

Third Audit Cycle of the Quality Assurance Council

# Report of Quality Audit of The University of Hong Kong

September 2024

Quality Assurance Council



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Third Audit Cycle**

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

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# **PREFACE**

## **Background**

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

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

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

## **Conduct of QAC Quality Audits**

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

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

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

The QAC's approach to quality audit is based on the principle of 'fitness for purpose'. Audit Panels assess the extent to which universities are fulfilling their stated mission and purpose and confirm the procedures in place for assuring the quality of the learning

opportunities offered to students and the academic standards by which students' level of performance and capability are assessed and reported. The QAC Audit also examines the effectiveness of a university's quality systems and considers the evidence used to demonstrate that these systems meet the expectations of stakeholders.

Full details of the audit procedures, including the methodology and scope of the audit, are provided in the QAC Third Audit Cycle Audit Manual which is available at <https://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/qac/manual/auditmanual3.pdf>.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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

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

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

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

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

The Audit Panel found the undergraduate (Ug), taught postgraduate (TPg), and research postgraduate (RPg) degree programmes offered by the University, as well as the programmes offered by The HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE; the School), are clearly aligned with, and assessed within the framework of University’s Vision and Mission 2016-2025, which includes the provision of ‘*a comprehensive education, benchmarked against the highest international standards, designed to develop fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students, while extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community*’. The University has separate QA and Quality Enhancement (QE) procedures for managing academic standards and the quality of Ug, TPg and RPg degree programmes, while HKU SPACE operates a distinct set of QA/QE procedures for its programmes. In each case, the Audit Panel found that there are robust systems in place for managing academic standards and the quality of programmes, described in comprehensive QA manuals. Chaired by the President and Vice-Chancellor, the Senate is the principal authority for regulation of education and has oversight of the aforesaid academic programme provision through its committee structure. A notable feature of the University’s approach to setting, maintaining, and enhancing the standard and quality of its awards is its effective use of local and international benchmarking in programme monitoring and review. Looking

ahead, it will be beneficial for the University to keep the terms of reference of committees concerned with quality and academic standards under review on a regular basis to ensure their consistency.

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

The Audit Panel confirmed that the University has robust and systematic processes for programme development, approval, monitoring and review. The University's Quality Manual provides templates and detailed policies to ensure consistency in approach by faculties and departments. Processes are well understood by staff. The University routinely undertakes reviews and enhancement of programme development, approval, and monitoring activities. There is a cycle of continuous review and improvement through curriculum review, faculty academic review and faculty annual T&L review. These processes include consideration of student achievement data and feedback and are supported by action plans. The Audit Panel found evidence of enhancements arising from the monitoring and review processes. Where appropriate, many of the University's programmes have professional body accreditation and are subject to professional body review. HKU SPACE has its own comprehensive QAE (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) Manual with oversight and approval provided by the University's governance framework, ensuring clear lines of responsibility and oversight within both the University and HKU SPACE. The Audit Panel is pleased to note that the University places considerable emphasis on external engagement, including local and global benchmarking in all aspects of the programme development, approval, and review processes, leading to a range of enhancements at programme, course, and University levels.

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

The University's arrangements for reviewing and enhancing T&L are effective. Guided by the Ug T&L Strategy 2021-28, the University has identified a range of recommendations relating to the review and enhancement of T&L and has adopted enabling strategies to achieve its intended goals. Policies, guidelines, and procedures governing T&L-related matters are in place and are overseen by faculty and department committees, boards and taskforces which submit reports to the Senate. T&L policies and guidelines are reviewed in a timely manner to address changes in teaching modalities, as triggered by the pandemic. The University has clear guidelines relating to the recruitment and appointment of academic staff, reflecting its commitment to providing high quality teaching. Teaching performance is a major indicator in the Performance Review and Development process. It was particularly impressive to observe the significant role played by the Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (TALIC) in staff induction and continuing professional development through the provision of a comprehensive range of induction and professional development programmes and activities. The support provided by TALIC is timely, effective, and well received by academic staff who are also supported to share and collaborate in teaching with peers from overseas universities through the University's Teaching



Exchange Fellowship scheme. The Audit Panel noted that innovative teaching practices, for example, the use of tele-clinics, communication-intensive courses, and adaptive learning, were promoted with positive outcomes at faculty and programme levels. The Panel considered that the systematic review and collation of good practice in T&L for wider dissemination across the University would further contribute to enhancements in T&L across the range of the University's provision. The University's regular evaluation of the learning environment and resources has led to enhancement of the learning space, digital facilities, and e-resources. Students' views on the quality of teaching and their learning experience are valued and actively sought and have contributed to the enhancement of T&L quality.

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

The Audit Panel confirmed that the University is committed to outcomes-based T&L and has a clear set of University Educational Aims (UEAs) with clear links to learning outcomes to be achieved by students at course and programme levels. Students are informed of the learning outcomes, grade descriptors and assessment rubrics through readily accessible guidance about their programmes. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in rapid changes and a greater emphasis on diversification of assessment, and the role of TALIC in providing extensive support in this regard deserves recognition. Faculties and departments align their assessment policies with the University's Assessment Policy, while tailoring their policies to meet specific discipline needs and professional body requirements. The University's assessment regulations and assessment board procedures ensure that academic standards are maintained. The appointment, role and responsibilities of external examiners are clearly stated within the current external examiner system, which in turn enables the University to benchmark assessment practice and outcomes against local and global standards leading to improvements, where appropriate. The Audit Panel noted that the external examiner system is currently under review.

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

The University's student support framework, comprising student services, service providers, monitoring authorities, and feedback obtained through student satisfaction surveys and by other means, enables the University to review and enhance its student support arrangements. The Audit Panel confirmed the effectiveness of the range of support for students provided by the University's Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS), including support for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), mental wellness counselling, and career preparation advice. The Audit Panel observed the development of the Student Information System (SIS), its accessibility to staff and students, and its integration with the Learning Management System to deliver comprehensive support for students. The Panel also noted that the academic advising system contributes to helping students achieve their academic goals and enables the identification of at-risk students who would benefit from further guidance and support. In addition, the hall tutor system facilitates effective residence-based academic advising

opportunities. Student induction is provided at institutional and faculty levels. Individual faculty induction arrangements vary, with some operating student ambassador schemes, involving new students being paired with student academic advisers, and some including meetings between students and professional body representatives. The University has organised various activities to enhance student integration and has sought and continues to seek opportunities to provide non-local learning experiences to Ug students. Students are supported to develop broader skills through Students as Partners and Student-led initiatives, and they have access to courses and resources designed to enhance their proficiency in language and communication skills. The Audit Panel noted that HKU SPACE also uses surveys to monitor student satisfaction with the level of support they receive. HKU SPACE has strengthened its monitoring and analysis of student feedback on student support through the establishment of the Quality Analytics Team (QAT) in the 2021/22 academic year (AY). Furthermore, the Panel noted that HKU SPACE has identified student support as a priority and has recently introduced student relationship management as a key performance indicator (KPI) to ensure that student needs are addressed appropriately.

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

The Audit Panel found that the University and HKU SPACE make systematic and constructive use of benchmarks in their QA and QE processes. The University has effective systems for the collection, analysis, and review of internal and external data for the management of academic quality and standards, and for evidence-based decisions designed to enhance the quality of T&L. Data at different stages of programme management and student academic journey are collected and analysed. The University is conscious of the significance of stakeholder feedback for the enhancement of T&L and has collected data through a range of surveys, which allow programme staff to reflect on curriculum design, programme management, and the quality of the student educational experience. Most data collection instruments focus on perception data from surveys of Ug, TPg, and RPg students, graduates, and employers. At the institutional level, the University uses three major surveys of current students and graduates to inform KPIs for its Ug and TPg programmes. Graduate employability is also surveyed. The University's Management Information Unit supports institutional review and decision-making; which includes compiling faculty KPIs and profiles for strategic planning. For instance, the unit conducts data analyses on Ug admission data and academic performance. The University is aware that data obtained from students and graduates on their learning experience could be more robust and continues to explore ways to increase such feedback. At HKU SPACE, data collection and analysis are integral to HKU SPACE's management of QA and QE, and the Audit Panel learned that the establishment of a QAT has led to the development of a more efficient student survey platform and reporting system.

# **INTRODUCTION**

## **Explanation of the audit methodology**

This is the report of a quality audit of HKU by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the QAC. It is based on a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) which was prepared by the University and submitted to QAC on 31 July 2023. Initial Private Meetings of Panel members were held on 4 and 5 October 2023 to plan for the audit visit and this was followed on 9 October 2023 by a Preparatory Meeting with the University to discuss the detailed arrangements.

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

The Audit Panel conducted an Audit Visit with the University between 4 December and 11 December 2023. They met the President and Vice-Chancellor, senior staff and deans; a representative group of students on taught programmes; a representative group of RPg students; academic managers including heads of departments and programme leaders; teaching staff; RPg managers and supervisors; external stakeholders; and staff from academic support services. The Panel also received demonstrations of the key features, and use made by staff and students, of the University's Learning Management System and the SIS.

The Audit Panel evaluates:

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

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

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

Founded in 1911, HKU is a research-led, English-medium university offering Ug, TPg, RPg and professional and continuing education programmes in a range of academic disciplines mainly at its two campuses and three teaching and research premises in Hong Kong. The University is currently establishing an HKU-Shenzhen campus in Nanshan, Mainland China with a focus on research, T&L and knowledge exchange.

The University's mission states that HKU will endeavour:

- To advance constantly the bounds of scholarship, building upon its proud traditions and strengths;
- To provide a comprehensive education, benchmarked against the highest international standards, designed to develop fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students, while extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community;
- To produce graduates of distinction committed to academic/professional excellence, critical intellectual inquiry, and lifelong learning, who are communicative and innovative, ethically, and critically aware, and capable of tackling the unfamiliar with confidence;
- To develop a collegial, flexible, pluralistic, and supportive intellectual environment that inspires and attracts, retains, and nurtures scholars, students, and staff of the highest calibre in a culture that fosters creativity, learning and freedom of thought, enquiry and expression;
- To provide a safe, healthy, and sustainable workplace to support and advance teaching, learning and research at the University;
- To engage in innovative, high-impact and leading-edge research within and across disciplines;
- To be fully accountable for the effective management of public and private resources bestowed upon the institution and act in partnership with the community over the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge; and
- To serve as a focal point of intellectual and academic endeavour in Hong Kong, China and Asia and act as a gateway and forum for scholarship with the rest of the world.

The University's mission is aligned with its vision of positioning the University as Asia's Global University, delivering 'impact through internationalisation, innovation and interdisciplinarity', attracting and nurturing '*global scholars through excellence in research, teaching and learning, and knowledge exchange*', and making '*a positive social contribution through global presence, regional significance and engagement with the rest of China.*'

In 2022/23 AY, the University had a total of 35 330 students in the following categories: 18 028 Ug, 13 652 TPg, and 3 650 RPg. The total number of students included 13 313 (38%) non-local students from 86 countries/regions. The University employed 8 526 staff (in headcount) in 2022/23 AY categorised as follows: 1 219 professoriate staff, 874 non-professoriate teaching staff, 2 203 research staff and 4 230 non-academic staff. 853 (in headcount) non-local professoriate staff (excluding honorary, visiting, and hourly-paid staff) were from 42 countries/regions.

The HKU SPACE is a self-financed, not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. With a mission to provide lifelong learning opportunities to the community on behalf of the University, the School offers a wide portfolio of courses and professional programmes

leading to different levels of qualifications, both academic and professional. The School's teaching centres are conveniently located for its principally local student population. 85 162 students (19 864 full-time equivalent) were enrolled in HKU SPACE programmes (as of 31 May 2023). A total of 1 062, comprising 389 full-time and 673 part-time students, were non-local students. The School had a total of 861 staff, including four senior managers, 195 academic staff and 662 non-academic staff.

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

- 1.1 HKU's UEAs and Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) underpin its degree and SD provision. Following a recommendation arising from its second cycle audit conducted in 2015, HKU revised its Vision and Mission statement (Vision 2016-2025) and UEAs to make specific reference to the level of academic standards it aspires to (see paragraph 1.2).
- 1.2 The Audit Panel found the University's degree programmes, and the SD programmes offered on its behalf by HKU SPACE, are aligned with, and assessed within the framework of the University's Vision 2016-2025, which includes the provision of a '*comprehensive education, benchmarked against the highest international standards, designed to develop fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students, while extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community*'. The University submits its Planning Exercise Proposals and, pursuant to the University Accountability Agreement (UAA), its performance indicators on T&L to the UGC.
- 1.3 HKU's guiding principles for QA/QE are as follows: (1) ensuring that programme learning outcomes (PLOs) align with UEAs and ILOs; (2) ensuring that learning resources align with achievement of UEAs; and (3) fostering self-reflection and peer review, providing flexibility and room for bottom-up initiatives, promoting collaboration and exchange of good practice, are student-focused and supported by evidence of learning experiences and learning outcomes, and involving internal and external benchmarking. Based on the documentation examined and meetings held with staff, students, and external stakeholders, the Audit Panel considered that there is sufficient evidence of the effective application of these principles by HKU in its QA/QE processes and procedures.
- 1.4 HKU's management of academic standards and academic quality is informed by its Ug T&L Strategy 2021-2028 (see paragraph 1.22). There are separate QA/QE procedures for taught (Ug/TPg) and RPg programmes, while HKU SPACE operates a distinct set of QA/QE procedures for SD programmes. In each case, the Audit Panel found that there are effective systems in place for managing academic standards and quality, which are comprehensively described in the

HKU Quality Manual, the Graduate School Handbook, and the HKU SPACE QAE Manual.

- 1.5 The Senate, chaired by the President and Vice-Chancellor, is the principal authority for regulation of education in the University, including standards and QA/QE, and welfare of students. The Teaching and Learning Quality Committee (TLQC), Academic Board, Faculty Boards, Boards of Studies, the Graduate School Management Team, and Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning (CPE&LL) have delegated authority from the Senate.
- 1.6 The Audit Panel learned that the University has twin pillars of T&L committees. The TLQC, chaired by the Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) (VP/T&L), has overall responsibility for QA/QE of all taught curricula, including the Common Core (CC) and the co-curriculum, and promotes best practice in monitoring, evaluating, and enhancing T&L. Academic Board, chaired by the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), has core responsibility for academic development and contributes to QA/QE, with three Academic Board sub-committees (CC Curriculum; Chinese and English Language Enhancement; and HKU Horizons) submitting annual reports to both Academic Board and TLQC on key curriculum matters, and quality assurance and enhancement matters respectively.
- 1.7 Faculty Boards also monitor academic standards and quality, and the Audit Panel learned of the key role played by Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committees (FTLQCs) in the management of QA/QE across the University, which oversee and coordinate QA/QE within each Faculty, and submit reports through the Faculty Board to TLQC. Faculty Deans and Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) (AD/T&L) work closely with Programme Directors and Department Heads. The Audit Panel noted the AD/T&L plays a pivotal role on the FTLQC and Faculty Board in assuring academic standards and quality, and actively leads the implementation of recommendations from various reviews.
- 1.8 HKU reviews faculty governance and management (Academic Faculty Review) every five years, with the Review Panel reporting to the Senate through the Academic Board. Faculties provide progress reports to the Senate, via the Academic Board, and provide regular updates in annual Faculty Development Plans (see Section 2 for further information). Internally, faculties undertake triennial reviews to ensure they remain aligned with the University's vision and strategies.
- 1.9 The Audit Panel noted that the Chairs of FTLQCs, as ex officio members of the University TLQC, provide a key shared membership between faculties and the University in the management of quality. However, while the terms of reference (known as 'Powers and Duties') for most FTLQCs specify the AD/T&L as the committee chair, and thus a member of TLQC, this is not the case for some

FTLQCs. The Audit Panel also noted that not all FTLQCs include student representatives as members. The Audit Panel **recommends the University to review the composition of the University TLQC and/or FTLQCs by considering if there would be room to achieve greater consistency in the representation and role of AD/T&L in committees concerned with quality and academic standards; and to review the composition of FTLQCs to ensure consistency in student representation.**

- 1.10 Following a recommendation arising from the QAC's second cycle audit of HKU conducted in 2015, the Senate's capacity for exercising oversight of QA/QE has been enhanced through the receipt of annual reports from TLQC. While Senate minutes reflect discussions of reports from its various boards, the Audit Panel found that the two most recent annual reports from TLQC are only referred to as 'received' in the minutes. The University may wish to consider how the Senate's oversight of the annual report from TLQC can be made more explicit.
- 1.11 The Audit Panel learned that the Graduate School, through its Management Team, has delegated authority from the Senate to oversee HKU RPg education. Since September 2021, the Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (VP/R), who has also been the Dean of the Graduate School, has been leading the Graduate School Management Team, which comprises four Associate Deans and the Programme Director for the RPg curriculum. The VP/R, as a member of HKU's Senior Management Team (SMT), can put relevant items concerning RPg education onto the SMT agenda. The Audit Panel heard that the Senate also receives reports from the Graduate School where appropriate. One example is the forthcoming report on the review of the revised RPg curriculum.
- 1.12 The Graduate School monitors and assures quality of RPg education, including admissions, award of postgraduate scholarships, supervision arrangements, study progress, coursework, training, and thesis examination. The Audit Panel found that the Graduate School works closely with faculties and departments on RPg matters, including major changes in policies and procedures. For professional doctorates, the Graduate School oversees academic standards, while faculties handle daily operations.
- 1.13 The Audit Panel found that Departmental Research Postgraduate Committees (DRPCs), which are usually chaired by the Head of Department, are the QA bodies for RPg education in non-unitary faculties. DRPCs make recommendations to the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (FHDC) on student admissions, as well as monitor and review student progress. In unitary faculties, the FHDC assumes this role. The FHDC oversees RPg admissions to ensure the best students are admitted, and makes recommendations on the degree of registration, field of study, and supervisory team to the Graduate School via the Faculty Board. Faculties appoint a Board of Examiners for each RPg student; which receives reports from examiners and makes recommendations to the Graduate School for approval. The Audit Panel noted that FHDC advises the

Faculty Board on various matters relating to higher coursework and research degrees (except Doctor of Science, Doctor of Letters, Doctor of Laws and Doctor of Social Sciences, and such postgraduate diplomas and certificates as the Senate may determine from time to time, where appropriate).

- 1.14 HKU SPACE's QAE Committee, chaired by the HKU SPACE Director, is responsible for QA/QE of SD programmes and courses, and reports to the CPE&LL Board. HKU SPACE has adopted an Approach – Deployment – Results – Improvement (ADRI) method in its approach to quality, and discussion of data analysis reports forms an integral part of QA/QE. HKU SPACE provides full-time and part-time award-bearing programmes at postgraduate (certificate/diploma), Ug (certificate/diploma) and SD levels (associate degree and higher diploma, certificate and diploma), and non-award bearing programmes. The University reviewed the SD provision at HKU SPACE in 2019-2020. The review, which the Audit Panel noted was very positive, recommended the five-yearly review cycle be used for faculties, with the next review to be conducted in 2024/25 AY.
- 1.15 The Audit Panel learned there are several formal points of contact between the University and HKU SPACE, which ensure good communication, alignment of QA/QE processes, and opportunities for new collaborations. Senior HKU staff, including the VP/T&L, sit on the HKU SPACE Board of Directors; the VP/T&L chairs the Board for CPE&LL; and the Provost/DVC (or a VP/Pro-VC) chairs a Joint Consultative Committee between HKU SPACE and the University's faculties.
- 1.16 The management of QA/QE of HKU's taught provision is informed by a wide range of data used in strategic planning, programme monitoring and review. At institutional level, the Audit Panel noted that HKU uses three major data sets as KPIs which are based on surveys of current students and graduates. For taught programmes, feedback data are obtained from the Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning (SFTL) survey conducted at the end of each course (KPI 5); and from the Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ) conducted at the end of Year 1, Year 2, and the final year for Ug students (KPI 6), and end of programme for TPg students (KPI 7). The Graduate Learning Experience Questionnaire (GLEQ) for bachelor's degree graduates (KPI 9) is run every two years for cohorts one and five years after graduation. Graduate employability is also surveyed (KPI 8).
- 1.17 The Audit Panel noted that SFTL course and teacher effectiveness scores have steadily improved since 2012/13 AY, with 78% and 80% (Ug) and 83% and 84% (TPg) positive responses respectively in 2021/22 AY. SLEQ and GLEQ data also show that student perceptions of their learning experience are positive and improving while the Graduate Employment Survey confirms the high levels of employability of HKU graduates, both locally and internationally. The Audit



Panel also noted that discontinuation rates for Ug and TPg students are low; being 2.5% and 1.7% for Ug and TPg programmes, respectively, in 2021/22 AY.

- 1.18 Student achievement is monitored and reviewed annually through analysis of examination statistics and T&L data, Boards of Examiners and external examiner feedback, Faculty Review Committees on Student Performance and Discontinuation, degree accreditation, and external advisory boards.
- 1.19 For RPg programmes, the Audit Panel found that academic standards and quality are informed by direct and indirect evidence of student achievement of ILOs and PLOs, including thesis quality, research output, the Graduate Employment Survey, and an Extended Alumni Tracer Study to assess the impact of RPg education on society.
- 1.20 For continuing and professional education, HKU SPACE established a QAT in 2021 to develop an efficient and user-friendly Online Learning Experience Survey (LES) system, and to administer student data collection and analysis. The Audit Panel learned that HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College staff will be able to access the LES system, starting from January 2024.
- 1.21 HKU's overarching Vision 2016-2025 is to deliver impact through internationalisation, innovation and interdisciplinarity; to attract and nurture global scholars through excellence in research, T&L, and knowledge exchange; and to make a positive social contribution through its global presence, regional significance, and engagement with mainland China. The Audit Panel learned that HKU's Ug T&L Strategy 2021-2028, which was approved by the Senate in July 2021, was developed following extensive consultation with staff, students, recent graduates, employers, and other key stakeholders, and through analysis of institutional surveys and external examiner reports.
- 1.22 The Ug T&L Strategy 2021-2028 has 24 recommendations for improving and enhancing T&L, which include providing formative support for teaching staff with student evaluation scores at the lower end of the spectrum, and incorporating structured peer review of teaching into routine staffing procedures (R1, see further details in paragraph 3.2); introducing greater diversity in course assessments (R3, see further details in paragraph 4.10); and providing more effective feedback to students (R4, see further details in paragraph 4.12). Fifteen recommendations have been taken forward by the VP/T&L or central T&L support units, and nine recommendations have been implemented at faculty or programme level. The Audit Panel noted that reports from the VP/T&L to the Senate in November 2022 and November 2023 have indicated good progress of implementation of the Strategy. During the Audit Visit, the Panel learned that the University expects the Ug T&L Strategy to be fully implemented by summer 2024, and an early example of the positive impact of the Strategy was evident. HKU SPACE has adopted the University's Ug T&L Strategy for its full-time SD

students, most of whom progress to degree studies, and where appropriate for its part-time programmes.

- 1.23 The Audit Panel noted a review of part-time and full-time Masters' programmes was being conducted by a Provost's Task Force, with the aim of identifying best practice and reviewing TPg strategies; with a report due in 2024. The Audit Panel noted that many of the recommendations in the University's Ug T&L Strategy (see paragraph 1.22) are also relevant to TPg programmes and the University may wish to consider such synergies in conjunction with the TPg Task Force.
- 1.24 The VP/R and Graduate School Management Team devise overall strategies and policies on RPg education. The Graduate School is currently reviewing the effectiveness of a revised RPg coursework curriculum implemented in September 2021. The Audit Panel heard that the report is to be completed in December 2023. Substantial changes to the coursework curriculum will be considered by faculties, SMT, and the Senate. The report will include plans to widen the variety of learning opportunities for RPg students, and enhance students' learning and research experience. The Graduate School will also take into consideration the T&L strategies of TPg programmes for further adoption and modification.
- 1.25 During 2023, HKU developed policy and introduced support and advice for teaching staff and students on the use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) tools. In February 2023, in response to student concerns, HKU put a brief halt to student use of large language models and other GenAI tools for credit-bearing activities, promoted a campus-wide debate on the implications of GenAI for T&L and conducted workshops on policy development. A Task Force on GenAI (GAITF) then drafted a policy for staff consultation, which was endorsed by the Senate in June 2023. The Audit Panel learned of the support and advice being made available to staff and students through the GenAI User Advisory Committee and TALIC, including an online course on GenAI literacy developed by TALIC. The Panel heard in meetings with teaching staff and students that they are aware of HKU's GenAI policy and the support and advice available, and that some teaching staff have started using GenAI tools in their courses.
- 1.26 A key feature of the University's approach to setting, maintaining, and enhancing the standard and quality of its awards is its effective use of local and international benchmarking in the monitoring and review of programmes (see Section 2). The consistently high-ranking HKU achieves for the UGC's sector-wide performance measures (PMs) and institutional KPIs under the UAA provide evidence of the strength of its academic standards. HKU also scores highly across global rankings and attracts high-quality international students. Graduate employment rates are excellent and attest to the high standards achieved by HKU's students.

- 1.27 The TLQC and faculties solicit external input and undertake international benchmarking to maintain and enhance academic standards through a range of mechanisms, including the external examining system, curriculum review, faculty review, accreditation and external advisory boards (see Section 2). The Audit Panel noted indicators of HKU's high academic standards include international external examiners affirming the high standard of HKU's taught degree programmes, and consistently positive professional accreditation and curriculum review reports (see Section 2). The Audit Panel learned of HKU's active engagement in global research and higher education partnerships through memberships of networks, including Universitas 21 (U21), with the VP/T&L as the current Chair of U21's Educational Innovation Steering Group.
- 1.28 Admissions regulations for Ug, TPg, and RPg degree programmes are described in the University General Regulations. HKU's Admissions policy, including entrance requirements, is decided by the Senate, which receives an annual report on admission standards, selection, and recruitment activities, and enhances admissions procedures where necessary. Strategies to support admissions include attracting and admitting top-quality students; diversifying the student population; and enhancing HKU's branding locally and internationally. The Audit Panel learned of two recent successful initiatives to attract top-quality doctoral applicants from around the world to HKU: the Presidential PhD Scholar Programme, and the Summer Research Programme.
- 1.29 The President's Steering Group on Undergraduate Admissions maintains strategic oversight of Ug admissions. For Ug programmes, the Admissions Office operates regional recruitment hubs, and the Audit Panel heard that the Director of Undergraduate Admissions meets annually with faculties to review strategies and standards, and to confirm quotas and standards. Guidelines for staff on Ug admissions are described in HKU's Quality Manual. TPg admissions are administered by faculties and reviewed annually in line with internal priorities and market trends. The Audit Panel learned that TPg applications to HKU have increased markedly since 2016/17 AY, for example, an 85% increase in the Engineering Faculty, and a 165% increase in the Business and Economics Faculty.
- 1.30 The admission of RPg students is managed at departmental level in non-unitary faculties and overseen by the FHDC and the Graduate School (see paragraph 1.13). Applicants without a MRes degree are considered for admission to a two-year MPhil programme, or to a four-year PhD programme with a coursework component comprising courses run by the Graduate School and their department or faculty. Applicants with a MRes degree are considered for admission to a three-year PhD programme without a coursework component except for a Research Ethics course run by the Graduate School. Part-time, three-year MPhil and four-and-a-half or six-year PhD programmes are available in most of the faculties.

- 1.31 Students registered for an MPhil, or a three-year PhD programme have a 12-month probationary period, and four-year PhD students have an 18-month probationary period. Students are required to demonstrate capability in research, submit a detailed scheme of research (with ethical approval where applicable), and complete all the Graduate School courses and at least 50% of departmental courses. Students and their supervisors submit progress reports every six months. At the end of the probationary period, the FHDC receives reports from the student and supervisors, endorsed or commented upon in non-unitary faculties by the Chair of the DRPC. The FDHC decides whether to recommend confirmation of candidature, transfer of candidature, or an extension of the probationary period to the Graduate School.
- 1.32 Students at HKU SPACE come principally from Hong Kong. For HKU SPACE full-time programmes, the entry requirements and the application procedures are specified in the College website. Applicants who do not possess the required academic qualifications but are over 21 with relevant working experience will be considered on individual merit. To ensure academic quality and achieve consistency, a set of general minimum entry requirements are applied for HKU SPACE programmes at postgraduate level (Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) Level 6 and above).
- 1.33 The Ug, TPg, RPg, and HKU SPACE students who met the Audit Panel found the application and admission process straightforward and confirmed they had received accurate and sufficient information on their intended programme of study.
- 1.34 The Audit Panel concluded that the management of academic standards and academic quality by HKU is clearly aligned with its Vision 2016-2025, and its supporting strategies, policies and procedures are subject to regular review to ensure their continued effectiveness. The Senate maintains oversight of academic standards and quality through its committee structure and promotes QE through well-defined QA frameworks described in comprehensive QA manuals, for taught and RPg degrees programmes, and SD programmes offered on its behalf by HKU SPACE. The Senate sub-committees and Boards have substantial delegated authorities at institutional and faculty levels. HKU monitors the performance of its Ug, TPg and RPg provision using a range of internal and external data. A notable feature of the University's approach to setting, maintaining, and enhancing the standards and quality of its awards is its effective use of local and international benchmarking.

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

- 2.1 HKU has a well-established and comprehensive set of policies and procedures for programme development, approval, monitoring, and review of Ug and Pg

programmes, including dual and off-campus programmes. These are set out in a detailed Quality Manual which is readily accessible by staff. The Senate reviews policies and procedures periodically based on advice from the Academic Board. Several templates have been developed to support each process, and coupled with the policies, the templates promote consistency across faculties and departments, whilst also allowing for variation, where appropriate, between faculties and disciplines.

- 2.2 HKU SPACE has its own comprehensive QAE Manual and aligns its quality assurance processes with those of the University. There are policies and procedures for approval and monitoring of programmes with internal approval and oversight by the School's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and further reporting on the School's quality assurance activities to the CPE&LL Board. HKU SPACE has its own quality assurance and enhancement unit that oversees operational aspects of quality assurance. Academic standards and quality are overseen by Academic Committees at programme level, College Boards at academic unit level, and by the School Academic and Management Board (SAMB) at School level. As noted in paragraph 1.14, the University undertook a review of HKU SPACE in 2019 with the next review taking place in 2024/25 AY.
- 2.3 Responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement within the University rests with the TLQC. Academic Board is the locus for programme and academic development. Both TLQC and the Academic Board report to the Senate. Quality assurance and enhancement is devolved to FTLQCs with oversight and monitoring by Faculty Boards. Depending on the nature of the change, minor changes may be approved by Faculty Boards, Departments, Schools, or Programme Committees. There are clear lines of responsibility and accountability within the quality assurance framework with overall responsibility resting with the VP/T&L. The BASc Curriculum Committee and the Common Core Curriculum (CCC) Committee provide oversight of the BASc courses and the CC curriculum respectively.
- 2.4 HKU states that curriculum development is guided by University and Faculty strategic goals, social needs, and stakeholder feedback. Faculty Development Plans which include proposed programme developments are submitted annually to the Budget and Resources Committee. Academic Board has approved guidelines for the formulation of proposals for a new academic programme or curriculum and has developed 'Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)' to assist in the preparation of proposals. New programmes may also be identified from the academic review of faculties.
- 2.5 Preliminary proposals for a new programme include market research, demand, local and global benchmarking and submission to external assessors for review and comment. Proposals for taught programmes are considered by Faculty-level committees such as FTLQCs for onward consideration by Faculty Boards. These

are then considered by a sub-group of Academic Board, chaired by the VP/T&L, that has responsibility for reviewing and advising on new programmes and making recommendations on the proposals to Faculty Boards before submission to Academic Board and the Senate for consideration. Programme teams present their proposals to Academic Board and any adjustments are subject to further consideration by Academic Board. The Senate provides final approval.

- 2.6 While the Senate delegates some of its powers and duties to Faculty Boards, it maintains detailed oversight and approval of new programmes, new courses on the CCC, major changes to the curriculum, and major amendments to the academic regulations through the Academic Board. It also receives annual reports from TLQC and academic review reports from the Advisory Group on Academic Review (AGAR). The Audit Panel confirmed that approval and oversight is rigorous.
- 2.7 The University's Quality Manual sets out the policy and procedures for the development of dual and off-campus programmes, including a due diligence checklist, proposal forms and examples of formal agreements. HKU has recently reviewed its guidelines for dual and off-campus taught degrees. Dual and off-campus degrees are reviewed three years after initial approval and every six years, as part of curriculum review. The Audit Panel concluded that there are robust approval arrangements for these programmes. Approval of new collaborative non-local programmes at HKU SPACE following consideration and approval by the School's International Partnership Committee and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee rests with the CPE&LL Board.
- 2.8 The University has a number of ways of reviewing and monitoring the curriculum. Curriculum review is evidential and is intended to foster a culture of continuous improvement. It takes place every six years and is informed by feedback from students, external examiners, and a range of data. TLQC conducts the review of Ug programmes. Faculties conduct the review of TPg programmes. External reviewers, drawn from global universities, play a key part in the process by suggesting curriculum enhancements. The process results in an action plan monitored by the relevant FTLQC, Faculty Board and by the University's TLQC. The Audit Panel considered the process to be detailed, rigorous and well understood by staff. The Panel also noted that part-time and full-time Masters programmes are being reviewed with a report due at the end of the 2023/24 AY (see paragraph 1.23).
- 2.9 Academic review of faculties, led by AGAR, takes place every five years. This review evaluates the mission and goals of faculties in the context of HKU's vision and mission. As part of the University's commitment to externality and benchmarking, the review panel includes international external members. The Senate considers and approves faculty academic review reports. From the evidence provided, the Audit Panel concluded that the academic review process is effective and comprehensive.

- 2.10 Faculties produce an annual report on T&L, which evaluates and reflects on their T&L achievements, and is supported by an action plan and progress report. The reports are informed by student feedback and achievement data, and by external examiners' reports (see paragraphs 1.18 & 6.10). Faculty Boards submit faculty annual reports to the TLQC for consideration and approval, and FTLQCs monitor faculty annual T&L reports, action plans and progress reports. The Audit Panel found the annual reports to be comprehensive and evaluative, leading to enhancements. In addition, TALIC visits faculties each year to discuss SLEQ outcomes and achievement data. Detailed reports are produced on the performance of each faculty as well as an overview report for the TLQC (see paragraph 1.18). VP/T&L also makes annual visits to faculties on a more informal basis to discuss strategic matters.
- 2.11 A significant number of programmes leading to awards of the University are accredited by professional bodies through the approval and review process. The list of programmes maintained by the University includes the last date of review and any scheduled reviews. The frequency of the review is determined by the professional body, curriculum developments and previous response by the University. Professional body accreditation and review may be accepted as an appropriate replacement for curriculum review. The Audit Panel concluded from reports and responses, and from its meeting with external members of accreditation bodies, that accreditation processes are thorough with appropriate enhancements, action plans and oversight evident. These reports are considered by TLQC and the Senate. Ongoing dialogue through discipline advisory boards, alumni, and engagement with members of professional bodies is actively encouraged.
- 2.12 The Graduate School maintains oversight of RPg programmes, with monitoring provided by FHDCs and DRPCs. Programme monitoring of RPg provision is informed by a range of feedback mechanisms, including SFTL, SLEQ, exit surveys as well as feedback provided in Staff-Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) meetings. FHDCs and DRPCs consider student progress and achievement. Following a review of RPg provision and in response to the previous QAC audit, the University has introduced a student achievement card to enable improved monitoring of the attainment of educational aims and learning outcomes. There are also six professional doctorates, based in four faculties. Each programme has its own PLOs, syllabuses, and regulations. Operational management rests with the faculties.
- 2.13 HKU adopts an outcomes-based approach to student learning (OBASL) with UEAs and ILOs informing PLOs. This is reinforced in the University's Assessment Policy. PLOs are mapped onto the UEAs and ILOs, whereas CLOs are mapped onto the PLOs for Ug and TPg programmes as part of the programme approval process. Course coordinators and programme leaders are responsible for mapping onto these outcomes. PLOs, CLOs and grade descriptors are accessible on Moodle as well as in programme handbooks. Assessments are

designed to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes. External examiners report on such achievement and there is evidence of enhancements arising from external examiner reports and the detailed responses by faculties.

- 2.14 Programme Learning Outcome Assessment Plans (PLOAPs) and Programme Learning Outcome Achievement Reports (PLOARs) are used to evaluate learning outcomes assessment and to reinforce OBASL. There is a PLOAP and PLOAR for all Ug and TPg programmes and the Common Core curriculum. PLOARs which reflect on student achievement of the PLOs take place every three years and are supported by improvement plans. PLOARs feed into curriculum review. They are considered and approved by FTLQCs or the CCC, as appropriate. The Audit Panel noted from the evidence provided that there is some variability in the quality of the analysis of the data. The Ug T&L Strategy 2021-28 has recommended that the University experiment with new forms of programme review by piloting a new scheme of external review, and also discuss with programme teams a more informal mode of programme review.
- 2.15 External engagement as well as global and local benchmarking are a particular strength of the University. As part of the programme design and approval process, programme teams are required to benchmark programmes against other similar programmes, both in Hong Kong and overseas. External assessors appointed from global universities to review proposals are expected to comment on comparable programmes as part of the benchmarking process. Curriculum review and faculty academic review panels also include external members. The University's external examining system, with its commitment to the appointment of externals from the top 50 global institutions, is also a key contributor to not only maintaining academic standards and benchmarking, but also enhancing courses and programmes (see paragraphs 1.26 & 1.27).
- 2.16 OBASL at HKU SPACE is reflected in the School's approach to programme development leading to programme approval involving a four-step process, including peer review and College Board approval-in-principle, SAMB approval, programme validation based on advice from subject experts and CPE&LL approval. The CPE&LL Board includes senior members of the University, School representatives and external members, and has authority delegated by the University Senate for the School's academic awards and policies. The School undertakes annual monitoring of programmes to assure and enhance academic quality and standards. This involves consideration of student achievement, student feedback, a PLOs survey, a learning experience survey and external examiners' reports. The School recognises the need for more extensive use of data as part of its QA/QE system which is overseen by the School's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee which reports to the CPE&LL Board. Guiding principles for academic collaboration, including procedures for setting up a partnership, are in place and further oversight is provided through institutional review. The School's International Partnership Committee and the SAMB monitor academic collaboration and report to the CPE&LL Board.



- 2.17 The University embeds enhancement through its various monitoring and review processes at faculty level and through its external examining system. Membership of key committees enables the sharing of good practice, as does the T&L Festival organised by TALIC. Students can provide feedback on their learning experience through the SLEQ, and the SFTL survey (SFTL), as well as through SSCCs. TALIC holds in-depth discussions on SLEQ results with faculties and identifies ‘take-aways’. SLEQ results are monitored and reported at TLQC.
- 2.18 Enhancement may also arise from centrally led initiatives. For example, following completion of the second cycle of the Ug curriculum review in 2021, and in response to student feedback indicating that Ug students particularly valued student exchange, research opportunities and experiential learning, the University introduced a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) initiative, a Eureka Programme for Ug research and an interdisciplinary Hong Kong project for experiential learning. These are in the process of being fully embedded.
- 2.19 HKU SPACE identifies enhancements through its monitoring and review processes and through its external examining system. External examiners and academic assessors are invited to provide guidance on all award-bearing programmes or subject groups, and to comment on assessment methods and student performance. External examiners’ comments are considered by programme teams, and College Boards, with oversight and approval by the HKU SPACE Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and the CPE&LL Board.
- 2.20 The University’s approach to, and the processes for, programme development and approval, monitoring and review are well established, as are those at HKU SPACE. There is detailed oversight of the implementation of these processes at university level with some delegation of operational matters to FTLQCs with approval by Faculty Boards. The CPE&LL Board provides approval and oversight of HKU SPACE quality assurance activities. The degree of autonomy recognises the varied portfolio of provisions offered by the University and HKU SPACE and reflects the maturity of the institutions. The Audit Panel noted that the active engagement of external reviewers, assessors, and examiners, in the review and enhancement of the arrangements for programme development, approval, monitoring and review enable the programmes leading to awards of the University to be benchmarked both globally and locally. It was also clear from the Audit Panel’s discussions with external stakeholders that the significant level of professional body accreditation of programmes, ongoing review activity and dialogue with external stakeholders further contribute to enhancement of the provision offered. The Audit Panel considers that **externality is comprehensively embedded within quality assurance processes, resulting in significant benchmarking locally and globally leading to enhancement of programmes and the curricula, and is a feature of good practice.**

- 2.21 In meetings with staff from across the University and from HKU SPACE it was apparent that the programme development, approval, monitoring, and review arrangements are well understood and operate effectively in providing assurance of quality and standards as well as enhancing the curricula. Given the potential for greater shared learning, the University may wish to consider further systematic ways to identify and disseminate good practice across the range of the University's provision.
- 2.22 The Audit Panel was able to confirm that there is a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for programme development and approval, monitoring, and review. The academic governance frameworks at the University and HKU SPACE are clear and identify levels of authority, accountability, and responsibility across the institutions. The adoption of an outcomes-based learning approach with ILOs in curriculum design leads to consistency in programme design and supports student learning. The significant engagement with externals and external benchmarking leads to enhancement of the curricula across all levels of programmes. The respective comprehensive Quality Manuals aid the consistent implementation of process, and the use of templates and FAQs ensures that processes are understood by staff. While there is some evidence of variability across different programmes and parts of the University, the Audit Panel established that this does not undermine the effectiveness of the policies.

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

- 3.1 Guided by the Ug T&L Strategy 2021-28, the University has identified a range of recommendations relating to the review and enhancement of T&L and has adopted enabling strategies to achieve its intended goals. The University adopts both top-down and bottom-up approaches to T&L enhancement. The VP/T&L chairs major committees on T&L. Policies, guidelines, and procedures governing T&L related matters are in place and are overseen by faculty and department committees, boards and taskforces which submit their Annual T&L Reports on Taught Curricula to the Senate via the TLQC. The guidelines and policies cover different areas of teaching, for example, Guidelines for Recording of Lectures and Other Classroom Activities, University Assessment Policy, Examination Guidelines and Provision of Feedback to Students on Assessment, and Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence for T&L. These policies and guidelines are reviewed in a timely manner by taskforces and committees set up to address changes in teaching modalities, as triggered by the pandemic and, more recently, to respond to the challenges of GenAI. The Audit Panel confirmed that the University is committed to reviewing and enhancing T&L regularly and the arrangements are effective.
- 3.2 The University has clear guidelines relating to the recruitment and appointment of academic staff, reflecting its commitment to providing high quality teaching. Teaching performance is one of the indicators in the University's Performance Review and Development process and the maximum weighting on teaching

performance for pre-tenure, non-clinical professorial staff has been raised from 45% to 50% since the last audit. In addition to SFTL results, from 2023/24 AY, summative peer review of teaching is to be adopted for evaluating teaching quality in major personnel decisions. Various levels and categories of teaching awards are also in place to acknowledge and recognise outstanding teaching overall and in specific domains, for example, eLearning and research supervision.

- 3.3 Policies on staff induction and professional development for academic staff and RPg students with teaching responsibilities are in place. TALIC is responsible for providing these induction and professional development programmes and activities. Faculties also provide induction and staff training for their teaching staff and organise faculty-level T&L mentorship schemes. In 2022, HKU established a Teaching Academy to act as a strategic think-tank and promote excellence and innovation in T&L. Supervisors of RPg students are required to attend faculty-based supervisor training and research ethics seminars.
- 3.4 TALIC plays a significant role in staff induction and continuing professional development through the provision of a comprehensive range of programmes and activities. A Professional Certificate in T&L course, which covers T&L at the University, is offered to new academic staff and a Teaching in Practice course is available for academic staff with little and no teaching experience. To prepare for T&L leadership roles, TALIC has launched a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice. In addition to these structured programmes, TALIC offers on-campus and online workshops/seminars on various T&L topics to meet the changing pedagogical needs of teachers, including for example, an ‘Active Learning Series’, ‘Students as Partners Series’, ‘Technology Enhanced Learning Series’, ‘ChatGPT Series’ and ‘Peer Review of Teaching’. TALIC also develops useful and accessible online resources on T&L topics for teaching staff and students. It is evident to the Audit Panel that TALIC has made a significant contribution in enabling the smooth transition to online teaching in the University during the pandemic. The initiatives implemented then to address the challenges faced at that time and the ongoing support provided by TALIC has been timely, effective, and well received by academic staff. The Audit Panel considers that **the wide range of professional development activities organised by TALIC provide effective support for academic staff throughout their careers and is a feature of good practice.**
- 3.5 To promote external engagement, the University has joined Advance HE as a strategic member, and the professional development programmes offered by TALIC are therefore benchmarked against the UK Professional Standards Framework. HKU teaching staff can access online resources on T&L in higher education and engage with overseas counterparts. In 2021, to further develop awareness of innovative T&L practice within HKU, the University engaged a higher education consultancy with experience working with top universities, mainly in North America and Europe. The University’s Teaching Exchange Fellowship Scheme encourages and supports teachers to visit reputable overseas

universities where excellent pedagogical practice or curriculum innovation is being implemented, and to facilitate reciprocal visits by academic staff from these universities to share pedagogical innovations.

- 3.6 The University's commitment to T&L is reflected in the various funding schemes, these includes Teaching Development Grant Scheme, Teaching Exchange Fellowship Scheme, as well as Teaching Development and Language Enhancement Grant (TDLEG). It has established to support teaching development and innovation and to promote pedagogical research. The Audit Panel learned that the take-up rate by staff for these schemes has been high. Peer review is built into the mechanisms for vetting and allocating resources for teaching development grant proposals. The University has also strategically set priority areas for funding, which is reviewed annually by TLQC. It is evident that the funding has created impacts on various aspects of T&L, as reported in a Report on Impact of Teaching Development Grants on the Development and Promotion of T&L prepared by the University's former T&L Evaluation and Measurement Unit.
- 3.7 The Audit Panel noted that innovative teaching practice, for example, the use of tele-clinics, communication-intensive courses, and adaptive learning, has been promoted with positive outcomes, but also that this occurs mostly at faculty and programme levels. The Panel considered examples of innovative teaching practice, including the use of simulation laboratories for real-life patient casework, the use of technology to make online videos more interactive, greater emphasis on experiential learning, providing greater international exposure to students, and working with students as partners, could be shared more widely to benefit staff and students across the institution (see paragraph 2.21), and the University may wish to explore how best to achieve this.
- 3.8 The University has implemented strategies to ensure the learning environment is positive, supportive, and inclusive. Regular evaluation of the learning resources and environment is conducted, including a focused review on eLearning in 2019. To respond to the demand for virtual T&L during COVID-19, the University has considerably enhanced its IT infrastructure and physical and virtual teaching environments. The Audit Panel noted the substantial resources invested in the improvement of learning spaces, digital facilities and library e-resources. These improvements have supported the implementation of innovative pedagogies in some departments and faculties and have facilitated different teaching modalities.
- 3.9 As noted in Section 2 of this report, the University regularly collects student feedback on the quality of teaching and their learning experience through different means, for example, SFTL, SLEQ, SSCC, Research Postgraduate Student Progress Reports, and Exit Surveys. The collected feedback is shared at relevant committees, such as Board of Examiners' meetings, and acted upon, as deemed necessary. The Audit Panel heard from staff with responsibilities for RPg students that enhancement measures introduced in response to student

feedback, for example, the new Graduate School curriculum, have been welcomed by students.

- 3.10 The Panel concluded that the University has demonstrated a strong commitment to the continuous review and enhancement of T&L in both face-to-face teaching and virtual T&L contexts in order to achieve its educational aims. The University's arrangements for reviewing and enhancing T&L are effective overall although, as noted in paragraph 3.7, the Audit Panel considered that the systematic review and collation of programme- and department-level T&L enhancements for wider dissemination of innovative pedagogic practice across the University's provision would further build on the progress made in T&L innovation to date. Policies and guidelines pertinent to the provision of quality teaching in the two teaching contexts are monitored and reviewed by relevant boards and committees. Academic staff are provided with professional development opportunities to equip them with the competencies needed to cope with the challenges and demands arising from changing teaching environments. Stakeholder feedback is collected, valued, and acted upon. Synergies between academic departments and teaching support units are evident.

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

- 4.1 HKU is committed to fair, transparent and rigorous assessment. The philosophy, principles and regulations for assessment are set out in the University's Assessment Policy which applies to the Ug and TPg curricula. In order to promote diversity of assessment, the University's Ug T&L Strategy 2021-28 further mandated that no single element in a Ug course should account for more than 50% of overall course assessment.
- 4.2 Faculties are required to develop and align their own assessment policies with the University's policy. While the Audit Panel noted some variability between faculty policies seen by the Panel, it concluded that this reflects the needs of different disciplines and the devolved approach to governance, and that such variation was within acceptable norms. Nevertheless, the University may wish to consider developing a template for faculty assessment policies to enable greater consistency, as appropriate. FTLQCs and Faculty Boards monitor and approve faculty assessment policies and report to TLQC accordingly. Operational oversight rests with the Course Coordinator, Programme Director, and AD/T&L. The Audit Panel heard that any exemptions from the Ug T&L Strategy and Assessment Policy would normally be due to professional body requirements and would have to be approved by the relevant FTLQC, Faculty Board and the Academic Board/TLQC, and reported to the Senate.
- 4.3 The Assessment Policy requires alignment between programme and course learning outcomes and the assessment processes and standards. The University and HKU SPACE are committed to, and have implemented, an OBASL and

criterion referenced assessment. The Audit Panel noted that diligent mapping of PLOs and CLOs onto the UEAs and ILOs is undertaken as part of the programme approval process. Communication of PLOs and CLOs, assessment tasks, rubrics, criteria, grade point average system and grade descriptors takes various forms, with the most common being programme handbooks, course descriptors, assessment briefs, and induction and orientation briefings by staff. The programme handbooks, course descriptors and assessment briefs seen by the Audit Panel were generally very detailed, contained the relevant information and were easily accessible on Moodle, the University's learning platform. The SIS contains details of course outlines which are used by students in selecting courses. Students who met the Audit Panel appeared well informed and knew how to access this information.

- 4.4 The previous QAC audit of the University recommended that HKU should facilitate student understanding of grade descriptors. This has been addressed in programme handbooks, course descriptors and induction and orientation briefings. The earlier audit also recommended that educational aims, PLOs, and ILOs should be developed for the RPg provision. These are available for RPg students on Moodle and in the handbook for PhD and MPhil programmes. The introduction of an Achievement Card in September 2018 allows staff and students to track attainment of PLOs, UEAs and ILOs for RPg students. The implementation of PLOAPs and PLOARs involves reflection on student achievement of the PLOs and an evaluation of the achievement data for Ug and TPg programmes. Reviews are undertaken on a three-year cycle and fed into curriculum review. HKU SPACE has also introduced PLO surveys that feed into annual monitoring.
- 4.5 The University's Quality Manual and the School's Examination Administration Handbook outline the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the assessment process, including external examiners, and the conduct of boards of examiners. The University's academic regulations for the award of Ug degrees, TPg awards, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy awards are reviewed regularly. Any changes to the regulations must be approved by the Senate, on the advice of Faculty Board. The Graduate School also has a well-established set of thesis examination procedures available on the Graduate School website. The Graduate School and the Senate approve RPg guidelines and regulations, and any proposed changes. FHDCs and FTLQCs maintain oversight of Professional Doctorates. Each Professional Doctorate has its own set of regulations. At HKU SPACE, Academic Policies and Regulations-Student Assessment provide information on grading systems, award classifications and the role of the Board of Examiners for HKU award-bearing programmes delivered through the School. The Audit Panel found that the University's Quality Manual, the School's Examination Administration handbook and the Academic Policies and Regulations provide comprehensive and accessible guidance for staff at HKU and HKU SPACE, and that the respective assessment processes are clear.

- 4.6 The process for marking and moderation is determined at course and programme level within the University, reflecting the diverse nature of the provision. Staff who met the Audit Panel confirmed that moderation meetings for standardising grades and the sampling of student work as calibration took place. The School's Academic Policies and Regulations require moderation to be undertaken by the programme team where there are two or more assessors to ensure consistency regarding the application of grade descriptors and grading standards.
- 4.7 The University states that the external examining system serves as an important quality assurance mechanism in benchmarking its curricula and assessment practice against global standards and practice. There is a well-developed external examining system whereby external examiners are nominated by the respective Programme Directors or Heads of Departments/Schools, and the University TLQC approves examiners on the advice of Faculty Boards. The Audit Panel learned that external examiners are normally appointed from the top 50 global universities. External examiners are required to report on curriculum design and content, pedagogy, assessment practice, student performance and standards, benchmarked against global and local institutions, as appropriate. They also identify areas requiring attention and make recommendations. Faculties provide responses made to external examiners to the relevant FTLQC and Faculty Board. Staff who met the Audit Panel were able to provide examples of enhancements arising from external examiner reports. A review of the external examiner system arose out of the Ug T&L Strategy 2021-28. While TLQC has considered the review report, the Audit Panel learned that the scope of implementation has yet to be decided.
- 4.8 HKU SPACE appoints external examiners and academic assessors for all award-bearing programmes at HKQF Level 4 and above. They are expected to provide academic guidance and advice to programmes or subject groups, comment on standards, assessment methods and student performance. An Examination Administration Handbook provides information on the appointment of, and procedures for, external examiners and academic assessors. The Audit Panel found that HKU and HKU SPACE's regulatory processes, including the respective external examining systems; academic regulations; and assessment processes, are robust.
- 4.9 The Panel was given a demonstration of two platforms used by the University to support student assessment. The SIS is used for enrolment on courses, accessing assessment grades, viewing teaching schedules and past papers, accessing the examination timetable, academic advising and tracking student achievement and performance. Students informed the Audit Panel that they use the SIS for finding out grades, course outlines and paying fees. Moodle is used for course materials, including programme handbooks; assessment materials such as rubrics and grade descriptors; and facilitating assignment submission through Turnitin. There is core information on each programme and course. TALIC also produces staff guidance on the use of Moodle.

- 4.10 HKU is committed to diverse and innovative assessment methods while ensuring that PLOs and CLOs are met. Following the introduction of the current Ug T&L Strategy 2021-28, faculties are required to review their assessment with a view to increasing diversity by reducing the number of examinations (see paragraph 1.22). An implementation report on the Strategy has been submitted to the Senate for consideration. The University has recently developed a policy on the use of GenAI in T&L assessment (see paragraph 1.25) and is actively encouraging staff to respond to this in their assessment practice. The University developed oral and online assessments as a rapid response to the global pandemic. The Audit Panel heard that TALIC provides a helpline for staff and guidance for candidates, course examiners and invigilators. The sharing of innovation and enhancements in assessment across faculties and the University occurs in several ways. The Audit Panel heard that this could be through membership of faculty and university committees, such as FTLQC, Faculty Board, TLQC, Academic Board, and the Senate. It also takes place through the annual teaching review process, as well as staff participation in TALIC's communities of practice, the Teaching Academy, annual visits to faculties by TALIC and more informal annual visits by the VP(T&L).
- 4.11 The University has a Student Plagiarism Policy for Ug and TPg students which is also adopted by HKU SPACE. Students are briefed about plagiarism and academic dishonesty during orientation and induction. New students are expected to complete an online module on academic dishonesty. Students who met the Audit Panel were aware of the plagiarism policy.
- 4.12 HKU expects feedback on assessment to be timely and effective. Feedback was reviewed as part of the development of the current Ug T&L Strategy when programme teams were recommended to review their feedback mechanisms to ensure that all students are provided with quick, frequent, available, and effective feedback (see Section 1, paragraph 1.22). Published guidance recognises that feedback may take a variety of forms, including group, individual and online feedback, although group or class feedback is the norm. Faculties determine when feedback will be available, providing them with some discretion in achieving timely and effective feedback, taking account of discipline demands, and student numbers. The monitoring of feedback is undertaken at programme level. FTLQCs maintain oversight and review of policy statements which are approved by Faculty Boards. Faculty statements on feedback seen by the Audit Panel were variable. While these variations are within acceptable norms, students continue to raise feedback on assessment as a potential area of concern in SLEQs and SSCCs. The University may therefore wish to consider the frequency of review of faculty statements to ensure their continued alignment with university policy and practice.
- 4.13 Faculties' annual T&L reports reflect on the feedback process, including any issues arising from student feedback. The University is attempting to address the challenges through two pilot projects on sharing feedback and automated



feedback. TALIC provides teaching, learning and assessment support. TALIC arose from merging of the Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, the Technology Enriched Learning Initiative and the Teaching and Learning Evaluation Measurement Unit in 2023. It actively supports staff in the design of assessment and in learning practice. TALIC provides staff development support on the use of Moodle, including multimedia support while Information Technology Services (ITS) provides technical support. In addition to the resources website, TALIC organises T&L seminars, including workshops on feedback, GenAI, experiential learning and assessment, online course design, and pedagogical innovation. Staff who met the Audit Panel commended the high level of support provided by TALIC. Equivalent support is provided at HKU SPACE by the Maisy Ho Centre for Teaching and Learning and the eLearning unit. The Maisy Ho Centre's vision is to be a leading T&L centre for professional and continuing education by enhancing pedagogical skills and knowledge.

- 4.14 The Audit Panel found that the support provided by TALIC was informative and comprehensive. Engagement with academic staff takes place through communities of practice, the Teaching Academy, and seminars and workshops. The level of engagement with faculties in the annual review of SLEQ and achievement data is extremely thorough, as are the reports. Extensive resources on assessment are readily available to staff on the TALIC website. The Audit Panel considers that **the provision of these resources by TALIC supports and enhances the diversification of assessment practice and is a feature of good practice.**
- 4.15 The Audit Panel concluded that the University and the School are committed to the enhancement of assessment practice through the work of TALIC and the Maisy Ho Centre for Teaching and Learning, the Assessment Policy and the UG T&L Strategy, as well as external examining, monitoring, and review processes. Whilst a more systematic approach to the sharing of enhancements across the University is to be encouraged (see paragraph 3.7), the Audit Panel recognises that oversight within the governance framework, the use of communities of practice, the Teaching Academy, and committee membership provide further ways of identifying and promoting enhancement within the University. It is also apparent that the University and School are able to respond in a timely manner to challenges, as evidenced by their rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing online and alternative assessment and new technologies.

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

- 5.1 Student support at the University is provided through faculties in conjunction with a range of central professional services. Several committees within the University's committee structure have oversight of student support. The Senate's Committee on Student Affairs oversees student welfare and facilities and monitors the CEDARS which provides students with extensive support services

and development activities. The TLQC oversees the Academic Advising and First Year Experience Committee (AAFYEC), formed in 2019 following the amalgamation of two committees, which provides oversight of the implementation and monitoring of the University's academic advising arrangements.

- 5.2 The University's AAFYEC regularly reviews student induction programmes. Some faculties have implemented student ambassador schemes and pair new students with student academic advisers, while other faculties provide opportunities for new students to meet representatives of professional bodies. CEDARS organises Weeks of Welcome twice a year in collaboration with student groups. At HKU SPACE, full-time students have a welcome day. The University's students are generally satisfied with the induction process and Welcome Week, finding the student-led activities helpful while also suggesting that the process could be improved by giving more information on course selection; and that more support would be helpful for dual degree students. The Audit Panel noted the launch of a Global Friends Programme in 2021 to promote deeper integration between non-local students and local student ambassadors who have a role to play in arranging tours of the University and helping non-local students to find their way around the University and services available to them. The Panel also noted the contribution made by faculties and the CC Office to support international student integration into the University, including the provision of support for the establishment of an international student society.
- 5.3 The Audit Panel learned that orientation days are organised for the University's RPg students with faculty members, and that students are told to approach the Research Postgraduate Committee during induction if they encounter problems. Orientation provides an opportunity for RPg students to be aware of support available to them, particularly in situations such as a student having a problem with a supervisor. RPg students are generally satisfied with the quality of the provision made available to them by the University and indicated that their feedback is actively sought and acted upon.
- 5.4 Support is available at local level and more widely at university-level through CEDARS and other university-wide support provided in relation to wellness and wellbeing support. SEN students have access to a range of specialised support and resources. Recurrent resources are allocated to a SEN Support Team in CEDARS to provide support to SEN students, such as needs assessment and review, study support, employment preparation, internships, special housing placement, counselling, and service referrals. Support is also provided through the procurement of learning aids and assistive devices, and through the provision of learning spaces to accommodate the needs of visually impaired and ADHD/autistic students. The Audit Panel learned that library staff can liaise with hall tutors to support SEN students' needs, and that ITS makes teachers aware of SEN students and the attendant implications for T&L space in scheduling classes. ITS also provides classroom support to SEN students through the provision of

specialised equipment and resources to meet their particular needs. The Panel was informed that the Committee on Personal Development and Counselling meets twice a year and undertakes annual reviews, identifying any issues arising and reporting to the Committee on Student Affairs and upwards to the Senate.

- 5.5 AAFYEC oversees the implementation and monitoring of academic advising at the University and an Academic Advising and Scholarships Office (AASO) provides professional development programmes to faculty academic advisers and student advisers. Following a review of the academic advising system in 2018, it was recommended that advising support should be offered to students, particularly during the first six weeks after registration. The Audit Panel was informed that emails are sent to first year students to ask them to select an academic adviser and contact is usually made by the adviser although the student may also contact the adviser. The Panel also learned that guidance on academic advising is available for teachers and workshops are held. Programme Directors nominate academic advisers for first year students and reminders, as required, are sent to academic advisers to contact students. In addition to academic advisers, support for students is available from student advisers and ambassadors. The Audit Panel learned that Programme Directors have given briefings to student advisers about what is expected of them as advisers. SLEQ results over the period 2019-2022 AYs show that there have been improvements in students' perceptions of the academic support they receive in the first six weeks, as well as in the helpfulness and effectiveness of academic advising.
- 5.6 The Audit Panel noted that academic advisers have access to the SIS, which allow them to identify students who may be at risk. Academic advisers can view a list of their advisees, set up meetings with advisees and keep track of advice given through the SIS. The Audit Panel was informed that academic advisers can see student performance and initiate meetings, if required, based on students' recorded results. Faculty staff can also alert academic advisers to student issues and vice versa. The Audit Panel learned from its meeting with teaching staff that different approaches are used to identify at-risk students who should be contacted by academic advisers, if required. These approaches include checking a student's attendance rate before the reading week and monitoring a student's Grade Point Average and usage of online resources as potential indicators of disengagement. From 2023/24 AY, ITS will provide teachers with learning analytics reports to help them monitor student performance and identify at-risk students. The Audit Panel considered that **the development of the SIS, its accessibility to staff and students, and integration with the Learning Management System which enables the identification of students who may need additional support, is a feature of good practice.**
- 5.7 The academic advising system is intended to help students achieve their academic goals, and enable the identification of at-risk students. AASO has developed an Academic Roadmap to help students visualise their entire learning journey and critical milestones along the way. Faculties also map pathways for

their students. Feedback from students indicated that accessibility of academic advisers, who usually come from a student's faculty, appears to vary, and much depends on the academic adviser. The Audit Panel also noted that students may find it easier to talk to student peer advisers rather than staff members, and smaller class sizes allow students to raise any issues with teaching staff directly. For students living in halls, students are assigned to be floor tutors to look after their hallmates and they can help identify at-risk students. Mentorship and advising arrangements are in place in halls, and hall tutors can act in a preventative role and capacity, referring onwards, as appropriate. The Audit Panel heard that accommodating international students in halls of residence contributes to supporting their greater integration into the University. The Panel noted that, whilst self-financed TPg students are not eligible for UGC-funded student hostels, CEDARS provides information packs about accommodation in Hong Kong and students have access to CEDARS's counselling service. In timetabling TPg courses, the University aims to strike an appropriate balance, taking account of the different modes of study of its wider student population.

- 5.8 Faculties use student survey and employer survey data as well as student feedback from meetings of the SSCC to enhance students' learning and personal development. The Audit Panel was informed of faculty responses to survey data and student feedback, including brown bag teaching seminars being organised to share SLEQ feedback experiences and the development of activities to enable more hands-on experience in provision of a more practical nature. The Graduate School collects feedback from RPg students through the Annual Learning Student Survey and Exit Survey. If problems are noted, the Graduate School passes feedback to the respective stakeholders. The Audit Panel learned that faculties handle cases sensitively and give extensions, as appropriate, to support RPg students' mental wellbeing. Support is also available at different levels of the University including through the Research Postgraduate Wellness Ambassadors and through CEDARS. In response to requests for whole-person development, the Graduate School has expanded RPg T&L activities to include workshops on mental wellness and time management, in addition to academic- and profession-oriented activities. The Graduate School has also responded to student requests for enhanced financial support through the introduction of new awards.
- 5.9 Student support services are reviewed through satisfaction surveys and through focused reviews on the services provided for students, leading to action taken in response to student feedback and objective data analysis to inform resource decisions. For example, Moodle has been enhanced and is now integrated with Zoom and Teams. In addition, the Audit Panel noted that the University has provided additional support through webinars and information packs provided for non-local students, in response to feedback arising from focus group activity. The University has also organised activities for students to grow as leaders with a global mindset and that positive feedback had been received on these activities. The University's Ug and TPg students appreciate the career development and

support provided through CEDARS and faculties, noting the availability of internship opportunities, supportive tutors, workshops, and career talks. External stakeholders commented on the support students received from university staff in helping students to obtain and undertake internships. They also noted that students were well prepared for their subsequent careers.

- 5.10 HKU SPACE also uses surveys to monitor student satisfaction with the level of support it provides for students. The School provides opportunities for students to give feedback and follow up on issues raised. It has also established Career SPACE, a one-stop online career platform for HKU SPACE students and alumni to support their career and professional development. It was clear that students value the Career SPACE initiative and the subject and career development advice provided by the School. HKU SPACE strengthened its monitoring and analysis of student feedback on student support through the establishment of a QAT in the 2021/22 AY. The School has also introduced student relationship management as a KPI in 2022/23 AY.
- 5.11 The Audit Panel confirmed the effectiveness of a range of students support provided by the University's Student Support Framework, which comprises student services, service providers, monitoring authorities and feedback mechanisms. The academic advising system contributes to helping students achieve their academic goals and enables the identification of at-risk students who would benefit from further guidance and support. As noted in paragraph 1.17, there has been steady improvement in SFTL course and teacher effectiveness scores, as well as improvements in student perceptions of their learning experience. In addition, the University's graduates enjoy high levels of employability and the discontinuation rates for Ug and TPg students are low. HKU SPACE has identified student support as a priority and, in 2022/23 AY, introduced student relationship management as a KPI to ensure that student needs are addressed appropriately. It continues to support students' career and professional development through the Career SPACE initiative.

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

- 6.1 The Audit Panel found that HKU's Information Technology Policy Committee (ITPC) provides strategic oversight of information technology and related risks to ensure their well-coordinated governance, including information security and data management. ITPC, supported by ITS, determines which information systems are subject to periodic internal assessments.
- 6.2 Information Security and Data Management Policy of HKU was approved in February 2017 and is applicable to all operations of the university. The Audit Panel learned that ITPC reviews the Policy periodically to propose amendments. Training is provided to staff on the policy, and a checklist is used to facilitate its implementation. Data is collected in compliance with Hong Kong's Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance.

- 6.3 The University's main student and staff information systems, known as SIS, and the Human Capital Management System (HCMS), are supported by ITS. The Audit Panel noted ITS provides comprehensive checklists on data privacy impact assessment and organises regular training workshops for staff.
- 6.4 The Audit Panel learned the University's Information Technology Strategy Plan has identified four goals: (1) better insights for decision-making, (2) increased staff efficiency, (3) enhanced student experience and success, and (4) ensuring better control and compliance. The University's Management Information Unit (MIU) sources data for analysis from SIS, HCMS, and externally. The Audit Panel found that the MIU supports institutional review and planning, as well as decision-making. This includes benchmarking to inform Senior Management's understanding of HKU's relative strengths and weaknesses globally. The MIU also compiles Faculty KPIs and profiles for strategic planning, Ug admission and academic performance data for the President's Steering Group on Ug Admissions (see paragraph 1.29), and data to inform planning by the AASO, libraries, and other facilities.
- 6.5 An Institutional Survey Reports System enables users to generate data reports for analysis and planning. HKU's funding model for faculty annual budgets is performance-based and data-driven. To assist the Budget and Resources Committee and faculties, MIU prepares annual KPI reports on T&L, research, and knowledge exchange. KPIs are used to track University and faculty performance over time and are fully aligned with sector-wide PMs and HKU-specific KPIs under the UAA.
- 6.6 HKU also provides extensive data to support decision-making by programme coordinators, academic managers, and budget holders, and externally to the UGC, local high schools, professional bodies, and other agencies. TALIC (see paragraph 1.25) oversees T&L data collection, validation, data analytics, and usage; and undertakes piloting of student questionnaires with focus groups, and regularly reviews content and interfaces to ensure their robustness.
- 6.7 The Audit Panel learned that data is collected from stakeholders throughout the student journey and used to inform decision-making in various T&L related matters. These include tracking and analysing student progress, recruitment and admissions, academic performance, course selection, co- and extra-curricular activities, feedback on courses and learning experience, achievement of UEAs (see paragraph 1.1), further studies, and employment. T&L policy reviews are facilitated by analyses of student performance as well as external benchmarks.
- 6.8 Students on taught programmes, who met the Audit Panel, conveyed their participation in providing their feedback through SFTL surveys (see paragraph 1.16). They also mentioned that adjustments were being made in their T&L experience following direct feedback to teaching staff. RPg students referred that

feedback is always being sought; and additional learning needs could be identified via student committees and meetings with senior faculty staff.

- 6.9 The Audit Panel found that HKU has a data-driven approach to enhancement in using data collected from various sources, including student, employer, market surveys, benchmarking against external programmes, accreditation bodies, curriculum reviews, focus group discussions, and external examiner reports. The data collected is to inform admission strategies, programme development, course design and delivery of Ug and TPg programmes. CEDARS (see paragraph 5.1) works with faculties to use employment survey data to further enhance students' career prospects. Global and local benchmarking data demonstrates employability of HKU graduates is very high.
- 6.10 Programme teams, departments and faculties review institutional data and other inputs annually to inform curriculum development and enhancement. Each Faculty Board, in consultation with the FTLQC, submits an Annual T&L Report to the Senate via TLQC, which includes an action plan and progress on achievement of actions from the previous plan (see paragraph 2.10). An example of the use of data to review RPg education seen by the Audit Panel is the 'Extended Alumni Tracer Study' in 2019 on the impact of RPg programmes on society, which led to a revised coursework curriculum. A review of effectiveness of the revised curriculum and to propose further enhancements was due to report to the Graduate School in December 2023 (see paragraph 1.11).
- 6.11 The Audit Panel was informed that teaching staff and academic advisers (see paragraph 5.6) can access the SIS to track students' academic progress to support weaker students and identify students at risk. From the 2023/24 AY, ITS will provide teachers with learning analytics reports to help them monitor student performance and identify at-risk students.
- 6.12 HKU is aware that data obtained from students and graduates on their learning experience could be more robust and continues to explore ways to increase such feedback and enhance data collection and analysis. The Audit Panel found examples of the various approaches being taken to achieve these aims. For example, the task force on the implementation of R7 of the Ug T&L Strategy 2021-2028 (see paragraph 1.22) has produced guidelines that have already led to an increase in the student response rate for the SFTL. HKU is also leading a UGC, cross-institutional TDLEG project, 'The Student Learning Experience in Hong Kong Universities: A Deep Dive into Institutional Data', to determine how institutional data can be analysed more innovatively and effectively.
- 6.13 A task force set up under the Ug T&L Strategy 2021-2028 to implement R5, on learning management system functionality, has reviewed Moodle data usage across Ug courses, including focus group discussions with teachers and students. The task force is formulating a set of guidelines to enable teachers to make

effective use of Moodle, and integration of Moodle with Microsoft Teams will commence in 2023/24 AY.

- 6.14 The Audit Panel noted that the need to improve data collection and analytics to support continuing and professional education programmes at HKU SPACE, which has over 85 000 registered students, has led to the development of a more efficient student survey platform and reporting system (see paragraph 1.20). The Panel found the learning experience of students on SD programmes at HKU SPACE is externally benchmarked using the International Student Barometer.
- 6.15 The Audit Panel learned that University initiatives developed through international benchmarking include COIL, the Hong Kong Project, and communication-intensive courses (see Section 3, paragraph 3.7).
- 6.16 Overall, the Audit Panel found the University has effective systems for the collection, analysis, and review of internal and external data for the management of academic quality and standards, and for evidence-based decisions designed to enhance the quality of T&L. HKU collects and analyses data from each stage of students' academic journey and makes systematic and effective use of benchmarks in its QA/QE processes. Data collection at HKU focuses on surveys of students, graduates, and other stakeholders (see paragraphs 1.16 & 1.17). The University is aware that data obtained from students and graduates on their learning experience could be more robust and continues to explore ways to increase such feedback.

## **7. CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 The programmes offered by the University are aligned with, and assessed within, the framework of the University's Vision 2016-2025. Supporting strategies, policies and procedures are subject to regular review to ensure their continued effectiveness. The Senate, through its committee structure, maintains oversight of academic standards and quality, and associated review activities to ensure their continued effectiveness. QE is promoted through well-defined QA frameworks for Ug, TPg and RPg degree programmes, and for programmes offered by HKU SPACE on behalf of the University; all of which are described in comprehensive QA manuals. The performance of the University's Ug, TPg and RPg provision is monitored using a range of internal and external data. A notable feature of the University's approach to setting, maintaining, and enhancing the standards and quality of its awards is its effective use of local and international benchmarking.
- 7.2 Programme development, approval, monitoring, and review policies as well as procedures implemented by the University and HKU SPACE are comprehensive. The academic governance frameworks are clear, ensuring effective oversight of the arrangements to be applied across different levels of activity, and identifying levels of authority, accountability and responsibility across the University and



HKU SPACE. The adoption of an outcomes-based learning approach supports consistency in programme design and student learning. Considerable emphasis is placed on external engagement to inform programme development and approval, monitoring and review, and enhancement across all levels of programmes offered.

- 7.3 The University is committed to the continuous review and enhancement of T&L to enable students to meet its educational aims and achieve the learning outcomes for the different levels of study it provides for students. TALIC plays a significant role in the induction and continuing professional development of academic staff through the provision of a comprehensive range of programmes and activities to support staff across the University. Academic staff also have opportunities to share and collaborate in teaching with peers from overseas universities through the University's Teaching Exchange Fellowship Scheme. Innovative teaching practices have been promoted and academic departments and teaching support units are working together effectively to address students' collective and individual learning needs.
- 7.4 Faculties and departments align their assessment policies with the University's Assessment Policy, while tailoring their policies to meet specific discipline needs and professional body requirements. Membership of committees within the governance framework, TALIC, the use of communities of practice, and the Teaching Academy provide diverse forums to identify and promote enhancement of assessment practice within the University. The assessment policies, regulations and procedures, together with the external examiner system ensure that academic standards are maintained, and that assessment practice and outcomes are benchmarked against local and global standards leading to enhancements, where appropriate. The Maisy Ho Centre for Teaching and Learning provides assessment enhancement support for HKU SPACE which is also committed to outcomes-based T&L.
- 7.5 The University provides a range of student support services which are monitored and evaluated through the governance framework and through feedback mechanisms. The development and accessibility of the SIS, and its integration with the Learning Management System, deliver comprehensive support for students. The academic advising system supports students to achieve their academic goals and enables the identification of students who would benefit from further guidance and support. Actions taken by the University have led to steady improvement in SFTL course and teacher effectiveness scores, as well as improvements in students' perceptions of their learning experience. Students are supported to develop broader skills and have access to courses and resources designed to enhance their proficiency in language and communication skills. The University's graduates enjoy high levels of employability and discontinuation rates for Ug and TPg students are low. HKU SPACE has strengthened its monitoring and analysis of student support and has introduced student relationship management as a KPI to ensure that student needs are

addressed appropriately. HKU SPACE is continuing to support students' career and professional development through its Career SPACE initiative.

- 7.6 The University and HKU SPACE make systematic and constructive use of benchmarks in their QA and QE processes. The University has effective systems for the collection, analysis, and review of internal and external data for the management of academic quality and standards, and for evidence-based decisions designed to enhance the quality of T&L. It collects and analyses data from each stage of students' academic journey and makes systematic and effective use of benchmarks in its QA/QE processes. Data collection at the University focuses on surveys of students, graduates, and other stakeholders. The University is aware that data obtained from students and graduates on their learning experience could be more robust and it continues to explore ways to increase such feedback. Data collection and analysis are integral to HKU SPACE's management of QA and QE, and the establishment of a QAT has led to the development of a more efficient student survey platform and reporting system.

## **APPENDIX A: THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**

*[Information provided by the University]*

### **History**

Founded in 1911, The University of Hong Kong (HKU) is the oldest tertiary education institution in Hong Kong. It has grown from three Faculties with only 23 graduates at its first Congregation to ten Faculties with around 38 000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in 2023/24 AY. Today, HKU is internationally recognised as a prestigious institution, attracting the best students and top-tier academics from around the world. Positioned as Asia's Global University, HKU delivers impact through internationalisation, innovation and interdisciplinarity. It is ranked 26th in the world and 2nd in Asia by Quacquarelli Symonds.

### **Vision and Mission**

#### *Vision*

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

#### *Mission*

HKU will endeavour:

- to advance constantly the bounds of scholarship, building upon its proud traditions and strengths;
- to provide a comprehensive education, benchmarked against the highest international standards, designed to develop fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students, while extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community;
- to produce graduates of distinction committed to academic/professional excellence, critical intellectual inquiry, and lifelong learning, who are communicative and innovative, ethically, and culturally aware, and capable of tackling the unfamiliar with confidence;
- to develop a collegial, flexible, pluralistic, and supportive intellectual environment that inspires and attracts, retains, and nurtures scholars, students, and staff of the highest calibre in a culture that fosters creativity, learning and freedom of thought, enquiry and expression;
- to provide a safe, healthy, and sustainable workplace to support and advance teaching, learning and research at the University;
- to engage in innovative, high-impact and leading-edge research within and across disciplines;

- to be fully accountable for the effective management of public and private resources bestowed upon the institution and act in partnership with the community over the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge; and
- to serve as a focal point of intellectual and academic endeavour in Hong Kong, China and Asia and act as a gateway and forum for scholarship with the rest of the world.

## **Role Statement**

HKU:

- offers a range of programmes leading to the award of first degrees and postgraduate qualifications in subject areas including Arts, Science, Social Sciences, and Business and Economics;
- incorporates professional schools such as Medicine, Dentistry, Architecture, Education, Engineering and Law;
- pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;
- offers research postgraduate programmes for a significant number of students in selected subject areas;
- aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength;
- as an English-medium University, supports a knowledge-based society and economy through its engagement in cutting-edge research, pedagogical developments, and lifelong learning; in particular, emphasises whole person education and interdisciplinarity;
- 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;
- 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
- 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 Court is the supreme advisory body comprising University and lay members. Its purpose is to represent the wider interests of the communities served by the University.

The Council is the supreme governing body of the University, subject to the provisions of the University of Hong Kong Ordinance and the statutes. The Council has 24 members comprising University members and lay members, with a ratio of 1:2.

The Senate is the principal academic authority responsible for all academic matters and student welfare. It comprises mainly academic staff and some elected student representatives.

Under the Council and the Senate, different committees are responsible for matters concerning specific aspects of the University. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the President & Vice-Chancellor supported by a team of senior administrators, including the Provost & Deputy-Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Presidents & Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans of Faculties and Schools, and Directors of administrative and support departments.

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

HKU is a prestigious, research-intensive university with ten Faculties and a range of research centres and institutes fostering research collaborations and interdisciplinary studies. The University offers a comprehensive array of undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate programmes, spanning disciplines such as architecture, arts, business and economics, dentistry, education, engineering, law, medicine, science, and social sciences. Additionally, HKU has established partnerships with renowned global universities, providing programmes for dual and off-campus degrees to further enrich the range of offerings for students.

HKU SPACE provides a wide range of sub-degree programmes, professional courses, and continuing education programmes catering to the needs of society. This diverse offering ensures that individuals have access to quality education and professional development opportunities that align with their personal and career goals. HKU SPACE plays a vital role in meeting the educational needs of the community and contributing to lifelong learning in Hong Kong.

### **Staff and Student Numbers**

In 2023/24 AY, the University had 18 491 undergraduate and 19 506 postgraduate students. In total, 41% of its students were non-local, drawn from 84 jurisdictions. There were 2 179 teaching staff, including 1 267 professoriate staff drawn from 44 jurisdictions.

HKU SPACE had 197 teaching staff and an enrolment of 77 285 students in 2023.

### **Revenue**

The income for HKU proper in the financial year 2022/23 was HK\$12,964 million, of which HK\$6,517 million came from government subventions. The remaining HK\$6,447 million comprised tuition, programme and other fees, interest and net investment income, donations and benefactions, auxiliary service fees and other income.

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

The University of Hong Kong welcomes the quality audit exercise, which has provided a very constructive opportunity for us to reflect on our teaching and learning (T&L) provision at all levels. The critical self-review has reaffirmed our strengths and identified areas of enhancement and consolidation. We are very grateful to the Audit Panel for its time and effort in reviewing our education provision and quality mechanisms. We are extremely pleased to note its positive commendations and affirmations of our work. These positive comments are not only a recognition of our past efforts, but also a stimulus to further enrich our students' learning experience and prepare them for future challenges in a dynamic world.

The Audit Panel noted that the University's effective use of local and international benchmarking in the review of programmes is a key feature of our approach to setting, maintaining, and enhancing the standards and quality of our awards (paragraph 1.34). It found that effective systems are in place for managing academic standards and quality at all programme levels (paragraph 1.4), and that external engagement is our particular strength (paragraph 2.15). The University has built robust quality enhancement mechanisms, inviting reputable scholars in respective fields to provide inputs, for example, in our curriculum reviews and external examining of programmes. We are appreciative of the Audit Panel's recognition that "externality is comprehensively embedded within quality assurance processes, resulting in significant benchmarking locally and globally leading to enhancement of programmes and the curricula, and is a feature of good practice" (paragraph 2.20).

Also, the Audit Panel confirmed that the University has "a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for programme development and approval, monitoring, and review. The academic governance frameworks at the University and HKU SPACE are clear and identify levels of authority, accountability, and responsibility across the institutions" (paragraph 2.22). The mechanisms and "review arrangements are well understood and operate effectively in providing assurance of quality and standards as well as enhancing the curricula" (paragraph 2.21).

In terms of T&L enhancement, the Audit Panel concluded that "the University has demonstrated a strong commitment to the continuous review and enhancement of T&L in both face-to-face teaching and virtual T&L contexts in order to achieve its educational aims" (paragraph 3.10), and that "the arrangements are effective" (paragraph 3.1). Staff development and support are critical to enhancing the students' learning experience, especially in a globally connected world with fast changing technologies. To strengthen support and embrace T&L innovations, the University established a new Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (TALIC) in July 2023, through the amalgamation of three former units.

We are glad to note the Audit Panel's strong endorsement of TALIC's work, affirming that "the wide range of professional development activities organised by TALIC provide effective support for academic staff throughout their careers" (paragraph 3.4).

The Audit Panel also found the University's varied schemes to support teaching development and innovation and to promote pedagogical research have created impacts on many aspects of T&L (paragraph 3.6). Undoubtedly, TALIC will follow up on the Audit Panel's advice to explore a wider dissemination of our innovative pedagogic practice across the entire campus.

Assessment is an important area of T&L. The University is committed to fair, transparent and rigorous assessment. The Audit Panel found that "HKU and HKU SPACE's regulatory processes, including the respective external examining systems; academic regulations; and assessment processes, are robust" (paragraph 4.8). The Audit Panel acknowledged that TALIC's support on this front was informative and comprehensive, enhancing the diversification of assessment practice (paragraph 4.14). With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic and the explosive development of Generative AI in recent years, assessment in higher education has faced unprecedented challenges. It is encouraging to receive the Audit Panel's affirmation that the University and HKU SPACE are able to respond in a timely manner to challenges, as evidenced by our rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing online and alternative assessment and new technologies (paragraph 4.15).

The needs of students and the support provided to them are constantly evolving. The University has implemented several mechanisms to regularly collect feedback from students and take measures to address their needs and enhance their learning experience. We are delighted to receive the Audit Panel's confirmation about the effectiveness of the University's Student Support Framework, including student services, service providers, monitoring authorities and feedback mechanisms (paragraph 5.11). Our Centre of Development and Resources for Students offers extensive support services and development activities for students. Our academic advising system assists students in achieving their academic goals and identifies those who may be at risk. The employability of our graduates remains consistently high. At the start of 2023-24, we introduced a series of future readiness activities for first-year undergraduate students to help them adapt more quickly to university life and foster a sense of belonging to the University.

The theme of this audit exercise is the collection, analysis and usage of data. In this respect, the Audit Panel found that the University has "effective systems for the collection, analysis, and review of internal and external data for the management of academic quality and standards, and for evidence-based decisions designed to enhance the quality of T&L" (paragraph 6.16). The University collects data from stakeholders throughout the student journey and utilises them to continually improve our programmes. HKU SPACE has established a Quality Analytics Team to develop a more efficient student survey platform and reporting system. The University will continue to explore ways to enhance data collection and analysis, particularly with the aid of emerging technologies.

The recognition and positive feedback from the Audit Panel have provided us with immense encouragement and motivation to strive for further excellence. In a rapidly

evolving higher education landscape, there is no room for complacency. We have taken on the advice of the Panel and are actively reviewing the composition of the University and Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committees to ensure greater consistency (paragraph 1.9). More widely, we are carefully considering the Audit Report in its entirety to further enhance our provision.

In a highly competitive global environment, the University will take the lead in innovating and responding swiftly to challenges in higher education. The rapid advancements in powerful Generative AI present many exciting opportunities to enhance T&L and improve the student learning experience. We are steadfast in our commitment to providing students with world-class transformative education, and have full confidence that we will scale even greater heights with the concerted efforts of our teachers, students, staff, alumni and other stakeholders.



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

AAFYEC	Academic Advising and First Year Experience Committee
AASO	Academic Advising and Scholarships Office
AD/T&L	Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning)
AY	Academic Year
CEDARS	Centre of Development and Resources for Students
CC	Common Core
CCC	Common Core Curriculum
COIL	Collaborative Online International Learning
CPE&LL	Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning
DRPCs	Departmental Research Postgraduate Committees
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
GLEQ	Graduate Learning Experience Questionnaire
FHDC	Faculty Higher Degrees Committee
FTLQC	Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committees
HCMS	Human Capital Management System
HKQF	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework
ILOs	Institutional Learning Outcomes
ITS	Information Technology Services
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
LES	Learning Experience Survey
OBASL	Outcomes-based Approach to Student Learning
PLOs	Programme Learning Outcomes
PLOAPs	Programme Learning Outcome Assessment Plans
PLOARs	Programme Learning Outcome Achievement Reports
PMs	Performance Measures
QA	Quality Assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
QAE	Quality Assurance and Enhancement
QAT	Quality Analytics Team
QE	Quality Enhancement
RPg	Research Postgraduate

SD	Sub-degree
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SFTL	Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning
SMT	Senior Management Team
SIS	Student Information System
SLEQ	Student Learning Experience Questionnaire
SSCC	Staff-Student Consultative Committee
T&L	Teaching and Learning
TALIC	Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre
TDLEG	Teaching Development and Language Enhancement Grant
TLQC	Teaching and Learning Quality Committee
TPg	Taught Postgraduate
U21	Universitas 21
UAA	University Accountability Agreement
UEAs	University Educational Aims
Ug	Undergraduate
UGC	University Grants Committee
VP/R	Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)
VP/T&L	Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)

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

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Denis WRIGHT (Panel Chair)  
Emeritus Professor, Imperial College London

Professor Ann HOLMES  
Former Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Wolverhampton

Professor Cecilia CHUN  
Director, Centre for Learning Enhancement And Research, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor Kwok-yin WONG  
Vice President (Education), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

### **Audit Coordinator**

Dr Irene AINSWORTH  
QAC Secretariat

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

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

### **Mission**

The QAC's mission is:

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

### **Terms of Reference**

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

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

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

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

### **Ex-officio Member**

Professor James TANG Tuck-hong	Secretary-General, UGC
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### **Secretary**

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