

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

Koyasan University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Wakayama, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2018	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.01.2019 – March.31.2026)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Koyasan University

Overview

Koyasan University (hereafter, the University) was established based on the educational principles of “*Shugei* (Exoteric and Esoteric Buddhism and Confucianism) *Shuchi* (Bodhicitta, or “enlightened mind”).” The University sets forth the mission of “providing a well-rounded education to teach and research specialized academic fields ranging from Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism to the humanities and social studies in a comprehensive and organic way, while also striving to cultivate student character, contribute to academic and cultural tradition and development, develop human resources that can contribute to society,” and conduct educational and research activities based on the spirits of Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism. The University consists of the Department of Esoteric Buddhism and Department of Humanistic Anthropology in the Faculty of Letters, the graduate school program of Esoteric Buddhism and graduate school program of Buddhism in the Graduate School of Letters as well as distance learning courses. In 2016 it formulated the “Koyasan University Revitalization Vision” as medium- and long-term plans, and each fiscal year draws up the “President Plan” to outline the initiatives on education, research, student support, and lifelong learning required to undertake their activities.

The University’s distinctive initiatives include the “Koyasan Archive,” with the University taking advantage of Koyasan’s (Mount Koya) historical site to digitize academically valuable materials in its library. The successful release of the archive data is commendable as the University’s unique approach to utilize its location, long history and culture. The University’s comprehensive student support offered by faculty members and graduate students is another distinctive feature.

However, student enrollment and finance are among the serious issues the University needs to address. As for enrollment, the University falls progressively short of its student quota, resulting in the failure to establish a solid financial base as a university. To boost its enrollment, the University is attracting adults by offering courses in collaboration with municipalities, but student enrollment needs to be more appropriately managed. To deal with its financial situation, the University is required to formulate medium- and long-term financial plans that include specific numerical targets reflecting its current conditions as well as devise effective improvement measures to stabilize its financial base.

There are other issues the University needs to address. For example, the Graduate

School of Letters has not sufficiently formulated the admission policy for each school and lacks research guidance plans for all programs except the distance learning courses. Various problems are found in the graduate school's educational system, with the degree award and curriculum design and implementation policies not established for each degree, and the screening criteria for theses and dissertations not explicitly stated, and problems are also seen in the University's systematic faculty development (FD) activities. These challenges should be addressed.

The University formulated the policy for its internal quality assurance system in 2017 and defined its internal organizational structure and procedures to develop an internal quality assurance system led by the Executive Council, but its activities are limited to self-study stated in the agenda of the President Plan. In the coming years, the University is expected to effectively operate its internal quality assurance system after conducting self-study for various activities in order to work toward addressing its challenges. It is expected as well to assure the quality of its educational and research activities and other initiatives and to make full use of its unique characteristics for further development.

Notable Strengths

Education and Research Environment

- The University takes advantage of its characteristics to digitize and release valuable historical materials on Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism, and Mt. Koya, including old manuscripts and printed books, achieving a successful outcome in launching the "Koyasan Archive" on the internet in 2017. It is commendable that this archive disseminates worldwide not only historical materials but also the University's Esoteric Buddhism research outcomes, with studies on Buddhism and Esoteric Buddhism expected to expand further.

Suggestions for Improvement

Internal Quality Assurance

- The University has developed an internal quality assurance system in which the Executive Council is positioned as an organization promoting internal quality assurance, the University Evaluation Committee inspects and assesses the attainment

status of the annual President Plan through self-study of the faculty and graduate school, and the Executive Council reflects the examination results in the next fiscal year's President Plan. However, the President Plan is limited to such items as education, research, student support, and international exchanges, and does not cover all the University's activities. Consequently, with the University's internal quality assurance system applied to the limited range of items stated in the President Plan, the University Evaluation Committee's inspection and assessment are not sufficient, and neither is the Executive Council's support for the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycles in the faculty and graduate school. These issues should be improved with the range of self-study reviewed and each of the University's activities inspected and assessed to ensure effective operation of the internal quality assurance system.

Educational Program and Outcome

- The degree award and curriculum design and implementation policies are not established for each degree conferred in the Master's and Doctoral Programs of the Graduate School of Letters. This issue should be improved.
- The two departments of the Faculty of Letters cap the number of credits students can register for in one year as a measure to ensure credit validity, but they accept credits that exceed the maximum for "Plan Subjects" and "Free Elective Subjects (including teaching certification subjects)." With no other measures adopted to ensure credit validity, this issue should be improved.
- The screening criteria for theses and dissertations are not defined in the Master's and Doctoral Programs of the Graduate School of Letters. This issue should be improved.
- To monitor and evaluate the student learning outcomes stated in the degree award policy, the faculty employs graduation thesis examination results and a rubric for grading class performance, while the graduate school outlines its direction for monitoring and evaluating student learning outcomes through seminar presentations and thesis and dissertation evaluations. However, specific benchmarks for the evaluations have not been developed. This situation should be improved.

Student Enrollment

- The ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are low at 0.4 in the Master's Program of the Graduate School of Letters and 0.17 in the Doctoral Program of the Graduate School of Letters. These ratios should be improved with the graduate school's student quotas thoroughly managed.

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- As for faculty development activities, the faculty and graduate school hold the FD/SD Training Session and administer class evaluation questionnaires by students, but participation in the training session and utilization of the questionnaire results are left to each academic staff member. Since these approaches are not sufficient as systematic FD activities, this issue should be improved with the purpose of the training session reconsidered and the questionnaire results systematically utilized.

University Management and Finance

- The Academic Affairs Committee holds the FD/SD Training Session for academic/administrative staff members, but it focuses primarily on lesson improvement and does not conduct staff development (SD) activities aimed at improving the quality of academic staff members necessary for university administration. This issue should be improved.

Recommendations

Educational Program and Outcome

- The Master's Program of the Graduate School of Letters (excluding the distance learning courses) states its enrollment periods and registration procedures in the research guidance plans, but it does not define the research guidance methods and schedules. This issue must be addressed with these items defined and clarified to students beforehand.

Student Enrollment

- The Master's and Doctoral Programs of the Graduate School of Letters state identical admission policies despite their different degree courses. This issue must be corrected.
- The average of ratios of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap over the past five years is low at 0.52 in the Faculty of Letters and 0.63 in the Department of Esoteric Buddhism, Faculty of Letters. The ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap is also low at 0.64 in the Faculty of Letters and 0.66 in the Department of Esoteric Buddhism, Faculty of Letters. These ratios must be corrected with the faculty's student quotas thoroughly managed.

University Management and Finance

- The University's balance sheet ratio for operating activities (imputed balance sheet) remains remarkably low, with the ratio of financial assets to the required reserve funds showing a definite downward trend. These situations indicate that the University is far from establishing the financial base necessary to realize its educational and research objectives and goals. In the years ahead, the University must correct this issue by formulating medium- and long-term financial plans stating concrete measures to achieve numerical targets and consistently implement them to establish a solid financial base.