

Policies Regarding International Strategies of the University of Aizu

Preface

Globalization has been included as a very important component in the establishment of the University of Aizu (UoA), and the UoA has implemented several measures for globalization such as bilingual environment where English and Japanese are official languages on campus. This is an essential for advancing cutting-edge knowledge and technology in Computer Science and Engineering. In addition, Foreign Personnel Advisers, interpreters and translators, and highly specialized academic staff are employed; a global lounge has been established to promote cross-cultural exchange and information sharing, etc.

In addition, the UoA has recruited faculty members through international recruitment, established close links with partner universities to expand the overseas connections developed through joint research and other exchange activities, and implemented numerous internationalization measures encompassing education and research exchanges.

As a result, the UoA has steadily achieved a higher proportion of foreign faculty members than other domestic universities, greater mobility in sending and receiving researchers and students abroad, and the highest ranking in 'International Outlook' among Japanese Universities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings and other similar assessments.

With these fundamental global aspects in place, we have been awarded three large national grants; 'Strategic Fund for Establishing International Headquarters in Universities'(AY2005 - AY2009) by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT); 'Asian Human Resources Fund Initiative,'(AY2008 - AY2010) a highly specialized foreign student development project by the Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) and MEXT, and the 'Top Global University Project' (AY2014 - AY2023), by MEXT.

Subsequently, the scope of overseas education and research exchange agreements expanded to actively facilitate mutual exchange among undergraduate students and admission to the UoA's postgraduate programs. The UoA Graduates who studied abroad, the UoA international students, former visiting researchers, and former faculty members are actively engaged in various regions both domestically and internationally, serving as valuable assets to both the UoA and the local region.

Recently in Japan, the Cabinet Office's Council for the Creation of Future of Education (April 2023) addressed the nature and future direction of investing in individuals for a post-COVID global society. specific measures include: (1) new post-COVID measures for outbound and inbound students, (2) developing a secure post-graduation work environment for inbound students, (3) internationalization of education.

Furthermore, the 'Fukushima International Policy Promotion Plan (enforced in December 2021)' addresses international initiatives in Fukushima Prefecture. It emphasizes the need to enhance education and research sophistication at the university level, fostering an appealing academic environment. The goal is to encourage the enrollment of international students and provide enhanced support for their academic pursuits, research endeavors, and daily lives. Additionally, it underscores the importance of collaboration and cooperation among governments, industries, and universities. This collaboration aims to integrate international students into the local community, create opportunities for interaction, support their employment within Fukushima after graduation, and strive for the development of talent that promotes multicultural coexistence.

Within its Medium-Term Goals, the UoA sets fundamental goals, while also establishing new goals in response to changes in social circumstances. The UoA will work toward revitalization and reconstructions following the Great East Japan Earthquake and nuclear disaster, the UoA collaborates with national and local governments, along with related organizations. The UoA engages in research and projects that harness the UoA's distinctive characteristics. Additionally, the UoA strives to cultivate talent contributing to recovery and innovation, addressing various challenges arising from changes in domestic and global socio-economic conditions, and endeavors to construct a sustainable society. The UoA actively monitors the trends in cutting-edge technologies such as DX and Society 5.0, aligning them with the needs and changes within industries, society, and local communities. The UoA's goal is to promote initiatives that leverage its unique strength.

In order to address the needs and challenges of society and the region in the future, the focus will be on developing more advanced research and education, while also enhancing sustainable collaborations among students, faculty, staff, and various stakeholders.

Specifically, when considering the way to stimulate students overseas, it is crucial to leverage the international environment created at the UoA through the continuing acceptance of international students. This is essential for developing human resources capable of actively engaging in international society.

In order to develop such human resources, the UoA must provide the opportunities for students to experience overseas at partner universities and to do a practical work and contributed within the local regions.

The “Policies Regarding International Strategies of the University of Aizu”, which serve as the foundation for international activities, will be revised to align with the formulation of the UoA's Medium-Term Goals and Plans.

Based on a comprehensive international strategy, we will promote focused initiatives in the following four areas, which are pillars of international exchange:

1. International Collaboration in Education and Research
2. Fostering Internationally Engaged Human Resources
3. Development of Collaborative Activities Corresponding for Regional Revitalization and Reconstruction
4. Enhancing the Implementation System for International Strategies

In realizing UoA's fundamental principles and international strategy, faculty members, administrative staff, and other relevant individuals, proactive activity can be conducted from the perspective of the University as a whole, and through strengthening of the UoA's international exchange activities, the idea of “local to global, global to local” will be achieved.

Fundamental Principle

In order to promote the founding mission of the UoA, “to advance knowledge for humanity,” the UoA will encourage international exchange in both education and research and realize the idea of “local to global, global to local” through contributions to international and local society. These contributions will be made by fostering excellent human resources and conducting creative research at the UoA as an international base for education and research.

Objectives

1. To realize high level education and research at the UoA of Aizu by promoting international exchange which facilitates and complements the education and research conducted at the UoA.
2. To foster human resources who are viable in international society and who have local roles while holding global perspectives, and to contribute to local communities through international exchange activities.

1. International Collaboration in Education and Research

Collaboration with universities overseas will have objectives to achieve synergy and to complement current education and research conducted at the UoA through exchange activities, taking into consideration the characteristics of the region, culture, and industry, while taking advantage of the special fact that the UoA has an environment where English is used as a working language.

The UoA has aimed to enhance educational and research exchanges by outlining specific collaborative activities and formulating Memoranda of Understanding and agreements. Faculty members will continue to serve as contact points, addressing various concerns such as: (1) elevating educational and research standards, (2) assessing accomplishments and future prospects in exchanges, and (3) exploring robust potential collaborations and mutual faculty exchanges.

Moreover, to strengthen collaboration, Memoranda of Understanding have been established to foster comprehensive partnerships with international universities and their departments. This initiative has deepened specific educational and research activities. The UoA has implemented an International Credit Recognition Program that allows credit acquisition with partner universities. Additionally, to facilitate in-depth research exchanges within our graduate schools, The UoA has introduced the Dual Degree Program and Global 3+2 program to further promote mutual exchange.

1.1 Educational Exchange

In educational exchange, the UoA will pay attention to trends within IEEE and ACM, aiming to enhance collaboration with leading global universities. This effort aims to broaden insights into learning support systems, teaching methodologies, and educational management, which will significantly contribute to pedagogical quality assurance. The UoA reviews its curriculum development and implementation policies, particularly those specific to Computer Science and Engineering to elevate the quality of education.

Simultaneously, the UoA will enhance faculty development and professional development, including teacher training initiatives. These measures will be continually implemented to refine the educational skills of the faculty members and staff and further augment ICT education and the research environment.

Therefore, as a 'Strategic Overseas University Partnership', mutual exchanges with universities with a proven track record in undergraduate education in the USA, Germany and other countries will be expanded. By introducing best practice in educational programs, the UoA will develop world-

standard ICT specialized education and English language education to support these, and develop and produce internationally-minded human resources who will contribute to the region.

1.2 Research Exchange

In research exchange, the UoA aims to advance fundamental research in Computer Science and Engineering with a long-term perspective, striving to comprehend accurately the trends in global technologies and evolving needs while enhancing collaborations with leading universities, fostering synergistic research fields, and facilitating interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary exchanges.

Furthermore, to encourage team-based research within research centers and clusters, strengthen cooperation between Computer Science and Engineering and diverse fields, and apply the results of such research to the local community, the UoA will expand specific agreements for educational and research exchanges with world-leading universities that have established strong networks with the UoA faculty members.

This initiative is anticipated to provide ample opportunities for improving international competitiveness and nurturing individuals capable of actively contributing on the global stage; furthermore, the UoA will strengthen programs that foster mutually complementary collaborations by designating universities from diverse countries and regions with a proven track record of exchange as 'Strategic Overseas University Partnership.'

2. Fostering Internationally-Engaged Human Resources

To contribute to the internationalization of Fukushima Prefecture and the expansion of international exchange, the UoA aims to enhance international programs offered to students and facilitate exchanges between international faculty members, students, and prefectural residents. This effort is intended to improve international competitiveness and foster the development of globally engaged human resources.

As part of our strategy for education and research exchange, the UoA will actively facilitate both outbound and inbound student exchanges, leveraging our strengths, such as specialized ICT education in English. Simultaneously, the UoA aims to cultivate an appreciation for diverse cultures and values through international exchanges within the region (local governments, educational institutions such as elementary and junior high schools) as well as on our campus. The UoA will proactively offer phased opportunities for study abroad, internships, and other educational and research experiences to our high-performing students who have been enriched through such exposure.

To facilitate the implantation of these programs, internal systems such as scholarships and tuition waivers will be put in place, and improvements will be made to enhance the systems, infrastructure, and facilities for outbound and inbound students.

3. Development of Collaborative Activities for Regional Revitalization and Reconstruction

Through international exchange activities, strengthen the connection between the university and society, and contribute to the promotion of DX and the realization of a sustainable society by leveraging our expertise in Computer Science and Engineering, industry, culture, etc., to contribute to the community.

The UoA will form teams of both international students and Japanese students, promote student participation in projects such as solving local problems as the UoA based in the Aizu region, deepen understanding of the local community through practical activities in revitalization and reconstruction, and encourage students to settle in the prefecture after their graduation.

In addition, while utilizing the UoA's international network, we will develop educational programs that contribute to innovation, entrepreneurship, and regional contribution, and actively promote collaboration and cooperation with the prefecture, national and municipal governments, educational and research institutions, companies, NPOs, and other diverse entities in order to develop human resources that will contribute to revitalization and reconstruction.

4. Enhancing the Implementation System for International Strategies

The comprehensive, interdisciplinary system structure with advanced functions for international projects will be enhanced.

4.1 International Strategy Implementation Structure

In order to implement the international strategy initiatives with university-wide cross-sectional and flexible capabilities, prior consultations will be held with all related parties, and various initiatives will be implemented under the leadership of the President and in coordination with the Board of Executives using an internal organizational structure that enables centralized planning and coordination.

4.2 Support System for International Researchers and Students

To promote "daily internationalization of the education and research environment" for international faculty members, researchers, and students so that they can engage in education and research activities at UoA in the same conditions as Japanese, the UoA will enhance the system of "self-help" and "mutual-help" lifestyle support, community building, and improvement of communication skills such as Japanese language skills.

In addition, deepen understanding of the local community through international exchange and other activities in revitalization and reconstruction, in order to encourage students to settle in the prefecture after their graduation.

4.3 Support for Organizing International Conferences and Seminar

To advance international exchange activities with educational institutions, companies in Japan and abroad, the UoA will continue to subsidize the organizing of international conferences, symposiums, and seminars that contribute to internationally-engaged human resources.

4.4 Network for Promoting Exchanges among Faculty, Staff, Students, and Alumni

By taking advantage of the global human network of faculty, international students, and alumni across more than 30 different countries and areas, which is one of the strengths of the UoA, the UoA and related stakeholders will mutually disseminate information to strengthen a sense of belonging to the UoA and create a sustainable network.

4.5 Improved Understanding and Professional Development of UoA Internationalization

Improve the support system for international exchange by promoting the training and recruitment of professional faculty and staff members who are professionally involved in student and researcher exchange, and by continuing to promote professional development in the internationalization of the UoA.

Utilizing the experience and knowledge gained in a bilingual environment already at a high level of internationalization, the UoA will pursue synergies by improving the cross-cultural communication skills of faculty and staff members, improving international exchange policies, and collaborating both inside and outside of the UoA.