



*Institutional Certified Evaluation and
Accreditation of Universities
General Principles:
2012-2019*

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Foreword

The *General Principles* is a document outlining the fundamental policy and guiding implementation method of evaluation that the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) follows in conducting the mandatory evaluation of universities concerning the general conditions of their education, research and other activities (hereafter referred to as the “the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities”).

Japanese legislation¹⁾ oblige all national, municipal/prefectural and private universities and colleges of technology to be evaluated by an organization certified by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (certified evaluation and accreditation organization) once every seven years on the general conditions of their education and research, management, and facilities for the purpose of contributing to improvement in quality of their education and research. Under this certified evaluation and accreditation system, universities and colleges are required to select at least one organization from among a number of certified evaluation and accreditation organizations.

NIAD-UE, being established in accordance with the Act on the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation²⁾, undertakes the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities with a view to ensuring that every university is given equal opportunity to undergo the evaluation stipulated by the School Education Law as well as to contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of their education and research.

The process of NIAD-UE’s institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities is to be carried out in accordance with the *General Principles* and the *Standards for Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities*. The *Guidelines for Self-Assessment* prepared for universities and the *Evaluation Manual for External Evaluators* detail the procedures.

The institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities conducted by NIAD-UE is aimed at maintaining and enhancing the quality of education and research of universities and graduate schools, and contributing to the development of their individuality and diversity. Guided by these aims and its own past evaluation experience, NIAD-UE is determined to carry out its evaluation and accreditation, and is also committed to making constant efforts to improve its evaluation system in order to conduct a more open and evolving style of evaluation of universities, taking into consideration views and advice from the universities and graduate schools evaluated.

1) School Education Law (Article 109, paragraph 2), and the Order for Enforcement (Article 40).

2) Article 16, paragraph 1.

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I Purpose

In order to maintain and enhance the quality of higher education and research at universities in Japan and contribute to the development of their individuality and diversity, the National Institution for Academic Degrees and University Evaluation (NIAD-UE) conducts the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities for the following purposes:

- (a) To assure the quality of education, research and other activities of universities by regularly evaluating the institutions in accordance with the Standards for Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities set by NIAD-UE concerning the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities (hereafter referred to as “the Standards”);
- (b) To contribute to improvement in the quality of education, research and other activities of universities by providing them with high quality evaluation reports; and
- (c) To encourage and assist universities to gain public understanding of and support for their status as institutions that serve the public good, by clarifying and publishing the conditions of their education, research and other activities.

II Fundamental Policies

With the abovementioned purposes in mind, NIAD-UE conducts the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities based on the following fundamental policies.

(1) Standards-based evaluation and accreditation

The process of the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities focuses on judging whether the general conditions of education, research and other activities of each university meet the Standards.

(2) Focus on educational activities

Considering international trends in university evaluation and the fact that this evaluation scheme targets all universities, NIAD-UE evaluates the general conditions of their institutional activities, particularly their educational activities.

(3) Contribution to the development of individuality

Although the process of the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities is based on the Standards, the mission of the university in terms of education, research and other activities is factored into the process to fully reflect its individual character and distinctive features in the evaluation. The Standards itself is are designed to enable the evaluation to be conducted with the university’s mission taken into account.

(4) Evaluation and accreditation based on self-assessment

The institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities is aimed at encouraging and assisting universities to undertake proactive approaches for profiling distinctive features on the orientation of their mission and enhancing quality of their education, research and other activities. In order to ensure that the evaluation is effective as well as transparent and fair, it is important that universities assess themselves in accordance with the Standards and the Guidelines for Self-Assessment.

NIAD-UE analyzes each university's self-assessment report together with documents, data and other materials submitted as evidence and conducts the evaluation based on the analysis findings.

NIAD-UE also offers training programs for internal assessors at applying universities. These programs are designed to help further the understanding of evaluation and accreditation by providing clear descriptions on how NIAD-UE's institutional certified evaluation and accreditation works, on how self-assessment reports are drawn up, etc.

(5) Peer review

To ensure that education, research and other activities of universities are appropriately evaluated, peer review by academic staff at universities and other external experts on university education and research is exploited in the evaluation process.

(6) A highly transparent system

NIAD-UE aims to create a transparent and open evaluation system by providing universities with the opportunity to remark on and/or object to the evaluation and accreditation results and the publishing of the final results. With the aim of conducting a more open and evolving evaluation, NIAD-UE makes constant efforts to improve its evaluation system, taking into consideration its past evaluation experience and views and advice from the universities and graduate schools evaluated.

(7) Internationally acceptable evaluation and accreditation

As universities go global, internationally acceptable certified evaluation and accreditation needs to be conducted. Keeping this in mind, NIAD-UE carries out an evaluation that places emphasis on the university's internal quality assurance system, learning outcomes, and publication of educational information.

III Implementation System

(1) System for implementing the process of evaluation and accreditation

The Committee for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities (hereafter referred to as “the Committee”) is the responsible body for organizing the process of evaluation and accreditation. The Committee is comprised of university presidents and academics as well as experts from different industries. Subcommittees for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation are set up under the Committee according to the condition of the targeted universities to carry out the actual process.

Taking into account the diverse areas and conditions of university education, the Subcommittees appoint external evaluators from among experts in various academic fields according to the situation of the faculties and other organizations at targeted universities. These experts are widely nominated from national, municipal/prefectural and private universities, academic societies, and economic and other relevant organizations.

The members of the Committee and Subcommittees are not entitled to join the decision-making process on any matters of universities that are associated with themselves.

(2) Training programs for external evaluators

To be more effective, the evaluation process must be highly reliable based on professional and objective judgments. NIAD-UE provides external evaluators with training programs that detail the purpose, contents, methods, etc., of university evaluation for them to share a common understanding and perform their tasks in a fair, appropriate and smooth manner.

IV Standards for Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities

(1) The Standards comprises ten criteria for the evaluation of universities concerning the general conditions of their institutional activities, particularly their educational activities.

(2) The ten standards cover the various requirements that NIAD-UE considers every university should satisfy, including conformity with the School Education Law, the Standards for the Establishment of Universities, and other related laws pertaining to universities.

(3) The standards are generally described further by one or more explanatory clauses. Each standard is accompanied by “viewpoints” created to assist the analysis of the conditions of the university’s education and other activities in line with the explanatory clauses.

Universities may create original viewpoint(s) better suited to their purpose.

V Methodology

(1) Outline of the evaluation process

The overall process of the institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities is as follows:

(a) Self-assessment process of universities

The university conducts a self-assessment and produces a report in accordance with the Guidelines for Self-Assessment.

The conditions of education and other activities at an institutional level, and, where appropriate, at the level of faculty, graduate school and institute, are analyzed and described in the self-assessment report for each of the ten standards in accordance with the accompanying explanatory clauses and viewpoints. In principle, the university is required to analyze and summarize the conditions concerning all viewpoints.

Where appropriate, in addition to the designated viewpoints, the university may create original viewpoint(s) better suited to its purpose for each standard, and analyze and describe the conditions in the report.

The university also appraises and describes its good practices, areas needing improvement, etc., in the report.

(b) NIAD-UE's evaluation process

(i) Based on the university's self-assessment, NIAD-UE judges whether the university as an institution meets each of the ten standards, and states reasons for its judgment. Where appropriate, the conditions at the level of faculty, graduate school and institute are also analyzed and summarized.

The standards are generally explained further by one or more explanatory clauses, and each standard is accompanied by viewpoints. Judgment is not made for each explanatory clause but for each standard based on a comprehensive analysis of the university's conditions from viewpoints set by both NIAD-UE and the university concerned.

(ii) In the case where the university's conditions meet the standards but require further improvement and/or where its good practices are identified, they are described in the final report.

(iii) A university judged to meet all ten standards set by NIAD-UE is given the status of a qualified institution.

If any one of the standards is not met, the university is judged as an unsatisfactory institution. These results are made public.

(2) Methods of evaluation

Evaluation and accreditation is conducted by the Subcommittees based on document analyses and site visits. Document analysis is conducted on the university's self-assessment report (including materials submitted as evidence), along with documents, data and other materials collected by NIAD-UE, in accordance with the "Evaluation Manual." Site visits involve interviewing staff and students and inspecting facilities in order to scrutinize the university in greater depth and verify issues unresolved during the document analysis in accordance with the "Guidelines for Site Visit."

The findings of the document analyses and site visits are summarized by the Subcommittees, and the summary is reviewed by the Committee to compile a draft of the evaluation results.

(3) Statement of objection(s) and finalization of evaluation results

Since the results of certified evaluation and accreditation should be made public as well as used for universities to improve the quality of their education, research and other activities, it is necessary to ensure that the evaluation process is accurate as well as transparent.

In this context, NIAD-UE notifies the university of the draft of the evaluation results prior to their finalization in order to provide it with the opportunity to make remark(s) and/or objection(s).

In the case where an objection is lodged against a failing judgment, an examination panel is set up under the Committee to address the issue. After the examination, the evaluation results are finalized by the Committee.

VI Evaluation Schedule

May to June

Briefing

End of September

Application

Academic year in which the evaluation process is conducted

June

Training programs for external evaluators

End of June

Submission of the self-assessment report

July to January

Document analysis and site visit

End of January

Notification of the draft of results

February

Statement of objection(s)

March

Finalization and publication of the evaluation results

NIAD-UE outlines the framework and methods of institutional certified evaluation and accreditation.

NIAD-UE receives applications for evaluation from universities.

NIAD-UE conducts training programs for external evaluators as to the purpose, contents, methods, etc., of university evaluation.

Universities conduct a self-assessment and submit a report to NIAD-UE in accordance with the Guidelines for Self-Assessment.

The Subcommittees composed of highly trained external evaluators examine the self-assessment reports, go on site visits, and summarize their initial findings. The Committee reviews the summary and compiles a draft of the evaluation results.

NIAD-UE notifies the university of the draft prior to the finalization of the evaluation results.

The university may make remark(s)/objection(s) to the draft.

After its panel examines the objection(s), the Committee finalizes the evaluation results. A final report of the results is compiled, sent to the university and its founder, and made public.

VII Publication of Evaluation Results

- (1) The results of certified evaluation and accreditation are published in the form of a final report.
- (2) The report is compiled for each university, and sent to the university and its founder. It is also made public through publication, both in print format and on the NIAD-UE website: <http://www.niad.ac.jp/>
- (3) To ensure the transparency of the evaluation process, the universities' self-assessment reports (except for attached documents, data and other materials submitted as evidence) are also published on the website.

VIII Information Disclosure

- (1) Expected to be an organization open to both society and universities and to make constant efforts to enhance transparency and objectivity with the aim of creating a better university evaluation system, NIAD-UE discloses the standards, methods and implementation system of certified evaluation and accreditation. NIAD-UE also makes public as much of the other information on its evaluation activities as it can through its website or in other appropriate ways.
- (2) In the case where NIAD-UE receives a request for the disclosure of internal documents pertaining to its evaluation activities, it will, in principle, comply with the request pursuant to the Act on Access to Information Held by Incorporated Administrative Agencies, excluding non-disclosure information such as personal data that could identify a person and corporate information that could damage an organization's rights and interests if disclosed.

In the case of a request for access to documents submitted by a university corporation that are in NIAD-UE's possession, consultation is held with the university in accordance with the Act.

IX Application

- (1) The process of certified evaluation and accreditation takes place once each academic year.
- (2) Universities are should apply to NIAD-UE for certified evaluation and accreditation using the prescribed form by the end of September in the academic year previous to the year in which they wish to undergo the evaluation process. When receiving an application, NIAD-UE conducts an evaluation without delay, unless legitimate reasons exist for doing otherwise.
- (3) Universities may apply for the next evaluation and accreditation after an interval of at least five academic years. (This does not apply to universities judged to have fallen short of the Standards.)

X Supplementary Review

The supplementary review is for universities judged to have failed one or more criteria of the Standards. These universities may apply for a supplementary review conducted only on the failed criteria item(s). The review must be carried out within two years of the evaluation year in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

If the results of this supplementary review are successful, the university is judged as a qualified institution having met all criteria of the Standards with the previous successful evaluation results also factored in. The review results are made public.

XI Evaluation Fees

Specific provisions for evaluation fees, fees for the supplementary review, payment procedures, etc., are set out separately.

XII Procedures for Revising the Standards

NIAD-UE makes constant efforts to develop a more open and evolving evaluation system through the necessary revision of the evaluation standards and other improvements, taking into account views and advice from the universities evaluated, external evaluators, and other stakeholders.

When the Standards, methods and other items necessary for university evaluation are amended, stakeholders are consulted for their opinions before the Committee examines and approves the amendment(s) in order to ensure the fairness and transparency of the process.

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