The Interim Report by the University Council of Japan
(Deliberation Process and Issues Requiring Further Consideration)

19th January 2011

(Summary)

1. Various situations surrounding universities, and qualitative/quantitative state of universities

Within the knowledge society where both internationalisation and computerisation continue to move forward, the role of universities within society as centres for fostering human resources, preserving and developing science and culture, and contributing to local communities and industries is growing more and more significant.

[Quantitative scale]	**[Quality of universities]**
- The 18-year old population is expected to remain around the 1.2 million mark for a while. - Universal access to university education is promoted, considering acceptance not only of the 18-year old population, but also of various students (especially matured and/or international students), and learning opportunities in the region.	- There have been many concerns of the contents and standards of university education from both within and outside universities. - Universities have made efforts to develop improved education and reform organisational management. - Universities are required to provide a sufficient response to the demands of society as well as to communicate the work they are doing to the wider world.
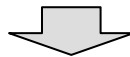
2. Outline of the deliberation process and issues requiring further consideration

2.1 Assuring and enhancing the quality of education

- Ensuring consistency of programmes/courses
- Improvements to the quality assurance system
- Response to globalisation of university education

2.2 Promoting mission differentiation and university partnerships

- Universities have wide-ranging functions and vary according to the age and environment.
- On that basis, (1) the visualisation of the state of education and research of different universities and (2) the introduction of assessment by function are promoted in order to evaluate the efforts of each university regardless of priority function area.
- Promoting university partnerships and promoting functional partnerships at the same time. (Universities actively play the role of local intellectual facilities.)

2.3 Strengthening organisational and management foundations in order to improve educational and research functions

- Strengthening organisational foundations through universities' autonomous and independent judgment.
- Strengthening universities' management foundations including funding.

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1 Various situations surrounding universities, and qualitative/quantitative state of universities

1.1 Various situations surrounding universities

Within the "knowledge society," where both internationalisation and computerisation continue to move forward, the role of universities within society as centres for fostering human resources, preserving and developing science and culture, and contributing to local communities and industries is growing more and more significant.

In addition to this, in reflection of the current situation both in Japan and overseas, the social role of universities is growing ever larger. Domestically, the declining birth-rate and ageing population, a declining population of working age, the impact of the difficult economic situation on employment, socio-economic disparity, worsening fiscal conditions and the issue of safety and security within society are all areas of concern. Within international society, developments in the integration of the Asian regional economy and severing economic competition in line with globalisation, along with global environmental problems and issues with food and energy supply, medical care and health, are creating problems for humankind as a whole.

Against this background, Japan believes that new opportunities for development and paths to growth can be found through changes to the age in which we live and shifts to the industrial structure, and that university education can play a significant role in training leaders for a new age, and equipping people with the knowledge and skills to succeed extensively as structural changes take place within industry.

Furthermore, as the ambition to proceed into higher education has grown, the number of females proceeding to university, including to graduate schools, has also increased, and the implementation of structural reorganisations to create an environment where women's abilities can be better utilised, including in employment as academics, will also contribute greatly to the development and growth of our country. In Japan, furthermore, the proportion of students of varying ages and from other countries and regions is low compared to other developed countries, and so adjustments to ensure an environment in which a more diverse range of people are able to study together are also a critical issue, since these will allow each person to continue learning throughout their lives, and thereby become independent both professionally and within society.

1.2 Quantitative scale of universities

Against this background, and before we begin considering the state of university education over the medium to long term, let us first look at the quantitative scale of Japan's universities, which is as follows.

In recent years, the number of people continuing their education to university level has risen, and reached 56.8% in the academic year 2010. The 18-year old population, which makes up the majority of people entering university, peaked at 2.05 million in 1992, and has been in decline since then, although the decline levelled out around 2008, and is expected to remain around the 1.2 million mark for the next 10 years.

The rise in the proportion of people entering universities has mainly come about due to the increasing number of senior high school students looking to go on to university. The 2005 report "The Future of Japan's Higher Education" predicted that the capacity of universities (number of people entering university / number of people applying for entry) would reach 100% in 2007, but as a result of an increase in the number of applications, the percentage figure currently remains in the 90s.

The number of people entering university peaked in academic year 1993 at 810,000, and had fallen by 2010 to 690,000.

Looking at the quantitative scale by region, compared with the overall national rate of progress to university, which as stated above is 56.8%, there is a disparity of around 30% between the prefectures with the highest university entry rates and those with the lowest. The 18-year old population is expected to remain stable nationwide for the foreseeable future, but viewed on a per prefecture basis, it is expected that some regions will see a decline of up to 20%.

The increasing proportion of young people proceeding to university is a phenomenon shared with other countries around the world, and there is a need to respond to this desire for learning among individuals who make up the knowledge society. As a result, when looking at the issue quantitatively, it is important to consider universal access to university education (in other words, offering the opportunity to all people to select a university education at any time), making it available not only to the 18-year old population, but also to people across a broad range of ages and nationalities. In addition, it is necessary to consider how to offer a balance of disciplines and functions through regional access to higher education.

It is thought that the 18-year old population will begin to shrink once again after the next 10 years of flattening out. In the meantime, alongside improved universal access, improvements to and assurance of quality in universities, functional differentiation, and strengthening of the organisational management basis are all issues that need to be focused on and specifically progressed.

1.3 The quality of universities

The historic, international shared concept of universities sees them as organisations that offer the following things:

- High-level education, and research to back this up
- Autonomous and independent activities with the purpose of meeting their conventional objectives
- The awarding of degrees as a result of the education offered, and based on the unique characteristics of the university,

and where the overall university structure is subject to a systematic guarantee provided by each country.

Given these assumptions, Japan's universities have contributed significantly through the period of modernisation since the Meiji era, and the period of economic growth after the Second World War, to the areas of human resources training, the formation of a knowledge base, and the development and growth of the social economy. During this time, universities, regardless of whether they were national, public or private, were based on a shared awareness of the role and function expected of them, in addition to which they engaged in education and research activities based on their various attributes, depending on their formation structure, allowing a composite university system to be developed through a combination of national, public and private universities. Against this background, the universities of today are required to respond proactively to the diversification of the needs of both students and society, while at the same time guaranteeing and improving the quality of their education.

Based on this awareness, the University Council has been engaged in advising on a range of systematic reforms and policy proposals, and universities have developed improved education and the reforms to organisational management required to support it. Many progressive examples can have been seen in this area. At the same time, perhaps because there has not been sufficiently broad communication of this information to society, there have been many concerns of the contents and standards of university education from both within and outside universities. Universities are required to provide a sufficient response to the demands of society from the perspective of assuring and improving the quality of education, but also to ensure that they communicate the work they are doing proactively to the wider world.

1.4 Issues requiring further consideration

Based on an awareness of these issues, the University Council has to date reflected consultative issues from the Minister of Education, Technology, Sports, Science and Culture in its wide-ranging considerations. As a result of these considerations, and with an awareness of the correlation between the various issues, the following three points have been identified as requiring further specific consideration:

- Assuring and enhancing the quality of education
- Promoting the mission differentiation and partnerships between universities
- Strengthening of the organisational and management foundations in order to improve educational and research functions

In regard to these, items requiring continued deliberation have been noted in "2 Outline of the deliberation process of the University Council." Furthermore, the details of deliberations by the University Council to date (including those resulting in systematic reforms and budgetary measures) are detailed in the outlines of deliberation processes given in the 1st through 4th reports, as well as in the separate report entitled "Regarding the Points of Debate Occurring During Deliberations of the 5th University Council."

The various issues, including those given in these reports, will require further on-going consideration, including hearing the opinions of people from various arenas, in the light of the discussions of the University Council.

Among the items for deliberation, the issue of graduate school education has been further considered in the light of the 2005 report "Postgraduate Education for a New Era," and the results of these considerations compiled into the separate report "Postgraduate Education for the Globalised Society."

2 Outline of the deliberation process of the University Council

2.1 Assuring and enhancing the quality of education

2.1.1 Assuring consistency of programmes/courses

Universities are required to improve the quality of their programmes/courses, to ensure that they are more systematic and consistent, to ensure that the focus is less on "what university" a student graduated from, and more on "what knowledge and skills" they have acquired.

(Issues requiring consideration)

- Many universities can be seen to be implementing measures in regard to the specific implementation of the three policies raised in the Council's 2008 Report regarding undergraduate programmes/courses, and the issues need to be verified based on this situation.

    - The Degree-Award Policy (clarification of the policy regarding the awarding of degrees, based on global trends and the domestic situation)
    - The Curriculum Policy (systematisation of curriculum, giving substance to credit systems, and education methods and results assessment that improves students' motivation to study for themselves)
    - The Admission Policy (selection of students, consideration of education in first year, partnerships between senior high schools and universities)

- The enactment regulations of the School Education Act were revised in order to promote the publication of information regarding measures of this sort taken by universities. In the future, universities will need to provide a common framework for the publication of information, the creation of databases based on examples from overseas, and the provision of information in a way that is easy for students and their guardians to understand.

- In the area of development of high-level professionals, activities are being developed towards quality assurance in each sector. Referencing these examples, and bearing in mind the attributes of each sector, the wide application of quality assurance activities in each subject/area is to be promoted and supported.

- Development of substantive Faculty Development/Staff Development in order not only to improve the skills of individual academics, but also to improve and guarantee the quality of education through organisational measures by academics.

- Framework whereby corporations that support university activities based on high levels of specialism (from a national perspective).

- Intensive support programmes for reforms throughout national, public and private universities.

    - Further clarity in terms of the objective of programmes, and educational targets within the universities being supported, as well as ensuring that measures are permanently established once support ends, and that achievements are communicated both within and outside the university.

2.1.2 Improvements to the quality assurance system

2.1.2.1 Improvements to establishment criteria

Regulations relating to establishment criteria are being revised based on commonly understood rules that include the university's concepts and educational principles. Specifically, the following details require consideration.

(Examples of issues requiring consideration)

- Clarification of facilities/equipment criteria

    - The clarification is required for alternative measures for implementation when a "sports ground" and/or "appropriate open spaces for use in student recreation or other activities" are not required (Articles 34 and 35 of the University Establishment Criteria).
    - Consideration of the significance of extra-curricular activities and other activities held on campus in the case of the above, in combination with learning in accordance with the curriculum.

- Clarification of criteria for independent graduate schools

    - It is accepted that universities comprising only a graduate school may be established "where there is a particular need for educational research" (Article 103 of the School Education Act), but the conditions for this need to be specifically defined (including buildings, campus, required facilities and equipment).

- Revisions to handling of professional graduate schools, based on conditions after establishment of systems

    - Professional graduate schools require full-time academics according to the criteria for their establishment (required teaching staff). Special measures that allow these staff to be counted among the required teaching staff for other courses will end in 2013 (10 years after the system was established) and so clarification is required of how the faculty for professional programmes/course will be organised and what the systematic response will be.
    - Legally, "experienced professional" full-time teachers are required to make up a minimum proportion of professional graduate schools' full-time teachers, but based on the fact that professional graduate schools handle "experienced professional" teachers in a range of different ways, clarification is required of the definition of full-time teachers, and how to establish the proportion of "experienced professional" teachers within the full-time teachers.

- How to define criteria for the establishment of junior colleges

    - Junior colleges are one of the aspects of higher education that promote universal education, and are successful in providing a diverse range of learning opportunities in partnership and cooperation with the regions in which they are located. The definition of criteria for their establishment requires clarification.

- Labelling of majors in academic degrees

- How to promote "double degrees," in partnership with universities overseas

2.1.2.2 Improvements to establishment approval process

In 2003, the current approval system was introduced; The establishment of universities should be approved if it met certain legislative conditions, and at the same time, the number of approval categories was reduced, and a system was introduced whereby registration could be done without requiring approval, and the approval process was simplified.

Subsequently, at the same time as dealing with the existing issues, the following issues require on-going consideration, from the perspective of clarifying the rules applicable to establishment approval.

(Examples of issues requiring consideration)

- Consideration based on predicted student numbers

- Revision of approval structure for interdisciplinary areas

- How to handle registration-based establishment in response to types and areas of degrees

- How to handle conditions and on-going academic years for interdisciplinary areas within the registration-based establishment system

- How to handle the revision of special exceptions to the certified evaluation professional graduate schools

2.1.2.3 Improvements to certified evaluation

The consortium of certified evaluation bodies has been established, which is expected to work for furthermore improving the quality of certified evaluation.

(Examples of issues requiring consideration)

- Improved contents and methods of evaluation

    - Evaluation that prioritises quality assurance measures for education. Focus on appropriate measures, in the light of international trends.
    - Evaluation based on perspective of social and professional independence for students after completion.

- More effective implementation of certified evaluation

    - Organisation of contents for self-evaluation, standardisation and common application of assessment.
    - Creation of system whereby certified evaluation bodies can effectively utilise data from universities.
    - Consideration of partnerships among evaluation bodies for assessment of professional graduate schools.

- Perspective that is conducive to the development of education and research in line with the individual attributes of universities

    - When promoting the diversification of functions within universities, care must be taken to appropriately assess the priority functions of each university.
    - Certified evaluations are required to contribute to the development of the education and research of each university, and more consideration must be given to this. At the same time, remembering the diversity of university function, some of evaluation bodies implement not only the institutional evaluations, but also the evaluation focusing individual functions of each university.

- International compatibility

    - Continual understanding and analysis of international trends relating to quality assurance and evaluation systems. Surveys and research into this area must be improved, and their results shared.
    - Certified evaluation structures and the current state of Japan's universities should be promoted in a way that is easy to understand.
    - Promotion of international partnerships.

- Other issues

    - Increase in learning opportunities for persons in charge of evaluations.
    - Support for continual information provision to universities subsequent to evaluations.
    - Proactive publicity of universities receiving top-level assessments and regarding examples of excellence.

2.1.3   Issues relating to globalisation of university education

2.1.3.1   Issues requiring further consideration in order to respond to the globalisation of university education

There are many issues requiring consideration in order to respond to the need for the globalisation of university education.

(Examples of issues requiring consideration)

● Promotion of further international partnerships in university education

  - Further promotion of various partnerships exemplified by the promotion of measures to ensure quality in partnerships between Japan, China and Korea.

● International developments within Japanese universities

  - With the intention of hosting excellent students from overseas, universities and industries should enter into partnerships through sharing information relating to international students and employment opportunities, in order to systematically support increased opportunities for progress within Japan for international students after completion of courses.
  - Japan's universities need to deal with the issues of converting to a system that allows openness to both Japan and overseas (for example, recruitment of academics and admission of students). Furthermore, the revisions to establishment criteria implemented in 2004 have made it possible for university departments to be set up overseas, and universities should grasp this opportunity to realise further promotion strategies.
  - In universities both in Japan and overseas, web-based international educational activities such as Open Course Ware are being proactively rolled out. Japan's universities should also take note of these measures and engage in positive communication and publication of information both at home and overseas.
  - Connected to the point above, consider current establishment criteria as regulating attendance-based learning and distance learning.

2.1.3.2 Compatible with double degrees in partnership with overseas universities

There is a need to realise the aspects listed below, in order, in relation to partnerships with universities overseas and the taking of "double degrees."

(Examples of issues requiring consideration)

● Based on the fact that many universities are already involved in diverse measures, university consortia and/or evaluation bodies should engage in independent, autonomous quality assurance activities (the accreditation assumed to be given by university consortia, for educational partnership programmes in partnership with overseas universities that meet certain criteria (participated in by universities at will)).

● Consideration of joint degrees (the awarding of degrees by multiple universities) following on from double degrees, and deliberation of systematic compatibility that will facilitate this.

(Examples of issues for consideration)
- Legislative and other regulations, typified by university establishment criteria
- Administration of curriculum, credits and degrees

● From the perspective of promoting further double degrees within graduate schools, consideration of raising the level of credits that can be transferred in masters' and doctoral programmes from 10 to 15.

- To be considered in the light of trends in graduate school education, not just in order to be compatible with the globalisation of university education (to, for example, improve the quality of coursework and make education more substantive).

2.1 Promoting mission differentiation and university partnerships

2.1.1 Promotion of mission differentiation

Universities take on board the expectations and demands of their regions, the attributes of their academic areas, the state of their students and academics, and the needs of their locality and its society, while at the same time trying to meet needs at global, national and local levels through their educational and research activities. From the perspective of supporting these activities, there is a need to proceed with considerations relating to mission/functional differentiation.

(Examples of issues requiring consideration relating to the promotion of functional differentiation)

● Visualisation of the state of education and research of different universities

- A structure that makes it easy to understand the specific attributes and individuality of the priorities and benefits of the way that each university is functioning. Overseas, universities publicising their information do so with sufficient consideration for the individual attributes and features of the university. Sufficient consideration needs to be given to this.
- In order to be able to respond appropriately to the increasing interest in Japanese universities from students abroad, universities need to implement measures to communicate their message overseas.

● Introduction of assessment by function, and development of points to be observed/indices

- Based on the understanding that there are a range of assessments available, such as certified evaluations and national university corporate evaluations, there needs to be harmony in the overall assessment system, and furthermore, consideration needs to be given to the division of roles between universities and assessment agencies.
- The concept of differentiation of function does not mean that universities are categorised into seven types, but rather that the individual nature and attributes of universities should remain as diverse in their expression as they currently are when expressed as education and research activities. Based on this fact, consideration should be given to the seven functions contained in the Report in 2005 "the Future of Japan's Higher Education" when assessing by function.
- When introducing assessment by function, if, for example, universities appear to have the same function, it must be remembered that they may demonstrate significant differences in terms of education and research activities, and for this reason the individual attributes of universities must be sufficiently considered.

2.1.2 Promoting university partnerships

In terms of university partnerships, regional or subject-based consortia are being organised in different areas, and the framework for the promotion of university partnerships has also been organised. There is a need to consider promotional policy for further partnerships between universities.

(Examples of issues requiring consideration relating to the promotion of university partnerships)

- Policy to promote further partnerships between universities, beyond the establishment formats of national/public/private

    - Creation of framework that facilitates the promotion of further functional partnerships, based on regional and disciplinary conditions.

- Promotion of educational programme that corresponds with requirements for regional human resources development through partnerships between universities

    - Groups of regional universities to organise educational programmes jointly with local industry and public sector, to ensure the provision of opportunity for continual regional learning for people from a wide range of ages and backgrounds.

2.3 Strengthening organisational and management foundations in order to improve educational and research functions

There is a need to implement further specific considerations based on the results achieved to date, in regard to improving the educational and research functions of universities through strengthening their organisational and management bases.

(Examples of issues requiring consideration relating to the improvement of organisational and management foundations)

- Specific considerations relating to the strengthening of governance of universities in the entire establishment formats of national, public and private universities.

- Partnerships between universities in the national, public and private sectors, as well as between regional industry and the public sector.

- Improvement in professional quality levels of university administrative staff, with the intention of strengthening organisational bases. Training through university education that incorporates groups that support universities, support for joint research from university partnerships, graduate courses, and course validation programmes.

- Creation of structure for information provision promoting autonomous decision-making by universities

    - The government supports autonomous and independent measures within universities to organise structures for the distribution of information relating to trends in approvals for the establishment of universities by region and sector, and the number of students per head of the population (by sector, degree level and region).
    - Organisations supporting universities should organise and analyse information relating to the study, organisation and management of the universities, and this information should be utilised by the universities.

- In regard to public funding, a fiscal basis for:

    - Core costs for teaching and research,
    - Support for educational reforms provided by national, public and private universities, and,
    - Financial support to students,

    should be established. In addition to this, and in consideration of the scale and diversity of areas covered by the university, funding compatible with functional diversification should be considered.

- Improved management consultations in universities. Universities should be supported in making their own decisions through autonomous and independent diversification of function, in regard to the academic areas and functions they engage with, in order that they can foresee their positions either as "independent development", "partnerships" or "withdrawal".