

*Institutional Certified Evaluation and  
Accreditation of Universities  
General Principles:  
2019-2026*

*NIAD-QE*

*National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education*

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October 2004 (Last revised: March 2018)

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Disclaimer: This document has been translated from the Japanese original drawn up by NIAD-QE to contribute to a deeper understanding of the certified evaluation and accreditation system. In the case where any discrepancy between this English version and the Japanese original is found, the Japanese original shall prevail.

## Foreword

Japanese legislation (School Education Act, Article 109, Paragraph 2 and the Order for Enforcement Article 40) oblige all national, municipal/prefectural and private universities to be evaluated by an organization certified by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (certified evaluation and accreditation organization) within seven years after the last evaluation on general conditions of their education and research, management, and facilities. Each university selects at least one organization from among a number of certified evaluation and accreditation organizations.

The National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education (NIAD-QE) conducts institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities as a certified evaluation and accreditation organization, in accordance with the Act on the National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education, Article 16, Paragraph 1, in order to ensure that all universities are given an opportunity to undergo the evaluation, and that the quality of their education and research is assured and enhanced.

NIAD-QE has formulated fundamental policies, Standards for Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities (hereinafter referred to as the Standards), and other documents for certified evaluation and accreditation as detailed below. *The General Principles* is a document outlining the fundamental policies and guiding implementation method of evaluation that NIAD-QE follows in conducting the mandatory evaluation of universities concerning the general conditions of their education and research activities (hereinafter referred to as the “institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities (CEA)”). *The Standards* focuses on educational activities in university programs that award bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral, and professional degrees. It identifies the conditions which NIAD-QE deems necessary for universities to satisfy, and to be compliant with in regards to relevant legislation including the Standards for the Establishment of Universities. Evaluation and accreditation is conducted as to whether universities meet these standards. *The Instructions for Self-Assessment* outlines the methods of self-assessment for universities when they are the subject of CEA based on *the Standards* stipulated by NIAD-QE. *The Evaluation Manual* is to be used by those who are engaged in NIAD-QE’s evaluation. It allows evaluation to be conducted with a common understanding and an adequate grasp of the methods and significance of the evaluation, as well as to be conducted transparently through universities and NIAD-QE sharing detailed procedures of evaluation.

The CEA conducted by NIAD-QE is aimed at maintenance and enhancement of the quality of education and research of universities, as well as the development of their individuality and diversity. Guided by these aims and its own past evaluation experience, NIAD-QE is determined to carry out its evaluation and accreditation, being committed to 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.



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## 1. Purposes

The National Institution for Academic Degrees and Quality Enhancement of Higher Education (NIAD-QE) evaluates and accredits universities as regards the general conditions of education, research and other activities at the request of the universities, for the following purposes:

- To assure the quality of education and research of universities;
- To enhance the quality of education and research of universities in keeping with their respective missions, promote improvement, and develop their strengths; and
- To assist universities in gaining public understanding of and support for their education and research activities.

## 2. Fundamental Policies

With the aim of achieving the purposes mentioned above, NIAD-QE follows the fundamental principles below in conducting its institutional certified evaluation and accreditation of universities (CEA):

### (1) Establishment of *the Standards for Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities*

In order to assure the quality of education and research of universities, NIAD-QE stipulates *the Standards* and evaluates the general condition of their activities. In the process of drafting *the Standards*, NIAD-QE seeks opinions not only from academics on campus but also from a broad range of sectors in society so that the standards may lead to a deeper understanding of education and research activities of universities.

### (2) Focus on educational activities

NIAD-QE evaluates the general condition of education, research and other activities of universities with a primary focus on their educational activities, which all universities are required to carry out as their common role in society.

### (3) Contribution to the development of individuality and enhancement of quality

NIAD-QE evaluates the initiatives carried out by universities in education and research activities and the outcomes thereof, in keeping with their respective missions. In this process, with a view to encouraging universities to enhance the quality of their activities, NIAD-QE highlights “good practices” and also points out the “areas for improvement” for which specific

efforts for improvement need to be made.

NIAD-QE conducts ongoing checks of improvement measures implemented by universities.

(4) Emphasis on internal quality assurance

The university's practice of reviewing its own education, research and other activities and of maintaining and enhancing the quality of the activities in light of the review results, viewed as "internal quality assurance," shall be prioritized in the processes of the CEA with focus on the organization and functionality of the system.

In the process of CEA, NIAD-QE analyzes the self-assessment report, together with the verifying materials and data that describes the results of self-assessment by the university as part of their internal quality assurance activities. It also checks supplementary information, visits campuses for interviews with students and other stakeholders, and makes decisions according to *the Standards*.

(5) Emphasis on learning outcomes

NIAD-QE's CEA mainly concerns the learning outcomes achieved by students by inviting students as well as graduates, their employers and other stakeholders to submit their opinions, given the importance of the knowledge and skills students have acquired and the quality of students' experience.

(6) Fair evaluation by peers

For the appropriate evaluation of highly professional education and research activities of universities to be ensured, peer professionals with experience and insights in the area are to play a major role in the process of CEA. Furthermore, with a view to gaining widespread understanding and support from the public, NIAD-QE invites participation in the evaluation process from experts in various fields in society, economy, and culture, while eliminating conflicts of interests among academics, in order to assure fairness in evaluation.

(7) Consistency with international trends in quality assurance

In formulating *the Standards* as well as conducting CEA, NIAD-QE pursues consistency with international standards in perspectives and techniques for quality assurance of higher education, so that its evaluation can serve as a reference for the international community.

### 3. Structure of the Evaluation and Accreditation Standards

The Evaluation and Accreditation Standards are designed to evaluate the overall status of education and research activities of universities, with a focus on their educational activities. The Evaluation and Accreditation Standards are composed of 27 standards, which are classified into six areas:

Area One: Standards for Basic Organizations for Education and Research

Area Two: Standards for Internal Quality Assurance

Area Three: Standards for Financial Management, Administrative Management, and  
Publication of Information

Area Four: Standards for Facilities and Equipment, and Student Support

Area Five: Standards for Student Admissions

Area Six: Standards for Academic Programs and Learning Outcomes

Standards concerning internal quality assurance as prescribed in the Evaluation and Accreditation Standards are priority evaluation items.

### 4. The Methodology of Evaluation and Accreditation

#### (1) The organization for evaluation and accreditation

The Committee for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation of Universities (hereafter referred to as the "Committee") is constituted as the body which is responsible for the process of evaluation and accreditation. The Committee comprises academics from national, municipal/prefectural and private universities, as well as experts from various fields in society, industry, and culture. Subcommittees for Certified Evaluation and Accreditation (hereafter referred to as the "Subcommittees") are set up under the Committee to carry out the evaluation process for individual universities and are tailored to the characteristics of the universities under evaluation.

The Subcommittees comprises evaluators from among academics and experts in various fields, appointed based on the condition of organizational structure and characteristics of education and research of the universities under evaluation. In light of the diversity of academic fields and the conditions of universities, NIAD-QE invites nominations of experts from a wide range of national, municipal/prefectural and private universities, academic societies, and other relevant organizations.

#### (2) Training of evaluators

To ensure reliable evaluation and accreditation based on professional and objective

judgment, NIAD-QE provides evaluators with training programs that detail the purpose, content, and methods of CEA, so they can share a common understanding and perform their tasks in a fair, appropriate and smooth manner.

## 5. The Methods

### (1) The basic components of NIAD-QE's evaluation and accreditation

NIAD-QE's process of CEA consists of self-assessment by the university and its review by NIAD-QE.

- Self-assessment by the university
  - 1) A university conducts self-assessment as part of its internal quality assurance activities, preparing a self-assessment report of the results together with the evidential materials and data included, following with the *Instructions for Self-Assessment*. As such evidential materials and data, the university can reuse the materials used for third-party evaluations other than those conducted in compliance with the present *General Principles* or quote the results thereof.
  - 2) In preparing a self-assessment report, the university analyzes, for each standard, the condition of its education, research and other activities as an entire institution or, if necessary, at the level of individual organization for education and research with reference to the condition of their academic programs, and decides whether the university meets each standard.
  - 3) The university identifies good practices and areas for improvement for each standard.
- Review by NIAD-QE
  - 1) On the analysis of the self-assessment report and necessary verification of obligations in the document analysis and the on-site inspection and confirmation in site visit, NIAD-QE decides as to whether the university meets each standard stipulated in *the Standards* and shows the reasons for the decision.
  - 2) With regard to the standards for academic programs and learning outcomes, NIAD-QE analyzes the status of education, research and other activities at each basic organization of education and research with reference to the condition of academic programs, and decides as to whether the university meets the standards.
  - 3) The university shall fail to meet a standard if any areas for improvement are found with regard to it.
  - 4) The university that meets all standards shall meet *the Standards* stipulated by NIAD-QE. If it fails to meet any of the standards, it shall meet *the Standards* on condition that it is

confirmed, all the things concerning all the standards considered, that the quality of education and research of the university is assured to live up to the condition required of a university. Otherwise, the university shall not meet *the Standards*. Should the university be found not to have a system or a procedure for internal quality assurance, either of which is deemed to be a priority requirement, the university would not meet *the Standards* regardless of whether it meets other standards.

- 5) In the evaluation results, NIAD-QE explicitly identifies good practices and areas for improvement, in addition to the decision as to whether the university meets *the Standards*. Internal quality assurance is a priority item, and if the system functions excellently, this is reflected favorably in the evaluation results.

## (2) Methods employed by NIAD-QE

In NIAD-QE's evaluation process, the Subcommittees conduct document analysis and site visits. Document analysis analyzes, in accordance with *the Evaluation Manual*, the university's self-assessment report (including materials and data given as evidence), as well as other third-party documents and material collected by NIAD-QE. To supplement the document analysis, site visits concentrate on the issues about which document analysis has failed to provide full understanding as well as on the interviews with various kinds of stakeholders, following the "Guidelines for Site Visit." The Subcommittees draft the evaluation results based on the findings from the document analysis and site visit for each university. The Committee reviews the draft evaluation results, and decides on the final draft of evaluation results.

## (3) Statement of objections and finalization of evaluation results

Before finalizing the results, the Committee sends the university under evaluation the final draft of evaluation results so that the university is provided with an opportunity for correction and objection. All corrections and objections would be given due consideration by the Committee.

If a university filed an objection to the Committee's decision on any standard to the effect that the university does not meet the standard, an independent panel, set up under the Committee, would scrutinize the decision and the objection and report its findings to the Committee.

The Committee appropriately finalizes the evaluation following the necessary procedures, including the review of the report from the independent panel.

## 6. Publication of Evaluation Results

- (1) The Evaluation results are compiled for each university and reported to the university and its establishing corporation. The results are made accessible widely to the public on the NIAD-QE website and by other means.
- (2) Along with the publication of evaluation results, the university's self-assessment report is also posted on the website in order to ensure the transparency of the evaluation process.

## 7. Continuing Verification of Improvement

Universities that are decided to meet *the Standards* in spite of the identification of areas for improvement are required to report subsequently to NIAD-QE about the condition of the improvement on the identified areas.

The Committee examines the report of the improvement and ostensibly adds the confirmation of improvement to the publicized evaluation results if it verifies the improvement.

## 8. Supplementary Review

Universities that are decided not to meet *the Standards* may apply for a supplementary review within two academic years after the evaluation, in accordance with procedures stipulated separately.

If a university is decided in the supplementary review to meet the standards that it has failed to meet in the original evaluation, NIAD-QE decides and makes publicly known that it meets *the Standards* together with the original results.

## 9. Information Disclosure

- (1) NIAD-QE makes publicly available the facts as stipulated in Article 169, paragraph (1) of the Ordinance for Enforcement of the School Education Act, including *the Standards*, evaluation methods, the structure of evaluation system and other related matters, and provides further information it holds concerning evaluation and accreditation by way of appropriate methods such as its website.
- (2) In cases where a request for disclosure of corporate documents regarding the evaluation of a university is filed, NIAD-QE discloses the relevant documents it holds in compliance with the

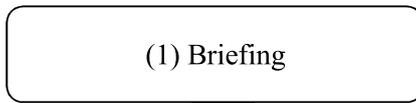
## 10. Temporal Constraints

- (1) The evaluation procedure is conducted once each academic year.
- (2) Universities shall apply to NIAD-QE by the end of September of the academic year which is prior to the one in which they wish to undergo CEA. Receiving applications from a university, NIAD-QE conducts CEA without undue delay.
- (3) Universities are required to abide by the prescriptions on the period of CEA in the relevant laws and regulations in applying for the CEA to NIAD-QE.

## 11. Evaluation Schedule

Preceding academic year

May to June



- NIAD-QE outlines the framework and methods of CEA.

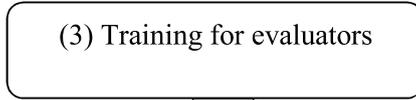
End of September



- NIAD-QE receives applications for evaluation from universities.

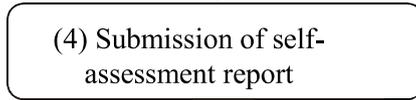
Academic year in which the evaluation process is implemented

June



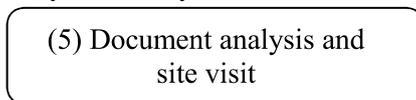
- NIAD-QE provides evaluators with training programs detailing the purpose, content, methods, etc. of university evaluation.

End of June



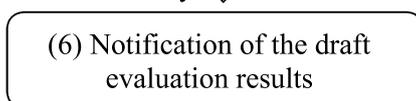
- Universities conduct a self-assessment and submit a report to NIAD-QE in accordance with the *Instructions for Self-Assessment*.

July to January



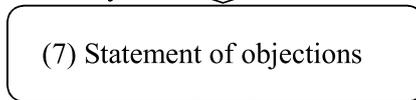
- The Subcommittees analyze the self-assessment reports, go on site visits, and summarize their initial findings.
- The Committee reviews the summary and compiles a draft of the evaluation results.

End of January



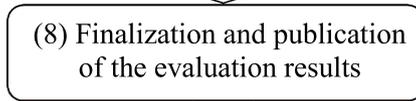
- NIAD-QE notifies universities of the draft evaluation results before finalizing them.

February



- Universities may provide comments or state objections to the draft.

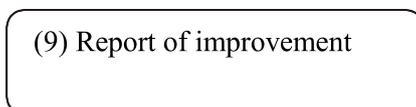
March



- After a panel deliberates on the objections, the Committee finalizes the evaluation results.
- A final report of the results is compiled, sent to the university and the entity that established it, and made public.

At least one academic year later

End of June



- If the university was advised of areas for improvement, it is required to report to NIAD-QE about the measures taken to address these areas.

## 12. Evaluation Fees

Evaluation fees, fees for the supplementary review, payment procedures, and other matters concerning fees are each prescribed separately.

## 13. Revision of *the Standards*

NIAD-QE is making efforts to develop a more open and flexible, evolving evaluation system by making the necessary revisions to *the Standards* and other improvements, taking into account the views of universities evaluated, external evaluators, and other stakeholders.

When revising *the Standards*, evaluation methods and other matters necessary for the evaluation of universities, the Committee deliberates and decides on the revisions after consulting stakeholders for their opinions, in order to ensure the fairness and transparency of the revision process.

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