# Report of a Quality Audit

*of* **City University of Hong Kong**

**October 2016**
**Quality Assurance Council**

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QAC Audit Report Number 14

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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.

# CONTENTS

# 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.

## 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 some 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
- the promotion of quality assurance and enhancement and the spread of good practice

The QAC's approach to quality audit is based on the principle of 'fitness for purpose'. Audit Panels assess the extent to which institutions are fulfilling their stated mission and purpose and confirm the procedures in place for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students and the academic standards by which students' level of performance and capability are assessed and reported. The QAC Audit also examines the effectiveness of an institution's quality systems and considers the evidence used to demonstrate that these systems meet the expectations of stakeholders.

Full details of the audit procedures, including the methodology and scope of the audit, are provided in the QAC Audit Manual Second Audit Cycle which is available at http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/doc/qac/manual/auditmanual2.pdf.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the report of a quality audit of City University of Hong Kong (CityU) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). The report presents the findings of the quality audit, supported by detailed analysis and commentary on the following areas:

- the setting and maintaining of academic standards
- the quality of student learning opportunities
- student achievement
- postgraduate provision
- quality enhancement

The audit findings are identified as features of good practice, recommendations for further consideration by the institution, and affirmation of progress with actions already in place as a result of its self-review. The report also provides a commentary on the Audit Themes: Enhancing the student learning experience; and Global engagements: strategies and current developments.

## Summary of the principal findings of the Audit Panel

(a)   The Audit Panel noted CityU's detailed and comprehensive response to the 2010 QAC Quality Audit Report. It was apparent that the University has been committed to addressing the concerns raised in the report and has made great strides since then. The progress CityU has made in responding to the commendations, affirmations and recommendations that resulted from the 2010 Quality Audit are discussed under the relevant headings of this report.

(b)   The report confirms the findings of the Audit Panel under the following headings: Academic standards; Quality of learning opportunities; Student achievement; Quality enhancement; Postgraduate provision; and the two audit themes - *Enhancing the student learning experience* and *Global engagements: strategies and current developments,* respectively.

(c)   The University clearly states its commitment to setting and maintaining high academic standards and providing a corresponding learning experience, which enables graduates with modest academic achievements at entry to graduate and compete with the best. The report draws attention to the four sets of five interlocking, generic graduate attributes (GAs) CityU has developed, which are carefully nuanced to differentiate them by academic level of study. The Audit Panel observed, however, that staff and students are not always aware of the status of the GAs as the overarching framework for student achievement. The report therefore encourages the University to clarify and communicate this effectively to all stakeholders, emphasising the

contributory role of curricular and co-/extra-curricular activities in achieving them.

(d)     The Audit Panel found much evidence of CityU's thorough and comprehensive approach to gathering data in relation to academic standards and noted that CityU has responded fully to a recommendation of the 2010 Quality Audit by establishing robust processes for annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence.   The Audit Panel observed, however, that some units are more rigorous than others in analysing quantitative and qualitative data, reflecting on findings, taking appropriate action and monitoring outcomes.

(e)     It was clear to the Audit Panel that CityU staff and students take academic honesty very seriously and that the University safeguards academic standards by preventing, detecting and dealing with breaches of its rules.   It was less clear, however, how CityU assures itself that colleges and schools are operationalising the University's policy consistently and fairly.   The report urges the University to set institutional standards for preventing, detecting and dealing with breaches of the University's rules on academic honesty, with an accompanying framework for determining penalties in keeping with the seriousness of the offence.   The report also suggests that the University establish robust systems for monitoring all reported breaches of academic honesty, across colleges and schools.

(f)     Much evidence was found that the University has successfully planned, implemented and embedded substantial changes to the quality assurance of the undergraduate (Ug) learning experience, since the 2010 QAC Quality Audit.   CityU has introduced a number of changes that have raised the profile of quality assurance processes and established a framework that includes guidance, regular review and clear lines of responsibility.   These changes include the establishment of the post of Associate Provost (Quality Assurance), the introduction of a quality manual and the institution-wide implementation of an integrated teaching and learning questionnaire. CityU's approach is to set minimum expectations, while respecting the autonomy of academic units to implement them appropriately.   The report observes that, to operate successfully, this approach requires institutional processes for ensuring that the minimum standards have been implemented and that local variations in practice do not undermine the broad comparability and fairness of academic standards and quality.   In light of this, the report suggests that the University establish a mechanism to ensure that outcomes of annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence, including the recommendations of external academic advisors, have been followed through and monitored systematically, throughout colleges and schools.

(g)    CityU has a staff development policy that includes performance-based pay review, to encourage and reward excellence in teaching.   The Audit Panel noted that, while there is evidence that this approach is benefiting the quality of the student learning experience, it is reactive, rather than proactive.   The report encourages the University to nurture excellence in learning and teaching by setting minimum standards for training of staff new to teaching and/or supervision at CityU, and to establish a framework of continuing professional development, tailored to both institutional and individual requirements, utilising processes of regular developmental review.

(h)    The strong emphasis CityU places on student achievement was much in evidence throughout the audit process.   In particular, the Audit Panel noted the centrality of student achievement in the mission statement; the framework of GAs that drives both curricular and co-/extra-curricular activities; the Discovery-enriched Curriculum (DEC) with its focus on creativity, attitude, ability and accomplishments; the University's claim that it adds value to mid-range entrants; the high rate and status of graduate employment; and the pride the institution takes in student and graduate successes.   The University has identified metrics to measure student achievement, directly and indirectly, and has developed a plethora of tools to generate these metrics.   It was not always clear to the Audit Panel, however, that there existed a sufficiently strong causal relationship or correlation between student achievement and the metrics cited.   This was particularly the case in relation to the claim that CityU adds value to its middle-ranking entrants and the report comments on this.   The Audit Panel noted that, when CityU discussed student achievement, there is an over-reliance on examples of individual success that exclude the majority of students.

(i)    It was evident that CityU has actively maintained its commitment to implementing outcome-based teaching and learning (OBTL) and criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) for the last decade.   The Audit Panel noted that the University's Quality Assurance Committee has recently undertaken a 'health check' on the status of OBTL and CRA which revealed some remedial action was required.   The report endorses the series of health checks and other remedial measures the University is undertaking to ensure that OBTL and CRA are fully understood and firmly embedded, within all departments at every level.

(j)    The Audit Panel observed that quality assurance structures in place at CityU, including those measures introduced in response to the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, have the potential to make a major contribution to enhancement. There is evidence that some of this potential is currently being realised. Benchmarking against local and international institutions, together with the use of external academic advisors by all departments, have identified areas for improvement, as have effective mechanisms for hearing the student voice. There are also examples of enhancement actions that have arisen from

annual programme and/or five-year reviews of academic excellence. The Audit Panel, noted, however, that the institution's declared approach to enhancement tends to emphasise identifying and solving quality problems, rather than a strategic and institutional drive to nurture excellence. The report encourages the University to articulate and promulgate its proactive and positive strategic approach to quality enhancement at institutional level and to consider a review of the templates for annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence, to reinforce the emphasis CityU places on reflective practice and continual improvement.

(k)     CityU regards postgraduate provision as mission-critical: doctoral studies are a priority growth area, research postgraduate (RPg) student numbers have increased notably over the last three years and further significant expansion is planned over the next few years. The Audit Panel found much evidence that the University is making preparations for this challenging change, ensuring that academic standards and quality are safeguarded. Graduate programmes are outcomes-oriented and graduate outcomes are broadly defined and articulated for RPg programmes, professional doctorate programmes and taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes respectively.

(l)     The Audit Panel heard that the PhD planner, which CityU has just introduced to assist PhD students and their supervisors plan and track student activity and progress, has been well received by those who have made use of it. It was noted that CityU empowers its academic units to uphold stringent exit standards for its RPg programmes, which rely heavily on the doctoral examination panels to achieve this. Following a recommendation of the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, CityU undertook a review, which confirmed its conviction that the existing composition of examination panels remained fit for purpose. The Audit Panel noted that this conviction remains unshaken, endorses CityU's commitment to empowering its academic units to uphold stringent exit standards, but, nevertheless, encourages the University to keep the sustainability of this arrangement under review as it scales up its RPg provision.

(m)     The Audit Panel noted evidence that TPg students are benefiting from the University's 2014 review of its TPg provision and that students are generally satisfied with the quality of their learning experience. Having identified a set of challenges via the review, the University has formulated initiatives to address them. The report endorses CityU's responses and encourage the University to continue to monitor and evaluate implementation. It highlights two initiatives in particular: first the plan to extend the second phase of DEC to all TPgs from 2016/17 and second the rationalisation of the TPg portfolio. The 2010 QAC Quality Audit affirmed CityU's commitment to implementing CRA for all taught programmes. The Audit Panel noted, however, that while Ug students understand what is expected of them in assessment and what they need to do to raise their level of achievement in

future, TPgs are not consistently deriving comparable benefit from OBTL and CRA. Furthermore, the Audit Panel noted that the curricular and co-/extra-curricular achievements of TPgs receive disproportionately less attention than that paid to Ug and RPg students. The report acknowledges the challenge this represents but, nevertheless, encourages the University to determine the means by which it can more effectively enable, support, evaluate and celebrate the achievement of TPgs, taking full account of the distinguishing characteristics of the student body.

(n)     The audit themes of *Enhancing the student learning experience* and *Global engagements: strategies and current developments* offered the Audit Panel the opportunity to focus more closely on these cross-cutting lines of enquiry. In considering the theme of *Enhancing the student learning experience*, the attention of the Audit Panel was drawn to three significant areas of activity: DEC; the support of students by a range of non-academic professional service providers; and the development of academic advising.

(o)     The Audit Panel found much evidence of student achievement that demonstrates the success of DEC in enhancing the student learning experience. The report therefore draws attention to DEC, which provides all Ug and RPg students with the opportunity to create original new knowledge during their studies at CityU. The report also comments upon the concerted effort made by the Gateway Education Laboratory, the Innovation Commons, the Knowledge Transfer Office, and the Computing Service Centre to facilitate innovation among students and staff, across a range of disciplines. Structured curricular and co-/extra-curricular activities are provided to enhance the student experience. They are supported efficiently and effectively by a range of highly motivated student services offices. The report highlights the network of student services, which are all working in same direction to provide proactive and flexible support, and which are valued by students at all levels. The Audit Panel observed, however, that there is a tendency for staff and students to see DEC as an end in itself rather than as a significant means for students to achieve the relevant set of graduate outcomes. The report therefore underscores the suggestion made above, under *Academic standards*, that the status of the graduate outcomes, as the overarching framework for student achievement, be reinforced.

(p)     The Audit Panel noted that the University had undertaken a review of its academic advising systems in 2014 and identified both best practice and shortcomings. It was clear that subsequent dissemination of the findings, widespread discussion and the establishment of a formal two-year reporting cycle have led to improvements. It was less apparent, however, that students are sufficiently confident about identifying the appropriate source of advice, notably in respect of accessing courses in another department or College/School. The report encourages the University to address this issue.

(q)     In considering the theme of *Global engagements: strategies and current developments*, the Audit Panel noted that CityU has articulated an ambitious global engagement strategy predicated on the four principles of destination, community, perspective and diversity. There was evidence of much progress in achieving these strategic aims including: increased and increasing opportunities for local and Mainland students to participate in exchanges, internships, study visits or service-learning overseas; greater numbers of international students enrolling as CityU students for study in Hong Kong; a variety of activities with an international focus for students unable to travel abroad; and concerted, creative efforts to foster integration between local and non-local students on campus. Several initiatives have brought additional benefits in terms of adding an international perspective to CityU's operations: the move to external academic advisors, many of whom are international experts from prestigious overseas institutions, together with the development of collaborative degree programmes with international universities, have facilitated international benchmarking of academic standards and quality, leading to enhancement of provision. Once again, the report draws attention to the network of student services, which are all working in same direction to provide proactive and flexible support, and which are valued by students at all levels and highlights, in particular, the Global Services Office, for the way it prepares, supports and debriefs students engaged in overseas activities.

(r)     The Audit Panel took note of the efforts being made in some quarters to integrate a global perspective within curriculum content and pedagogical practices. Frequently, however, responses to questions about this form of global engagement focused solely on activities such as overseas exchanges and internships. The report endorses the progress the University is making to modernise the curriculum to include a global focus and encourages it to press forward with this process.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Explanation of the audit methodology

1.1 This is the report of a quality audit of City University of Hong Kong (CityU, the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on an Institutional Submission which was prepared by CityU following a period of self-review and submitted to QAC on 21 December 2015. A one-day Institutional Briefing and Initial Meeting of Panel members was held on 21 January 2016 to discuss the detailed arrangements for the audit visit.

1.2 The Audit Panel visited CityU from 15 to 17 March 2016. They met the President and senior team: the deans of college and school; heads of department and programme directors; staff with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement at college/school level; teaching staff; those responsible for supervision of research postgraduate students; non-academic professional staff who facilitate and support enhancements to the student learning experience and global engagements; a wide range of students, including undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research postgraduates; and external stakeholders including employers and alumni. The Audit Panel evaluates:

- the setting and maintaining of academic standards
- the quality of student learning opportunities
- student achievement
- postgraduate provision
- quality enhancement

and identifies its audit findings, including features of good practice, recommendations for further consideration by the institution, and affirmation of progress with actions already in place as a result of its self-review. The Audit Panel provides a commentary on the Audit Themes: Enhancing the student learning experience; and Global engagements: strategies and current developments.

## Introduction to the institution and its role and mission

1.3 City University of Hong Kong was founded in 1984 as City Polytechnic of Hong Kong with just 1 278 students. In 1994 the Polytechnic acquired university status with independent degree-awarding powers.

1.4 CityU's mission states that the University is committed to:

- nurture and develop the talents of students and to create applicable knowledge in order to support social and economic advancement.

1.5     Of CityU's students, 12 878 are undergraduate (Ug), 5 376 are taught postgraduate (TPg) and 1 138 are research postgraduate (RPg) students. CityU employs 3 067 teaching, research, support and other staff in its academic departments.

1.6     CityU's vision states that the University aspires to develop into a leading global university, excelling in research and professional education.

## 2. THE SETTING AND MAINTAINING OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS

2.1     This report addresses academic standards from two perspectives: first, the academic standards set and maintained for programmes of study and their manifestation in the University's overarching graduate attributes (GAs), which are addressed in this section of the report; and second, levels of individual student achievement against those academic standards, as measured by assessment, which are addressed below under *Student Achievement*.

2.2     The University's approach to setting and maintaining high academic standards, is implicit in the mission, vision and core value statements and embedded in the conceptual frameworks and action plans of CityU's former and new strategic plans, which all emphasise making a difference to students and society through excellent research and professional education. According to the University, academic standards are defined within the framework of its mission and the graduate outcomes and rest on three pillars: learning outcomes aligned with mission and GAs; explicit consideration of external stakeholders; and benchmarking against standards of international peers, which are addressed below.

2.3     In order to test how well CityU's approach to setting and maintaining academic standards is working in practice, the Audit Panel scrutinised a range of relevant documents provided by CityU including: the quality manual; the strategic plans for 2010-2015 and 2016-2020 and CityU's academic development proposal (ADP) 2016-19; the guidelines for five-year review of academic excellence; information about professionally accredited programmes; and the University's Rules on Academic Honesty. In addition the Audit Panel requested and received additional information including: the agenda and minutes of the CityU Quality Assurance Committee; and minutes of an assessment panel meeting. CityU also provided a series of three audit trails illustrating the key quality assurance processes of annual programme review, five-year reviews of academic excellence and the external academic advisor scheme.

2.4     During visits to the University, the Audit Panel discussed with senior managers, deans of colleges and schools and staff with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement (QAE) and RPg supervisors how CityU

maintains comparable academic standards, high entry requirements and stringent exit standards across its provision; and explored with heads of department, programme leaders and teaching staff the ways in which academic standards are maintained through assessment and monitored via annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence. The University's Rules of Academic Honesty were discussed widely with senior managers, QAE staff, Ug and TPg students.

2.5    The Audit Panel found evidence that CityU effectively deploys its approach to setting academic standards via thorough processes of programme design and approval, which ensure, in response to an affirmation made in the 2010 Quality Audit, that course intended learning outcomes (CILOs) and programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) are aligned with the appropriate set of GAs. GAs are themselves aligned with the University's mission, vision and five core values of excellence, honesty, freedom of enquiry, accountability and civility and collegiality. The Audit Panel commends the four sets of five interlocking, complementary GAs, which are subtly nuanced to differentiate between the achievements represented by Ug, TPg, professional doctoral and research doctoral awards. In conversations with students and staff at various levels, it became clear that some, though by no means all, view the Discovery-enriched Curriculum (DEC) as the overarching framework for student achievement and are unaware that academic standards derive from the GAs. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University clarify and communicate effectively to all stakeholders the status of the GAs in relation to academic standards, emphasising the contributory and complementary roles of curricular and co-/extra-curricular activities in achieving them.

2.6    As an institution with a mission and vision that places a high value on professional education and the creation of applicable knowledge, CityU is committed to making good use of external stakeholders, including external academic advisors (EAAs), employers and alumni, in helping to set and maintain the academic standards of its awards. The Audit Panel found evidence that deans and heads of academic units are fulfilling their responsibility for ensuring that alumni, professional associations, employers and other external stakeholders are appropriately involved in the design, approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes. It was clear that accrediting bodies often have a positive influence on, for example, expediting the embedding of outcome-based teaching and learning (OBTL) and criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) in programmes that are professionally accredited.

2.7    CityU encourages academic units to seek external professional accreditation, where possible, as a form of external benchmarking of academic standards and, to date, a little over 50% of programmes have achieved this. Building on an affirmation made in the 2010 Quality Audit, the University also

encourages academic units to compare themselves in this respect, *inter alia*, with similar units in benchmarking institutions. The Audit Panel was informed that this had proved difficult to accomplish in practice and found evidence that EAAs are more productively fulfilling this function. The primary role of EAAs is to assist CityU in maintaining the international standards of its awards and, in this respect and others, they also serve a benchmarking function.

2.8     In dialogue with staff and students at all levels, it became clear to the Audit Panel that CityU takes academic honesty very seriously. The University has established regulations concerning academic honesty to safeguard academic standards which include procedures for preventing, detecting and dealing with breaches of its rules. Measures for preventing infringements, which include a mandatory, online 'quiz', are comprehensive and engage students interactively, while both staff and students understand and use Turnitin to prevent and detect dishonest practices. Having issued its minimum standards on this matter, CityU respects the autonomy of colleges and schools to interpret and implement them appropriately in context, referring only offences that attract a penalty deemed 'serious' to the Academic Conduct Committee for investigation. While respecting this approach in principle, the Audit Panel formed the view that the minimum requirements are insufficiently detailed to give the University confidence that its academic standards are being implemented consistently and fairly across the institution. Therefore the Audit Panel recommends that the University set institutional standards for preventing, detecting and dealing with breaches of the University's Rules on Academic Honesty, with an accompanying framework for determining penalties in keeping with the seriousness of the offence. A second, linked aspect of this recommendation is outlined below (see para 2.11).

2.9     The Audit Panel found much evidence of CityU's thorough and comprehensive approach to gathering data in relation to academic standards. The University monitors graduate achievement of GAs, together with employment rates and starting salaries, and has developed its own metrics for gauging student attractiveness to employers, their industry-relevant knowledge and capacity for innovation. Furthermore, CityU has responded fully to a recommendation of the 2010 Quality Audit by establishing robust processes for annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence.

2.10    CityU's quality assurance policies and procedures in relation to academic standards are all intended to be enhancement-orientated. Annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence all require associated action plans together with reports on enhancement activities completed as a consequence of the previous report. The audit trails revealed, however, that some units are more rigorous than others in analysing quantitative and

qualitative data (including the reports of EAAs), reflecting on findings, taking appropriate action and monitoring outcomes.   In addition, the annual programme and five-year reviews provided in the audit trails revealed an emphasis on identifying obvious quality problems rather than a process of self-reflection to identify potential areas for enhancement to drive excellence.

2.11    In relation to academic honesty, Senate has responsibility for receiving overview reports and improving institutional practice, which it delegates to the Academic Policy Committee.   As the Academic Policy Committee receives reports only on those cases reported to the Academic Conduct Committee, the Audit Panel concluded, however, that the committee with overall authority for academic standards is not in a position to maintain a comprehensive overview of academic honesty, identify emerging trends and enhancement opportunities.   The Audit Panel therefore advises, as part of the recommendation outlined in paragraph 2.8 above, that the University establish robust systems for monitoring and analysing all reported breaches of academic honesty, across colleges and schools to address this issue.

2.12    Overall the Audit Panel concluded that CityU has strengthened its arrangements for setting, maintaining and safeguarding academic standards since the 2010 Quality Audit, particularly in relation to the alignment of CILOs, PILOs and GAs; annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence: the involvement of external stakeholders in QAE processes; and benchmarking of academic standards.   Academic standards could be further secured by ensuring that the quality assurance and enhancement cycle is completed by systematically and consistently identifying enhancement opportunities and confirming that action plans have been implemented, monitored and evaluated as agreed.

## 3.    THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

3.1    CityU's approach to managing the quality of learning opportunities is driven by its aspiration to be the destination of choice and to provide learning opportunities commensurate with that objective.   The University's mission expresses its commitment to 'nurture and develop the talents of students and to create applicable knowledge in order to support social and economic advancement'.

3.2    In order to establish how successfully CityU is operationalising its approach to managing the quality of learning opportunities, the Audit Panel examined key QAE documentation, with particular reference to the new quality manual and its supporting material; the guidelines for five-year reviews of academic excellence; information about staff support and development; CityU minutes; and the evaluation of learning and teaching.   The Audit Panel also drew on the audit trails to explore how well the annual programme reporting process, the five-year review of academic excellence; and EAAs assure and enhance

the quality of learning opportunities.

3.3     The Audit Panel discussed CityU's overarching approach to the organisation and management of QAE with senior managers, while conversations with staff responsible for QAE centred on key changes made since the 2010 QAC Quality Audit.   Innovations in learning and teaching were explored with students, academic managers and teaching staff, who also provided information about their experiences of the University's provision of staff development and support.

3.4     CityU has successfully planned, implemented and embedded substantial changes to the quality assurance of the Ug learning experience since the 2010 Quality Audit.   Recent revisions have raised the profile of quality assurance processes and established a framework that includes guidance, regular review, and clear lines of responsibility.   The CityU Quality Assurance Committee, chaired by the Associate Provost (Quality Assurance), carries ultimate responsibility for QAE, but devolves operational responsibility to colleges and schools.   The Associate Provost (Quality Assurance) is a relatively new post established in 2011.   Responsibilities include oversight of institutional quality initiatives including: teaching excellence; UGC teaching award applications; the five-year review of academic excellence scheme; quality audits; the selection of EAAs; and meeting EAAs to facilitate fast-cycle responses to any problems identified.

3.5     CityU's approach has been to set minimum expectations and general guidance about how to achieve them, while respecting the autonomy of academic units to implement them appropriately.   All academic units report annually against key performance indicators (KPIs) and indicate if they have met minimum standards.   Senior staff informed the Audit Panel that the aim was to establish a culture of trust, and that the progress of schools and colleges is monitored by the annual collection of KPI statistics and by scrutiny of annual reports.   The incentive for academic units to improve is provided by linking funding to performance.

3.6     The University appoints EAAs to provide advice on academic programmes and their quality.   While there is clear evidence that they are adding value through this activity, together with benchmarking and networking, the Audit Panel formed the view that there is considerable variability across academic units in the effectiveness of responding to issues raised by EAAs in their reports.

3.7     The University has a well established process for annual programme reporting on the quality of learning opportunities, which specifies clearly the quantitative and qualitative inputs required from Ug and TPg programmes. The Audit Panel noted, however, that the report template does not explicitly require reflective commentary on the data and that the extent to which

programmes provide this varies considerably. As noted under *Academic Standards* (see para 2.10 above), the audit trails and additional information, requested by the Audit Panel, also revealed significant variability in the extent to which outcomes of annual reporting are formally discussed and documented. The Audit Panel formed the view that CityU's approach of setting minimum expectations, while respecting the autonomy of academic units to implement them appropriately, requires a greater degree of institutional oversight than that currently exercised to enable the University to assure itself that minimum standards are being met and that local variations in practice are not undermining the broad comparability of the quality of learning opportunities. In light of this, the Audit Panel recommends that the University establish a mechanism to ensure that outcomes of annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence, including the recommendations of EAA's, have been followed through and monitored systematically throughout colleges and schools.

3.8 Building on a development affirmed by the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, CityU introduced a new quality manual in 2015. It provides clear and accessible information about the quality framework and guidance about its implementation, together with hyperlinks to further information and pro-formas, replacing the previous *Principles, Policies and Practices of Quality Education.* Teaching staff whom the Audit Panel met were aware of the existence of the quality manual, though few have yet had an opportunity to use it. Associate deans for Ug and postgraduate students have been briefed on the manual, and tasked with disseminating information about it.

3.9 In response to a recommendation from the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, CityU introduced an integrated teaching and learning questionnaire (TLQ) in 2012. The questionnaire covers 98% of teaching events, and response rates are around 45%. Results are fed back to teaching staff each semester, and annually to deans and heads of academic units. Institutional oversight and identification of trends is systematically achieved through consideration of taught programme surveys at programme committees, then College-level committee, followed by University-level committee. Survey reports are reviewed by the relevant departments, who use the information productively to guide improvements. Survey results form part of data used in performance-based pay and resource allocation. Survey findings are considered in annual programme reports. An Institutional Analysis Group feeds Executive Dashboard with useful and informative data.

3.10 CityU has made a positive response to a recommendation from the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, by defining five strategic goals for e-Learning in the Strategic Plan 2010-2015, and revising its e-Learning strategy. In 2014/15, the Blackboard virtual learning environment (VLE) was upgraded to the cloud-based Canvas system. Three massive open online course projects were funded in 2015.

3.11    The University does not prescribe minimum requirements for the engagement of teaching staff with the VLE platform, but does supply guidance and reference materials to enable users to define their own pedagogy.   The Office of the Chief Information Officer conducted a series of workshops in the academic units in 2014/15.   New pedagogical approaches such as flipped classrooms and online discussion fora are encouraged.   Teaching staff reported to the Audit Panel that they feel well supported to integrate eLearning within their teaching and learning practices, and that innovative developments are encouraged.   Students whom the Audit Panel met reported that they find online discussions and interactive lectures helpful and that Canvas is a good interface for documents and communication: staff reported that 60% of students of students in a focus group had direct experience of flipped classrooms.

3.12    While it was clear to the Audit Panel that CityU's facilitative, rather than regulatory, approach to eLearning results in variability across academic units, there was no evidence that this is detrimental to the learning experience.

3.13    The Audit Panel found evidence that the quality assurance structures at CityU are being used to detect problems and that the annual planning round, with its explicit link between performance and resource, is an effective incentive for action to address them.   Senior staff reported that the changes to structures at CityU had improved the speed of response to quality issues arising from questionnaires.   TLQs indicate an average score of 5.7 out of 7.0 for the quality of the overall learning experience, and over 80% of teachers achieve at least 5.0.   A review of the performance-based pay scheme 2013 found it had resulted in a stronger focus on performance.

3.14    The quality manual details the procedures that provide support for academic staff new to the University.   These include the appointment of a mentoring committee within the academic unit where the individual will be based.   The committee is tasked with helping the new staff member to integrate into their college, school or department and to develop an appropriate plan for professional development.   In some departments, staff new to teaching attend a departmental workshop on teaching, provided by senior staff.   They are also encouraged to apply for a teaching development grant.   Staff new to RPg supervision initially work alongside an experienced co-supervisor. There is currently no mandatory training for staff new to teaching or supervision at CityU.   The University is working on a teaching certificate, though it has not yet been decided whether this will be mandatory.   Part-time staff are treated in the same way as full-time staff.   Employers and stakeholders suggested that, based on feedback from the CityU graduates they had employed, there was scope for employing 'professors of practice' within the teaching ranks of the University to enhance the practical, experiential aspect of the University's learning environment.

3.15 Research students who teach or conduct laboratories are required first to take a course, *Teaching Students: First Steps*, delivered by Office of Education Development and Gateway Education (EDGE). They then receive continuing support for their teaching role from the relevant course leader. This includes assessment rubrics and marking coordination meetings, if required. RPg students whom the Audit Panel met spoke very positively about the support they receive as teaching assistants.

3.16 The Audit Panel found evidence that CityU actively promotes and supports the professional development of its staff. The quality manual and staff development policy statement describe the University's approach to staff development for teaching and learning and affirm its commitment to supporting and encouraging the continuing professional development of academic staff. EDGE offers a programme of development opportunities, including DEC workshops; training sessions on the Canvas VLE; and sessions for sharing good practice, led by winners of the University's teaching excellence awards (TEAs). EDGE also offers teaching development grants to academic staff for the implementation of creative teaching ideas, and new academic staff can apply for teaching start-up grants. The University recognises good practice through TEAs. The criteria for award have recently been revised to include an emphasis on evidence of impact on students' ability to create new knowledge in their field of study. Nominations for award are provided by heads of department and previous award winners; shortlisted candidates are then interviewed by a panel that includes students and external representatives.

3.17 Staff engagement with their own professional development is driven by performance-based pay. Performance evaluations include evidence from TLQs and that may include the peer review of teaching scheme. The online TLQ is used to improve the pedagogical practice of teaching staff. If a member of staff consistently scores below 5.0, it triggers action by the line manager to investigate the low score and, if appropriate, put in place additional support, including provision of a mentor. These measures apply to very few individuals; a recent survey by the Office of the Provost recently noted that only around 2% of staff had scored below 5.0 for three semesters in a two-year period. The Audit Panel noted that results from the TLQ are used to indicate how staff can achieve better teaching performance, to support them in doing so, and to advise newly appointed faculty how to structure their teaching to strengthen their performance in the classroom. Office of the Provost analyses returns and offers guidance to help colleagues contextualise the findings and make use of surveys as a formative as well as a summative device. There is thorough and extensive consideration of TLQ data at all levels from departmental to institutional. The Audit Panel saw evidence of the effective use of the data to inform both staffing decisions and quality assurance processes relating to individual programmes and academic units.

3.18    CityU has a staff development policy that includes a performance-based pay review scheme to encourage and reward excellence in teaching.   The Audit Panel formed the view that, while there is evidence that this approach is benefiting the quality of the student learning experience, it is reactive, rather than proactive.   Therefore, the Audit Panel recommends, in order to set up its people to succeed and to nurture excellence in learning and teaching, that the University set minimum standards for training of staff new to teaching and/or supervision at CityU, and establish a framework of continuing professional development, tailored to both institutional and individual requirements, utilising processes of regular developmental review.

3.19    Overall the Audit Panel concluded that CityU has established thorough and comprehensive systems for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities it provides to its students.   To derive maximum benefit from these systems, the University is encouraged to ensure that it strikes an appropriate balance between respecting the autonomy of academic units and completing the quality cycle.

## 4.    STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

4.1    Student achievement is critical to CityU's mission, which emphasises professional education and applicable knowledge, and provides the over-riding purpose for the framework of graduate attributes that drives both curricular and co/extra-curricular activities.   The University's goal is to transform students into active innovators instead of being primarily recipients of knowledge.   CityU expects graduating students to be highly employable professionals, equipped to contribute constructively, responsibly and creatively to a rapidly changing world.   These goals are applied to all students, including those whose achievements prior to entry have been mid, rather than high, level.   It was clear to the Audit Panel that the centrality of student achievement is widely understood and embraced by staff and students throughout the University.

4.2    In order to test the effectiveness of CityU's approach to student achievement, the Audit Panel examined the documentary evidence the University has generated to monitor its own achievement in this respect.   This included: the assessment policy; a record of student achievement in DEC; graduate exit surveys; RPg completion times; RPg completion rates; RPg publication rates; RPg awards and academic achievements; the summary of internship opportunities for CityU students; and an overview of institutional surveys. In response to a request from the Audit Panel, the University also provided evidence of the value its educational process adds to the achievements of mid-range entrants and information about the OBTL health checks it has conducted.

4.3    In addition, the Audit Panel explored in dialogue with senior managers, deans and a range of non-academic professional staff, the ways in which CityU adds value to Ug mid-range entrants.   The progress made on implementing OBTL and CRA was discussed with academic managers at various levels, teaching staff and students.   A meeting with external stakeholders provided the Audit Panel with insights into how employers view the achievements of CityU graduates.

4.4    CityU states that it enables and supports student achievement via core and co-/extra-curricular activities that add value to the achievements of Ug mid-range entrants and enhance the employability of all students; by fostering innovation through the delivery of DEC, with its focus on creativity, attitude, ability and accomplishments; and by aligning the outcomes of teaching, learning and assessment with the relevant set of overarching graduate outcomes.

4.5    The Audit Panel was keen to ascertain how CityU substantiates the claim that its educational programmes add value to the achievements of the University's mid-range Ug entrants.   Senior managers reported that DEC is key to adding value since it constitutes a campus-wide goal and is the mechanism by which students are given confidence.   DEC, which is discussed in greater depth under *Enhancing the student learning experience* (see paras 7.5-7.7 below), is intended to give each student the chance to experience the creation of knowledge that is new to the world, during his or her study at CityU.   It was originally developed for Ug students but will be rolled out to TPg students in 2016/17, as the second phase of DEC (DEC 2.0).   The Audit Panel was also referred to various enabling mechanisms such as peer support, peer-assisted teaching, the Gateway Education Laboratory which provides cross-disciplinary learning experiences, and the academic advising system, all of which are viewed by senior managers as means of adding value.

4.6    However, relatively few of the responses to the Audit Panel's enquiries focused on core activities of learning, teaching, assessment and student support.   They tended rather to emphasise special or one-off occurrences and examples of outstanding individual achievement.   Deans cited the value added by giving students distinctive learning experiences, including field work, and advocated fundraising to support student activities.   A request for additional evidence of value added to this particular category of student produced an extensive document that listed student awards, support given to students for various competitions, excerpts from student academic records and a report indicating levels of student satisfaction with student exchange programmes.   Non-academic professional staff focused on the value of internships, the entrepreneurial opportunities provided by DEC and the level of library support available.

4.7    The Audit Panel formed the view that the University has a tendency to concentrate on outcome metrics at the expense of identifying and articulating the factors embedded within the processes of teaching, learning, assessment and support that are making a tangible difference to the achievements of mid-range students.    Therefore the Audit Panel recommends that the University locate or develop an appropriate method that is capable of substantiating the University's claim that its educational processes are the means by which value is added to cohorts of mid-range students.

4.8    The Audit Panel found clear evidence that CityU has actively maintained its commitment to implementing OBTL and CRA.   For example, it was noted that the University has recently undertaken a 'health check' on the status of OBTL and CRA and the Audit Panel was keen to find out more about it. Mindful of the fact that staff recruited since the implementation of OBTL and CRA might not be sufficiently familiar with the approach, CityU Quality Assurance Committee established a working group to consider the constructive alignment of intended learning outcomes (ILOs), teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks and to review a number of templates and syllabus/course outlines.   As a result several documents were revised and it became clear that some remedial work with teaching staff on OBTL and CRA was required.   A workshop was held in 2014 led by the Associate Provost (Quality Assurance) specifically focusing on OBTL and the University is already committed to following up the health check in the future. The Audit Panel affirms the thorough action the University is taking to ensure that OBTL and CRA are fully understood and firmly embedded, within all departments at every level.   The Audit Panel also notes that this shortfall in essential learning and teaching skills reinforces the recommendation made under *Quality of learning opportunities* (see para 3.18 above concerning staff new to teaching and supervision at CityU).

4.9    Teaching staff and Ug students whom the Audit Panel met were, nevertheless, thoroughly engaged in the University's outcome-based approach to learning, teaching and assessment (see para 6.8 below for a discussion about TPg students and CRA).   Teaching staff informed the Audit Panel that student achievement is gauged by the development of grading rubrics for each course. Students confirmed that course outlines, including ILOs and clear sets of grading criteria are distributed and explained via course documents and during the first class of each course.   Since these are made available well in advance of assessments, students reported that they are able to understand what is expected of them in assessment, what their grade signifies about their performance and how they could improve their performance in future. While generally satisfied with these arrangements, Ug students suggested that more face-to-face formative feedback arising from summative assessments, from teaching assistants and professors, could further enhance their academic achievement.

4.10    The University takes pride in its ranking amongst the top 150 Universities according to the Global Employability University Survey.   There is clear evidence that graduates achieve high rates of high status employment. Employers and other external stakeholders whom the Audit Panel met all spoke positively about the attributes of graduates whom they consider to be eminently employable.   They variously attributed the achievement of these attributes to CityU's innovative learning approach; the quality of the internship experiences; and the emphasis on soft skills as well as professional education.

4.11    CityU has identified metrics to measure student achievement directly and indirectly, such as programme completion rates, grade point averages, first employment destinations and starting salaries.   A plethora of tools have been developed to generate these metrics, including the revised TLQ, and the graduate survey.   It is not always clear to the Audit Panel, however, that there exists a sufficiently strong causal relationship or correlation between student achievement in general and the metrics cited.   The Audit Panel noted that questions about student achievement tended to prompt responses that are over-reliant on examples of individual success that exclude the majority of students.   This was particularly the case in relation to the claim that CityU adds value to its middle-ranking entrants (see para 4.6 above).   Similarly, CityU students who have won government awards for new product ideas are cited as evidence for the success of DEC as are teachers who have secured internal and external teaching excellence awards for the contribution they made to transformational teaching under DEC.

4.12    The Audit Panel noted that improvements in student achievement appear initially to be entirely metrics-driven rather than process-orientated.   For example, annual reviews of academic units, which are linked to the provision of resources and staff remuneration, include metrics for graduate employment (including employment rate, percentage of graduates pursuing further studies and graduate starting salaries); and for graduate achievement (including percentage of graduates with exchange experience and percentage of graduates with work-related experience).   Academic units may report in terms of absolute excellence against an externally benchmarked standard or improvement against that unit's previous performance.   Closer scrutiny of the development of the process for annual review of academic units reveals, however, that such measures are intended to be contextualised within a process-based view of the University.   This viewpoint considers the links between activities such as admitting, developing and placing students together with knowledge creation, curation and transfer and the facilitation of enhanced student achievement.   It remains unclear to the Audit Panel, nevertheless, how the achievement of absolute excellence or improvement against previous performance correlates with either enhanced processes for improving student achievement or enhanced student achievement *per se*. The Audit Panel encourages the University to explore further the connection

between desired student outcomes and the processes of learning and teaching.

4.13    Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that CityU accords great importance to enabling and supporting student achievement and takes justifiable pride in the successes of its students, graduates and alumni.   While the commitment of the University to adding value to mid-range entrants is not in doubt, deeper understanding of the aspects of the learning environment that best foster this would be of benefit to both the institution and the students in question.   The Audit Panel noted CityU's vigilance concerning the ongoing implementation of OBTL and CRA, as the bedrock of student achievement.

## 5.    QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

5.1    Enhancement is interpreted by CityU to mean approaches to overcoming quality problems, for example with English language training, teaching quality, OBTL implementation or staff development.   The quality manual states that the University is committed to enhancing the learning opportunities of all students by providing students with a consistently high quality learning and teaching experience.   This is to be achieved through the University's support of academic practice, technology-enhanced learning, experiential learning and global learning that promotes discovery and innovation.

5.2    In order to test the effectiveness of CityU's approach to quality enhancement, the Audit Panel examined a range of the documentary evidence, including committee membership, terms of reference, and papers, assessment panel minutes, internal review documentation, annual programme reports, guidance for the five-year reviews of academic excellence, the Quality Manual and the University's ADP.

5.3    During the audit visit, the Audit Panel explored the University's strategic approach to enhancement with senior managers and discussed the ways in which enhancement opportunities are identified through routine quality assurance processes with staff responsible for QAE, teaching staff, non-academic professional staff and external stakeholders.   Staff and students at all levels provided illustrations about the way in which student feedback had led to improvements in provision.

5.4    The Audit Panel noted that much of the quality assurance system that CityU has established, and built up following the 2010 Quality Audit, has the potential to take forward an enhancement agenda.   As noted above, (see para 3.4), the post of Associate Provost (Quality Assurance) now carries responsibility for key quality initiatives including five-year reviews of academic excellence, quality audits, and the appointment of EAAs, all of which have implications for enhancement.

5.5 According to the quality manual, the University is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality of its taught programmes through regular monitoring and review in accordance with University-wide processes, University policies and strategic directions and, where appropriate, reference to international benchmarking standards. Every taught programme is subject to annual monitoring through the submission of an annual programme report. The annual review process includes input from EAAs. Reports, which are primarily data-driven, are scrutinised by the relevant College Validation and Monitoring Committee and checked for action against issues raised in the previous year. During the audit visit, staff provided the Audit Panel with a number of examples of enhancement activity arising from these reports including: analysis of recruitment trends leading to revised recruitment strategy; improvement to pastoral support; increased opportunities for students to have an international experience; addition of computer simulations to a core programme to ensure 'state of the art' teaching; review of electives and addition of new opportunities to existing programmes. These examples included specific responses to issues raised by EAAs.

5.6 Five-year reviews of academic excellence are intended to identify any changes that need to be made to increase the attractiveness of CityU's offer. The objective of the process is to conduct a holistic review of the overall academic performance and strategic direction of individual academic units. The reviews include input from a panel of independent international experts. CityU seeks out best matched partner institutions and invites international experts to conduct the review. The resulting reports are considered by department, college and university level committees and the Provost. The academic unit is required to prepare an action plan to address issues raised by the report and progress with this plan is monitored. Example documentation shows clear evidence of enhancement activity resulting from this process and teaching staff were able to provide further examples.

5.7 The Audit Panel concurs with the view of senior staff that the five-year review of academic excellence is an effective form of review against international standards of excellence. It requires extensive preparations, involves EAAs and students, includes scrutiny of metrics and either confirms international standards or identifies areas for improvement. The process includes a one-year follow-up. Outcomes and follow-up of both annual programme and five-year reviews are explicitly linked to performance-based pay and allocation of resources, which may include student intake numbers. This facilitates a considered overview of individuals and academic units and provides an incentive to engage fully in the process and reinforces its effectiveness.

5.8 Also explicit in both processes is the involvement of EAAs and the international benchmarking they bring to the University. Although the EAAs are appointed by the University, heads of individual academic units

consider the top 50 international institutions in their particular discipline and recommend suitable institutions. Advisors may also be sought from industry for departmental advisory committees. As well as bringing international experts into the institution, the process helps academic units to identify the factors that affect institutional rankings.

5.9 EAAs contribute to enhancement through their detailed reports, which are discussed at school board meetings and away-days. Course and programme leaders write formal responses to the reports, and the report and responses are considered during annual and five-year reviews. The Audit Panel heard examples of enhancement that had resulted specifically from the EAA reports, including changes to the syllabus, improved English language support for the final project and reduction in the number of assignments to prevent over-assessment.

5.10 The Audit Panel found evidence that CityU has a variety of mechanisms for taking the student voice into account to enhance provision. These mechanisms are operating effectively and include student representation on key committees, school boards and programme committees, student mentors, Staff-Student Consultative Committees (SSCCs), focus groups and surveys such as the TLQ. All Students' Union posts are elected; and the election of the President is based on nominations by Students' Union Council. Student representatives are nominated by peers followed by mini-election. Representatives gather views from their fellow students and take them to the relevant programme committee. All programmes also have SSCCs. The TLQ includes questions about the quality of teaching, including that delivered by teaching assistants. Responses to the TLQ are considered by the college dean and are reported in the annual course report. Staff reported that the free text boxes were often the most informative parts of the TLQ and gave examples of enhancements that had resulted from the questionnaire.

5.11 In addition to academic provision, CityU gathers student feedback on facilities, learning resources and student support services. Feedback is sought from SSCCs, focus groups and surveys. Individual services have additional approaches to collecting feedback. For example, the Library uses standardised international surveys, and the Career and Leadership Centre collects quantitative and qualitative data from students and employers, and builds evaluation into the workshops it runs. Support staff were able to provide convincing examples of enhancements that had arisen from student feedback received through focus groups and analysis of user data.

5.12 Students whom the Audit Panel met reported that the University listens to their voice and were able to give examples of the way in which it had responded to their feedback and enhanced provision. They reported that staff are generally keen to collect feedback and act on it. Ug students are represented on all committees and both TPg and RPg students were also

satisfied with coverage of representation. RPg students also reported that informal feedback mechanisms are effective ways of resolving issues and enhancing provision, and cited lunchtime gatherings as an example. Student representatives reported they have no difficulty in adding items to the agendas of committees they attend, and are able to speak out at meetings, as required.

5.13    Senior, teaching and support staff at CityU consider the mechanisms for listening and responding to the student voice to be effective. Papers from CityU Quality Assurance Committee provide evidence that the business of the committee includes consideration of feedback from students and external stakeholders, and sharing of good practice. The papers also show that key findings from student surveys have been followed up at college, school or university level, and used to make improvements.

5.14    In terms of CityU's restricted definition of quality enhancement as overcoming quality problems, potential hindrances or shortfalls, the Audit Panel found ample evidence of the University's success. As noted above in *Quality of learning opportunities*, staff were able to provide a number of examples of teaching quality enhancements that had addressed problems identified through CityU's quality assurance structures. Other notable examples include the interventions in relation to English language training, implementation of OBTL and CRA and staff development. The Audit Panel also observed that CityU always builds into its institution-wide enhancement initiatives the means to measure their success. While the Audit Panel has some reservations about the strength of the correlation between the metrics selected and desired outcomes, the metrics do indicate significant improvement.

5.15    The Audit Panel found evidence that the University undertakes ambitious enhancement initiatives such as DEC and that some of the potential for quality assurance structures to make a major contribution to enhancement is currently being realised. For example, benchmarking against local and international institutions, and the departmental EAA scheme have both identified areas for improvement, as have effective mechanisms for listening to the student voice. Documentation provided examples of enhancement actions that have arisen from annual programme or five-year reviews of academic excellence and teaching staff were able to provide further examples. The Audit Panel noted, however, that the institution's declared approach to enhancement focuses on identifying and solving quality problems, rather than on a strategic and institutional drive to nurture excellence. Therefore the Audit Panel encourages the University to articulate and promulgate its manifestly proactive and positive strategic approach to quality enhancement and further suggests CityU review the templates for annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence to reinforce the emphasis CityU places on reflective practice and continual improvement.

5.16    Overall the Audit Panel concluded that CityU's approach to quality assurance is fundamentally enhancement-orientated and that the University's innovative learning and teaching initiatives derive from manifest an institutional drive towards continuous improvement.   This underlying positive commitment to quality enhancement could, however, be better and more explicitly expressed and communicated to all stakeholders in terms of proactive strategic intent.

## 6.    POSTGRADUATE PROVISION

6.1    Postgraduate provision plays a critical part in CityU's pursuit of its mission. The University aims to offer distinctive programmes that meet high international standards of quality, to uphold stringent exit standards and to strengthen the knowledge creation component in all academic programmes, including its postgraduate programmes.   Doctoral education is a priority growth area; student numbers have increased notably over the last three years and further significant expansion is planned over the next few years.

6.2    The Audit Panel scrutinised a range of relevant documents, including the University's Strategic Plan 2015-2020: postgraduate student enrolment numbers; postgraduate student admission and achievement data; stakeholder feedback data; and information on the recently introduced the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) planner.

6.3    The Audit Panel discussed the planned expansion of RPg student numbers and the rationalisation of TPg programmes with senior managers, including deans, and RPg supervisors.   Conversations with a range of local and non-local students, teaching staff and RPg supervisors focused on the quality of the postgraduate learning experience and the opportunities postgraduate students have to make their collective voice heard.   The Audit Panel explored the support available to postgraduate students with professional staff who offer a range of student services.

6.4    Graduate programmes are jointly organised, managed, and reviewed by the Chow Yei Ching School of Graduate Studies and individual academic units. They have undergone significant change in recent years, including the transition to OBTL and CRA.   Graduate outcomes are broadly defined and articulated for research degree programmes, professional doctorate programmes and taught postgraduate programmes, respectively.    The relevant set of graduate outcomes is reflected in the intended learning outcomes of all postgraduate programmes and courses.

6.5    Student support services are offered to both Ug and postgraduate students, and students whom the Audit Panel met reported that they are satisfied with their learning experience.   Postgraduate students also participate in the Senate and the Council, are represented on relevant committees, and declared themselves satisfied with the coverage of postgraduate student representation.

6.6     The Audit Panel was keen to discover how CityU is preparing for its planned expansion of RPg and TPg student numbers, which will also entail strengthening research capacity and graduate training.   Senior managers were able to offer a convincing rationale for the expansion, predicated on a detailed analysis of the University's capacity in relation to staffing and facilities.   Staff at all levels demonstrated awareness of the challenges the University faces, the rationale for the action it is taking and the progress made to date.   In sum, the Audit Panel found much evidence that the University is making thorough preparations for this challenging change, ensuring that academic standards and quality are safeguarded.

6.7     As an important aspect of safeguarding academic standards, CityU empowers its academic units to uphold stringent exit standards for its academic programmes.   RPg programmes rely heavily on doctoral examination panels to achieve this.   Following a recommendation of the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, CityU undertook a review, which confirmed its conviction that the existing composition of examination panels remained fit for purpose.   Deans and research supervisors whom the Audit Panel met expressed a strong conviction that the existing composition works effectively and serves CityU well, and that it would be a matter of regret if were to changed.   The Audit Panel endorses CityU's decision but, nevertheless, encourages the University to keep the sustainability of this arrangement under review as it scales up its RPg provision.

6.8     The 2010 QAC Quality Audit affirmed CityU's commitment to implementing CRA for all taught programmes.   In conversations with Ug and TPg students it became apparent to the Audit Panel that TPg students were less confident than their Ug counterparts about knowing what is expected of them in assessment, understanding the meaning of the grade awarded to their work and grasping what they would have to do to improve their performance in future assessments.   The Audit Panel noted that grading rubrics have not been consistently developed across all TPg programmes and that there is significant variation in the timeliness and effectiveness with which staff communicate with students about expectations and the meaning of the grades awarded.   Senior managers explained that TPg students tend to be less well informed about educational frameworks, because they study at CityU for a relatively short time, often as part-time students, and tend to be more pragmatic and career-orientated than Ug and RPg students.

6.9     The Audit Panel also noted a comparative dearth of records of TPg students' achievements.   Senior managers identified a range of contributory factors: TPg programmes are considerably shorter than Ug and RPg programmes; TPg students have not had access to DEC to date; TPg students are less likely than Ug and RPg students to report extra-curricular achievements; links between the University and alumni of TPg programmes are not as strong as those with Ug and RPg alumni; and attributing the successes of graduates solely to their

TPg student experience is of questionable validity. While acknowledging the distinctive characteristics of the TPg student body and the challenges these present, the Audit Panel recommends that the University determine the means by which it can more effectively enable, support, evaluate and take pride in the achievement of its TPg students, taking full account of these characteristics.

6.10    The Audit Panel noted that CityU has made a significant investment in developing metrics to evaluate the quality of the postgraduate learning experience and that these metrics provide evidence of encouraging results. For example, the University is able to demonstrate steady improvements in application-to place ratios, performance in recruitment and achievement of Hong Kong PhD Fellowships; high entry qualifications; and positive course evaluation scores for all postgraduate programmes. CityU also presents notable student success in relation to RPg publication rates and achievement of external awards and on-target completion times and completion rates for all postgraduate programmes. Graduate destination statistics signal the high percentage of students achieving high level and high status employment.

6.11    It was clear to the Audit Panel that CityU is committed to increasing the attractiveness and sustainability of its postgraduate provision by strengthening graduate training and offering cutting edge programmes. In order to achieve this strategic priority, the portfolio of postgraduate programmes has been both rationalised and enhanced. In formulating its strategic plan, the University identified the following key challenges for RPg provision: securing adequate teaching and learning space; tracking student progress systematically; ensuring the viability of research degree programmes; giving RPg students sufficient time to complete their studies; and providing teaching assistants with an adequate level of experience. In response, CityU has already inaugurated the following initiatives: the acquisition of off-campus facilities; the PhD Planner; the extension of the duration of PhD study; and the teaching assistant scheme. In addition, Senate has approved criteria and procedures to guide the expansion of the suite of joint PhD programmes with Mainland universities.

6.12    The PhD Planner was recently created by the School of Graduate Studies, to help RPg students track their study progress, research training, conference attendance and other developmental areas, for a more satisfying learning experience. While most of the RPg students and RPg supervisors whom the Audit Panel met have not had the opportunity to make use of the PhD Planner, those who are using it reported that they find it a useful tool for recording progress and planning activity, which will end up serving the purpose of a *curriculum vitae*.

6.13    RPg students also receive training for their duties as course teachers or as graduate teaching assistants, and are provided with funding support to attend

international conferences. Most of the students who met with the Audit Panel were teaching assistants and all reported very positively on the mandatory course they had attended, the ongoing support they receive and the opportunities they have to gain teaching experience.

6.14    In 2014/15, all academic units were required to conduct a self-evaluation exercise encompassing the full range of current and potential TPg programmes with a view to realigning provision to institutional strengths, streamlining the portfolio and developing a set of KPIs to guide future development. The exercise identified the following challenges: the risk of proliferation of programmes; ensuring that the portfolio offers fit-for-purpose education; securing high quality student intake; and ensuring that programmes are competitive and sustainable. It was evident to the Audit Panel that TPg students are already benefiting from CityU's swift response to the findings of this review. The University plans to offer a smaller number of programmes which target new professional opportunities. Student intake numbers together with the financial viability and credentials of prospective entrants are now regularly reviewed. The expanded total enrolment of TPg students will not exceed 6 500, distributed across a smaller range of programmes, operating on a student: staff ratio of 7.9. A research component will become mandatory for all TPg students as DEC 2.0 is rolled out to them in 2016/17.

6.15    The Audit Panel acknowledges the substantial amount of work CityU has undertaken in reviewing its postgraduate provision, endorses the changes it has implemented in response to its findings, particularly in respect of the extension of DEC 2.0 to all TPgs and encourages the University to continue monitor and review the impact of these initiatives.

6.16    Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that CityU's realisation of its ambitious plans to expand and enhance its postgraduate provision is grounded in institution-wide analysis, critical self-reflection, analysis and strategic planning that is primarily student-centred and enhancement-orientated. Efforts are being made to safeguard academic standards and quality throughout the transitional period, though more needs be done to ensure that TPg cohorts derive as much benefit from CityU's QAE framework as other students.

**7a.    AUDIT THEME: ENHANCING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

7.1    CityU's approach to enhancing the student learning experience is embedded within the Strategic Plan 2015-2020, *Making a Difference through Excellence in Research and Professional Education,* which articulates five strategic themes (deepen discovery and innovation in professional education; expand interdisciplinarity and team-based research to address global challenges; strengthen internationalisation and global partnerships; enlarge capacity for

knowledge transfer and entrepreneurship; and enhance good governance and the CityU brand) to be applied across six strategic areas (student learning and career development; research and technology transfer; faculty and staff recruitment, reward and retention; campus planning and development; globalisation; and branding, image and culture).

7.2    In order to evaluate how effectively CityU is pursuing these strategic priorities, the Audit Panel scrutinised extracts of relevant documents, including the University's current and previous strategic plans and action plans; annual programme review reports; annual reports of academic units; agendas and minutes of CityU Quality Assurance Committee; documents describing DEC, including evidence of student achievements; and guidelines on academic advising.

7.3    The Audit Panel discussed CityU's various strategic priorities for enhancing the student learning experience with senior managers on several occasions. A meeting dedicated to exploring this audit theme was arranged, giving the Audit Panel the opportunity to explore the support offered to students by a range of non-academic professional teams.  The challenges and benefits of DEC were explored with academic managers, teaching staff and Ug students. The support  provided to students at all levels, via academic advisors and non-academic professional services was discussed with students and teaching staff including RPg supervisors.

7.4    In considering the theme of *Enhancing the student learning experience*, the Audit Panel focused primarily on three significant areas of activity: the DEC; the support of students by a range of non-academic professional service providers; and the development of academic advising.

7.5    In pursuing its strategy for enhancing the student learning experience, CityU identifies the further development of DEC and the improvement of the supporting infrastructure including campus-wide facilities such as Gateway Education Laboratory and the Innovations Commons, as a priority over the next few years.

7.6    DEC was introduced in 2011 as a new curriculum focused on discovery and innovation, with the goal of giving all students the opportunity to make an original discovery while they are studying at CityU.   The Audit Panel noted the consistent efforts that CityU has made to facilitate and promote the development of DEC including: dedicated workshops; reorganisation of EDGE to transform it into a conduit for DEC; and measures to encourage the creation of a new Gateway Education course with a DEC focus.   All Ug and RPg programmes are now required to have DEC-related objectives, activities and outcomes assessments.   The University is about to roll out DEC 2.0, which will include TPg students and encompasses both in-programme and out-of-programme learning, designed to have impact beyond the campus and

benefit society. The Audit Panel found much evidence and heard many examples of student achievement that demonstrate the success of DEC in enhancing students' learning experience. The Audit Panel therefore commends DEC, which provides all Ug and RPg students with the opportunity to create new knowledge during their studies at CityU. The Audit Panel observed, however, that there is a tendency for staff and students to see DEC as an end in itself rather than as a significant means for students to achieve the relevant set of overarching graduate outcomes. For this reason, the Audit Panel underscores the recommendation made above, under *Academic standards*, (see para 2.5 above) that CityU clarify and communicate effectively to all stakeholders the status of the graduate outcomes as the overarching framework for student achievement and the contributory role of DEC and other curricular and co-/extra-curricular activity in enabling students to achieve them.

7.7    In support of DEC, the University remains committed to establishing and developing campus-wide DEC-specific facilities to foster creativity and facilitate the realisation of ideas, such as the Gateway Education Laboratory, established in 2013, and the Innovations Commons, established in 2014. Teaching and non-academic professional staff whom the Audit Panel met spoke highly of the help the Gateway Education Laboratory provides to both staff and students, for example in developing protocols for the development of products. The Audit Panel commends the concerted effort of staff, students and other stakeholders of CityU to facilitating innovation among students and staff across a range of disciplines, and in particular the contribution made by the Gateway Education Laboratory, the Innovation Commons, the Knowledge Transfer Office, and the Computing Service Centre.

7.8    In addition to these services and facilities, CityU has put in place a range of structured co-/extra-curricular activities to enhance the student learning experience. The University states clearly that these activities are formulated within an OBTL framework geared towards achievement of ideal graduate attributes. Conversations with both local and non-local students made it clear that these activities are supported efficiently and effectively by a range of highly motivated student services offices. The Audit Panel commends CityU's network of student services, which are all working in same direction to provide proactive and flexible support that are highly valued by students at all levels.

7.9    CityU introduced an academic advising scheme in 2012 to ensure that students could take full advantage of the new four-year degree, which, *inter alia,* offers greater freedom to Ug students to design bespoke programmes of study. The scheme is devolved operationally to academic units. It is supported by a central coordination mechanism, via DegreeWorks software, that enables students to monitor their progress and facilitates interactions between students and advisors. The Audit Panel heard from teaching staff

and students whom they met that the academic advising system works well within departments and programmes. The Audit Panel discovered, however, that some students lack confidence about identifying the appropriate source of advice, notably in respect of accessing courses in another department or College/School. The Panel therefore suggests that CityU address this issue.

7.10 CityU systematically gathers and processes evidence at different points of the academic year, to evaluate the initiatives it is taking to enhance the quality of the student experience. For example, programmes comment on DEC in their annual reports as does EDGE and DEC outcomes are systematically tracked across colleges and schools. Data gathered about the number of patents filed with students as co-inventors serve as another indicator of the success of DEC. In 2014, a review of the academic advising system demonstrated that 90% of students are accessing DegreeWorks at least once per semester and the vast majority have met their advisors at least once. More broadly, the student learning experience survey and learning experience survey for postgraduates are used as part of the overall statistics databank and used to add value to the quality of learning.

7.11 Mechanisms to trigger enhancement are built routinely into annual and periodic review processes, while new initiatives like DEC and academic advising are also subject to dedicated trouble-shooting and enhancement-orientated reviews post-implementation. DEC, for example encountered initial difficulties in matching supply and demand in relation to courses, which were resolved through early review. The Audit Panel also noted that the University had undertaken a review of its academic advising systems in 2014 and identified both best practice and shortcomings. It was clear that subsequent dissemination of the findings, widespread discussion and the establishment of a formal two-year reporting cycle have led to improvements, such as the early warning system for low achieving students and the training sessions for student mentors and advisors.

7.12 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that CityU regards the continuous enhancement of the student learning experience as a matter of significant strategic importance, particularly in respect of DEC. The two initiatives highlighted in this section of the report have both benefited from the following features: intelligent planning and preparation; operationalisation that sets high minimum standards while accommodating local customisation; and searching post-implementation critical review and enhancement.

## 7b. AUDIT THEME: GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS: STRATEGIES AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

7.13 CityU has articulated an ambitious global engagement strategy, predicated on the four principles of destination, community, perspective and research. The University aspires to become a global destination for quality professional

education; to build a faculty that has an impact on the international community through its engagement in global issues; to develop students' international perspective; and to promote professional programmes and research initiatives that address critical global issues. Three further strategic goals have been identified in relation to outreach and visibility; students' international perspectives, global awareness and multicultural sensitivity; and diversity of staff and students.

7.14    In order to evaluate how effectively CityU is pursuing these strategic priorities, the Audit Panel scrutinised extracts of relevant documents, including the Global Engagement Strategy; the University's current and previous strategic plans and action plans; CityU's ADP 2012-15; information about academic collaborations with institutions overseas and in the Mainland; and statistical data about international students and staff and inbound exchange students. The Audit Panel also requested, and was provided with, documents illustrating the modernisation of curricula to include a global focus and details about the role of Associate/Assistant Dean (Internationalisation).

7.15    The Audit Panel discussed CityU's various strategic priorities for global engagements with senior managers and deans on several occasions. The quality assurance of offshore programmes and the selection of overseas partners for student exchange and joint programmes was explored in meetings with staff responsible for QAE who also commented on the role of EAAs in providing a form of international benchmarking. A meeting dedicated to exploring this audit theme was arranged, giving the Audit Panel the opportunity to explore the support offered to students by a range of non-academic professional teams. This quality of this support was discussed further in meetings with students. Students at all levels shared their experiences of the integration of local and non-local students on-campus while internationalisation of the curriculum was discussed with senior managers, academic managers and teaching staff.

7.16    Under the new Strategic Plan 2015-2020, seven new initiatives have been deployed, focusing on programme review against international excellence; expansion of joint degree programmes; increased effectiveness of international exchange and internship programmes; enhanced intake quality and diversity of international student body; redevelopment of University staff quarters; promotion of student-initiated projects to deepen internationalisation and integration; and strengthened industry and higher education partnerships to enrich teaching and learning.

7.17    The Audit Panel found much evidence of CityU's recent and continuing efforts to achieve ever more challenging goals in respect of global engagements. The success of the five-year review of academic excellence against international standards has already been discussed earlier in this report (see para 5.7 above). The transition to EAAs, many of whom are

international experts from prestigious overseas institutions, together with the development of collaborative degree programmes with international universities, have brought additional benefits in terms of adding an international perspective to CityU's operations and have facilitated international benchmarking of academic standards and quality, leading to enhancement of provision.

7.18 Senior managers, academic managers, staff responsible for QAE, non-academic professional staff and RPg supervisors whom the Audit Panel met, all provided broadly similar, general principles for the selection of international collaborative partners for joint programmes and/or exchange but almost none were able to direct the Audit Panel to any formal criteria or guidelines covering this process. The Audit Panel had sight of a Senate paper concerning criteria and procedures for approval of a new academic and/or research partnership and discovered that there exist strict criteria for joint PhD programmes and enabling guidelines, procedures and templates for establishing agreements of cooperation and academic exchange with local, Mainland and overseas institutions. The Audit Panel encourages the University to ensure all staff are aware of these documents particularly in light of the planned expansion of joint degrees, exchanges and internships.

7.19 The Audit Panel found much evidence that Ug, RPg and, to a very limited extent, TPg students at CityU are already benefiting extensively from opportunities to undertake overseas exchanges and internships. The University has 450 student exchange agreements with nearly 350 partner institutions in over 40 jurisdictions and is now working towards a target of 60% participation. Students whom the Audit Panel met spoke enthusiastically about their experiences and appreciated the extensive efforts CityU has made to secure scholarships for outbound students in financial difficulties.

7.20 In addition to expanding opportunities for international exchanges, internships, study visits and service-learning overseas, the Audit Panel noted evidence of CityU's commitment to internationalising the home campus by increasing both the proportion and the diversity of international staff and students. For example, the proportion of international staff has risen from 58% to 64% since 2010, while the proportion of international students has risen from 15% to 24% in the same period. The University has invested in academic, cultural and pastoral support for international students, including inbound exchange students who, for example, are provided with peer support. Both local and non-local students whom the Audit Panel met spoke very highly of the support they receive from the University when engaging in any form of international or intercultural activity. Once again the Audit Panel commends the network of student services, which are all working in the same direction to provide proactive and flexible support that is highly valued by students. In particular the Audit Panel highlights the work of the Global Services Office,

for the way it prepares, supports and debriefs students engaged in overseas activities.

7.21 The University recognises that internationalisation needs to extend beyond overseas experiences and the diversification of the staff and student body. Accordingly it endeavours to provide a global experience on campus for all students, including international students and local students who are unable to participate in overseas activities. This global experience can occur across core, co-/extra-curricular activities. The Audit Panel noted the effort being made in some quarters to integrate a global perspective within curriculum content and pedagogical practices, for example the way in which the Bachelor of Business Administration Global Business Systems Management programme has updated its curriculum. Frequently, however, responses to questions about this form of global engagement focused primarily on activities such as overseas exchanges and internships. The Audit Panel therefore affirms the progress the University is making to modernise the curriculum to include a global focus and encourages CityU to press on with this development.

7.22 CityU monitors activities related to global engagements, gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from a variety of sources to enhance programmes. There is evidence that numerical targets are being achieved: CityU is providing increased and increasing opportunities for local and Mainland students to participate in exchanges based on over 450 student exchange agreements with nearly 350 partner institutions in over 40 jurisdictions. Greater numbers of international students are enrolling for full-time study at CityU over the last five years. The Audit Panel also noted that the University is approaching its aspirational goal of a total number of outbound and inbound Ug exchange students of 2 500.

7.23 A three-year study of both incoming and outgoing exchange students demonstrates that the experiences of both groups are positive, highlighting, for example, adaptation to local cultures, development of a good sense of community with others, increased independence and language competence. KPIs of students studying on joint degrees are monitored by the School of Graduate Studies and show similar results.

7.24 The University's approach to and deployment of global engagements is encapsulated in its global engagement strategy that derives from CityU's strategic plans and ADPs. Metrics for evaluating progress and mechanisms for identifying, implementing and monitoring enhancements opportunities form an integral part of these documents which subject to the close scrutiny of senior management and built into the annual performance-based review of academic units.

7.25 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that CityU has made significant progress

in enhancing its global standing and improving the opportunities it provides to staff and students to benefit from a wide range of global engagements. Progress on modernising the curriculum to include a global focus is less well advanced than other components of the global engagement strategy and the University is encouraged to press on with this development.

## 8.   CONCLUSIONS

8.1     CityU celebrated 30 years as a University in 2014.   It has developed significantly over recent years at local, regional and international levels. There has been an emphasis on academic excellence, research performance, graduate employability and global engagement.   Under the guidance of its strategic plan and a recommendation from the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, the University implemented DEC as a path-breaking approach to innovation-orientated education.   These improvements are reflected in a rise in prominence in the past five years, locally and internationally, of which the University is quite rightly very proud.

8.2     CityU has strengthened its commitment to academic standards since the 2010 QAC Quality Audit.   It has aligned CILOs, PILOs and GAs and introduced annual programme and five-year reviews of academic excellence.   There is a strong emphasis on involving external stakeholders in QAE processes and international benchmarking of academic standards.   It is important that the University maintain this commitment to academic standards by ensuring systematic and consistent application of the quality assurance and enhancement cycle.

8.3     The success of CityU's innovative approach to learning, DEC, which provides both students and staff the opportunity to create original new knowledge, was evidenced in individual student achievement.   The next stage is for the University to develop processes that demonstrate how its activities are enhancing student achievement across all cohorts.

8.4     Since the 2010 QAC Quality Audit CityU has successfully planned, implemented and embedded substantial changes to the quality assurance of the undergraduate learning experience.   To derive maximum benefit from these systems, CityU is encouraged to ensure that it strikes an appropriate balance between respecting the autonomy of academic units and completing the quality cycle.

8.5     CityU's commitment to enhancing the student learning experience is reflected in activities it has initiated including DEC and the student academic advising service.   There was ample evidence provided demonstrating DEC student outcomes supported by co-curricular units and the highly motivated student services offices which are proactive, flexible and work cooperatively. However, the academic advising system needs further strengthening to assist

students seeking help.

8.6     CityU has a strong focus on global engagement which was evident from the number of students engaging in international exchange and placements.   It is making progress in modernising the curriculum to include a global focus.   It remains important for CityU to press forward with this process.

## APPENDIX A: CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG (CITYU)

## History

City Polytechnic of Hong Kong was established in 1984 with 1,278 students. The Polytechnic graduated its first PhD in 1991 and three years later launched the School of Graduate Studies. In 1994, the Polytechnic acquired university status as City University of Hong Kong with independent degree-awarding powers.

## Vision and Mission of the University

*Vision*

City University of Hong Kong aspires to become a leading global university, excelling in research and professional education.

*Mission*

City University of Hong Kong is committed to nurture and develop the talents of students and to create applicable knowledge in order to support social and economic advancement.

## Role Statement

CityU:

(a)  offers a range of professionally oriented programmes leading to the award of first degrees, and a small number of sub-degree programmes;

(b)  pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;

(c)  offers a number of taught postgraduate programmes and research postgraduate programmes in selected subject areas particularly in professional and applied fields;

(d)  emphasises application-oriented teaching, professional education and applied research;

(e)  aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength;

(f)  emphasises high value-added educational programmes for whole person development and professional competencies and skills;

(g)  maintains strong links with business, industry, professional sectors, employers as well as the community;

(h)     pursues actively deep collaboration in its areas of strength with other higher education institutions in Hong Kong or the region or more widely so as to enhance the Hong Kong higher education system;

(i)     encourages academic staff to be engaged in public service, consultancy and collaborative work with the private sector in areas where they have special expertise, as part of the institution's general collaboration with government, business and industry; and

(j)     manages in the most effective and efficient way the public and private resources bestowed upon the institution, employing collaboration whenever it is of value.

## Governance and Management

The University is governed by its Council, Court and the Senate.   The Council is the supreme governing body of the University and, as such, may exercise all powers conferred and shall perform all of the duties imposed on the University by the City University of Hong Kong Ordinance.

The President, as the chief executive officer, oversees all academic and management functions and chairs the President's Cabinet, the Management Board and the Senate. The Provost oversees all academic and associated developments, including faculty appointments, retention and promotion, and the delivery of the Strategic Plan.   The Provost is assisted by three Associate Provosts (Academic Planning and Undergraduate Education, Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning) and seven Deans of Colleges and Schools.    There are five Vice-Presidents (including the Chief-of-Staff) in the University who are responsible for student support; research enterprise; institutional administration; developing institutional relationships with external stakeholders; and strategic planning and policy development.

## Academic Organisation and Programmes of Study

The University is organised into three Colleges (i.e. College of Business; College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; and College of Science and Engineering) and five Schools (i.e. School of Creative Media; School of Energy and Environment; School of Law; School of Veterinary Medicine; and Chow Yei Ching School of Graduate Studies) offering Ug, TPg, RPg and PhD programmes.

## Staff and Students Numbers

In 2014/15, the University had 12 028 undergraduate and 794 postgraduate students in UGC-funded programmes.   Enrolments in self-financed programmes accounted for a further 6 570 students.   Teaching staff comprises 801 regular and 53 short-term contract staff to give a total of 854.   95.7% of teaching staff members have doctoral degrees.

**Revenue**

Consolidated income for the year 2014/15 was HK$4,538.4 million of which HK$2299.8 million (51%) came from government subvention and HK$2238.6 million (49%) from tuition, programmes, interest and net investment income, donations, auxiliary services and other income.

# APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

City University of Hong Kong (CityU) sincerely thanks the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) of the University Grants Committee (UGC), the Audit Panel, the Audit Coordinator and UGC colleagues for their highly professional conduct in completing the audit exercise. CityU values the detailed assessment of its strategic approach to quality assurance and of the initiatives derived therefrom.

CityU is pleased that the Audit Panel recognized the University's significant quality-related improvements since the last audit. The Audit Panel commended the University for the implementation of the Discovery-enriched Curriculum (DEC), a path-breaking approach to discovery- and innovation-oriented education as the academic blueprint of the University. The Audit Panel also noted "the consistent efforts CityU has made to facilitate and promote the development of DEC" and found much evidence and many examples of "student achievement that demonstrate the success of DEC in enhancing students' learning experience" (para. 7.6). In terms of setting and maintaining academic standards, the Audit Panel found evidence of the University's effectiveness in deploying its approach to setting academic standards via thorough processes of programme design and approval. Furthermore, the Audit Panel commended CityU for the carefully-nuanced graduate attributes which emphasize the clear differentiation across the achievements represented by undergraduate, taught postgraduate, professional doctoral and research doctoral awards (para. 2.5). The University shares the Audit Panel's view that the graduate attributes could be more effectively communicated to stakeholders by emphasizing the contributions of curricular and co-/extra-curricular activities in achieving them (para. 2.5).

The University is also pleased with the Audit Panel's commendation of CityU's network of student services. Student services "are all working in the same direction to provide proactive and flexible support" for the two audit themes of enhancing students' learning experience and global engagements (paras. 7.8 and 7.20). The Audit Panel further acknowledged the "concerted effort of staff, students and other stakeholders of CityU to facilitating innovation among students and staff across a range of disciplines" (para. 7.7) and found clear evidence of CityU's continuing efforts to achieve ever more challenging global engagement goals.

The University is committed to continuous quality enhancement and concurs with the Audit Panel's conclusion that "[The University] has strengthened its arrangements for setting, maintaining and safeguarding academic standards since the 2010 Quality Audit, particularly in relation to the alignment of CILOs, PILOs and GAs; annual programme and 5-year reviews of academic excellence; the involvement of external stakeholders in quality QAE; and benchmarking of academic standards" (para. 2.12). CityU is encouraged by the Audit Panel's affirmation of "the thorough action the University is taking to ensure that OBTL and CRA are fully understood and firmly embedded, within all departments at every level" (para. 4.8). Following the health check in 2014, the University articulated and enacted plans to ensure that OBTL and

CRA will remain fully embedded and implemented in its academic infrastructure.

The Audit Panel found strong evidence that the University has "raised the profile of quality assurance processes and established a framework that includes guidance, regular review and clear lines of responsibility" (Executive Summary (f)). The University is satisfied that its periodic review schemes are all fit for purpose with effective systems for seeking feedback and making improvements. The University nonetheless accepts that existing processes will be strengthened by the recommended establishment of a "mechanism to ensure that outcomes of annual programme and 5-year reviews of academic excellence, including the recommendations of EAA's, have been followed through and monitored systematically throughout colleges and schools" (para. 3.7).

Academic honesty is taken seriously by CityU staff and students. Students are made aware of it from their first day at the University and onwards. The Audit Panel observed that CityU has defined clear regulations which include procedures for preventing, detecting and dealing with breaches of its rules.   Measures for preventing infringements, which include a mandatory online "quiz", are comprehensive and engage students interactively. The University agrees that a system for monitoring and analyzing all reported breaches of academic honesty will be helpful (para. 2.11). The University will accordingly follow the Audit Panel's guidance in setting institutional standards for compliance, with an accompanying framework for ensuring that penalties are commensurate with the seriousness of the offence and consistent across the campus (para. 2.8).

The University welcomes the Audit Panel's recognition of the University's commitment to the continuing professional development of academic staff (para. 3.16). CityU concurs that its implementation of a performance-based pay-review mechanism can be augmented by the Audit Panel's recommendation for setting "minimum standards for training of staff who are new to teaching and/or supervision, and on establishing a framework of continuing professional development, tailored to both institutional and individual requirements, utilising processes of regular developmental review" (para. 3.18).   While the existing system is fit for purpose and provides the University with evidence that staff performance has been satisfactory, the Audit Panel's recommendation will yield consistency with the University's approach of setting minimum expectations.

CityU thanks the Audit Panel for commending the University on its enhancements to the student learning experience. However, the Audit Panel recommended that "the University locate or develop an appropriate method that is capable of substantiating the University's claim that its educational processes are the means by which value is added to cohorts of mid-range students" (para. 4.7). Further, the Audit Panel noted "a tendency to concentrate on outcome metrics at the expense of identifying and articulating the factors embedded within the processes of teaching, learning, assessment and support that are making a tangible difference to the achievements of mid-range students" (para. 4.7). The University notes the Audit Panel's detailed advice

on how to demonstrate that the added value to students is attributable to the excellent teaching and learning support provided. CityU believes that this kind of research is most appropriately pursued at the sector-wide level with leadership from the UGC.

Postgraduate education is a critical part of the institutional mission, and CityU aims to offer distinctive programmes that meet high international standards of programme quality. The Audit Panel acknowledged "the substantial amount of work CityU has undertaken in reviewing its postgraduate provision, endorses the changes it has implemented in response to its findings, particularly in respect of the extension of DEC 2.0 to all TPgs and encourages the University to continue to monitor and review the impact of these initiatives" (para. 6.15). The Audit Panel noted that "the curricular and co-/extra-curricular achievements of TPgs receive disproportionately less attention than that paid to Ug and RPg students" (Executive Summary (m)) and hence recommended that the University "determine the means by which it can more effectively enable, support, evaluate and celebrate the achievement of TPg students, taking full account of these characteristics" (para. 6.9). The University agrees with the Audit Panel's comments and will explore appropriate means to enhance opportunities for TPg student achievement.

As a University which aspires to become a leading global university, excelling in research and professional education, CityU views the Quality Audit exercise as a meaningful opportunity to identify areas for improvement. The Audit Panel's measured, professional advice is a valuable contribution to the further enhancement of the University's educational provision, for which CityU is grateful.

## APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMNS

| | |
|---|---|
| ADP | Academic development proposal |
| CityU | City University of Hong Kong |
| CILOs | Course intended learning outcomes |
| CRA | Criterion-referenced assessment |
| DEC | Discovery-enriched Curriculum |
| DEC 2.0 | Second phase of Discovery-enriched Curriculum |
| EAA | External academic advisor |
| EDGE | Office of Education Development and Gateway Education |
| GAs | Graduate attributes |
| ILOs | Intended learning outcomes |
| KPIs | Key performance indicators |
| OBTL | Outcome-based teaching and learning |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PILOs | Programme intended learning outcomes |
| QAC | Quality Assurance Council |
| QAE | Quality assurance and enhancement |
| RPg | Research postgraduate |
| SSCCs | Staff-Student Consultative Committees |
| TEAs | Teaching excellence awards |
| TLQ | Teaching and learning questionnaire |
| TPg | Taught postgraduate |
| Ug | Undergraduate |
| UGC | University Grants Committee |
| VLE | Virtual learning environment |

## APPENDIX D: CITYU AUDIT PANEL

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Co-Panel Chair)
Professor of Molecular Biophysics and Assistant Principal Researcher Development,
The University of Edinburgh

Emeritus Professor Joan Cooper (Co-Panel Chair)
Higher Education Consultant
Emeritus Professor, University of New South Wales

Professor Isabella Wai-yin Poon
Pro-Vice-Chancellor / Vice-President and Professor of the Department of Statistics,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor James Pounder
Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre and Adjunct Professor in Management,
Lingnan University

## Audit Coordinator

Dr Melinda Drowley
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 October 2016)

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr Lincoln LEONG Kwok-kuen, JP (Chairman) | Chief Executive Officer, MTR Corporation Limited |
| Professor Adrian K DIXON | Emeritus Professor of Radiology, University of Cambridge, UK |
| Dr Kim MAK Kin-wah, BBS, JP | Executive Director (Corporate Affairs), The Hong Kong Jockey Club |
| Professor PONG Ting-chuen | Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology |
| Mr Paul SHIEH Wing-tai, SC | Senior Counsel, Temple Chambers |
| Professor Jan THOMAS | Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Southern Queensland |
| Professor Amy TSUI Bik-may | Chair Professor of Language and Education, The University of Hong Kong |
| Dr Don WESTERHEIJDEN | Senior Research Associate, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente |

**Ex-officio Member**

| | |
|---|---|
| Dr Richard ARMOUR, JP | Secretary-General, UGC |

**Secretary**

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