



# Report of a Quality Audit *of* Hong Kong Baptist University



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**Quality Assurance Council  
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# **Report of a Quality Audit of Hong Kong Baptist University**

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

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# **PREFACE**

## **Background**

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

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

## **Conduct of QAC Quality Audits**

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

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

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

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

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

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

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

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

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

- (a) The Audit Panel noted HKBU's detailed and comprehensive response to the 2009 QAC Quality Audit Report. It was apparent that the University has been committed to addressing the concerns raised in the report. The progress HKBU has made in responding to the commendations, affirmations and recommendations that resulted from the 2009 QAC Quality Audit are discussed under the relevant headings of the 2016 report.
- (b) HKBU has established a sound approach to setting and maintaining academic standards for the awards it delivers at its Hong Kong campus and the University's policies recognise the importance of externality in this respect. The Audit Panel noted that the University has strengthened some of its policies for assuring academic standards in response to the 2009 QAC Quality Audit. A new system of Departmental Academic Advisors, designed to provide both a more holistic annual monitoring than that provided by external examiners and an interim review between the six-yearly visits of the Academic Consultation Panels is being implemented. The report comments on ways in which externality could be more consistently applied in relation to grade moderation. HKBU benefits from the detailed scrutiny of the new annual programme quality assurance reports undertaken by sub-groups of the University's Quality Assurance Committee. The report indicates how annual programme quality assurance reports could be improved further by establishing a clearer link between quality assurance data and action plans and further strengthened by benchmarking of hard data with comparator institutions. The Audit Panel formed the view that HKBU needs to strengthen the way it maintains the academic standards of its awards delivered

wholly or partly outside Hong Kong. Attention is drawn to the following matters in this respect: the need for HKBU, as the degree-awarding body, to assure itself of the broad equivalence of the academic standards of cognate degrees, whether delivered in Hong Kong or at other locations; the importance of ensuring that degree certificates issued by the degree-awarding body carry consistent information regardless of location of study; and the responsibility of HKBU to ensure that its degree certificates for joint degrees provide unambiguous information about the study undertaken and student achievement.

- (c) It was clear to the Audit Panel that the University has successfully managed the introduction of the four-year undergraduate programme and has introduced a diverse and extensive range of curriculum choice and co/extra-curricular learning opportunities since the last QAC Quality Audit. Within the same period HKBU has also accomplished the transition to outcome-based teaching and learning and from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced assessment. In the report, the Audit Panel recognises the ways in which teaching staff have benefited from the leadership and support of the Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning in effecting these changes and from a wide range of staff development activities to support the development of their pedagogical practice. The Audit Panel noted the progress HKBU has made in developing e-learning in response to an affirmation in the 2009 QAC Quality Audit. Despite the significant investment made, however, HKBU has yet to decide on a common university e-learning platform or to set minimum university standards for its use. The report urges HKBU to take decisive action to avoid unnecessary investment in multiple platforms, both in Hong Kong and at the Beijing Normal University-HKBU United International College (UIC), and to establish standards for the consistent provision of e-learning and learning support materials. Attention is also drawn to the need to ensure that all students undertaking HKBU awards have comparable access to learning resources, regardless of the location of study. The Audit Panel noted that, while Senate receives a report on individual appeals, it is not afforded the opportunity to learn from the presentation and analysis of an overview report.
- (d) The Audit Panel found much evidence of the way in which the University's longstanding commitment to whole person education permeates the institution, providing a framework that encompasses student achievement in relation to students' intellectual, professional, social, psychological, spiritual and physical development. Whole person development is monitored by a self-report instrument designed specifically for that purpose. The report comments on the way the University has also successfully aligned this framework with more recent pedagogical developments, such as outcome-based teaching and learning and the articulation of graduate attributes for undergraduate, taught postgraduate (TPg) and research postgraduate (RPg) students respectively. Achievement of formal learning outcomes is measured utilising criterion-referenced assessment, though the Audit Panel noted that this has not yet been fully implemented for all HKBU awards. The report encourages HKBU to rationalise its data collection and focus on securing response rates that will produce significant results, capable of driving



enhancement. HKBU has modified the structure of the four-year curriculum and academic support arrangements to accommodate the needs of an increasing number of senior entrants to optimise their learning opportunities and enable them to achieve their potential. The Audit Panel noted the growth in research-related employment for HKBU's higher degree graduates and its rates of success generally in employment and further study. The report encourages HKBU to co-ordinate, collate and disseminate the various collections of data on graduate success.

- (e) HKBU collects a significant body of information related to quality assurance that is capable of being subjected to self-critical analysis to drive quality enhancement. For example, Academic Consultation Panels form judgements about the performance of academic units every six years; programme quality assurance reports are completed annually; and Departmental Academic Advisors will act as 'critical friends' and provide feedback on departmental quality each year. In addition the Formative Review Exercise, Evidence Collection Initiative and Whole Person Development Inventory provide data on the quality and effectiveness of student learning opportunities. The Audit Panel noted that general education, language development and whole person education provision have been enhanced in light of data analysis but considered there is a risk that complex data analysis schemes can become an end in themselves. The report encourages the University to complete the task of implementing the online course feedback questionnaire across the institution, to extend and standardise student feedback on their experience of teaching and learning. The Audit Panel noted several features of good practice in teaching and learning including, for example, the Teaching and Learning Experience Sharing seminars and the various communities of practice. The report suggests that HKBU identify effective ways of capturing and disseminating such examples to promote systematic institution-wide enhancement.
- (f) The Audit Panel found evidence that quality assurance of HKBU's RPg and TPg programmes is well founded. Students are effectively supported in a caring and stimulating environment and generally express satisfaction with teaching, supervision, learning opportunities and resources, with the possible exception of dedicated study space for RPg students. HKBU is providing an effective environment for RPg studies. RPg students receive training for their duties as graduate teaching assistants and expressed their appreciation of the mandatory common core training programme provided for them. Research supervisors share a clear vision of the purpose of the RPg programme and are highly enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their students. The report suggests that HKBU should build on this strength by providing training and ongoing development in supervisory skills for all relevant staff. The Audit Panel noted that development of the TPg portfolio tends to be a bottom-up process with a focus on continuous growth. The report proposes that HKBU's TPg provision would benefit from the articulation of an overarching institution-wide strategy that clearly articulates both the nature and extent of the desired suite of TPg programmes and includes

mechanisms designed to give the University confidence that its provision meets international academic standards.

- (g) The Audit Themes of *Enhancing the student learning experience* and *Global engagement: strategies and current developments* offered the Audit Panel the opportunity to focus more closely on these cross-cutting lines of enquiry. In considering the theme of *Enhancing the student learning experience*, the Audit Panel noted that the University focuses on the enhancement and enrichment of student learning through Whole Person Education via the General Education curriculum and within co/extra-curricular activities via activities such as exchanges, internships, study tours, service learning and summer study programmes. Noteworthy as these developments are, it was not possible for the Audit Panel to identify the way in which these activities related to the University's strategic aims. Furthermore, the Audit Panel formed the view that HKBU would benefit overall from greater coherence in its strategic planning and greater specificity in its action plans and performance indicators. The report therefore urges the University to articulate its overarching strategic priorities for enhancing the student learning experience, with identified targets, designated roles and responsibilities, timelines and key performance indicators.
- (h) In considering the theme of *Global engagements: strategies and current developments*, the Audit Panel noted that the University is providing a range of opportunities for students to acquire global knowledge and transferable skills through the formal curriculum associated with their major academic subject. These include case studies addressing global or regionally contextualised issues, artist-in-residence schemes, credit-bearing internships, and discipline-specific field trips and study tours. It was not, however, possible for the Audit Panel to identify an underpinning conceptual model that drives and unifies HKBU's multi-faceted, but not fully integrated, approach to internationalisation. For this reason, the report suggests that the University articulate clearly its strategic approach to internationalisation, based on a well-defined conceptual model designed to frame and interconnect the various components of the strategy, such as student exchanges, internationalisation of the formal curriculum, faculty collaboration, joint degrees, the promotion of global citizenship and an inclusive international campus culture.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Explanation of the audit methodology**

- 1.1 This is the report of a quality audit of Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on an Institutional Submission which was prepared by HKBU following a period of self-review and submitted to QAC on 23 February 2015. A one-day Institutional Briefing and Initial Meeting of Panel members was held on 2 April 2015 to discuss the detailed arrangements for the audit visit.
- 1.2 The Audit Panel visited HKBU from 19 to 21 May 2015 and Beijing Normal University-HKBU United International College (UIC) on 16 May 2015. They met the President and senior managers of both HKBU and UIC; deans, heads of department and senior staff with responsibility for quality assurance from both institutions; academic managers and teaching staff from both HKBU and UIC, including those responsible at HKBU for supervision of research postgraduate (RPg) students; academic support staff from both HKBU and UIC; a wide range of students, including undergraduates from both HKBU and UIC and taught postgraduates and research postgraduates from HKBU; and employers and alumni. The Audit Panel evaluates:
- the setting and maintaining of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - student achievement
  - postgraduate provision
  - quality enhancement

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

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

- 1.3 HKBU was founded in 1956 as a post-secondary college with a mission to provide broad-based liberal education in a Christian environment for the young people of Hong Kong. The College was granted self-accrediting status in 1993 and gained university status in November 1994. Its mission states that -

*HKBU is committed to academic excellence in teaching, research and service, and to the development of the whole person in these endeavours built upon the heritage of Christian higher education.*

Of HKBU's 13 645 students, 9 348 are undergraduate, 3 882 are taught postgraduate (TPg) and 415 RPg students. HKBU employs 1 744 staff in academic departments.

In addition, HKBU operates in collaboration with Beijing Normal University (BNU), the UIC on a campus in Zhuhai. UIC has approximately 5 000 undergraduate students and offers 20 undergraduate programmes leading to HKBU awards.

HKBU's vision is to aspire to be a premier institution of higher learning providing broad-based, creativity-inspiring education with a distinctive contribution to the advancement of knowledge through research and scholarship.

## **2. THE SETTING AND MAINTAINING OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS**

- 2.1 This report addresses academic standards from two perspectives: first, the academic standards set and maintained for programmes of study and their manifestation in graduate learning outcomes, which is addressed in this section of the report; second, levels of individual student achievement against those academic standards, as measured by assessment, which is addressed below under Student Achievement (see page 22 below).

### **Academic policy framework for assuring academic standards**

- 2.2 The University states that it regards quality assurance as a collective and continuous process. HKBU understands the importance of setting and maintaining academic standards that ensure its programmes and student learning outcomes are the equivalent of those at other Hong Kong, regional and international universities.
- 2.3 HKBU's extensive quality assurance policy framework is aimed at ensuring that the University's academic standards are robust and all programmes maintain appropriate academic standards over time. The University states in its Institutional Submission that it has maintained academic rigour on a par with other UGC-funded institutions.
- 2.4 In response to a recommendation from the 2009 QAC Quality Audit, the University has reviewed and rationalised its academic committee structure. Academic policies undergo appropriate development and approval processes,

with all academic policies ultimately being approved by HKBU Senate. UIC academic policies parallel those of HKBU and are first endorsed by UIC Senate and then forwarded to HKBU Senate for final approval. HKBU places considerable importance on this sequence of policy approvals as the basis of equivalence between the academic standards and quality of UIC and HKBU. The Audit Panel recognises the importance of this sequence of approvals as a component of quality assurance but suggests the monitoring of equivalence needs to go beyond policy approval (see paragraphs 2.17 to 2.26 below).

- 2.5 The Audit Panel tested the consistent application of these policies and approaches in setting and maintaining academic standards through a number of strategies. They scrutinised the Institutional Submission and its supporting appendices and information sets for evidence of the application of university policies. They also requested and examined additional information at the level of individual programmes and departments. Site visits were made to HKBU in Hong Kong and UIC in Zhuhai. During these visits, members of the Audit Panel interviewed staff at multiple levels and in many roles, including senior staff, staff with responsibility for quality assurance, deans and heads of department; academic managers and teaching staff, including those with responsibility for research supervision. The Audit Panel enquired about their knowledge of university policies and their practices related to them, to ascertain the consistency with which academic standards were being set and maintained. Students also were questioned about their experiences with the application of policies and procedures.
- 2.6 The Audit Panel found there are cascading responsibilities for setting and reviewing academic standards, with deans holding the major responsibility, then heads of department, and specific programme directors at the local level. These are generally appropriate but concerns were raised about the University's approach to ensuring the maintenance of appropriate academic standards in programmes delivered, wholly or in part, in collaboration with international partners (see paragraphs 2.17 to 2.26 below).
- 2.7 Admission standards are appropriately applied at all levels. In data provided for two specific programmes, there was an upward trend in entry levels in one case, and the Audit Panel was advised that in the second programme, where entry levels had been declining, action had already been taken to discontinue that programme. In the RPg programmes, careful selection strategies are used to ensure there is a strong 'fit' between the prospective student's research interests and the strengths and capacities of the department (see paragraph 6.5 below).
- 2.8 HKBU academic policies and procedures for new programme development, approval and accreditation are generally sound. The economic viability of a programme is considered by the Academic Development Committee (ADC), comprised of the senior management team plus the deans. External experts

who are members of the relevant Academic Consultation Panel (ACP) contribute to the processes of programme accreditation; and ultimate approval is granted by Senate. While some variability was noted in individual programmes, overall the practices related to programme design and accreditation are fit for purpose, establishing a strong foundation for the setting and maintenance of academic standards.

- 2.9 New programmes at UIC follow a similar sequence of approvals, with endorsement by the UIC Senate and ultimate approval by HKBU Senate. Changes to programmes offered at both locations are considered and approved using the same sequence of approvals, including consideration by relevant Quality Assurance Committees.
- 2.10 Through seeking additional information on current programmes during the site visit, the Audit Panel learned that HKBU has no central repository either for up-to-date programme and course documentation or for archived versions of programme and course curricula. Instead, Academic Registry requests current versions of programme and course documentation from departments part-way through the academic year, or as needed. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that HKBU establish a secure central repository to hold the definitive current and archived versions of programme and course information in a consistent format.
- 2.11 Programmes undergo a comprehensive review on a six-year cycle, by an ACP made up of external members. The University recognises that six years is a long period between reviews, and to help provide interim external inputs, has recently implemented a policy to appoint external Departmental Academic Advisors (DAAs) for three-year terms. Expectations for these advisers are high, though it is too soon to be able to judge their added value. The intention is to provide annual reports on overall departmental quality, as ‘critical friends’. Given the scope of the role, however, and the requirement to visit the University only once in the three-year term, the Audit Panel considers it unlikely they will be able to provide an in-depth review of academic standards at the level of individual programmes.
- 2.12 In response to the recommendation from the 2009 QAC Quality Audit that HKBU introduce a systematic process to ensure quality between the six-yearly ACP system, the University established the requirement of annual programme quality assurance reports from 2013/14 (reporting on academic year 2012/13), initially including UGC-funded and self-financed TPg programmes as well as RPg programmes, and additionally for self-financed undergraduate programmes from 2014/15. Annual programme quality assurance reports are required of all programmes and are compiled by programme directors with inputs from the Programme Management Committees (PMCs). A common template is used, with flexibility for additional components and a basic set of quality data is pre-loaded from

databases managed centrally. HKBU policy requires that these annual reports are considered by programme advisory committees, which include external stakeholders from both local and international or regional universities. HKBU regards these groups as important in maintaining academic standards.

- 2.13 Examples of reports provided to the Audit Panel indicated that the nature and role of the programme advisory committees varies across faculties. In some faculties, the programme advisory committee operates at faculty level, across all programmes. The Audit Panel formed the view that this breadth of scope could lead to a dilution of engagement by stakeholders in monitoring quality at the level of the programme. In at least one academic unit, there is no formal programme advisory committee. In this case, external advice is acquired informally, through the involvement of practitioners who evaluate graduation projects. While there needs to be some flexibility in process, given the diversity of disciplines, the rigour of HKBU's maintenance of academic standards would benefit from more systematic inputs by external experts - both colleagues from other universities and professional stakeholders. The Audit Panel therefore encourages the University to develop more systematic approaches and greater consistency in the ways in which programme advisory committees review annual programme quality assurance reports.
- 2.14 Internal monitoring of academic standards through scrutiny of annual programme quality assurance reports is robust. Reports are forwarded to the Quality Assurance Committee for review. Individual programme reports are consolidated into faculty-level reports and deans make an annual presentation on the consolidated report to the Senior Executive Committee.
- 2.15 Because of the number of annual programme quality assurance reports to be considered, the Quality Assurance Committee has developed a strategy that involves utilising subgroups of its membership to review a cluster of programme reports. It takes care to assign academics from different disciplines to this task and ensures consistency by applying a detailed rubric which has undergone several iterations. The Audit Panel suggests that HKBU might reconsider the recent re-labelling of levels of report quality, with barely minimal compliance being deemed 'acceptable'. Nevertheless, overall scrutiny of the Quality Assurance Committee on the annual programme quality assurance reports demonstrates that the Quality Assurance Committee members are applying a critical eye to the reports and are providing good feedback on ways they could be strengthened. The Audit Panel therefore commends the Quality Assurance Committee for its careful review of annual programme quality assurance reports and the quality of the feedback it provides to programme directors.
- 2.16 The University states that it has adopted stringent means to ensure that programmes offered offshore achieve the same high standards as those

delivered in Hong Kong. The Audit Panel has no reason to be concerned about the quality of the programmes delivered by UIC but is concerned, nevertheless, about two aspects of the maintenance of academic standards of HKBU awards - firstly, the demonstration of equivalence of HKBU awards delivered by UIC and secondly, those delivered, in whole or part, via collaborations with regional and international partner universities.

- 2.17 It is consistently claimed that HKBU awards delivered by UIC are the same as HKBU awards delivered in Hong Kong. This claim rests on three pillars: first that the curriculum is identical to that which was accredited for Hong Kong use; second that the sequence of steps required to approve curriculum changes involves HKBU Quality Assurance Committee and Senate (as well as UIC equivalent bodies); and the use of external examiners drawn from HKBU.
- 2.18 While the Audit Panel was informed that UIC and HKBU use the same quality assurance approaches, the Audit Panel found the approaches to be quite dissimilar. For example, data systems are less well developed at UIC, where staff indicated that they are not familiar with HKBU's quality data systems because they have developed their own and hard data seems to play no role in UIC annual programme quality assurance reports. Instead, the quality focus at UIC seems to be on relevant groups of staff getting together and forming a shared understanding of issues faced by programmes.
- 2.19 It was clear to the Audit Panel that over the ten-year lifespan of UIC, both the programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) and the courses that constitute degrees have diverged somewhat in order to meet the particular needs of UIC students. These curricular changes have been made for sound reasons and have been properly approved by both UIC and HKBU senates. This divergence over time is not limited to degree structure. Whole Person Education (WPE) approaches have evolved quite differently at UIC and are measured using different tools. The paper-based teaching evaluation instrument is still used as a student experience survey rather than the online Course Feedback Questionnaire (CFQ) used at HKBU. Criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) is not yet fully implemented and UIC grade distributions are still guided by a normal distribution curve. There is no common English language proficiency test at HKBU and UIC. Given all of these differences, there are few shared data sets, so it has become very difficult to make direct and rigorous comparisons of student outcomes between the degrees delivered by UIC and those delivered by HKBU.
- 2.20 At the time of initial accreditation of the UIC programmes, it appears there was close collaboration between UIC academics and HKBU academics, but over time, the level of collaboration has lessened. Both UIC staff and HKBU staff now tend to see UIC as an independent institution. While is claimed by



some that there is still a considerable degree of collaboration, the Audit Panel found the level to be quite limited.

- 2.21 Current collaboration is primarily focused on the role taken by HKBU academics as ‘external examiners’ for UIC-taught degrees and on biennial reviews of UIC undertaken by HKBU. Examples of the HKBU external examiner reports viewed by the Audit Panel suggest they are providing detailed and useful reports to UIC programme directors and deans, but it appears these reports are not provided to relevant heads of department at HKBU. In interview, the HKBU deans stated their only responsibility for the quality of the UIC-taught degrees is as members of the HKBU Quality Assurance Committee and Senate. They do not feel any responsibility related to their faculty’s disciplinary expertise. Their understanding is that UIC is an independent higher education institution, responsible for its own degree quality, notwithstanding the fact that these are HKBU awards.
- 2.22 There is no HKBU membership of the UIC divisional boards of examiners and grade distributions from UIC courses and information on degree classifications enter the HKBU system at a high level, as one of many reports to the Undergraduate Regulations Committee, without any HKBU discipline-specific consideration of student outcomes and with no UIC staff member present who can speak to the reports.
- 2.23 The second concern of the Audit Panel relates to degree certification and the differential treatment of the certification for degree completion for HKBU awards taught in different locations. The Audit Panel was advised that degree certificates for degrees delivered in Hong Kong include the words ‘completed in Hong Kong’. Degree certificates for degrees of virtually the same name, taught at UIC, are silent on the place of study.
- 2.24 Some degrees taught in collaboration with regional and international partner universities raised a different concern about official certification. Where the degree certificate is for a single named degree and the certificate includes the name and seal of both universities, it is clear this is a degree taught in collaboration with another university. However, in at least one collaborative arrangement, one body of work results in the award of two completely separate degrees, with different titles - one from HKBU and the other from a British university. The HKBU certificate gives no indication this is a joint, dual or double award. The Audit Panel formed the view that the current practice of awarding two certificates for different degrees, neither of which references the other, does not communicate unambiguously the volume and nature of the student’s completed body of work. In light of this and the concern raised in paragraph 2.23 above, the Audit Panel recommends that HKBU ensure that information provided on UIC degree certificates is consistent with the information provided on certificates for the home campus and that information on all HKBU degree certificates for awards delivered in

collaboration with other institutions communicates unambiguously the volume and nature of the studies completed.

- 2.25 International professional accreditations, such as those acquired by the School of Business, provide an important source of external inputs to the maintenance of academic standards at an international level and HKBU is encouraged to continue to seek additional professional accreditations when available and in alignment with its overall quality assurance strategy.
- 2.26 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that more robust strategies are required for HKBU to ensure that degrees delivered wholly or in part by other institutions, are indeed of equivalent quality with equivalent outcomes to those delivered wholly at HKBU. The Audit Panel recommends that the University, as a degree-awarding body, strengthen its approaches to monitoring the quality and equivalence of degrees delivered at UIC and with other regional and international partner universities.

### **Assessment of student learning and externality**

- 2.27 The University has in place appropriate policies and procedures to support and promote student academic integrity through educative procedures, particularly through a new required course on academic writing for first year students, and through the investigation and sanctioning of identified violations. Interviews with staff indicated widespread use of ‘Turnitin’ software and a shared understanding of the university-wide procedures and sanctions to be followed in cases of plagiarism or cheating. Students at both UIC and HKBU are aware of the penalties that could be incurred for violations of academic integrity.
- 2.28 An important component of academic standards relates to the quality of graduates of the university’s programmes and therefore, the quality of student learning assessment that provides both employers and the society at large, with confidence that HKBU graduates are at least the equivalent of, if not better than, graduates of similar programmes offered by other universities. As HKBU aspires to regional and international equivalence in the quality of its graduates, the Audit Panel explored the involvement by academics from other institutions, regions and nations in supporting the judgments of student achievement made by HKBU academic staff and thereby giving credence to the University’s claims to international equivalence of outcomes.
- 2.29 The Audit Panel found, however, that external inputs to grading practices are now quite limited at HKBU, with the exception of RPg thesis examination and external judges for graduate exhibitions in the Academy for Visual Arts. External examiners are no longer required under university policy though the Audit Panel heard that some new programmes are permitted to have them and others still choose to do so. The Audit Panel’s questions did not elicit a clear

rationale for discontinuing the use of external examiners and the ongoing need for external reference points in grading student achievement is not well understood by all HKBU staff.

- 2.30 External moderation of grades is not required under the HKBU Policy for the Assessment of Student Learning and occurs rarely, generally only in cases where internal markers are unable to reach agreement. Whilst it is anticipated that the new DAAs will provide international inputs on levels of student achievement, their roles are broad and it is unlikely that they will be engaging with assessments of individual student achievement. Therefore, the Audit Panel recommends that the University strengthen its arrangements for grade moderation, ensuring they are robust and systematically involve external academics in reviewing a sample of final year student work on a regular basis.
- 2.31 HKBU's emerging approaches to benchmarking are at an early stage of development and with the exception of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores, graduate salaries and some co-developed items on the newly developed Academic Proficiency Test (APT), there is, as yet, little hard data on which to make reliable comparisons. Activities labelled 'benchmarking' by HKBU therefore tend to be comparisons of policies or approaches, rather than comparisons of hard data. The Audit Panel noted an example of good practice at HKBU which entails referencing international standards, in the development of the *Regulatory Framework for Professional Doctoral Degree Programme*, where a study was made of professional doctoral regulations in both local and international universities, alongside a review of Hong Kong Qualifications Framework Level 7. At a discipline level, there are a few specific benchmarking activities underway. For example, in Chinese Medicine, the pass rate of applicants applying for entry to the profession enables comparisons to be made with other universities offering this programme.
- 2.32 The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University develop and implement a benchmarking programme with partner regional and international institutions, to enable comparisons of both university-wide and discipline-specific quality data.
- 2.33 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that while academic policies governing the setting and maintenance of academic standards are appropriate, and procedures regulating academic standards at the programme level are generally sound, there is room for improvement in the consistency with which these policies are applied across the University.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES**

- 3.1 HKBU's mission is a commitment to 'academic excellence in teaching, research and service, and to the development of the whole person in all these

endeavours built upon the heritage of Christian higher education'. In its role statement and current strategic plan, *Vision 2020*, HKBU promotes a strong commitment to WPE, and aspires to be a 'regional leader in WPE that delivers academic excellence and innovation'. To achieve this aspiration, HKBU intends to integrate into a single 'quality teaching and learning' focus the following three strategic themes: the enhancement of teaching and learning; the provision of best value-addedness to HKBU students through an excellent teaching and learning environment; and the improvement in the attractiveness and agility of HKBU programmes for the recruitment of high quality students.

- 3.2 HKBU states that its overall approach to providing learning opportunities is characterised by the delivery of diverse curricula at all levels affording opportunities for students to develop their intellectual interests, transferable skills and general knowledge beyond their major disciplines; through securing, maintaining and developing an appropriate staffing resource; by innovation in teaching particularly through the development of e-learning; and through the development of the physical estate, especially the library and specialist teaching resources.
- 3.3 To test the effectiveness of HKBU's declared approach to the quality of learning opportunities, the Audit Panel reviewed pertinent sections of the Institutional Submission, together with their relevant web-links and several appendices and took account of a number of additional documents, particularly those relating to graduate success data, data collection and analysis, quality assurance information and teaching and learning. In addition, the Audit Panel engaged in meetings with senior staff at both HKBU and UIC, staff delivering programmes, academic support staff, students and external stakeholders. The Audit Panel also visited the Learning Commons and met students and advisers in that environment. The Panel additionally visited UIC at Zhuhai and discussed education provision there with senior staff, academic managers and support staff, teaching staff and students.

### **The curriculum**

- 3.4 The four-year curriculum, introduced in 2012/13, emphasises breadth and flexibility providing students with the opportunity to develop intellectual interests, transferable skills and general knowledge beyond their major disciplines. It is organised to deliver WPE by enabling all students to attain by graduation a relevant set of Graduate Attributes (GAs). GAs relating to RPg and TPg levels were developed at the same time. Both curricular and co-curricular activities within the undergraduate programmes are designed specifically in relation to the GAs and delivered within an Outcome-based Teaching and Learning (OBTL) framework. An additional feature of the curriculum is the compulsory honours project for all honours students.

- 3.5 Curricula are planned to deliver learning outcomes which reflect the GAs, at the appropriate level, which together give expression to the University's WPE philosophy, although at UIC WPE relates only to extra-curricular activities. Curriculum delivery is based on OBTL, whereby each programme has specified PILOs that reflect the relevant graduate attributes. Staff whom the Audit Panel met acknowledged that the introduction of OBTL has posed challenges, particularly resulting from an initial lack of widespread institutional expertise. Academic managers and teaching staff confirmed that OBTL is now fully implemented. Staff cited the particularly helpful assistance available from the Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning (CHTL), which provides appropriate staff development sessions, often delivered by external experts.
- 3.6 The Audit Panel concluded that the University has successfully managed the introduction of the four-year undergraduate programme and has introduced a diverse and extensive range of curriculum choice and co/extra-curricular learning opportunities since the 2009 QAC Quality Audit.

### **Learning and teaching**

- 3.7 The University appoints two groups of staff with teaching duties: academic staff and teaching staff. The former are deployed to teach and supervise at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, to undertake research and/or scholarly and creative activities, and to provide academic leadership in fostering excellence in teaching, research and professional service in their relevant disciplines. Lecturer appointments were made initially for the purposes of teaching at Associate Degree and undergraduate levels; lecturers are not expected to engage in research but will engage in appropriate scholarly and professional activities. They supplement undergraduate teaching in junior years, thereby releasing academic staff time to focus on supervision and research duties. RPg students are also assigned limited teaching duties.
- 3.8 In line with its belief in the paramount importance of quality teaching and learning, the University provides opportunities to develop faculty throughout their careers. HKBU's overarching professional development framework has three main foci: staff induction, which introduces new staff to the key elements in the delivery of the HKBU curriculum; the Faculty Professional Development Series (FPDS), organised by CHTL, which can be recognised as advance standing leading to the University of Western Australia Master of Education award; and a series of occasional workshops and seminars organised by the General Education Office. The Audit Panel noted that the University has made efforts to improve low uptake and completion rates for FPDS by participating in the UGC-supported "Blended and Online Learning and Teaching" project, led by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, to facilitate the online delivery of FPDS. In parallel, the University is also

undertaking a review of its staff induction programme to enhance content and delivery.

- 3.9 The University encourages the sharing of good practice. The Teaching and Learning Experience Sharing (TALES) seminar series offers seven to ten workshops each semester on a range of teaching-related matters. The communities of practice are an initiative to encourage inter-institutional collaborative projects on teaching and learning. Themes to date have included WPE, the development of students' e-portfolios, enhancing GAs and discipline-based communities.
- 3.10 Individual staff development needs are identified in the annual performance review process, which was improved following a recommendation in the 2009 QAC Quality Audit, better to align staff appraisal and staff development. Individual staff are encouraged to apply for departmental, faculty or central resources and to attend the developmental activities offered by CHTL. Analysis of data gathered from students via the Course Feedback Questionnaire (CFQ) demonstrates that staff in receipt of Teaching Development Grants and those participating in inter-institutional communities of practice, generally receive higher scores on teaching performance than other staff.
- 3.11 Teaching staff whom the Audit Panel met are aware of the induction programmes for new staff, and welcome the availability of various teaching support grants. They appreciated in particular the TALES seminars and communities of practice which attract increasing numbers of teaching staff, and contribute to confidence building, pedagogic development and networking opportunities. Staff reported their adoption of what they had learned in TALES seminars and the Audit Panel learned of collaborative learning and teaching development initiatives with overseas institutions.
- 3.12 CHTL staff contribute to the common mandatory teaching and assessment course for RPg students, and to the more discipline-focused sessions at departmental retreats. CHTL takes into account feedback from these and other CHTL programmes, as well as developmental needs for university initiatives, in determining the future focus and delivery of their activities. The Audit Panel learned from both senior staff and teaching staff of the valuable support available from CHTL, particularly in the transition to OBTL and CRA.
- 3.13 The Audit Panel commends the University on the diversity and availability of a wide range of activities to support staff in the development of their pedagogical practice. In light of the fact that participation in staff development activity is largely a decision for individual staff members, the Audit Panel encourages the University to consider how it might ensure

participation by a wider range of staff, particularly in relation to the implementation of institution-wide teaching and learning initiatives.

- 3.14 The University states that its approach to innovation in teaching focuses on e-learning, encouraging research-informed teaching and enhancing the range of specialist learning facilities. Building on the affirmation of the 2009 QAC Quality Audit, it replaced an ad hoc task force by an e-Learning Committee in 2010, charged with ensuring the timely adoption of appropriate technologies and to monitor progress on the delivery of the e-learning strategy, which it reviewed in 2012. E-learning is supported by the Office of Information Technology, the Library and CHTL which together provide hardware, software and advice. Further support is available via an online guide.
- 3.15 The University has identified the following strategic priorities for e-learning: enhancement of technical infrastructure and technical support; enhancement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the institutional processes to support objectives and boost benefits in all other areas; the design, delivery and maintenance of effective teaching and learning; provision of support for research-based or enquiry-based learning; and the enhancement of research and scholarship of teaching. More specifically, current e-learning developments are aimed at enhancing diversity and quality of the learning experience; encouraging, facilitating and supporting the use of innovative technology; and guiding and informing investment in e-learning infrastructure. The e-Learning Committee reviewed e-learning progress in 2012 and found progress to be satisfactory. As a result of a stocktaking exercise the next year, the Committee concluded that the state of e-learning activities at HKBU was comparable to that elsewhere, but that a priority for the University was to determine how best to promote e-learning to HKBU colleagues.
- 3.16 The Audit Panel was informed that e-learning at HKBU is mainly a pedagogy-driven development aimed at enhancing the student's face-to-face learning experiences and facilitating digitally-supported learning and assessment opportunities for students and staff. The widespread use of 'Turnitin' for assignment submissions to assist with plagiarism detection was noted by the Audit Panel as an example of the consistent use of e-learning opportunities across the institution. There is a wide variety of e-learning resources available to students, with some staff using video and audio resources to capture lecture material, either via YouTube, Facebook or the University's learning platforms, and some staff using Dropbox for assignment submissions.
- 3.17 The University reports an increase in the number of teaching staff using e-learning for interactive student engagement, following the introduction of Blackboard and particularly after the visits of two e-learning consultants in 2013/14. HKBU is hoping to take what it considers to be an e-learning

leadership role in Hong Kong with the establishment in 2015 of the new Resource Centre for Ubiquitous Learning and Pedagogy. The Centre aims to provide support for ‘instructors’ most difficult pedagogical problems’; seeks to lower the resistance of students to engaging in e-learning; and more generally plans to enable the use of technology to disseminate information and construct knowledge using diverse media, particularly students’ own mobile devices.

- 3.18 The University is currently operating with two major learning management system platforms - Moodle (launched in 2007/08) and Blackboard (introduced in 2012/13), and has expressed its intention to convert fully to Blackboard, primarily for its outcomes assessment and e-portfolio functionality. The Audit Panel noted the University’s comment in the Institutional Submission that full adoption of Blackboard is essential but that this has been slow as it is voluntary. Successive meetings of the e-Learning Committee have been discussing the migration since 2012 and, as recently as April 2015, it received a paper proposing the full adoption of Blackboard and the archiving of Moodle by September 2016. Indeed, staff reported that an 18-month transition period had been established in 2012 but that this timeframe proved too optimistic and discussions about the relative merits of platforms are still ongoing. Senior staff confirmed that the SECO had found it difficult to reach a conclusion on the future development of the e-learning model given the divergence of views within the institution and had determined to operate both systems for the next two years, as there is currently no clear-cut decision. Indeed, senior staff pointed to the possibility of investing in another system altogether in 2017, were an appropriate one to emerge.
- 3.19 Students and faculty staff whom the Audit Panel met reported making considerable use of the e-learning platforms, expressing preferences for either Blackboard or Moodle, depending on their own experiences. Students at UIC felt that e-learning was generally underdeveloped, and staff at UIC observed that Moodle is less expensive and more accessible than Blackboard in Mainland China. Currently the choice of platform at HKBU remains a matter for individual staff, as do decisions as to what course materials and interactive sessions with students should be available on the e-learning platform selected. There is no University policy on minimum standards for the amount and type of materials to be uploaded onto the e-learning system, or the uses to which they should be put.
- 3.20 Therefore the Audit Panel recommends that the University determine, by the end of 2015, a firm timeline to provide students and staff with a common university e-learning platform to avoid the additional investment in multiple platforms. It also recommends that the University determine for the start of academic year 2016/17 the minimum pan-university standards for the use of the e-learning platform.



## **Academic appeals**

- 3.21 HKBU has in place appropriate policies, procedures and timeframes for students to appeal academic decisions, in accordance with clearly established practices.
- 3.22 Staff whom the Audit Panel met were aware that the University has in place arrangements for student appeals, although not all were aware of the details involved and not all students whom the Audit Panel met were aware of the arrangements. The Office of Student Affairs (OSA) website outlines the sequence of individuals with whom students might discuss or formally lodge an appeal and indicates that the Director of Student Affairs offers assistance in this regard. The Audit Panel formed the view that this information is insufficiently accessible and not detailed enough. It encourages the University to address this shortcoming.
- 3.23 HKBU maintains an appeals database, and all individual cases are formally reported to Senate. Senate does not, however, receive an overall annual report on appeals, which would afford it the opportunity to learn from the numbers, types, broad outcomes and trends of appeals. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University ensure that Senate receives and considers an analysis of the number, nature and overall outcomes of student appeals and complaints together with historic data indicating annual trends in appeals data.

## **Learning environment**

- 3.24 HKBU has been developing its campus under the guidance of the 2007 Campus Expansion Plan which aims at both increasing campus floor space and re-arranging space to integrate departments and provide coherent learning support, student support and administrative spaces. Particular features of the plan relating to learning and teaching are the development of the library area and the provision of additional specialist learning facilities, notably in the Schools of Chinese Medicine and Communication.
- 3.25 The extension to the Library at the main campus in Kowloon has provided more personal and group workspaces in a newly established Learning Commons, greater access to online materials and a virtual advice centre on English language.
- 3.26 The University cites a number of examples of the provision of specialist learning and teaching resources. The databases in Chinese Medicine represent a major achievement and are widely used internationally. The Jockey Club has financed an HD TV/film production studio for the School of Communication and a multi-media language laboratory has been established in the Language Centre.

- 3.27 Students whom the Audit Panel met spoke highly of the development of the Learning Commons and welcomed in particular the clear signage denoting different learning zones, the opportunities for both personal and group work, and the adjacent availability of both staff and peer support. They also appreciated the presence of staff offering IT support, particularly for laptop problems. Students indicated broad support for the library facilities as a whole, though some were less impressed, and others expressed concern at the unavailability of some specialist databases. Library staff receive comments from students and attempt to meet requests when possible. They also provide standard questionnaires every two to three years. The Audit Panel formed the view that the library could be more systematic in gathering data and in taking actions to address issues identified. The Audit Panel noted that the Library Committee, which includes faculty and student representatives, advises ADC on library resource requirements for existing activities and for proposed library developments, and submits, through ADC, an annual report to Senate. The Audit Panel also learned of the operation of Library Committees within academic units and of more informal Library Consultative meetings with representatives of academic units separately, attended by a number of library staff. In discussion with other service department representatives, it became apparent that there is no mechanism for Senate to consider either reports on quality data or proposed action plans from the range of the University's academic support units. Therefore, the Audit Panel recommends that the University ensure that Senate has an opportunity to comment upon both systematic quality data and action plans of the various academic support services.
- 3.28 While there are some consultative arrangements between HKBU and UIC library staff, the Audit Panel became aware that UIC students have access to the HKBU library resources only while attending summer school in Hong Kong, and are unable to access the HKBU library or its e-learning resources remotely. While UIC students complained about the lack of access to both hard copy materials and e-resources from the HKBU library, the Audit Panel heard that they really appreciate the chance to provide feedback on which new books should be added to the UIC Library. While acknowledging the resource and access constraints underlying the present arrangements, the Audit Panel recommends the University ensure that all students undertaking HKBU awards have access to learning resources comparable in terms of adequacy and quality to those of the University.
- 3.29 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the University provides learning opportunities that effectively reflect its WPE mission, and that give students a broad-based and flexible curriculum to achieve their intended learning outcomes and graduate attributes. Students are well supported by enthusiastic teaching staff who are able to access a wide range of pedagogic development opportunities. The learning opportunities could be further enhanced through the following: greater consistency in the use of e-learning; focused investment

in a selected e-learning platform; systematic data collection, reports and associated action plans in respect of learning support services; and the provision of comparable access to learning resources for all students undertaking HKBU awards.

#### **4. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

- 4.1 The University is committed to providing a liberal and holistic education that emphasises human values through its delivery of WPE ‘that fosters intellectual, professional, social, psychological, spiritual and physical development’ with the aim of producing ‘capable, confident and caring leaders who possess a high degree of integrity, a strong sense of responsibility and unbaiting perseverance’. Individual student achievement of intended learning outcomes and GAs is calibrated by various forms of assessment. The University claims that overall success of HKBU graduates is measured and monitored by its extensive programme of data collection.

##### **Assessment**

- 4.2 As part of its response to the 2009 QAC Quality Audit, the University formulated a new assessment policy, which was reviewed and refined in 2013/14, a year after implementation. This document covers key aspects of assessment including Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), PILOs, CRA and the moderation of grades. It also includes a section on academic honesty, which states that students are to be informed about what constitutes acceptable academic practice. In parallel with the introduction of the four-year undergraduate curriculum and OBTL, the new assessment policy required the adoption of CRA for all courses, to replace the norm-referenced system that had operated previously. The Audit Panel noted that this was a logical consequence of OBTL, with student performance measured against pre-determined criteria and academic standards linked to specified CILOs and PILOs rather than to the relative achievements of other students. These developments are fully in line with recommendations and affirmations of the 2009 QAC Quality Audit.
- 4.3 Staff confirmed that CRA had been implemented in each programme, although the Audit Panel was told that it has not necessarily been applied consistently to each course at either HKBU or UIC. In the general education programme, courses are monitored by the General Education Office but are subject to regular marking and monitoring by the respective departmental boards. Assessment rubrics have been developed by staff and are provided to students, normally within two weeks of the start of the course. Staff reported that they were well supported in making the transition to CRA; for example, one faculty commissioned a senior academic to assist staff in the initial development of rubrics and other staff had attended CHTL workshops. Checks against norm-referenced grade distribution were conducted not in

order to mark to the normal curve but as a safeguard against unjustified grade inflation. The Audit Panel formed the view, however, that external grade moderation needs to be strengthened (see paragraphs 2.29 - 2.30 above). Students whom the Audit Panel met found the rubrics valuable in preparing their assignments and confirmed the fairness of assessment and their understanding of the University's assessment grading system and its grade descriptors which are widely accessible. Staff offered different views to the Audit Panel as to whether the move to more formative assessment had led to a reduction in the proportion of assessment conducted via formal examinations.

### **Monitoring student achievement**

- 4.4 Through analysis of the characteristics of its student intake, the University noted in particular the increase in the number of senior year entrants, and formed a task force in 2014 to ensure that their needs were appropriately reflected in the curriculum structure. Having consulted with senior year entrants the task force made a number of recommendations. From the 2015/16 academic year, senior year entrants will be eligible to transfer credit units from prior tertiary studies up to a maximum of 50% of the total number of units in the HKBU programme. Senior year entrants will also be encouraged to attend HKBU's summer programme. The University will provide a dedicated orientation programme and strengthen the specialised support available to these students. The Audit Panel heard that these arrangements are already in place for 2015 entrants. The Audit Panel commends the University on amending the structure of the four-year curriculum and support arrangements for senior year entrants to optimise the opportunities available to them to meet all the intended learning outcomes of their degrees.
- 4.5 The University conducts systematic reviews of students' holistic development during their studies through the Whole Person Development Inventory (WPDI), under the leadership of the OSA. As well as increasing students' self-understanding, the inventory also provides guidance to help students plan for their university life and to actualise Whole Person Development (WPD). Results have shown a significant improvement in nine out of 15 factors and three out of six domains, but not in the intellectual, physical or psychological domains. Students whom the Audit Panel met specifically commented on the importance of the physical domain, explaining that under time pressure, they could neglect physical exercise.
- 4.6 Students may log in to the WPDI eSystem through the webpage of the Counselling and Development Centre to complete the questionnaire or to review their personal report. Students whom the Audit Panel met found this approach helpful. Two longitudinal studies of 2011 and 2012 entrants undertaken in 2014 showed growth in most of the WPD factors over the period, and consistent variations in student development among the factors

themselves. Full-time undergraduate and postgraduate students are invited to use the Student U-Life Record E-system to assist them in tracking their broad learning experiences, including their co/extra-curricular activities, and to help them with the preparation of their curricula vitae. This also interfaces with the Student Development Portfolio System.

- 4.7 Students whom the Audit Panel met spoke positively about the WPE elements of their programmes, many having selected HKBU for its WPE commitment. External stakeholders related to the Audit Panel their experiences of the characteristics of HKBU graduates as reflecting clearly the principles of the University's WPE philosophy, which a number of the stakeholders, as former alumni of HKBU themselves, felt they had achieved, though some questioned whether graduates needed to counterbalance a characteristic humility with the ability to display confidence and initiative in the workplace more effectively. The Audit Panel therefore commends the University in facilitating student achievement in realising the outcomes of the WPE philosophy as evidenced by the supportive testimony of students, employers and other external stakeholders.
- 4.8 The Evidence Collection Initiative (ECI) has been developed by HKBU to assist in monitoring student achievement in WPE. Notable examples include the data on language enhancement and general education courses. Other benchmarking/assessment mechanisms to measure the achievement of graduate skills and capabilities include external tests such as IELTS and APT. The Audit Panel commends the University on its initiatives to monitor statistically the impact of the learning environment on student achievement and the students' WPD. However, the Audit Panel noted that the large volume and complexity of the data analyses may make it difficult for academic staff fully to comprehend and utilise them in the interests of quality enhancement. The Audit Panel formed the view that attention needs to be given to aggregating these many data sources in a user-friendly way, designed to address the specific information needs of academic staff as they contemplate how they might effect continuous improvement of aspects of student learning and development. In this context, the Audit Panel also suggests that HKBU assure itself that sample sizes and response rates are sufficient to produce reliable information year-on-year.
- 4.9 A task force on language enhancement was established in 2013/14 to address shortcomings in student achievement evidenced by ECI data collection and analysis. Efforts made by HKBU as a result of this intervention resulted in an upward trend in student achievement on standardised tests such as IELTS. The Audit Panel notes this good practice in monitoring and supporting student achievement and encourages the Language Centre to continue to build on this foundation and focus on the teaching of writing skills in light of the different needs of undergraduate students on the four-year degree programme.

## **Graduate success**

- 4.10 Measures of graduate success provide an important component of data on the quality of graduates. HKBU now has an annual graduate survey, completed on paper at the Commencement Ceremony. Follow-up phone surveying helps maintain a very high response rate for this survey. Starting salaries are routinely gathered centrally for all Hong Kong institutions, making some comparisons possible, but staff indicated this was not a stable indicator and had little utility as a measure of graduate success. Other forms of data gathering on HKBU graduate success are not well systematised or reported. The graduate survey conducted by OSA is reported only to Department Chairs and at University level and results are not aggregated or reported in ways that are of practical use in tracking quality over time or for informing quality enhancement activities, particularly at programme level. Annual programme quality assurance reports contain some data on graduate success and programmes have developed their own surveys or other strategies for gathering data on graduate success, but this important area of quality data is not well coordinated or well used across the University.
- 4.11 Employer surveys are undertaken by OSA, with results presented to Senate. OSA also undertakes graduate employer surveys and a three to five year follow-up from alumni. Several programmes conduct their own graduate and employer surveys as they reported that data from the OSA surveys were available only at university level, and were of little assistance in determining the focus of programme enhancement activities. Therefore the Audit Panel encourages the University to review its operations for the collection, analysis and dissemination of the results of the wide range of employer and graduate surveys it conducts.
- 4.12 Reports of graduate success in terms of external awards, anecdotal evidence of career successes and entry to postgraduate programmes in international universities are an important component of the evidence that HKBU academic standards are being maintained at a level that meets international norms. A modest upward trend in student achievement on standardised tests such as IELTS, (in previous years the Educational Testing Service profile), and the regionally-developed APT are also positive indicators, but the University recognises that more work is needed to lift students' trilingual abilities further. A third positive result is provided through graduate employment data which shows a high uptake of HKBU graduates in the fields sampled by the Audit Panel. Quantitative benchmarked data that enable direct comparisons with graduates of other universities would enable HKBU to demonstrate that its programmes are indeed preparing graduates at an international standard. In the last decade, a significant corpus of international collaborative work, has codified the in-common components of degrees across many institutions and some nations, and in some cases has produced shared assessment strategies within disciplines, to enable hard comparisons to be made about graduate

quality. The Audit Panel encourages HKBU to explore joining such collaborative efforts.

- 4.13 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that HKBU has made significant progress in developing its assessment policy and practices since the 2009 QAC Quality Audit. Although CRA has yet to be fully implemented across all courses in HKBU and UIC, it is clear that both students and staff are benefiting from the transparent assessment practices associated with the identification of CILOs and PILOs and the development of assessment rubrics. Both the changes made to accommodate senior year entrants and the WPDI testify to the University's commitment to optimising opportunities for students to fulfil their potential and monitoring student achievement. The Audit Panel noted, however, that amassing data should not be an end in itself and emphasised the need for the University to ensure that data are presented in a user-friendly way and put to productive use to promote and enhance student achievement.

## **5. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT**

- 5.1 HKBU sees quality enhancement as an on-going commitment with its broad oversight being an important element of the roles of the Vice-Presidents and other senior staff. There is no discrete enhancement strategy, although senior staff pointed to the ongoing focus on the enhancement of student learning, the enhancement of broad-based major subjects and a more recent focus on the development of inter-disciplinary learning approaches as being among HKBU's enhancement priorities. Senior staff emphasised the WPE mission of the University as being the key driver of enhancement.
- 5.2 The Institutional Submission states that HKBU's approach to quality enhancement is underpinned largely by the collection of evidence from the formal quality assurance processes; the analysis of evidence collected through student experience questionnaires; the outcomes of student participation in quality enhancement; and the outcomes of curriculum review. The enhancement of learning and teaching through staff development, learning resources provision and estate development is addressed under The Quality of Learning Opportunities (see page 14 above), while the provision of student support arrangements is reviewed in under Audit Theme 1: Enhancing the student learning experience (see paragraph 7.4 below).
- 5.3 In order to test the effectiveness of HKBU's declared approach to enhancement, the Audit Panel reviewed pertinent sections of the Institutional Submission together with their relevant web links and appendices, and took account of a range of additional documents, particularly those relating to data collection and analysis and quality assurance information. The Audit Panel also reviewed additional papers relating to ACP reports and responses, annual programme quality assurance reports and programme advisory committees. In addition, the Audit Panel engaged in meetings with senior staff, staff

delivering programmes, academic support staff students, and external stakeholders.

### **Data collection and analysis for quality enhancement**

- 5.4 Several quality assurance data gathering exercises, including the Formative Review Exercise (FRE), the ECI and the WPDI, are cited by the University as key quality enhancement initiatives.
- 5.5 Following the introduction of OBTL, the University piloted the FRE from 2010 to assess the quality of learning and teaching through indirect evidence on the basis of a series of voluntary questionnaires and student interviews at the end of each year and on graduation. The aim was to demonstrate the impact of the learning and teaching environment on students' achievement of the GAs and suggest solutions to problems identified. Positive results were recorded in the first year during which 1 000 students from 45 courses provided valid results from two questionnaires. Overall, the results showed that students following programmes that had been delivered within an OBTL framework demonstrated greater degrees of engagement with deep learning and higher commitment levels than those students enrolled in other courses.
- 5.6 In 2011/12, the FRE was subsumed within the ECI, to collect indirect evidence to assess students' attainment of PILOs and GAs. The analysed data are presented to the Teaching and Learning Policy Committee (TLPC) and Senate, then to academic units, and are available at course, programme and University level. This project involved comprehensive data collection from relatively small samples at multi-levels (course, programme and institution), focused on teaching and learning outcomes more generally, and involved elements of student self-assessment. Resulting data are downloaded to the annual programme quality report templates. The number of programmes surveyed increased from 2010/11 to 2013/14, while response rates remained steady at approximately 40%.
- 5.7 HKBU developed the WPDI for use in 2011, to identify students' holistic development. The WPDI replaced an American assessment tool used since 1999. The WPDI is constructed as six domains – intellectual, physical, professional, psychological, social and spiritual – correlating 15 factors. The University sees this as essential in both enhancing students' self-awareness and the University's understanding of its student body but has been concerned at the low response rates to its student surveys. The University decided to consolidate from 2014/15 the various data collection exercises into a holistic assessment of students' achievement of GAs through WPE assessment. The Audit Panel affirms the steps being taken by the University to enhance the value of its student data collection initiatives through securing higher response rates.



## **Quality assurance systems and quality enhancement**

- 5.8 HKBU regards its quality assurance system as key to enhancing the quality of academic programmes. The University cites in particular the enhancement potential of the six-yearly visits of ACPs, the annual quality assurance reporting system and the recently introduced DAA scheme which will provide an annual report at departmental level. Additionally, the less formal programme advisory committees contribute to enhancement.
- 5.9 The direct impact on programmes of ACP feedback is likely to vary depending on the composition of the academic unit scheduled for review. For example, in one case, the focus was on a faculty comprising five separate departments. The ACP report, although comprehensive and searching, focuses on the faculty and the individual departments holistically (in line with the ACP's brief); there was not an opportunity to report in detail on the health of programmes individually. The report nevertheless records that the ACP reviewed past examinations, scripts and students' work, met with students and employers from a range of the Faculty's programmes, and included reports of discussions with the separate departments. In another case, the Audit Panel noted that the ACP report focuses on an individual programme as it is the only degree programme offered by the academic unit scheduled for review. The Audit Panel formed the view that the value of the ACP process for programme enhancement might be inconsistent across the University, depending on the extent to which an ACP panel is able to focus on individual programmes. Similarly, the Audit Panel noted that the subsequent consideration of the ACP Faculty report by the PMC, Faculty Board, Quality Assurance Committee and Senate, though detailed, made little reference to individual programmes or to enhancement opportunities.
- 5.10 The Audit Panel noted that one academic unit was exempt from the scheduled ACP visit in 2011/12 as its key programme had undergone accreditation in 2011. While the outcomes of this accreditation were taken very seriously at the various levels within the University, the Audit Panel noted that the unit would not benefit from a full, holistic external peer review exercise until the next scheduled ACP in 2019, some eight years after accreditation.
- 5.11 The Institutional Submission states that annual programme quality reports are intended to encompass a focus on enhancement activities and opportunities and are supplemented by a self-reflective and forward-looking annual report and plan prepared by each faculty/school/Academy of Visual Arts and submitted to SECO, although the latter are not referred to in HKBU's quality manual.
- 5.12 One good example seen by the Audit Panel demonstrates the potential for the annual programme quality reporting system to identify enhancement proposals and to monitor action thereon, although this is not necessarily

evident in other examples seen by the Audit Panel. The annual report in question shows nine enhancement action proposals covering a wide range of initiatives on teaching structures and focus, synergies with general education programmes, enhancing the Honours project, improving students English language abilities, developing closer relationships between research and teaching, encouraging an entrepreneurial spirit among students, and developing relationships with international institutions. In this example of good practice there is clear evidence of these enhancement initiatives receiving consideration following the approval of the programme quality assurance reports through the committee phases.

- 5.13 Quantitative data on areas such as applications and admissions, degree outcomes, employability rates and graduate salaries are uploaded centrally to annual programme quality assurance report templates which is helpful in reducing the workload of programme coordinators and increasing the likelihood of consistent application across the University. However the Audit Panel noted that programme-level quality assurance data is not used in a consistent way to track programme quality over time, or identify quality issues that subsequent quality enhancements need to address. The Audit Panel encourages the University to consider how better use could be made of the quality assurance data at programme level, in order to design related opportunities for enhancement.
- 5.14 The DAA scheme has only been in existence since 2014/15 and reports are not expected until 2015/16. It is therefore too early to judge the success of the scheme in respect of quality enhancement. The Audit Panel noted, however, that the focus of DAA reports is on the academic unit with limited opportunity for the external scholar to comment on enhancement at the level of the individual programme. Therefore the Audit Panel recommends that, as the DAA scheme develops, the University examine ways to strengthen independent external scrutiny for each taught programme to ensure that enhancement opportunities are identified and followed through.
- 5.15 Academic Advisory Committees assist with the enhancement of programmes by advising on future developments, particularly in the light of community needs, market demand, placements and graduate employment opportunities. The Audit Panel noted the very comprehensive report of the Science Faculty Advisory Committee which included Academic Advisory Committee-informed reports from each of the Science departments. The Audit Panel met several external members of advisory committees, some of whom were HKBU alumni, who are able to bring external views which programme management representatives find helpful.
- 5.16 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the HKBU's extensive quality assurance arrangements all have a part to play in the identification of good practice and enhancement opportunities. The Audit Panel encourages the

University to exploit further the potential of these arrangements and consider how to capture and harness wide-ranging localised enhancement activities for the benefit of the institution as a whole.

### **Student participation in quality enhancement**

- 5.17 HKBU encourages student participation in its quality assurance and enhancement processes, by fostering the attendance by student representatives at Senate, standing committees, faculty/unit boards, and PMCs, the last being informed of the outcomes of regular informal meetings between students and departmental heads on course and programme matters. Student views are also gathered through a student satisfaction questionnaire, the CFQ, which is now available electronically. Graduate satisfaction surveys report in particular on co-curricular activities. Further information is obtained through the annual graduate employment survey and periodic follow-up surveys of recent graduates.
- 5.18 Students whom the Audit Panel met referred to helpful consultative meetings with deans or heads of department. They appreciated the variety of opportunities they have to meet informally with staff during the teaching week and at the end of the semester. Student representatives reported positively on the more formal quarterly staff-student meetings. The Audit Panel was informed that staff are friendly and supportive, and are readily available via email. Students are aware that they are represented on Senate, Senate committees and boards at faculty level although no examples were forthcoming of the outcomes of student input into these fora, or of the way the system of student representatives works in practice.
- 5.19 Building on an affirmation from the 2009 QAC Quality Audit, HKBU's TLPC established a task force to review the teaching evaluation questionnaire and consider its possible replacement by a CFQ. Three pilot CFQ surveys, following extensive consultation with staff and students, were held in 2013/14. Senate subsequently agreed the formal introduction of the CFQ, replacing the teaching evaluation questionnaire, into all courses from the first semester of 2014/15. The Audit Panel noted that not all programmes are, as yet, fully compliant in this regard and that the paper-based teaching evaluation questionnaire is still used across all programmes at UIC.
- 5.20 CFQ is an on-line survey completed by students during a class period within the last two weeks of the semester. It consists of three sections, the first of which focuses on the quality of teaching, reflecting the student's views on lecturer capability and retains many of the questions used in the former teaching evaluation questionnaire. Results are sent to the individual teacher and relevant head of department/dean. The second section consists of questions for gauging student feedback on their achievement of CILOs. The

third section presents more generic questions on ideas for improvement, views on the library, IT and e-learning, and the student's interest in the course.

- 5.21 The outcome of the teaching evaluation questionnaire, and now the CFQ, form the basis of discussions between the lecturer and head of department/dean during the annual performance review. Deans confirmed that student comments are taken seriously in this regard. CFQ data are not aggregated at the level of programme and individual outcomes are not available to programme directors, though they and PMCs may receive summary reports of general points identified in the surveys. The Audit Panel encourages the University to develop ways to include aggregate data from CFQs in the data sets provided to programme directors for inclusion in the annual programme quality reports. These data could help identify curricular design issues that can then be targeted for enhancement activities.
- 5.22 Students whom the Audit Panel met observed that completion of the teaching evaluation questionnaire and now the CFQ is not compulsory, though some reported feeling pressurised by staff into completing the surveys during class time. While some students had received feedback from staff about issues raised by students via the teaching evaluation questionnaire/CFQ, the majority were not convinced that completing the questionnaire at the end of the semester facilitates immediate improvements to the course, and reported that they find mid-semester evaluation preferable and more immediately effective.
- 5.23 The Audit Panel affirms HKBU's decision to administer the CFQ from 2014/15 and encourages the University to ensure that staff close the quality loop by developing mechanisms to inform students about the improvements made in response to their feedback.
- 5.24 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that HKBU is committed to enhancing student learning opportunities through data gathering exercises, the formal quality assurance and enhancement arrangements, and through student participation in enhancement. However, the Audit Panel noted that there is no overarching approach and leadership responsibility for quality enhancement, and that there is considerable potential for HKBU to exploit further its extensive quality assurance and enhancement processes as key elements in identifying enhancement activities and opportunities.

## **6. POSTGRADUATE PROVISION**

- 6.1 HKBU defines its postgraduate provision as cascading down from mission and vision, via WPE, to the definition of postgraduate GAs, and corresponding learning outcomes. GAs and learning outcomes for both TPg and RPg programmes were formulated in 2012/13. Postgraduate studies are administered with the support of the Graduate School, which also serves as the executive arm of three governing committees.

- 6.2 The Audit Panel tested the effectiveness of University's arrangements for the quality assurance and enhancement of its postgraduate provision by reviewing the Institutional Submission and its supporting appendices and information sets. Additional information was requested including enrolment numbers, programme information and KPIs. During the Institutional Briefing and the Audit Visit, the Audit Panel met with RPg and TPg students, teaching staff delivering TPg programmes and those responsible for supervision of RPg students; and staff responsible for providing postgraduate students with academic support.

### **Research postgraduate programmes**

- 6.3 HKBU has a quota of approximately 200 RPg students allocated by UGC each year. While staff whom the Audit Panel met commented on the comparatively small number of PhD students, the Audit Panel heard that the limited intake has caused HKBU to seek students in niche areas, where unique research profiles and specialisation have led to the recruitment of high calibre PhD students. Specifically, HKBU identifies six focused research areas in the SWOT analysis contained in the 2012-15 ADP: cross-cultural studies, contemporary China studies, environmental science, advanced materials research, advanced e-transformation and technology, and Chinese Medicine, though these are not included in its Role Statement.
- 6.4 The purpose of HKBU's portfolio of RPg programmes is well established and research supervisors share a clear vision of this purpose. Academic standards are monitored by the Graduate School, Research Postgraduate Studies Committee and the Research Committee. The Audit Panel noted that one external examiner participates in the MPhil Board of Examiners and two external examiners participate in the PhD Board of Examiners, thus bringing a degree of externality to bear at the latter stages of the PhD process. Some benchmarking of RPg academic standards occurs at programme level, for example the Faculty of Social Sciences benchmarks standards with four other institutions.
- 6.5 Admission to programmes is handled at the local level and student applications are judged 'holistically'. Supervisors informed the Audit Panel that the different academic units use different means to secure the quality of the student intake; for example some hire prospective students as research assistants in the first instance while others conduct interviews to ensure the best students are selected. In some cases, undergraduates with potential are identified via the honours project. Some students whom the Audit Panel met had chosen to undertake doctoral studies at the University because of their positive experiences of undergraduate or TPg study at HKBU. Others came because of a prior contact with their supervisor, or because they wanted to undertake study in Hong Kong, or to take advantage of the niche opportunities in HKBU's research offerings.

- 6.6 Students judged their RPg learning experience positively, with the exception of dedicated study space which not all considered sufficient. They see the required coursework as ‘fit for purpose’ with preparation in research methods, advanced academic English writing and presentation, basic pedagogical skills in teaching university students, library research skills, research ethics, statistics and information literacy, *inter alia*, included within the core programme. Established in 2014, little can yet be said about the long term impact of the new core programme of coursework, but evaluation of the first year of operation received very positive responses from both staff and students. Students reported that they have opportunities to publish and to present their research at conferences with support from HKBU. The Audit Panel noted that there is no common requirement for publication as part of the PhD programme and expectations concerning publication vary considerably. Students reported that their publication and teaching experiences give them confidence that they will be able to compete in the job market with graduates from other universities in Hong Kong and elsewhere.
- 6.7 Research supervisors whom the Audit Panel met are research active, highly enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their students. The Audit Panel noted, however, that no specific training is currently provided for staff who take on supervision duties, who learn through doing, often acting as a co-supervisor alongside a more experienced member of staff. The Audit Panel affirms the action the University is taking to formalise training in research student supervision for new academics and notes the on-going staff development support offered to research supervisors via TALEs seminars since 2013/14. The University is encouraged to make such staff development mandatory to ensure that the entire RPg community benefits.
- 6.8 Bi-annual reports were created as a mechanism to monitor closely the progress of research students. Students spoke positively about their experience of using these reports. Recently, the University has piloted and adopted a refined template for bi-annual progress reports, with separate sections for completion by both supervisor and student. The Audit Panel noted that the Graduate School is monitoring the implementation of the new template and is fine-tuning it in the interests of ongoing quality enhancement.
- 6.9 The 2014 summary of RPg quality assurance data indicates that additional depth in respect of international perspectives would strengthen the programmes. The Audit Panel learnt that supervisors play a crucial role in providing RPg students with a global learning experience. Several supervisors described strategies to enhance international perspectives, including the large number of nationalities represented among the academic staff and bringing in overseas experts to deliver lectures and work with doctoral students. Other examples included: the practice of having a co-supervisor from overseas invited to join the supervision team. This enables

the student to work with the overseas supervisor for three to six months and provides opportunities for students to work with the supervisor's overseas research collaborators. The Audit Panel commends the collective efforts of supervisors to offer international perspectives to their students and encourages the University to disseminate such good practice for the benefit of the institution as a whole.

- 6.10 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that HKBU is providing an effective environment for RPg studies. This environment would, however, benefit from systematic benchmarking of academic standards with comparator institutions and a mandatory programme of training and support for research supervisors.

### **Taught postgraduate programmes**

- 6.11 HKBU at present provides 46 TPg programmes, including 10 programmes that offer classes both in Hong Kong and at off-shore locations in Mainland China and Macao. In addition there are several international TPg collaborations. The Audit Panel noted that development of the TPg portfolio tends to be a bottom-up process, initiated by departments, schools, or faculties, with success being judged on the basis of continuous growth. The Audit Panel formed the view that the University lacks a clear strategic approach to the development and monitoring of the suite of TPg programmes on offer. Therefore the Audit Panel recommends that the University develop and implement an overarching institution-wide strategy that clearly articulates both the nature and extent of the desired portfolio of TPg programmes together with appropriate measures, responsibilities and timelines for monitoring and evaluating progress.
- 6.12 The Institutional Submission refers to HKBU's commitment to benchmarking the academic standards of its TPg programmes by referencing them against international and local practices. The Audit Panel noted that the School of Business is triple-accredited and thus subject to three different international benchmarking exercises and that a small number of other TPg programmes are undergoing accreditation. There was little evidence of comparable activity occurring consistently across the institution, however, and the Audit Panel encourages the University to continue to seek disciplinary and/or professional accreditations wherever possible.
- 6.13 The Audit Panel's scrutiny of the documentation and information gleaned through interviews suggests the TPg GAs are mapped effectively against PILOs, although the GAs themselves could be expressed more clearly. Therefore the Audit Panel encourages the University to refine and clarify the TPg GAs to render more transparent their manifestation in both curriculum and pedagogy.

- 6.14 Students commented positively on the implementation of OBTL and CRA within their programmes. They reported that assessment rubrics are explained to them clearly and that they consider feedback on assignments is fair and in keeping with the principles of CRA.
- 6.15 The Institutional Submission states that HKBU has made every effort to ensure that policies, structures, and processes are in place to enhance the quality of its taught postgraduate programmes. Students commented on the quality of faculty (whom they described as experienced, up-to-date, caring and inspiring), the ability to learn from practitioners and the quality of the library. A few individual concerns also were raised, including a lack of electives in one programme, the need for a full-time programme option in another case and better access to specialised facilities in one area. Students also remarked on the need for further internationalisation of TPg programmes. The Audit Panel formed the view that, while TPg students are generally satisfied with their learning experience, HKBU could take steps at an institutional level to ensure that its suite of TPg programmes is systematically enhanced.
- 6.16 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University's TPg students appreciate and are benefiting from the educational experience HKBU is providing for them. However the development of the TPg portfolio has occurred in the absence of a clearly articulated institutional strategy and without the solid comparative data that could give the University confidence that its TPg programmes are meeting international academic standards. Attention also needs to be paid to clarifying the TPg GAs and ensuring that they are appropriately manifested in both curriculum and pedagogy.

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

- 7.1 The University focuses on the enhancement and enrichment of student learning through whole person education via the general education curriculum, including language enhancement, and within Co-curricular Learning (CCL) and extra-curricular activities such as student exchanges, internships, study tours, service learning and summer study programmes. HKBU has taken the introduction of the four-year degree programme as an opportunity to enhance and enrich learning opportunities.
- 7.2 The Audit Panel evaluated how well HKBU's approach to enhancing the student learning experience is working in practice by examining the Institutional Submission and its supporting appendices and information sets. Additional documentation concerning enhancement was requested during the Audit Visit, including information about the University's KPIs, such as enrolment numbers, programme information, information about the use of technology, or KPIs. During the Institutional Briefing and the Audit Visit, the



Audit Panel met with a range of staff able to provide information relevant to the Audit Theme and talked to students about enhancement activity resulting from student feedback.

- 7.3 The general education programme is a key feature of the four-year curriculum and requires students to take a suite of courses, designed to strengthen bilingual competence, communication skills and WPD more generally. The curriculum is made up of 26 compulsory units – language skills, numeracy, physical education, history and civilisation, the values and meaning of life – together with another 12 units comprising 4 courses from outside their faculty/unit. HKBU suggests that general education programmes generally enhance the student experience and are key contributors to students' achievement of GAs and hence have a key role in WPE. The initial WPE and ECI surveys suggested a need for improvements, particularly in bilingual competencies and a task force was established in 2014/15 to make recommendations in this regard. Language enhancement, designed to improve students' written and oral skills, plays an important role within general education. The Language Centre offers a wide range of both credit-bearing and co-curricular language activities.
- 7.4 HKBU facilitates a range of co/extra-curricular activities although participation levels vary. Not all students have been following University policy to complete CCL by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester. OSA is responsible for CCL which is designed to broaden students' horizons. It takes the form of seminars, campus events, workshops and experiential learning, all of which contribute to the achievement of GAs. There is a minimum formal attendance requirement of eight items/events in the first four semesters and attendance records are kept, but students are encouraged to continue beyond this minimum participation level. OSA also leads on pastoral care; student affairs counsellors mentor students on co-/extra-curricular activities, offer career advice and emotional and psychological counselling support, including onward referral as necessary. All students have an advisor or mentor, though levels of engagement vary.
- 7.5 Students are able to track their personal academic progress by accessing HKBU's registration system, which displays the courses taken so far. Those courses still required in order to complete the programme can be found in the student information system enabling students to plan for their studies. Extra-curricular activities are recorded on the Student U-Life Record System (SURE) which is available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students. Self-reports from a sample of students illustrate both the progress made towards achievement of GAs and 'value-addedness' through the HKBU educational experience. Currently extra-curricular activities are not formally recorded in university systems and the systematic implementation of e-portfolios has been stalled by the decision to defer full migration to the Blackboard Learning Management System. Given the importance of co/extra-

curricular activities for WPD, the Audit Panel encourages the University to consider an institution-wide system for formal capture and verification of such activities.

- 7.6 To date, HKBU has had a relatively small number of students with special educational needs but the University has now established a task force and a unit within OSA to facilitate the inclusion and support of such students. The Audit Panel was informed that students with special needs are now able to apply for individualised arrangements with respect to exams, including separate rooms and/or extensions of time and that access to lecture rooms is generally good for wheelchair users.
- 7.7 With regard to targeted support for international students, the Audit Panel was informed that while exchange students may provide feedback on their experience at HKBU via the teaching evaluation questionnaire/CFQ, their responses cannot be disaggregated from those of the general student population without compromising their anonymity. However a separate student survey has been conducted on the inbound exchange students to learn about their general living and learning experiences at HKBU. The inputs collected have been used to inform improvement needs in relation to the services provided to this group. The most recent instrument has been enhanced to include the elements related to the seven GAs. The Audit Panel encourages the University to extend this survey to provide a regular opportunity for feedback from all categories of non-local students.
- 7.8 Teaching excellence is developed using a cyclical approach, which includes provision of resources, sharing of good practices, recognition of excellence, encouragement of the scholarship of teaching and learning, and extensive professional development opportunities. There was much evidence of the significant role played by CHTL's annual reports to TLPC and Senate on the effectiveness of a succession of data-gathering initiatives of students' views on teaching, courses, programmes and their own personal and academic development.
- 7.9 The Audit Panel learned about the Academy of Visual Arts' Online Grading Assistant system, a particularly innovative and valuable online tool designed to enhance teaching, learning and assessment practices by aligning data on the students' achievement levels of CILOs, PILOs and CRA more effectively. Student reports on the levels of learning difficulty they experienced in undertaking a course are mapped against assessment rubrics enabling staff to identify rubrics that require adjustment to address levels of difficulty. The Audit Panel commends the Academy on this innovative tool and encourages the University to promote and support its implementation across the institution.

- 7.10 Processes are in place to promote and reward excellent teaching, to share good teaching practices, and to reward good performance. Teaching excellence is well supported through initiatives led by CHTL; for example it was clear that TALEs workshops are an effective mechanism for sharing and developing good and innovative teaching practice and faculty praised the availability of resources, such as teaching development grants. However the Audit Panel's questions did not elicit a clear account of the means by which the University currently assures itself that teaching quality at HKBU is on a par with international standards. The Audit Panel noted anecdotal data about the external recognition received by HKBU academic staff for excellent teaching, and the wide range of opportunities provided for ongoing pedagogical development.
- 7.11 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that HKBU provides a solid range of learning enhancement opportunities for students, and a significant level of pastoral care to its student population, in line with its commitment to WPD. Learning enhancement could be strengthened by more explicit application of the Approach-Deployment-Results-Improvement ('ADRI') cycle to this aspect of the University's quality framework: there needs to be a clearer connection between HKBU's stated approach to learning enhancement and the arrangements it deploys to put this approach into practice; institutional goals for learning enhancement need to be set and their achievement monitored via measurable performance indicators which will allow the institution to evaluate the effectiveness of its performance over time and continuously improve its practice.
- 7.12 The Institutional Submission presents a list of enhancement initiatives and examples, but lacks an account of how these relate to the University's underlying strategic aims. The Audit Panel's enquiries during interviews did not elicit an account of the University's overarching approach to enhancement. Furthermore, as a result of various discussions about the management of change in the institution, the Audit Panel formed the view that the University would benefit overall from increased coherence in its strategic planning and greater specificity in the setting and monitoring of associated action plans and performance indicators. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University articulate its overarching strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience, with associated targets, designated roles and responsibilities, timelines and key performance indicators.

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

- 7.13 In considering the theme of *Global engagements: strategies and current developments*, the Audit Panel noted HKBU's stated commitment to internationalisation in all aspects of its work and its aim to provide a teaching

and learning environment that prepares students and faculty staff to function effectively in today's increasingly interdependent world.

### **Strategy and organisation**

- 7.14 HKBU's Internationalisation Strategy was developed in 2006 and expanded in 2009 when the University planned to encourage students to participate in an exchange for a term, and to increase the presence of international faculty members. The strategy constituted a part of the 2009 Strategic Plan, organised loosely around three goals: promoting internationalisation via curriculum design, outbound exchanges and international collaborations; promoting student exchanges; and internationalising the faculty. *Vision 2020* reiterates these goals, making reference to student exchanges, internships and international destinations for graduates.
- 7.15 The Audit Panel reviewed the Institutional Submission (including Appendices) and the additional materials submitted for the Audit Trails on the theme of HKBU's strategic approach to global engagements. Attention was also paid to *Vision 2020* including its KPIs pertaining to internationalisation and to the 2009 Strategic Plan. In meetings with staff and students the panel considered a range of issues relating to the theme. The Audit Panel was keen to understand the conceptual model of international education that was driving the various internationalisation activities, how various statements on internationalisation are inter-connected and coordinated in implementation, and how international activities are evaluated in terms of outcomes.
- 7.16 It became clear to the Audit Panel that the University accords internationalisation a high priority. Senior managers and other staff confirmed that *Vision 2020* constitutes the overarching strategy document for HKBU and incorporates its international strategic plans. They stated that globalisation began as a project at HKBU 25 years ago and a long-established Internationalisation Advisory Committee continues to provide advice to the Vice-President (Research and Development) who carries overall responsibility for internationalisation. In 2010, offices were established in Shanghai and Beijing respectively to manage Mainland China developments and liaise with universities in the Mainland China. The task force for engagement with the Mainland China was established under SECO in 2012 when two associate vice presidents were appointed, one for international developments and another to oversee Mainland China activities. The Audit Panel was informed that global engagements enrich the experience of students and are intended to increase their competitiveness, while on-campus internationalisation is also important for students who cannot afford to go overseas.
- 7.17 At the macro level, the Associate Vice-President (Community Relations) and the Associate Vice-President (Mainland Activities) jointly hold responsibility

for policy-making and decision-making on internationalisation, while it is claimed that discussions at SECO and Senior Management Team lead to team-based decisions. Specific activities are carried out at the faculty and programme level. In response to the Audit Panel's questions about the overarching conceptual model driving HKBU's approach to internationalisation, senior staff explained that WPE and the GA's drive the approach, as well as *Vision 2020*.

- 7.18 *Vision 2020* includes an extensive set of KPIs for global engagement, however the Audit Panel found little evidence of strategic thinking in this area, or a clearly articulated conceptual model for internationalisation. The KPIs suggest that more of everything would constitute improvement. When questioned, senior staff agreed that quality of partners also is important, and it was suggested that the emphasis on volume and growth has to be understood in the Asian context where universities are only just beginning to internationalise, and must grow rapidly. The Audit Panel accepts that point, but believes the conceptual model guiding internationalisation activities at HKBU would benefit from ongoing clarification and refinement.

### **International and regional networks**

- 7.19 The HKBU role statement indicates that the University will pursue deep collaborations with sister Hong Kong universities and others in the region. It states that collaboration with Mainland academic and research units strengthens the teaching-research nexus, enhances links with Chinese scholars, and strengthens ties with strategic developments across the border. Deep collaboration with BNU led to the establishment of UIC in 2005, while research links have been built with laboratories in Mainland China for biological analysis and Chinese Medicine. There are several other examples of departmental level collaborations with overseas universities. Since 2013, the Government and International Studies Department has led the European Union's European Studies Program, which is a centre involving four Hong Kong universities with an office located at HKBU. Plans for future collaborative partnerships include those for more joint/dual degrees, more research collaborations, more strategic networks and more international PhD students.
- 7.20 HKBU maintains that there are stringent requirements for the selection of international partners, which are designed to ensure that academic quality and experience are sound and constitute a good match. HKBU policy lists criteria such as: availability of English language provision; fit with HKBU programmes; programme philosophy; financial viability; and rapport with academic staff in the relevant field. The Audit Panel judged that, important as they are, these criteria cover only the basic level of suitability. There was little evidence of strategic thinking in partner selection and limited

understanding of both the reputational risks and strategic opportunities of international collaborations.

- 7.21 Programme-level collaborations are largely initiated and managed by departments. There are no extra steps required for the approval of international collaborations or joint degree programmes, though it was mentioned that any academic or research collaborative entities with Mainland China require approval by senior management. The Audit Panel formed the view that encouraging the development of collaborative arrangements at departmental level, in the absence of strong high level policy, strategic consideration and academic quality controls, makes it difficult for the University to ensure that the relative merits and overall sustainability of its international partnerships are properly evaluated or that comprehensive risk assessment and mitigation has been undertaken. Without very clear requirements, such agreements may proliferate, even though some agreements may deliver little to the University. The *Checklist* for the Quality Assurance Committee to approve offshore programmes provides basic coverage of quality assurance on the assumption that being identical to an onshore programme is sufficient. Where an identical onshore programme is lacking, a rationale is required for approval. In the *Operational Guidelines for Offshore TPg Programmes*, there is no acknowledgement of the risk factors inherent in offshore operation such as would, for example, be evidenced by the adoption of more stringent approval processes.
- 7.22 In the absence of a clear strategic direction concerning selection of international partners and given the importance of these relationships to HKBU's ongoing globalisation work as well as the international standing of the University itself, the Audit Panel recommends that the University re-examine and strengthen its criteria and processes for selecting partners for international and regional programme collaborations, according high value to those that have the potential for multi-faceted, sustainable relationships that will enhance HKBU's international outlook and reputation in the long term.
- 7.23 The University maintains a database of exchange partnership agreements which provides an overview and could be used to identify under-performing regional and international partnerships of all kinds. Expiry dates on agreements are indefinite however, so periodic review of the value to HKBU of specific partnerships is not triggered automatically, if at all. The Audit Panel learnt that exchange agreements were last rationalised eight years ago when very few were found to be inactive. HKBU has been keen to sign agreements with new exchange partners since then. There is no central requirement or guidelines for conducting pre-expiry reviews of international agreements. Reviews may be conducted by the faculty or departments concerned as the expiry date approaches; and renewal is subject to approval by the Dean. The Audit Panel recommends that the University expand the capacities of the International Agreements database to enable comprehensive,

systematic tracking of all international agreements, including joint degrees and exchange agreements, and that a requirement and guidelines for pre-agreement expiry reviews be established at University level to monitor the effectiveness and sustainability of all international partnerships.

### **Student international experience**

- 7.24 The University places high value on providing on-campus HKBU students with an increasingly international learning environment and wide global knowledge. Four strategies represent the deployment of these priorities: first, student exchanges, particularly outbound mobility experiences for Hong Kong students; second, campus life that includes many opportunities to interact with other cultural groups; third, an international faculty; and fourth, a curriculum that has integrated within it, opportunities to develop global knowledge and skills. HKBU has identified alumni development as an opportunity to strengthen its international and regional reputation and enhance engagement by alumni with current faculty and students to build international networks. The University's recent SWOT analysis acknowledges the community perception that HKBU lacks an international perspective; and the HKBU community is generally aware that more needs to be done to enhance a global perspective among graduates.
- 7.25 The University offers a wide range of opportunities for student outbound mobility either for longer-term attachments or for short visits to regional and international universities. There are over 250 exchange partners globally and each year, approximately 360 inbound exchange students come to HKBU from across the world. Inbound numbers could be higher but are constrained by the availability of hostel space. At the same time, approximately 340 HKBU students participate in outgoing exchanges each year. The University would like to send more, but acknowledges that outbound mobility for HKBU students has been limited because of the need to keep inbound and outbound student numbers roughly balanced. A total of about 1 800 HKBU students participate in other types of outbound learning experience in Mainland China and elsewhere each year. However, graduate surveys in 2013 showed that fewer than 20% of the graduating cohort had an exchange experience while studying at HKBU. Overall, there has been a steady growth in outbound exchange student numbers over recent years. Senior managers informed the Audit Panel that the target is to double outbound student numbers in six years as more accommodation becomes available for inbound students and the Audit Panel affirms the steps being taken by HKBU to increase levels of participation in outbound mobility programmes of all types.
- 7.26 Surveys are conducted to capture the perceptions of returning exchange students. The Student Exchange Report 2013 shows gains in the relevant GAs among students who returned from outbound exchange. The in-house

inventory used highlights gains in the areas of global competency, cultural engagement and awareness, as well as self-actualisation.

- 7.27 The University recognises the importance of cultural diversity on campus and takes steps to foster a cross-cultural ambience. The University has made a concerted and successful effort to recruit international PhD students. Curricular and co-curricular activities aim to foster cross-cultural awareness. In the highly internationalised community on campus, there are multiple opportunities for students from many countries to mingle socially. Mixed cohorts of students engage in teamwork, while activities outside the classroom, such as field-trips, promote integration.
- 7.28 Good care is taken of international and Mainland students; OSA provides non-local students with peer, ‘family’ and social support, and assists in creating a supportive cross-cultural learning environment. The library has 24/7 study spaces for those who need a place for scholarly work. The Audit Panel heard that differences among students from different backgrounds have been well handled by teachers in their classes. Other steps taken to promote integration between local and non-local students socially, culturally and intellectually in the HKBU community include activities such as festivals, the global café, the global youth summit, and TED Talk programmes. While international students whom the Audit Panel met spoke positively about HKBU, it was noted that the University is not able to extract data about international student satisfaction, and respond appropriately to the feedback provided (see paragraph 7.7 above).
- 7.29 HKBU also has achieved a highly international faculty on campus. Of 838 full-time equivalent staff, 180 are from Mainland China and 184 from other countries, a percentage of 45% international.
- 7.30 UIC is the result of a longstanding partnership with BNU to deliver HKBU liberal arts degrees on the Mainland. It has experienced rapid growth and has created a unique type of college experience on the Mainland. It has a new campus under construction and expects to grow exponentially over the next few years both in programme offerings and student numbers. It represents a very successful model developed in partnership with a high status Mainland partner, and may become a freestanding university in its own right sometime in the future. HKBU is keen to see this model as a platform for other collaborations and joint research/educational activities, believing that UIC alumni are likely to be future leaders in China and will be well-positioned to help the next generation of HKBU/UIC students.

### **Internationalisation of the curriculum**

- 7.31 In terms of internationalising the formal curriculum, the major effort has been through the planning for student achievement of GAs via the general



education programme - particularly those GAs focusing on global citizenship, communication and language development, knowledge including cultural knowledge and teamwork. While the general education courses provide a good basis for developing basic globalisation knowledge and skills, more advanced knowledge and skills, relevant to the student's particular discipline or profession also need to be embedded in the formal curricula of the major programmes.

- 7.32 The Audit Panel found little information in the documentation about how international themes are systematically included in programme-level curriculum design. However the Audit Panel heard at interview that particular programmes have made efforts to develop students' global competence through practices such as an international community development course, an international service placement, or scholars-in-residence schemes. Faculty members have brought international practices into the curriculum through programmes such as the artist-in-residence scheme and seminars with international presenters on disciplinary topics.
- 7.33 TPg curricula, have incorporated global perspectives on a variety of topics including gifted education, mental health, drugs and psycho-linguistics, human diversity, race studies, education and social problems in different parts of the world.
- 7.34 The Audit Panel commends the opportunities provided for students to acquire greater globalisation knowledge and skills in their formal degree curriculum and encourages the University to ensure that such good practice is shared and embedded across the institution.
- 7.35 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that HKBU exposes students to an international community of scholars, and provides opportunities to explore the relationship of Hong Kong to the rest of the world, encouraging students to engage in multicultural and bilingual experiences. The Audit Panel judged, however, that there is insufficient clarity in the policy statements about global engagement and the KPIs for globalisation need to reflect greater strategic thinking, rather than simply increases in volume. Moreover, the Audit Panel's questions did not elicit from the University a clear statement about the overarching conceptual model that drives and unifies HKBU's multi-faceted approach to internationalisation. Therefore, the Audit Panel recommends that the University articulate and codify clearly its strategic approach to global engagement, based on a well-defined conceptual model designed to frame and interconnect the various components of the strategy, such as student exchanges, internationalisation of the formal curriculum, faculty collaboration, joint degrees, the promotion of global citizenship and an inclusive international campus culture.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 Over many years, HKBU has continued to develop its ethos around the concept of WPD. This concept has gone well beyond rhetoric, to become a guiding force for the University community's shared identity. A significant investment has been made in articulating clear meanings of the term WPD, identifying its components and devising systems for tracking student progress in achieving its desired outcomes. The University clearly cares about its students' wellbeing and provides support for them across many dimensions of student life.
- 8.2 The University is committed to the maintenance of academic standards as evidenced by a comprehensive set of academic policies and has been diligent in addressing the recommendations and affirmations made in the last QAC Quality Audit, conducted in 2009. University teaching and learning approaches reflect a high level of maturity and, in the opinion of the Audit Panel, HKBU would be accepted as a worthy peer not only of local and regional universities, but also of many of the world's universities. The University also is in good standing with its alumni and external stakeholders.
- 8.3 In terms of quality assurance, HKBU has established sophisticated systems of data gathering which provide a rich data source. The Audit Panel concluded, however, that more could be done to aggregate and present these data in ways that address the practical needs of academic leaders, especially at the local level, to inform quality enhancement and monitor the success of enhancement initiatives. Whilst there is a great deal of energy devoted to improving the student learning experience in a variety of ways, these activities are not clearly prioritised in an overarching operational plan for teaching and learning that is clearly linked to *Vision 2020*.
- 8.4 HKBU's commitment to internationalisation and global engagement also generates high levels of activity, geared towards achieving the University's KPIs which emphasise continuous growth year-on-year across all aspects of globalisation. Student outbound experiences are especially valued and there has been significant growth in the number of students availing themselves of these opportunities. The Audit Panel concluded, however, that HKBU's approach to international education would benefit from further development of its conceptual base, a stronger application of strategic thinking and a greater emphasis on risk management, particularly in the area of collaborative academic programmes.
- 8.5 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that HKBU provides a solid range of learning enhancement opportunities for students, and a significant level of pastoral care to its student population, in line with its commitment to WPD. In order to build on the Audit Panel's positive judgements about HKBU's front line activities, the University would benefit from paying attention to a

common theme running throughout the Audit Panel's findings by addressing the need for clearer strategic thinking at the highest level and a rebalancing of deliberation and executive action to address the institution's strategic priorities.

## **APPENDIX A: HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY (HKBU)**

### **History**

HKBU was first founded as a post-secondary college (Hong Kong Baptist College) in 1956 with a mission to provide broad-based liberal education in a Christian environment for the young people of Hong Kong. Government-recognised first-degree programmes were introduced in 1986, followed by the Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy research programmes in 1988 and 1991, respectively, and taught postgraduate programmes in 1992. The College was granted self-accrediting status in 1993 and gained University status in November 1994.

### **Vision and Mission of the University**

#### *Vision*

HKBU aspires to be a premier institution of higher learning providing broad-based, creativity-inspiring education with a distinctive contribution to the advancement of knowledge through research and scholarship.

#### *Mission*

HKBU is committed to academic excellence in teaching, research and service, and to the development of whole person in all these endeavours built upon the heritage of Christian higher education.

### **Role Statement**

HKBU:

- (a) offers a range of programmes leading to the award of first degrees in Arts, Business, Chinese Medicine, Communication Studies, Education, Science and Social Sciences;
- (b) pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;
- (c) offers a number of taught postgraduate programmes and research postgraduate programmes in selected subject areas;
- (d) follows a holistic approach to higher education and emphasizes a broad-based creativity-inspiring undergraduate education, which inculcates in all who participate a sense of human values;
- (e) aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength, and in particular in support of teaching;
- (f) maintains strong links with the community;
- (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 the executive body of the University and, as such, may exercise all the powers conferred and perform all the duties imposed on the University by the Hong Kong Baptist University Ordinance.

The Court is the supreme advisory body of the University, and is established in accordance with the Hong Kong Baptist University Ordinance and the Hong Kong Baptist University Statutes.

The Senate is the supreme academic body of the University. It regulates the academic affairs of the University as well as the welfare and discipline of the students.

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

HKBU offers a total of 106 undergraduate/postgraduate programmes. Full-time undergraduate programmes leading to the BA, BBA, BchiMed, BEd, BSc and BSSc degrees are offered by the eight Faculties/Schools/Academy of Visual Arts. In addition, taught postgraduate courses are available in major disciplines. Postgraduate can also undertake research work for the degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy.

In 2005, the United International College (UIC) was founded in Zhuhai in joint partnership with the Beijing Normal University - the first full-scale co-operation in higher education between the Mainland and Hong Kong. At the time of HKBU's audit, about 5 000 students were registered at UIC on 20 programmes that lead to a HKBU first degree.

## **Staff and Students Numbers**

In 2014/15, the University had 6 465 undergraduate and 415 postgraduate students in UGC-funded programmes. Teaching staff comprises 439 regular and 3 visiting and short-term contract staff to give a total of 442. 98% of teaching staff members have doctoral degrees. Enrolments in self-financed programmes accounted for a further 6 765 students.

## **Revenue**

Consolidated income for the year 2013/14 was HK\$2,899 million of which HK\$1,091 million (38%) came from government subvention and HK\$1,808 million (62%) from tuition, programmes, interest and net investment income, donations, auxiliary services and other income.

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

1. Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) welcomes the Audit Report, which acknowledges the University's efforts and accomplishments in enhancing student learning experience and global engagements. With HKBU's longstanding commitment to Whole Person Education (WPE), we are particularly pleased with the Audit Panel's recognition of the University's efforts in providing a caring environment and a solid range of learning opportunities that "effectively reflect its WPE mission" (*pars. 3.29 & 8.1*).
2. We concur with the Audit Report findings that our broad-based and flexible curriculum has enabled students to achieve their intended learning outcomes and graduate attributes (*par. 3.29*), and that our modified academic support arrangements have allowed our senior year entrants to "optimise their learning" (*page 4, par. (d)*) and to "acquire greater globalisation knowledge and skills" (*par. 7.34*). Such concerted efforts are evidenced by the supportive testimony made by students, employers and other external stakeholders (*par. 4.7*).
3. Furthermore, HKBU welcomes the encouraging remarks made by the Audit Panel that quality assurance of our postgraduate programmes is "well founded" and that students are effectively supported in a caring and stimulating environment (*page 4, par. (f)*). The Report's positive statement on the University's provisions for its research postgraduate students to work with overseas supervisors and the efforts of supervisors to offer international perspectives to their students is well taken (*par. 6.9*).
4. The Report commends the University for its successful implementation of the 4-year undergraduate curriculum, together with a smooth transition to outcomes-based teaching and learning and criterion-referenced assessment (*page 3, par. (c)*). We find the Panel's comments on the University's quality assurance policy framework and operations most helpful as we further fine-tune our quality assurance practices.
5. HKBU regards UGC's quality audit exercises as our collaborative effort with the UGC-QAC to strive for academic excellence. In this regard, the University "has been diligent" in addressing the comments received in the 2009 QAC Quality Audit (*par. 8.2*). In the same spirit, the University will take on board the invaluable suggestions made by the Panel in the current Audit Report.
6. The University shares the Panel's view that we will benefit from a clearer articulation of our overarching strategic approach to enhancing student learning experience. To this end, planning and implementation of the strategy will follow,

with the setting of associated targets, designated roles and responsibilities, timelines, and key performance indicators, in order to complete the feedback loop (*par. 7.12*).

7. With the aim of further enhancing the University's international outlook and reputation, we will endeavour to develop a conceptual model to give better coherence to the various global engagement activities and initiatives (*par. 7.35*). For instance, we will re-examine the criteria and processes for selecting partners for programme collaborations (*par. 7.22*).
8. The Report recognises our efforts of data gathering which provide a rich data source. The University will adopt the Panel's advice to strengthen our evidence-based decision-making process by consolidating our data collection efforts and data analysis dissemination mechanisms in order to better inform quality enhancement and continuously monitor the success of our various enhancement initiatives (*par. 8.3*).
9. Hong Kong Baptist University appreciates the frank and collegial exchange with the Audit Panel and would like to thank the Panel for its insightful comments and helpful suggestions. In particular, we are delighted with the Report's endorsement that our "teaching and learning approaches reflect a high level of maturity" and that HKBU is "a worthy peer not only of local and regional universities, but also of many of the world's universities" (*par. 8.2*).

September 2015



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

ACP	Academic Consultation Panel
ADC	Academic Development Committee
APT	Academic Proficiency Test
BNU	Beijing Normal University
CCL	Co-curricular Learning
CFQ	Course Feedback Questionnaire
CHTL	Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning
CILOs	Course Intended Learning Outcomes
CRA	Criterion-Referenced Assessment
DAA	Departmental Academic Advisor
ECI	Evidence Collection Initiative
FPDS	Faculty Professional Development Series
FRE	Formative Review Exercise
GAs	Graduate Attributes
HKBU	Hong Kong Baptist University
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
OBTL	Outcome-based Teaching and Learning
OSA	Office of Student Affairs
PILOs	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes
PMC	Programme Management Committee
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
RPg	Research Postgraduate
SECO	Senior Executive Committee
TALES seminar	Teaching and Learning Experience Sharing seminar
TLPC	Teaching and Learning Policy Committee
TPg	Taught Postgraduate
UGC	University Grants Committee
UIC	Beijing Normal University-HKBU United International College
WPD	Whole Person Development
WPDI	Whole Person Development Inventory
WPE	Whole Person Education

## **APPENDIX D: HKBU AUDIT PANEL**

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Sandra Vianne McLean A.M. (Panel Chair)  
Emeritus Professor, Queensland University of Technology

Professor Peter Bush  
Emeritus Professor, The University of Northampton

Professor Stephen C K Chan  
Professor of Department of Cultural Studies, Lingnan University

Professor Christian Wagner  
Associate Provost (Quality Assurance), and Chair Professor for Social Media, City  
University of Hong Kong

### **Audit Coordinator**

Dr Melinda Drowley  
QAC Secretariat

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

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

### **Mission**

The QAC's mission is:

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

### **Terms of Reference**

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

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

**Membership** (as at February 2016)

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

Mr Roger Thomas BEST, JP      Former Partner, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu

Professor Adrian K DIXON      Master of Peterhouse and Emeritus Professor of  
Radiology, University of Cambridge, UK

Dr Judith EATON      President, Council for Higher Education  
Accreditation, USA

Mr Paul SHIEH Wing-tai, SC      Senior Counsel, Temple Chambers

Dr Michael SPENCE      Vice-Chancellor and Principal,  
The University of Sydney, Australia

Professor Amy TSUI Bik-may      Chair Professor of Language and Education, The  
University of Hong Kong

Professor Kenneth YOUNG      Master of CW Chu College, The Chinese University  
of Hong Kong

**Ex-officio Member**

Dr Richard ARMOUR, JP      Secretary-General, UGC

**Secretary**

Ms Eva YAM      Deputy Secretary-General (1), UGC