Doctoral Program in Disability Sciences

■ Doctor of Philosophy in Disability Sciences

Program Educational Objectives

This program trains researchers who can conduct advanced research on various topics related to disabilities and provides leading education in the field of disability sciences from a global perspective.

Graduate Profile	To prepare professionals who can provide expert solutions to problems related to people with disabilities from a scientific perspective. Specifically, graduates will have a broad knowledge of disabilities and be able to contribute to problem-solving, as well as identify research issues from real-world problems and promote research plans and their implementation with collaborators to solve those issues.

Diploma Policy

The degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Disability Sciences is commenced to those who have fulfilled the requirements for the completion of the Doctoral programs, as set out in the Graduate School Regulations of the University of Tsukuba and related university regulations, and who are deemed to have the following competences.

	Competences	Evaluation perspectives
Knowledge and Skills	1. Knowledge creation competence: Ability to create new knowledge that can contribute to future society	①Are there any research findings that can be considered new knowledge? ②Can we expect you to create knowledge that will contribute to future society?
	2. Management competence: Ability to plan and implement measures to identify and solve challenges from a higher perspective	①Can you make and implement long-term plans for critical challenges? ②Can you identify challenges, even in other areas of expertise, and solve them from a higher perspective?
	3. Communication competence: Ability to express the true nature of academic findings positively and clearly	①Can you explain the true nature of research content and specialized knowledge clearly and logically to researchers from different areas and to people other than researchers? ②Do you proactively share your findings with researchers and experts from your field of expertise and accurately answer questions?
	4. Leadership competence: Ability to have objectives get accomplished under your leadership	①Can you set attractive and compelling goals? ②Are you capable of building systems to realize goals and accomplish objectives as the leader?
	5. Internationality competence: Possession of a high level of awareness and motivation to be internationally active and contribute to international society	①Do you have strong awareness and motivation to contribute to international society and international activities? ②Have you obtained adequate linguistic skills for international information collection and action?
	6. Research creativity: The ability to discover issues related to disability sciences and create original research	①Can the student identify and formulate research questions related to disability sciences from a professional standpoint? ②Can the student solve problems related to disability sciences with an original research plan?

	Competences	Evaluation perspectives
Knowledge and Skills	7. Ability to plan and execute research: The ability to plan and execute cutting-edge research on disability sciences	①Can the student develop a long-term research plan for an important issue related to disability sciences? ②Can the student research disability sciences based on a research plan they developed and modify it as appropriate?
	8. Research dissemination ability: The ability to disseminate research findings related to disability sciences through academic journals	①Can the student present and discuss their own research findings on disability sciences in class or other settings? ②Has the student published the findings of their own research on disability sciences in an academic journal?
	9. Ability to understand and communicate about disabilities: Advanced and extensive knowledge of disability sciences and the ability to teach it to others	①Can the student clearly and logically describe the nature of their specialized knowledge in disability sciences?
	10. Ethical understanding and attitude: The ability to implement and teach others the ethical procedures necessary for research and practice in disability sciences	①Has the student completed a research ethics application? ②Can the student acquire the ethical values and knowledge necessary for research on disability sciences and communicate them clearly?

Guidelines for Assessing Learning Outcomes	The doctoral dissertation is highly valued as the culmination of learning achievements. The comprehensive evaluation of students' attainment of learning outcomes, based on the degree-awarding policy, is conducted through the process of dissertation writing and the dissertation design, interim, and final presentations. The doctoral dissertation is examined and evaluated by a Dissertation Examination Committee composed of four members: one main examiner and three co-examiners. The evaluation is based on the criteria for the degree thesis and the knowledge and skills (competences) stipulated in the degree-awarding policy, specifically assessing whether students: – Produce new knowledge or show potential contributions to future society (Creation of Knowledge) – Set and solve research problems with broad perspective (Management Ability) – Present research content and results clearly and logically, and respond accurately to questions (Communication Ability) – Demonstrate leadership by cooperating with collaborators and stakeholders to achieve research goals (Leadership) – Have the awareness and language ability to contribute internationally, gather global information, and disseminate findings (International Competence) – Generate original research ideas in disability science (Research Creativity) – Plan and conduct advanced research in disability science (Research Planning and Execution) – Publish research results in academic journals and other outlets (Research Dissemination) – Explain specialized knowledge of disability science clearly and logically (Understanding of Disability) – Conduct research appropriately with ethical awareness and knowledge (Ethics and Attitude) These evaluations are reflected in course assessments, including: – 1st year: Disability Science Research Practice (compulsory, 1 credit), Seminar I (compulsory, 1 credit), Overseas Research Activity I (elective, 1 credit) – 2nd year: Seminar II (compulsory, 1 credit), Overseas Research Activity I / II (elective, 1 credit each) – 3rd year: Seminar III (compulsory, 1 credit), Overseas Research Activity I / II (elective, 1 credit each)

Evaluation Criteria for Degree Theses/ Dissertations	– The Research Guidance Committee, consisting of 1 academic advisor (research supervisor, chairman) and 2 assistant academic advisors (committee members), will guide doctoral dissertations until the dissertation is submitted. The submitted dissertation will be reviewed and evaluated by a Dissertation Review Committee comprising 1 primary reviewer and 3 secondary reviewers. At least 1 member of the review committee is selected from the faculty not in charge of this program. – Evaluation of the doctoral dissertation will be made comprehensively from the following perspectives, based on the peer review of the submitted dissertation, the content of the final presentation, and the oral examination results. 1. The significance and position of the research in the field of disability sciences is clearly expressed based on an understanding of past research and research trends in relevant fields both in Japan and internationally. 2. The results of original research that contributes to the development of the field of disability sciences are included in an amount appropriate for an academic paper. 3. The reliability of the research findings has been adequately verified based on sufficient knowledge of research integrity. 4. The discussion of the research findings is valid, and the conclusion is based on objective evidence. 5. The research background, objective, method, results, discussion, and conclusion are organized in a format appropriate for a doctoral dissertation in the field of disability sciences.

Curriculum Policy

The Doctoral Program in Disability Sciences fosters researchers or highly skilled professionals with research skills who can independently carry out research to understand the characteristics of people with disabilities and overcome or eliminate the difficulties associated with them, focusing on their respective areas of specialization, and disseminate the results of their research both domestically and internationally.

Curriculum Design Framework	– Through major coursework (research in a specialized field), students will acquire ethical understanding and attitude, the ability to plan and execute research, research creativity, and research dissemination ability by participating in activities such as individual and group discussions on research topics with their academic advisor and two assistant academic advisors. – Through the foundational course Disability Sciences Research and Practice, students will acquire the ability to understand and communicate about disability (knowledge and research methods) by assisting in classes in the College of Disability Sciences under the guidance of the faculty member in charge of the class. – Through the foundational course Overseas Research Activities, students will acquire research dissemination ability by presenting research at international conferences and participating in research exchange with graduate students at overseas universities and other partner institutions.

Curriculum Design Framework	– Through research ethics workshops, students will acquire ethical understanding and attitude. – Through presentations regarding their doctoral dissertation, students will acquire research dissemination ability.
Teaching and Learning Methods	The degree program curriculum consists of courses for the preparation of a doctoral dissertation. Research courses are structured within specialized fields; graduate students must take one group of research courses (Research I, II, and III) from their chosen specialization as a compulsory subject. In all specializations, students must take part in a design presentation in Research I (October of the first year), submit an academic paper in Research II, and take part in a mid-term presentation in Research III (June of the third year). In the spring semester of the first year, a research ethics workshop is held separately from classes to train attitudes toward research ethics and specific research ethics review procedures. Then, in Disability Sciences Research and Practice in the fall semester of the first year, students develop the teaching skills by working in the research methods for their own specialized field as class assistants for courses in the College of Disability Sciences under the guidance of the faculty member in charge of the class. In addition, through presentations at international conferences and classes for research exchange seminars with graduate students of international partner universities (Overseas Research Activities), students develop the communication ability, international character, and research dissemination ability necessary for a researcher or highly skilled professional with research skills.

Admission Policy

Desired Student Profile	We are seeking individuals with research skills of disability sciences, possessing a strong interest in cutting-edge research in Japan and abroad, and aiming to become researchers or highly skilled professionals with research skills who have global perspectives in fields such as education, welfare, clinical practice, public administration, or international cooperation in the future.
Student Selection Process	– Evaluation will be based on the score of the English external examination, the master's thesis review, and an oral presenation on their research plan and oral presentation. – Through the entrance examination, the applicant's English proficiency and research skills related to disability sciences will be reviewed.

Learning Support Framework

Academic Support	– Doctoral supervision is provided by one main advisor and two sub-advisors, offering support for study skills, time management, and presentation skills from faculty with diverse expertise. – Four dissertation presentation sessions are held annually (June, October, November, February). At each session, students may give design, interim, or final presentations (internal pre-defense), depending on their preparation and progress. – As the standard study plan, students are guided to give the design presentation in October of the 1st year, the interim presentation in June of the 3rd year, and the final presentation in November of the 3rd year. – Support for learning skills such as information gathering, analysis, logical thinking, and writing is provided through seminars, including literature reviews, progress checks, and research presentations. – Each year, students and advisors are informed of the JST “Next-Generation Researcher Challenging Research Program”, and students are encouraged to apply. – The program provides independent financial support to partially cover Article Processing Charges (APCs) and English editing costs, thereby facilitating the international dissemination of research by graduate students.
Opportunities for Peer Interaction	– For international exchange, students are given opportunities to interact with partner universities in Asia and North America through CIC partnerships and inter-departmental agreements, raising international awareness and motivation for global research. – At the end of each year, a joint student meeting for master's and doctoral students is held to share information on thesis writing, job hunting, and student life. – An orientation event “Building Your Own Career with Disability Science” is held for students considering continuing to the doctoral program. It includes talks and networking with graduates, providing opportunities to think about careers after degree completion. – In graduate school guidance sessions, graduates give talks on career paths after degree completion and join discussions with current and prospective students. – In common graduate courses organized by this program (BHE), students with diverse expertise form teams to propose new projects, encouraging interaction, motivation, and solutions to social issues.

Opportunities for Student–Faculty Interaction	– In the doctoral supervision system, each student is guided by one main advisor and two sub-advisors, providing opportunities to work with faculty from diverse fields. – Participation in joint research meetings and faculty-led projects gives students opportunities for interaction and motivation in research. – Networking events with graduates active in society provide chances for career and research consultations. – In some research areas, students join collaborative projects as research assistants (RAs) or co-researchers. – Upon graduation, students are asked to provide an active email address to build an alumni network. – At the end of each year, program-specific student surveys and meetings are held to exchange opinions on education and research guidance.

Approaches to Assuring and Enhancing Educational Quality

– Graduates serve as external evaluation committee members, providing feedback and engaging in discussions to improve education and research guidance. This external input guides quality assurance and educational improvement.
– At the end of each year, program-specific student surveys and meetings exchange opinions on education and guidance. The results are used to inspect activities and plan improvements for subsequent years.
– The program facilitates career paths where graduates of the master's program, after gaining experience as highly skilled professionals, return to the doctoral program to resume research with practical insights. This assures educational quality and strengthens the framework for achieving program objectives.