

Academy Report 2016

Towards the Plenary Council of the University for AY 2016

Progress of Discussions to Date and Major Issues
in Academic Affairs and Student Life

Foreword

In the 2015 academic year (AY 2015; last academic year), the university reviewed the improvements that had been made in line with the policies on academic affairs, student life, and tuition fees and financial management confirmed at the AY 2011 Plenary Council. A special issue of *Ritsumeikan Style* was published in June 2015 concerning this review and the university's position on future directions. In subsequent discussion groups, administrative meetings and other forums, the Plenary Council's constituents—the Student Union, Graduate Student Council, Faculty/Staff Union, university authorities (Executive Board of Trustees), and Ritsumeikan Co-operative (with observer status)—pursued discussion of issues in such areas as the Academy's future plans, academic affairs, internationalization, scholarships, student life, and campus infrastructure. However, the need arose to pursue discussions on both the R2020 latter phase plan and tuition fee revision formulas in the same academic year, while taking into account various issues within the university as well as policy developments in the national education ministry. It therefore became unfeasible to formulate policies by the end of the 2015 academic year, and the Plenary Council thus had to be postponed. Instead, in order to confirm the progress made in discussions during AY 2015, an expanded Plenary Council Representatives' Meeting was held with the Chancellor in attendance.

Based on the progress of discussions in AY 2015, another issue of *Ritsumeikan Style* was published in June 2016 to outline directions for enhancement of education and student life at RU, the planning framework for the latter half of the R2020 plan, and tuition fee policies to apply up to AY 2018. This document was distributed and explained in regular classes and seminars, and feedback solicited from students. In addition, the university pursued ongoing discussions through five-party panels attended by Col-

lege and Graduate School Deans, representatives from each College and Graduate School, and representatives of undergraduate and graduate student bodies, as well as graduate school discussion forums, joint discussion groups addressing university-wide perspectives, and an expanded meeting of Plenary Council representatives.

In the Plenary Council this academic year, discussions will be advanced on the basis of three core understandings: (1) that it is important for students to learn in a pro-active and self-directed manner across their entire university life, including curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities; (2) that the university shall offer support in order to enhance students' learning; and (3) that faculty and staff members will engage in such support with a sincere awareness of the "weight of tuition."

This special issue of *Ritsumeikan Style* outlines the progress made in discussions to date and the main points of contention arising therefrom, with the aim of reflecting these points in the discussions that take place at the Plenary Council. It focuses primarily on academic affairs and student life, as well as educational issues within each College with an emphasis on the first year of the undergraduate curriculum. The special issue published in June this year has already outlined the proposal for tuition fees, which was not to revise base tuition levels, but to adopt a formula allowing for tuition to be raised to compensate for certain increases in consumer price levels (1.0% or more); this information is not repeated in the current issue.

In preparation for the first general assembly of the Plenary Council, scheduled for Wednesday, October 12, we will continue to pursue discussion of issues in such areas as the Academy's future plans, academic affairs, internationalization, scholarships, support for student life, and campus infrastructure plans.

Future Approaches to the Plenary Council of the University

Established in 1948, the Plenary Council has operated for many years as a consultative body with student involvement based on Ritsumeikan's principle of governance by all constituents. Up to the mid-1970s, rather than being held periodically every few academic years, the Council was held whenever a revision of tuition fees was proposed, with the revision coming into effect the following academic year. It was at the AY 1979 Plenary Council that a formula was proposed entailing revision of tuition fee levels based on the rate of improvement in academic conditions over a four-year period, plus percentage increase in the consumer price index. In line with this tuition fee revision formula, the Council was held every four years thereafter up to AY 2011. A major review of the formula was undertaken at the AY 2011 Plenary Council, resulting in the abolition of the academic conditions improvement rate and introduction of a system for clear specification of tuition fees

payable over the entire course of a student's enrollment. The policies on tuition, academic affairs, and student life confirmed by the Plenary Council are documented in a Plenary Council Memorandum.

Last academic year, in response to the abovementioned inability of the university to hold the Plenary Council as scheduled, the Student Union, Graduate Student Council, and Faculty/Staff Union questioned the university authorities' position on the future of the Plenary Council itself and the decision to propose tuition levels only for the two-year period up to AY 2018. This matter was discussed at a meeting of the Executive Board of Trustees at the end of July, and their basic position was communicated and explained to the Council's constituents thereafter. The various constituents presented their responses to the proposals made by the Executive Board of Trustees, and these will be points of discussion at the Plenary Council from now on.

Enabling and Enhancing Pro-active, Self-directed Student Learning

Discussions between the Student Union and university authorities in the lead-up to the AY 2016 Plenary Council have been based on a common understanding of the importance of students pursuing their learning in a pro-active, self-directed manner across their life at university as a whole, including curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities. Among the issues put forward by the Student Union were: (1) the importance of achieving a shift in learning and establishing motivation for learning in the initial year of enrolment, in order for students to learn systematically with a view to their future career path; (2) the need to enable systematic learning in major education, general education and foreign language education subjects, based on an understanding of the significance of each subject category, and (3) the need for the provision of advice from senior students and instructors and opportunities for students to engage in self-reflection in the course of their learning, and the requirement that such opportunities and advice be delivered to all students through seminar classes, research labs, and the like. Since last year, discussions have also addressed issues related to internationalization, such as forums and mechanisms for enhancing cross-cultural understanding and exchange.

Based on these discussions, the university will pursue the six priority policies outlined below. The various Colleges will also pursue the initiatives set out on a separate page in order to take advantage of their distinctive academic features. The university will work together with students to review and confirm the achievements and points for improvement in these areas each academic year from now on.

01 Devise ways to raise students' motivation to study, especially in the initial year of enrollment, and enhance initiatives for steady learning progress both within and beyond the classroom

Students' first year of study and experience of university life is crucial in achieving an effective shift to university-level study. Our discussions on motivation for study have emphasized the importance of students pursuing their learning with an awareness of goals and achievements. Each College has been working to devise ways to motivate students for study in their initial year of enrollment and build foundational academic abilities in specialist areas, as well as opportunities to consider the link between study within the College and wider society.

Activities from now on will focus on points including: (1) teaching approaches directed to raising motivation in College core subjects and small-group subjects; (2) approaches to learning outside class, including in sub-seminars, to foster pro-active and self-directed approaches, and clear specification of actual requirements in regard to class preparation and revision; and (3) enhancement of ICT and study environments to support learning outside class.

02 Advance opportunities for systematic study with a view to career progression

It is important for students to be conscious of their own career potentials and pursue a systematic approach to learning in the initial years of their university studies. We will develop ways to make students aware of systematic linkages within their programs and

majors, and across individual subjects and subject categories. The Student Union has also made a demand regarding the treatment of Verifications of Participation in Sporting Competitions, etc. but the university believes that situations in which class non-attendance is unavoidable can be addressed to some extent by clarifying class plans and topics (including preparatory questions and homework), and at the same time developing support functions for study outside class.

03 Raise the quality of the graduation thesis/research/project as a culmination of learning, and clarify learning outcomes

The graduation thesis/research/project is the culmination of Bachelor degree education, and a major indicator of what students can do by the end of their undergraduate studies. All Colleges will continue to improve the clarity of their learning outcomes at the point of graduation, and substantiate and enhance the learning processes and methods leading thereto.

04 Create a campus environment in which all students understand and accept other cultures and cultural diversity

The Student Union raised several concerns in the course of discussions concerning the internationalization of the campus and academic affairs. These included the insufficient interaction between international and domestic students and among international students themselves, and the large number of students who perceive their foreign language proficiency as a barrier and are therefore hesitant to pursue such interaction. It was agreed that in order to address these problems, it would be important to create opportunities on campus for students to engage with diverse value outlooks and engage with other students even beyond the classroom. The Student Union also identified challenges relating to foreign language learning, including the clarification of objectives and achievement standards, and the enhancement of study abroad programs tailored to students' needs.

The university will continue to develop an environment that is receptive to other cultures and cultural diversity. Through foreign language education, we will enhance opportunities for students to engage in foreign language output activities in line with their proficiency levels, and increase the number of major and general education subjects taught in foreign languages. Furthermore, we will work to enhance the accessibility of study abroad programs in order to improve connections between such programs and major education and to cultivate greater interest in going abroad.

05 Enhance systems and methods for active learning beyond borders

To nurture students with an enthusiasm for learning and a self-directed approach attuned to their future, we will develop schemes for active learning not only in class but across the campus and wider society, making use of the distinctive features of each campus and the academic characteristics of each College. The Colleges are already advancing educational initiatives with partners including local communities and companies, and developing problem-oriented methods such as Project-Based Learning. These initiatives will be further advanced, and the quality of teaching and learning raised to enable students themselves to develop self-directed approaches to learning.

06 Develop “commons” to enrich curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular learning, and enhance learning support

A variety of learning commons have been developed at Ritsumeikan University in line with the characteristics of each campus and College curriculum. New advancements in learning are also expected with the opening of the BKC Sport and Health Commons this academic year. The Student Union has pointed out the need to develop functional linkages among the university’s various commons in order for them to be used effectively, and discussions have been pursued concerning the development of learning support systems and enhancement of schemes to enable students to learn from their peers.

Into the future, we will explore how commons can be used to support students’ learning in line with the academic characteristics and educational priorities of each College. It will be important to furnish support in areas that are essential to undergraduate learning, such as writing in Japanese and English and study methods, as well as to work together with the foundation learning support programs offered in specialized areas such as mathematics, physics, and chemistry.

In order to promote campus internationalization, we will seek to develop programs and spaces in which a diversity of students can interact with one another and advance their study of foreign languages outside class. We will support students’ learning with a view to creating multi-cultural collaborative campuses in which students are stimulated by one another’s diversity.

The university will enhance the quality of learning for students across all fronts—not only in class but also outside class and in co-curricular and extra-curricular settings—and support their pro-active, self-directed learning.

College-specific priority issues focusing on first-year education

College of International Relations

The academic discipline of international relations involves analyzing a range of global problems in today’s multi-dimensional, multi-tiered society and exploring solutions thereto. The discipline’s subject matter and methods are diverse, and student may sometimes find it difficult to know what they should be learning. In order to ensure that students do not become “lost” in the discipline, the first year of the curriculum provides comprehensive coverage of the issues and methods addressed in international relations through subjects including Introductory Seminar and Introduction to International Relations. Students select their specific program when they advance to second year, and from third year they pursue more specialized learning under the guidance of faculty members in Advanced Seminar classes.

The College also advances learning attuned to globalization, including cross-registration of IR and GS majors and study abroad. From this academic year, English writing support is being offered as a university-wide initiative. We hope that students will make use of this support.

College of Policy Science

Since its opening in 1994, the College of Policy Science has produced many capable graduates for society both within and beyond Japan, under the educational ideal of cultivating human resources oriented to problem-solving. The College is pursuing this ideal further through the English-medium program

(CPRS) launched in AY 2013, and the curriculum reforms of AY 2014.

Under the new curriculum, core subjects and small-group seminar subjects are offered on a semester-length basis, making them more accessible for students taking leave of absence and studying abroad. The undergraduate thesis (graduation research) has also been made compulsory, as it is the culmination of learning in the undergraduate program. The number of languages that students can take up as beginners has been increased from three to ten, and new subjects are being added under the concept of “learning in an English medium.”

The foundation of our highly international curriculum is an approach to learning grounded in society and the local community. Students are engaged in hands-on learning in field sites both near and far.

Toward the Enhancement of Graduate School Education

The enhancement of education in the Graduate Schools was addressed as one of the Strategic Basic Issues in the R2020 latter phase plan, and we are now working to give shape to the ideas in the medium-term plan formulated last academic year.

In the area of Graduate School education, as well as enabling students to deepen their own expertise through production of a research thesis, we will furnish opportunities for students to cultivate the capacity to tackle problems actually envisaged in wider society. We will provide an environment in which students can develop internationally-compatible research capabilities by presenting their findings at international conferences and interacting with researchers and students outside Japan. We will also seek to create graduate programs in which international students from a variety of countries and regions worldwide can learn, research and collaborate with Japanese students.

In light of the progress of discussions to date, we will work to achieve the following goals as we move toward 2020.

01 Respond to globalization and enrich Graduate School academics in line with the globalization of research activity

As well as acknowledging the necessity of addressing the globalization of research activity, we will work in line with actual conditions in each Graduate School on tasks including establishing double degree programs with more universities, instituting scholarship systems to promote research activity outside Japan, enhancing study abroad programs, and delivering support for practical language proficiency and thesis-writing. We will also tackle a broad range of other challenges in relation to globalization, including the development of environments enabling research activity by graduate students from diverse backgrounds, including English language-basis students and working adults, and issues pertaining to race and ethnicity.

02 Enhance support for career path development

We will make it a university-wide priority to advance basic knowledge and skills essential for academic career path development by graduate students across all graduate schools, including research ethics, proficiency in English and other foreign languages, and presentation skills. Continued efforts will also be made to enhance both systematic and operational aspects of the TA system.

03 Utilization of commons to promote interdisciplinary learning by self-directed, pro-active graduate students

The newly-established Research Commons have been evaluated positively based on usage to date, but several problems concerning usage conditions have also been identified, and proposals made with a view to increasing convenience and promoting higher usage. While remaining fully aware of the characteristics of research styles and activity in different fields, we will investigate the usage patterns in each commons and address campus-specific proposals and conditions as we formulate concrete programs for the commons to be used to the full as venues for interdisciplinary learning and research by graduate students in a self-directed, pro-active manner.

Toward the Enrichment of Student Life

The Student Union and university have pursued discussions under the common understanding that “students should learn and grow through self-directed activities and interaction with a diverse range of others in all aspects of their curricular and extra-curricular life.” We also face challenges in terms of enriching student life in line with globalization and the multi-campus arrangements arising from the opening of OIC in 2015.

Based on discussions with each constituent body, the university will pursue initiatives in the enrichment of student life with a focus on the four issues outlined below, as well as reviewing scholarship and subsidy systems in order to advance those initiatives, and instituting new systems from the 2017 academic year.

I. Issues in the enrichment of student life

01 Development of environments that support diverse student learning and enable the pursuit of safe, secure, comfortable, and healthy learning and student life

1. Development of diverse commons and refurbishment of facilities

On the Kinugasa Campus, by March 2018 we will undertake earthquake-proofing of the Student Center, as well as refurbishing the first and second floors of the Student Center with a view to creating interactive spaces (commons) for information dissemination across cultural, artistic, sporting, and other spheres of activity, and enabling exchange among students and with members of the local community. In addition, in order to maintain building coverage ratios the former library will be demolished and cleared by March 2017. The space thereby created will be developed into a venue for workshops with various student groups and, taking into account opinions solicited from students, space for exchange and relaxation for students.

At BKC, construction of the Sport and Health Commons has been completed, and its use by the general student body is being phased in incrementally. As we prepare for full-scale operation of the commons from April 2017, opinions will be solicited from students regarding uses for regular classes and general purposes.

At OIC, the university is aware of the extreme dangers involved in using indoor areas of the Arena in high-temperature conditions in summer, and we are exploring ways to address this problem.

2. Improvement and enrichment of dining environments

As part of the AY 2017 refurbishment of the Zonshinkan on Kinugasa Campus, we are considering revamping the basement dining hall and increasing seating capacity from the current 450 to 500. In addition to the existing dining facilities on campus, a Lunch Street (following on from the BKC Lunch Street) will be launched on a trial basis at OIC in the second half of this academic year, a new café will be opened in the BKC Sport and Health Commons, and other efforts made to alleviate crowding at lunch times. The university is also working with the Co-op to develop Halal food menus in response to globalization of the campus.

3. Advancement of campus-wide no-smoking policy

The Graduate Student Council has suggested that the campus-wide no-smoking policy has resulted in an upsurge in smoking in secluded areas of campus and surrounding precincts, leading to a rise in passive smoking. On this basis it has proposed that the no-smoking policy be replaced by designated smoking areas. However, in light of the steady decrease in smoking rates among undergraduate students, the university authorities will continue to pursue campus-wide no-smoking policies as well as campaigns on smoking etiquette and quit-smoking initiatives.

02 Supporting students to tackle challenges beyond borders

1. Expansion and priority strengthening of student fields of activity:

Support for enhancement and revitalization of extra-curricular pursuits

Clubs, circles, and other such forums enable students to expand their fields of activity into the wider community and internationally, through projects including community development and revitalization in collaboration with community groups, volunteering, and international cooperation. In order to enable more students to pursue such activities and to enrich the content thereof, we will develop extra-curricular programs that allow students to deepen their awareness of social issues and build collaborative learning relationships. We will also review the current student growth support scholarship system that provides support for such activities, and create a system in which messages concerning desired approaches to curricular and extra-curricular study are communicated in a comprehensible manner from the university/Colleges to students, application processes are streamlined, and post-award activities and budgetary spending are manageable.

While maintaining appropriate support for all extra-curricular activity groups, the university also selects certain clubs for priority enhancement. Such clubs are those which are active at the top level nationally, and whose activities help to cultivate the identity of the Ritsumeikan Academy. We will evaluate the outcomes of this system to date, formulate a new priority enhancement policy, and select clubs accordingly.

2. Support for student growth through participation in the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics

In 2020, Tokyo will host the Olympics and Paralympics, a celebration of sports and culture. This event is an opportunity to garner the attention of wider society and propel greater international exchange, and we will develop ways to foster student growth through it. In concrete terms, in addition to providing enhancement programs for competitive student athletes, we are considering ways to support student involvement in a variety of related projects, including dissemination of Japanese culture and international exchange, volunteer activities, promotion of women in sport, and support for people with disabilities.

03 Fostering interaction in a diverse student body; creating and activating diverse communities

1. Promoting student interaction to generate new activities and learning opportunities

The Student Union has highlighted the need, in the context of Ritsumeikan's distinctive features of "diversity" and "multicultural environment," to treat student life in both its curricular and extra-curricular dimensions as a learning opportunity, and to create environments in which a diversity of students interact and grow together. The strength of our university lies in the diversity of our students and activities. Recently we have been furnishing assistance for the formation of new learning communities, and many new communities have been born. We are now considering ways not only to generate more new communities, but also to support the growth of those that are already active.

Another important challenge is to provide new opportunities for mutual growth and community-building in areas such as interaction between international and domestic students. We will continue to explore ways to address this challenge in light of patterns of student activity in a multi-campus environment, and the characteristics of each campus.

2. Shuttle bus services to promote inter-campus learning and extra-curricular activities

Last academic year the Student Union conducted a survey of extra-curricular activity groups regarding shuttle bus services, and the timetable for these services was revised on the basis of the survey results. We will continue to take into account student usage patterns and needs as we seek to optimize the provision of inter-campus travel services for learning and extra-curricular activities.

04 Enriching support for student life and growth through balance between curricular and extra-curricular pursuits

1. Support for student growth through balance between curricular and extra-curricular pursuits

Extra-curricular activities furnish important opportunities for learning that fosters capacities of self-directed thinking and action, collaboration, and management. The university will work to help students to connect their learning across curricular and extra-curricular spheres and grow into self-directed learners. Specifically, we will explore possibilities for support programs that take into account individual student circumstances and needs in relation to self-management of time and tasks to achieve balance between curricular and extra-curricular pursuits, and the development of managerial and organizational structures so that extra-curricular activity groups can be operated toward the achievement of their objectives. In strengthening support for extra-curricular activity groups, we will also give consideration to the ideal roles for club leaders, deputy leaders, and advisors, and the implementation of training programs for groups.

2. Enhancement of peer support and support for diverse students

In April 2016, the Disabled Students Support Office and Special Needs Support Office were merged into a new Disability Resource Center, which will provide more holistic support tailored to students' needs. Through a network that also encompasses such organs as the Student Support Room and Medial Service Center, we will continue to develop environments that support a diversity of student needs.

In some areas of support, peer support programs have been introduced and are generating mutual interactive learning among students. Into the future, peer support, group activities, project work and other such initia-

tives will be used across a wider range of areas as we develop environments in which students can support and learn from one another.

II. Undergraduate Student Scholarship and Subsidy Programs for AY 2017 and Beyond

Three main concerns have guided the university's discussions in the area of undergraduate scholarships and subsidies: (1) further promotion of diverse student learning through curricular and extra-curricular activities; (2) promotion of global learning in multicultural settings, and (3) development of an environment in which students can learn free from financial insecurity. The basic framework in these areas is set out in the table below.

1. *Scholarships associated with the Ritsumeikan Learning Model* are divided into "scholarships" for individual students, and "subsidies" for groups. They will support students' growth into independent learners in line with individual capabilities and interests.
2. *Scholarships associated with the Ritsumeikan Global Initiative* will support both inbound international students and students of Ritsumeikan University studying abroad, as well as supporting international exchange activities on campus and contributing to the internationalization of the university as a whole. A new subsidy system will be instituted in order to promote inter-cultural exchange both on and off campus.
3. In regard to *financial support scholarships*, we will maintain the policy of raising the scholarship award rate for all students within the category considered "in need of financial support" (those with household incomes of 4 million yen or less [taxable incomes of 197 million or less]), while awarding preferentially to those from households with incomes of 3.29 million or less (considered by the Japan Student Services Organization to be "effective zero-income" households). The Student Union has identified a need for the new scholarship system, like the current one, to provide generous support in the form of full coverage of second semester tuition fees for students experiencing severe financial hardship (those in the 3.29 million-and-under income bracket). We will continue to discuss ways to respond to this need.

Overview of scholarships and subsidies for AY 2017 and beyond

Category	Name
1. <i>Scholarships associated with the Ritsumeikan Learning Model</i> Supporting student growth in curricular and extra-curricular settings	<Scholarships for individual students> ● Saionji Memorial Scholarship ● +R Challenge Scholarship ● Sports, Culture and Arts Special Admissions Scholarship <Scholarships for groups and organizations> ● Learning community development subsidies ● Subsidies for revitalization and enhancement of extra-curricular activities etc.
2. <i>Scholarships associated with the Global Initiative</i> Promoting international exchange and inbound/outbound mobility	● Study Abroad Challenge Scholarship ● Study Abroad Support Scholarship etc.
3. <i>Financial support scholarships</i> Helping students lead a secure student life	● Financial support grant scholarships ● Scholarships to support enrollees from outside the Kinki region ● Emergency grant scholarships awarded at enrollment etc.



Ritsumeikan University

Ritsumeikan University Academy Report, Ritsumeikan Style, AY 2016 Plenary Council September Special Issue

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Published on September 29, 2016, by Office of Public Relations, Ritsumeikan University

