



# Report of a Quality Audit of Sub-degree Operations *of* The University of Hong Kong

February 2019  
Quality Assurance Council

**Quality Assurance Council  
Sub-degree Audit Cycle**

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Sub-degree Operations of  
The University of Hong Kong**

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The Quality Assurance Council is a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the University Grants Committee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

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# **PREFACE**

## **Background**

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) was established in April 2007 as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

UGC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the quality of UGC-funded universities and their activities. In view of universities' expansion of their activities and a growing public interest in quality issues, QAC was established to assist UGC in providing third-party oversight of the quality of the universities' educational provision. QAC aims to assist UGC in assuring the quality of programmes (however funded) offered by UGC-funded universities.

Since its establishment, QAC has conducted two rounds of quality audits, the first between 2008 and 2011 and the second between 2015 and 2016. By virtue of its mission, however, these audits conducted prior to end 2016 include only first-degree level programmes and above offered by the UGC-funded universities.

In 2016, UGC has assumed the role of the overseeing body of the external quality audits on the sub-degree operations of the UGC-funded universities, with the involvement of QAC as the audit operator. The sub-degree audit cycle commenced in end 2016 with the promulgation of the Audit Manual.

## **Conduct of QAC Quality Audits**

Audits are undertaken by Audit Panels appointed by QAC from its Register of Auditors. The Audit Panel composes of three auditors who are either international or regional experts in higher education quality assurance, drawn from a higher education system based outside of Hong Kong. The Panel also includes at least two local members, at least one of whom should be drawn from another UGC-funded university.

QAC's core operational tasks derived from its terms of reference are:

- the conduct of institutional quality audits
- the promotion of quality assurance and enhancement and the spread of good practice

QAC's approach to quality audit is based on the principle of 'fitness for purpose'. Audit Panels consider the nature and strength of those operations in terms of the vision, mission and goals of the university and the Sub-degree Providing Unit(s) (SDPU(s)) within it. The degree of alignment between the SDPU(s) and the university's vision, mission, goals and strategic priorities is also considered.

Full details of the audit procedures, including the methodology and scope of the audit, are provided in the QAC Audit Manual on Sub-degree Operations of UGC-funded Universities which is available at [http://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/qac/manual/auditmanual\\_sub-degree.pdf](http://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/qac/manual/auditmanual_sub-degree.pdf).

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This is the report of a quality audit of the sub-degree operations of The University of Hong Kong (HKU; the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council. The report presents the findings of the quality audit, supported by detailed analysis and commentary on the following Dimensions:

1. governance, management, university planning and accountability
2. approach to programme quality assurance
3. curriculum design, programme development and approval processes
4. programme delivery, including pedagogical approaches, learning environments and resources, scheduling
5. support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development
6. student learning assessment
7. student participation and student support services
8. systems for acting on quality assurance data to make ongoing enhancements to student learning

The audit findings are identified as examples of good practice worthy of commendation, recommendations for further consideration by the University, and affirmation of progress with actions already in place as a result of its self-study.

### **Summary of the principal findings of the Audit Panel**

#### *1. Governance, management, university planning and accountability*

The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE; the School) aspires to be a world-class centre of excellence for provision of professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region. HKU SPACE builds on 60 years of experience in providing professional and continuing education programmes and was established in 1999 as a self-financed non-profit-making organisation for educational purposes. Governance and management of this large and very experienced provider of long standing are working well. The Audit Report highlights the School's comprehensive and well documented governance and management policies and procedures. Institutional planning is outlined in the 2017-2025 strategic plan for HKU SPACE. The School has developed a detailed governance model that guides interaction with HKU and within HKU SPACE. Management structures and processes are documented in extensive publications, including a governance manual, clear terms of reference and membership of the layers of committees, and regular reporting requirements. The latter attest to the accountability structures that are in place. Risk analysis undertaken by HKU SPACE is robust and identifies academic and other risks and mitigating actions. Documentation for planning and management is clearly understood and adhered to within the School.



The commitment to and implementation of good governance and management processes was noted.

There are, however, two aspects of governance and management that could benefit from a more rigorous approach. First, it was noted that the last internal review of HKU SPACE by HKU Council was undertaken in 2002. All intervening reviews or audits have been externally initiated. The Audit Report suggests that HKU undertake periodic reviews of HKU SPACE because such regular internal reviews would benefit all concerned and contribute to good governance. Second, the Audit Report recognises the progress made to date in respect of external benchmarking and encourages systematic, planned and targeted engagement in international benchmarking with world-class institutions so that the School can pursue its bold vision of being a world-class centre of excellence.

## 2. *Approach to programme quality assurance*

The quality assurance (QA) system at HKU SPACE was formalised in 1999/2000. There is evidence that it is fulfilling its aim to ‘comprehensively enable development, implementation, review and enhancement of award-bearing study programmes as well as short non-award-bearing courses’. Based on its strong foundation, with some modifications over time to ensure fitness-for-purpose and some streamlining and efficiencies, the current QA System represents an excellent demonstration of the School’s commitment to programme QA. The comprehensive, detailed and informative *Quality Assurance Manual* describes processes, policies and procedures; the committee structures and duties of office bearers that make the system work are clearly specified. The Audit Report draws attention to HKU SPACE’s comprehensive and effective QA processes that include a meticulous approach to programme approval and review which draws on external input. Noteworthy too are the levels of commitment and involvement demonstrated by staff engaged in QA processes.

## 3. *Curriculum design, programme development and approval processes*

The approach to curriculum design, programme development and approval is well established and consistent. The QA System is based on an overarching quality framework that is in turn predicated on an Outcome-based Approach to Student Learning (OBASL). The quality framework draws on relevant external frameworks including those of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) and a range of professional bodies with whom the School collaborates in offering relevant programmes. HKU SPACE articulates with the University’s mission by offering ‘lifelong learning opportunities for the community’. This mission is exemplified by a portfolio of programmes of different durations and in different disciplines designed to meet perceived market needs flexibly and responsively. The School has made a strategic decision to prioritise programme developments in

aviation, building and construction, care, and data science and programme development in these areas is progressing well.

Documentation indicates clearly how HKU SPACE differentiates between programme approval at HKQF Levels 1-3 and 4-7. Regardless of the level of qualification, the programme proposals consistently articulate programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs). These are to be achieved through successful completion of a suite of courses, each with their own set of course intended learning outcomes. Where appropriate, programme design is aligned with the requirements of professional bodies and the views of external examiners are often sought. Individually and collectively this system provides a comprehensive and effective QA process for the approval of new programmes, which staff understand thoroughly.

4. *Programme delivery, including pedagogical approaches, learning environments and resources, scheduling*

The School's strategic plan 2017-2025 emphasises creativity and innovation in learning and teaching. The Audit Panel (the Panel) found several examples of significant developments taking place to fulfil the aims of the plan. The School has already embedded OBASL, in which intended learning outcomes are aligned with course content, learning activities and assessment assignments. Evidence was found of a high level of understanding among School staff of the use of intended learning outcomes at both course and programme levels. As part of a new emphasis on a more holistic approach to curriculum design, full-time Associate Degree (AD) and Higher Diploma (HD) programmes are committed to integrating formal curricula and co-curricular learning activities. A new core curriculum will be introduced to AD programmes from 2018/19 to develop students' generic skills and enhance their historical, social, ethical, aesthetic and scientific knowledge. In addition, greater emphasis will be given to experiential learning for full-time students. The School will continue to strengthen links between its programmes and relevant sectors of industry by recruiting part-time teachers from the field and drawing on other sources of industrial expertise. The Audit Report endorses the work HKU SPACE has already undertaken to develop its strategy for e-learning and technology in learning and teaching and encourages the School to operationalise it in greater detail.

Documentary evidence, site tours and meetings with staff and students confirmed that a robust QA System is at work to assure the quality of the learning environment for programme delivery. Learning Centres are all conveniently located with easy access by public transport. Students have access to HKU's library; some learning centres also house collections of reserved books. Information Technology facilities include portals for learners and teachers, a learning management system and Wi-Fi service. Students were generally satisfied with their learning environment and the quality and enthusiasm of their teachers.

## 5. *Support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development*

HKU SPACE is committed to excellence in its provision of professional and continuing education. It recognises the importance of retaining quality teaching staff, both full-time and part-time, and aligns its human resources policies with those of HKU. The School has a fully developed framework for staff appointment and development.

The School has established explicit staff development requirements for its full-time teaching staff. The Training and Staff Development Committee oversees planning and implementation of such activities; the list of workshops available covers a variety of pertinent topics. Workshops are well attended by full-time staff and are valued by participants. The Panel also noted the positive response of staff to the School's recent decision to require full-time academic staff to participate in at least 15 hours of staff development activity over a two-year period.

HKU SPACE also provides support and staff development opportunities to its part-time staff, to ensure smooth delivery of its extensive provision. The Teacher Support Unit, for example, provides specific assistance to part-time teachers on logistics and administrative matters. Documentation is of good quality, accessible and up-to-date. There is, however, room for improvement in relation to participation rates; while a significant number of workshops are open to part-time staff, take-up is low. As a result, the School cannot be confident that part-time teachers are adequately trained in OBASL, criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) and the use of assessment rubrics to inform and assist student learning. The Audit Report acknowledges the measures HKU SPACE has already taken to assist part-time staff further to develop their teaching practices and encourages the School to adopt a dedicated staff development programme for part-time staff, geared to the roles, responsibilities and working patterns of part-time teachers.

## 6. *Student learning assessment*

HKU SPACE has a clearly defined set of principles concerning assessment, translating the approach and policies of HKU into the specific context of sub-degree programmes. Although the move to CRA in the context of OBASL has been challenging, staff training has been effective. The School has considered the appropriateness of assessment methods for testing students' learning outcomes at course level but more could be done to ensure that the sum of assessment tasks facilitate full achievement of the PILOs. Pilot end-of-programme surveys and programme outcome assessments promise to assist in this respect; roll-out of these initiatives should make a significant contribution to evaluation of the effectiveness of programmes and levels of student achievement.

While annual monitoring reports pay considerable attention to data from the Learning Experience Survey (LES), there is relatively little analysis of course

assessment outcomes. These data could supplement existing indicators for the identification of poorly-performing courses, and for the identification of good practice. The Audit Report suggests that HKU SPACE take explicit account of student course assessment outcomes in annual programme monitoring.

Innovative assessment tasks have been developed for professional aspects of programmes; external stakeholders involved in the provision of such opportunities are effectively supported as assessors. There was evidence that assessment processes in part-time and full-time versions of the same programme are comparable. Students are signposted towards HKU's comprehensive advice on the avoidance of academic dishonesty.

#### *7. Student participation and student support services*

HKU SPACE values student feedback on the delivery of its programmes and actively solicits such input primarily through student representatives serving on Academic Committees (ACs) and Student-Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs). Students are generally satisfied with channels for conveying their concerns about programme delivery directly to teachers, programme leaders, or to ACs or SSCCs through student representatives. Unlike HKU, not all academic governance committees in HKU SPACE have student representatives. Staff informed the Panel that it was difficult to persuade part-time students to take on that level of engagement. Notwithstanding this, the Audit Report encourages HKU SPACE to consider new ways of ensuring that the student voice is heard at every level of the organisation.

There is evidence that full-time Community College students are participating in a range of extracurricular activities organised by students, student-led bodies and staff. Following the recent move towards a more holistic education, some extracurricular activities, such as a mentorship programme, study tours, service learning projects and a mental well-being programme, have been recognised on the academic transcript.

HKU SPACE provides a range of student support services for full-time students including: student development and counselling services; support for the Student Union and its activities; scholarships and bursaries; support for non-local and new students; and services for students with special educational needs. Both Community Colleges are sensitive to students' different needs and have developed somewhat different ways of coping with them. Students express satisfaction with the range and quality of the services they receive. Provision for part-time students is more limited.

8. *Systems for acting on quality assurance data to make ongoing enhancements to student learning*

The mission of the School and those of the individual colleges emphasise the significance and quality of student learning for both full-time and part-time students. Drawing on the University strategy to provide students with a total learning experience, the School is integrating the formal curricula of both AD and HD programmes with student-led co-curricular learning activities co-ordinated by student support services. The Panel noted that this approach has been strengthened with the requirement that all programmes introduce a credit-bearing course in experiential learning from 2017/18.

The LES is an end-of-course evaluation required for all award-bearing programmes and represents a central component of the School's quality enhancement framework. Students are required to give feedback on teaching quality, support services and the extent to which the course enabled them to achieve the intended learning outcomes. The LES is an integral part of the annual programme monitoring process, with a specific section providing a summary of the last three years' scores on teaching effectiveness and the effectiveness of courses in enabling students to achieve intended learning outcomes. Staff were aware of the thresholds applied to teaching effectiveness scores and the implications of falling below them. Follow-up action is taken when such circumstances arise. There was a clear commitment to enhancing quality by actively responding to the comments and feedback contained in the LES. Overview reports submitted to the Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning similarly demonstrate this commitment.

The Audit Report recognises the work HKU SPACE has already undertaken in piloting an end-of-programme survey to assess the achievement of PILOs in 20 programmes and acknowledges the early achievements of the programme outcomes assessment pilot and accordingly encourages the School to expedite implementation of these initiatives across a wider range of programmes.

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Explanation of the audit methodology**

This is the report of a quality audit of the sub-degree operations of The University of Hong Kong (HKU; the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on an Institutional Submission (IS) which was prepared by HKU following a period of self-study and submitted to QAC on 20 November 2017. A Mutual Briefing was held on 24-25 January 2018 which provided an opportunity for HKU to brief Members of the Audit Panel (the Panel) on the context of the University's sub-degree operations.

The Panel visited HKU from 20 to 22 March 2018. They met the Acting President and Vice-Chancellor and HKU senior staff; Directorate of The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE; the School); Heads of HKU SPACE Colleges; full-time students; part-time students; programme leaders; external stakeholders; teaching staff; academic support services staff; and members of academic governance committees.

The Panel evaluates:

- governance, management, university planning and accountability
- approach to programme quality assurance
- curriculum design, programme development and approval processes
- programme delivery, including pedagogical approaches, learning environments and resources, scheduling
- support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development
- student learning assessment
- student participation and student support services
- systems for acting on quality assurance data to make ongoing enhancements to student learning

and identifies its audit findings, including features of good practice worthy of commendation, recommendations for further consideration by the University, and affirmation of progress with actions already in place as a result of its self-study.

## **Introduction to the University**

HKU was founded in 1911 and is the oldest tertiary institution in Hong Kong. Since its foundation, the University has grown substantially and now embraces a wide range of teaching and research programmes. A brief history of the University is provided at Appendix A.

Sub-degree programmes in the University are predominantly offered by HKU SPACE. Internally, the School has a collegiate organisation. The wide range of part-time

programmes and short courses is offered principally by three colleges which are the College of Business and Finance, the College of Humanities and Law and the College of Life Sciences and Technology (which also includes the Division of Chinese Medicine). The School established the HKU SPACE Community College in the year 2000 to provide full-time sub-degree education through its Associate Degree (AD) and Higher Diploma (HD) programmes. The School also works with Po Leung Kuk in a joint venture college, HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College (HPSHCC), which offers AD and HD programmes under the HKU system.

## **1. GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 1.1 HKU aims to be Asia's Global University, delivering impact through internationalisation, innovation, and interdisciplinarity. Its mission includes the objective to extend lifelong learning opportunities for the community. This is now largely achieved via HKU SPACE, as stated in the Vision, Mission and Values for the School. HKU builds on 60 years of experience in providing professional and continuing education programmes. Until 2000, part-time programmes in professional and continuing education were offered by the Department of Extra Mural Studies, established in 1956/57. In response to the growing demand for award-bearing programmes, the School of Professional and Continuing Education was established in 1992. As the Government determined that continuing education should not be publicly funded, HKU Council established HKU SPACE as a self-financed non-profit-making organisation for educational purposes, and a company limited by guarantee in 1999. From 2000, full-time sub-degree programmes have been offered by HKU SPACE. The School aspires to be a world-class centre of excellence for the provision of professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.
- 1.2 HKU's latest strategic plan runs from 2016 to 2025; HKU SPACE's strategic plan covers 2017-2025, to support and align with the University's plan. It outlines strategic developments for the School in the form of brief overview statements for the Colleges, the Community Colleges, the Institute for China Business and HKU SPACE Executive Academy. The documentation clearly identifies the rapidly changing context for sub-degree provision, acknowledging increasing competition from private providers and more stringent government regulations. HKU SPACE's activities are ring-fenced financially from those of the University proper. HKU SPACE thus occupies a position between being a public or a private provider, drawing no financial support directly from the University Grants Committee (UGC). The Panel regards HKU's continued provision of sub-degree programmes on a non-profit-making basis as a positive achievement for the University.
- 1.3 The Panel was advised that HKU SPACE operates in a sectoral context where about 15% of HKU SPACE graduates in the AD and HD programmes

articulate to HKU and about 38% articulate to other UGC-funded universities. HKU operates an open entry system based on merit in which HKU SPACE students must compete with sub-degree students from other institutions for entry into HKU.

- 1.4 The Panel tested the effectiveness of HKU SPACE's approach to governance, management, university planning and accountability of its sub-degree programmes by scrutinising key documents including: the strategic plans of HKU and HKU SPACE respectively; the *HKU SPACE Governance Manual*; and the *Governance Relationship of HKU and HKU SPACE* which together provide an outline of arrangements for planning, governance and management.
- 1.5 Audit trails requested by the Panel included minutes of various committees involved in processing new part-time and full-time programme proposals, at various levels of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF). Documented processes of accountability checks were also examined. Sampling this way enabled the Panel to ascertain if policies and procedures outlined in management documents are working in practice.
- 1.6 The Panel explored the working relationship between HKU and the School in interviews with members of senior management, academic leaders, teaching staff, academic support services staff, students, external stakeholders and members of academic governance committees. Students talked to the Panel about how they experience the relationship between the two institutions.
- 1.7 HKU SPACE provides excellent documentation relating to governance and management, planning and accountability. The *HKU SPACE Governance Manual* is a comprehensive document which presents clear and detailed information and guides the operation of various committees and stakeholders. The Panel considers the governance and management structure at HKU SPACE well embedded and widely understood, noting that staff adhere to guidance provided in the *Manual*. The Panel therefore commends HKU SPACE on its comprehensive and well documented governance and management policies and procedures.
- 1.8 The Panel paid close attention to policies and procedures governing interactions between HKU and HKU SPACE. It became clear in interviews that the Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning (Board for CPE&LL), chaired by the President and Vice-Chancellor of HKU, plays a vital role in facilitating such interaction.
- 1.9 The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) promotes collaboration and communication among academic units in relation to self-financed lifelong learning and other areas of common interest. The relationship between HKU and HKU SPACE is further enhanced via the activities of the Quality Assurance Committee. Virtually all HKU's sub-degree provision is delivered



by HKU SPACE: just one certificate programme is offered by the Faculty of Arts of HKU. The University explained the historical reasons for this and provided assurance about the quality procedures applied to the programme.

- 1.10 There are, however, two areas of management in which the Panel sees room for improvement. First, the Panel could not find a mechanism that regularly assures both HKU and HKU SPACE that all activities are functioning at the highest level, as befits a world-class institution. Periodic reviews commonly provide such assurance in higher and tertiary education. The last internally initiated review of the School by HKU took place in 2002; all subsequent reviews have originated externally. The Panel recognises the importance of external reviews, such as those conducted by UGC, but is of the view that it is also important for HKU to assure itself periodically that its sub-degree provision is operating appropriately at the level of best practice. Periodic review constitutes an important aspect of governance that HKU SPACE currently lacks. It could helpfully include evaluation of the following components: the rationale for offering sub-degree programmes via HKU SPACE; mechanisms that facilitate such provision; and the efficiency and effectiveness of planning, implementation and delivery. Therefore, the Panel recommends that HKU undertake comprehensive periodic reviews of HKU SPACE.
- 1.11 Second, the Panel considers that benchmarking could be strengthened. The IS refers to several activities taking place under this heading including the valuable input provided by external examiners from other institutions in relation to the specific issues on which they are appointed to comment or assist. Professional bodies that accredit HKU SPACE programmes provide assurance that the School's provision is meeting required professional standards. Joint programmes offered in collaboration with partner institutions offer some benchmarking opportunities, albeit they are relatively narrow in scope. The Panel formed the view that the School currently lacks a strategic, targeted approach to securing benchmarking opportunities with comparable world-class institutions. Given the ambitious goal of HKU SPACE to be a world-class centre of excellence, such an approach is imperative. Therefore, the Panel affirms the steps already taken by HKU SPACE on benchmarking and encourages the School to engage in systematic international benchmarking with world-class institutions.
- 1.12 Risk analysis undertaken for HKU SPACE activities is robust and useful; mitigating actions are identified. Utility of the risk matrix could be enhanced in two ways: first by identifying specific role-holders as risk owners, rather than identifying colleges generically; secondly by separating the document into strategic and operational risks.
- 1.13 HKU SPACE has gathered data for several years to support proper governance procedures. In 2017 these data sets were codified as Key Performance

Indicators (KPIs). External benchmarking with comparable institutions may provide valuable insights into the best choice of KPIs for specific purposes (see paragraph 2.9 below).

- 1.14 Several mechanisms are in place to facilitate ongoing communication and interaction with all stakeholders, including students, graduates, teachers, subject experts and professional practitioners. For example, feedback from students is well documented and followed up, as evidenced by the minutes of relevant committees in the audit trails.
- 1.15 Data on professional accreditation and industry recognition of programmes are particularly noteworthy because of the breadth of programmes listed. Students whom the Panel met appreciate the extensive use of practitioners in teaching, particularly in part-time programmes, which College Heads regard as an attractive feature, testifying to the relevance and applicability of the programmes on offer.
- 1.16 The Panel found evidence in the audit trails that rigorous interrogation of data takes place at every level. Concern that data based on student perceptions may be over-emphasised at the expense of student assessment outcomes and other hard data derived from annual programme monitoring is discussed below under *Dimension 6* (see paragraph 6.21 below).
- 1.17 HKU SPACE's responses to externally initiated reviews and audits testify to the commitment of the School and the University to learn from such events. Of note was the School's response to the report on the 2007 Joint Quality Review Committee (JQRC)'s Institutional Review, which was commended by the review panel that subsequently considered HKU SPACE's Interim Report in 2011. Notwithstanding such positive examples, a regular internal review of HKU SPACE by HKU, as recommended above (see paragraph 1.10) will provide confidence and reassurance to both institutions.
- 1.18 Overall, the Panel concluded that plans, strategies, policies and procedures developed and implemented by HKU SPACE are of high quality and represent an excellent demonstration of fitness-for-purpose. Manuals that guide committees and individual stakeholders are particularly well put together, comprehensive and informative. Two improvements are identified: the use of internal periodic institutional reviews to assure the validity and excellence of the current approach; and systematic, more deliberate use of targeted external international benchmarking with world-class institutions.

## **2. APPROACH TO PROGRAMME QUALITY ASSURANCE**

- 2.1 HKU SPACE has enjoyed a long history of excellence in quality assurance (QA) and continues to place significant emphasis on maintaining and enhancing the academic and professional standards of its programmes. The

School's QA System was formalised in 1999/2000. It has evolved and been modified over time aiming to 'comprehensively enable development, implementation, review and enhancement of award-bearing study programmes, as well as short non-award bearing courses'. The Internal Qualifications Framework System was established, with reference to both the Outcome-based Approach to Student Learning (OBASL) and the qualification levels and generic level descriptors proposed by the Government in the same period. HKU SPACE can thus be regarded as a pioneer in the developments of quality systems in Hong Kong. Based on this strong foundation, with modifications over time to ensure fitness-for-purpose and some streamlining and efficiencies, the current QA System is an excellent manifestation of HKU SPACE's commitment to programme QA.

- 2.2 The Panel studied the School's *Quality Assurance Manual* and *Quality Assurance Booklet* noting the guiding principles for the Internal Qualifications Framework System. Most of the appendices to the IS concern programme QA and include: complete lists of programmes; terms of reference and membership of QA committees; and sampled reports. Audit trails provided minutes of all the committees involved in programme approval, monitoring and review processes.
- 2.3 The Panel investigated how courses and programmes that are underperforming are identified in meetings with Directorate, Heads of Colleges, Programme Leaders and teaching staff. Externality in programme QA was explored with external examiners, representatives of articulating universities and the representative of a company providing externships. Consistency of programme QA across the School was discussed with both academic support services staff and members of QA committees.
- 2.4 The HKU SPACE QA System is underpinned by a suite of comprehensive, detailed and informative documents that describe policies and procedures, committee structure, terms of reference and individual office bearers that make the system work and are required for successful implementation. In brief the system comprises:
  - Directorate, providing leadership and ensuring strategic direction
  - Board for CPE&LL and JCC, providing a conduit to Senate and other parts of HKU
  - Quality Assurance Committee, taking responsibility for development and oversight of the QA and Internal Qualifications Framework Systems
  - School Academic and Management Board (SAM Board), considering and coordinating strategic academic development, together with academic and management policies and regulations
  - College Board, acting as a forum in each college (or equivalent) to advise Directorate on college academic issues and implementation of the college annual development plan.

- 2.5 Monitoring and accountability processes are well embedded. Standard forms/templates and operational guidelines are provided in the *Quality Assurance Manual*. The QA System encompasses the quality cycle of a programme, from design, development and approval, through monitoring, modifications and enhancement, to periodic review. Validation reports illustrate the rigour of the processes.
- 2.6 Academic Committees (ACs) are formed for each programme (or hierarchy of programmes) for monitoring purposes and for gathering feedback and/or input from stakeholders. Annual monitoring is robust but the process emphasises factual statements about outcomes rather than taking a reflective, evaluative approach. Adopting the latter could provide a more productive basis for reinforcing and disseminating existing good practice and effecting improvements where required. Some monitoring reports present quantitative and qualitative data from both staff and students.
- 2.7 In 2016/17, 28 new programmes were approved, while 89 existing programmes were reviewed and approved to continue. The School produced 340 annual monitoring reports (AMRs) and 64 overview reports, covering 421 groups of programmes. This demonstrates that the QA System is sufficiently robust to cope with a large programme load. There was clear evidence that QA procedures are operating effectively. Programmes benefit from various forms of external benchmarking including input from external examiners, academic advisors and, in some cases, accreditation/recognition by professional bodies. The Panel noted the commitment, involvement and dedication of all participants in the HKU SPACE QA System and commends the School on its comprehensive and effective QA processes that include a meticulous approach to programme approval and reviews which draws on external input.
- 2.8 Data provided by the Learning Experience Survey (LES) are forwarded to programme teams, college heads and Directorate for monitoring and review purposes. Results are positive and have improved in the last five academic years. More than 6 700 modules have been covered by circa 142 800 questionnaires. LES results also indicate that part-time students are more satisfied than full-time students. HKU SPACE staff attribute this to part-time students being more focused, more clearly motivated, more certain of their choice of programme, closer to industry and enthused by the teaching of practitioners who are experts in their field. An end-of-programme survey was piloted in 2016/17 and there are plans to roll it out more widely.
- 2.9 The 25 KPIs adopted by the School in 2017 (see paragraph 1.13 above) are also used for measuring performance and informing policy reviews and resources planning at programme level. Annual reports on the 25 programme KPIs will be provided and a review of their effectiveness will take place in four years' time.

- 2.10 The QA System has been subjected to critical consideration in several reviews: an internal HKU Council review of HKU SPACE (2002); the external Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review by UGC (2002); the external JQRC Institutional Review (2007). These events all provided constructive and encouraging feedback on the system. HKU SPACE and HKU responded positively to suggested changes and improvements, as evidenced by the comprehensive follow-up to the JQRC Institutional Review recommendations. Internal procedures exist for the review of quality processes.
- 2.11 The School systematically gathers data and feedback for example via LES, the Survey on Support Services (SSS), Student-Staff Consultative Committees (SSCCs), and external examiners. There is evidence of action for improvement following the analysis of data.
- 2.12 It is too early for the Panel to form a definitive view on the use of the 25 programme KPIs since they were only recently approved. Over time there may be benefit in focusing on a more manageable number of KPIs and reclassifying others simply as performance indicators.
- 2.13 Overall, the Panel concluded that there is ample evidence that documentation of processes, procedures and policies on programme quality is excellent, as exemplified in the *Quality Assurance Manual*, which is comprehensive, detailed and informative. Day-to-day workings of the committees also manifested the same high quality. Noteworthy too is the strong commitment, involvement and passion of individuals at HKU SPACE who serve on the various committees and occupy various academic leadership positions and make the system work well.

### **3. CURRICULUM DESIGN, PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESSES**

- 3.1 HKU SPACE has an established, consistent approach to curriculum design, programme development and approval. The School has adopted an OBASL, which is integrated with the Internal Qualifications Framework System to provide an overarching framework for curriculum design, programme development and regular programme monitoring. The QA System is overseen by the Quality Assurance Committee, which is chaired by the Director of HKU SPACE and reports to the Board for CPE&LL. The internal qualifications framework draws on relevant external frameworks including the HKQF and a range of professional bodies with whom the School collaborates in offering relevant degree programmes. College heads are each responsible for implementing the QA System in their college, operating through their College Board to manage their respective programmes and courses.
- 3.2 HKU SPACE articulates with the University's mission by offering 'lifelong learning opportunities for the community'. This entails offering programmes

of different durations and in different disciplines to meet perceived market needs flexibly and responsively. The School has made a strategic decision to prioritise aviation, building and construction, care, and data science; programme development in these areas is progressing well.

- 3.3 The Panel tested the effectiveness of HKU SPACE's approach to curriculum design, programme development and approval processes by scrutinising relevant documentation including: the *HKU SPACE Governance Manual*; the *Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Developments 2017-2025*; the *Quality Assurance Manual*; programme validation panel reports; AMRs; programme review reports; external examiner reports; and annual reports submitted to the Board for CPE&LL with relevant extracts from Senate minutes.
- 3.4 Interviews with college heads and members of academic governance committees focused on how the School manages the volume of business without compromising quality. Teaching staff discussed the training and support they receive in relation to curriculum design and development. The Panel also heard from academic support services staff about how they contribute to design and approval processes and prepare for the introduction of programmes in subject areas new to the School.
- 3.5 Processes for programme development and approval are set out in the *Quality Assurance Manual*. Programme teams propose non-award-bearing courses to the relevant College Board for peer review of course structure, content and costings. Authorisation rests with the College Boards. The process that applies to approval of an award-bearing programme varies. If the programme is set at HKQF Levels 1-3, it is approved at college level; the Board for CPE&LL receives lists of such approved programmes, via the Quality Assurance Committee, at the end of each academic year. Programmes set at Levels 4-7 are scrutinised by programme validation panels who report via the Quality Assurance Committee to the Board for CPE&LL, where authority to approve is located. This differentiated approach to programme approval supports the School's intention to offer programmes at many levels as well as to respond to the needs of different sectors and students in Hong Kong.
- 3.6 A Steering Committee on College Curriculum takes responsibility for allocating development of new programmes to specific community colleges based on their distinctive missions thus eliminating unnecessary competition and avoiding duplication. Potential tensions between HKU SPACE and the University proper are resolved at the JCC and the Board for CPE&LL. Prior to seeking formal approval, programme ideas are tested out with programme leaders and division heads; short taster courses might be offered to gauge levels of interest and test the market.
- 3.7 The Panel found evidence that programme validation panels apply a consistent and thorough method to programme approval. Programme approval

documentation demonstrates that overall programme objectives are established from the outset and used to generate clearly articulated programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) which are in turn translated into sets of course intended learning outcomes (CILOs). Minimum entry criteria are specified. Learning outcomes for AD and HD programmes are designed with reference to the Common Descriptors for AD and HD programmes issued by the Education Bureau. While both types of programme are at HKQF Level 4, they vary in the proportion of generic and specialist content. The Panel noted high levels of understanding among staff both about the programme approval process and about the use of intended learning outcomes within that process at both course and programme levels (see paragraph 6.10 below).

- 3.8 Programme validation panels test different elements of programme approval documents by meeting the programme leaders and seeking advice from two external members, either academics or practitioners, with expertise in the area under scrutiny. Where appropriate, alignment with the requirements of professional bodies is considered.
- 3.9 The School has several means by which it monitors outcomes of programme and course approval processes. AMRs enable programme leaders and ACs to reflect on patterns in application numbers. External examiner reports indicate general satisfaction with programme and course content and structure. These documents also confirm appropriate alignment between the CILOs and the assessment regime and confirm that most students achieve the CILOs, albeit with varying levels of performance. LES scores provide end-of-course data indicating whether students believe that they have achieved their CILOs. HKU SPACE recognises that understanding whether PILOs have been achieved is also important but less well developed. To address this, the School has piloted an end-of-programme student survey.
- 3.10 HKU SPACE has a robust and widely understood system that forms an integrated and continuous programme design, approval and monitoring process. There is clear evidence that ACs, programme leaders, teaching staff and the colleges actively respond to comments and feedback from external examiners and students to ensure maintenance of academic standards and quality enhancement. As a result, course design is regularly reviewed and adjusted.
- 3.11 Overall, the Panel concluded that the School takes a meticulous approach to programme approval and annual monitoring and has adopted an integrated and continuous process for curriculum design, programme development and approval that is comprehensive and effective. This process is fully embedded within the School's QA System, is well understood by staff at all levels and draws on external input.

#### **4. PROGRAMME DELIVERY, INCLUDING PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES, LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND RESOURCES, SCHEDULING**

- 4.1 HKU SPACE places significant emphasis on assuring and enhancing the quality of its programmes through its support of teaching and learning. This involves consideration of both the learning environment and of the learning and teaching resources. The School's strategic plan for 2017-2025 emphasises creativity and innovation in learning and teaching. Innovative pedagogical approaches identified by the School include problem-based learning; company-based externships and technology-assisted learning, such as online teaching platforms, webinar, and virtual reality applications. Since 2017, the School has been actively developing its e-learning and technology initiatives.
- 4.2 The School is adopting a more holistic approach to curriculum design for its full-time AD and HD programmes, with a view to integrating formal curricula, co-curricular learning activities and student support services to cultivate students' multiple intelligences. Greater emphasis is to be given to experiential learning for AD and HD students.
- 4.3 The Panel tested the effectiveness of HKU SPACE's approach to programme delivery by scrutinising relevant documentation including: the School's strategic plan for 2017-2025; the *Quality Assurance Manual*; information about online facilities and virtual reality facilities and equipment; the *Handbook on Effective Teaching*; staff development programmes; information on student support services of the community colleges; HKU SPACE's *E-Learning Development 2017/18*; and documentation relating to the core curriculum, experiential learning, the self-exploration and enrichment course, company-based externships, study and voluntary services, and samples of extracurricular activities.
- 4.4 In interviews with students the Panel discussed teaching quality, library resources, computer and Information Technology (IT) provision, the availability of specialist equipment and the support they had received in making the transition from secondary school to college. The place of e-learning and technology-enhanced learning in HKU SPACE's teaching and learning strategy was explored with members of senior management, academic support services staff, programme leaders and students. The Panel also had the opportunity to meet external stakeholders making key contributions to the introduction of the core curriculum and provision of company-based externships.
- 4.5 The School has nine learning centres with 157 classrooms and 18 computer laboratories, all located with easy access by public transport. Full-time AD and HD programmes are operated by two HKU SPACE community colleges, with headquarters located in Kowloon Bay and Causeway Bay respectively.



Students have access to HKU libraries and can use on-line resources via the HKU libraries website or the SPACE Online Universal Learning platform; some learning centres also house modest collections of reserved books. Other IT facilities include Wi-Fi services at learning centres, electronic portals for learners and teachers, virtual classroom and webinar. The School is also developing several virtual reality facilities.

- 4.6 HKU SPACE has already embedded OBASL. Staff development and sharing sessions help teaching staff acquaint themselves with OBASL and develop other pedagogical knowledge and skills, such as those related to the pilot exercise in programme outcome assessment; an experiential learning handbook and a handbook on effective teaching have also been compiled.
- 4.7 Both full-time and part-time students whom the Panel met were generally satisfied with their learning environment and the quality and enthusiasm of their teachers; they also appreciated the timely feedback given by teachers on work submitted for assessment. Meetings with programme leaders and teaching staff indicated that they understand OBASL, particularly the use of intended learning outcomes at both course and programme levels. Teaching staff were well aware and generally appreciative of staff development provision. They commented positively on peer support available within course teams and the assistance they receive from course coordinators, programme leaders and division heads when advice on academic matters is needed.
- 4.8 Problem-based learning has been adopted in some full-time programmes while company-based externships are currently offered as credit-bearing courses in two full-time programmes. Since 2017, the School has been actively developing e-learning and technology-assisted learning in line with the strategic plan for 2017-2025. The Committee on Technology and Teaching and Learning was established in January 2017 to promote ways in which technology can be used to enhance learning and teaching. The E-learning Team has been co-operating with programme teams in exploring new pedagogies to suit different learning and teaching needs. An e-learning newsletter and training workshops help disseminate the use of e-learning and technology among teaching staff. A conference on e-learning and technology was organised in November 2017.
- 4.9 It is too soon for the Panel to assess the impact on student learning of the community colleges' current move towards a more holistic curriculum. This initiative is intended to balance generic skills with subject specialist knowledge in full-time AD and HD curricula. A new core curriculum will be introduced to AD programmes from 2018/19 to develop students' generic skills and enhance their historical, social, ethical, aesthetic and scientific knowledge. The revised 2017/18 curriculum requires all AD and HD programmes to instigate a credit-bearing course in experiential learning, which can take the form of a research project, externship, placement, or company-based inquiry.

- 4.10 While some programme leaders can give examples of technology-assisted learning in their own pedagogical practice, the Panel did not find evidence of a systematic or strategic approach at college and School levels. Part-time students reported only limited experience with e-learning and other forms of technology-assisted learning. The Panel formed the view that e-learning at HKU SPACE is still at an early stage of development and its impact on student learning has yet to be felt. The Panel therefore affirms the action already taken to develop a strategy for e-learning and technology and encourages the School to operationalise it in greater detail.
- 4.11 The Panel found evidence that the School collects and analyses a significant amount of quantitative and qualitative data on programme delivery from a variety of sources including: the LES and SSS from students; external examiner reports; feedback from SSCCs, and advice from internal and external sources of industrial expertise.
- 4.12 Analysis of these data informs AMRs and overview reports, submitted by the Quality Assurance Committee to Senate via the Board for CPE&LL (see paragraph 2.6 above for further comment). Responses to matters raised are documented in the reports themselves, closing the quality loop.
- 4.13 Overall, the Panel concluded that a robust QA System is at work to assure the quality of programme delivery including pedagogical approaches, the learning environment and resources. Students and staff are broadly satisfied with HKU SPACE's provision. There is evidence that the School is experimenting with creative and innovative pedagogical approaches including recent efforts to promote e-learning and technology-assisted learning across the institution.

## **5. SUPPORT FOR TEACHING QUALITY, INCLUDING PEDAGOGICAL DEVELOPMENT**

- 5.1 HKU SPACE is committed to excellence in its provision of professional and continuing education and recognises the importance of recruiting and retaining quality teaching staff, both full-time and part-time. Although the School is a separate entity from HKU, its human resources policies are aligned with those of the University proper. HKU SPACE has a fully developed framework for staff appointment and development and aims to recruit teaching staff with a relevant Master's degree plus at least 2 years' professional and/or teaching experience.
- 5.2 The Panel tested the effectiveness of HKU SPACE's approach to support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development, by examining pertinent documentation including: the *Quality Assurance Manual* and *Booklet*; the *Human Resources Manual*; the *Handbook on Effective Teaching* and related guidance on course assessment, marking and handling multiple classes; and information pertaining to the roles and duties of programme leaders.

Completed samples of the LES together with summary statistics were reviewed, as were training programmes for teaching staff, the staff development plan and staff development schemes. Audit trails illustrate how LES results and observation of teaching feed into the annual monitoring processes.

- 5.3 The Panel discussed overall strategy for staff recruitment, development and retention with senior management and academic leaders of the colleges. They also invited a range of teaching staff to talk about their experiences of induction, support, continuing professional development, recognition and teaching excellence awards. Conversations about the quality of teaching and learning at HKU SPACE were held with a cross-section of full and part-time students, alumni and other stakeholders, including external examiners and partners providing articulation and externships for students.
- 5.4 For sub-degree provision, HKU SPACE offers a range of full-time and part-time sub-degree programmes via three colleges and two community colleges. Most full-time programmes are taught by both full-time and part-time staff while part-time programmes are delivered mainly by part-time staff. All programmes are co-ordinated by a programme leader. To cater for its large student population, ranging from Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination graduates to adult learners in full-time employment, HKU SPACE operates across nine learning centres. It is therefore not uncommon for courses to have multiple classes delivered by different teachers at different learning centres.
- 5.5 Statements about staff development in the IS sound relatively weak, for example ‘encouraging’ staff to pursue lifelong learning rather than ‘expecting’ them to do so. Interviews contradicted this initial impression, providing evidence of a strong institutional drive and recognition of what more needs to be done. The Teacher Support Unit helps part-time teachers with logistics and administrative matters, issuing up-to-date handbooks and guidelines that are accessible online. Several colleges have established their own awards for outstanding teachers. The Panel could not, however, locate explicit statements about student participation in awards systems, nor does there appear to be any involvement of award-winners in staff development activities where they could share their good teaching practices.
- 5.6 Subject teams, course co-ordinators, division heads, and programme leaders all provide teachers with peer and mentor support; even college heads are known to get involved in giving advice. Class observation by the relevant programme leader is stipulated practice serving the dual purpose of assuring the quality of the teaching delivery and providing professional support to individual teachers.
- 5.7 The School has established explicit staff development requirements for full-time teaching staff. The pay structure and teaching award schemes for full-time staff are well established and geared to supporting retention of good

teachers and recognition of those that are outstanding. The performance management system requires staff to identify annual performance objectives and core competency requirements with at least one obligatory interim ‘coaching’ meeting. The Training and Staff Development Committee oversees planning and implementation of such activities; the list of workshops available covers a variety of pertinent topics. Workshops are well attended by full-time staff and valued by participants.

- 5.8 The adoption of innovative pedagogies, such as experiential learning and e-learning, coupled with the introduction of the Core Curriculum to the AD programmes, will require teachers to ensure they are up-to-date with curriculum development as well as keeping abreast of changes in pedagogical practices. In light of this, the Panel endorses the School’s recent decision to require full-time academic staff to participate in at least 15 hours of staff development activity over a two-year period, a development welcomed by staff.
- 5.9 HKU SPACE sets great store by its policy of engaging part-time teaching staff who are also actively employed in their field of professional practice and regards these links with industrial expertise as key to the success of the School’s part-time programmes. While the pay structure and opportunities for recognition of part-time staff through adjunct and honorary appointments are positive features, the Panel formed the view that the induction and training of part-time staff would benefit from closer attention. Part-time staff have access to the full range of staff development activities enjoyed by their full-time counterparts but attendance is generally low. HKU SPACE recognises both the difficulty of getting part-time staff to participate in staff development activities and the importance of ensuring that they are up-to-date with contemporary and innovative pedagogies and curriculum development, including a working knowledge of OBASL, criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) and the explicit use of rubrics in assessment to inform and assist student learning. The Panel therefore affirms the measures HKU SPACE has already taken to assist part-time staff further to develop their teaching practices and encourages the School to adopt a dedicated staff development programme for part-time staff, geared to the roles, responsibilities and working patterns of part-time teachers.
- 5.10 HKU SPACE makes extensive use of LES data on teaching effectiveness, for example within staff performance appraisal. Teaching staff whom the Panel met are well informed about the thresholds applied to teaching effectiveness scores and the implications of falling below them. These data also operate as a KPI for HKU SPACE. Participation in staff development activities for full-time staff functions as a programme KPI. Findings of class observation for entire programmes are reported in AMRs. Aggregated data with commentary on issues identified and/or rectified are fed into the annual monitoring process through AMRs, which are reviewed in detail by the relevant AC.

- 5.11 The Panel found evidence of robust planning and monitoring practices to support staff and enhance teaching quality. Enhancement is built into HKU SPACE's strategic planning processes. The 2017-2025 strategic plan signals the adoption of several pedagogical innovations including: experiential learning; deployment of e-learning; and the introduction of the Core Curriculum to AD programmes. Communication to staff about such developments takes place via the intranet and related systems; it was clear that these channels are effective means of disseminating new policies and practices. There is also evidence of collegial communication between staff at various levels through both formal regular staff meetings and informal interactions. It was clear to the Panel that programme leaders play a pivotal and substantial role, carrying out their duties conscientiously.
- 5.12 HKU SPACE's comprehensive QA process is designed to identify teaching and learning issues through feedback from students and staff members, including both programme leaders and teachers; and internal reviews and monitoring. Reports and minutes provided in the additional information and audit trails provided evidence that the School addresses these issues systematically. For example, HKU SPACE has published a new set of guidelines for the community colleges to address the specific issue of large courses delivered by different teachers in multiple learning centres and ensure that all students registered on these courses receive a consistent and comparable learning experience. The Directorate is responsible for reviewing provision of adequate support for staff and associated human resources policies.
- 5.13 Overall the Panel concluded that HKU SPACE's policies, procedures and processes to support teaching quality, including pedagogical development, are fit-for-purpose. Much evidence was found of the School's commitment to continuous enhancement of teaching and learning. Further action is required, however to ensure that all teaching staff are supported comparably and consistently for the implementation of OBASL and CRA, and for the adoption of new pedagogical approaches such as e-learning and experiential learning.

## **6. STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 HKU has a clear and comprehensive assessment policy which makes no reference to sub-degree provision, stating explicitly that it relates only to undergraduate and taught postgraduate provision. HKU SPACE has autonomy in respect of regulations and has developed its own independent guidance on assessment which makes no explicit reference to the assessment policy of the University. The School's own assessment policies are predicated on OBASL and CRA, which have been implemented throughout the University proper and provide clear reference to the purposes of student assessment and to the importance of the selection of assessment methods that make it possible for students to demonstrate their learning.

- 6.2 The School's assessment policy provides detailed guidance on the conferment of awards, and on re-examination for students who are unsuccessful in assessments.
- 6.3 The *Quality Assurance Manual* states that assessment performance should be considered when monitoring the effectiveness of programmes, but places initial emphasis, at course level, on quantitative results derived from the LES, rather than on assessment outcomes.
- 6.4 The Panel tested the effectiveness of HKU SPACE's approaches to student learning assessment by considering relevant documentation including: the School's own assessment policy documents; samples of information made available to students via programme handbooks or elsewhere; external examiner reports; an audit trail relating to a particular programme and another relating to the annual quality cycle.
- 6.5 Discussions with students and teaching staff during the Audit Visit focused on their understanding of CRA in the context of OBASL and how students learn through formative assessment and feedback. Programme leaders and teaching staff provided information about technical details such as grading and moderation and insights into the ways in which AMRs evaluate the effectiveness of assessment. Staff at all levels and external stakeholders engaged in discussions about the comparability of assessment practices across programmes, the consistency of training across full-time and part-time staff and the extent to which HKU SPACE considers assessment outcomes at programme level.
- 6.6 HKU SPACE has successfully followed a parallel path to HKU in the adoption of OBASL and CRA. The School states clearly that CRA is an essential component of OBASL and requires all marking to be undertaken against grade descriptors. These are provided generically for certain types of assessments and all programmes are required to provide grade descriptors in student handbooks and via the learner portal at the start of each course. In appropriate courses, intended learning outcomes and grade descriptors are set in relation to industry standards. There are some variations between colleges, as appropriate to their distinctive portfolios of programmes.
- 6.7 The School has created clear guidance for staff which explains the implications of this change for pedagogical development, staff teaching practice, and student assessment. Full-time staff have been fully briefed on the underpinning philosophy and practicalities and have developed a deep understanding of the relationship between intended learning outcomes and the setting of criteria for assessment. An externship provider whom the Panel met had also been appropriately briefed on CRA. HKU SPACE recognises that there are, however, some gaps in the understanding and application of OBASL and CRA, particularly in relation to part-time staff.

- 6.8 Student assessment outcomes are recorded on a variety of scales including percentages and letter grades. Conversion tables are then used to present all student assessment outcomes as grade points. The Panel noted some discrepancies in mark-grade conversion for several courses within individual programmes. Graduates from programmes at HKQF Levels 1- 4 are awarded a ‘distinction’, ‘merit’ or ‘pass’ according to their cumulated grade point averages. A procedure is in place for the consideration of alternative grading schemes for individual programmes.
- 6.9 Student handbooks provide information about rubrics and marking schemes to ensure that students understand what is being asked of them and the relationship between their achievement of PILOs and CILOs and the assessment grades they receive. Students whom the Panel met displayed a thorough understanding of these approaches. The Panel noted some inconsistent use of rubrics and assessment criteria in assignments and therefore encourages HKU SPACE to address this matter and secure comprehensive implementation of OBASL and CRA as soon as possible.
- 6.10 The School’s assessment policy emphasises the importance of students being given opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of PILOs and CILOs through a variety of types of assessment. One audit trail provides insight into the close attention given at programme approval to the appropriateness of assessment methods to be used in each course. It was less evident, however, that the same level of consideration is given to establishing whether assessment tasks set individually at course level collectively constitute an appropriate menu of assessments at programme level to facilitate achievement of PILOs. The Directorate provided reassurance that this issue has already been raised and will be subject to further discussion. The Panel endorses the School’s decision to consider further how the programme approval process could take account of this matter.
- 6.11 While the University’s assessment policy refers to formative assessment, discussions with staff and students made it clear that this is rarely practised in HKU SPACE. Respondents equated formative assessment with continuous assessment which, while often including formative elements, is ultimately summative. Students and staff expressed the view that some students find transition from secondary school to college challenging. The Panel suggests that the School consider whether the addition of elements of purely formative assessment could ease the transition of students to higher education study.
- 6.12 The Panel wished to ascertain whether the range of assessment tasks required of students on part-time versions of programmes is comparable to the range required of students on full-time versions of the same programmes. An audit trail provided evidence that the School ensures comparability and equivalence of assessment practices by, for example, requiring both full-time and part-time

versions of programmes to report to a single AC and by appointing the same external examiner for both versions.

- 6.13 Students receive appropriate information on the significance and delivery of feedback. The School requires staff to provide students with assessment results preferably within one month of assessment and no later than three months after assessment; the Panel heard that staff commonly advertise much shorter time-scales than three months to students. In the case of AD and HD programmes, this requirement has been reinforced by guidance on the provision of feedback via continuous assessment issued by the Steering Committee on College Curriculum. Ensuring that timely feedback is delivered to part-time students by part-time staff is challenging.
- 6.14 Although HKU SPACE has its own assessment policies and procedures, students on some programmes are signposted via programme handbooks to the excellent HKU booklet, *What is Plagiarism?* which explains academic dishonesty and how to avoid it, complete with worked examples. The Panel suggests that all students could benefit from this publication.
- 6.15 HKU SPACE has clear guidelines on the use of moderation when there are two or more assessors for a course. Teaching staff and programme leaders reported that moderation practices are commonly and appropriately used where students are completing individual project work or capstone courses requiring individual initiative. The Panel noted that moderation is not necessarily required in other circumstances, although it may occur at the discretion of the programme leader, once mark distributions for individual courses have been ascertained.
- 6.16 Responsibility for implementing assessment policies lies with programme leaders. They are also responsible for ensuring that all members of their teaching teams comply with the policies. Training for programme leaders covers a wide range of topics including management of processes.
- 6.17 External examiners are required for all programmes at HKQF Levels 4-7. Appointment of external examiners (at programme level) and academic assessors (at course level) is ultimately the responsibility of the Deputy Director (Academic Services). The *Quality Assurance Manual* defines their roles as being to provide 'general academic advice on a programme and its development' but not normally to concern themselves with 'vetting of the marking of individual scripts'. The overarching purpose of using external examiners is maintenance of academic standards 'at a level comparable to those in local and international higher education institutions'. In relevant programmes, choice of external examiner alternates between leading academics and non-academic professionals with experience of the accreditation requirements of professional bodies.



- 6.18 The Panel met external examiners who also play a role within their institution in selecting HKU SPACE students for articulation to their own degree programmes; some external examiners from abroad are also from articulating universities. The Panel formed the view that this creates a potential conflict of interest and suggests that consideration be given to reviewing the guidelines on the appointment of external examiners to address this appropriately.
- 6.19 Since external examiners do not have responsibilities relating to individual assessments, the task of appraising variations in individual mark patterns between courses falls to programme leaders. The Panel was provided with samples of course mark distributions for two programmes and noted variations in these. Programme leaders assured the Panel that attention is paid to such variations but no significant examples of discussions were found in the minutes of annual monitoring reviews.
- 6.20 Student complaints about assessments are normally raised through informal channels. Programme handbooks state explicitly that there is no right of appeal against grades while there is provision for checking procedural irregularity or technical error. The *Quality Assurance Manual* contains a detailed and comprehensive formal complaints procedure but this is a staff-orientated rather than a student-facing document. The Panel suggests that consideration could be given to producing an equivalent document for students.
- 6.21 AMRs play a crucial role in evaluating the effectiveness of assessment within courses and programmes. They place primary emphasis on quantitative data collected through the LES. Overall success rates on programmes are discussed in AMR reviews and follow-up actions are noted. However, they provide much less evidence of consistent and detailed consideration of student assessment outcomes and performance at course level. There is no consistent evidence to indicate that variations in mark distributions are being used to identify examples of good practice where student performance is commendable, or to identify courses where action may be needed. The Panel therefore recommends that HKU SPACE take explicit account of student course assessment outcomes in annual programme monitoring. This could supplement an approach to the identification of 'quality' which at present tends to emphasise market attractiveness rather than academic rigour.
- 6.22 Other sources of evidence used by HKU SPACE include both formal and informal contacts with professional bodies. SSCCs also gather and facilitate responses to views expressed about the appropriateness and validity of certain assessment tasks.
- 6.23 HKU SPACE recognises that a full set of data at programme level will further enhance the capacity of the School to reflect on its performance through consideration of student assessment outcomes. The Panel therefore affirms the action HKU SPACE has already taken in piloting both the end-of-programme

survey and the programme outcomes assessment, and encourages HKU SPACE to expedite their implementation across all programmes.

- 6.24 Overall, the Panel concluded that policies on assessment are robust and sensibly operationalise the pedagogic philosophy of the School on OBASL. HKU SPACE has adopted practices that provide the requisite degree of flexibility, given the complex portfolio of courses and programmes being offered at a variety of levels and in a variety of modes.
- 6.25 The School has a clear philosophy for student assessment and a well embedded pedagogical approach, predicated on OBASL and CRA. The Panel found that students were thoroughly briefed on what was expected of them. External stakeholders have good reason to have confidence in the academic standards set for students and the calibre of HKU SPACE graduates. Students understand the relationship between their personal and academic development and the testing of their achievements, and recognise the expansion in the range of opportunities available to them as a result of studying at HKU SPACE.

## **7. STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

- 7.1 HKU SPACE values feedback on the delivery of its programmes from both full-time and part-time students and actively solicits such input primarily through student representatives serving on ACs and SSCCs. The School provides a range of student support services including: student development and counselling services; support for the Student Union and its activities; scholarship and bursaries; support for non-local and new students; and services for students with special educational needs.
- 7.2 Drawing on the University strategy to provide students with a total learning experience, the School has introduced a new emphasis on holistic education for AD and HD programmes. HKU SPACE aims to engage full time students in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to supplement learning acquired through formal curricula and develop students' multiple intelligences better to prepare them for transition to university programmes after graduation.
- 7.3 The Panel tested the effectiveness of HKU SPACE's approach to student participation and student support services by scrutinising relevant documentation including: programme review panel reports; college mission statements; documentation about the core curriculum, experiential learning, and co-curricular and extracurricular activities; information about student support services at the community colleges; and the support services questionnaire and survey results.
- 7.4 The Panel visited some of the learning centres, including the two Community Colleges, on site tours. This gave them the opportunity to talk informally with

a range of teaching staff, academic services support staff and students. In interviews, they talked to both full-time and part-time students about student representation and their experiences of student support services and extra-/co-curricular activities. Interviews with academic support staff provided the opportunity to gather information about individual services and explore generic issues including: gathering and responding to stakeholder feedback; integration of services across the School and with HKU; and contributing to programme design and development.

- 7.5 Student representatives are actively engaged in ACs and SSCCs which operate at programme level across HKU SPACE. Students whom the Panel met were aware of the identity of their representatives and how the system works.
- 7.6 The School is currently engaged in integrating the formal AD and HD curricula with co-curricular learning activities and student support services to cater for students' holistic development. Extra-curricular activities are to be viewed as an integral part of students' varied learning experiences and to achieve this the community colleges are supporting students and student-led bodies to organise a variety of student activities. Staff also organise study and voluntary services learning projects and other forms of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities for students. To support this expanded approach a mentorship programme and a mental well-being programme have been recognised on the academic transcript. Other colleges organise extra-curricular activities for part-time students, albeit less frequently.
- 7.7 Both community colleges are sensitive to the varying needs of their full-time students and have developed differentiated ways of meeting them. For example, the Deputy Principal of the HPSHCC holds monthly meetings with non-local students to check how well they are adapting to life and study in Hong Kong; at the Community College, induction briefings are arranged for new non-local students and special functions like internationalisation events are organised on campus to enhance students' intercultural appreciation. While full-time students enjoy the full range of support services, provision for part-time students is more limited. They rely mainly on programme teams and individual teachers for academic guidance and career advice.
- 7.8 It is still too early to evaluate the impact of the new emphasis on holistic education on the graduate attributes of HKU SPACE's full-time sub-degree students. Nevertheless, the Panel found evidence that AD and HD students are already participating in a variety of extra-curricular activities organised by students, student-led bodies and staff, ranging from orientation activities, different kinds of competitions and contests, to social gathering events.
- 7.9 Students expressed satisfaction with the support services they receive. The Panel noted the high quality of the information the Community College has compiled for its students to help them prepare for further studies. Students

expressed satisfaction with the channels available for conveying their concerns about programme delivery directly to teachers and programme leaders, or to ACs and SSCCs.

- 7.10 HKU SPACE is keeping records of the extra-curricular activities organised by staff, students, and student-led bodies. Whether the new policy of recognising some extra-curricular activities on the academic transcript will raise levels of student participation remains to be seen.
- 7.11 HKU SPACE collects student feedback on support services via various channels, including the LES, the SSS and SSCCs as well as informal communication between students and staff. Students are notified of the responses to their feedback. Unlike HKU, not all academic governance committees in HKU SPACE have student representatives. Staff informed the Panel that it was difficult to persuade part-time students to take on that level of engagement. Notwithstanding this, the Panel noted the substantial number of full-time students in the community colleges and encourages HKU SPACE to consider new ways of ensuring that the student voice is heard beyond programme level.
- 7.12 Annual SSS results are reviewed by the Service Quality Improvement Working Group, led by the Deputy Director (Administration and Resources); analysis and follow-up actions are further reported to SAM Board and the Quality Assurance Committee. It is unclear whether student feedback, collected by the LES, SSCCs and other means, follows the same route or is dealt with by service units directly. There is no evidence to show that benchmarking with student support services of other institutions is systematically conducted to drive self-improvement. Nevertheless, the Panel noted communication and exchange between service units at HKU SPACE and their counterparts at HKU, enabling the former to benefit from the experience and expertise of the latter.
- 7.13 Overall, the Panel concluded that student representation is working effectively at course and programme level but could be improved at the level of the institution. Full-time students at HKU SPACE are given ample opportunities to engage in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities while opportunities for part-time students are necessarily more limited. Both full-time and part-time students whom the Panel met expressed satisfaction with the range and quality of the student support services that they receive.

## **8. SYSTEMS FOR ACTING ON QUALITY ASSURANCE DATA TO MAKE ONGOING ENHANCEMENTS TO STUDENT LEARNING**

- 8.1 The mission of the School and those of individual colleges emphasise the significance and quality of student learning within the context of aspiring to be a world-class centre of excellence for professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region. This mission is articulated in the

educational learning outcomes for full-time sub-degree programmes which emphasise critical thinking, problem solving and communication in different contexts and in accordance with different professional standards. The new, more holistic approach to the AD and HD curricula has been strengthened by the requirement that all programmes introduce a credit-bearing course in experiential learning from 2017/18. This development is motivated by the intention to enhance ‘students’ understanding of the complexity of real-life problems’ and link the knowledge developed through the courses to practice.

- 8.2 The Panel tested the effectiveness of HKU SPACE’s approach to acting on QA data to enhance the quality of the student learning experience by scrutinising relevant documentation including: the *HKU SPACE Governance Manual*; the *Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Developments for 2017-2025*; the *Quality Assurance Manual*; programme validation panel reports; AMRs; programme review panel reports; external examiners’ reports; individual college missions; and materials on experiential learning opportunities. In addition, the Panel requested samples of annual reports to the Board for CPE&LL and minutes of Senate discussions of these reports.
- 8.3 During the Audit Visit the Panel sought information about curriculum development, programme development and approval processes from a variety of stakeholders, including the senior management team, programme leaders, teaching staff and academic support staff. The Panel sought further details from Directorate and College Heads on the School and college missions and how data from monitoring processes support longer-term thinking about the shape of the programme portfolio. Processes for identifying and addressing under-performing courses and programmes were discussed with members of senior management, college heads, programme leaders and teaching staff.
- 8.4 There are well developed, fully embedded systems and processes designed to enable HKU SPACE to act upon QA data and enhance the quality of student learning. The AMR is the central process through which different sources of data on the quality of the student learning experience are collected and analysed. It enables programme leaders, teaching staff and ACs to consider the following elements: patterns in application numbers; assessment outcomes at a high level such as percentages of students who pass or fail; LES scores on teaching effectiveness and course effectiveness in enabling students to achieve their CILOs; views of external examiners; and key comments from SSCCs. Quantitative data for the past three years is presented so that trends can be discerned. These reports also record actions taken to enhance programmes in response to the previous years’ reports and identify good practices that could be translated into other programmes. This feature of the AMR ensures appropriate follow-through and closure of the quality loop.

- 8.5 The system of AMRs, external examiners reports, LES and programme reviews and how the different elements inter-relate is well understood by staff and the external stakeholders involved.
- 8.6 Programme leaders informed the Panel that thresholds for teaching effectiveness vary with scores for full-time teachers set at 60% and for part-time teachers at 55%. It was clear that a series of actions is taken as part of the annual monitoring process to respond to suggestions for improvement when courses fall below the relevant threshold. These actions include changes to emphasis in course content, teaching approach and teaching staff.
- 8.7 The Panel found evidence that external examiners take their responsibilities seriously and provide appropriate comments on programme structure, course content, course assessments, student assessment outcomes and levels of student performance. External Examiners reported that HKU SPACE is responsive to their comments (see also paragraph 6.19 above).
- 8.8 The purpose of programme review is to ‘assess the effectiveness of programme monitoring, as well as to conduct a full-scale evaluation of a programme for further development and quality improvement’. Programmes at HKQF Levels 4-7 are subject to periodic reviews every five-six years. Programmes at Levels 1-3 are reviewed annually, using the AMR and discussion at the AC. A programme review panel is established which includes external academic and/or professional members, as appropriate, and considers in detail a self-evaluation document submitted by the programme team. At the end of its review the programme review panel can recommend continuation or discontinuation of the programme. Where programmes are renewed the panel makes a series of recommendations which the programme team considers and, where they are accepted, develops an action plan to address. The completed report is submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee via the relevant College Board and subsequently forwarded to the Board for CPE&LL.
- 8.9 Student learning progress is monitored via continuous assessment; students have formal and informal opportunities to discuss the outcomes of their individual achievement with teaching staff. Full-time students conveyed a well developed understanding of what is expected of them in relation to CILOs. Documentation confirms that programme teams monitor student progress and that external examiners comment on examination papers and indicate whether they consider them suitably designed to assess CILOs. The end-of-programme survey piloted in 2017 across 20 programmes is intended to help HKU SPACE ascertain the extent to which students believe they have achieved PILOs; the School intends expanding this survey to cover a wider range of programmes.
- 8.10 The AMR is an effective, robust and entrenched process for continuously assessing whether HKU SPACE is delivering the quality of student learning set out in its School and individual college missions. ACs review in detail LES

data, external examiners' comments, and SSCC lists of good practices plus updates on actions taken into response to previous recommendations. Programme leaders and teaching staff report that that this process is valued, clearly understood and viewed as a critical enhancement mechanism.

- 8.11 The transparency of course effectiveness LES scores for comparative purposes in AMRs and, their publication to students provide important feedback loops that aid conversations around the transfer of good practice across courses.
- 8.12 External examiner reports and their comments in interviews with the Panel indicate general satisfaction with programme and course content and structure.
- 8.13 The School's comprehensive and consistently applied QA and quality enhancement processes ensure that both excellent and poor practices are identified and either appropriately cascaded or rectified. There is therefore a robust, integrated and continuous process for ensuring the quality of student learning is both maintained and enhanced.
- 8.14 The Panel found clear evidence that programme leaders and teaching staff take appropriate actions in relation to data presented in the AMR to enhance the quality of programmes and student learning and address under-performance. External examiners' comments are systematically considered and actions taken in response to address suggestions for improvement. Whilst the LES focuses on perceptions of course effectiveness, little evidence was found of consistent and detailed consideration of student assessment outcomes either at course level or across a programme (see paragraphs 6.21 and 6.23 above). The potential benefits of enhancement-orientated end-of-programme surveys and the programme outcomes assessment project pilots were noted (see paragraph 6.23 above). The Audit Report recognises the work HKU SPACE has already undertaken in piloting an end-of-programme survey to assess the achievement of PILOs in 20 programmes and acknowledges the early achievements of the programme outcomes assessment pilot and accordingly encourages the School to expedite implementation of these initiatives across a wider range of programmes.
- 8.15 Both full-time and part-time teachers whom the Panel met demonstrated that they understand thoroughly how LES data are used within staff performance appraisal. This enhancement mechanism is supported by collegial communication between staff members at different levels facilitated through regular staff meetings, communication via the intranet and informal interaction.
- 8.16 Each College produces overview reports on programme monitoring that provide further commentary on student enrolment, teaching effectiveness and 'new good practices' and to a lesser extent programme structure, programme management and student assessment and performance.

- 8.17 Overall the Panel concluded that HKU SPACE has a structured approach to acting upon QA data to enhance the quality of student learning. The School's integrated system of reviews is very well established. It has developed these practices in the context of a complex portfolio of sub-degree programmes delivered on both a full-time and part-time basis across a range of sites and with a large and diverse set of teachers, programme leaders, students and external stakeholders involved. The Panel found that staff and students were well-versed in the processes and understood their roles within them.

## **9. CONCLUSIONS**

- 9.1 HKU is a significant provider of sub-degree programmes in Hong Kong and in the region and can point to a long and distinguished history of 60 years of offering part-time sub-degree programmes and since 2000 full-time sub-degree programmes. The University's success has been achieved through the establishment of the Department of Extra Mural Studies in 1957, SPACE in 1992 and HKU SPACE since 1999, a self-financed non-profit-making organisation established by the HKU Council.
- 9.2 Given the volume and range of the sub-degree programmes on offer, there are excellent policies, processes and procedures in place to guide their development, approval, monitoring and review stages. In this report, HKU SPACE has been congratulated on the detailed informative documentation that guides all aspects of management and QA regarding these programmes.
- 9.3 The high level of commitment, professionalism and enthusiasm of staff members of HKU SPACE is particularly noteworthy and is one of the major contributing factors to the effective operation of all QA processes. The Panel has also indicated ways in which HKU SPACE could make further progress towards achieving its goal of being a world-class centre of excellence by drawing attention to some areas of improvement or enhancement.
- 9.4 The Panel acknowledges the cooperation by the University, particularly through prompt and extensive responses to requests for further information and participating freely in interviews, thus contributing to a very smooth audit process.



## **APPENDIX A: THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG (HKU)** ***[Information provided by the University]***

### **History**

The University of Hong Kong (HKU), founded in 1911, is the oldest tertiary education institution in Hong Kong. In response to the demands of a changing society, the Department of Extra-Mural Studies (DEMS) was established in 1956 to provide continuing adult education, the first continuing education unit located within a university in the region. In 1992, DEMS was renamed as the School of Professional and Continuing Education, indicating the significant transformation in the School's status and identity, both within the University and the wider community. In 1996, the Government stated continuing education should be self-financing. In 1999, to ensure there was no cross-subsidy from the University, The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE) was established as a self-financed non-profit-making organisation for educational purposes. HKU SPACE continues to plan its activities with greater flexibility and remains proactive in responding to the needs of society.

### **Vision and Mission**

#### HKU

##### *Vision*

HKU, Asia's Global University, delivers impact through internationalisation, innovation and interdisciplinarity. It attracts and nurtures global scholars through excellence in research, teaching and learning, and knowledge exchange. It makes a positive social contribution through global presence, regional significance and engagement with the rest of China.

##### *Mission*

HKU will endeavour:

- To advance constantly the bounds of scholarship, building upon its proud traditions and strengths
- To provide a comprehensive education, benchmarked against the highest international standards, designed to develop fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students, while extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community
- To produce graduates of distinction committed to academic/professional excellence, critical intellectual inquiry and lifelong learning, who are communicative and innovative, ethically and culturally aware, and capable of tackling the unfamiliar with confidence

- To develop a collegial, flexible, pluralistic and supportive intellectual environment that inspires and attracts, retains and nurtures scholars, students and staff of the highest calibre in a culture that fosters creativity, learning and freedom of thought, enquiry and expression
- To provide a safe, healthy and sustainable workplace to support and advance teaching, learning and research at the University
- To engage in innovative, high-impact and leading-edge research within and across disciplines
- To be fully accountable for the effective management of public and private resources bestowed upon the institution and act in partnership with the community over the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge
- To serve as a focal point of intellectual and academic endeavour in Hong Kong, China and Asia and act as a gateway and forum for scholarship with the rest of the world

## HKU SPACE

### *Vision*

In fulfilling the mission of HKU in extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community, HKU SPACE aspires to be a world-class centre of excellence for the provision of professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.

### *Mission*

- Collaborate with the University and other institutions locally and globally in expanding lifelong learning opportunities for personal development, academic progression and professional and career advancement.
- Engage with stakeholders to deliver high quality education and training programmes to meet the needs of society in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.
- Be a strong advocate of lifelong learning for all to realise an educated citizenry and quality of life.
- Excel in the provision of professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.
- Foster strategic partnerships locally and globally to promote international outlook and opportunities.

### *Values*

- Supportive of our learners, our staff and our partners
- Pioneering new initiatives and passionate for change
- Accountable to stakeholders with professionalism and integrity
- Creative and innovative in teaching and learning
- Excellent in the quality of what we do to serve our communities

## **Role Statement**

HKU:

- (a) offers a range of programmes leading to the award of first degrees and postgraduate qualifications in subject areas including Arts, Science, Social Sciences, and Business and Economics;
- (b) incorporates professional schools such as Medicine, Dentistry, Architecture, Education, Engineering and Law;
- (c) pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;
- (d) offers research postgraduate programmes for a significant number of students in selected subject areas;
- (e) aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength;
- (f) as an English-medium University, supports a knowledge-based society and economy through its engagement in cutting-edge research, pedagogical developments, and lifelong learning; in particular, emphasises whole person education and interdisciplinarity;
- (g) pursues actively deep collaboration in its areas of strength with other higher education institutions in Hong Kong or the region or more widely so as to enhance the Hong Kong higher education system;
- (h) encourages academic staff to be engaged in public service, consultancy and collaborative work with the private sector in areas where they have special expertise, as part of the institution's general collaboration with government, business and industry; and
- (i) manages in the most effective and efficient way the public and private resources bestowed upon the institution, employing collaboration whenever it is of value.

## **Programmes of Study offered by Sub-degree Providing Units**

HKU provides a range of sub-degree programmes:

- The Certificate in Chinese Language programme (set at QF Level 3) offered through the Chinese Language Centre, Faculty of Arts;
- 48 full-time Associate Degree and Higher Diploma programmes (QF Level 4) and the Diploma in Foundation Studies programme (QF Level 3)
  - offered through the HKU SPACE Community College and HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College;

- mainly for articulation to the next level of study and for work at the para-professional level;
- 178 part-time sub-degree programmes (QF Levels 1 – 4) including foundation certificate, certificate, diploma and advanced diploma
  - offered through the HKU SPACE College of Business and Finance, College of Humanities and Law and College of Life Sciences and Technology;
  - mainly academic, professional, career advancement and for self-enrichment;
  - some closely related to specific industries;
  - well-articulated with multiple entry and exit routes

### **Staff and Enrolment Numbers of Sub-degree Programmes**

A breakdown of staff and course enrolments in 2016/17 is as follows –

<b>Sub-degree Providing Unit</b>	<b>Academic and Academic Supporting Staff Numbers</b>		<b>Course Enrolment Numbers</b>	
	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>	<b>Full-time</b>	<b>Part-time</b>
Chinese Language Centre	2	9	28 (average for 3 terms) Term 1: 28 Term 2: 30 Term 3: 26	-
HKU SPACE	228	806	8 713	27 218

## **APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS**

The University of Hong Kong is very appreciative of the Quality Audit conducted by the Quality Assurance Council, essentially because it served as an opportunity to achieve the objectives set out in the Goal Statement for the exercise. It also provided scope for the University and our School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE) to undertake a thorough self-evaluation of our sub-degree operations. We are gratified by the positive comments in the Audit Report, which affirm our high level of commitment to quality assurance.

We are particularly pleased that the Audit Panel recognised the School's "comprehensive and well documented governance and management policies and procedures" (para 1.7) as well as our utilisation of "comprehensive and effective quality assurance processes that include a meticulous approach to programme approval and reviews which draws on external input" (para 2.7). In the Report, the School was also congratulated on "the detailed informative documentation that guides all aspects of management and QA regarding these programmes" (para 9.2). The University is appreciative of the Panel's commendations on the effective governance policies and quality assurance mechanisms which HKU SPACE will continue to reinforce through on-going review and enhancement.

As one of the objectives set out in the Goal Statement, HKU SPACE is committed to enhancing the effectiveness of its QA System in ensuring the quality of programme monitoring and delivery. On this front, the Panel concluded that "a robust QA system is at work to assure the quality of programme delivery including pedagogical approaches, the learning environment and resources" (para 4.13), and that "HKU SPACE has a structured approach to acting upon QA data to enhance the quality of student learning" (para 8.17). The School will continue to undertake reviews and modifications to ensure that our QA System serves its purpose and supports the high quality of teaching and learning.

Through the Audit exercise, the School chose to fortify the practice of an Outcome-based Approach to Student Learning (OBASL) and to promote the use of innovative and advanced teaching pedagogies. Acknowledging this, the Panel concluded in its Report that "policies on assessment are robust and sensibly operationalise the pedagogic philosophy of the School on OBASL" (para 6.24) and that there is evidence that "the School is experimenting with creative and innovative pedagogical approaches including recent efforts to promote e-learning and technology-assisted learning across the institution" (para 4.13). Certainly, the School will continue to invest in and utilise advanced technology and creative teaching pedagogies to enrich the student learning experience, as planned in the School's Strategic Developments for 2017 - 2025.

The University and School are gratified by the Panel's affirmations on our risk analysis (para 1.12), e-learning strategy (para 4.10), measures of developing part-time teachers' teaching practices (para 5.9) and the initiative of piloting an end-of-programme survey (para 6.23). Such affirmations help us to further focus our efforts on enhancing the utility of the risk matrix, operationalising the developmental plan on e-learning and technology, reinforcing the staff development programme, and expediting the implementation of end-of-programme surveys across a wider range of programmes.

The University recognises the recommendations made by the Panel on the periodic review and international benchmarking of the School, and the University Council has already established a working party to review the relationship between HKU and HKU SPACE. For the periodic review, the Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning has proposed to include HKU SPACE in the University's system of Academic Reviews under which individual Faculties are subject to regular reviews of academic governance and performance. Appropriate terms of reference will be developed as HKU SPACE is not research-oriented, while it delivers substantial part-time as well as full-time teaching provision.

Building on HKU SPACE's Strategy for International Collaboration as detailed in its Strategic Developments for 2017 - 2025, we will strengthen our approach to international benchmarking and identify parameters appropriate to the scale and diversity of sub-degree provisions that we offer to the community. We plan to examine the feasibility of engaging an external body to conduct benchmarking with international institutions, in addition to establishing more structured exchange on good practices, visits and conferences with HKU SPACE's strategic partners.

Regarding staff training, HKU SPACE will establish a Centre for Teaching and Learning to promote teaching excellence and to develop innovative learning pedagogies. The School also recognises the merit of enhancing students' participation in academic governance of the part-time programmes, and we will further enhance our systematic analysis and reporting of course assessment outcomes.

The University is grateful for the comments and recommendations presented in the Audit Report. We were particularly impressed with the knowledge and professionalism of the Panel members. HKU SPACE is committed to excel in the provision of high quality professional and continuing education in fulfilling the University's mission in developing and extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community.

## **APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AC	Academic Committee
AD	Associate Degree
AMR	Annual monitoring report
Board for CPE&LL	Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning
CILOs	Course intended learning outcomes
CRA	Criterion-referenced assessment
HD	Higher Diploma
HKQF	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
HKU SPACE	The University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education
HPSHCC	HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College
IS	Institutional Submission
IT	Information technology
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee
JQRC	Joint Quality Review Committee
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LES	Learning Experience Survey
OBASL	Outcome-based Approach to Student Learning
PILOs	Programme intended learning outcomes
QA	Quality assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
SAM Board	School Academic and Management Board
SDPU	Sub-degree providing unit
SSCC	Student-Staff Consultative Committee
SSS	Survey on Support Services
UGC	University Grants Committee

## **APPENDIX D: HKU AUDIT PANEL**

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Rudi Lidl (Panel Chair)  
Emeritus Professor, University of Tasmania

Professor Timothy Clark  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Social Sciences and Health), Durham University

Professor Paul White  
Emeritus Professor, The University of Sheffield

Dr Eva Wong  
Director, Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning, Hong Kong Baptist University

Professor Eric Yu  
Associate Vice President (Quality Assurance), The Education University of Hong Kong

### **Audit Co-ordinator**

Dr Melinda Drowley  
QAC Secretariat



## **APPENDIX E: QAC'S MISSION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

QAC was formally established in April 2007 as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the UGC of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

### **Mission**

QAC's mission is:

- (a) To assure that the quality of educational experience in all programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above (however funded) offered in UGC-funded universities is sustained and improved, and is at an internationally competitive level; and
- (b) To encourage universities to excel in this area of activity.

### **Terms of Reference**

QAC has the following terms of reference:

- (a) To advise UGC on quality assurance matters in the higher education sector in Hong Kong and other related matters as requested by the Committee;
- (b) To conduct audits and other reviews as requested by UGC, and report on the quality assurance mechanisms and quality of the offerings of institutions;
- (c) To promote quality assurance in the higher education sector in Hong Kong; and
- (d) To facilitate the development and dissemination of good practices in quality assurance in higher education.

**Membership** (as at January 2019)

Mr Lincoln LEONG Kwok-kuen, JP (Chairman) Chief Executive Officer, MTR Corporation Limited

Professor Chetwyn CHAN Che-hin Associate Vice President (Learning and Teaching), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Professor Adrian K DIXON Emeritus Professor of Radiology, University of Cambridge

Mrs Belinda GREER Chief Executive Officer, English Schools Foundation

Dr Kim MAK Kin-wah, BBS, JP President, Caritas Institute of Higher Education and Caritas Bianchi College of Careers

Professor PONG Ting-chuen Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Professor Jan THOMAS Vice-Chancellor, Massey University

Dr Don F WESTERHEIJDEN Senior Research Associate, Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente

**Ex-officio Member**

Professor James TANG Tuck-hong Secretary-General, UGC

**Secretary**

Miss Winnie WONG Ming-wai Deputy Secretary-General (1), UGC