

Report of a Quality Audit *of* The Hong Kong Institute of Education



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Quality Assurance Council

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The Hong Kong Institute of Education**

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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.

The UGC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the quality of UGC-funded institutions and their activities. In view of institutional expansion of their activities and a growing public interest in quality issues, the QAC was established to assist the UGC in providing third-party oversight of the quality of the institutions' educational provision. The QAC aims to assist the UGC in assuring the quality of programmes (however funded) at first-degree level and above offered by UGC-funded institutions. The QAC fulfils this task primarily by undertaking periodic quality audits of the institutions.

Conduct of QAC Quality Audits

Audits are undertaken by Panels appointed by the QAC from its Register of Auditors. Audit Panels comprise local and overseas academics and, in most cases, a lay member from the local community. All auditors hold, or have held, senior positions within their professions. Overseas auditors are experienced in quality audit in higher education. The audit process is therefore one of peer review.

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

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

The QAC's approach to quality audit stems from recognition that the higher education institutions in Hong Kong have distinct and varied roles and missions, reflecting the UGC's vision of a differentiated yet interlocking system. The QAC does not attempt to straitjacket institutions through a single set of standards or objectives, but recognises that each institution has objectives appropriate to its mission. The QAC defines quality in terms of 'Fitness for Purpose', where institutions have different purposes which reflect their missions and the role statements they have agreed with the UGC.

A QAC audit is not a review against a predefined set of standards. It does, however, require institutions to articulate and justify the standards they set for themselves, and demonstrate how the standards are achieved. Since student learning is the focal point of the QAC audit system, audits examine all aspects of an institution's activities which contribute to the quality of student learning. Full details of the audit procedures, including the methodology and scope of the audit, are provided in the QAC Audit Manual, which is available at: <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/index.htm>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The quality of student learning is the focal point of Quality Assurance Council (QAC) quality audits. The audits are intended to assure the Hong Kong University Grants Committee (UGC) and the public that institutions have procedures in place to enable them to deliver on the promises they make in their role and mission statements in regard to their educational objectives. A QAC audit is therefore an audit of an institution's Fitness for Purpose in teaching and learning. The audit examines whether an institution has procedures in place appropriate for its stated purposes, whether it pursues activities and applies resources to achieve those purposes, and whether there is verifiable evidence to show that the purposes are being achieved.

This is the Executive Summary of a QAC quality audit of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) conducted in 2011. The report presents the QAC's findings as elicited by the QAC Audit Panel, supported by detailed analysis and commentary. The findings cover each of the audit focus areas as well as the institution as a whole. Where appropriate, the findings are expressed as **commendations** of good practice; **affirmations** which recognise improvements the institution is already making as a result of its self-review; and **recommendations** for improvement. These are listed below.

In recent times, the HKIED has been pursuing an agenda to develop its quality assurance system and has implemented changes to mechanisms and committee structures to underpin that development. The Panel saw these relatively new changes as a positive contribution to the Institute's stated goal of moving from an earlier approach of quality control, through a quality assurance approach, to implementation of an embedded quality enhancement culture. The staff and leadership of the Institute were seen to be actively engaging in discussions of student learning and pedagogy and there was an evident intention to maintain a strong focus on these while the Institute builds its research profile in pursuit of its goal of university status.

Commendations

1. The QAC commends the HKIED for the strength and effectiveness of the relationships with its partners, particularly local schools and employers. *[Page 8]*
2. The QAC commends the HKIED for the effective leadership of Council in moving towards the goal of achieving university status with an Education-plus academic profile. *[Page 10]*
3. The QAC commends the HKIED for the effectiveness of operations and attention to quality assurance aspects within the Centre for Language in Education (CLE). *[Page 19]*
4. The QAC commends the HKIED for the range of advising services available to students to guide them through academic and extra-curricular aspects of their studies. *[Page 20]*
5. The QAC commends the HKIED for its commitment to facilitating student mobility and provision of grants to support individual students to have a Mainland or international experience. *[Page 22]*

6. The QAC commends the HKIED for its commitment to providing support for staff attendance at conferences in the interests of professional development and career progression. *[Page 26]*

7. The QAC commends the HKIED for the quality of the programmes for new staff and the involvement of the senior academic leadership in their induction to the culture of the Institute. *[Page 27]*

Affirmations

1. The QAC affirms the HKIED's ongoing commitment to quality enhancement in student learning as it seeks to build its research profile towards the goal of university status. *[Page 6]*

2. The QAC affirms the adoption by the HKIED of the Education-plus concept and encourages the Institute to further explore the meaning and implications of this concept and articulate it as a foundation for all of its academic programmes, in particular teacher education. *[Page 8]*

3. The QAC affirms the sound foundation of policy and support the HKIED has established for research postgraduate programmes. *[Page 28]*

Recommendations

1. The QAC recommends that the HKIED review its academic committee structure to clarify leadership accountabilities and streamline the work of committees to ensure there is clarity and consistency in the application of Institute level policies and quality enhancement processes. *[Page 7]*

2. The QAC recommends that the HKIED articulate, as soon as possible, the planned Institute-level framework to underpin continuing implementation of Outcome-based Learning (OBL) and the integration of learning outcomes for the Institute, programmes, courses and learners. *[Page 10]*

3. The QAC recommends that the HKIED review the relationship between departments and faculties and ensure that the Deans have sufficient authority as academic leaders to ensure sustainability of the teaching programmes. *[Page 11]*

4. The QAC recommends that the HKIED develop a Change Management plan and a strategy for Internationalisation to guide institutional action towards the vision of an Education-plus profile. *[Page 12]*

5. The QAC recommends that the HKIED place high priority on the rapid development and implementation of a framework of key performance indicators (KPIs) and performance indicators (PIs) to provide measures of performance and progress towards institutional goals in a period of rapid change. *[Page 13]*

6. The QAC recommends that the HKIED clarify aspects of its programme review processes including the mechanisms for external input and the timeline within which reviews are conducted subject to any external re-validation requirements. *[Page 15]*
7. The QAC recommends that the HKIED develop an overarching curriculum framework highlighting the Education-plus vision as a foundation of curriculum design to ensure that the general values and aspirations of the Institute are articulated through all of its programmes. *[Page 17]*
8. The QAC recommends that the HKIED develop a pedagogically-based policy and strategy for the development of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) infrastructure to support learning. *[Page 19]*
9. The QAC recommends that the HKIED expedite the development of a comprehensive language policy aligned with institutional goals and priorities and pay particular attention to the attachment of credit to language enhancement courses and goals. *[Page 20]*
10. The QAC recommends that the HKIED take advantage of the opportunity afforded at the final block placement for Field Experience (FE) for assessment of students' achievement of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs). *[Page 22]*
11. The QAC recommends that the HKIED develop a comprehensive and integrated assessment policy which provides guidance for consistent implementation of general assessment principles adopted by the Institute. *[Page 24]*
12. The QAC recommends that the HKIED review its approach to the use of feedback data from students to ensure that data from all sources are well integrated at programme level and acted on to provide information to students on improvements arising from their input. *[Page 25]*

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is the report of an audit of the quality of the student learning experience at The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on an Institutional Submission which was prepared by HKIEd following a period of self-review and submitted to the QAC on 14 December 2010. A one-day Initial Meeting of the Audit Panel was held on 20 January 2011 to discuss the Submission. The Panel Chair and Audit Coordinator visited HKIEd on 24 January 2011 to discuss the detailed arrangements for the audit visit.
- 1.2 The Audit Panel visited HKIEd from 21-24 March 2011 and met over 110 staff and 90 students from across the University, as well as a number of external stakeholders, including the Chairman and lay members of the Institute Council, local employers and graduates of HKIEd.
- 1.3 HKIEd is one of the eight institutions in Hong Kong funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC). Established as an Institute in 1994 it has built on 150 years of teacher training in Hong Kong and has now begun to encompass disciplines complementary to education within the range of its offerings. There are approximately 420 academic teaching staff and visiting scholars. As at September 2010 there were 4,326 undergraduate and 10 research postgraduate (RPg) students funded by the UGC with 1,917 self-financed students in taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes to give a total student enrolment of 6,253. The academic programmes are delivered through three faculties: Arts and Sciences; Education Studies; and Languages.
- 1.4 A brief profile of HKIEd is provided in Appendix A. It includes the Institute's role statement as agreed with the UGC and brief details of its history, mission, vision and organisational structure.
- 1.5 The Institutional Response to the Audit Report is provided in Appendix B. A list of abbreviations, acronyms and definitions used in the Audit Report is provided in Appendix C. Details of the Audit Panel are provided in Appendix D. The QAC's Mission, Terms of Reference and Membership are provided in Appendix E.
- 1.6 Since student learning is the focal point of the audit system, QAC audits examine all aspects of an institution's activities which contribute to the quality of student learning. These activities range from planning and policy development, through programme design, approval and review, to teaching, assessment and student support. The QAC has selected a set of such activities, common to all institutions, as the 'focus areas' of audit. Each focus area is a significant contributor to student learning quality and is sufficiently generic that it can be interpreted in a way which is relevant to each institution's activities and practices. Taken together, the focus areas effectively define the scope of a QAC audit.
- 1.7 The Audit Report follows the general guidance provided in the QAC Audit Manual¹ and covers the audit focus areas, with its structure generally being based on the format

¹ <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/index.htm>

of HKIEd's Institutional Submission.

- 1.8 The QAC and the Audit Panel are grateful to HKIEd for the Institute's collegial and efficient cooperation throughout the audit process.

2. OVERVIEW – TEACHING AND LEARNING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

- 2.1 The quality assurance arrangements at HKIEd encompass a series of committees; formal feedback mechanisms and processes (including programme reports and student feedback); external inputs; supporting mechanisms (such as teaching awards and annual reflective reports); and human resources policies and guidelines (including performance review).
- 2.2 The Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) which is a committee of Academic Board (AB) is chaired by the Associate Vice-President (Quality Assurance) and oversees *a devolved quality assurance system that is part of the Institute's transformational processes*. There is also a newly-established Committee on Learning and Teaching (CLT) that reports to AB and is linked to a series of Teaching and Learning Committees at faculty and departmental levels to provide a structure for enhancement of quality. In addition, the establishment of the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) provides a mechanism for oversight of quality matters in relation to postgraduate (Pg) programmes. The Institute's goals of *nurturing a new generation of graduates with qualities that meet the changing needs of the 21st century* are being pursued through a Teaching and Learning Plan developed as part of the planning of the 334/5 curriculum.
- 2.3 The Panel saw these relatively new arrangements as a positive contribution to the Institute's stated goal of moving from an earlier approach of quality control, through a quality assurance approach, to implementation of an embedded quality enhancement culture. The staff and leadership of the Institute were seen to be actively engaging in discussions of student learning and pedagogy and there was an evident intention to maintain a strong focus on these while the Institute builds its research profile in pursuit of its goal of university status.

Affirmation 1

The QAC affirms the HKIEd's ongoing commitment to quality enhancement in student learning as it seeks to build its research profile towards the goal of university status.

- 2.4 While the Panel was impressed with the commitment to quality enhancement it noted that there are very many committees and working groups at the Institute. Over time, new committees have been added without an effective analysis of the quality assurance system as a whole. The structure is very complex and seems not to be economical in terms of staff time. While the stated terms of reference and membership categories of individual committees are internally logical, the Panel noted some confusion among staff about the differences between committee roles particularly where there are overlapping membership and similar, albeit differentiated, responsibilities, for example

CLT and AQAC committees. Care will be needed to ensure that there is clear distinction at the operational level of these committees with attention to ensuring there is no dilution in the provision of high level strategic advice on HKIED directions, policy development and the processes of quality monitoring.

- 2.5 In addition, the *devolved quality assurance system* has led to a situation where currently there is, in the Panel's view, too much diversity in local interpretations of policies and procedures. The high level of devolution is causing duplication of effort that brings insufficient benefits. Further, it was evident that there are widely varying definitions and processes across departments, without sufficient checks and balances to ensure Institute-wide strategy and policy is being followed. For example, the quality manuals being created at departmental level vary in scope and content to the extent that the Institute perspective and its overarching quality manual are down-played and there is an over-reliance on the use of templates to provide consistency. Local level 'buy in' for strategic directions is important, but the Panel considers that devolution has passed an optimal level at HKIED.
- 2.6 A further concern for the Panel in relation to the extent of devolution was the expectation that various committees are responsible for operational decisions about programme delivery. Committees generally are not well placed to provide oversight of programmes. They provide a valuable site for consultation and debate about programme directions but there needs to be clear reporting lines to formal leadership positions where the accountability for action resides.

Recommendation 1

The QAC recommends that the HKIED review its academic committee structure to clarify leadership accountabilities and streamline the work of committees to ensure there is clarity and consistency in the application of Institute level policies and quality enhancement processes.

3. ARTICULATION OF APPROPRIATE OBJECTIVES

Vision and Mission

- 3.1 The Vision of the Institute is to *"be a leading university in the Asia Pacific region, focusing on Education and complementary disciplines, and recognised for our excellence in nurturing competent and caring professionals and the impact of our scholarship"*.
- 3.2 The Institute was provided with new student places by the UGC within the 2009-2012 triennium to enable it to develop into a multidisciplinary institution and build its research capacity. HKIED stated that it is currently working towards the goal of gaining university status with a new mission of *becoming an education-focused, multidisciplinary and research-strong institution* and an aim of *meeting the needs of a new generation of students and a rapidly changing Hong Kong society*.

- 3.3 This aspiration builds on the Institute's history of teacher education, which remains part of its core mission but within an explicitly *multidisciplinary* environment. The approach is referred to as *Education-plus* and is supported across the Institute, including by Council, although there are varying ideas of what the concept might mean and how it might be implemented. At present, there is a lack of clarity in how the old and new missions intersect and the emerging relationships among the disciplines are not yet clear.
- 3.4 The powerful *Education-plus* concept and the underlying values need to be articulated as the multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary foundation for all the activities of the Institute. It is important to ensure that the new disciplines are there not simply for the purposes of broadening the base of operations towards university status but are fully integrated as important elements in their own right within the *Education-plus* framework. It needs to be clear how the co-location of a number of disciplines will contribute to enriched learning, teaching and research across all of the Institute's programmes.

Affirmation 2

The QAC affirms the adoption by the HKIED of the Education-plus concept and encourages the Institute to further explore the meaning and implications of this concept and articulate it as a foundation for all of its academic programmes, in particular teacher education.

Industry Relationships

- 3.5 The Panel met with Institute stakeholders and heard their views on the Institute and the graduates. The employer views were positive and focused on what were considered to be notable characteristics of the graduates, namely their depth of expertise in pedagogy and their passion and enthusiasm for teaching as a profession. It was indicated that the language capacity of graduates who had completed the English major was strong but improvement was needed in the language capacity of the other Institute graduates (see section 7 for discussion of language). Generally, the partners spoke highly of their relationships with the Institute and reported that their advice is accommodated where feasible. External Examiners (EEs) and External Reviewers (ERs) met by the Panel shared this view.

Commendation 1

The QAC commends the HKIED for the strength and effectiveness of the relationships with its partners, particularly local schools and employers.

Learning Outcomes

- 3.6 The learning framework for the Institute is indicated as being based on four main values characterised as the 4Cs: *Character and moral responsibility; Competence and professional excellence; Cultivation of wisdom and intellectual engagement; Civic-mindedness and social responsibility.*

- 3.7 As described within this broad framework, seven attributes of the ideal graduate are integrated into a conceptual framework for Outcome-based learning (OBL) with expected learning outcomes at multiple levels: (1) Generic outcomes representing expectations of all graduates; (2) Programme outcomes showing the distinctive characteristics of graduates by the end of their programmes (PILOs); (3) Subject outcomes representing the requirements of specific subjects that define discipline-specific achievements (CILOs); and (4) Learner outcomes representing integrated outcomes developed at the course level, and which bring together generic, programme, and subject outcomes.
- 3.8 It is outside the remit of the Panel to comment on the extent of progress in any higher education institution towards full implementation of OBL under the initiative advocated by the UGC across the sector. On the other hand, it is necessary to comment on aspects of OBL since the ‘Articulation of Appropriate Objectives’ is one of the focus areas for audit. The Institute, in common with some other Hong Kong institutions, acknowledges that challenges still lie ahead in fully implementing OBL. The Working Group on OBL has the task of ensuring that the implementation of OBL *transforms teaching and learning (including assessment) practices* and has plans to engage in early 2011 with *departments and faculties on the underlying philosophies of OBL and develop a conceptual framework for OBL* at the Institute. In addition, the OBL Unit within the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Technology (LTTC) provides operational support for the development and implementation of OBL at HKIEd, as do the Teaching and Learning Committees at institutional, faculty and departmental levels. These units and groups are playing an important role in spreading awareness of OBL.
- 3.9 It was clear to the Panel that there has been extensive discussion and debate around OBL among staff of the Institute, and a number of scholarly papers have examined the topic. However, among those charged with leading its implementation, there was evidence of some ambivalence towards OBL. The Panel was unable to discern, across the academic leadership, a clear shared commitment to OBL implementation, thus making it difficult for academic leaders to provide effective advocacy for the full introduction of OBL. It is crucial that the proposed Institute-level conceptual framework for OBL provides academic leaders with an overarching view of what is expected in regard to OBL. This will need to be communicated clearly to the academic community to counter what the Panel concluded was an imperfect grasp among some teaching staff of the ramifications and benefits of introducing OBL.
- 3.10 A key component of a statement to guide the continuing implementation of OBL should be a close and visible alignment of the seven graduate attributes (generic learning outcomes) framed at Institute level, the programme learning outcomes and course-level learning outcomes. It seemed to the Panel that the focus of OBL implementation was occurring at the level of courses and, to some extent, majors but the programme level learning outcomes are not comprehensively in place. The bottom-up approach to developing PILOs as an amalgam of CILOs rather than a statement of a small number of higher level outcomes at programme level, did not seem to be a workable approach. The Institute has indicated that it is aware of the need to further develop the overall approach to implementing OBL. The Panel agreed and considers this to be a high priority for the Institute.

Recommendation 2

The QAC recommends that the HKIEd articulate, as soon as possible, the planned Institute-level framework to underpin continuing implementation of Outcome-based Learning (OBL) and the integration of learning outcomes for the Institute, programmes, courses and learners.

4. MANAGEMENT, PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- 4.1 The Council is the Institute's executive governing body and is advised by AB on academic policies and academic matters. The Council has a Staffing Committee and a Finance Committee with responsibility for oversight of the Institute's budget and financial management processes. It was clear to the Panel that the Council is playing a key role in moving the Institute towards a shared vision of university status and implementing the *Education-plus* concept. There are regular informal meetings between the Council and senior management with a clear sense of the lines of authority for governance and management functions. Council is aware of risk management particularly in the financial area; the Audit and Finance Committees are chaired by external Council members and external auditors are appointed.

Commendation 2

The QAC commends the HKIEd for the effective leadership of Council in moving towards the goal of achieving university status with an Education-plus academic profile.

- 4.2 The Institute's Senior Management is headed by the President, supported by a Vice-President (Academic), a Vice-President (Research and Development) and a Vice President (Administration). The Vice-President (Academic) takes responsibility for teaching and learning. Associate Vice-Presidents have been appointed to support programme development, quality assurance, external relations, research and development, and graduate studies.
- 4.3 The Institute has three faculties which were restructured in recent years to form the current organisational structure. These are headed by a Dean with support from Associate Deans and the Heads of Departments.
- 4.4 Within the organisational structures, programmes are the responsibility of faculties and under the direction of the Dean and a Programme Committee. These committees are chaired by Programme Leaders and consist of Programme Coordinators who play a subsidiary role, and representatives from relevant teaching departments. Courses are seen as the responsibility of the many departments in the Institute and there are Course Teams which prepare courses for instruction, ensure consistency across multiple classes and seek feedback as the courses progress.
- 4.5 In any institution, the division of responsibilities between faculties and departments creates practical difficulties in setting and maintaining overall programme curriculum integrity and in developing the close alignments between programmes and courses that

are essential in an OBL approach. Most of the Institute's programmes are cross-faculty and are serviced from multiple departments including the new non-education programmes. The Dean's job specifications include expectations related to programme leadership roles, but the Panel considered that the Deans' accountability for programme quality needs to be more visible in practice, and the faculty's involvement in overall management of the programmes more proactive. Whilst the current situation may reflect the recent restructuring of the faculties, it serves to emphasise the differences between departments, rather than the commonalities they share.

- 4.6 The Panel's perception of faculties as relatively low profile organisational units highlights a challenge for the efficient management of the Institute which needs to ensure that departments do not drive a proliferation of largely similar courses (such as research methods) or similar micro-specialisations within programmes. Such course proliferation is not sustainable and may inhibit the development of the Institute's research profile through the volume of work needed to manage and maintain so many courses. The Panel was informed that external factors, such as manpower requirements and student numbers allocated by UGC, drive enrolments in a number of programmes and specialisations. Nonetheless, it was considered that the Institute needs to make careful strategic decisions about course and specialisation viability. New specialisations require significant human resources to develop and maintain, and unless both need and viability are clearly demonstrated, the Institute should decline to undertake those specialisations. It was noted that the Institute's aspiration in regard to implementing *Education-plus* requires interdisciplinary approaches which can only be based on strong discipline expertise. This will provide a continuing challenge to the faculties offering programmes in complementary areas.
- 4.7 The Panel concluded that the Institute needs to bolster the development of the faculty structure to ensure faculties can move beyond what might be seen as a coordination role to providing the necessary high level leadership for programmes and groups of departments.

Recommendation 3

The QAC recommends that the HKIED review the relationship between departments and faculties and ensure that the Deans have sufficient authority as academic leaders to ensure sustainability of the teaching programmes.

Planning

- 4.8 The Institute's overarching plans are the *Strategic Plan* and the *Teaching and Learning Plan 2012* which set out the goal of providing a *total learning experience* for students so that they can learn in different ways, for different purposes to achieve multiple outcomes. The *Teaching and Learning Plan 2012* also emphasises a commitment to OBL.
- 4.9 In light of the extensive change the Institute is undergoing, the Panel was concerned about the lack of a comprehensive change management strategy, or master plan, with measurable targets to assess progress in moving towards its goals. Whilst the

Institute's vision is largely in place, and there is a current Strategic Plan with supporting plans in key areas, the high level strategy that needs to flow to make the vision a reality is not as clearly articulated as it might be. There is a danger that in the absence of a well-defined strategy the Institute will fall short of achieving its aim of implementing an integrated *Education-plus* profile for the Institute. The Panel observed differences in the cultures of the older, well established academic units and the newer units responsible for the complementary areas and considered that a conscious effort needs to be made to ensure that the institution-level perspective is not fragmented through development of two strands within the organisation.

- 4.10 Current high level planning activity has another important omission also. There is a need to develop an International Strategy document that provides a comprehensive plan for the international aspirations of the Institute, including ensuring the languages of instruction are appropriate in practice; programme offerings are attractive and accommodation is suitable for international students. Such a strategy also needs to capture the Institute's goals for internationalisation of the curriculum for all students, and incorporate approaches to outbound mobility for the Institute's students on international and mainland placements and immersion programmes.

Recommendation 4

The QAC recommends that the HKIEd develop a Change Management plan and a strategy for Internationalisation to guide institutional action towards the vision of an Education-plus profile.

Performance Indicators

- 4.11 Among the Institute's plans for improvements developed as a result of the self-review in preparation for the QAC audit is a strategy to implement *a coherent performance indicator system*. This work is at an early stage and there seemed to the Panel to be little understanding of the conceptual relationship between high level Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and operational Performance Indicators (PIs), and the ways in which these could assist the Institute to meet its strategic goals. There was a belief that quantitative targets were not necessary at the present time in the light of the rapid changes in the Institute.
- 4.12 In the view of the Panel, it is important that the Institute move quickly to complete the development of formal KPIs to track the performance of the Institute as a whole and in particular, to track progress toward the strategic goals and the new vision of HKIEd. Qualitative indicators and descriptive examples will not suffice. This work should ensure that common 'hard' indicators are used across the Institute as a whole, including within its governance structure, and that these are able to be 'drilled' to lower levels to show relative performance of organisational units.
- 4.13 The Institute has established a group of high profile international peer institutions with which it intends to compare itself, but formal benchmarking of performance and sharing of information on strategies or policies appear to be at an early stage of development. It was noted that senior managers in the support areas have proposed a plan for benchmarking for those areas and benchmarking in the support areas generally appears to be better developed than at the Institute level. The Panel encourages the

Institute leadership to take advantage of these relationships, to share data and identify good practices in management and leadership of institutions.

Recommendation 5

The QAC recommends that the HKIED place high priority on the rapid development and implementation of a framework of key performance indicators (KPIs) and performance indicators (PIs) to provide measures of performance and progress towards institutional goals in a period of rapid change.

Policy

- 4.14 Section 5 (below) notes the variability in the implementation of quality assurance arrangements across the Institute. This is also the case with a highly devolved approach to policy implementation which has produced many variations in policies, particularly at departmental level. Each academic unit seems to adapt centrally-devised policy to an extent that even in such matters as the use of grade descriptors there is significant variability between departments. Given that students typically undertake courses from multiple departments, this variability in policy does not seem helpful or desirable. It was not clear to the Panel that there are adequate checks and balances to ensure that departmental adaptations of Institute-level policies and other policies developed at lower levels are kept in alignment with policies determined by high level authorities such as the AB. This is an area for attention by the Institute.

Management Information

- 4.15 Quality assurance and enhancement is built on an ongoing cycle. In the quality cycle, data on activities and interventions are gathered and considered and these inform the next round of interventions. At the Institute, the cyclical nature of quality enhancement was not evident to the Panel. Plans are developed, initiatives taken and data gathered, but this is not seen as an ongoing cycle. Each sequence is seen as a separate entity from the one that preceded it. This was evidenced by the lack of information provided to students on actions taken at various levels of the Institute as a result of student input via the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) questionnaire and other feedback mechanisms (see section 10). There is also a Programme Evaluation Questionnaire but in some programmes this is not administered annually to all students so there is no opportunity to see trends or judge the effectiveness of actions taken to deal with a problem identified. The Institute can demonstrate high employment rates of graduates shortly after graduation as it uses a survey to track the progress of graduates and obtain feedback from employers. The data from these reports is sent back to the individual programmes for reflection although it was not obvious to the Panel how this feedback is subsequently used for action and improvements.
- 4.16 In both the Institutional Submission and in the interviews, there was, generally, a lack of hard quantitative data and robust qualitative data in evidence. While staff were able to give many positive examples and anecdotes of their activities there was little evidence of systematic tracking of quality issues or progress towards institutional priorities, over time. In addition, while there were data sets to which sophisticated

statistical tests had been applied, there was a lack of interpretation of these data in terms of what improvements were needed. Further, a problem was noted with the way some data collection exercises had been structured or managed with examples of inappropriate use of scales or calculation of means as well as a lack of practical integration of data sets to give a comprehensive perspective on programme quality.

- 4.17 The Institute needs to develop its use of information so that it is able to track progress on goals and support effective decision making. To support this activity, the Institute is urged to place high priority on developing a Management Information System that provides meaningful data and aggregations. The format of data needs to be user-friendly to meet the requirements of managers at different levels through, for example, what are referred to as ‘dashboards’ of programme quality (see also section 5.6). Implementation of an effective information system at HKIEd would ensure the provision of useful data for tracking performance and supporting action and decision making across the institution.

5. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT, APPROVAL, MONITORING AND REVIEW

Programme Development and Approval

- 5.1 New programmes generally are initiated at departmental/faculty level, the exception being the Bachelor of Education (BEd) 334/5 programme that has been developed by an Institute level Programme Development Committee (PDC).
- 5.2 Development of an *initial programme proposal* is led by a Programme Leader and, if approved by AB, the Programme Leader works with a PDC to prepare a *full curriculum proposal* for consideration at Faculty and Institute levels, including an External Review process. The authority for accreditation of programmes is limited to teacher education courses while non-education courses are validated by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ).
- 5.3 The Panel examined the programme development processes for the newer programmes introduced at the Institute and concluded that while the processes are complex, they are effective. In the recently introduced programmes the input from external and internal stakeholders had been appropriately noted which has contributed to innovation in design and learning experiences in the programmes.

Programme Monitoring and Review

- 5.4 Monitoring and review mechanisms include student evaluation of teaching surveys and periodic review of academic units. Programme level review is overseen by Programme Committees. Faculty Boards (FBs) have Boards of Examiners whose role is to ensure overall academic standards and in addition, the FBs are expected to monitor programmes and submit an annual report to AB. External input is provided through EEs, ERs and Advisory Committees with external members.

- 5.5 A review of the balance of internal and external evaluation mechanisms is due to report to the CLT in June 2011, an intention that is welcomed by the Panel. In this context, the Panel urges the Institute to ensure there is more consistency than at present in external inputs to reviewing programme quality. Current approaches combine relatively new strategies with older approaches making for an inconsistent approach to external involvement. For example, there is still a significant degree of unevenness in the extent to which EEs and ERs review elements of programmes. In one Pg programme studied closely by the Panel, it was intended to produce separate ER reports for each of the very large number of specialisations, but there was no review of the programme as a whole, nor any attempt to coordinate specialisation reviews within a programme level model. There was also significant variability in the component being reviewed - in some cases, a single course, in others a cluster of courses, or majors. These particular variations are not necessarily problematic individually but demonstrate the lack of consistency across the Institute in the way it approaches reviews.
- 5.6 In addition, as mentioned in section 4.17 which deals with Management Information systems, there is a need to combine the different data sources about programmes in a more comprehensive and meaningful way than at present. Data aggregations can speak powerfully to programme viability, process measures of programme quality, and outcomes. They enable tracking of trends over time and measure the impact of interventions in the interests of quality enhancement. The best of these are concise, pulling together multiple data sources into easy to read ‘dashboards’ that are largely automated, so that academics can focus their attention on interpretation of quality data and addressing quality issues identified, rather than on data sourcing and manual compilation into documents such as the Annual Programme Report (See also section 10). Such data aggregations make it possible to provide continuous monitoring of programme quality, with minimal investment of the time of academics although there is still a need for more in-depth strategic consideration of programmes on a longer term basis.
- 5.7 Currently, the Institute is considering the timing of periodic programme reviews and the Panel was told that the new policy could call for a mix of three-, four- and five-year cycles, depending on the duration of individual programmes. The panel would urge the Institute to adopt a single uniform period for all periodic programme reviews once the first cohort of graduates has emerged. It is acknowledged that HKCAAVQ timelines may be an influencing factor in determining the cycle for those programmes subject to validation and re-validation requirements by that body.

Recommendation 6

The QAC recommends that the HKIED clarify aspects of its programme review processes including the mechanisms for external input and the timeline within which reviews are conducted subject to any external re-validation requirements.

- 5.8 The Institute’s RPg programme was begun in 2009/10 and is monitored by the BGS but this process is still at an early stage as there have been only two small intakes of students so far in accordance with the number of places allocated by the UGC.

6. CURRICULUM DESIGN

- 6.1 The Institute's conception of curriculum is based on a formal curriculum and co-curricular activities, both inside and outside the classroom with the 4Cs providing a learning framework for these experiences and learning outcomes at different levels. The *Statement on Undergraduate Education at HKIEd* is a summary of the Institute's philosophy of curriculum design with reference to aspects such as learning outcomes; learning environment and community.
- 6.2 As indicated above, the PDCs take responsibility for the development of individual programmes within a common framework, as endorsed by AQAC. The PDCs also are seen to be responsible for mapping the relationship between course, programme and generic outcomes. (See section 3 for discussion of learning outcomes.)
- 6.3 The Institute currently is involved in a series of major curriculum projects: development of a five-year BEd programme and development of three- and four-year versions of degrees in complementary, non-education disciplines introduced as part of the strategy for moving to a multidisciplinary institution and changes in the secondary education system in Hong Kong.
- 6.4 As discussed below in the context of Assessment (section 9), curriculum design is a critical component of an OBL approach. Learning outcomes need to visibly cascade from the highest level, to programme level, and thence to individual courses. With the exception of the new discipline programmes where learning outcomes are well integrated, there is scope for the cascade or systematic assessment of learning outcomes to be further embedded in curricula.
- 6.5 The Panel understands the pressures on all curricula for inclusions of new and expanded content. Nonetheless, given the extended duration of undergraduate programmes resulting from contextual changes in Hong Kong, the Institute has a valuable opportunity to provide increased flexibility for students. In light of the introduction of complementary studies there is an opportunity to translate the *Education-plus* concept as one of the main underpinnings of curriculum design at all levels. The General Education (GE) element of the new five-year full time BEd has the theme of *Becoming an Educated Citizen* and sets out a structure that incorporates foundation and consolidation courses. While there is extensive discussion in the Institute's documentation of the rationale for GE there is passing reference only to the *Education-plus* concept and how the new approach to GE supports the Institute's aspirations in this regard. The relationship of GE to co-curricular activities is explained but there is no explicit discussion of the desirability of students taking courses alongside their fellow students in the new non-education discipline areas. The Panel considered that the Institute needs to explain more comprehensively how the Institute will ensure that all students experience the innovative *Education-plus* concept through the design of its curricula.
- 6.6 The issue of cross-disciplinary studies also arises for the students enrolled in the newer programmes in complementary disciplines. The outcome of a recent HKCAAVQ validation process for one of these programmes appears to limit the opportunities for students to undertake a minor in an education field as it restricts the student choice of minor to the 'cognate areas', that is, to the non-education areas. It appears, however,

that it is open to the students to complete a suite of electives outside their primary disciplines. The Panel urges the Institute to continue developing curriculum strategies that actively encourage students in all programmes to range broadly in their selection of courses and to build coherent sequences that expose them in a significant way to the *Education-plus* philosophy.

- 6.7 An additional aspect to be considered for inclusion in all curricula is a stronger focus on the research-teaching nexus which will both enrich the students' learning and assist the Institute move towards its goal of building a strong research profile. The lack of a focus on research in some specialisations in a TPg programme was noted some years ago at AB but there does not seem to have been a curricular response to this matter.
- 6.8 The Institute's new vision, including a bold statement about the need for innovation in the teaching workforce and the increased emphasis on research productivity, all carry significant curricular implications. But as yet, it is not possible to clearly identify these elements of the vision in practice as curricular manifestations. Nor could the Panel find the *Education-plus* idea highlighted in the *Statement on Undergraduate Education at HKIEd* which the Institute considers to be a crucial driver in programme development. The Panel concluded that there is a need for a more explicit conceptual framework at the Institute level to encapsulate these curricular ambitions and provides clear-cut guidance for curriculum designers who can operationalise and implement the HKIEd curriculum vision.

Recommendation 7

The QAC recommends that the HKIEd develop an overarching curriculum framework highlighting the Education-plus vision as a foundation of curriculum design to ensure that the general values and aspirations of the Institute are articulated through all of its programmes.

- 6.9 A further issue that any new curriculum design policy should address is coherence in programmes with the same nomenclature. The Panel examined a TPg programme which had undergone a series of incremental changes over the previous five years and concluded that these changes had taken the programme some distance away from the original intent. Specialised studies within the degree had grown in power to the point where this programme could now be conceived as a large number of separate programmes rather than a single programme with a strong and coherent structure. The Panel acknowledges that it is not unusual for TPg programmes to have many specialisations based on large numbers of student enrolments. The Panel also appreciates the marketing benefit of offering a range of specialisations. It concluded, nonetheless, that the question of coherence in curriculum structure, particularly in programmes with many specialisations, is a matter for policy attention by the Institute.
- 6.10 While the Panel welcomed the newly-designed GE component of the five-year BEd they hold some concerns about the oversight of these cross-departmental arrangements which were reported by academic staff as vested in a committee, namely, the PDC (Undergraduate Programmes). The Institute needs to make clear to the academic community that the ultimate accountability rests not with the committee as a whole, but rather with the senior academic who holds an assistant vice-president position and, who

by virtue of the office, chairs the PDC (Undergraduate Programmes). (See also section 2 and section 4.)

7. PROGRAMME DELIVERY AND STUDENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

7.1 The expectation of students is that they will integrate their learning experiences across different contexts and to this end the Institute provides a range of supports towards the achievement of a total learning experience. Generally speaking, the Panel was impressed by the services provided to students by the various support units. It also noted the attention by the support units to quality assurance and enhancement through collection and use of data. This includes some initial work on benchmarking with a number of international partners.

Library and Information Technology

7.2 The HKIEd Library provides services at the Tai Po campus and at the Town Centre Library in Kowloon and is a member of the various Hong Kong university cooperative networks. In addition to print and electronic resources acquired from external sources the Library has itself developed a range of on-line resources including the HKIEd Research Repository which gives access to full text documents.

7.3 IT facilities include 900 computers with 24-hour access to computing labs and wireless networking on campus provided by the Office of Information Technology and Services (ITS). The departments also have IT facilities which are coordinated by the ITS. There is also a notebook loan programme for UGC-funded students. This scheme will terminate in the coming year and there is some uncertainty about what might replace it in light of changes in technology and the cessation of external funding.

7.4 A Learning Commons initiative designed to *promote active, social and experiential learning* is also under development; this was seen as a good initiative in tune with international trends. The project is being overseen by key service providers in the Institute and is in its second stage of implementation working with a mandate to promote active, social and experimental learning.

7.5 The Panel heard positive views about the individual service providers and concluded that they provided a good level of support to students and staff. On the other hand, there were concerns that there is no overarching institutional strategy for an integrated approach to the development of these services and to ensuring that they collectively support the achievement of the aims set out in the *Teaching and Learning Plan 2012*. For example, the expectation that *learning technologies support the total experience of students by providing them with opportunities to learn anywhere and anytime* has significant implications for the way that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are developed and provided at HKIEd. And while the Learning Commons development has involved the ITS and the Library there appears to be no mechanism for developing and maintaining an IT and information resources strategy with involvement of key stakeholders such as the LTTC over the longer term. Without an overall strategy for ICT that is clearly linked to the *Teaching and Learning Plan*, the opportunity is lost for ensuring that the way the technology is developed is in harmony

with the teaching and learning pedagogies at the Institute and more generally, worldwide, with the movement to e-learning. In addition, there is danger of fragmentation of effort between different units providing ICT and learning support in the Institute to the detriment of the learning opportunities for students.

Recommendation 8

The QAC recommends that the HKIEd develop a pedagogically-based policy and strategy for the development of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) infrastructure to support learning.

Facilities

- 7.6 Upgrading and revitalisation of teaching spaces is proceeding based on the feedback from pilot projects with the addition of new education technologies towards a goal of more flexibility in the spaces available and ultimately in scheduling. The Panel supported the view of Council that there will be a need to upgrade facilities generally in the event that university status is gained by the Institute.

Language and Language Enhancement

- 7.7 Language enhancement courses in English and Chinese (Putonghua, Written Chinese, and Cantonese) are provided by the Centre for Language in Education (CLE). Students are introduced to a broad range of self-access learning facilities and services at the Arthur Samy Language Learning Centre (ASLLC). The Centre uses an assessment tool called Tertiary English Language Test as a mechanism for placing students in their appropriate skill grouping for language enhancement tuition and for monitoring their progress. The Panel considered this to be an important development and encourages CLE to persevere with the project. Discussions also are being held on the best methods of measuring language skills of students when they exit the Institute.
- 7.8 The panel endorses the work of CLE including the associated self-access ASLLC. With a relatively small staff, they are providing a well targeted service to students. Further, this team has demonstrated a strong quality culture, initiating a series of data gathering strategies, and using these data to reconsider the effectiveness of their offerings and make necessary changes in the interests of quality enhancement.

Commendation 3

The QAC commends the HKIEd for the effectiveness of operations and attention to quality assurance aspects within the Centre for Language in Education (CLE).

- 7.9 A 2002 Academic Board policy requires students to take at least 15%-25% of their courses in English. The remainder of courses may be taken in Chinese with the exception of programmes preparing English language teachers where English is the medium of instruction. There is, however, a new language policy under development in keeping with the principles of *Functional Trilingualism*. One of the proposals is to introduce an *English-rich* environment at the Institute. The Panel believes this policy

needs to be completed as expeditiously as possible in the interests of enriching the English language proficiency of students and staff.

- 7.10 Some CLE courses are credit-bearing; others are non-credit-bearing optional courses. The Panel was informed that there are also some required language enhancement courses that do not carry academic credit for satisfactory completion and concluded that, as a general principle, all required studies should carry credit points. The Panel encourages the Institute to review its policy on this matter.

Recommendation 9

The QAC recommends that the HKIED expedite the development of a comprehensive language policy aligned with institutional goals and priorities and pay particular attention to the attachment of credit to language enhancement courses and goals.

Student Support

- 7.11 The recently established Graduate School (GS) has made a good start in supporting Pg students both in TPg and RPg programmes. It has established a range of support services for research students and in future, should become a key component of the quality systems for the Pg programmes.
- 7.12 The panel noted the valuable support services provided by the Student Affairs Office (SAO) which is responsible for the provision of accommodation, counselling, health, and student finance services for students. SAO oversees a wide range of advising services and is developing an on-line advising system to allow students to track their academic progress. A mentorship programme wherein senior students guide junior students in achieving specific learning outcomes and enrichment in settings such as hall life education and orientation for new students is also available through SAO. Other student advisory mechanisms include a Personal Tutorial System available to some groups of first-year Ug students which involves academic staff acting as tutors and giving pastoral care for small groups of students. All of these advising services were favourably mentioned by students interviewed by the Panel as was the Orientation programme provided on entry to the Institute.

Commendation 4

The QAC commends the HKIED for the range of advising services available to students to guide them through academic and extra-curricular aspects of their studies.

Whole-Person Initiative

- 7.13 The Institute is in the process of launching the *Whole-Person Development Advising System* in 2010/11 within which students can make use of a self-monitoring mechanism with validated student development measurement tools to direct their growth. This will draw together an Academic Advising System and a Campus Life Advising System. It is intended that this *Whole-Person* system will contribute to what is termed *the Total Learning Experience framework designed to encourage students' self-directed learning*

in a wide array of co-curricular learning activities with the possible award of credit points within the new undergraduate curriculum.

- 7.14 The Panel noted that pre- and post-testing of the Personal Development of students is a useful initiative although the testing is not overtly linked to the seven generic skills identified as characteristic of graduates of the Institute. A project being undertaken with UGC funding on measuring growth in personal development levels in the Assessment Research Centre affords an opportunity to make those connections.

8. EXPERIENTIAL AND OTHER OUT OF CLASSROOM LEARNING

- 8.1 The Institute's commitment to providing a *Total Learning Experience* for students means that all HKIED programmes include opportunities for learning both through formal curriculum and co-curricular activities. Ancillary policies related to new student orientation, hall life, international and Mainland exchange, Field Experience (FE) and service learning provide additional *out of classroom* learning opportunities. Policies related to the whole-person development of students are overseen by the Student Affairs Committee of AB. The Institute provides financial support for immersion and service education activities, described below, and there are plans to broaden the availability of these activities if sufficient funds can be secured.
- 8.2 Records of students' involvement in experiential learning organised through the Institute are maintained by the support departments although judgments on student success, or otherwise, are determined elsewhere. There is a desire to add records from externally initiated activities to provide a more comprehensive Awards and Co-curricular Activities Transcript (ACAT) for graduating students which, in time, will be incorporated into e-portfolio as part of the move to full implementation of OBL.

Field Experience

- 8.3 Teacher education students undertake FE through a series of sequenced teaching and non-teaching activities in multiple local schools. The School Partnership and Field Experience Committee develops policies and directions for FE practices, coordinates with schools and arranges partnerships. Academic staff members supervise students' FE experiences with support from the School Partnership and Field Experience Office (SPFEO). The Panel was satisfied that the approach and management of FE is competently handled but the heavy pedagogical involvement by academic staff may need to be reconsidered as greater research expectations are added to the workload of academic staff. The Panel noted also that there was an important opportunity at the final stage of FE to assess PILOs in an authentic manner and to gain from that a holistic view of the extent to which the programme was successful in delivering desired student learning outcomes. This would require a significant reconstruction of the current approach to assessment in the block FE activity. (See section 3 for further discussion of learning outcomes.)

Recommendation 10

The QAC recommends that the HKIED take advantage of the opportunity afforded at the final block placement for Field Experience (FE) for assessment of students' achievement of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs).

Service Education

- 8.4 Opportunities for service education are provided by SAO through the Service Exposure Attachment Programme which was implemented in nine locations for 2009/10. Students complete learning journals to report on their achievement including increases in their personal capacities.

Exchanges and Study Abroad

- 8.5 Local, Mainland, and international internships are provided to broaden students' learning and exposure through work placements in non-educational settings and there are efforts to extend the programme to accommodate more students.
- 8.6 HKIED students may apply for study in an overseas or Mainland partner university for one semester or a full academic year. The Mainland Development Office co-organises camps with Mainland universities. Students in Chinese, English and Early Childhood Education study for six to 15 weeks in overseas or Mainland universities.
- 8.7 The standard of student accommodation and support is an issue for both inbound and outbound students. Mainland and international students are well supported at the Institute and are generally satisfied but Hong Kong students travelling to the Mainland enter environments where they have to be more self-reliant. In addition, the expectations of international students who come to Hong Kong in regard to accommodation are sometimes out of alignment with the norm for Hong Kong institutions but this appears to be well managed and generally does not impact negatively on the overall experience of these students at HKIED. A Buddy programme assists in this regard.
- 8.8 The Institute places a high priority on international learning experiences for its students and provides relatively generous grants to facilitate their travelling to partner institutions.

Commendation 5

The QAC commends the HKIED for its commitment to facilitating student mobility and provision of grants to support individual students to have a Mainland or international experience.

Hall Life

- 8.9 The Student Residents' Associations and tutorial teams provide pastoral care and hall-based activities in the residences. Wardens' meetings chaired by the Dean of Students facilitate professional exchange and coordination across halls. About 50% of

students experience hall life.

- 8.10 The Panel noted the enrichment impacts on students from having been in the halls and participating in their programmes of activities. Hall life is an important part of the total experience of HKIED students particularly for development of their generic skills.

9. ASSESSMENT

- 9.1 Following a review of General Academic Regulations; work on the 334/5 curriculum; and the introduction of OBL, the Institute has set out seven student assessment principles. These general principles are described as *the basis of the Assessment Policy* and practices for the Institute. A review of assessment practices carried out in 2010 identified where further work is needed to instigate more innovative assessment approaches. In addition, the Working Group on OBL is preparing a plan to address the issue of the assessment of generic learning outcomes, towards the goal of aligning the Institute's assessment practices with their learning vision, their commitment to innovation and learning outcomes assessment.

Course Grading

- 9.2 Grading is non-normative and criterion-referenced according to the Institutional Submission. Detailed grade-related descriptors for each grade have been specified on an 11-point scale to serve as internal reference for staff although it was noted that this was not universally applied by all departments. There is a policy for grade moderation involving double marking by internal and external markers. Students may appeal against assessment results.
- 9.3 Grade Point Average (GPA) is used to determine award classifications. For teacher education programmes, a student's performance in FE is set as an additional criterion for the classification of awards.
- 9.4 Assessment of students' generic skills and workplace qualities is made by their supervisors during internship visits. Students who have been on exchange and undertaken academic studies at an off-shore institution receive credit points for successful completion of courses but the results are not added to the data for calculation of their GPAs owing to the wide variety to course grading in host institutions.

Boards of Examiners

- 9.5 A Board of Examiners is established for each programme to review and approve the assessment results of courses. It also serves to prescribe remedial actions for problem cases and to recommend award classifications. EEs and a more recently introduced system of ERs provide input on standards of awards although there is some variation in how this advice is received and handled. It was not clear to the Panel that there is consistency between how the different Boards operate including how they balance the apparent contradictions between criterion-based assessment and decisions on classification of awards within cohorts. EE/ER reports are normally considered by the relevant Programme Committee which in turn reports to the relevant FB.

Plagiarism

- 9.6 Students are required to read the Institute's *Policy on Academic Honesty, Responsibility, and Integrity with Specific Reference to the Avoidance of Plagiarism by Students* and to sign a declaration indicating their agreement to uphold the principles of academic honesty throughout their studies upon their admission to the Institute. The Institute has Turnitin software on trial and there are education activities on academic integrity offered by the Library.
- 9.7 Alleged cases of plagiarism are dealt with initially by departmental committees and, as needed, by the Student Disciplinary Committee which also sets policies and procedures on student conduct and discipline. This Committee decides on cases of violation, including plagiarism by students, and the imposition of penalties for misconduct.
- 9.8 The Panel noted the seven student assessment principles mentioned above and the policies dealing with moderation and external examination. Whilst these principles and policies are appropriate in themselves, the Panel identified a significant gap between the principles and the current practices of assessment at the Institute. It was concluded that the current suite of policies guiding assessment practices needs to be reviewed and strong implementation strategies identified within an integrated policy statement. Areas to be addressed include reference to equivalence of workload and demand between courses carrying similar credit; the teaching-research nexus; consistency in application of rubrics; approval of assessment requirements; timely feedback, and assessment of experiential learning. The matter of assessment of the 4Cs and generic learning outcomes currently under investigation by the Working Group on OBL also needs to be included in Institute policy. Given the Institute's desire to encourage more self-directed learning, there also should be, in addition, assessment strategies to assist the students to measure their own learning progress towards the achievement of the programme level learning outcomes.

Recommendation 11

The QAC recommends that the HKIED develop a comprehensive and integrated assessment policy which provides guidance for consistent implementation of general assessment principles adopted by the Institute.

10. TEACHING QUALITY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Student Feedback on Teaching

- 10.1 The Institute uses a variety of methods to gain feedback from students on quality of teaching. There are feedback mechanisms such as an Annual Programme Evaluation survey; Programme Assemblies; and Staff-Student Consultative Meetings (see section 11). The face to face feedback opportunities add a useful component to the overall picture of student satisfaction, but they are used differentially across programmes and departments. Some appear to be functioning more effectively than others. The Panel concluded that there needs to be a systematic way to capture this qualitative data, summarise and track it over time.

- 10.2 The principal mechanism for gathering student satisfaction data is the SET which is conducted for each course every semester. The Panel learned that a new SET instrument is being developed to better accommodate the introduction of OBL and encourages the Institute to integrate the data from the new SET for a programme-wide perspective to supplement the information from the Annual Programme Evaluation survey. As discussed in section 4, within the overall quality assurance arrangements at HKIED, there is no reliable and systematic feedback loop that informs students of changes made as a result of their input through SET and other avenues. The ‘quality loop’ is not being closed, and this undermines the quality assurance cycle. Remedial action should be taken to improve the feedback to students about actions taken.

Recommendation 12

The QAC recommends that the HKIED review its approach to the use of feedback data from students to ensure that data from all sources are well integrated at programme level and acted on to provide information to students on improvements arising from their input.

- 10.3 Academic and teaching staff are encouraged to incorporate Annual Reflective Reports on Teaching into their individual processes for review and evaluation and a number of departments reported that they use this mechanism. The Panel considered, however, that the use of these Reflective Reports is uneven and too dependent on individual initiative to ‘share’ their reports so that the potential of the Reflective Reports is not being exploited for the benefit and growth of the individual staff concerned. The Institute might wish to consider how these fit within the proposed new policy on staff development. (See also section 10.11.)
- 10.4 Teaching Development Grants are serving a useful purpose in encouraging, promoting, and rewarding innovative approaches to teaching and the design of the learning environment, particularly for those staff who receive a grant. Project teams are required to share their findings with colleagues but the Panel considered that more could be done to make this dissemination of good practice more effective and provide a greater impact on the Institute’s teaching practices across departmental boundaries.
- 10.5 The Institute has two teaching awards: *Excellence in Teaching* and *Scholarship of Teaching*.

Staff Profile and Performance

- 10.6 The Institute has two categories of staff engaged in teaching and learning: *academic* staff who are expected to perform teaching, research and service functions and *teaching* staff who carry out teaching and service duties but are not expected to carry out research. It is possible for *teaching* staff to migrate to the *academic* staff category if they meet the criteria established for vacant positions. There has been at least one instance where the Institute transferred a significant number to the academic staff in order to meet an academic workforce shortfall.

- 10.7 The Panel welcomed the support given to some *teaching* staff to enable them to meet the criteria for transfer to the academic staff, for example, a young teacher who was encouraged and supported to complete an MPhil. There also was evidence of encouragement given to staff to complete doctoral qualifications - an approach which has helped the Institute build a strong foundation of well-qualified staff. In addition, the HKIED has a generous system for supporting staff to attend conferences which benefits staff at all levels, helping them stay current in their fields and supporting career progression.

Commendation 6

The QAC commends the HKIED for its commitment to providing support for staff attendance at conferences in the interests of professional development and career progression.

- 10.8 To support the goal of achieving university status, the Institute has been emphasising the need for individual staff members to be active in research and has built this as an expectation in the Staff Appraisal Scheme. In addition the Institute has been actively recruiting to meet a Council target of 40 Chair Professors/Professors. This latter target is close to being met. This includes the recent establishment of a UNESCO Chair in Technical and Vocational Education and Training and Lifelong Learning.
- 10.9 Calls for applications for *academic* promotion are made each year. The Institute takes what it describes as a holistic approach to assessing applications within the broad weighting of 40% research; 40% teaching and 20% service. Promotion committees are expected to use their judgment where the position and duties of an individual do not fall neatly into the proportions described, for example, in the case of research-intensive staff. But promotion committees are, nonetheless, expected to use quantitative data as a basis for these qualitative judgments. There is a substantiation process that typically follows a six-year time frame from date of appointment.
- 10.10 Academic staff are appraised every three years, or more frequently, on the initiative of the relevant Faculty Dean or head of department, within what is described as the *New System* of staff appraisal. The process involves review by a Departmental Review Committee and an Institute Review Committee with final authority for the outcome residing with the President. The Institute's remuneration system is performance based.

Staff Development

- 10.11 While the Institute provides support for various staff development activities, it was recognised, through the self-study for the QAC audit, that there is need for a new policy. This is being led by the CLT with a mid-2011 target for completion.
- 10.12 Staff development activities are conducted mainly through the LTTC which includes the OBL Unit. For higher level academic staff development, the Centre relies in the main on expertise from external sources. In addition, the Research and Development Office (RDO) also provides regular staff development activities. The Panel was told also that, in some departments, there was a healthy culture of peer-led workshops as a local form of staff development.

- 10.13 Formerly, staff development was focused on upskilling for e-learning technologies but more recently the major thrust has been on developing capacity for implementing OBL. With the anticipated cessation of the current external funding for the OBL Unit, LTTC will need to develop alternative approaches and is considering short term secondments of expert staff from elsewhere in the Institute.
- 10.14 Induction programmes for new staff are provided by the Library, LTTC, and Human Resources Office. Although not compulsory, new staff members are encouraged to participate. The Panel was impressed by the induction programme for staff. The most senior staff of the Institute, including the President, typically spend time with new staff members to introduce them to the Institute, its culture and strategic directions.

Commendation 7

The QAC commends the HKIEd for the quality of the programmes for new staff and the involvement of the senior academic leadership in their induction to the culture of the Institute.

11. STUDENT PARTICIPATION

- 11.1 Student representatives participate in decision-making processes at the Institute through membership of key committees and they generally are nominated by the Institute's main student representative body, the Students' Union (SU). The SAO provides a well-regarded induction for students appointed to Institute committees.
- 11.2 The current SU is planning to transform itself into an independent entity and intends to propose amendments that are expected to take into consideration the needs of Pg students who are not currently represented by the SU.
- 11.3 Students are represented in meetings or portions of meetings concerned with the selection of candidates at the senior management level, including the Selection Panels for President and Vice-Presidents.
- 11.4 Many programmes offer a Student Assembly as well as Staff-Student Consultative meetings which are held each semester. Each Faculty was reported to have a Dean's Forum although these arenas were not well known among students. The Panel noted a relatively low level of student engagement in these activities. Student feedback on these opportunities was mixed in terms of the effectiveness of the mechanisms for resolution of issues, although students do feel free to raise and discuss issues with staff.
- 11.5 In mid-2010 the Student Affairs Committee endorsed a paper to affirm the principle of student participation in governance of the Institute but as at the time of the audit visit this statement had not been considered by AB as a whole.
- 11.6 The ACAT recognises the participation and contributions of students in co-curricular activities. (See section 8.)

12. ACTIVITIES SPECIFIC TO RESEARCH DEGREES

- 12.1 As part of the Institute's becoming an education-focused, multidisciplinary and research-strong institution, the Hong Kong Government has provided RPg places to the Institute with 10, 20, and 30 full-time RPg places for 2009/10, 2010/11, and 2011/12 allocated respectively. The first cohort commenced study in June 2010.
- 12.2 Responsibility for oversight of research degrees lies with the BGS which is chaired by the Vice-President (Research and Development). The Graduate School (GS), overseen by a Dean, provides the infrastructure for the development, implementation and quality assurance of the RPg programme. The GS also works closely with faculties, departments and research centres to provide a supportive research environment for RPg students.
- 12.3 There was evidence that the first cohorts of research students were receiving appropriate support in terms of access to, and regularity of, supervision. The Library and RDO were judged to be providing good support and access to resources including software and data packages. Students also receive financial support for national and international conference attendance and there were instances of successful international networking and placements with partners. Students are expected to teach in the GE programmes as part of the requirements of their UGC postgraduate grants.
- 12.4 Communication between the leadership and staff of GS and research students appeared to be close and productive and there appeared to be positive personal dynamics in operation in the research centres where students are placed. Fast and effective reactions to student feedback on issues were reported.
- 12.5 The policy and procedures set out for the research projects and theses show what is expected of students along with additional activities such as joint academic publications and contribution to the work of the centres. There is also attention to 'soft' skills development including project management, teamwork, and career development.
- 12.6 Given the Institute sees the provision of strong RPg programmes as a strategic priority, it is to be expected that the first cohorts of students will be somewhat privileged. The Panel noted that with continued growth in RPg enrolments, scale-related challenges may arise, but nonetheless, the Panel considered that the Institute, through the GS, has made a good start in research degree provision and support to students.

Affirmation 3

The QAC affirms the sound foundation of policy and support the HKIED has established for research postgraduate programmes.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 The Panel concluded that the HKIED has a strong commitment to implementing an effective quality assurance system and to maintaining a focus on excellence in teaching and learning as it moves towards its goal of gaining university status.

- 13.2 The Institute is facing a period of significant challenges. The key concept of *Education-plus* as a hallmark of the Institute's aspirations is still to be fully realised and the goal of university status requires strengthening the research emphasis and output of HKIED. There is also the externally-driven requirement for extension in time of Ug programmes along with the addition of new discipline areas to the institutional profile.
- 13.3 Many of the quality assurance arrangements considered by the Panel are recently implemented and, as yet, there is limited accumulated evidence of their effectiveness. The Institute has, however, identified many of the areas it needs to develop further and the Panel believes that if HKIED continues to actively pursue the path it has set for improvement of its quality assurance system, and takes account of the advice contained in this report, it will make great strides in the coming years.
- 13.4 The Panel is grateful to the Institute for the care and attention to detail demonstrated throughout the many phases of the audit process including the audit visit.

APPENDIX A: THE HONG KONG INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (HKIED) **[Extracted from the Institutional Submission]**

History

The historical roots of The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) go back to 1853. In 2004, the institution marked its 10th anniversary as an Institute and celebrated achievements built on a 150-year tradition of teacher education.

Vision and Mission

The primary mission of HKIED is to promote and support the strategic development of teacher education in Hong Kong, by preparing quality educators, supporting them in their lifelong learning, and leading in education innovation and reform.

HKIED is currently in a period of major change, moving towards the provision of teacher education in an explicitly multidisciplinary environment with new disciplines being added to the suite of education programmes that have been the focus of the Institute's operations to the present.

Role Statement

The agreed role statement for HKIED is to:

- (a) offer a range of programmes leading to the award of certificates, degrees and postgraduate diplomas, which provide suitable preparation for a career in education and teaching in the pre-school, school and vocational training sectors; and
- (b) also offer a series of programmes which provide professional education and development for serving teachers in these sectors;
- (c) nurture through all its programmes knowledgeable, caring and responsible teachers who will serve the needs of Hong Kong schools;
- (d) pursue the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;
- (e) deliver degree programmes relating to secondary education whenever possible through strategic collaborations with other local tertiary institutions;
- (f) provide a source of professional advice and development, and of research in education, as appropriate, to support the pre-school, school and vocational training sectors in Hong Kong;
- (g) maintain strong links with the community, and in particular the schools and the teaching profession;
- (h) pursue 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; and
- (i) manage in the most effective and efficient way the public and private resources bestowed upon the institution, employing collaboration whenever it is of value.

Organisational Structure

The Council is the Institute's executive governing body and is advised by Academic Board on academic policies and academic matters.

The Institute's Senior Management is headed by the President. He is supported by a Vice-President (Academic), a Vice-President (Research and Development) and a Vice President (Administration). The Vice-President (Academic) takes responsibility for teaching

and learning. Associate Vice-Presidents have been appointed to support programme development, quality assurance, external relations, research and development, and graduate studies.

A Dean heads each of the three faculties: Arts and Sciences; Education Studies; and Languages and the Graduate School and they are supported by Associate Deans, and Heads of Departments/Centres in the case of Faculties. A number of research centres have also been established at the Institute and Faculty levels.

Programmes of Study

The Institute provides a full range of awards from sub-degree to doctoral level. Professional awards in education attract Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and may be undertaken in either pre-service or in-service modes. Practising teachers with QTS can also upgrade their qualifications. The first of the new programmes introduced to broaden the profile of HKIED have been developed in discipline areas considered complementary to Education, namely, Language Studies; Global and Environmental Studies and Creative Arts and Culture. The first Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) students enrolled in 2009/10.

Staff and Student Numbers

There are over 420 academic teaching staff and visiting scholars in the Institute with approximately 120 research support staff. As at September 2010 there were 4,326 undergraduate and 10 research postgraduate students funded by the University Grants Committee with an additional 1,917 self-financed students in taught postgraduate programmes to give a total student enrolment of 6,253.

Revenue and Estate

The Institute has a purpose-built campus in Tai Po and an off-campus Sports Centre and Town Centre located at Pak Shek Kok and Tai Kok Tsui, respectively. At the Tai Po Campus, the HKIED HSBC Early Childhood Learning Centre and the HKIED Jockey Club Primary School provide close links to the practice of school education.

Revenue in 2009/10 was HK\$968 million of which government subventions accounted for 68% (HK\$657 million), tuition, programmes and other fees 24% (HK\$228 million), with the balance from sources such as donations and provision of auxiliary services.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

The Hong Kong Institute of Education welcomes the Audit Panel's endorsement of our "Education-plus" vision and aspiration for university status, and its affirmation of our Council's leadership in such a strategic move (Affirmation 2 and Commendation 2). In transforming into an Education-based, multi-disciplinary institution with research and research training capability, the Institute has set specific milestones under its *Strategic Plan 2009-12 & Beyond* to guide actions and monitor progress, within four major areas of transformation – namely people, capacity, schools and community, and the regional education landscape. We realize many of the efforts and the ensuing results are interdependent, as the scope of transformation is all encompassing. At this advanced and critical phase of our transformation, the audit exercise has provided us with a timely opportunity for review and reflection.

A focus on students and the quest for teaching excellence have long been the hallmark of the Institute, and in our transformation we have sought to ensure that these deep roots and core values are being well preserved. The Panel's acknowledgement that "the staff and leadership of the Institute were seen to be actively engaging in discussions of student learning and pedagogy and there was an evident intention to maintain a strong focus on these while the Institute builds its research profile in pursuit of its goal of university status" (paragraph 2.3) comes as positive encouragement for our transformation efforts.

To prepare a new generation of teachers who are globally aware, socially caring, culturally sensitive and professionally competent, great emphasis has been placed on providing all the necessary resources for the support of our students. The Panel's commendations on the range of support the Institute provides to students through language enhancement (Commendation 3), advising services and extra-curricular activities (Commendation 4), and international and Mainland experiences (Commendation 5), etc., have confirmed our core values and commitment to student learning. We are also delighted that the Panel was appreciative of our effective partnerships with schools and the employers (Commendation 1), as it has been one of the Institute's major strategic goals to serve the Hong Kong schools and community through quality graduates and applied work, including that in pedagogical studies.

In the course of transformation towards a research-active institution, the Institute has been mindful that our commitment to student learning would not be diluted (Affirmation 1), including support to students of the newly introduced research postgraduate programmes (Affirmation 3). The Institute will continue to foster an environment characterized by intellectual engagement, and to develop a strong nexus between research and teaching.

The Institute values highly the quality of staff whom we regard as our most important asset. In recent years, staff development has been stepped up, and additional staff of high calibre have been recruited to strengthen our academic capacity. We are pleased that the Panel endorses our processes for the induction of new staff (Commendation 7) and our ongoing support for staff development (Commendation 6). The need to retain quality staff and provide career development remains a key priority. Apart from the most recent fine-tuning of our performance-based reward system, more proactive career advancement mechanisms for teaching and administrative staff have also been put in place.

Over the past several years, in taking steps to enhance capacity, structure resilience and process performance, we have been conscious of the need to cultivate amongst staff a new culture and ethos, within a collegial environment conducive to productivity and synergy. Given our rich

legacy in teacher education and the significant scale of transformation, this process has been elaborative, and at times lengthy, but we have ensured that effort, energy and time will not be spared in getting the buy-in of the Institute community for the change needed.

And we are seeing the wind of change. As acknowledged by the Panel (paragraph 2.3), the Institute has initiated new changes to move from an earlier approach of quality control, through a quality assurance approach, to implementation of an embedded quality enhancement culture. The Institute agrees that the articulation of learning outcomes at different levels can be further enhanced within the overarching “Education-plus” vision to serve as the foundation of the curriculum frameworks for different programmes, while underpinning the continuous implementation of “Outcome-Based Learning” (OBL) (Recommendations 2 and 7). While OBL has been adopted to help focus attention on learning effectiveness at the Institute, programme and course levels, the Institute strives to pursue an OBL strategy that can fit the local climate. We have sought to avoid an overly technical approach, being aware that OBL is a tool rather than an end in itself. In the process there will no doubt be healthy debates on the directions and practices.

The Institute takes on board other Panel recommendations related to strengthening programme review, assessment and student feedback processes (Recommendations 6, 10, 11 and 12). A review of policies on infrastructure support for learning through ICT (Recommendation 8) has already been initiated by our Committee on Learning and Teaching. After wide internal consultation, the Committee on Language Policy has now finalized the draft New Language Policy to take effect from 2012-13, which will be considered by Senior Management and the Academic Board (Recommendation 9).

While the Institute is making steady progress in its transformation in all respects, we are mindful of the need to manage well the change process – including stakeholder interests, expectations and cultures. In line with Recommendations 4 and 5, we will seek to articulate better our change strategy, and further develop the performance indicator system to provide feedback on the progress made. A new management information system is also being developed to complement this effort. In addition, our various initiatives and programmes launched in the last few years in international and mainland collaboration will be consolidated into an International Strategy Statement.

The Institute shares the Panel’s observations on the need to review the academic committee structure. Work has already started in reviewing academic structures, policies and processes. The Academic Board has just approved at its June 2011 meeting a new academic administration structure with streamlined decision-making processes in line with Recommendation 1. Part of this reorganization and reengineering exercise involves identifying key accountabilities and strengthening the academic leadership role of Faculty Deans as suggested in Recommendation 3.

The Institute thanks the Audit Panel for its recognition of and support to our various transformation goals and ongoing efforts, and for its invaluable advice and recommendations to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of such efforts.

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

AB	Academic Board
ACAT	Awards and Co-curricular Activities Transcript
AQAC	Academic Quality Assurance Committee
ASLLC	Arthur Samy Language Learning Centre
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BGS	Board of Graduate Studies
CILO	Course Intended Learning Outcome
CLE	Centre for Language in Education
CLT	Committee on Learning and Teaching
EE	External Examiner
ER	External Reviewer
FB	Faculty Board
FE	Field Experience
GE	General Education
GPA	Grade Point Average
GS	Graduate School
HKCAAVQ	Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications
HKIEd	The Hong Kong Institute of Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
ITS	Office of Information Technology and Services
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LTTC	Centre for Learning, Teaching and Technology
MAPP	Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
OBL	Outcome-based Learning
PDC	Programme Development Committee
Pg	Postgraduate
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PI	Performance Indicator
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RDO	Research and Development Office
RPg	Research Postgraduate
SAO	Student Affairs Office
SET	Student Evaluation of Teaching
SPFEO	School Partnership and Field Experience Office
SU	Students' Union
TPg	Taught Postgraduate
Ug	Undergraduate
UGC	University Grants Committee

APPENDIX D: HKIED AUDIT PANEL

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Sandra Vianne McLean (Panel Chair)
Consultant, Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching Quality)
Queensland University of Technology

Dr Leo Goedegebuure
Deputy Director, LH Martin Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Management
University of Melbourne

Professor Dr Rainer Kuenzel
Professor of Higher Education Management and Policy, University of Osnabrueck, Germany
Academic Director of the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (ZEvA), Hanover, Germany. Former Director of the University of Osnabrueck.

Professor Paul Lam
Vice-President (Student Affairs), City University of Hong Kong

Professor William Lee
Associate Vice-President (Academic Affairs) and Registrar
Director of Core Curriculum and General Education
Lingnan University

Mr Yau Chung Wan
Supervisor of Tsung Tsin College and Council member of the Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency

Audit Coordinator

Emeritus Professor Mairéad Browne
QAC Secretariat

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

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

Mission

The QAC's mission is:

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

Terms of Reference

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

- (a) To advise the University Grants Committee 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 the 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 1 September 2011)

Mr Philip CHEN Nan-lok, SBS, JP (Chairman)	Managing Director, Hang Lung Group Limited and Hang Lung Properties Limited, Hong Kong
Mr Roger Thomas BEST, JP	Former Partner, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu
Dr Judith EATON	President, Council of Higher Education Accreditation, USA
Professor Richard HO Man-wui, JP	Honorary Professor, Department of Chinese Language and Literature of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
Professor Richard HO Yan-ki	Professor (Chair) of Finance, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong
Professor Edmond KO, BBS, JP	Senior Advisor to the Provost and Director of the Center for Engineering Education Innovation, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Sir Colin LUCAS	Former Vice-Chancellor, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
Sir Howard NEWBY	Vice-Chancellor, University of Liverpool, United Kingdom

Ex-officio Member

Mr Michael V STONE, JP	Secretary-General, UGC
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Secretary

Mrs Dorothy MA	Deputy Secretary-General (1), UGC
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