

May 30, 2022

External Evaluation Report for the 2020–2021 Project Results

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This document reports the outcome of an external evaluation of the 2020–2021 project results based on the attached Report on the Results of the Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Advanced Type) Project for 2020–2021.

1) Achieve a recruitment rate of over 30% women researchers

Remarks: With regard to the recruitment rate, despite various efforts, not only was the target not met, but it also became clear that there is a widening gap between the target and actual results. It is necessary to further analyze the causes and issues related to this. As there is a large discrepancy in the performance of initiatives in different departments, it seems necessary to not only continue to promote the initiatives in a practical way, but also to reinforce the university-wide approach to initiatives under the commitment of the president. I also hope the awareness of issues will be reinforced and followed up through the Board of Directors, Head of Department Meetings, Academic Council, and Management Council, etc.

As a base for the awareness of promoting women's participation, it is important to realize the various types of unconscious bias and recognize the situation. It is commendable that efforts are being made to raise awareness, such as the publication of accomplishments and changes in each department, and the creation of materials related to unconscious bias and distribution of them across the university. Moving forward, I hope that the university continues efforts to improve initiatives that enable effective awareness of issues.

2) Improve the percentage of women holding higher ranking positions

Remarks: Regarding the PI Training Program for International Collaborative Research Overseas, I highly rate the efforts to achieve the target by utilizing online implementation, etc., despite the difficult situation of the COVID-19 pandemic. In future, I hope that the effectiveness and issues of online implementation will be verified so that the nature of the promotion of effective international collaborative research and the nature of PI training in view of post-COVID-19 will continue to evolve.

For the appointment rate of higher-ranking positions, although it is inevitable that results will vary

from year to year, there was a significant drop in 2020–2021, and along with falling short of the target, there are significant differences depending on the department and employment status. It is necessary to accept with a sense of urgency that the instillation of a university-wide awareness is not sufficient. On the other hand, although it is commendable that the rate of women researchers in executive positions exceeded the final target, other universities have recently been significantly ramping up their efforts in increasing the number of women in executive positions, such as the University of Tokyo, which now has women comprising half of the executive members (including part-time). I hope that further progress will be made also at Kobe University.

3) Increase the base of next-generation young researchers

Remarks: Regarding the International Collaborative Early-career Researcher Training Program and the International Human Resource Exchange Program, it is unfortunate that they could not be implemented as planned due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In future, I hope that applications will be actively encouraged and that efforts will be expanded for these initiatives. It seems necessary to consider expanding initiatives, such as holding exchange and workshops online even after the COVID-19 pandemic ends.

4) Enhance the diversity environment and expand it beyond the university

Remarks: The final version (version beta) of the Diversity Education Program was created with improvements based on the survey result of the Program, which is assessed as an important tool for spreading future initiatives both inside and outside the university. However, utilization of the Diversity Co-creation Network should be considered to be still in its infancy. I hope there will be an acceleration and expansion of these initiatives.

In addition, the size of the diversity fund is still small, and the scope of the solicitation activities has not been wide enough. As such, it seems necessary to further strengthen efforts to increase donations, such as through directly encouraging companies or soliciting at events or alumni reunions, not limiting the activities to the PR magazine and the homepage.

For the Diversity Forum, it is commendable that the content was practical and fulfilling from a consistent perspective of creating an environment in which everyone can work actively, that there were more than 100 online participants in each session including those in management positions, and that the Forum achieved a certain level of success in raising awareness and promoting the system. As adjustment was made to the content following the recent amendments to the Childcare and Nursing Care Leave Act, it seems necessary to effectively raise awareness of issues by incorporating timely content.

5) Verification of the results and evaluations of the Overseas Dispatch Program for Women Researchers

Remarks: Regarding Overseas Dispatch for Women Researchers, there was a significant impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and it struggled to progress as planned. However, as stated above, it seems necessary to conduct a verification and evaluation of the results of the online initiatives, and reinforce from various perspectives the realization of the objective of training women researchers by implementing different initiatives in future, in addition to the Overseas Dispatch Program. Moreover, I hope there will be continued efforts in follow-up of past dispatched researchers, visualization of results and so on.

6) Overall Remarks (please add comments regarding the “Report on the Actions Taken in Response to the Findings of the FY 2018 and FY 2019 External Evaluations” here)

Remarks: It is commendable that the initiative system was strengthened, even amidst the difficult COVID-19 situation, and that there was much effort put toward implementing various initiatives. However, the results are still inadequate, though awareness of the importance of “diversity” continues to grow as society changes. I hope that the necessity of taking initiatives as a university is affirmed and that these initiatives are geared up.

In addition, as the content and the status of some initiatives were difficult to grasp solely from the project results report and the status update report in response to recommendations, I had to confirm the situation for each department through the website. In future, I would be very grateful if the reference materials for the data or verification/analysis results could be provided in a slightly wider range as attached materials. Furthermore, in the status update report on the not-yet-implemented efforts for issues raised in the external evaluation, various items were noted as “was considered by the Executive Board Meeting.” However, it is not necessarily clear what sort of initiatives were decided to be promoted as a result of this consideration. I hope the direction of the results of such examinations would be written a little more clearly.