also room for improving the quality of support offered to the growing number of international students seeking teaching jobs in Japan.

The JLT program aims to prepare students to teach immediately after graduation. First-year students mainly study theory, while second-year students focus on practical training divided into three stages. In the first stage, the students teach AIU international students who volunteer as mock students, and in the second, they teach exchange students from AIU's overseas partner institutions. Third-stage students travel abroad to teach at AIU's partner institutions. Through action research, the practical training provides opportunities to experience the teaching process from instructing at the beginner level to running programs, and is a commendable program that well prepares students for their future work. The teaching practicum at overseas partner institutions, in particular, is a project planned and carried out by students themselves, and includes a component where students compile the results of their activities in a report or presentation. These are notable features instrumental in equipping students with practical teaching abilities in the short duration of two years. Given there are many students who wish to work abroad, the Graduate School is advised to make further efforts to cultivate potential employers for its graduates.

The purpose of the GCP program is to train professionals who will thrive internationally in such fields as media and public relations. The sub-program, which previously consisted of the three study areas of interpretation skills, journalism, and

organizational public relations, has been reorganized to focus on journalism and organizational public relations, and aims to train highly-skilled professionals in these areas. With the goal of further building expertise in each of these areas, in addition to practical courses integrating theory and practice, the GCP program has launched advanced courses designed to develop digital tool skills and comprehensive analytical skills. These are commendable initiatives that respond to today's needs. It should be pointed out, however, that because the program covers such extensive areas of study, the specific qualities and attributes GCP aims to develop in its students as a professional graduate program are vague. While some teachers meet regularly to share and discuss class content, this information is not necessarily shared among all the teaching staff concerned. To help better establish the definition of global communication as a field of study, the program is advised to ensure the contents of these faculty discussions are shared and understood by everyone, and promote closer coordination and information sharing especially with visiting and adjunct instructors through faculty development (FD) and other such opportunities. Also, there are no teachers who currently teach the GCP program exclusively, and expanding the teaching capacity should help to further increase the distinctiveness of the program.

Regarding student admissions, GSGCL, which takes in new students twice a year, has a number of highly commendable programs that flexibly meet diverse student needs, namely the Pre-Graduate Student System that recognizes students' gap-year activities for course credits; the recurrent courses that allow students with work experience to shorten their time in school; and an intensive English program for applicants with insufficient English proficiency. It is also worth noting that English-speaking staffers are available to provide language assistance and smooth the way for international students and faculty members joining the school community.

In evaluating the faculty's education and research activities, the Graduate School varies the weight of each evaluation criterion by area of specialty, which is a sound practice that makes the assessment more targeted and tailored to the individual characteristics of the teachers being evaluated. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that there are only two full-time female teachers on the faculty. The Graduate School is advised to encourage greater diversity by promoting a better gender balance in the makeup of the faculty.

In conclusion, as the nation's sole professional graduate school of global communication practices, GSGCL provides original, innovative educational programs with the unique mission to train highly-skilled global communication professionals. Going forward, the Graduate School may want to define the distinct

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features and goals of the global communication field, communicate how it seeks to promote these features and goals as a professional graduate school specializing in this field, and clearly disseminate its unique objectives and educational programs domestically and abroad. We look forward to the Graduate School making further public relations efforts to help advance the field of global communication.