

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

Aoyama Gakuin University



<b>Basic Information of the Institution</b>	
Ownership: Private	Location: Tokyo, Japan
<b>Accreditation Status</b>	
Year of the Review: 2014	
Accreditation Status: accredited (Accreditation Period: April.01.2015 – March.31.2022)	

## **Certified Evaluation and Accreditation Results for Aoyama Gakuin University**

### **Overview**

Aoyama Gakuin University (hereafter, the University) has its roots in three schools: Girls' Elementary School, Kokyo Gakusha Boys' School, and the Methodist Mission Seminary, each founded by missionaries sent by the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States. The three schools evolved into Aoyama Gakuin, a portion of which was approved as Aoyama Gakuin University in 1949, as a university in the postwar Japanese higher education system. The University originally had three colleges, the College of Literature, the College of Commerce, and the College of Engineering, and since then it has established undergraduate units as well as graduate schools, and it has reorganized its academic and administrative units. Currently, the University has nine undergraduate units, the College of Literature, the College of Education, Psychology, and Human Studies, the College of Economics, the Faculty of Law, the School of Business, the School of International Politics, Economics, and Communication, the School of Cultural and Creative Studies, the College of Sciences and Engineering, and the School of Social Informatics. It also has twelve graduate schools, the Graduate School of Literature, the Graduate School of Education, Psychology, and Human Studies, the Graduate School of Economics, the Graduate School of Law, the Graduate School of Business, the Graduate School of International Politics, Economics, and Communication, the Graduate School of Cultural and Creative Studies, the Graduate School of Science and Engineering, the Graduate School of Social Informatics, the Graduate School of International Management, the Law School, and the Graduate School of Professional Accountancy. The University has two campuses: Aoyama campus, located in Shibuya Ward, Tokyo, and Sagamihara campus, located in Sagamihara City, Kanagawa Prefecture. It has developed educational and research activities, following its founding spirit that “education at Aoyama Gakuin shall be conducted in perpetuity based on Christian faith.”

Prior to this accreditation review, the Law School had already undergone professional graduate school accreditation review by the Japan Law Foundation (JLF) in the second half of the 2013 and was accredited. In the same year, the Department of International Management in the Graduate School of International Management was reviewed and accredited by the Alliance on Business Education and Scholarship for Tomorrow: A Twenty-First Century Organization (ABEST21), and the Department of Professional Accountancy in the Graduate School of Professional Accountancy was reviewed and accredited by the Japanese Institute of International Accounting Education (JIIE). Thus, Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) reviewed each School this time by improvements from the previous accreditations onwards from the standpoint of University Accreditation (institutional certified evaluation and accreditation).

After its accreditation review by JUAA in 2007, the University has rearranged the locations of academic units on its two campuses, and has formulated mid- and long-term practical plans to respond to the changing needs that society asks universities to meet. Moreover, the University has made efforts to enrich its education. For example, it created the “Organization for Aoyama Standard Education,” which systematically implements a common curriculum called “Aoyama Standard” that offers common liberal arts subjects for all students. However, the University has several issues to address, including educational content and methods (e.g., the lack of course work in the doctoral programs). In addition, the University’s internal quality assurance system cannot be regarded as fully functional. JUAA strongly expects the University to make good progress to carry out reform of the system, given that such reform is already under consideration.

## Notable Strengths

### *Educational and Research Organization*

- It is commendable that the University has made continuous efforts to strengthen and reform its organization in order to remain current, and such efforts has produced positive effects on students' learning. In particular, in April 2013, the University established the "Institute of Information and Media," reorganized from the "Information Science Research Center," and has made efforts to improve the information environment, including planning, introducing, using, and managing facilities and equipment. With such efforts, the University has enriched its support of classes that use computer technologies as well as its support of curriculum and instructional methods of basic information education. It also initiated the use of "Course Power," a web-based class management system, and has video-recorded lessons and made them available to students. Many students have used these services to enrich their studies.

### *Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome*

- It is commendable that the University has made efforts to offer a cutting-edge educational program in economics. In particular, since 2003, the Department of Public and Regional Economics in the College of Economics and the Department of Public and Regional Economics in the Graduate School of Economics have created a computer room exclusively for the "Geographic Information System (GIS) Laboratory," which is the first effort of its kind among economic undergraduate and graduate programs in a Japanese university, and have begun to offer a full-scale GIS education. The GIS system makes it possible to visualize regional economic and social dynamics in a three-dimensional format based on highly advanced grid-square-coded statistical data. As such, it enables researchers and students to empirically validate theories (e.g., regional development theory) and analyze them. Some students have entered the University because of this educational program, making this effort unique in terms of student recruitment.
- It is commendable that the School of Cultural and Creative Studies has been successful and effective in motivating students to study through unique educational methods. For example, the "Laboratory Training" uses "Aoyama Community Laboratory" (a research center attached to the School) as a site for seminars in which students act as "interns" to collaborate with local communities, businesses, and national and local governments. Many students have participated in these seminars. Moreover, the University offers "Aoyama Communicative English (ACE)" classes that are offered six days a week, and students taking these classes can raise their TOEIC<sup>®</sup> scores sixty to ninety points on average every year from April (when they enter the University) to December.
- It is commendable that the College of Economics has taken an initiative to measure students' learning outcomes, and through this initiative students' learning has been improved. In particular, since 2012, the College has encouraged students to take the "Economic Record Examination" and has used it to assess students' learning outcomes. Because the College pays the cost of the examination, the number of students taking it has been increasing. Since 2012, the College has consistently produced high-scoring students with S and A+ grades, scores that are given to only a very few examinees. This shows that this initiative has a high degree of success.

### *Student Support*

- It is commendable that the School of International Politics, Economics, and Communication offers unique support of students in their career development, an effort that is consistent with its purpose of research and education, which is to value interaction with people as widely as possible across the world. In particular, the School has developed its own support of student career development. It has established the “SIPEC Student Study Group of Diplomacy and International Civil Service,” a guidance program targeting those who wish to pursue a career in diplomacy or seek employment in international organizations. The program, aiming to produce persons of talent who can play active roles in the international theater, is managed by the faculty members, and under their supervision, during the summer and spring holidays, students play a central role in organizing special seminars and study groups to prepare for civil service examinations. They also organize study conferences, consultation meetings with alumni, and internship opportunities. From 1985 to 2011, the program had remarkable success in helping students secure employment in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, public service in organizations such as the United Nations and other international institutions, and in media-related organizations such as newspaper companies. Based on these successes, the School established the “SIPEC Student Club for Career Exploration in Journalism ” in 2012 and since then it has begun to offer guidance to those students who wish to become journalists.

### *Social Cooperation and Contribution*

- It is commendable that a number of students at the University have engaged in social contribution activities and have expanded the area of their activities from the national to the international front, with support of the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011 as a start. In particular, since the earthquake, the University has conducted its social contribution activities through the “Aoyama Gakuin University Volunteer Station.” Since the beginning of its activities, it has continued to support the affected areas and has expanded the horizon of activity, including in both the “local sector,” in which students do volunteer work for local welfare facilities, and the “international sector,” in which they engage in activities in overseas countries, such as the Philippines and Nepal.

## **Suggestions for Improvement**

### *Mission and Purpose*

- The purposes for graduate schools and professional graduate schools stated in the documents “Graduate School Regulations” and “Professional Graduate School Regulations” are the same as those purposes prescribed in the School Education Act. The language of the documents does not represent the University’s own mission and purposes. This should be improved.

### *Educational Content, Methods, and Outcome*

- In all undergraduate units and graduate schools, the curriculum design policies do not state basic ideas concerning educational content and methods. This should be improved.
- The doctoral programs in all the graduate schools do not combine coursework and research appropriately in their curricula. Considering the purpose of a course-based

doctoral program, the graduate schools should offer appropriate educational content.

- In more than several academic units across the University, syllabi do not contain information about assessment criteria and standards. This should be improved.
- The maximum number of credits students can register for a year has been set high at fifty-four for second-year students in the Department of French Language and Literature in the College of Literature; at fifty-four for fourth-year students in the School of International Politics, Economics, and Communication; and at fifty-two for the fourth year students in the School of Cultural and Creative Studies. In addition, in the Department of English in the College of Literature and in the Department of Education in the College of Education, Psychology, and Human Studies, the maximum number of credits students can register for per year has been set between forty-four and forty-eight; however, the number has been set high at fifty-six for transfer students for two years after their transfer. This should be improved.
- None of the departments (except the Department of French Literature and Language) in the Graduate School of Literature have stipulated the criteria for examining special topic research findings. The doctoral program in the Graduate School of International Management and the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Professional Accountancy have not stipulated the criteria for examining degree-seeking theses. These criteria should be formulated and clearly stated in the student handbooks, e.g., “Graduate Student Handbook.”

#### *Enrollment*

- The ratio of enrolled students to the student enrollment cap is low at 0.41 in the Law School. It is high at 1.24 in the Department of Mechanical Engineering in the College of Science and Engineering, and at 2.33 in the second half of the doctoral program in the Graduate School of Social Informatics. This situation should be improved.

#### *Education and Research Environment*

- The Mandai Memorial Library on the Sagamihara Campus does not have full-time staffs with professional knowledge and skills. This should be improved.
- No regulations have been stipulated against dishonest conducts in research activities. This should be improved.

#### *Internal Quality Assurance*

- While the University produces a “Self-Study Report” every three years following the “Self-Study Rules” and the “Self-Study Committee Rules,” annual self-study is only conducted by the faculty council and other committees of each undergraduate unit or graduate school, with focused on some idiosyncratic items. That is, no systematic, thorough, or university-wide self-studies are conducted by the “Committee on Self-study” at the university-level and by any “Unit-Level Committee on Self-Study.” Given this situation, the University’s internal quality assurance system cannot be said to be functional. Moreover, no methods have been established through which university-wide results of self-studies can be disseminated as feedback to each unit, and no clear system is set to connect the

results to improvements. This situation should be improved through the development of a system of internal quality assurance.