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Proposals for the Internationalization of Kyushu University

from

SHARE-Q International Advisory Group (SIAG)

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1. About SIAG

SIAG is an advisory group consisting of international faculty members at Kyushu University, appointed by SHARE-Q (Strategic Hub Area for Top-Global Research Education – Kyushu University). SIAG aims 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 sessions in English (FDE)

Every academic year, SIAG endeavors to organize at least three FDEs on topics relevant to international faculty members at Kyushu University; the FDEs are open to all faculty members and administrative staff, for networking and exchange of information.

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

Every two years, SIAG prepares a memo with Proposals, to be submitted to the University Leadership. Previous Proposals were presented in March 2017, September 2019, and March 2022. This is the fourth set of Proposals.

2. Contributors

SIAG Board Members

Name	Title	Faculty
Johan Lauwereyns	Senior Vice President, Professor	Arts and Science
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SIAG Associate Board Members

Name	Title	Faculty
Douglas Drummond	Professor	Agriculture
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3. Bullet Points

- **BILINGUAL SUPPORT:** To turn Kyushu University into an attractive workplace for international academics, all levels and divisions must be encouraged to work in English, to improve English-language skills among Japanese-speaking personnel, and to provide Japanese-language learning opportunities to non-Japanese speakers.
- **EVALUATION, INCENTIVES, AND PROMOTION:** The current approach to evaluation, incentives, and promotion leads to disaffection among international faculty members. We offer a range of proposals to motivate researchers in ways that match Kyushu University's VISION2030 and fulfill our ambition to climb in the world rankings.
- **INTEGRATION IN ADMINISTRATION:** To internationalize Kyushu University, it is crucial to integrate international faculty members in all aspects of policymaking and management. Great progress has been made in this respect at the university-wide level, but many faculties and schools lag behind.
- **INTEGRATION OFF CAMPUS:** Kyushu University should explore feasible and sustainable solutions to enhance the off-campus experience for its international faculty, staff, and students, fostering a supportive and engaging community. We offer several concrete proposals.

4. The Current Proposals

4.1. *On bilingual support.*

For Kyushu University (KU) to become a world-class center for education and research, it is essential to continue improving and accelerating the creation of a fully bilingual environment. The goal is to turn KU into a welcoming, supportive, and attractive workplace for international academics even if they have no proficiency yet in Japanese. Following the previous SIAG proposals, KU has already made important improvements in bilingual communication. However, despite the progress made, international faculty members still face many significant challenges to reach their full potential in the KU context. Below we list a number of proposals to address these challenges.

- Design a language program for current and new international employees to improve their communication ability in Japanese.
- Encourage the use of simple and straightforward Japanese (“やさしい日本語”), both in writing and in speaking. Automatic translations (e.g., via DeepL) are more efficient when the original source uses clear and efficient communication.
- Create bilingual versions of all university-related websites (main website, departments, research centers, ...) with the same information in both languages.
 - Common facilities such as the Center of Advanced Instrumental Analysis of Kyushu University should have their website and instructions on the use of the facilities and equipment available in both Japanese and English.
- Systematically provide bilingual versions of all documents and forms used by faculty members and students. Set up a monitoring system to evaluate and incentivize the bilingualization at the departmental level.
 - Allow applications or submissions of documents in English for any administrative procedures within the University.

- Provide bilingual support for research-related procedures such as reporting and accounting for JSPS or MEXT that cannot be conducted in English.
- Many experimental protocols such as the use of humans, animals or genetically modified organisms are subject to important legal and local KU regulations. The information and registration procedures should be bilingual.
- It may be necessary to lobby with national government agencies to improve their bilingual administration (e.g., lobbying together with a network of national universities who have similar challenges)
- Appoint at least one bilingual member in the administrative staff of each department who will be responsible for supporting the administration procedures for international academics.
- Provide incentives to Japanese administrative staff to improve their English skills and to work more in English. Such incentives could include:
 - Establish a ten-year limit with attractive salary for fixed-term employees with specialist skills for international administration (including required conditions such as a Master's degree and a score of 850 or higher in TOEIC).
 - Increase the chances of promotion to senior administrator positions for employees who achieve high performance in English.
 - Identify and reward administrators with high performance in English based on feedback from international faculty members (e.g., a special award issued by the President, with a bonus.)
 - Allow employees to study English and take exams during the working hours for a certain proportion of their time (e.g., 5%).
 - Pay the TOEIC exam fee once per year for employees, regardless of status.
 - If a person achieves a high score, he/she is given a number of paid vacation days in proportion to the score.

4.2. *On evaluation, incentives, and promotion*

At Kyushu University there are two main mechanisms by which faculty members are evaluated: Q-RADeRS is a comprehensive system in which faculty members must input all their activities. This system has limited effect on salaries but is the basis to track the performance of the faculty members, departments, faculties, and the university as a whole. The second evaluation system, termed "Faculty Performance Evaluation" provides bonuses only for recipients of large grants (such as Kiban-S, etc...) or internationally acclaimed prizes such as the Nobel Prize, the Kyoto Prize, or the Purple Ribbon. The current approach to evaluation, incentives, and promotion leads to disaffection among foreign researchers. Here we offer a set of proposals toward creating a more motivating environment.

- **Merge the evaluation systems and change the grading.**

To avoid redundancy and extra paperwork in evaluation, it would be advisable to merge the Faculty Performance Evaluation with the Q-RADeRS. As for the Faculty Performance Evaluation, it grades the faculty members in three categories: Extremely Excellent "S", Standard "C", and Below Standard "D". Numerous faculty members have shown their discontent with this grading (cf., the SIAG FDE of 2022.9.27). Particularly the use of the category "C" is seen as a lack of appreciation for respectable academic performance. It would be less insulting if the categories are changed from "C" to "A".

- **Expand the number of categories.**

A preferable approach would be to increase the number of evaluation categories, reducing the large gap between the Extremely Excellent "S" category and the Standard "C" category. The current system is too simple and does not recognize numerous researchers whose performance is closer to the "S" category than to the "D" category. We propose to expand the categories by two, i.e. generate "S", "A", "B", "C", and "D", in which "A" could be termed Excellent, and "B" Better Than Standard.

▪ **Create new incentives in line with important KPIs for KU.**

In order to create a more rational model of evaluation and rewards, a broader group of incentives should be offered for individual performance that matches with the Key Performance Indicators set by the University Leadership. As a result, more researchers would identify with the university goals leading to greater productivity in ways that reflect well on the university as a whole. Here we mention just a few possibilities for new incentives. Importantly, these incentives should be available for both Japanese and international faculty members and would promote performance in key dimensions relevant for world rankings (e.g., international research network, international student ratio, and citations per faculty member).

- Awards for Excellence in Research, issued by the President, with a bonus
- Awards for Excellence in Teaching, issued by the President, with a bonus
- Young Researcher Award
- Recognition of achievements related to improving the reputation of KU, such as performance that advances KU's rankings
- Rewards for publishing papers with co-authors from overseas institutions
- Rewards for the number of international students supervised
- Rewards for classes taught in English by Japanese faculty members
- Recognition of achievements related to the mid- and/or long-term goals of the university as described in VISION2030

▪ **Implement proactive measures that enable international faculty members to reach their full potential.**

In addition to financial incentives, the University Leadership should consider a range of other incentives and proactive measures that would optimize the environment for international faculty members to be fully motivated and successful in their research and educational endeavors:

- Provide a clear pathway to promotion (similar to Sentan-Q)
- Consider a follow-up to Sentan-Q that includes international faculty members

- Create transparency on the regulations for promotion in each faculty
- Share information about promotion and personnel strategies within the university, across different faculties; aim to create university-wide standards and approaches for promotion and tenure as a function of age and achievement
- Provide support in the form of research grants or travel grants particularly for initiatives that improve the internationalization of Kyushu University (e.g., teams composed of Japanese and international faculty members)
- Provide strategic guidance for international and domestic grant applications, with realistic chances of success; target the participation in large research overseas networks (e.g., COST Action) and assist the search for matching funds (e.g., via JST or JSPS)
- Encourage networking and matchmaking among Japanese and international researchers within the University by targeted, topic-based invitations to join projects
- Encourage large-scale research projects and joint publications among Japanese and international researchers (create a research culture that fosters multi-author, multi-institutional publications in English, in all faculties)
- Give international faculty members access to graduate schools and graduate student supervision
- Provide support to improve the research and teaching environment, particularly targeting the integration of international faculty members, in terms of infrastructure as well as assistance (TAs, RAs, and administrative assistants)
- Give priority for sabbatical, or Free Quarter for Research (FQR), based on the research potential and the anticipated benefits for the internationalization of the University

4.3. *On integration in administration.*

The integration of international faculty members in administration at Kyushu University has improved greatly at the level of the Headquarters and the University Leadership. SIAG, as an advisory group, has been able to work directly with the International Affairs department and with the University Leadership to improve the internationalization of Kyushu University. At the university-wide level, Kyushu University shows excellent progress toward academic integration of international faculty members; indeed, in many ways, both SIAG and the senior roles of international faculty members are models of integration, not just for Kyushu University, but for Japanese universities in general. Kyushu University leads the way in this regard. The next challenge, however, is to extend the academic integration to the various faculties and schools. Here, “academic integration” refers primarily to participation in decision-making and management in all aspects, including curriculum development, the development of the research and teaching environment, recruitment, and policymaking with respect to daily operations. At present there exist large differences in the level of academic integration, from very good (e.g., the School of Interdisciplinary Science and Innovation) to very poor. We have the following questions and suggestions:

- **Questions:** In which way can the University Leadership promote academic integration at the departmental level?
 - What levers does the University Leadership have at its disposal? Can it move beyond mere requests to enforce rules and policies? Effective monitoring is required to properly track the level of academic integration.
 - Can the University Leadership provide incentives?
 - Financial incentives versus disincentives for the faculties and schools
 - Allocation of full-time equivalent (FTE) points for academics or for administrators.
 - How can the University Leadership make its leadership model more visible, more impactful?

- **Suggestions:** Ensure inclusion of international faculty members in important committees and senior roles at the various faculties and schools.
 - Allow international committee members to speak in English, even when the meetings are run in Japanese.
 - Provide either English versions of the documents (via DeepL) or short summaries in English (just one or two lines to state the important content).
 - Promote in-person meetings for meaningful opinion exchange.
 - Include Associate Professors in decision-making, and preferably also Assistant Professors.
 - Include international faculty members in search committees when recruiting new faculty members.
 - Encourage mentorship by Japanese faculty members to actively promote the academic integration of junior international faculty members.

- **For consideration:** In many departments, there may be only very few international faculty members, who could remain isolated in a monolingual Japanese environment. The key issue is to increase the numbers of international faculty members to avoid such isolation or underrepresentation.
 - One realistic approach in this regard would be to reassign isolated faculty members to different units where it is feasible to create a critical mass of international faculty members.
 - Ideally, all faculties and schools should have significant numbers of international faculty members and English-proficient administrators; but until this ideal is reached, the most strategic pathway to academic integration is to identify specific faculties and schools that can host a significant number of international faculty members (e.g., Engineering, Agriculture, the School of Interdisciplinary Science and Innovation); international faculty members should preferably be allocated to such units.

4.4. *On integration off campus.*

Kyushu University should explore feasible and sustainable solutions to enhance the off-campus experience for its international faculty, staff, and students, fostering a supportive and engaging community. Discussions with the Social Engagement Division of Kyushu University revealed shared interests in off-campus support.

Key Initiatives:

- City Collaboration (in progress):
 - Provide advice to cities and local communities for improving the living environment for non-Japanese speakers.
- Enhanced Online Platform (in progress):
 - Improve the university's online platform to offer comprehensive information on off-campus activities.
- Mentorship Club ("Your Q-Angel"): Foreign researchers and faculty members arriving in Japan generally face an array of difficulties at work and also in their private (off-campus) lives. These difficulties arise from various factors, including cultural differences, a complex language, and customs different from those in their home-countries. An inadequate integration off-campus may result in poorer performance and lower retention rates. In this context we would like to propose the "Your KU Angel" (or "Q-Angel") program, a volunteer-based system comprising veteran members of KU (Japanese and/or non-Japanese) who would advise (counsel) new researchers about various on-campus as well as off-campus matters. The experience of more veteran researchers is invaluable and would add intangible value towards the successful retention of non-Japanese researchers coming to our university.
 - Establish a "mentorship club" for newly hired faculty/staff, "Q-Angel" proposal
 - A volunteer-based advising system for new researchers, providing personalized guidance on in-campus and off-campus matters.
 - Process:

- Recruitment of volunteers.
 - New researchers choose an "Angel" for up to 12 months.
 - No monetary compensation; activity may be included in Q-RADeRS evaluation.
 - Meeting frequency determined by individuals, suggested monthly for up to one hour (online or in person).

- Meet & Greet Party:
 - Host a meet & greet party for new faculty members (modeled after a regular event at Kyoto University).
 - Annual international community lounge for new members.
 - Mandatory attendance for all new faculty members.
 - The President gives welcome remarks for an introductory session that covers essential procedures and support systems.
 - Current faculty members and newcomers interact in team-building activities; followed by dinner.

- Ongoing workshops every six months to address daily life challenges.

- Internship Programs (already being discussed):
 - Develop internship programs for international students in Itoshima City to foster connections and engagement.
 - Duties:
 - Support children in need of assistance.
 - English- or native-language support for learning and daily life.
 - Coordination with parents and additional responsibilities as required.