

Message from the Director of the Office of Institutional Research

Kyushu University's Office of Institutional Research (IR Office) was established in April 2016. Reforms and improvements based on self-assessment of a university's activities and analysis of the results are essential to enhancing that university's functions. Accordingly, national university corporations have a legal obligation to undertake their own evaluation of the extent to which they have achieved the medium-term targets that they set for themselves based on their medium-term plans, and to engage with the certified evaluation and accreditation process for quality assurance in education. In 2001, before it became a national university corporation, Kyushu University established the Office for Information of University Evaluation to conduct university evaluation. As its duties subsequently expanded, the office was reorganized with augmented capabilities in 2004, and it took charge of duties associated with "National University Corporation Evaluation" and "Institutional Certified Evaluation and Accreditation", among others. Although the Office of Institutional Research was able to deal with such evaluation-related tasks, it was barely equipped with any functions to support the analysis of the results of self-assessment and the promotion of university reform and improvement based on numerical indicators and qualitative indicators backed up with evidence. As such, making a fresh start under a new name in Japanese (although its English name remained the same), Kyushu University's Office of Institutional Research was given stronger functions in these areas, in addition to its evaluation-related tasks, the objective was to support a more substantial governance structure that permits the strategic management and administration of the University, under the President's leadership.

According to the Universities Subcommittee of the Central Council for Education, IR is the "collection and analysis of data about university activities in such areas as education, research, and financial affairs, and investigative research for the purpose of supporting decision-making by the university". Setting out policies for improvement and reform based on "objective, carefully scrutinized, persuasive data" is likely to facilitate the formation of a common understanding of the need for improvement and reform, and to assist in building consensus on policies for achieving this.

From this perspective, the first and most important duty of the IR Office is to build up "objective, carefully scrutinized, persuasive data".

Over the years, each of the university's departments have amassed a huge volume of numerical data of all kinds. This was accumulated in whichever form that was easiest for the department in question (and sometimes, the staff member in question) to collect, use, or submit in response to requests for data. Furthermore, the definitions used in data differ in quite a few cases, even where the data covers

the same category and the same period. Under these circumstances, merely collecting the data from the departments providing it is not sufficient to enable the IR Office to amass “objective, carefully scrutinized, persuasive data”. With the assistance of the various Administrative Offices, the IR Office has accumulated data scattered about within the University in order to convert it to “objective, carefully scrutinized, and persuasive data”. On the other hand, the disclosure of this data requires very careful attention. The category for the scope of publication has also been carefully scrutinized, and the IR Office has been moving forward while also discussing categorization with the provider of the data.

The Kyushu University Fact Book contains only part of the data that we have accumulated. Our purpose in compiling it was to provide a snapshot of the current status of the university and its individual departments, for use in making reforms and improvements, and in formulating plans for the future, and the electronic data made available on the Internet is easy to use as it is constantly updated. Displaying data “over time” enables readers to understand the University’s “past”, and to a certain extent, to infer its “future”. It also contains an example of the analysis of the university's research ability. We hope that each department will refer to this and use SciVal or Pure to analyze their own research ability.

As it is published online, we hope that all the external stakeholders who support Kyushu University will also take this opportunity to look over its current status, and provide their assistance and guidance so that we can enhance the functions of the IR Office in evaluating Kyushu University and supporting its reform and improvement.

The Kyushu University Fact Book is the fruit of the labors of IR Office staff and could not have been produced without the assistance of IR Office support staff and advisors. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Makoto Aratono". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Director of IR Office

March 2020