

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

Notre Dame Seishin University



Basic Information of the Institution	
Ownership: Private	Location: Okayama, Japan
Accreditation Status	
Year of the Review: 2023	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2031)	

Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Notre Dame Seishin University

Overview

Notre Dame Seishin University, founded by the congregation for Catholic education, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, sets forth the founding spirit of “Purify your heart and be a person of love” and the educational philosophy of “seeking truth, goodness, and beauty based on the Christian spirit.” Based on its spirit and philosophy, the University strives to achieve its purpose defined as “providing female students with broad liberal arts knowledge based on the Christian spirit, teaching and researching in-depth specialized arts and sciences, developing intellectual, moral, and applied abilities, and cultivating sincere, competent, and truly free-spirited individuals.”

The University reexamined its brand image in April 2019, and formulated the Notre Dame Seishin University Vision for the Future and Society: Vision 2039 (hereafter “Vision 2039”) to set out the five visions of “university,” “education,” “research,” “social contribution,” and “organizational management.” Under this vision, the University has drawn up the Notre Dame Seishin University Medium-Term Plan (hereafter “Midterm Plan”) with seven measures laid out to address the key challenges of “enhancing its social value and strengthening its financial base.” The University outlines a master plan, achievement indicators and evaluation criteria for the master plan, and action plan in each measure, and clarifies the schedule, methods, and steps to achieve the goals.

In terms of student support, the University has established the Advisor System for the departments to share the need for remedial education based on students’ abilities and provide course guidance and learning advice. The University also established the Inclusive Education Research Center in AY2020 after reorganizing its predecessor. Advisors, the center’s counselors, and other staff share the necessary information for support through the Student Affairs Committee and briefing sessions to offer guidance and consultation according to each school year, and to encourage students to develop their desired career paths, including the acquisition of qualifications.

The University actively engages in community contribution activities led by the NDSU Business-Academia Collaboration Center and the NDSU Center for Regional Collaboration and SDGs Promotion based on the Social Cooperation and Contribution Policy. The Takahashi Black Tea Project, Food and Nutrition Education Project for Future Rice carried out in collaboration with an agricultural cooperative, and other activities have

produced positive outcomes with these initiatives providing students with practical learning experience while supporting women's community contribution activities. In 2023 the University signed a comprehensive partnership agreement with Soja City and launched internships at the city office to promote student independence, with interns presenting policy proposals from a female perspective.

The University has established the University-Wide Internal Quality Assurance Policy with the Internal Quality Assurance Promotion Committee positioned as the university-wide organization. The University's self-study is divided into the teaching and learning section and the administrative section, and the University-Wide Self-Study Committee (hereafter "University-Wide Committee") chaired by the vice president in charge of teaching and learning summarizes the assessment results of the Sectional Committee, Individual Committee, and Improvement Subcommittee, before undertaking improvement measures based on the self-study activities in line with the overall policy, system, and procedures established by the Internal Quality Assurance Promotion Committee headed by the president. Based on the policy and procedures, the University began a three-tiered self-study in 2022 in an effort to develop and operate the current internal quality assurance system, but the Internal Quality Assurance Promotion Committee provides neither feedback nor support for improvement. In the coming years, the University should address this issue by reviewing the committee's role in the internal quality assurance system while effectively operating the university-wide PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle.

As for education, the University has appropriately designed the curricula based on the university-wide diploma and curriculum policies as well as the policies of the faculties, departments, graduate schools, and their programs, but some graduate schools do not state the basic concept of their curricula policies. To monitor student learning outcomes, the University uses the three levels of institution (university), curriculum (departments and relevant bodies), and lesson subject established based on the university-wide assessment policy. However, the graduate schools fail to clarify the connection between the methods of monitoring these outcomes and the learning outcomes stated in the diploma policy. This issue should be addressed. Some departments and graduate schools have low ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap. The graduate schools resumed its own faculty development (FD) activities for educational improvements in AY2023 for the first time since AY2018, but more efforts should be made for the master's and doctoral programs as a whole or each graduate school to implement these activities on a regular basis.

In the years ahead, the University is expected to address various issues by

operating its internal quality assurance system more effectively with the Internal Quality Assurance Promotion Committee fulfilling its role, enhancing its presence as the only women's university in Okayama Prefecture, and advancing its distinctive initiatives.

Notable Strengths

Student Support

- The departments' full-time faculty members serve as advisors for individual students to provide both comprehensive and specific support covering course consultation, learning assistance, and life support. In AY2020 the University established the Inclusive Education Research Center after reorganizing its predecessor to create an environment for faculty, staff, and students to learn together by integrating the knowledge of subject pedagogy, early childhood education, special needs education, psychology, and other fields. It is commendable that advisors, the center's counselors, and other staff members work together to share the necessary information for support through the Student Committee and briefing sessions to offer guidance and consultation according to each school year, and to help students develop their desired career paths, including the acquisition of qualifications.

Social Cooperation and Contribution

- The departments take advantage of their expertise to conduct regional collaboration activities, with the NDSU Center for Regional Collaboration and SDGs Promotion signing partnership agreements with local businesses, organizations, and other entities in response to their requests to overcome various challenges. For example, the Department of Contemporary Sociological Studies carries out the Takahashi Black Tea Project to revive the method of growing black tea in Takahashi City, Okayama Prefecture, and develop products using tea leaves harvested in collaboration with the Department of Foods and Human Nutrition, while working with an agriculture cooperative to develop a rice brand, with both projects resulting in the commercialization and marketing of products. In addition, faculty, staff, and students are contributing to gender equality efforts in the local community through cross-departmental internships at a city office, where interns express their views from the perspective of female university students. It is commendable that the University is actively involved in addressing regional and social challenges and returning its

educational and research outcomes to society while promoting student independence.

Suggestions for Improvement

Internal Quality Assurance

- The University uses the PDCA Sheet to conduct three-tiered inspections and assessments of the departments/graduate programs/research institutes/centers, faculties/graduate schools, and the university as a whole (teaching and learning and administrative work), before the University-Wide Committee compiles the results listing the issues to be addressed. However, the Internal Quality Assurance Promotion Committee tasked with promoting internal quality assurance provides neither feedback nor support for improvement to the organizations. With many improvement efforts undertaken voluntarily by the departments, graduate programs, and other divisions, the University should address this issue by reviewing the role of the Internal Quality Assurance Promotion Committee and supporting the departments, graduate programs, and other divisions to effectively operate the university-wide PDCA cycle.

Educational Program and Learning Outcomes

- The basic concept of curriculum implementation is not specified in the curriculum policies of the Master's Degree Program in Japanese Language and Literature in the Graduate School of Letters; Master's Degree Program in Socio-Cultural Studies in the Graduate School of Letters; Master's Degree Program in Human Development and Education in the Graduate School of Human Life Sciences; Master's Degree Program in Food Science and Nutrition in the Graduate School of Human Life Sciences; and Master's Degree Program in Human Living Sciences in the Graduate School of Human Life Sciences. This issue should be addressed.
- The graduate schools measure student learning outcomes through the midterm presentations and screening of dissertations, but the connection between the screening criteria or evaluation perspectives of the presentations and the learning outcomes stated in the diploma policy is unclear. This issue should be addressed with the methods and indicators for monitoring and evaluating these outcomes developed to appropriately measure the learning outcomes.

Student Enrollment

- The ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are low at 0.85 in the Faculty of Literature, 0.80 in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature, and 0.82 in the Department of Contemporary Sociological Studies, Faculty of Literature. The average ratio of freshman enrollment to the freshman enrollment cap over the past five years is also low at 0.88 in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Literature. These ratios should be improved with the faculty's student quotas thoroughly managed.
- The ratios of student enrollment to the student enrollment cap are low at 0.39 in the master's programs in the Graduate School of Letters, 0.30 in the master's programs in the Graduate School of Human Life Sciences, 0.00 in the doctoral programs in the Graduate School of Letters, and 0.11 in the doctoral programs in the Graduate School of Human Life Sciences. These ratios should be improved with the graduate schools' student quotas thoroughly managed.

Faculty and Faculty Organization

- The graduate schools have not conducted FD activities for educational improvements since such activities were last carried out in AY2017. This issue should be addressed with FD activities implemented by the master's and doctoral programs as a whole or each graduate school. With FD activities resuming in AY2023, efforts should be made to carry out these activities on a regular basis.