



The Open University of Japan Action Plan 2010

*2010  
Action  
Plan*



THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF JAPAN  
27TH

# *Action Plan 2010*



**Aiming to Build a Smoothly-Functioning Interface Between Students and  
the University in Order to Become a University Centered on Education**

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2010 will see the 27th year since the establishment of the Open University of Japan (OUJ). During this time, our aim has been to use the methods of distance education to form a new union of lifelong learning and general education. We have pursued these educational objectives and developed steadily over a quarter of a century.

As we approach the turning point in the 21st century, however, it will be necessary to make still further dramatic advances in anticipation of future economic and social changes as well as worldwide progress in globalization. Particularly with new developments being made in information technology (IT) and the urgent demands arising from the aging of society, OUJ is approaching a major crossroads where we must determine what direction to take.

This was the context in which the Open University of Japan Action Plan 2008 was formulated two years ago, and various measures have been implemented in accordance with that plan. Eight of the 12 plan objectives are being achieved to date, including the publication of the OUJ Book Series.

Building on that previous plan, Action Plan 2010 provides a vision of OUJ a half-decade in the future, with particular emphases on the following two points.

First, we will seek to improve student satisfaction by working in cooperation with our Study Centers to establish closer communication with the students. In this way, we will create a smoothly-functioning interface between the university and its students. Second, we will broaden our perspective internationally and establish OUJ as a lifelong learning institution with a worldwide presence in the area of distance education.



The Open University of Japan  
President

**Hiromitsu ISHI**

## I. The Basic Principle

OUJ is a university that makes lifelong learning available to all people who play active roles in their homes and communities as well as in business, government, and the international community. We will aim to become an institution of higher education with the core concept of general education as a "knowledge circulation platform," aspiring to link academic knowledge with the learners' experiences.

Meanwhile, in the context of a rapidly changing society, the area that must be covered by general education has broadened considerably. There is great demand for career advancement through acquisition of knowledge and skills that are indispensable to take part in society actively. OUJ will henceforth devote its efforts to support this kind of career advancement also, and will reinforce its system of supporting students who intend to acquire qualifications. We will respond to student needs by establishing a certain number of courses for acquiring qualifications as well as for general education.

In order to realize these aims, OUJ will make active use of a variety of educational means, including distant-learning classes that employ multiple broadcast and communication media as well as schooling by face-to-face methods. Such effort will establish OUJ as a lifelong learning institution at the world-class level and will

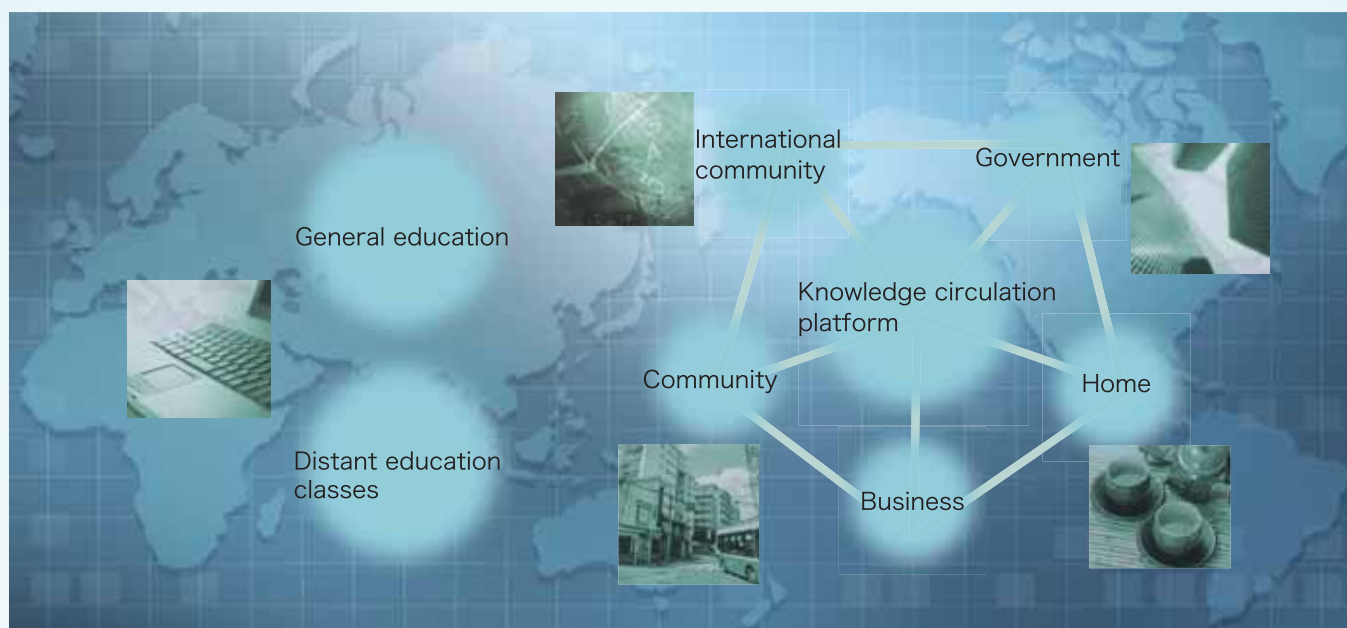
contribute to the realization of a high-quality lifelong learning society.

As Japan's elderly become a rapidly increasing proportion of the population, and the country experiences informatization, internationalization, and other such major changes, the country is recognizing anew the importance of lifelong learning. As it is said that "learning is for a lifetime," there will be increasing numbers of people who, regardless of their age, occupation, or location, strive to enhance their knowledge. On the other hand, there are also many people who have no opportunity to learn because of time, place, or economic constraints. OUJ will therefore exert the maximum effort to improve its educational and research systems while making active use of distance education methods so that all lifelong learners can be provided with the opportunity for university education.

## II. Three Master Plans

### (1) Reforms to Improve Student Satisfaction

OUJ has tended to let the convenience of faculty members and the university administration take precedence over that of its students. From this point forward, however, the university will make a greater effort to provide high-quality educational services from the perspective of the students who make use of these services. Faculty members will,



of course, make greater efforts to create attractive teaching materials and provide them promptly for students, and will give readily comprehensible lectures. OUJ will also exert more efforts to make its offices and Study Centers more approachable and easier to use for students. The Call Center system will also be further expanded, the relationship between students and university will be made closer, a learning support system will be developed, and an environment will be created in which learning can be continued smoothly and in which students can feel a sense of belonging to OUJ.

OUJ will therefore further enhance the feasibility of learning by making maximum use of effective educational methods and media, and by creating learning materials for high-quality distance education. Such education through broadcasting will also be complemented with IT technology, and interactive education/learning will be promoted. In doing so, OUJ will bear in mind that many students are unaccustomed to the kind of IT technology that will be essential for learning in the future, and efforts will also be made to improve their IT literacy.

The most crucial element throughout this initiative will be the cumulative, continuous efforts made by all OUJ faculty and staff working together as one to improve student satisfaction.

## **(2) Educational and Organizational Reform Adapted to the Times**

OUJ will take appropriate steps to implement educational and organizational reform that is adapted to the rapidly changing times. For example, we will reinforce education in specialized fields such as information and business, and will carry out corresponding organizational reforms of our undergraduate and graduate programs as necessary.

In the past, education and curriculum related to

acquisition of qualifications used to be handled as subsidiary matters under liberal arts education. Now, however, OUJ will reinforce the organizational structure that handles education for the acquisition of qualifications. Appropriate measures will be taken to assure the continuity of educational programs as well as to enable flexible adaptation to changes in the requirements for acquisition of qualifications.

It will be necessary to conduct a review of graduate school education. The quality of education in the master's program will be enhanced, for example by reassessing the enrollment capacity and improving interactive student supervision using IT. We recognize that there is a strong demand from students for a doctoral program, and we shall strive to establish one.

## **(3) Further Advances in Internationalization**

OUJ used to conduct activities that were relatively restricted to the domestic sphere. In the future, however, we will work steadily toward realizing substantial collaboration with international institutions with which OUJ has concluded exchange agreements in its capacity as Japan's representative lifelong learning institution. Our aim is to become an open university that is appreciated internationally both for reputation and for content. We will also take active part in important international conferences relating to distance education, and will work to convene those international conferences in Japan in future.

OUJ will also distribute courses in a variety of different media to Japanese learners living abroad, as well as to people of other countries and regions interested in Japanese culture and able to understand the Japanese language. The university will aim to gradually enrich its educational services internationally.



### III. 10 Specific Action Plans

#### **(1) Improving the Quality of Education**

Student satisfaction with the university depends on the quality of education which the students receive. Specific features include high quality textbooks, readily understandable broadcast teaching materials, improved face-to-face classes, and disclosure of the questions in the credit certification examinations. Other essential elements include providing attentive guidance on tutorials through correspondence, and building a system that enables appropriate responses to be given to students' inquiries at any time.

At OIJ, we will implement changes to place more emphasis on education. As a means of achieving this change, greater importance will be attached to the teaching ability and educational achievements of faculty members at the time of promotion, reappointment, and hiring.

In order to raise the quality of education, it will also be necessary to improve the educational support system. This will be done by systematically bringing in personnel to provide teaching assistance for faculty members and learning assistance for students. Specifically, this will include a full-scale implementation of plans to obtain the participation of OIJ graduates and graduate students, as well as faculty and graduate students from neighboring universities, as teaching assistants. These measures are intended to further improve OIJ educational activities and student services.

#### **(2) Broadening General Education and Improving the Education System for Acquisition of Qualifications**

There has been an extensive broadening of liberal arts education as society has advanced, and OIJ is being called upon to improve and strengthen its liberal arts education program, which has been the basis of the university since its foundation. Credit transfers with universities under the mutual credit-transfer agreement are also becoming more commonplace, and even greater importance than before is being placed on responses to requests from credit-transferring universities. OIJ will therefore endeavor to provide courses that meet the diversity of needs, including those of universities under the mutual credit-transfer agreement.

In recent years, we have also seen the increase in needs among our students for acquisition of qualifications as nurses, curators, and so on. OIJ will provide support for this kind of career advancement in addition to the broadening of our conventional general education program. To that end, we will establish a career advancement support center, designed to help determine which qualification courses should be instituted, plan

the curriculum, implement the courses, and provide assistance for these activities. By doing so, we will provide precisely tailored support for student needs.

#### **(3) Clarifying and Strengthening Study Center Functions**

Face-to-face classes offered up to now at our Study Centers have been conducted mainly by instructors who work for a university in the local area. In future, full-time faculty members of the OIJ will also become actively involved, enabling students to take face-to-face classes that are even more closely linked to broadcast courses. Such involvement on the part of full-time OIJ faculty members is expected to improve their educational activities by being more attuned to student needs and learning progress.

Study Centers are clearly assigned the role of locally-based loci of support for OIJ students. These centers will engage more actively than ever in measures to support the learning processes of registered students and returning students, so as to increase the number of course registration. "Regional studies" and other distinctive, appealing face-to-face classes will also be planned and conducted at Study Centers, and a web site for each Study Center will be set up. These measures will reinforce the coordinating function of the Study Centers as links between students and the university. In face-to-face classes, more consideration will be given to meeting student needs that arise when taking the courses. Steps will also be taken to improve public lectures, open campuses, and other such activities. We will move forward with plans to open the Study Center facilities to the local community, and fulfill a unique community college function through utilizing our Study Centers as local forums for lifelong learning in each region. To these ends, the Study Centers will be given greater autonomy, and their directors will be given greater authority.

#### **(4) Creating a Learning Community**

Registered students and alumni will join as one with the university and our Study Centers to create a distinctive OIJ learning community. We will try to raise the public awareness of OIJ, so that students can take pride in their learning. We will make active efforts to hold 'salons' and general education seminars for alumni associations and clubs formed by registered students, and will work for closer cooperative ties with various organizations of registered students. We will also provide learning and information exchange forums for a variety of organizations, to include residents of regional communities.

#### **(5) Developing New Course Materials**

The distinctive features and characteristics of each televised course will be carefully considered, and courses in which high-quality video imagery is

expected to have a conspicuous impact will be televised by terrestrial digital broadcasting and BS satellite digital broadcasting. They will be presented with beautiful imagery that will make those broadcast courses even more appealing.

OIJ will also review past broadcast courses, keeping in mind the possibility of reusing some of the outstanding teaching materials. This measure is intended to make good use of the multiple channels that will be available after the transition to BS satellite broadcasting.

The Internet will be utilized as the third medium for providing courses in addition to TV and radio, and OIJ will begin creating courses for this additional medium as well. The course content will be designed with consideration for students who do not have easy Internet access, so that they will also be able to follow these courses by printed material and the radio. Projects envisioning the use of this new medium will be created with the involvement of faculty members, the Center of ICT and Distance Education, the university library, and the Department of Production, to promote the development of new teaching materials.

#### **(6) Improving the Quality of Textbooks**

Improvement in the quality of textbooks also has a significant influence on the quality of broadcast courses, which are created in tandem with those printed materials. Taking this into consideration, we will make it a rule to start the production of broadcast teaching materials only after the textbook has been written. The rule will be strictly enforced. This new rule should result in an earlier deadline for completing the textbook, which should also allow time for the book to be evaluated during the production of the broadcast teaching materials. Furthermore, it will be possible to make appropriate use of the textbook as a reference tool in producing the broadcast teaching materials, and students can be given time to examine the course contents in advance. These new measures will greatly enhance the quality of our educational service to the students.

#### **(7) Implementing IT Literacy Education**

OIJ is accepting application, registration, and other administrative procedures through the Internet, both to improve student service and to make administration more efficient. Interactive education using the Learning Management System (LMS) is being promoted as well, in order to compensate for the undesirable one-sided tendency of correspondence education. These measures presuppose students' literacy in information and computer technology centered on Internet access, which is an essential technology for modern society. However, OIJ is not necessarily at a high level where IT technology is concerned, one of the reasons being the fact that the average age of students is relatively high.

OIJ will therefore engage in a multifaceted

program to improve the students' IT literacy by providing them outreach lectures, television lectures, and other such activities, conducted primarily by instructors from the Center of ICT and Distance Education.

#### **(8) Reorganizing the Graduate School Program and the Institution of New Programs and Courses**

Since the time of its founding, OIJ has provided guidance on graduation research theses. In 2001, the university established the master's program in the graduate school, and we have been building up solid results in research guidance for working adult students and students who live in distant areas. This master's program will be further improved as OIJ strengthens its thesis supervision system and improves the consultation and guidance system through the use of Internet technology.

As we are aware of the strong public demand for a doctoral program in the graduate school, the university will consider this matter in conjunction with its reassessment of the enrollment capacity of the master's program, with a view to creating a doctoral program as soon as possible. This doctoral program is expected to bring about a new practice in the intellectual world whereby students write their dissertations by organizing into a theory the system of highly specialized technology, experiences, and knowledge they have acquired through their practical business activity.

Given the above reassessment, OIJ will also consider establishing new graduate and undergraduate programs. For example, recognizing the demand among our students, and taking into consideration the status of OIJ as a distance education institution as well as human resource utilization within the university, OIJ is going to promptly inaugurate a master's program and an undergraduate program on media and information, with the aim to enrich the new educational foundation. We are also going to examine the possibilities for supporting not just general education, but also business and other such new fields related to the real world.

#### **(9) Establishing Education and Research Based on Knowledge Circulation Structure**

OIJ aims to appreciate both the experience that has been accumulated by learners in society and the knowledge that has been refined by scholarship. Based on this appreciation, we will establish a process of mutual feedback between the two in order to fuse them together, building a new framework of knowledge for education. OIJ seeks in this way to become an institution of higher education based on the knowledge circulation structure. Such a structure will enable learners to correctly perceive and understand the experience they have cultivated in society. It will also assist them to acquire a general education that will



stand them in good stead as they take the knowledge they gained at OUJ and make practical use of it in their private lives and in society.

The faculty, as the driving force behind education and research based on this knowledge circulation structure, will exert themselves to the utmost to improve general education and expand the opportunities for lifelong learning. In conjunction with this activity, OUJ will start its own research project on the desired modality and methods of education that function effectively through the medium of distance education. Such research efforts are expected to yield a still greater effect when the doctoral program is established.

#### **(10) Promoting Collaboration in the International Community**

OUJ is an institution that leads the open universities in Japan. In order to engage in equal relations with the open universities of the world and to exchange knowledge with them, OUJ will devote still greater effort to the conclusion of more international exchange agreements. In order to grasp the current of world developments, it will also be essential for OUJ to learn from other universities. Specifically, we will promote joint research, comparative studies, and personnel exchanges with leading institutions in Britain, the United States of America, South Korea, China, and other countries. We will also host more joint seminars and international conferences with overseas partners.

As a further international endeavor of OUJ, the university will increase its overseas educational activity for Japanese residing overseas, as well as for people of other countries and regions who have an interest in Japanese culture and the ability to understand the Japanese language. In light of the monitoring system in New York which has already produced positive results, OUJ will use the Internet and other such means to provide overseas learners with high-quality general education subject sets created at OUJ. We will also aim to expand the geographical range of this activity and will further improve OUJ educational activity through face-to-face classes, and public lectures.



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