

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

Sonoda Women's University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Hyogo, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2021	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.1.2022 – March 31, 2029)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Sonoda Women's University

Overview

With Shagashojin, or practice of compassion for others as its founding spirit, Sonoda Women's University defines its purpose as "developing women who will acquire a broad range of learning, pursue advanced expertise in arts and sciences, demonstrate a wealth of humanity and creativity, and contribute enthusiastically to society." In AY2019, the University drew up its medium- to long-term plan, "SONODA VISION 2030," which outlines specific policies and action goals to fulfill its founding spirit, philosophy and purpose in five areas: education, student support, research support, social cooperation, and administrative and operational structure.

With respect to internal quality assurance, the University has set university-wide policies and procedures, established a framework centering on the "Management Council," and is working toward improvements and enhancements by taking into account the check and review results conducted on the basis of the university standards and business plan. Since AY2020, internal quality assurance discussions have been held separately from the regular Management Council meetings, and the internal quality assurance system has become functional, so it is hoped that the University will continue to work toward improvements and enhancements primarily through this Council.

With respect to education, in accordance with the university-wide degree award policy (diploma policy), faculties and departments have established a degree award policy for each of their individual degrees, and have defined and published curriculum design and implementation policies (curriculum policies) to enable students to acquire the abilities indicated therein. In addition, each class subject is numbered on a university-wide basis, clearly indicating the sequence and structure of the curriculum. However, there are some departments that do not indicate their basic approach to curriculum implementation in their curriculum design and implementation policies, and some for which the relationship between the learning outcomes indicated in the degree award policies and the measurement indicators is not clear. This should be improved.

Another issue that should be addressed immediately is undergraduate student quota management. For example, at the Faculty of Human Education's Department of Child Education, 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 have remained low. In addition, in terms of ensuring the safety of facilities and equipment, the fact that there is no clear schedule for the implementation of earthquake-proofing work in some university buildings requires immediate improvement. In addition, problems with student quota management are partly contributing to the deteriorating financial situation of the University, so there is concern that this will affect implementation of earthquake-proofing of its facilities. Therefore, it is necessary to promptly review the project details and financial situation and systematically correct these issues.

On the other hand, outstanding initiatives include the use of the personnel evaluation system for exchanging views among faculty members and for managers to monitor the status of all faculty members, university-wide support for students with disabilities, and proactive social cooperation and social contribution activities centered on the "Social Cooperation Promotion Center."

Moving forward, the JUAA hopes that these issues will be resolved through the proper functioning of the internal quality assurance system, and that the University's philosophy and objectives will be fulfilled by further developing its distinctive and outstanding initiatives.

Notable Strengths

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- In order to evaluate and make use of faculty members' educational, research, and social contribution activities, etc., a personnel evaluation system has been established under which all faculty members score themselves on their respective activities, and after a first evaluation based on an interview with their superiors and a second evaluation based on the results of that, the President makes a final evaluation. These initiatives provide a good opportunity for faculty members to reflect on their own activities during the year and exchange opinions with management, while for management, including the president, they are useful in monitoring the status of all faculty members engaged in social contribution and various other activities based on the University's philosophy. The fact that this system is functioning effectively is commendable.

Student Support

- Support for students with disabilities is being undertaken based on the "Guidelines for Supporting Students with Disabilities," led by the" Liaison

Council for Supporting Students with Disabilities,” a university-wide organization responsible for providing general support in university life. Information necessary for providing support is shared through this council to each department, division, and even to faculty members in charge of courses, while taking considerations regarding personal information into account. In addition, a university-wide support system has been established in collaboration with students and others, including distribution of guidebooks to all faculty and staff, training programs to promote better understanding of diversity, and the assignment of paid student volunteer note takers. It is commendable that this system functions effectively and that support is promptly provided to students with gender dysphoria and hearing impairments as appropriate for their situations.

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- Using the Social Cooperation Promotion Center, which takes centralized responsibility for such projects as lifelong learning, community collaboration, and research support, the University is actively engaged in social collaboration and social contribution while monitoring the needs of the local community. With respect to research in particular, the University has established a “community-oriented research” category in its internal joint research fund, supports research aimed at solving regional issues through the Social Cooperation Promotion Center’s specialized research support department, and shares the fruits of the University’s education and research widely with the local community through such initiatives as open lectures and agreements with external organizations. Furthermore, in education, the “Tsunagari Project,” a compulsory cross-departmental course in the second year, develops the competencies required in society by having students work with government and local organizations to solve local issues, thereby creating an organic link between education, research and contribution to the community. These initiatives are commendable for embodying the University’s founding philosophy of making practical contributions to the local community.

Suggestions for Improvement

Educational Program and Learning Outcomes

- The Faculty of Human Health’s Department of Wellness does not indicate its basic approach to curriculum implementation in its curriculum design and

implementation policy. This should be improved.

- The Faculty of Human Health's Department of Wellness and Department of Food and Nutrition state that they measure the learning outcomes specified in the degree award policy using grading for each department's courses and questionnaires given to staff in charge of students' practical training, but the relationship with the learning outcomes is unclear, and improvement is required accordingly.

Education and Research Environment

- Regarding the earthquake-proofing of school buildings, plans for rebuilding some university buildings have been drawn up and are being implemented in accordance with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's "Guidelines for the Promotion of Earthquake Resistance of School Facilities," but at present no plans have been made for earthquake-proofing of Building No. 1, the building with the largest capacity, so immediate improvements are required in order to ensure the safety of users of the facilities.

Recommendation

Student Enrollment

- At the Faculty of Human Education's Department of Child Education, the average ratio of first-year student enrollment to the first-year student enrollment cap over the past five years and the ratio of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap were low at 0.61 and 0.57, respectively. This should be corrected to ensure proper undergraduate student quota management.

University Management and Finance

- Since AY2017, the operational income and expenditure balance ratio for both the university division and the corporation as a whole has been below the average for "other universities composed of multiple faculties." The ratio has turned negative in recent years, and the gap is widening. Moreover, the ratio of the financial assets to the required reserve fund remains at an extremely low level, indicating that the financial base necessary for the stable provision of educational and research activities has not been established. In order to improve the situation going forward, the JUAA hopes that corrective measures will be taken to establish a financial base by developing a medium- to long-term financial plan

that clearly defines specific projects and their funding plans, and by steadily implementing the “Sonoda Gakuen Corporation Medium-Term Business Plan.”