

**Assembled and Edited by
the Planning Committee for External Review**

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Preface

The University of Tokyo Faculty of Medicine was established in 1877, under Japan's modernizing Meiji government. Its roots go back to the vaccination center established with donations from 82 private practitioners in 1858, when Tokyo was still called Edo, and over the past 145 years it has trained some 20,000 doctors.

While we are conscious and proud of our long tradition, we are acutely aware of the need to reform our curriculum to meet the needs of a new age. We are determined to prepare our students to become tomorrow's leaders in international medicine through the best possible undergraduate training.

So it is too in the realm of research, where we intend to uphold the highest standards to solve the most challenging problems. For many years we have worked to consolidate and improve our strengths in this area.

The 1991 revision of Japan's Standards for University Establishment called on universities to examine and evaluate their own performance. Internal reviews have begun at many universities. The newly established National Institution for Academic Degrees began reviewing Japan's universities in 2000.

In undergraduate education, we now regularly carry out evaluations of our own programs, including through course evaluations by students. Formerly in research, we evaluated our work by publishing biannual lists of each department's publications; we are taking steps to ensure that our evaluation will be more objective and rigorous in the future.

The designation in 1997 of the University of Tokyo as an institution centered on its graduate schools was a turning point. It is vital that we give the future development of postgraduate education here a sound foundation. Universities must see themselves as they are seen by others. Hence the present external evaluation of our research programs.

Research, teaching, and clinical practice are of course closely linked in a graduate school of medicine, and all three require evaluation, yet this time, we restricted our scope to research. Needless to say, this can under no circumstances be construed as the relegation of teaching and clinical practice to ancillary roles. Simply, we hoped to receive the most useful possible suggestions by narrowing our area of focus. Research is of course, by itself, a vast field.

The review process was meticulously prepared and executed by a committee headed by Professor Hiroto Okayama. We invited world-renowned scientists of the highest caliber to serve on the committee and review our faculty's work. Professor Erwin Neher and nine other distinguished scientists from overseas worked in collaboration with eleven eminent colleagues from Japan. I wish here to express my sincere gratitude to the evaluation team, who devoted so much of their valuable time to this task.

Whether internal or external, the principal meaning of any review lies in the willingness of those reviewed to listen and respond to fair criticism. Without vigorous implementation of changes -- should any be shown to be necessary -- external review will be sterile.

Greater openness is yet another major aim. Through outside evaluation we hope to make our research activities as widely known as possible and to arouse the public's interest in our work by publicizing both our findings and the outcome of peer review. Exposure to outside scrutiny and a wider audience will encourage us to reflect on future directions.

I earnestly hope that the findings of this external evaluation will, in these and many other ways, be a powerful guiding force helping us to build better research structures and programs at the University of Tokyo.

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

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