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Proposals for the Internationalization of Kyushu University

from

Strategic International Advisory Group (SIAG)

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1. About SIAG

The Strategic International Advisory Group (SIAG) consists of international faculty members at Kyushu University, appointed by the University Leadership to discuss and formulate recommendations on all matters relating to life and work as an employee of Kyushu University, particularly with a view to promoting the internationalization of the University.

SIAG focuses on two types of activities:

a) The organization of Faculty Development (FD) sessions

Every academic year, SIAG endeavors to organize three FDs on topics relevant to international faculty members and to efforts relating to internationalization at Kyushu University. The FDs are open to all faculty members and administrative staff at Kyushu University and serve for networking and exchange of information. The FDs are usually held bilingually in English and Japanese and are archived on the Global Gateways website of the Department of International Affairs.

b) The formulation of Proposals for the Internationalization of Kyushu University

Every two years, SIAG prepares a set of Proposals, to be presented to the University Leadership. Previous Proposals were presented in March 2017, September 2019, March 2022, and March 2024. The Proposals are then discussed in detail during regular meetings (typically, three meetings per year) with the University Leadership, to plan and review their implementation to the extent possible. This is the fifth set of Proposals.

2. Contributors

SIAG Board Members

| Name | Title | Faculty |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Johan Lauwereyns | Senior Vice President, Professor | Arts and Science |
| Natalie Konomi | Vice President, Professor | Global Strategies Office |
| Jose M. M. Caaveiro | Vice President, Professor | Pharmaceutical Sciences |
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| Huixin Liu | Vice President, Professor | Science |
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3. The Big Picture

The current set of proposals aims to identify an overall vision and how to achieve it by improving the current system. To make Kyushu University attractive to both researchers and students, we are willing to work further with all relevant teams to implement the proposal.

As a research university, it goes without saying that excellence in research and education is the top priority. This means creating a suitable academic environment, exploiting all tools available to improve and simplify management and administration (e.g., DX, AI), so that faculty members can maximally devote their time and efforts to research and education. This overall theme is developed in detail in four sections for the current proposals: (1) Internationalization of education; (2) Bilingual support; (3) Improvement of the research environment; and (4) Administrative efficiency. Before introducing the specifics of the current proposals, we offer a few general remarks for an overall perspective.

The big issue as we see it

Kyushu University is currently following a strategy of internationalization to improve metrics (international student and staff numbers, and outbound activity of Japanese students) to increase Kyushu University's rankings and meet the aims of MEXT. Many of these activities are initially funded by short-term grants from MEXT but require Kyushu University to find its own funding for their continuance, causing a dramatic shift in resources away from core activities. The outcome of this has been a more rapid erosion of teaching and research resources beyond the effects of decreased MEXT income and inflation. It leads to short-term thinking and sets the University on a path to becoming an institution devoted to contract industrial research.

Rankings are a distraction. Having studied several sets of rankings (THE, QS, etc.), we noticed that the domestic rankings are consistent across all systems (Kyushu University is usually ranked in the second half of the top ten, between 5th and 10th, among Japanese universities); however, the world rankings show vast differences for Japanese universities versus the rest of the world; QS rates Japanese universities relatively highly, THE moderately so; one ranking had no Japanese universities in the top 1000. This suggests that the overall rankings for Japanese universities are largely controlled by perceptions of the Japanese sector as a whole, not anything that can be controlled by individual universities. It means playing the rankings game is not wise. It is better for Kyushu University to simply aim to be the best university it can be. The first step is to identify what the priorities really are. Who are the important stakeholders? What should Kyushu University offer them?

The vision

Excellence in research and education as the top priority.

Excellence in research

Meaningful research activity requires time and money, and a merit-based evaluation system for recognition of the achievements. Micromanagement with short-term goals and dubious metrics rarely achieves the desired outcomes. Kyushu University should aim to provide a resilient environment where research activity is encouraged, protected and supported, aiming for ambitious long-term goals (e.g., prioritizing top 10% publications over speed and quantity of publications). Research performance should be rewarded fairly in promotions and salaries (using incentives not only for obtaining grants, but also for excellence in research outputs, as judged by peers).

Excellence in education

In this AI era, university education should focus on developing students' critical thinking skills rather than feeding knowledge. With shrinking personnel, the University needs to rethink the educational programs, restructuring KIKAN if necessary. A reevaluation of the size and range of courses offered needs to be made to determine what is sustainable in a country with a declining population. It would be better to focus limited resources into fewer areas rather than attempt to be a "full service" university that underperforms in certain areas.

Education as research. We note that education is intricately linked to research. We might even say that research *is* education. To train students in critical thinking, to provide students with learning opportunities that cannot be replaced by AI, means to help them initiate and develop research, from articulating problems and hypotheses to conducting meaningful investigations. Educational programs would benefit from explicitly organizing education as research.

4. Bullet Points

- **INTERNATIONALIZATION OF EDUCATION:** Existing efforts toward international education and mobility programs are promising but lack a shared institutional framework. We propose to establish a shared definition and an integrated approach that connects curriculum, pedagogy, student experience, and faculty development, incorporating insights from SCIKyu and iNavi, and aligning with Vision 2030.
- **BILINGUAL SUPPORT:** A fully bilingual working environment must be accelerated across Kyushu University through an integrated digital transformation approach. This requires clear priorities, systematic monitoring, consistent translation standards, appropriate incentives, and national benchmarking. Phased actions will operationalize the bilingualization policy, support its implementation across all units, and ensure sustained, institution-wide impact.
- **IMPROVEMENT OF THE RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT:** To sustain internationally competitive research and retain global talent, Kyushu University should strengthen the research environment for international faculty by guaranteeing transparent access to shared facilities (with bilingual/English rules, booking, and training), ensuring minimum baseline research budgets and internal seed/collaboration funding, and protecting research time through realistic teaching-load caps.
- **ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY:** To achieve world-class excellence in their efforts toward research and education, faculty members need to be able to rely on maximum administrative efficiency with structures and mechanisms that support and facilitate the academic work. We recommend systematic reduction in paperwork, common-sense integration of administrative staff and faculties, and communication with SIAG-like groups at other universities in Japan.

5. The Current Proposals

5.1. *On internationalization of education*

Background

Kyushu University has made substantial progress in developing an internationalized environment through bilingualization, integration of international faculty, and improvements in support systems. However, the educational dimension, how students gain global competencies through their studies, remains fragmented across faculties. Existing efforts such as EMI (English-Medium Instruction), COIL /PBL, and mobility programs are promising but lack a shared institutional framework. We propose a shared definition and an integrated approach to “internationalization of education” that connects curriculum, pedagogy, student experience, and faculty development, with insights from SCIKyu and iNavi, and aligning with Vision 2030.

Proposed Definition of “Internationalization of Education”

Internationalization of Education at Kyushu University is a systematic and intentional process of integrating global, intercultural, and comparative perspectives into curriculum, teaching and learning practices, and student development pathways, regardless of instructional language, to cultivate graduates who can collaborate across cultures, engage responsibly in global society, and apply knowledge in international contexts.

Proposals (Core Pillars)

1. Curriculum & Content – What is taught

- Integrate global and intercultural learning goals into syllabi.
- Expand interdisciplinary (and international) joint courses, virtual exchanges (including hybrid), and comparative modules.
- Promote general education courses with international perspectives.

2. Pedagogy & Learning Design – How students learn

- Encourage COIL/VE, multicultural teamwork, and PBL with global themes.
- Provide teaching guidance and model materials for internationalized teaching.
- Strengthen faculty development in EMI and inclusive pedagogy; showcase model syllabi and examples of good practices.

3. Learning Community & Inclusion – Who learns together and how

- Create opportunities for Japanese and international students to collaborate.

- Introduce peer-support systems integrating diverse student backgrounds such as mixed TA teams.
 - Integrate academic, cultural and language support into a coherent framework.
4. Student Development & Pathways – What skills students gain (skills and growth)
- Strengthen opportunities for developing intercultural competence, reflective learning, and global citizenship.
 - Link curricular and co-curricular international activities and experiences (mobility, community engagement)
 - Align with the Global Professional Certification Program (for recognition and pathways).
 - Support domestic student participation in mobility and internationalized programs.
5. Evaluation and Quality Assurance – How success is measured
- Use both quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess learning impact.
 - Identify and scale good practices.
 - Develop a KU-specific rubric to support and guide course and program design.
 - Encourage regular review of internationalized education initiatives.
 - Evaluate internationalization of education at three levels:
 - A. Institutional Level (systems and staff).
 - B. Faculty / Program Level (curriculum design and faculty engagement).
 - C. Course / Activity Level (student learning outcomes, experiences, feedback).

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

A. Quantitative KPIs

Pillar 1: Curriculum & Content

- Percentage of courses with global or intercultural learning objectives.
- Percentage of programs mapping global outcomes across the curriculum.
- Number of COIL/VE activities integrated into core courses.
- Number of faculties using KU's Internationalized Education Rubric.

Pillar 2: Pedagogy & Learning Design

- Percentage of courses using COIL/VE, multicultural teamwork, or PBL with international themes.
- Faculty participation in EMI, inclusive pedagogy, and intercultural facilitation training.

Pillar 3: Learning Community & Inclusion

- Mixed-group participation rates (Japanese students × international students).
- “Language safety” indicators and student sense of belonging.
- Proportion of courses offering accessible materials.

Pillar 4: Student Development & Pathways

- Percentage of students reporting gains in global competence and awareness.
- Participation in mobility and hybrid international programs.
- Completion rates in the Global Professional Certification Program.

Pillar 5: Evaluation & Quality Assurance

- Number of faculties completing annual self-assessment.
- Implementation rates of improvement actions.
- Faculty participation in relevant training.

B. Qualitative Indicators

Pillar 1, 2 Curriculum & Pedagogy

- Reflective teaching portfolios.
- Peer reviews of course design.
- Case studies demonstrating learning impact.

Pillar 3, 4 Student Experience

- Reflective journals, intercultural portfolios and narrative accounts.
- SCIKyu-led focus groups and jointly designed syllabi or activities with students (SCIKyu and iNavi), with course updates based on student feedback.
- “Language safety” and comfort-level pulse surveys.

Additional Recommendation: Create a KU-Specific definition of “Global Competence”.

While many global-competence frameworks are rooted in Western educational assumptions (individualism, assertiveness, direct communication), it is desirable to develop a KU-specific, culturally responsive definition of global competence based on:

- Japanese socio-cultural values (e.g., modesty, relational harmony, group orientation)
- KU student learning realities and narratives
- Vision 2030
- MEXT’s “gurobaru jinzai” discourse

This ensures validity, avoids cultural bias, and produces meaningful indicators.

5.2. *On bilingual support*

To enhance Kyushu University's global competitiveness, the continued acceleration of fully bilingual working environments is required. While prior initiatives have improved bilingual communication, structural barriers remain that limit the full participation of international faculty. The following proposals outline immediate, intermediate, and long-term actions to address these challenges and support an inclusive and functional academic environment.

Embed bilingualization into organizational culture through a holistic digital transformation approach, fully integrating bilingual practices across university operations to strengthen inclusion.

- Immediate: Reaffirm the bilingualization policy through a brief internal statement aligned with DX and inclusion, communicate its purpose to all units, and expand pilot participation.
- Intermediate: Standardize reporting and workflows, integrate bilingualization into DX training, and require bilingual outputs from all pilot units.
- Long-term: Institutionalize bilingualization via annual reporting and dashboards, embed it as a KPI in planning (and Q-RADeRS where relevant), and integrate bilingual workflows into onboarding and leadership development.

Enhancing bilingualization at Kyushu University involves three parallel goals: 1) strengthening bilingualization efforts, 2) establishing a monitoring framework to track policy implementation, and 3) setting clear translation priorities supported by consistent, accurate practices and appropriate confidentiality protocols for AI-assisted translation.

- Immediate: Update the bilingualization policy with clear priorities and scope.
 - Establish a small advisory working group.
 - Define core monitoring indicators.
 - Approve a priority (e.g., a top-50) document list and a living terminology guide.
 - Finalize confidentiality rules for AI translation.
- Intermediate: Implement faculty-level checklists and annual status reporting; pilot monitoring in selected divisions and publish a brief internal dashboard; expand a central AI translation hub with shared glossaries, templates, and human-review support.
- Long-term:
 - Institutionalize university-wide monitoring and reporting aligned with Vision 2030.
 - Integrate bilingualization into standard performance frameworks (and in Q-RADeRS where and if appropriate).

- Harmonize translation standards, annually review priority documents, and secure governed, long-term AI translation infrastructure.

Creating incentives for staff to support bilingual initiatives.

- Immediate: Incentivize staff engagement in bilingual initiatives.
 - Prioritize the appointment of bilingual and English-speaking administrative personnel across all faculties.
 - Define what constitutes a bilingual contribution and implement feasible incentives (e.g., recognition, workload credit, small rewards).
- Intermediate: Launch a manageable and ‘light’ recognition scheme (e.g., certificate or badge) with an annual call for participation.
- Long-term: Integrate bilingual contribution recognition into promotion and HR development frameworks, supported by formal institutional recognition.

Reaching out to other national universities for bilingualization best practices involves coordinating a sharing session or contact group to exchange practical approaches and lessons learned.

- Immediate: Initiate benchmarking outreach to a small set of peer universities and collect baseline information.
- Intermediate: Convene one or two online benchmarking sessions and circulate a concise knowledge brief.
- Long-term: Establish an ongoing inter-university exchange mechanism (e.g., a national network or rotating annual forum).

5.3. *On improvement of the research environment*

Research Issues for International Researchers

International faculty joining Kyushu University face a number of specific challenges in conducting research and establishing a long-term research program. Issues fall into four main categories: access to shared facilities, language barriers, funding, and research time. These proposals will help ensure that all Kyushu University faculty are able to remain research active, producing internationally competitive research for publication in top journals. Failure to create an environment conducive to research will make it more difficult to attract and retain the best faculty and students.

Access to Equipment and Shared Facilities

Maintain high-quality shared facilities and resources, especially libraries with English-language materials and core research infrastructure to support faculty across all disciplines and ensure Kyushu University remains internationally competitive.

- Subscribe to major English-language journals and databases and remain up to date with the purchase of physical copies of key publications in English.
- Ensure easy access to core equipment and shared facilities for international researchers (clear rules, booking procedures, and contacts).
- Assign dedicated administrative and technical staff (not academic staff) to manage bookings, training, and the daily operation of shared facilities.
- Develop an English-language online platform that:
 - Lists all shared facilities across campuses.
 - Describes available instruments, fees, and conditions of use.
 - Provides contact information and application forms in English and Japanese.
 - Provides English-language user manuals and equipment training.
- Review the fee structure so that:
 - Junior and international researchers with limited funding can use essential facilities at no charge or very low cost.
 - International researchers can more easily afford technical assistance that arises from Japanese language-based systems and equipment (e.g., by reducing the hourly charge for technical assistants)

Funding Support and Basic Budget

- Establish a dedicated internal fund to support the research activities of international faculty.

- Create an internal collaborative fund to support joint projects between international and Japanese researchers, encouraging co-supervision and collaboration.
- Set a minimum university-wide standard for a basic budget (公費) for all schools and departments so that each laboratory has, at minimum, the resources to cover essential operational costs (utility bills, consumables, safety items, basic maintenance), regardless of external grant success. The basic budget should cover costs for teaching and administrative duties; faculty should not be expected to fund core activities from external research funding.

Research Time

- International faculty are under pressure to undertake a disproportionate amount of undergraduate teaching due to the lack of faculty for teaching in English. The university should set a cap on teaching duties to ensure that international faculty have adequate time for research. The present teaching credit system is too heavily biased in favor of graduate teaching and should therefore be scrapped.

Proposed Actions

- Immediate actions (within 1 year):
 - Design and launch an English-language shared-facility platform.
 - Assign dedicated administrative/technical staff to key facilities, instead of relying on academic staff.
 - Generate basic user guides in English
 - Introduce temporary fee reductions or waivers for international researchers with limited funding.
- Intermediate- and long-term strategies
 - Adjust budget policies so that basic running costs are guaranteed by schools, independent of competitive grants.
 - Establish and formalize internal funding schemes including a fund for international researchers and a collaborative fund to promote joint projects between international and Japanese researchers with clear eligibility requirements and transparent evaluation criteria.
 - Regularly review usage data and feedback from international researchers to further refine access rules, staffing, and funding mechanisms.
 - Adjust teaching loads to guarantee a minimum research time for all faculty.

5.4. *On administrative efficiency*

The core competencies and contributions of faculty members reside in research and education. For academics, both international and Japanese, to be able to optimize performance, they require appropriate administrative support. For international faculty members, there are added challenges to navigate the culture and language of the administration. Maximum administrative efficiency removes obstacles and reduces bureaucracy. The overall observation, compared to overseas institutions, is that there is excessive paperwork and suboptimal use of human resources in administration.

Reduce paperwork

Excessive paperwork takes away time from research and teaching; it disincentivizes activity: it is easier to do nothing than to deal with the paperwork for symposia, lectures, field trips, book purchases, etc. The long-term effect is one of depleting energy and inspiration. Reducing this burden would help to nurture an active, healthy academic environment.

Default trust with real accountability

- The current administrative culture puts heavy emphasis on learning, information sharing, and the submission of documents toward safety and against corruption; it creates the false sense that the paperwork prevents problems, but it does not lead to proper protection against misconduct, fraud, etc.
- Instead, it would be better to retune the balance, based on default trust that academics are professionals and can conduct their work responsibly.
- This should be coupled with real accountability in case of transgression; presently, there may be a lack of “bite” (or perceived impact of “punishments”) when faculty members fail to perform their duties, or when they commit harassment, misconduct, fraud, etc.
- For any form of unprofessional behavior, the consequences should be for the perpetrator, not for the entire University.

Simplify the administrative processes

- Reduce and simplify documents; minimize text in documents.
- Reduce and simplify e-learning obligations.
- Use AI strategically to take the processes out of the hands of faculty members and to optimize the distribution of tasks among administrators.

Common-sense integration of human resources in administration

Currently, it is as if we have two companies, one (which we will call “The Academy”) designs and implements education and research, and operates autonomously; the other (“The Admin”) provides logistics, runs the books, and answers to MEXT. This separation of powers leads to gaps, mismatches, inefficiencies, miscommunication, and friction. The budget management, down to the single yen within an academic year, leads to inefficient bookkeeping and suboptimal usage of resources. The rotation of administrative personnel, as it is currently conducted, is detrimental to efficiency, communication, and work relationships. In addition, bilingualization needs further development.

Better integrate The Admin and The Academy

- The recruitment, evaluation, and promotion of administrative personnel should be done strategically in line with university needs (e.g., international competence as a key skillset, to be valued accordingly).
- The management of The Admin and The Academy should be better streamlined, with stronger guidance from central administration.
- The budget distribution and bookkeeping should aim for more adaptability to circumstances, independent of the calendar.
- Hire international administrators.
- Offer specialist-level salaries to Japanese or international administrators with global competency.

Fewer rotations, better prepared

- Rotations should be better planned in advance, responding to the needs and circumstances of different departments and administrative units.
- The frequency of rotation should be organized as a function of the administrator’s career stage (e.g., junior staff rotate more frequently to gain diverse skillsets, whereas experienced staff and senior administrators are allowed more time to develop depth of knowledge and expertise in relevant areas).

Create a cross-institutional SIAG

- Share notes and good practices across institutions
- Lobby toward MEXT
- Can be organized initially via FDs through the Kyushu-Okinawa Open University (KOOU)