

**Results for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation for  
Professional Graduate Business School**

**Otaru University of Commerce, Graduate School of Commerce,  
Major in Entrepreneurship**



<b>Basic Information of the Institution</b>	
Ownership: National	Location: Hokkaido, Japan
<b>Accreditation Status</b>	
Year of the Review: 2023	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April 1, 2024 – March 31, 2029)	

**Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results  
for the Major in Entrepreneurship, Graduate School of Commerce,  
Otaru University of Commerce (Otaru Business School)**

The unique purpose of the Major in Entrepreneurship, Graduate School of Commerce, Otaru University of Commerce (Otaru Business School, or OBS), is “to train business innovators who can design and deliver innovative business models, as well as business leaders with strong corporate management skills, capable of conceiving new business opportunities.” The Business School has approached its activities in a strategic manner to meet this purpose, from the formulation of a medium- and long-term vision, curriculum design to faculty staffing and school management, and its efforts have produced positive results. Especially notable is the 2022 revised version of the OBS Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan which outlines various initiatives for the school’s four strategic targets of “raising the social awareness of OBS and cultivating new demand for OBS and its MBA program,” “improving the educational program,” “creating an alumni network,” and “expanding recurrent education.” On the basis of the core competence of “an education program that enhances practical skills,” defined in the medium- and long-term vision, the OBS Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan has enabled the Business School to contribute to society by producing outstanding business professionals.

OBS’s education program offers a curriculum consisting of basic, core, elective, practical, and business workshops as five subject groups. The courses are organized according to year level and designed to progressively build up business management knowledge and practical skills required of today’s business leaders and business innovators. The courses offered and their contents are reviewed flexibly to adapt to changing local needs and times in collaboration with universities of other disciplines and related industries. Since AY2022, for example, the Business School has worked with its consortium partner, Hokkaido University, to launch an in-class project aimed at growing start-up businesses. In this initiative, students devise a business plan to commercialize the technology seeds of Hokkaido University’s science professors. This remarkable feature of the curriculum has the potential to positively impact the training of business leaders. As a result of this and other efforts to enrich the education program, the overall satisfaction rate reflected in OBS student surveys has steadily risen over the years. Furthermore, the post-graduation outcomes of OBS’s graduates are strong, with many succeeding in their chosen pursuits.

OBS’s staffing plan promotes faculty diversity in terms of specialty, age, and

gender to meet varied student learning needs. The Business School supports and facilitates the faculty's scholarly activities by holding the "OBS Salon," a regular get-together designed for teachers to share and discuss research outcomes with their colleagues, and by encouraging teachers to create case study teaching materials based on their own research findings. The latter is an unprecedented undertaking and highly commendable from the standpoint of connecting academic research and practical education. As for its hiring and promotion practices, the Business School implements a human resource policy designed to broadly assess teachers' skills and accomplishments in bridging theory and practice using criteria established in five evaluation areas, namely education, research, social contribution, and contribution to university management, and miscellaneous factors. Furthermore, systematic efforts are being made to promote faculty development activities, which have proven effective in improving teaching contents and methods.

Steady steps have been taken to improve school management, including curriculum design and the implementation of medium- to long-term action plans, in response to the recommendations from an advisory board established in 2019 that includes members from outside the school. OBS provides students with enriched learning opportunities in cooperation with the outside community, for example, through the Special MBA Course offered jointly with Hokkaido University's Graduate School of Agriculture, Research Faculty of Agriculture, Graduate School of Health Sciences, Graduate School of Engineering, Faculty of Information Science and Technology, Graduate School of Chemical Sciences and Engineering, Graduate School of Life Science, and Graduate School of Medicine. This partnership agreement is a commendable undertaking.

As described above, OBS works hard to train business innovators and business leaders and has produced admirable results. There are several areas of improvement that OBS should address, however.

First, the 2018 version of the OBS Vision, Strategy, and Action Plan promotes such practices as hiring graduates as practitioner lecturers or inviting them to participate in teaching material development. While these initiatives may provide some measure of benefit, it is desirable that controls be put in place to protect the quality of education when allowing graduates with no proven qualifications in the relevant fields to partake in educational activities. Second, despite the increasing relevance of data literacy, data-related courses such as statistics are not mandatory, and the curriculum in general is oriented toward qualitative analysis-focused courses. In view of the Business School's unique goal of developing business innovators and business leaders, it is advised that the

curriculum be revamped to develop students' quantitative analysis skills and to enhance data literacy. Third, the faculty composition leaves room for improvement from the viewpoint of diversity, with no female or non-Japanese nationals currently represented in full-time teaching positions. OBS needs to fix the gender imbalance of its teaching staff and further work to build a faculty capable of delivering entrepreneurship education with a global focus. This issue was pointed out in the AY2018 certified evaluation and accreditation for professional graduate business schools, and is being raised for a second time to draw attention to the fact that the problem has not been addressed adequately.

The commitment and integrity of OBS in carrying out its education, research, and social contribution activities stood out throughout the certified evaluation and accreditation for professional graduate business schools. OBS has responded well to the recommendations of the previous assessment, and the Business School is expected to further improve the quality of its education and research, and develop its distinctive strengths to achieve the aim of producing excellent business professionals by taking actions on the recommendations detailed above.