

10. Internal Quality Assurance

1. Description of Current Conditions

(1) Is the university fulfilling its social responsibility by assessing its activities and disclosing outcomes of those assessments?

At APU, items pertaining to internal quality assurance initiatives, the university's basic policy on accreditation and the disclosure of accreditation results are stipulated in the University Regulations, and we endeavor on an institution-wide basis to improve the quality of our education (Ref. 10-1, Article 1).

Meanwhile, university-wide self-assessments are conducted by the Self-Assessment Committee. Major achievements in recent years include the formulation of the AY2012 Self-Assessment Report and the implementation of an external evaluation (by the University Evaluation Committee) in AY2013 based on said report. We take the improvements proposed by this objective third-party seriously and strive to improve the quality of our activities.

Also, to engage in university development according to international standards, we are actively pursuing accreditation from an international accreditation body. More specifically, the College of International Management and the Graduate School of Management are scheduled to obtain accreditation from AACSB, an international business school accreditation agency, by the end of the 2014 academic year.

The results of the certified evaluation (i.e., accreditation) by the Japan University Accreditation Association (JUAA) in AY2008 are published on the university homepage (Ref. 10-2). This homepage contains the following information: University Basic Data (an annual data sheet based on a JUAA's specified format), data from the University Data Book (with some exceptions), the aforementioned AY2012 Self-Assessment Report and the summary issued by the Chairman of the University Evaluation Committee during the external evaluation in AY2013.

With regard to information disclosure, APU's parent institution, the Ritsumeikan Trust, formulated the Ritsumeikan Trust Information Disclosure Regulations in AY2010, which apply to all schools established by the Trust. These regulations "aim to fulfill our social responsibility with regard to various activities including administration, education and research, to realize fair and highly transparent management, and to contribute to improving the quality of self-rule by our constituent members and education and research and activities" (Ref. 10-3, Article 1). Article 4, Paragraph 1 of these regulations stipulate the disclosure of information to the general public, including information pertaining to "the status of education and research activities" stipulated in Article 172-2, Paragraph 1 of the

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Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act. In line with this, APU also discloses information on the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Information Disclosure Page on the Ritsumeikan Trust's homepage (Ref. 10-4).

In addition, we also respond to requests for the disclosure of information as per Article 3, Paragraph 2 of these regulations, which stipulate that "information will be released in accordance to disclosure request procedures stipulated in these regulations." In sum, the intent of these regulations is to define two types of information disclosure—the disclosure of information for wider audience and the disclosure of information limited to individuals who meet certain conditions—while keeping personal information and other confidential information private (Ref. 10-3, Article 3).

(2) Is there an internal quality assurance system in place?

1) Internal quality assurance cycle and system

With regard to internal quality assurance, we ensure the functioning of a comprehensive verification cycle comprising a) a self-assessment (by the Self-Assessment Committee) based on a Self-Assessment Report created in compliance with JUAA's accreditation standards (i.e., University Standards and Self-Assessment Items (hereinafter collectively referred to as "University Standards"), b) an external evaluation by the University Evaluation Committee, and c) accreditation by JUAA (Ref. 10-5).

- [1] The basic policy regarding self-assessment methods is that APU should create a Self-Assessment Report in compliance with the Japan University Accreditation Association's University Standards once every two years.
- [2] In the academic year following the year in which said Self-Assessment Report was formulated, the University Evaluation Committee shall convene to conduct an external evaluation of the university based thereupon. (The Committee shall meet once every two years in principle.)
- [3] APU will opt not to formulate a Self-Assessment Report in the academic year following the Japan University Accreditation Association accreditation screening, which is conducted once every seven years. In addition, the University Evaluation Committee will not convene in the year in which the Japan University Accreditation Association accreditation screening falls.
- [4] In years when neither a meeting of the University Evaluation Committee nor a Japan University Accreditation Association accreditation screening is held, the Self-Assessment Committee will follow up on those items pointed out by said external evaluation bodies to ensure the effective operation of the university's verification cycle.

We have established the Self-Assessment Committee as the university-level body in

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charge of promoting internal quality assurance. It is chaired by a Vice President and all of the Deans are members. The regulations governing this committee stipulate that it "... shall conduct an annual self-assessment of education, research, organizations, operations, facilities and equipment for each academic organization" (Ref. 10-6, Article 2).

Another body that oversees internal quality assurance is the University Evaluation Committee. The University Evaluation Committee was established to conduct external evaluations of the university, and its members consist of several outside stakeholders. This committee evaluates the objectivity and adequacy of APU's self-assessments (Ref. 10-7, Articles 1 and 3).

To contribute to this process of self-assessment and improvement, the Self-Assessment Committee Regulations state that "The committee shall report results [of self-assessments] to the President and the Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University University Evaluation Committee; [and] the President, upon receiving assessment results, shall reflect them in university plans" (Ref. 10-6, Article 4, Paragraphs 1 and 2).

In accordance with this, the results of our self-assessments have been reported twice, once in AY2011 and once in AY2013, to the University Evaluation Committee and the President, and based on an evaluation and comprehensive review of those results, efforts to make improvements have been incorporated into action plans and new curricula (Ref. 10-6, Article 2, Paragraphs 1 and 2; Ref. 10-8; Ref. 10-9).

2) Compliance initiatives

APU's parent institution, the Ritsumeikan Trust, formulated the Ritsumeikan Trust Compliance Committee Regulations which stipulate the following matters pertaining to the authority of the Compliance Committee, one of its permanent committees (Ref. 10-10, Article 2).

(Duties of the Compliance Committee)

Article 2

1 The duties of the Compliance Committee are listed as follows:

- (1) To propose important policies and policy revisions pertaining to the promotion of compliance in the Ritsumeikan Trust and the schools established thereunder to the Chairman of the Board;
- (2) To plan and implement training and awareness-raising initiatives in the Ritsumeikan Trust and the schools established thereunder for the promotion of compliance;
- (3) To process cases of compliance promotion policy violations in the Ritsumeikan Trust and the schools established thereunder and propose measures to prevent reoccurrence to the Chairman of the Board;
- (4) To notify the Chairman of the Board of the measures stipulated in Article

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- 15, Paragraph 2, Item 2 of the Ritsumeikan Trust Regulations for Confidential Informant Claim Processing;
- (5) To disclose initiatives concerning the promotion of compliance;
 - (6) Any other items deemed necessary by the Committee for the promotion of compliance.

Furthermore, an investigative committee can be established to handle each individual case and the authority of that committee is as stipulated below (Ref. 10-10, Article 6).

(Investigative Committee)

Article 6

- 1 When compliance promotion policy violations or suspected are uncovered and investigations become necessary, an Investigative Committee may be established under the Compliance Committee.
- 2 The Director of the Office of Legal Compliance shall establish an Investigative Committee upon the approval of the Compliance Committee Chairman.
- 3 The Director of the Office of Legal Compliance, after establishing an Investigative Committee, must issue a report to the Compliance Committee.
- 4 Necessary items concerning the Investigative Committee's investigation procedures shall be stipulated separately.
- 5 When deemed urgent by the Investigative Committee, the Chairman of the Board must halt the actions of an organization or individual suspected to be compliance promotion policy violations and enact any other required measures.

Separate from the roles of the Compliance Committee, the duties and authority of the Office of Legal Compliance are stipulated in the Ritsumeikan Trust Compliance Promotion Regulations as follows (Ref. 10-11, Article 8).

(Duties and Authority of the Director of the Office of Legal Compliance)

Article 8

- 1 Duties and authority of the Director of the Office of Legal Compliance are listed as follows:
 - (1) To collect information and ascertain the compliance situation in each organization;
 - (2) To conduct processing procedures for cases of compliance issues or investigations on claims stipulated in the Ritsumeikan Trust Confidential Informant Claim Processing Regulations;
 - (3) To report the findings of the investigations concerned in the preceding item to the Compliance Committee and request decisions as needed;

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- (4) To request organizations to make improvements when the Compliance Committee determines there have been actions that constitute compliance issues;
- (5) To report the details of processing mentioned in the preceding item to the Chairman of the Board;
- (6) To conduct legal reviews of documents and request necessary corrections;
- (7) To enact any other measures required to prevent actions of non-compliance from occurring;
- (8) To undertake consultation pertaining to compliance;
- (9) Any other items ordered by the Chairman of the Board.

In terms of measures for assisting the Chairman of the Board, both the Office of Auditing and the Office of Legal Compliance carry out this role, with audits functioning to ascertain any problems found after conducting a review of enforcement outcomes. The Office of Legal Compliance, however, deals in preventative measures to ensure that inappropriate decisions are not made and that the decision-making and execution processes are conducted appropriately.

Likewise, the Compliance Committee carries out the role of supervising compliance initiatives, ascertaining how incidents that arise are being handled, and advising the Chairman of the Board on any internal control issues and corrective measures.

(3) Does the internal quality assurance system function adequately?

As mentioned earlier, the Self-Assessment Committee plays the central role in ensuring that university-wide internal quality assurance is achieved. When it comes to light that some kind of action must be taken as a result of self-assessment work, the executive in charge will request the relevant Divisions to undertake said action. If said action needs to be approved by the university, a proposal is sent to the University Senate Meeting.

The general timing and details of this process are outlined below.

AY2009	University Evaluation Committee	AY2012	Create Self-Assessment Report
AY2010	Create Self-Assessment Report	AY2013	University Evaluation Committee
AY2011	University Evaluation Committee	AY2014	Create Self-Assessment Report and submit it to Japan University Accreditation Association

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1) Self-assessment activities at the organizational and individual level

At the organizational level, based on the results of self-assessments and external evaluation, we clarify the Division in charge, formulate action plans and set feasible targets and timelines to ensure the effective operation of the PDCA Cycle.

In addition, the College of International Management and Graduate School of Management are engaged in a cycle of international quality assurance and continuous improvement for education and research with the ultimate aim of obtaining accreditation from AACSB.

At the level of the individual faculty member, we have conducted the Class Evaluation Survey since 2000. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, these evaluations and a comprehensive review of their results are conducted as part of the Faculty Assessment System. Under this system, faculty are urged to conduct self-assessments of their activities on the fields of teaching, research and community service, after which they are interviewed by their Dean or Center Director. In this way, the system encourages faculty to make improvements across a range of fields.

With regard to research, faculty must draw up and submit an Individual Research Allowance Performance Report and Research Plan to receive their individual research allowances and research travel allowances. Then, they are encouraged to reflect on whether their research has progressed as planned and if they have used their research allowances appropriately (Ref. 10-12).

In the offices, staff in management positions are given an opportunity to reflect on the office organization and the roles they have played over the course of the year based on self-assessment reports conducted by office managers and the Director-General. This serves to improve the management capacity of each office. In addition, each staff member must draw up and submit an APU Permanent Staff Member Goal and Evaluation Sheet and a Career Sheet, and they receive regular follow-up and feedback by way of interviews with their managers. These documents are also used as a reference in the consideration of personnel transfers.

2) Development of an education and research activity database and the promotion of institutional research (IR)

With regard to research activities, we built and operate our own Researcher Database, which is used to disseminate the research achievements of our faculty far and wide (Ref. 10-13). With the consent of our faculty, we strive to make the data entered into the Researcher Database available to an even wider audience by providing it to ReaD & Researchmap, a database administered by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and the National Institute of Informatics (NII). The entry of data into the Researcher Database is linked to the aforementioned Faculty Assessment System and must be completed for faculty to receive their individual research allowances. Incentivizing data entry in this way has helped us improve the content of the database (Ref. 10-13; Ref. 10-14, p.4).

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In AY2012, we launched the institutional research (IR) project in an effort to ascertain and verify the situation surrounding students, faculty and classes using objective data. To monitor the student situation, we have started an enrollment management system in which we analyze a variety of student data—from entrance examination scores and learning progress to extracurricular activities and career/advancement information—stored in our data warehouse.

3) Responding to recommendations from external evaluation bodies

To incorporate the opinions of outside stakeholders in our self-assessment activities, we established the aforementioned University Evaluation Committee, a body composed of several external members that advises the President. This committee typically meets once every two years to conduct external evaluations. The regulations state that the University Evaluation Committee shall assess the objectivity and adequacy of our self-assessment results and that the President shall incorporate the results of said evaluation into the various plans of the Academy and the university (Ref. 10-7, Article 2, Paragraphs 1 and 2).

Most recently, this committee conducted an external evaluation in AY2013, and its results along with the summary issued by the Chairman were reported to the President and the Self-Assessment Committee. We take all of the committee's recommendations seriously, and each Division strives to address them as part of improvement efforts (Ref. 10-9).

We also respond carefully to recommendations issued by MEXT and accreditation agencies. In AY2008, when we underwent an accreditation screening by JUAA, we received 9 advices and one recommendation. We compiled the efforts undertaken in the Colleges and Graduate Schools to respond to these advices and recommendation in an Improvement Report which was submitted to JUAA on July 26, 2012 after being confirmed by the Self-Assessment Committee. In its response to our report, which was delivered to APU on March 15, 2013, JUAA said: "The Association can see ... that the university has taken these advices and recommendations seriously and is motivated to make improvements." However, it remarked on the section entitled "Degree Conferral and Approval of Completion", which was the subject of its second advice, 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."

Ways to ensure the transparency, objectivity and stringency of screenings for these reports were debated during the discussions on the 2014 Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies and Graduate School of Management curriculum reforms, and the process was improved by 1) holding joint research presentations within each Division, 2) making students submit their research proposals for screening, and 3) including faculty other than the supervisors in the screening process (Ref. 10-15, p.8).

2. Assessment

(1) Items that are Showing Results

1) International quality assurance initiatives

By striving to obtain AACSB accreditation for the College of International Management and the Graduate School of Management, we have started to develop an internal quality assurance framework that takes into account international quality assurance (Ref. 10-16).

(2) Areas for Improvement

1) Undeveloped approach to assessment items that should be prioritized

The role of the Self-Assessment Committee is to define the university's approach to self-assessment, but this remains undeveloped and undecided.

3. Strategic Direction for the Future

(1) Items that are Showing Results

1) International quality assurance initiatives

We are working to spread the College of International Management and Graduate School of Management's initiatives toward obtaining AACSB accreditation throughout the rest of the university as best practices. The College of Asia Pacific Studies and Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies are already planning to strengthen their quality assurance initiatives as part of the undergraduate curriculum reforms slated for AY2017.

(2) Areas for Improvement

1) Undeveloped approach to assessment items that should be prioritized

With a keen eye on the next round of undergraduate curriculum reforms scheduled for either AY2017 or AY2018, the Self-Assessment Committee will define an approach for assessments, which is a priority issue for the university, in AY2016 and enact a policy for future self-assessment activities.

4. Supporting Resources

10-1: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University University Regulations (same as Ref. 1-2)

10-2: University Accreditation, APU homepage

10-3: Ritsumeikan Trust Information Disclosure Regulations

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- 10-4: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Information Disclosure Page
- 10-5: Confirmation of Policy on Self-Assessment Timing and Methods and Revisions to Relevant Regulations
- 10-6: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University Self-Assessment Committee Regulations
- 10-7: Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University University Evaluation Committee Regulations
- 10-8: AY2014 Office Operational Plan Sheet (Standard Form)
- 10-9: AY2013 University Evaluation Committee Report
- 10-10: Ritsumeikan Trust Compliance Committee Regulations
- 10-11: Ritsumeikan Trust Compliance Promotion Regulations
- 10-12: AY2014 Individual Research Allowance Disbursement Procedures
- 10-13: Regarding the Provision of Information to Read & Researchmap and the Renewal Thereof
- 10-14: Faculty Assessment (Assessment of Activities and Achievements in AY2013) (same as Ref. 3-16)
- 10-15: AY2014 Curriculum Reforms in the Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies Master's Program and Graduate School of Management Master's Program
- 10-16: AACSB Self-Evaluation Report