

**Quality Assurance Council  
Third Audit Cycle**

**Report of Quality Audit of  
The Chinese University of  
Hong Kong**

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

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# **PREFACE**

## **Background**

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

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

Since its establishment, the QAC has conducted three rounds of quality audits, the first audit cycle between 2008 and 2011, the second audit cycle between 2015 and 2016 and the sub-degree audit cycle between 2017 and 2019. By virtue of the QAC's mission prior to 2016, the first and second audit cycles included only first degree level programmes and above offered by the UGC-funded universities. Following the Government's recognition of the need for greater systematisation and externality in monitoring the quality of sub-degree level programmes, as well as the recommendations from a Working Group comprising representatives from the UGC, the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications and the Heads of Universities Committee, the Government gave policy support for and invited the UGC to be the overseeing body of the quality audits of UGC-funded universities' sub-degree operations with the QAC as the audit operator in 2016.

## **Conduct of QAC Quality Audits**

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

- the conduct of universities' quality audits
- the promotion of quality assurance (QA) and enhancement and the spread of good practices

Audits are undertaken by Audit Panels appointed by the QAC from its Register of Auditors. An Audit Panel consists of four members, including two local members with a background in the Hong Kong higher education system and two non-local members with extensive and senior experience of quality and academic standards. Lay members may also be appointed where it is deemed appropriate.

The QAC's approach to quality audit is based on the principle of 'fitness for purpose'. Audit Panels assess the extent to which universities 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 a university'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 Third Audit Cycle Audit Manual which is available at <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/qac/manual/auditmanual3.pdf>.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This is the report of a quality audit of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK; the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the QAC. The report presents the findings of the quality audit, supported by detailed analysis and commentary on the Audit Criteria below as well as the Audit Theme on ‘Collection, Analysis and Usage of Data’.

- How effectively does the university review and enhance its framework for managing academic standards and academic quality?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance its arrangements for programme development and approval, monitoring and review?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance teaching and learning (T&L)?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance student learning assessment?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance its arrangement for supporting students?

The audit findings are identified as features of good practice and recommended actions for further consideration by the University.

The quality audit in the third audit cycle covers all academic programmes with degrees to be awarded by CUHK. As such, this report also covers the relevant academic programmes offered by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (CUHK(SZ)), which is a separately incorporated university established in Shenzhen on the Mainland through a Memorandum of Understanding between CUHK, Shenzhen University and the Shenzhen Municipal Government in accordance with the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools upon the approval by the Ministry of Education.

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

#### **1. Review and enhancement of the University’s framework for managing academic standards and academic quality**

The Audit Panel established that both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) demonstrate a strong commitment to reviewing and enhancing their frameworks for managing academic standards and quality. The CUHK Senate is the senior academic body which determines major academic decisions for both institutions, with all degrees being awarded in the name of CUHK. The organisational structure with Faculties/Schools and Departments, and a layer of key academic committees, assists with the implementation of the Strategic Plan and other University policies developed to help uphold standards and improve quality. Of particular note are the various review mechanisms such as the Visiting Committees (VComs) comprised of international experts, External Reviewers

(ERs) and External Examiners (EEs), and a regular schedule of activities, ranging from internal programme reviews to large-scale external faculty/school reviews, that provide valuable opportunities for benchmarking. The two universities have a robust policy framework in place that supports QA and enhancement. The extensive Quality Manuals (QMs) clearly set out significant academic policies. Both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) are characterised by a collegiate experience with the successful establishment of several on-campus colleges to support students' whole-person development.

## **2. Review and enhancement of the University's arrangements for programme development and approval, monitoring and review**

The Audit Panel confirmed that CUHK has a comprehensive, well-structured and mature process for programme development and approval, monitoring and review. There are clear and detailed procedures to ensure consistency in the planning, development and approval of new programmes, internal and external monitoring and programme review, ensuring quality and standards across the University's academic portfolio. Processes are supported by an internal governance framework which identifies appropriate levels of authority, accountability and responsibility across the structure of the University. These are well understood by staff and are effective in supporting the management and enhancement of quality and standards at programme level. Programme design for taught and research programmes is based on the University's outcomes-based approach, with graduate attributes for undergraduate (Ug), taught postgraduate (TPg) and research postgraduate (RPg) programmes at its core. Through the use of VComs, the composition of which includes local and international senior academics and practitioners, there is a clear commitment by the University to engage eminent external experts in periodic faculty/school review, with committees, through their comprehensive reports, not only assuring the University of quality and standards in relation to academic provision but also Faculty/School strategy, planning and research, which together gives CUHK oversight of the student experience.

## **3. Review and enhancement of teaching and learning**

Both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have effective policies in place, articulated in, for example, the respective QMs and the Virtual Teaching and Learning (VTL) Strategic and Action Plan, to ensure that T&L quality and research supervision meet a high standard. The Audit Panel established that there is effective use of student feedback at course and programme levels and this is used to inform academic staff, programme and faculty reviews on both universities and across all provision. Student feedback is supplemented with employer feedback, to ensure that the focus on graduate attributes is maintained. There are effective policies and procedures for appointment, induction, development, engagement, review and recognition of teaching staff. The Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research (CLEAR) and its equivalent at CUHK(SZ) offer a range of resources and activities to support staff while incentive mechanisms to recognise teaching and support staff include the Teaching Development and Language Enhancement Grant (TDLEG) that encourages external engagement. The University is encouraged to promote further enhancement of teaching quality through peer review of

teaching more widely in a targeted manner. Review of the quality of physical and digital learning environments and resources is effective, as evidenced by the responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic, new teaching facilities and environments provided, and the introduction of guidelines for VTL.

#### **4. Review and enhancement of student learning assessment**

The Audit Panel confirmed that the University has a well-developed approach to outcomes-based, criterion-referenced assessment, with programme and course learning outcomes, informed by graduate attributes, underpinning assessment design across all programmes. The University's policy on assessment, which includes the university-wide code of practice, is detailed and comprehensive in ensuring a robust and consistent approach across Faculties/Schools to assessment design, marking, moderation, determination of grades, feedback to students and academic appeals, and for UG programmes, honours classification. Grade descriptors form the basis of the University's criterion-referenced approach to assessment enabling a holistic evaluation of students' performance against agreed standards and providing a rubric for marking and moderation. The assessment policies and procedures focus on clarity and consistency on one hand, and afford flexibility to accommodate subject and programme needs on another to reflect the academic and professional environments of some students, including through greater use of online learning and assessment. The University has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, with students being informed through several mechanisms of the importance of academic honesty and the University's response should this be breached. Clear and helpful information is provided, both for students and staff, to support the University's assessment processes with a comprehensive range of online information to complement that available in printed media. Assessment design and processes across the University are overseen by a framework of management and deliberative structures which, together, result in a robust approach to academic governance of assessment.

#### **5. Review and enhancement of the University's arrangement for supporting students**

The Audit Panel established that CUHK provides high-quality support to students. Each area of student support has its relevant committees and responsible office(s). The extensive support system ensures students receive a wide range of services which effectively promote their personal, academic and professional development. Students at different levels of studies from both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) receive the necessary induction when they first enter the University. CUHK clearly articulates the goals and objectives of the non-credit co-curricular activities as part and parcel of the overall student learning experience for the achievement of the graduate attributes. CUHK is responsive to student feedback and requirements, as well as society needs in developing new support measures such as CUHK's Co-operative Education Programme (Co-op@CUHK), the university-wide, work-integrated education programme. The Audit Panel observed that the academic advisory system at both universities comprehensively covers all students, providing a multi-tiered means of identifying



students at risk and helping them to progress. The University has developed a Diversity and Inclusion Policy and established a Diversity and Inclusion Office. The Panel noted the introduction of the Guidelines for Inclusive Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment which identify additional support for students with special educational needs (SEN). Student representatives participate in more than 30 committees at different levels, though the University may wish to strengthen its provision of support and guidance for representatives.

## **6. The Audit Theme – Collection, analysis and usage of data**

The Audit Panel observed that CUHK and CUHK(SZ) systematically collect, analyse and use quantitative and qualitative data in planning, management, evaluation and enhancement of academic activities, though the former's approach, reflecting its comparative maturity, is better established. There is an impressive array of feedback and evaluation instruments in place to elicit information from students and these are operated throughout the student life cycle, from admission, across the programme, and both one and five years after graduation. The sources of data used in review processes include a substantial meta-analysis by CLEAR of all Ug programme, TPg programme and Sub-degree, Professional and Continuing Education Programme (SPCEP) review reports. At CUHK there is comprehensive analysis and reporting of academic key performance indicators (KPIs) and the University is implementing an automated, central data collection process which will enable better co-ordination of data for enhancement purposes. At CUHK(SZ) greater emphasis on analysis and sharing of student data analysis is planned with the strengthening of a Smart Campus project designed to improve data collection systems.

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Explanation of the audit methodology**

This is the report of a quality audit of CUHK by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the QAC. It is based on a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) which was prepared by CUHK and submitted to the QAC on 12 June 2023. Initial Private Meetings of Panel members were held on 14 and 15 August 2023 to plan for the audit visit and this was followed on 21 August 2023 by a Preparatory Meeting with the University to discuss the detailed arrangements.

The Audit Panel was able to scrutinise a range of relevant documentation provided by the University, including its SER and Core Information, Audit Trail documentation, and additional information provided before the Audit Visit.

The Audit Panel conducted an Audit Visit with CUHK between 16 and 27 October 2023. Panel members met with the Vice-Chancellor and President and his senior team and deans; President and senior staff at CUHK(SZ), a representative group of students on taught programmes; a representative group of RPg students; academic managers including heads of departments and programme leaders; a group of academic staff; RPg managers and supervisors; external stakeholders; and staff from academic support services.

The Audit Panel evaluates:

- How effectively does the university review and enhance its framework for managing academic standards and academic quality?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance its arrangements for programme development and approval, monitoring and review?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance T&L?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance student learning assessment?
- How effectively does the university review and enhance its arrangement for supporting students?

The Panel identifies its audit findings, including features of good practice and recommended actions for further consideration by the University.

## **Introduction to the University and its role and mission**

Founded in 1963, CUHK is a comprehensive research university with a global aim to combine tradition with modernity, and to bring together China and the West. CUHK's mission states that the University is committed to 'assist in the preservation, creation, application and dissemination of knowledge by teaching, research and public service in a comprehensive range of disciplines, thereby serving the needs and enhancing the well-being of the citizens of Hong Kong, China as a whole, and the wider world community.'

The vision states that the University aims ‘to be acknowledged locally, nationally and internationally as a first-class comprehensive research university whose bilingual and multicultural dimensions of student education, scholarly output and contribution to the community consistently meet standards of excellence’. The CUHK Strategic Plan for 2021–2025 (*CUHK 2025 Excellence with Purpose and Responsibility*) (CUHK 2025) addresses the seven ‘key areas’ of Education, Student Experience, Research and Innovation, Talent Attraction and Development, Global Engagement, Alumni Engagement and Institutional Advancement, and Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development.

The University has a main campus in Shatin, Hong Kong as well as a number of other local campuses. CUHK(SZ), which is a separately incorporated university founded in Shenzhen on the Mainland in accordance with the Regulations of the People’s Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools which exists in a joint venture with CUHK, was established in 2014. CUHK(SZ) also offers academic programmes leading to the awarding of degrees by CUHK.

Across its eight Faculties of Arts, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Science and Social Science, CUHK currently offers a total of 80 Ug programmes, 18 Double Major Programmes (DMPs), 12 Dual Undergraduate Degree Programmes, 126 TPg programmes, eight postgraduate (Pg) Diploma programmes, and 97 RPg programmes. 158 SPCEPs are offered by five Sub-degree Providing Units. All full-time teaching staff, with a few exceptions of teachers belonging to research institutes/centres, and full-time Ug students are affiliated with both a Faculty and a College, with the latter supporting students’ whole-person development.

As of December 2022, CUHK had 17 323 students enrolled on Ug programmes, 3 164 students on RPg programmes, and 11 008 students on in its TPg programmes. Among the total figure of 31 495 students, 9 339 (30%) are non-local students coming from 69 countries around the world. As of June 2022, CUHK had 8 990 students enrolled in the SPCEPs. In June 2022, CUHK was employing 1 661 academic staff, 1 695 research staff, 434 professional staff and 4 301 administrative, technical and support staff. In December 2022, CUHK(SZ) had 6 538 Ug students, 2 309 on TPg programmes, 172 MPhil students and 624 PhD students. Of the 9 643 total, 362 were international students. In the same timeframe, CUHK(SZ) was employing 455 academic staff, 234 research staff, 81 teaching support staff and 749 administrative staff.

## **1. REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY’S FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ACADEMIC QUALITY**

1.1 CUHK is governed by a Council, with the Vice-Chancellor and President and their cabinet overseeing all units and offices. The highest academic authority is the Senate. CUHK(SZ) was founded as a separately incorporated university established in Shenzhen on the Mainland through a Memorandum of Understanding between CUHK, Shenzhen University and the Shenzhen

Municipal Government in accordance with the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools upon the approval by the Ministry of Education, and commenced operations in 2014. The President of CUHK(SZ) is the chief academic and administrative officer and reports directly to the Governing Board which is chaired by the CUHK Vice-Chancellor and President. CUHK(SZ) reports all academic matters to the Senate of CUHK through its Academic Board at CUHK(SZ). There is now close collaboration between CUHK and CUHK(SZ) at various levels.

- 1.2 CUHK has a detailed and comprehensive Strategic Plan spanning 2021-2025 (i.e. CUHK 2025) which commits the University to seven key areas: delivering education that fosters whole-person development; providing student experience that widens students' horizons; undertaking research and innovation that creates social impact; fostering global engagements; nurturing human capital that values ingenuity and diversity; strengthening alumni engagement and institutional advancement; and fulfilling social responsibility and supporting sustainable development. Sections of CUHK 2025 are annually reviewed by relevant committees – for example, the Education Section is monitored by Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning (SCTL) – and reported to Council, which also reviews mid-term progress. CUHK(SZ) has independently developed its own mission, vision statement and a Five-Year Academic Plan 2023-2027 (the Academic Plan) which is charting the strategic direction for its academic development. While the two high-level strategic plans exist relatively independently, there are a number of strategic Memoranda of Understanding or Agreements between CUHK and CUHK(SZ), and these reflect a common strategic vision, shared objectives and collaborative endeavours. To improve liaison between the two universities a Task Force on Collaboration between CUHK and CUHK(SZ) has been established. The Academic Plan is subject to robust discussion at the Task Force with opportunity for input from both sides.
- 1.3 Academic governance and management operate through a range of cascading committees in each of the two universities. At CUHK, two of Senate's subcommittees, SCTL and Senate Committee on SPCEP, are tasked with developing and implementing action plans to deliver CUHK 2025. The Education Section of the Strategic Plan is reviewed by the SCTL on an annual basis. The T&L governance structure has facilitated a number of improvements, with the revamp of the University Core Curriculum Requirements as one example. At CUHK(SZ) the Academic Board is the senior academic body and it submits an Annual Report and an Annual Plan to the CUHK Senate.
- 1.4 There are coherent, well-developed policy frameworks and management structures in place at all levels across both CUHK and CUHK(SZ). For the most part, the two universities have independently operating approaches though there are some examples of cross-university relations. These include the Undergraduate Examinations Board (UEB) which submits recommendations to

CUHK Senate on the classification of bachelor's degrees for both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) students and liaison between the two CLEARs that cooperate closely.

- 1.5 CUHK has eight Faculties, 59 academic Departments/Schools, the School of Continuing and Professional Studies (CUSCS), and interdisciplinary research institutes/centres. The University is also characterised by its collegiate experience with all full-time teaching staff, with a few exceptions of teachers belonging to research institutes/centres, and full-time Ug students being affiliated with both a Faculty and one of nine Colleges. CUHK(SZ) has six Schools headed by Deans, a Graduate School and, as with CUHK, Colleges. Schools are responsible for delivering academic programmes, conducting research, advising students and engaging in service activities. Each student belongs to one of the five Colleges which provide residential accommodation, pastoral care, whole-person education and extra-curricular activities. Both institutions have rich research cultures which benefit the growing number of research students.
- 1.6 CUHK has a systematic and comprehensive set of strategies for monitoring and reviewing performance. The University adopts an externally driven performance monitoring process comparing its performance with benchmarking data from other UGC-funded institutions based on the University Accountability Agreement (UAA). Internal monitoring of performance at CUHK is undertaken by the University Planning Office (UPO) through the University's Data Dashboard which informs the UAA. University KPIs, including specific academic KPIs are reported in the UAA annual report.
- 1.7 There is also a range of internal annual and periodic reports including regular programme reviews, re-approval processes for all self-financed TPg programmes and SPCEPs at Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) Levels 4-6 and performance-based quota allocation for RPg programmes, all of which offer examples of enhancement. In addition, professional programmes undergo periodic accreditation reviews. Performance at department and programme level is the responsibility of Faculty Deans. At the highest academic level University performance is monitored by Senate through receipt of annual reports from the key Senate committees and the Library as well as CUHK(SZ).
- 1.8 Review and monitoring procedures are strengthened by the external benchmarking intrinsic to the EE and VCom processes in place at CUHK and CUHK(SZ), with the latter also using ERs. The reviews and resultant action plans contribute to a cycle of continuous enhancement. The Audit Panel formed a particularly positive view of the work of the VComs in delivering rigorous and in-depth review as well as valuable external benchmarking (see paragraphs 2.8-2.9). In addition, the CUHK CLEAR conducts a major meta-analysis of large numbers of Ug and TPg programme reviews with a view to identifying good practices and areas for improvement in T&L and programme management (see paragraphs 2.9, 3.6 and 6.6).

- 1.9 CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have a clear and extensive policy framework supporting QA and promoting quality enhancement. There are comprehensive QMs separately covering Ug/Pg programmes at CUHK, SPCEPs at CUHK, and provision at CUHK(SZ). The QMs are augmented by major QA policies including a Code of Practice for TPg and RPg studies, Integrated Frameworks for Curriculum Development and Review, and Assessment Policies for SPCEPs and taught programmes. Selected T&L policies are fully articulated in the CUHK Academic Staff Handbook and in the CUHK(SZ) Teachers' Guide. Recent enhancements include a section in the QM on e-learning development, Guidelines on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessments and the new Guidelines on Approval for Virtual Teaching and Learning Courses in Taught Programmes. Each of Senate's sub-committees submits an annual self-reflective report on its activities to Senate.
- 1.10 Academic standards for Ug, TPg and RPg provision at CUHK are guided by the graduate attributes which cover knowledge, professional and generic skills, and attitudes and values. The Ug graduate attributes were updated in CUHK 2025 to place additional emphasis on global readiness, crossing knowledge boundaries, and making contributions to society. The strengthened approach to students' language learning through the English Across the Curriculum initiative is a consequent example of enhancement. Academic standards of programmes are assured by the University's continuous enhancement of its academic portfolio. Accreditation by professional organisations assures that students fulfilling the requirements of CUHK study programmes have met employers' expectations.
- 1.11 CUHK Senate and its major sub-committees also play a crucial and rigorous role in the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The UEB assesses the academic performance of Ug students, the academic performance of Pg students is overseen by the Executive Committee of the Graduate Council (GCExCo) and RPg student performance is further monitored through annual progress reports by supervisors and Heads of Graduate Divisions and scrutinised by the Graduate School. Benchmarking of academic standards is included in the role of external experts in the VCom process. CUHK(SZ) states that it strives to achieve the same level of academic excellence and innovation as CUHK, by adopting the same academic standards, a three-tier external review system and a robust internal QA system. Each School at CUHK(SZ) benchmarks its programmes and staff recruitment with CUHK and with top-tier international universities.
- 1.12 Ug and TPg student admission at CUHK is overseen by the Senate Committee on Undergraduate Admissions and GCExCo respectively. The quality of student admission for SPCEPs is assured by Faculties and CUSCS. At CUHK(SZ) student admission at all levels is overseen by government educational authorities and relevant university committees including the Committee on Undergraduate Admission and Entrance Examination. CUHK undertakes an annual analysis of Ug and TPg student admission and intake quality. It includes benchmarking and longitudinal tracking and identifies potential enhancements to admissions

practice and outcomes. In that context, CUHK has taken steps to systematically reach the 25% goal of non-local students. The quality of admissions at CUHK(SZ) has steadily improved and have ranked first among universities in Guangdong Province for seven consecutive years.

- 1.13 The Audit Panel was able to affirm that both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) demonstrate a strong commitment to reviewing and enhancing their frameworks for managing academic standards and quality. The CUHK Senate is the senior academic body which determines major academic decisions for both universities, with all degrees being awarded in the name of CUHK. The organisational structure with Faculties/Schools and Departments, and a layer of key academic committees, assists with the implementation of the Strategic Plan and other University policies developed to help uphold standards and improve quality. Of particular note are the various review mechanisms, such as the VComs comprised of international experts and EEs, and a regular schedule of activities, ranging from internal programme reviews to large-scale external faculty/school reviews, that provide valuable opportunities for benchmarking. The two universities have a robust policy framework in place that supports QA and enhancement. The extensive QMs clearly set out the most important policies. Both universities are characterised by a collegiate experience with the successful establishment of on-campus colleges to support students' whole-person development.

## **2. REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S ARRANGEMENTS FOR PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL, MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- 2.1 CUHK has a clear set of general academic regulations governing full-time Ug studies and frameworks that articulate the requirements in terms of programme design and structure for TPg programmes, the Dual Degree Programmes (DDPs), DMPs and RPg programmes. Comprehensive Ug and Pg student handbooks inform students of the core requirements of their programme. There is a structured and hierarchical system of committees for the approval of new programmes, including major modifications to programmes. CUHK maintains close links with universities and organisations around the world, especially in Mainland China through collaborative learning and teaching activities against which it benchmarks its programmes.
- 2.2 CUHK's QA framework for programme development, approval, monitoring and review is articulated in the mandatory Integrated Framework for Curriculum Development and Review for Ug programmes, TPg programmes and SPCEPs. Each Framework provides details of programme and course planning, course review, programme self-evaluation and programme review, based on CUHK's outcomes-based approach which has at its core, graduate attributes and the learning needs of students. Responsibility for the review and updating of the Integrated Frameworks lies with SCTL and the Senate Committee on SPCEP.

- 2.3 The procedures for programme development, approval and review are described in detail in the QMs for Ug and Pg programmes, CUHK(SZ) programmes and SPCEPs. The Manuals are comprehensive and complemented by a range of appendices related to programme design and approval, monitoring and review and programme assessment, which provide a more granular level of detail for staff. The academic standards of programmes are overseen by Senate, Senate committees, Graduate Council and Faculty Boards, the Academic Board for CUHK(SZ), and for SPCEPs, the Senate Committee on SPCEP.
- 2.4 Graduate attributes, a key reference point in programme design and review for Ug, TPg and RPg programmes, are set out in the QM. The attributes underpin course and programme learning outcomes, teaching, learning and assessment in an ‘outcomes-based’ approach to curriculum design that is articulated in CUHK’s model of an aligned curriculum. Graduate attributes are reviewed as required with reference to students’ learning needs and CUHK priorities, most recently being updated to reflect the University’s aspirations as articulated in the CUHK 2025. Reflecting on feedback from the QAC Second Audit Cycle, CUHK developed and implemented a clear Policy on External Referencing to Hong Kong Qualifications Framework. The policy articulates the relationship between the HKQF and CUHK’s graduate attributes for Ug, TPg and RPg programmes. These are mapped against the Generic Level Descriptors for Levels 5, 6 and 7 and used to determine programme learning outcomes, which in turn inform the content of the curriculum and assessment design. The Audit Panel considers **the comprehensive embedding of graduate attributes in programme design, monitoring and review, and the extent to which they are aligned with, and have a positive impact on, learning, teaching and assessment in taught and research programmes, equipping students to meet societal needs, to be a feature of good practice.**
- 2.5 CUHK has a comprehensive and rigorous multi-layered process for the development and approval of new programmes, including DDPs and DMPs. Department Boards propose new programmes to respective Faculty Boards, with approved proposals being submitted to the Senate Academic Planning Committee (SAPC) who considers fit with CUHK strategic objectives and priorities and, dependent upon the outcome, progress to the formal planning and approval process. Proposals for new TPg programmes are considered by the GCExCo, the Self-financed Taught Postgraduate Programmes Quota Allocation Committee and Resource Allocation Committee. At CUHK(SZ), proposals for new programmes are considered by the Joint Committee on Education and Academic Board before being considered by CUHK’s SAPC and Senate. Programmes at CUHK(SZ), which are benchmarked against similar CUHK programmes additionally require approval by the Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China. For SPCEPs, responsibility for programme approval resides with the Senate via the Senate Committee on SPCEP and SAPC.



- 2.6 CUHK's DDPs enable students to obtain two degrees, one from CUHK and one from another university by undertaking at least two years' studies at each. DDPs are an integral part of CUHK's strategic goals to enhance the University's competitiveness and increase students' exposure to a global network, a key aspiration of CUHK 2025. In developing DDPs, which have a clear framework, CUHK takes into account the international reputation of the partner university, the choice of participating programmes and their strength in relevant disciplines, with due diligence on proposed partners being considered by the Committee on Collaborative Programmes. A further development in CUHK's academic portfolio, is the introduction of DMPs, a model that enables students to graduate with one degree in two major subjects. In the 2023/24 academic year a collaborative DMP between CUHK and CUHK(SZ) has been introduced, the first such programme of its kind in Hong Kong and the Greater Bay Area, to support the ethos of 'One Country, Two Systems'.
- 2.7 CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have a well-established VCom system which reports to senior management on departmental strategy, planning, standards and research and provides assurance on the quality of T&L through a comprehensive review of a Faculty/School and its Departments. The system provides an integrated approach to each review, informed by a detailed self-assessment report and internal programme review reports. The Chair and members of the VCom, which includes international senior academics and practitioners, are appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and President. VCom reports, which are comprehensive and detailed accounts of key recommendations for Faculties/Schools are sent to the Vice-Chancellor and President with the Education Section being considered by the SCTL and the Resource Allocation Committee in the programme review process. In response to the report, the Faculty/School is required to develop an action plan endorsed by the Faculty/School Board, progress against which is monitored through a mid-term review report and at the next full programme review. External members of VComs commented on the comprehensive nature and robustness of the process, with members receiving informal feedback at the end of the process on outcomes. **The Audit Panel considers the ways in which the comprehensive and effective international VCom system informs Faculty/School strategy and planning, helps assure the University's quality and standards through external benchmarking, and consequently promotes enhancement of the whole student experience, to be a feature of good practice.**
- 2.8 Ug and TPg programmes are reviewed internally by CUHK and CUHK(SZ) every four to six years on a cycle determined by the SCTL and Academic Board respectively, and prior to a VCom visit, as far as possible. Within programmes, courses are reviewed regularly by teachers at CUHK and ERs at CUHK(SZ). Themes for programme review are discussed and agreed by SCTL. Reviews are informed by an extensive and detailed self-assessment document that includes a review of the programme learning outcomes and external benchmarking of quality and standards. Programme self-evaluation reports and review are

informed by data from a variety of sources including that provided by CLEAR, international trends, market needs, university priority areas, emerging research areas and student feedback. Reports are submitted to the SCTL and Resource Allocation Committee, and at CUHK(SZ), the Academic Board. The Review Panel's report includes recommendations for the VCom, a review of progress and improvements made since last review, a judgement on T&L quality, processes for T&L enhancement and benchmarking, with programmes being required to respond to reports with a detailed action plan. Self-funded TPg programmes approved by the Senate have a maximum validity of six years. Re-approval for continuation and the period of validity of such re-approval will depend on the review conducted by the Committee on Re-Approval of Self-financed Taught Postgraduate Programmes. Programme review for SPCEPs is undertaken on a cycle determined by the Senate Committee on SPCEP, with each programme review report initially reviewed by that committee. All programme review reports are then analysed through the CLEAR meta-analysis for final consideration by the Senate Committee on SPCEP. The outcomes of the programme review for SPCEPs will inform the recommendations made by the Committee on Re-approval of SPCEPs, which will also be considered by SAPC and Senate. Following each cycle of programme review, CLEAR at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) undertake a meta-analysis of all programme review reports to identify areas for improvement and good practice, with reports being shared and collated. At CUHK and CUHK(SZ) RPg programmes are reviewed using VCom visits informed by self-reflection and programme review.

- 2.9 Minor changes to Ug and TPg programmes at CUHK are considered and approved by the relevant Faculty Board with major revisions requiring approval by Senate, and if applicable, the GCEXCo after endorsement of the Faculty Board. If the change involves a General Education programme, endorsement is required by the Senate Committee on General Education. Whilst major programme changes still require the approval of Senate, CUHK(SZ) Academic Board can now approve minor programme changes. The Senate Committee on SPCEP considers requests for minor programme changes and makes recommendations for major programme changes to SAPC for endorsement and Senate for approval.
- 2.10 The Audit Panel found clear evidence that CUHK has a comprehensive, well-structured and developed process for programme development and approval, monitoring and review that are also followed by CUHK(SZ). Policies and procedures are detailed in ensuring consistency in the planning, development and approval of new programmes, internal and external monitoring and review which ensure quality and standards across CUHK's academic portfolio. Programme design for taught and research programmes is based on CUHK's outcomes-based approach which has at its core, the desired graduate attributes. The VCom system shows a clear commitment by CUHK to engaging eminent external experts in periodic faculty/school review across taught and research programmes. Programme review and VCom reports are comprehensive and through their recommendations, result in improvements in practice and enhancement of the

student experience, with VCom reports being considered at the highest level within CUHK.

- 2.11 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the setting and maintaining of academic standards through programme design, approval, monitoring and review is robust, well developed and works to promote effective enhancement at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ). The Audit Panel noted a clear and comprehensive articulation of processes for assuring and reviewing quality and academic standards in the QMs and Integrated Frameworks for Curriculum Development and Review and in CUHK's graduate attributes which are mapped onto the level descriptors in the HKQF and to which programme learning outcomes are closely aligned.

### **3. REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- 3.1 In terms of policies for physical and digital T&L, there are distinct and comprehensive QMs for SPCEPs, Ug/TPg/RPg and for CUHK(SZ), but they are based on common principles. All three manuals are extensive and comprehensive, containing relevant policies and practices on T&L. They are regularly updated, although the schedule is not specified, and are accessible to teachers and students.
- 3.2 A new VTL Strategic and Action Plan has been formulated to replace the previous eLearning policy. The University has also developed Guidelines for Inclusive Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment which, as noted in Criterion 5, pay specific attention to the needs of students with SEN. There is a range of more specialised T&L policies, including an eLearning Student Ambassadors Programme, designed to support and enhance understanding of eLearning systems and technologies for T&L, CUSCS programmes engaging in the wider and better use of VTL, and a further expansion of hybrid mode of teaching to meet learner needs and promote VTL. CUHK(SZ) introduced a series of eLearning policies in response to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which sought to accelerate the application of modern technologies in T&L. More generally, T&L policies were updated in March 2022.
- 3.3 The University employs various means to evaluate T&L quality and research supervision. To obtain student feedback on T&L quality at the course level the Course and Teaching Evaluation (CTE) questionnaire is used across all provision and on both universities. CUHK and CUHK(SZ) use the Early Feedback Collection System to identify potential problems in Ug and TPg courses and address problems at an early stage. CUHK(SZ) also uses the CTE data for yearly course reviews and this, as noted at paragraph 3.12, plays an important role in staff review, where action is taken when CTE scores are low or fluctuating. While the Audit Panel noted the collection and analysis of CTE scores, the University might wish to consider the value of benchmarking of CTE results across the institution, along the lines of what is already done for the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ). Currently CTE outcomes are shared with students at faculty-level Staff-Student Committees though the Audit Panel

suggests that the University might consider extending provision of outcomes to all students.

- 3.4 For RPg students in CUHK and CUHK(SZ), in addition to the CTE tracking which applies to required courses, RPg committees in Departments ensure prompt handling of other programme issues. Supervision is tracked through yearly progress reports and programme reviews that reference the exit survey and which are handled by GCEXCo for triangulation.
- 3.5 The SEQ is used to provide student feedback about T&L quality, directly relevant to programme review, for Ug and TPg programmes at CUHK and CUHK(SZ). For all full-time Higher Diploma programmes, the Sub-degree Student Experience Questionnaire is conducted to collect student feedback. The CLEAR at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) provide helpful benchmarking of programmes against the whole Faculty/School and the relevant university. The Audit Panel noted evidence of this having a useful impact on programme reviews with the SEQ results driving change, an example being the scale for 'relationship with other students' scoring low, and the Faculty of Medicine responding to this.
- 3.6 Other means of evaluating T&L quality include exit surveys across all levels and universities, which are used to inform T&L quality in reviews and link to the graduate attributes, and a process to collect indirect evaluation against learning outcomes for non-credit-bearing co-curricular courses. CUHK also collects information from employers who host Ug internships and Co-op@CUHK, the university-wide, work-integrated education programme, as well as accreditation processes where appropriate. Both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) conduct alumni surveys five years after graduation from Ug programmes. These various sources of feedback help ensure that the graduate attributes remain suitable as the driver of outcomes-based assessment linked to those attributes.
- 3.7 The Audit Panel was able to establish that there is an effective, systematic student feedback collection cycle in CUHK, while CUHK(SZ) is continuing to develop its collection and use of student feedback on learning and teaching. The Panel also considered that the University might want to consider making better use of the extensive data available by increasing evaluation of T&L against external benchmarks. In general, however, both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) evaluate T&L quality and research supervision from multiple perspectives, with robust, regular review and useful benchmarking processes.
- 3.8 Policies and procedures for staff appointment, induction and development at CUHK and CUHK(SZ) are fit for purpose. A number of new staff recruitment schemes have been introduced to attract and develop talent particularly aimed at senior and early career scholars and scientists. Induction for new staff includes a one-day orientation programme organised by CLEAR which aims to welcome and familiarise new academic staff with the University and its services. Teaching staff at the rank of Assistant Professor or below have to complete the Professional

Development Course (PDC), which focuses on teaching strategies and course planning, pedagogical advances, and other T&L themes. In CUHK, completion of the compulsory induction programme is one of the considerations for contract renewal. Part-time staff have full access to this support and in some Faculties there is careful checking of new part-time teachers to ensure that they are ready for teaching. CLEAR also offers professional development and training for teaching staff, research supervisors, and teaching support staff. CLEAR at CUHK(SZ) follows the CUHK model and processes.

- 3.9 Those who are new to research supervision must complete an additional PDC component, delivered by CLEAR at CUHK and CUHK(SZ), covering RPg supervision. New RPg supervisors then co-supervise until their first completion with training offered by CLEAR. CLEAR also offers training for RPg students who will teach though the Panel noted that this is due to be strengthened.
- 3.10 CUHK provides multiple incentive mechanisms to recognise teaching and support staff. These include the University Education Award, the Vice-Chancellor's Exemplary Teaching Award, and Faculty Teaching Awards. Similarly, CUHK(SZ) has had the Presidential Exemplary Teaching Award since 2017, the Exemplary Teaching Assistant Award since 2018, and the Teaching Ethics Award since 2020.
- 3.11 The University engages in a range of academic alliances, designed to provide opportunities for staff at institutional and faculty/department/unit levels to strengthen collaborations, exchange knowledge and identify best practice. CUHK also uses its TDLEG to encourage staff external engagement. The number of TDLEG projects between 2019-22 increased substantially from the period 2016-19, as did the number of presentations and publications generated from TDLEG projects. CUHK is very active in the Hong Kong Teaching Excellence Alliance and has a significant number of awardees of the UGC Teaching Awards.
- 3.12 Peer review of T&L is viewed as important at CUHK and is applicable for all lecturer grade appointees applying for advancement, i.e. promotion of teaching track staff. The peer review process is supported by detailed documentation which specifies clear domains and benchmarks. The Audit Panel noted that only teaching track staff in CUHK are required to undertake peer review. The process is used more widely in some Faculties, with the support from one VCom report emphasising the importance of regular peer observation of teaching and recommending its use to avoid over dependence on CTE scores. CUHK(SZ) uses university-level domains and school-level criteria for peer review of teaching which is required for promotion of both teaching and tenure track staff. Some Schools at CUHK(SZ) utilise peer review more widely and in others, teaching sessions are open for classroom observation by senior academic staff. The Audit Panel noted the value of peer review of teaching and the effectiveness of the relevant process at both universities but also that the implementation of peer

review on a wider scale would entail resource implications. Nevertheless, peer review has demonstrated its contribution to enhancing teaching at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) and could be usefully extended to other groups of teaching staff, such as less experienced teachers or those with low CTE scores. The Audit Panel **recommends that to more systematically promote enhancement of teaching quality, the University reviews the scope of its policy for peer review to better identify and target which groups of teaching staff can benefit.**

- 3.13 CUHK responded swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic and, in line with the objectives articulated in CUHK 2025, developed the VTL Strategic and Action Plan and the Guidelines for Inclusive Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment (see paragraph 3.2). The new VTL initiatives, overseen by the Sub-Committee on Education Technologies, have led to improvements in IT infrastructure and eLearning capacity. CUHK(SZ) has 160 multimedia classrooms serving different T&L needs and various eLearning tools are integrated into the widely used Blackboard platform. The Phase II development of the campus is planned for completion in 2024 with around 100 additional classrooms, all equipped with enhanced multimedia systems. CUHK(SZ) has established science laboratories, some providing examples of outstanding scientific excellence. At both universities, the Library plays an important role in the creation, access, dissemination and preservation of knowledge. It also makes effective use of student and staff feedback to identify and resolve library issues.
- 3.14 The CTE at the two universities includes questions on effective use of learning, including digital resources, and results in productive and timely feedback, though the questions are not entirely standardised and this may reduce opportunities for wider benchmarking. The Audit Panel noted that feedback from Ug/TPg and RPg students on learning resources and the learning environment was very positive. CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have invested in improving physical and digital environments and have updated their policies in the light of lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, while continuing to collect regular feedback from students at programme and course level.
- 3.15 The Audit Panel affirmed that both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have effective and extensive policies to manage, review and enhance the quality of T&L. Effective policies and documentation, including the respective QMs and the VTL Strategic and Action Plan, are in place to ensure that T&L quality and research supervision meet a high standard. The Audit Panel established that there is effective use of student feedback at course and programme levels and this is used to inform academic staff, programme and faculty reviews on both universities and at all levels. Student feedback is supplemented with employer feedback, to ensure that the focus on graduate attributes is maintained. There are effective policies and procedures for appointment, induction, development, engagement, review and recognition of teaching staff with support from CLEAR at CUHK and CUHK(SZ), though the Audit Panel encourages the University to more systematically promote enhancement of teaching quality, by revisiting policy on

peer review of teaching across Faculties and Schools. Review of the quality of physical and digital learning environments and resources is effective, as evidenced by the responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic, new teaching facilities and environments provided, and the new guidelines for VTL.

#### **4. REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1 CUHK and CUHK(SZ) adopt an outcomes-based approach to the assessment of Ug, TPg programmes and SPCEPs in which graduate attributes, mapped against the HKQF Generic Level Descriptors, inform programme learning outcomes and shape assessment tasks. Criterion-referenced grade descriptors are employed across all taught programmes to provide consistency in determining grades and to ensure student grades are aligned with learning outcomes.
- 4.2 CUHK's Policy on Assessment of Student Learning in Taught Programmes (Assessment Policy), including those delivered by CUHK(SZ), and the Policy on Assessment of Student Learning in SPCEPs are detailed and comprehensive, ensuring that assessment is designed according to a clear set of university-wide principles and reflect CUHK's outcomes-based, criterion-referenced approach. CUHK has a separate summary on the guidelines for honours classification, guidelines on Pg course assessment and guidelines and procedures for thesis submission/assessment for RPg and taught doctoral programmes, which complement these policies. The Assessment Policy has recently been comprehensively reviewed to reflect the adoption of grade descriptors across all assessment tasks, the assessment of online courses, the introduction of a new Distinction/Pass/Failure grading basis for courses and the use of a more comprehensive set of assessment tools. Within the Assessment Policy, the university-wide code of practice provides details of expectations with respect to benchmarking, marking, internal and external moderation, assessment panels, assessment of online courses, awarding grades, academic integrity, honours classification, feedback to students and academic appeals. The Assessment Policy contains details of monitoring the quality and impact of assessment through Department/programme committees with oversight by the Dean of Faculty/Dean of Graduate School. Assessment is also monitored as part of programme review and by VComs and at CUHK(SZ) by ERs who review assessment for each course. Assessment and examination requirements for RPg programmes, including the final thesis, are detailed in the Postgraduate Student Handbook.
- 4.3 A criterion-referenced, outcomes-based approach underpins the design of assessment for Ug and TPg programmes and SPCEPs. Graduate attributes, mapped onto the HKQF, are reflected in programme and course learning outcomes, with assessment tasks being designed to test the achievement of these. Grade descriptors are employed across all forms of assessment. They specify the criteria by which standards are defined for each grade and provide information

to students on the level of performance and the quality of work expected to achieve a certain grade. Staff receive training and support in the use of the outcomes-based approach to assessment from CLEAR. Academic standards with respect to assessment and its alignment with course and programme learning outcomes are scrutinized as part of the programme review process. SPCEPs adopt the same outcomes-based approach, with assessment being aligned with learning outcomes. The Audit Panel noted that CUHK has made significant progress in articulating its criterion-referenced, outcomes-based approach to assessment since the last QAC Audit through the responsive development and implementation of a comprehensive Assessment Policy. In exploring the relationship between graduate attributes, the outcomes-based, criterion-referenced approach to assessment and the adoption of grade descriptors with staff, the Audit Panel found a lack of clarity about how CUHK's outcomes-based approach works in practice and the components of the model apply to assessment. In reflecting on this, CUHK might therefore wish to consider how it could further refine how it articulates its approach to staff.

- 4.4 Assessment Panels at faculty/school level have authority and responsibility for all aspects of assessment for taught programmes including endorsement of course assessment schemes, determination of assessment results, consideration of any representations concerning unusual circumstances during the course of student assessment, and handling of grade appeals. Panels are chaired by the Department Chairman/Head of the Graduate Division/Dean of Faculty with two further members and have clear terms of reference. Panels make recommendations to CUHK's UEB which has responsibility for determining the honours classification of an Ug student's degree at CUHK and CUHK(SZ). In addition to determining the honours classification of students from CUHK(SZ), the UEB is responsible for confirming that the assessment practices are in line with those at CUHK. CUHK(SZ) assessment is also benchmarked against CUHK through the ER system with findings reported to CUHK(SZ) Academic Board and Senate via the CUHK(SZ) annual report. The award of research degrees at CUHK(SZ) is recommended by the Thesis Assessment Committee to the Board of Graduate Studies and Academic Board. At the University the Thesis Assessment Committee makes recommendations on the award to the GCExCo.
- 4.5 Following feedback from students and teachers CUHK has adopted a new Distinction/Pass/Failure grading basis for credit-bearing courses in taught programmes to more accurately reflect a student's attainment. The introduction of new Ug courses using the new grading basis and the switching of existing Ug courses to this basis are approved by the Senate, and for new and switching of existing TPg courses, by the Graduate Council.
- 4.6 CUHK has a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, with a clear and comprehensive policy on academic honesty within the Assessment Policy applicable to all taught and research programmes, and a guide for students and teachers on the website. VeriGuide anti-plagiarism software is used across



CUHK and CUHK(SZ) with cases not captured by teachers being followed up by the Departments concerned. At CUHK, a summary of the follow-up results is submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education). Following a recommendation from the last QAC audit, VeriGuide is now also used for SPCEPs. In response to the move to online learning and assessment during the COVID-19 pandemic, CUHK set up a Task Force on Upholding Academic Honesty to develop procedures for carrying out investigations on CUHK's ICT facilities for suspected cases of academic dishonesty. Following recommendations from the Task Force, CUHK's procedures for handling student disciplinary cases were revised.

- 4.7 Study requirements including assessment and degree classification information are available for students in the General Regulations Governing Full-time Undergraduate Studies in the Undergraduate Student Handbook, for TPg students in the Postgraduate Student Handbook and as stand-alone documents all of which are available online. Assessment tasks and requirements including grade descriptors are detailed in course outlines that all students receive at the beginning of a course.
- 4.8 The principles guiding the feedback provided to students on assessment are detailed in the relevant Assessment Policy. A turn-around time of two to four weeks is expected for work submitted during term time with specific dates being provided in each course outline to inform students. Students at CUHK and CUHK(SZ) can query a grade with their teacher/assessment panel within a specified timeframe with assessment panels having authority to endorse requests submitted by teachers to change grades upon appeal by students. If the appeal cannot be resolved through this route, students can lodge a complaint with CUHK if they believe that there is procedural impropriety in determining grades or other academic issues resulting in them having been directly affected.
- 4.9 The Audit Panel found clear evidence that CUHK has a well-developed approach to criterion-referenced, outcomes-based assessment, with programme and course learning outcomes, informed by graduate attributes, underpinning assessment design across all programmes. CUHK's policy on assessment and the code of practice contained therein are detailed and comprehensive in ensuring a robust and consistent approach across CUHK and CUHK(SZ) in relation to the management of internal and external moderation, academic honesty and appeals. Standards in assessment are assured through the use of grade descriptors that reflect learning outcomes, these in turn, being mapped onto the HKQF. Assurance that quality and standards in assessment is being maintained is gained through periodic programme review and VComs. CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism, placing great emphasis on academic honesty across all taught and research programmes.
- 4.10 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the setting and maintaining of academic standards through assessment is robust with the University exhibiting a

systematic approach to the review and enhancement of policy and procedures. Whilst policies and processes are working effectively, the Audit Panel noted uncertainty amongst staff as to how CUHK's outcomes-based approach to assessment, articulated in the Assessment Policy, works in practice and how this links to graduate attributes and grade descriptors. CUHK might therefore wish to consider how it could further refine how it articulates this approach to staff.

## **5. REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY'S ARRANGEMENTS FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS**

- 5.1 CUHK provides high-quality support to students with a team led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) and including the University Dean of Students, College Deans of Students and Faculty Associate/Assistant Deans. There are initiatives to meet students' developmental and study needs in different areas, and each area has its relevant committees and responsible office(s). All nine Colleges support students' whole-person development in addition to providing on-campus accommodation. Similarly, at CUHK(SZ), under the leadership of the Vice President (External and Student Affairs) and Associate Vice President (Student Affairs), five offices and five Colleges provide student support, pastoral care, whole-person education and extra-curricular activities for all students.
- 5.2 The University Dean of Students chairs relevant committees which are joined by College Dean(s) of Students/ representative(s) and Faculty Associate/Assistant Dean(s)/representative(s). The Audit Panel established that there is regular and close communication between the central University and Colleges to facilitate co-ordination in different areas of student support and development.
- 5.3 CUHK provides university-led induction and orientation programmes for new students under the co-ordination of the Joint Committee on New Student Orientation. CUHK(SZ) provides a range of induction activities including, among other activities, mentorship, an English course, and a 'Buddie Programme'. Students from both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) at different levels of studies have access to the orientation and receive the necessary information when they first enter the University. They find the information useful and meets their expectations.
- 5.4 CUHK and CUHK(SZ) conduct Entry Class Questionnaires (ECQs), a SEQ and Exit Surveys. CUHK also administers the First Year Experience Questionnaire. These surveys gauge students' feedback on different areas of T&L experiences including student support.
- 5.5 Both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) implement an effective and systematic academic advisory system, with the operations specified in the Handbook on the Implementation of the Academic Advisory System and the relevant procedures. The system covers all students, providing a multi-tiered means of identifying

students at risk and helping them to progress. Every student (both Ug and Pg) is assigned an academic advisor, known as a Level I Advisor. Warnings are issued to marginal students whose grade point average is below a certain threshold. The marginal students and those who are placed on academic probation or extended probation receive extra guidance from Level II Advisors designated by Departments/Programmes. Students are required to meet their Level I Advisor at least once a year and students on probation must obtain the endorsement of the designated academic advisor for course enrolment in the following term. Level II Advisors may refer a student to other student support offices for health or counselling services. For students who encounter serious problems, the respective Associate/Assistant Dean acts as a case manager and coordinates university efforts in assisting the student. Roles and responsibilities of advisors and other relevant parties are well-defined, and a set of resources are available to the advisors. Departments/Programmes are required to keep records of the advisory meetings. Faculties each establish a Committee on Academic Advising which meets at least twice a year to give advice on academic advising and consider recommendations on student waiver cases. The Audit Panel considers that **the comprehensive academic advisory system covering all students at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ), which provides a multi-tiered means of identifying and supporting at risk students to help them progress, to be a feature of good practice.**

- 5.6 The extensive support systems in CUHK and CUHK(SZ) ensure students receive a wide range of services which effectively promote their personal, academic and professional development. At the central level, the I•CARE Centre for Whole-person Development, now under the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), promotes whole-person development through experiential learning and underpins student support at the University. The five key aspects of the I•CARE framework are related to the graduate attributes. The Student Development Portfolio (SDP) digitally captures and presents students' participation in experiential learning activities organised by different student support units under the I•CARE whole-person development framework. Students may also record their participation in activities organised by student bodies and external organisations.
- 5.7 CUHK(SZ) has established the Undergraduate Research Awards and University Honours Awards to promote student research and development. The Social Practice Centre designs activities to develop students' sense of social responsibility and generic skills. CUHK(SZ) is still in the progress of developing its SDP.
- 5.8 CUHK has a clear articulation of the goals and objectives of the non-credit co-curricular activities as part and parcel of the overall student learning experience for the achievement of the graduate attributes. Certain good practices in the non-credit bearing activities are incorporated into the credit-bearing curriculum (e.g. service learning). The Audit Panel deems such a clear relationship between credit- and non-credit-bearing learning activities is helpful in promoting whole-

person education, and also supports the good practice identified at paragraph 2.4 in terms of achievement of the graduate attributes. The Audit Panel suggests CUHK enhances its internal communication of this articulation to all concerned staff.

- 5.9 Student surveys, including the exit and graduate surveys, provide the needed information to assess academic and professional development of students and inform improvement.
- 5.10 CUHK provides a wide range of support to students through various offices and all nine Colleges under the guidance of relevant committees. Students may make use of the resources and learning opportunities provided by the Independent Learning Centre to improve their academic study, independent learning and language skills. UG students undertake non-formal learning activities, including service learning and language enhancement programmes, summer trips and non-academic exchanges. The Career Planning and Development Centre in the OSA provides career-focused services and programmes for students. The University offers a Multicultural Counselling Service through the OSA. The Library provides a large volume of digital and print resources and technology-rich spaces to support student learning and innovative pedagogies, as well as training programmes in partnership with Faculties.
- 5.11 Students may participate in physical or virtual exchange opportunities organised by the Office of Academic Links (OAL) and China Engagement Office. The Audit Panel was of the view that CUHK is responsive to the needs of the society and students. An example is the launch of Co-op@CUHK in the 2021/22 academic year in response to the relatively low success rate in full-time employment among CUHK UGs. Likewise, Pg students have access to the Improving Postgraduate Learning Programme which contains courses on generic research skills and teaching skills. Positive student feedback has been received on different support services through surveys.
- 5.12 Students at CUHK(SZ) receive support and services via its OSA and the five Colleges. They have access to exchange opportunities through the Study Abroad Programmes. CUHK(SZ) also assists students with financial difficulties, supports students' career development, promotes students' well-being and fosters cultural integration.
- 5.13 The University has developed a Diversity and Inclusion Policy and established a Diversity and Inclusion Office. The Audit Panel noted the introduction of the Guidelines for Inclusive Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment which identify additional support for students with SEN. As VTL will play an increasingly important role in future, the Guidelines represent a significant and forward-looking measure to promote inclusion in the learning mode of the future.

The Audit Panel encourages CUHK in sharing the Guidelines and information on their implementation.

- 5.14 The Audit Panel noted the various support measures to promote student integration that CUHK has in place. The Learning and Cultural Enhancement Section of OSA provides specialised and personalised support to non-local students and promotes cultural diversity, integration and internationalisation on campus. The OAL provides a range of support to incoming exchange students. I-House and i-LOUNGE are hubs within the University for promoting cultural diversity. Student societies are highly encouraged to involve non-Cantonese speaking students in planning and hosting orientation programmes. At CUHK(SZ), the International Scholar and Student Services and the OAL provide support for incoming international students. Non-local students at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) indicate that the support they receive is helpful.
- 5.15 Student representatives in CUHK participate in more than 30 committees of different levels. However, the Audit Panel remained unclear as to how representatives are trained for their role, hearing that some students relied on support and guidance from their predecessors in the role, and also noted that students do not always learn of the consequences of their suggestions on university practice and policy. At CUHK(SZ), the Student Congress is an important platform for student consultation and connecting students. The Student Consultation Committee under the Academic Board, consisting of teachers and Ug and Pg students, is charged with the responsibility of consultation with students when deemed necessary.
- 5.16 Both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have a systematic way to collect student feedback through a number of student surveys and meetings to understand students' learning experience and progression. Responses to the surveys have led to improvements. Students are encouraged to share their views through the Senate Staff-Student Consultative Committee for academic matters and Staff-Student Centres Management Committee for facilities and space. The University Dean of Students and Registrar solicit feedback from students, for example, during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5.17 CUHK(SZ) has used electronic means to set up a 24-hour hotline to communicate with students. The Faculty-Student Interaction Programme encourages informal communication and strengthens staff-student bonds and communication in informal settings. The senior management also meets students at Night Chats.
- 5.18 The Audit Panel was able to establish that both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have policies and procedures which enable effective student support and, as well as an elaborate and well-designed infrastructure to facilitate students' study and promotion of students' personal, academic and professional development.

Leadership is strong and there is evidence of good communication and co-ordination between ‘central’ and college staff. CUHK has a clear direction for the co-ordination of formal and co-curricular activities to provide a holistic and evolving study experience for students. CUHK has devoted attention and resources to promote diversity and inclusion as exemplified by the Guidelines for Inclusive Virtual Teaching and Learning Environment. Annual reports are submitted to the relevant committees which guide and advise the activities. Student feedback is positive at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ). Students indicate they receive the needed support and useful information.

## **6. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USAGE OF DATA**

- 6.1 The Audit Panel noted that CUHK and CUHK(SZ) are at different stages of development in terms of their utilisation of data. CUHK has considerable experience in collecting, analysing and using data, both quantitative and qualitative, in planning, management and evaluation of academic operations, including for enhancement. The University’s approach is overseen by the IT Governance Committee (ITGC), which ensures that descriptive statistics/data are collected through institutional systems and implemented by the UPO which coordinates data collection and analysis processes at CUHK. The UPO has recently developed a data strategy for an automated centralised data collection process. Both ITGC and the UPO are led by the Provost.
- 6.2 Experience of data utilisation at CUHK(SZ) is based on a shorter timeframe although the institution explains how quantitative and qualitative data are significant resources in its strategies for assuring academic quality and standards. The IT Steering Committee issues rules for data protection and monitors data application with annual reports submitted to Academic Board. The IT Services Office team is responsible for monitoring and managing the safety of data. A Personal Data Controlling Committee oversees and handles disputes or complaints in data management in line with a Policy on Protection of Personal Data (Privacy), enacted in 2019. Further changes are planned with the establishment of an Academic Planning Office and the introduction of a new Student Affairs Management System.
- 6.3 CUHK and CUHK(SZ) classify data in similar ways. CUHK separates data into five broad categories: descriptive statistics such as admissions and employment data; feedback from stakeholders including student surveys; data compiled/collected for major reviews with specific aims, for example studies to gauge SEN students’ needs; benchmarking data including from the UAA and VComs; and intelligence data, for instance from committees. CUHK(SZ) identifies five types of data used in monitoring the University’s teaching quality and management efficiency: operational data on, for example, course enrolment, classroom attendance, and grades of student assignments; feedback data from the range of surveys conducted with staff and students (including CTE and SEQ); data collected with specific aims; internal and external benchmark data for self-

assessment, strategic planning and decision-making; and review and feedback data from course, programme, school and university levels.

- 6.4 The Audit Panel observed the extent to which CUHK has addressed the tenor of criticisms made in the 2018 Report of a Quality Audit of Sub-degree Operations of CUHK which noted a lack of performance indicators at the strategic level and of management information at the operational level that are available for monitoring, reporting and improvement. CUHK's maturity is evident in the extent to which it systematically makes use of comprehensive types of data to facilitate its decision making and planning for enhancements. Data has been employed in developing and reviewing strategic plans and other strategies. In formulating CUHK 2025, different types of data were analysed by various planning groups. For example, the Education Sub-group reviewed benchmark information on curriculum structures of local and international institutions and student performance was compared against employer opinions on first degree graduate attributes.
- 6.5 CUHK has been effective in the development, monitoring and review of academic KPIs to assess the implementation of CUHK 2025, for example in considering how to measure 'global engagement' of staff and students. The UAA Annual Report 2022/23 includes a detailed report on Performance Indicator Synopsis. There is, though, a recognition that more needs to be done in systematic data collection in some areas, including for SPCEPs which need a student information system. Similarly, CUHK(SZ) has identified challenges it is currently facing in terms of data application and management: the lack of manpower and professional skills to make full use of a large amount of data; and the surveys on teaching evaluation and student learning experience need to have a higher return rate.
- 6.6 While there are various differences, both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) make effective use of data from multiple sources in reviewing the quality of the academic experience. Student feedback is captured through the ECQ, which depicts a profile of Year One students, the Early Feedback Collection System at the beginning of term, the First Year Experience Questionnaire, the Graduate Capabilities Questionnaire and an Alumni Questionnaire. The CTE is a major mechanism of internal QA at both CUHK(SZ) and CUHK, collecting student feedback on the course and teaching quality at the end of each term. The Exit Survey administered to both Ug and SD students, and which mirrors the ECQ, collects student feedback on courses, programmes and the University, focusing on whether and how the University has met their expectations with respect to graduation and future plans. In addition to the various surveys across and beyond the academic year, mid-term programme surveys take place and feedback is collected from placement units and internship providers on placement arrangements and students' performance. Analysis of the SEQ shows long-term trends and longitudinal changes for year two and year four students. One notable example of the University's approach to data usage is evident in CLEAR's

comprehensive meta-analyses of 69 CUHK UG programme reviews and all TPG programme review reports which have been used to instigate self-reflection at programme and faculty level.

- 6.7 At both CUHK and CUHK(SZ), results of all these surveys are reported to relevant committees and shared with Faculties/Departments/programmes/units for reference and follow-up. The Audit Panel noted that the University's use of data on recruitment, retention, achievement of intended learning outcomes, student satisfaction, completion and employment enable effective monitoring and improvement of student achievement and experience.
- 6.8 To illustrate its approach, the University provided an audit trail from CUHK and CUHK(SZ) on the use of data in internal and external reviews. The VCom and programme reviews of the B.A. in Translation at CUHK and CUHK(SZ) demonstrate how the institutions analyse a comprehensive corpus of qualitative and quantitative data at programme and department level, to identify good practice and issues for action, progress against which is effectively monitored. SEQ results are benchmarked against Faculty and University norms, though the CTE analysis considers only raw data and does not take up the same opportunity. The VCom cycle which commenced in 2023 has been enhanced to become a comprehensive review of the Faculty and its Departments, including the Department of Translation.
- 6.9 To enable effective benchmarking, internal and external data are considered in major planning and review processes. As an example, for planning of new programmes, CUHK uses benchmark data from employers and local and international comparator institutions, and for faculty-level review, benchmark data from UG programmes at partner universities and internal faculty data. CUHK used the UAA analysis, which revealed that it ranked relatively low in terms of UG students' success rate in full-time employment, to launch Co-op@CUHK to better equip students for employment (see paragraph 5.11).
- 6.10 The Audit Panel was able to identify the various examples of CUHK's systematic and comprehensive use of the various types of data to inform major planning activities, annual review at university, faculty and programme levels, and new enhancement initiatives. The Panel could confirm evidence of a systematic, comprehensive data-driven approach to decision making and enhancements. CUHK(SZ) acknowledges that as a comparatively new institution, it is still developing data collection systems, and the data collected and analysed is more limited compared to the longer established CUHK. The Panel heard that CUHK(SZ) is seeking to address the data gap and enhance data analytics. It noted plans to strengthen the Smart Campus project by building a centralised data collection and analysis platform, and to implement the newly-built Student Affairs Management System to integrate fragmented student records.



6.11 The Audit Panel was able to establish that both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) systematically collect, analyse and use quantitative and qualitative data in planning, management, evaluation and enhancement of academic activities, though the former's approach, reflecting its comparative maturity, is better established. There is an impressive array of feedback and evaluation instruments in place to elicit information from students and these are operated throughout the student life cycle, from admission, across the programme, and both one and five years after graduation. The sources of data used in review processes include a substantial meta-analysis of all Ug programme, TPg programme and SPCEP review reports. At CUHK there is comprehensive analysis and reporting of academic KPIs and the University is also introducing an automated, central data collection process which will enable better co-ordination of data for enhancement purposes. At CUHK(SZ) greater emphasis on analysis and sharing of student data analysis is planned with the strengthening of a Smart Campus project designed to improve data collection systems.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

7.1 CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have a comprehensive and systematic approach to reviewing and enhancing their frameworks for managing academic standards and quality. CUHK Senate is effective in determining major academic decisions for both institutions with all degrees being awarded in the name of CUHK. The committee and organisational structures help facilitate implementation of the Strategic Plan and other University policies developed to uphold academic standards and improve quality. Extensive QMs clearly set out significant academic policies. A regular schedule of monitoring and review activities from course, through programmes, departments to faculty/school level, promote improvement. Use of external experts in VComs and as EEs, plus ERs at CUHK(SZ), provide opportunities for benchmarking. The College systems in place on both universities support students' whole-person development.

7.2 The University has a comprehensive, well-structured and mature process for programme development and approval, monitoring and review. Clear and detailed procedures enable consistency in the planning, development and approval of new programmes, internal and external monitoring and programme review, ensuring quality and standards across the academic portfolio. The internal governance framework identifies appropriate levels of authority, accountability and responsibility across the University and these are well understood by staff. Taught and research programmes are designed in accordance with the University's outcomes-based approach, with graduate attributes for all programmes at its core. Particularly through VComs, there is a clear commitment to engaging eminent external experts in periodic review of programmes and at faculty/school level. Their comprehensive reports help assure quality and standards of academic provision but also Faculty/School strategy, planning and research as well as the wider student experience.

- 7.3 Both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) have effective policies in place, including the VTL Strategic and Action Plan, to ensure that the quality of T&L and research supervision meet a good standard. Student feedback at course and programme level is used to inform academic staff, programme and faculty reviews across CUHK and CUHK(SZ) and all provision. Student and employer feedback strengthen the focus on graduate attributes. Policies and procedures for appointment, induction, development, engagement, review and recognition of teaching staff are effective. CLEAR at both universities offer resources and activities to support and improve staff and there is a range of incentive mechanisms to recognise teaching and support staff, though peer review of teaching could be developed. The quality of physical and digital learning environments and resources is reviewed effectively, as evidenced by responsiveness to the COVID-19 pandemic with new teaching facilities and the introduction of guidelines for VTL.
- 7.4 There is a well-developed approach to outcomes-based, criterion-referenced assessment, with programme and course learning outcomes, informed by graduate attributes, underpinning assessment design across all programmes. The detailed and comprehensive assessment policies ensure a robust and consistent approach to assessment design, marking, moderation, determination of grades, feedback to students and academic appeals, and for Ug programmes, honours classification. While policies and procedures focus on clarity and consistency, they also afford flexibility to accommodate subject needs including in the move to greater use of online learning and assessment. There is a zero-tolerance policy on plagiarism with students aware of the importance of academic honesty and sanctions should this be breached. Assessment design and processes are overseen by a framework which result in a robust approach to governance of academic standards and achievement.
- 7.5 The extensive support systems at CUHK and CUHK(SZ) ensure students receive a wide range of services which effectively promote their personal, academic and professional development. Students at different levels receive a productive induction when they first enter the University. The goals and objectives of the non-credit co-curricular activities are integral to the overall student learning experience for the achievement of the graduate attributes. There is a responsiveness to student and employer feedback in developing new support measures such as Co-op@CUHK, the university-wide, work-integrated education programme. The academic advisory system comprehensively supports all students, providing a multi-tiered means of identifying students at risk and helping them to progress. Both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) provide high-quality support to students.
- 7.6 CUHK and CUHK(SZ) systematically collect, analyse and use quantitative and qualitative data in planning, management, evaluation and enhancement of academic activities, though the former's approach, reflecting its comparative maturity, is better established. There is a wide array of feedback and evaluation

instruments in place to elicit information from students across the student life cycle, from admission, across the programme, and through to five years after graduation. At CUHK there is comprehensive analysis and reporting of academic KPIs to monitor achievement of strategic objectives. At CUHK(SZ) greater emphasis on analysis and sharing of student data analysis is planned with the strengthening of a Smart Campus project designed to improve data collection systems.

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

### **History**

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is a self-governing institution incorporated by Ordinance in 1963 by amalgamating three original Colleges: New Asia, Chung Chi and United (founded in 1949, 1951 and 1956 respectively). CUHK Ordinance 1976 has made the structure more unitary. Shaw College was established in 1986. With the addition of five new Colleges in 2006 and 2007, there are now altogether nine Colleges in CUHK. Over the decades, CUHK has developed from an institution with fewer than 1 400 students and 300 staff, to the home to over 30 000 students and 8 000 staff members today.

### **Vision and Mission**

CUHK is committed to achieving its long-established mission and vision.

#### *Vision*

To be acknowledged locally, nationally and internationally as a first-class comprehensive research university whose bilingual and multicultural dimensions of student education, scholarly output and contribution to the community consistently meet standards of excellence.

#### *Mission*

To assist in the preservation, creation, application and dissemination of knowledge by teaching, research and public service in a comprehensive range of disciplines, thereby serving the needs and enhancing the well-being of the citizens of Hong Kong, China as a whole, and the wider world community.

### **Role Statement**

CUHK:

- (a) offers a range of programmes leading to the award of first degrees and postgraduate (Pg) qualifications in subject areas including Arts, Science, Social Sciences and Business Administration;
- (b) incorporates professional schools such as Medicine, Architecture, Engineering and Education;
- (c) pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;
- (d) offers research postgraduate (RPg) programmes for a significant number of students in selected subject areas;
- (e) aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength;

- (f) contributes to the development of Hong Kong, China as a whole, and the region through quality education, research, engagement and service, in all the disciplines it offers;
- (g) pursues actively deep collaboration in its areas of strength with other higher education institutions in Hong Kong or the region or more widely so as to enhance the Hong Kong higher education system;
- (h) encourages academic staff to be engaged in public service, consultancy and collaborative work with the private sector in areas where they have special expertise, as part of the institution's general collaboration with government, business and industry; and
- (i) manages in the most effective and efficient way the public and private resources bestowed upon the institution, employing collaboration whenever it is of value.

## **Governance and Management**

The Council is vested with the authority to govern, manage and control the affairs, purposes and functions of CUHK. The Vice-Chancellor and President, together with his cabinet comprising the Provost, Pro-Vice-Chancellors/Vice-President and Associate Vice-Presidents, oversee all units and offices in general.

As the highest academic authority stewarding education and research, the Senate is served by several bodies: Senate Academic Planning Committee (in effect the Senate's executive committee), Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning, Undergraduate Examinations Board, Graduate Council, Senate Committee on Sub-degree, Professional and Continuing Education Programmes (SPCEPs) and other Senate committees. Faculties and the Senate communicate through Faculty Boards.

Governed by a Governing Board, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (CUHK(SZ)) reports all academic matters to the CUHK Senate through its Academic Board, the membership of which includes CUHK senior management to ensure the academic standards of CUHK(SZ) are on par with those of CUHK.

## **Academic Organisation and Programmes of Study**

CUHK has eight Faculties, 59 academic Departments/Schools and nine Colleges. All full-time teaching staff and full-time undergraduate (Ug) students, with a few exceptions of teachers belonging to research institutes/centres, are affiliated with both a Faculty and a College.

CUHK offers a total of 80 Ug programmes, 18 specially-curated Double Major Programmes, 12 Dual Undergraduate Degree Programmes, 126 taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes of which two are offshore TPg programmes, eight Pg Diploma programmes, and 97 RPg programmes at doctoral and master's levels including articulated MPhil-PhD programmes.

158 SPCEPs are offered by five active Sub-degree Providing Units of the University, namely, Faculties of Arts, Education, Medicine and Social Science, and the School of Continuing and Professional Studies (CUSCS).

CUHK(SZ) has six Schools and five Colleges, which currently offer 26 Ug programmes, 19 TPg programmes and 12 RPg programmes, including three programmes jointly offered by different schools in CUHK(SZ).

### **Staff and Student Numbers**

In the 2023/24 academic year, CUHK has 32 866 students with 17 897 of them enrolled in Ug programmes, 3 374 in RPg programmes, and 11 595 in TPg programmes. 8 423 students are enrolled in the SPCEPs. CUHK has 8 394 full-time staff, among whom 1 729 are academic staff.

CUHK(SZ) has 10 359 students with 6 729 of them enrolled in Ug programmes, 999 in RPg programmes, and 2 631 in TPg programmes. CUHK(SZ) has 1 692 full-time staff, among whom 530 are academic staff.

### **Revenue**

The University's income for the year ended 30 June 2023 was HK\$11,205 million, of which HK\$5,984 million (53%) arose from government subventions and HK\$2,635 million (24%) from tuition, programme and other fees.

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

The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) is grateful for the opportunity to take part in the third-round quality assurance audit and the kind commendations and constructive recommendations by the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) Audit Panel on various aspects of teaching and learning at the University.

This round of audit covers all programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above, however funded, leading to a qualification wholly or partly awarded by the University, including programmes offered by The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (CUHK(SZ)). The Audit came at an opportune time for the University to conduct a holistic self-reflection on the quality of its teaching and learning in both physical and virtual environments across different levels of studies and different campuses as we celebrate our diamond jubilee.

The University deeply appreciates the Panel's detailed report. We are encouraged by the Panel's findings, highlighting several features of good practice. It is indeed important to embed 'graduate attributes in programme design, and monitoring and review', to ensure positive learning outcomes in all our taught and research programmes, as the report has noted (paragraph 2.4). We are also heartened by the Panel's acknowledgement of the robust international Visiting Committees (VComs) system the University has established, which 'informs Faculty/School strategy and planning, helps assure the University's quality and standards through external benchmarking, and consequently promotes enhancement of the whole student experience' (paragraphs 1.8 and 2.7). The Panel also confirmed that the comprehensive academic advisory system for all students at both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) provides 'a multi-tiered means of identifying and supporting at risk students' (Executive Summary item 5 and paragraph 5.5), which represents another major investment on the part of the University.

CUHK is proud to be the first UGC-funded university to have established a second campus in the Greater Bay Area, and CUHK(SZ) is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2024. From the start, we were keenly aware that every effort must be made to set the highest standards in teaching and learning. It is thus gratifying to note the Panel has found strong commitment of both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) to reviewing and enhancing the frameworks for managing academic standards and quality (Executive Summary item 1 and paragraph 1.13). Our 'comprehensive, well-structured, and developed process for programme development and approval, monitoring and review' as well as 'effective and extensive policies' help manage and enhance the academic standards and quality of teaching and learning (paragraphs 2.10, 2.11 and 3.15).

Regarding student learning assessment, the University is glad that its 'significant progress in articulating criterion-referenced, outcomes-based approach to assessment since the last QAC Audit through the responsive development and implementation of a comprehensive Assessment Policy' is well noted in the audit report (paragraph 4.3). Apart from assessment, the University also exhibited 'a systematic approach to the

review and enhancement of policy and procedures’ in setting and maintaining standards (paragraph 4.10).

Provision of high-quality support to students is one of CUHK’s top priorities. The Audit Panel established that both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) provide high-quality and effective support to students, enabled by well-established policies and procedures, ‘well-designed infrastructure’, as well as ‘various support measures to promote student integration’, underpinned by ‘regular and close communication between the University central and Colleges’ (Executive Summary item 5 and paragraphs 5.2, 5.14 and 5.18). It is encouraging that positive feedback has been received on the University’s responsiveness ‘to the needs of society and students’, as well as provision of learning resources and learning environment to students of all levels (paragraphs 3.14 and 5.11).

In terms of data collection, analysis and usage, the University is very pleased to note the Audit Panel’s affirmation on the systematic collection, analysis and usage of ‘quantitative and qualitative data in planning, management, evaluation and enhancement of academic activities’ by both CUHK and CUHK(SZ) (Executive Summary item 6 and paragraph 6.11). CUHK(SZ) will improve its data collection systems via the Smart Campus Project and continue to work on analysis and sharing of student data analysis. The University’s use of data to enable effective monitoring and improvement of student achievement and experience, and the ‘effective use of student feedback at course and programme levels to inform academic staff, programme and faculty reviews’ were well recognised (Executive Summary item 3, paragraphs 3.15 and 6.7).

In pursuit of continuous improvements, we have formulated an Action Plan to guide our teaching and learning development in alignment with CUHK 2025, which has incorporated new strategies with reference to the self-reflection conducted for the Audit, including the effective collection and use of data to facilitate quality monitoring, enhancement and decision-making.

The University recognises the importance of peer review of teaching and learning and agrees with the Audit Panel on the merit of reviewing the scope of the present policy that applies mainly to teaching staff on the teaching track. We see considerable value in ‘extending [peer review of teaching] to other groups of teaching staff’ (Executive Summary item 3 and paragraph 3.12), especially as a formative tool. More attention will also be paid to strengthening our ‘provision of support and guidance for [student] representatives’ (Executive Summary item 5 and paragraph 5.15) serving on University committees.

The University sincerely thanks the Audit Panel for the comprehensive and rigorous review. This positive audit report recognises the effort we have put into delivering quality education over the years and will motivate us to further improve teaching and learning at the University. The dedication of CUHK and CUHK(SZ) colleagues should be acknowledged, and we would also like to thank the many other stakeholders, including our alumni, who have contributed so much to realising the vision and mission



of CUHK. We remain committed to building a world-leading university that will create value for and bring concrete benefits to the local, national and international communities.

## APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| CLEAR      | Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research   |
| Co-op@CUHK | CUHK's Co-operative Education Programme  |
| CTE        | Course and Teaching Evaluation   |
| CUHK       | The Chinese University of Hong Kong  |
| CUHK(SZ)   | The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen  |
| CUHK 2025  | CUHK Strategic Plan for 2021–2025  |
| CUSCS      | School of Continuing and Professional Studies  |
| DDP        | Dual Degree Programme  |
| DMP        | Double Major Programme   |
| ECQ        | Entry Class Questionnaire  |
| EE         | External Examiner  |
| ER         | External Reviewer  |
| GCExCo     | Executive Committee of the Graduate Council  |
| HKQF       | Hong Kong Qualifications Framework   |
| I•CARE     | <i>I</i> = Integrity and moral development;<br><i>C</i> = Creativity and intellectual development;<br><i>A</i> = Appreciation of life and aesthetic development;<br><i>R</i> = Relationships and social development;<br><i>E</i> = Energy and wellness |
| ITGC       | IT Governance Committee  |
| KPI        | Key Performance Indicator  |
| OAL        | Office of Academic Links   |
| OSA        | Office of Student Affairs  |
| PDC        | Professional Development Course  |
| Pg         | Postgraduate   |
| QA         | Quality Assurance  |
| QAC        | Quality Assurance Council  |
| QM         | Quality Manual   |
| RPg        | Research Postgraduate  |
| SAPC       | Senate Academic Planning Committee   |
| SCTL       | Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning  |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| SDP   | Student Development Portfolio                               |
| SEN   | Special Educational Needs                                   |
| SEQ   | Student Experience Questionnaire                            |
| SER   | Self-Evaluation Report                                      |
| SPCEP | Sub-degree, Professional and Continuing Education Programme |
| T&L   | Teaching and Learning                                       |
| TDLEG | Teaching Development and Language Enhancement Grant         |
| TPg   | Taught Postgraduate   |
| UAA   | University Accountability Agreement                         |
| UEB   | Undergraduate Examinations Board                            |
| Ug    | Undergraduate   |
| UGC   | University Grants Committee                                 |
| UPO   | University Planning Office                                  |
| VCom  | Visiting Committee  |
| VTL   | Virtual Teaching and Learning                               |

## **APPENDIX D: CUHK AUDIT PANEL**

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Rudi LIDL (Panel Chair)  
Consultant and  
Emeritus Professor, University of Tasmania

Professor John BACON-SHONE  
Head of Quality Analytics, HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education

Dr Albert CHAU  
Vice-President (Teaching and Learning), Hong Kong Baptist University

Professor Dawn EDWARDS  
Clerk to the Board of Governors and Director of Academic Governance, Royal Northern  
College of Music

### **Audit Coordinator**

Dr Neil CASEY  
QAC Secretariat

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

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) was formally 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.

### **Mission**

The QAC's mission is:

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

### **Terms of Reference**

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

- (a) To advise the UGC on quality assurance (QA) 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 QA mechanisms and quality of the offerings of universities;
- (c) To promote QA in the higher education sector in Hong Kong; and
- (d) To facilitate the development and dissemination of good practices in QA in higher education.

## **Membership** (as at June 2024)

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Professor Jan THOMAS (Chair)  | Vice-Chancellor, Massey University  |
| Professor Simon BATES         | Vice Provost and Associate Vice President, Teaching and Learning, The University of British Columbia      |
| Dr Benjamin CHAN Wai-kai, MH  | Chief Principal, Hong Kong Baptist University Affiliated School Wong Kam Fai Secondary and Primary School |
| Professor Jimmy FUNG Chi-hung | Associate Provost (Teaching & Learning), The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology               |
| Professor Sir Chris HUSBANDS  | Former Vice-Chancellor, Sheffield Hallam University   |
| Professor Julie LI Juan       | Associate Vice-President (Mainland Strategy), City University of Hong Kong                                |
| Professor Marilee LUDVIK      | Associate Provost and Director, Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Loyola University Chicago          |
| Ms Phoebe TSE Siu-ling        | General Manager, Commercial Banking Department, Bank of China (Hong Kong) Limited                         |
| Dr Carrie WILLIS, SBS, JP     | Former Chairperson, Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals                      |

### **Ex-officio Member**

Professor James TANG Tuck-hong      Secretary-General, UGC

### **Secretary**

Mr Louis LEUNG      Deputy Secretary-General (1), UGC