Foreword

On this occasion of
FD Handbook publication
Director, Center for Learning Support and Faculty Development

"Education quality assurance" is an emerging issue surrounding the present higher education in Japan. It was first raised in the Central Council of Education's report "For the development of undergraduate program education" in 2008, and since then there has been a strong demand for each university to enhance its undergraduate program as the learning environment for realizing student development based on its education philosophy and objectives. In its report in 2012, the Central Council of Education published a message that a university education reform that enables students to acquire the ability to cope with and survive the era of unpredictability would be the basis for consolidating the lives of students and the future of Japan, and that the promotion of qualitative shift of undergraduate education is crucial for that purpose. Another new aspect in this report was its clear indication that securing sufficient learning time is the starting point for ensuring independent learning of students, and that the responsibility for the improvement of undergraduate education is on each university.

At Doshisha University, the Learning Commons opened in 2013 as part of the measures to encourage independent learning of students and secure sufficient amount of time for learning outside the classroom. The Learning Commons offers a variety of learning support services which are expected to enhance student learning in and out of the class. If we define independent learning as "students' independent engagement in learning, with a clear sense of purpose instead of a passive attitude, toward some form of accomplishment," Active Learning is recently gaining attention as a strategy to facilitate such independent learning. It is based on the promotion of shift of the central objective of education activities from "what to think" to "what ability to acquire," and the increasingly shared notion that interactive active learning is effective in such shift. Along with the traditional classroom lecture, typical methods of active learning such as first-year education, project-based education, presentation and PBL are becoming common.

In order to cultivate in students the thinking ability, creativity and problem inquiry ability required to deal with problems they face in the real world that are complex, diverse and have more than one right answer, faculty members are expected to conduct an interactive class based on discussions and student presentations and encourage students to actively engage in learning before and after class, seeking materials and literature on their own.

Also, with the ongoing universalization of higher education, it is becoming increasingly difficult for university entrance examination to keep its function of maintaining the level of new students as before. Accordingly, the recent trend is that universities are expected to educate students with diversified academic abilities and goals and assure the quality of higher education at the point of their graduation. In addition to the firm establishment of a diploma policy, a curriculum policy and an admission policy both at the university level and in each faculty, assessment of more specific learning outcome is the new added aspect in education quality assurance.

The Center for Learning Support and Faculty Development has taken various measures to promote education quality assurance, such as a range of learning support at the Learning Commons, introduction of the course numbering system in the entire university, and promotion of education IR for grasping the learning outcome. This handbook is published as part of the education quality assurance as well. In order to enhance independent learning of students through active learning, we hope that the examples of education improvement and education methods introduced in this handbook will give you some hints for your class improvement and education practice.

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