

# Prologue

## Introduction

In anticipation of the important role that the Asia Pacific region will play in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the significance of cultivating human resources who can understand the Asia Pacific region and function in the global arena, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU) was opened in April 2000 in Beppu City, Oita Prefecture through a public-private collaboration between Oita Prefecture, the City of Beppu and the Ritsumeikan Trust.

In multicultural societies, a diverse array of values coexist and sometimes clash or cause friction. Keeping this in mind, APU provides students with a multilingual and multicultural environment that can be found nowhere else in Japan. We aim to cultivate human resources who can learn to overcome occasional conflicts, who can grow to understand people with diverse cultural and historical backgrounds, who can accept the differences of others, and who, through dialogue, strive to create a peaceful society. This aspiration is shared deeply by APU's students, faculty and staff as expressed in the basic ideals of 'freedom, peace and humanity', 'international mutual understanding' and 'the future shape of the Asia Pacific region' in the Opening Declaration.

## Basic Approach to Self-Assessments Thus Far

As a university with an extremely clear mission, we recognize the importance of objectifying and verifying the education and research activities achievements of our students, faculty and staff. For this reason, we established the University Evaluation Committee immediately upon our inception in 2000, and every academic year, we compile data pertaining to teaching, research and administration and publish it internally and externally in the form of this Self-Assessment Report.

In line with revisions to the School Education Act in 2002, universities became obliged to undergo institutional certified evaluations once every seven years starting in the 2004 academic year. In 2008, APU underwent an institutional certified evaluation conducted by the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) and earned a passing grade.

Based on these initiatives, APU drafts Self-Assessment Reports that are compliant with JUAA accreditation standards as part of its internal quality assurance policy. Based on these reports, APU conducts self-assessments and undergoes external evaluations before undergoing certified evaluations (i.e., accreditation) within the designated time frame.

More specifically, Self-Assessment Reports are formulated once every two years, in principle, and the University Evaluation Committee convenes in the academic year following

the formulation of said report to conduct an external evaluation of the university based thereupon. However, once every seven years, in the year in which the university undergoes a JUAA institutional certified evaluation, the University Evaluation Committee does not convene, and a Self-Assessment Report is not drafted in the following year.

Self-assessments are stipulated in the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Self-Assessment Committee Regulations, while university evaluations are stipulated in the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University University Evaluation Committee Regulations. The Self-Assessment Committee is composed of the heads of the various organizations, including College Deans, Graduate School Deans and the Deans of the Divisions, and the President appoints the chair and vice chair from among the members of the committee. Meanwhile, the University Evaluation Committee is composed of external stakeholders who are not Ritsumeikan Trust officials, faculty or staff.

The offices at APU, which handle all administrative tasks, formulate annual action plans based on the results of the self-assessment and monitor the progress of those plans.

#### Improvements and Reforms in light of the Previous Certified Evaluation Results

In AY2008, when APU underwent the certified evaluation by JUAA, we were asked to report on the improvements made on the one recommendation and nine advice that were issued. The status of these improvements was outlined in a Progress Report that was submitted to JUAA in July 2012.

JUAA assessed this report by saying: "The Association can see ... that the university has taken these recommendations and advice seriously and is motivated to make improvements." However, even though JUAA indicated there were no items that required additional improvement reports in the near future, it commented on the section entitled 'Degree Conferral and Approval of Completion' as follows: "...the issue of assuring the transparency, objectivity and stringency of the screenings of research reports that take the place of master's theses is still in the discussion phase, so we expect positive outcomes in the future."

This item was explored as a key part of the AY2014 graduate school reforms, and as a result, we decided to adopt a multiple (i.e., two-person) screening framework and develop a process by which students participate in regular joint sessions to present papers and research reports as well as in report seminars. Please refer to Standard 4 for details.

#### Other

As is mentioned several times in this report, APU is currently in the process of obtaining accreditation by AACSB<sup>1</sup>. While undergoing the institutional certified evaluation by JUAA,

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<sup>1</sup> Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business.

An accreditation agency for management education with over 500 member schools in more than 30 countries.

we are seeking to further improve our international compatibility and improve the quality of our education and research. To do this, we are proactively striving to obtain international accreditation in specific fields.