

Report of a Quality Audit *of* Lingnan University



October 2016

Quality Assurance Council

**Quality Assurance Council
Second Audit Cycle**

**Report of a Quality Audit of
Lingnan University**

October 2016

QAC Audit Report Number 13

© Quality Assurance Council 2016

7/F, Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wanchai
Hong Kong
Tel: 2524 3987
Fax: 2845 1596

ugc@ugc.edu.hk

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

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

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	1
Background	1
Conduct of QAC Quality Audits	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
Summary of the principal findings of the Audit Panel	2
1. INTRODUCTION	7
Explanation of the audit methodology	7
Introduction to the institution and its role and mission	7
2. THE SETTING AND MAINTAINING OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS	8
3. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES	12
The liberal arts curriculum	14
Teaching and learning	15
4. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT	17
Outcome-based teaching, learning and assessment	20
Monitoring Student Achievement	21
5. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT	24
6. POSTGRADUATE PROVISION	28
Research postgraduate provision	29
Taught postgraduate provision	33
7a. AUDIT THEME: ENHANCING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE	35
Orientation	36
Integrated learning programme and whole-person education	36
7b. AUDIT THEME: GLOBAL ENGAGEMENTS: STRATEGIES AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS	38
8. CONCLUSIONS	43
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: LINGNAN UNIVERSITY (LU)	45
APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS	48

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMNS	50
APPENDIX D: LU AUDIT PANEL	51
APPENDIX E: QAC'S MISSION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP	52

PREFACE

Background

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

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

Conduct of QAC Quality Audits

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

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

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

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

Summary of the principal findings of the Audit Panel

- (a) The Audit Panel noted LU's detailed and comprehensive response to the 2010 QAC Quality Audit Report. It was apparent that the University has been committed to addressing the concerns raised in the report, although not all matters had been followed through to completion. The progress LU has made in responding to the commendations, affirmations and recommendations which resulted from the 2010 Quality Audit is discussed under the relevant headings of this report.
- (b) The University's commitment to setting and maintaining high academic standards is implicit in its mission statement, which states that its provision is informed by 'the best of Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions' and nurtures 'all round excellence in students'. LU makes few explicit references to the way in which it sets the academic standards of its awards, however, and the report suggests that it would benefit from articulating this explicitly in its academic quality policies and procedures. The report encourages the University to consider further enhancing confidence in its academic standards by benchmarking them against local, regional and international comparator institutions. Academic standards are set and maintained within the University's academic communities, through comprehensive and rigorous processes of programme approval and periodic review, which benefit from the critical appraisal of a variety of external experts. The Audit Panel noted that the expanded role of the External Academic Advisor (EAA), which has replaced the role of External Examiner, is adding value at departmental level. Under the

new regime, individual courses are submitted to EAAs on a rolling cycle, which varies in length from two to five years. The report encourages the University to ensure that moderation mechanisms are in place to check that academic standards are regularly and rigorously maintained and monitored at course level, as an integral part of the assessment process. The Audit Panel found evidence that the University's unequivocal position on academic integrity is not always explicitly or consistently applied within the student learning environment. The report endorses the steps the University is taking to safeguard the academic standards of its awards, by assuring itself that staff and students across the institution have a shared understanding of its requirements in relation to academic integrity and the procedures for dealing with infringements.

- (c) It was clear that students at LU benefit from a high quality learning environment distinguished by small classes and close relationships between staff and fellow students. The Audit Panel found much evidence of the University's commitment to achieve excellence through a liberal arts education and to provide a rich range of opportunities for whole-person development for its students. In light of these strategic priorities, the report endorses several courses of action that LU has already initiated. First, the University is taking steps to fulfil its commitment to increase interdisciplinary learning opportunities by resisting pressure to reintroduce early specialisation. Second, a science component is under development within the undergraduate (Ug) core curriculum as part of LU's commitment to provide a broad curriculum that delivers a liberal arts foundation and transferable skills. Third, the University is rebalancing teaching and research in order to sustain its mission as a liberal arts university. The primary purpose of these developments is to benefit the student learning experience at both Ug and postgraduate levels.
- (d) The Audit Panel found clear evidence that both staff and students are benefiting from the clarity an outcome-based approach to teaching and learning (OBATL) brings to the learning environment. It became apparent, however, that the transition to OBATL has not been completed, despite a recommendation in the 2010 Quality Audit. The report urges the University to ensure that OBATL is fully implemented throughout the University by the beginning of the academic year 2017/18. The Audit Panel noted the significant contribution the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) makes to the quality of learning and teaching in supporting such developments. The report draws attention to the mission-sensitive approach of the TLC to supporting the professional development of staff through a range of innovative initiatives.
- (e) LU's overarching objective is to produce graduates who leave the University with confidence, hope and pride in their academic achievements. The report notes the value added to the University's atypical student body, which is realised through substantial financial and human investment in small classes and broad exposure of students to international and service-learning

experiences. Graduate attributes have been identified at Ug, taught postgraduate (TPg) and research postgraduate (RPg) levels. Where OBATL has been implemented within taught programmes, course intended learning outcomes have been mapped on to programme intended learning outcomes, which are themselves aligned with the relevant set of graduate attributes. The report notes the wide and varied range of services designed to support student achievement, including orientation events, resourceful and pro-active library services, a well-managed and closely monitored academic advising system; and peer and employer mentoring programmes. Graduate destinations data and the testimony of employers and alumni indicate that the University's graduates are well prepared to hold their own in a competitive employment market.

- (f) The Audit Panel noted that two matters of direct relevance to student achievement were raised in the 2010 Quality Audit but have not been addressed. It became clear to the Audit Panel that some staff have made the transition to criterion-referenced assessment (CRA), while others continue to use norm-referenced assessment and grade to the curve. As a result, the final profile of an individual student may consist of an array of courses some of which have been assessed through criterion-referencing, others by norm-referencing. In the interests of comparability of academic standards and transparency of assessment for students, the report urges the University to ensure that CRA is fully implemented across the institution by the beginning of the academic year 2017/18. The Audit Panel ascertained that a 2010 Quality Audit affirmation concerning mandatory English language testing at exit point was not followed through. In light of data that show that employers and alumni still record low scores for the English skills of LU graduates, the report urges the University, with immediate effect, to identify and implement suitable instruments for the rigorous testing of standards of English language competency at entry and exit points.

- (g) The Audit Panel noted that LU's vision is enhancement-orientated, aspiring to excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university, distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement. Furthermore, enhancing the learning environment is named as one of LU's strategic priorities. The University invests time and effort into benchmarking itself against other institutions to identify opportunities for enhancement. The Audit Panel noted, however, that it is not always clear what aspects of its operation LU intends subjecting to comparative scrutiny or what metrics it will employ. The report suggests that the University develop systematic methodologies, with appropriate metrics, for benchmarking institutional performance, academic standards, curricula or student profile, as appropriate, with local, regional and international comparator institutions. During the visit to LU, the Audit Panel became aware of a number of examples of localised good practice that had not previously been drawn to its attention. The report encourages the University to identify and implement the most effective means of promoting enhancement of learning and teaching by disseminating good

practice across the institution consistently and systematically. LU gathers feedback from students, graduates, alumni and employers on the student experience and the attributes of its graduates, to good effect. The Audit Panel concurs with the view of senior managers, however, that LU is less effective at enhancing its reputation with those who lack first-hand experience of the institution. The report endorses the efforts being made to remedy this and promote to prospective students, teachers, parents and employers the distinctive characteristics of the education LU offers and the specific strengths of its graduates.

- (h) When considering postgraduate provision, the Audit Panel was mindful that the postgraduate community at LU represents a small proportion of a relatively small institution with a mission, vision and strategic priorities primarily focused on delivering a liberal arts undergraduate education. There was evidence that both TPg and RPg students are benefiting from the small classes and rich contact time with academic and support staff, in the same way as Ug students. Postgraduates can also share some of the advantages of hostel life, whether or not they are themselves residents. Some postgraduates, for whom LU may not have been first choice for undergraduate study, have made a positive choice to stay for postgraduate studies.
- (i) There was much evidence from RPg students, their supervisors and academic support staff that research postgraduate provision at LU is well founded, supported and resourced, offering students a high quality individualised learning experience. While quality assurance arrangements are generally sound, the Audit Panel found evidence that information about some key policies and procedures is not published where students might reasonably expect to find it. Supervisors were of the view that RPg students acquire the knowledge they need from a variety of sources, including their previous undergraduate experience and exposure to scholars. The report prompts the University to ensure that its policies on research conduct and academic integrity and on intellectual property rights are articulated coherently and communicated systematically and effectively to all staff and students who undertake research by the start of the academic year 2016/17. The University's graduate attributes are not as embedded in the RPg learning environment as they are at Ug and TPg levels. The report encourages the University to give further consideration to how its mission and vision can be appropriately contextualised within RPg provision. It was clear to the Audit Panel that the University is giving serious consideration to the challenges and opportunities presented by its commitment to a research postgraduate community. The report endorses the efforts the University is making to enhance the RPg learning environment by investing in a senior appointment and developing local, regional and international co-operation and networking.
- (j) The Audit Panel found evidence that the delivery of TPg programmes and the support offered to students is of high quality. Staff and TPg students are aware

of the TPg graduate attributes and LU's emphasis on whole-person development and know that Integrated Learning Programme (ILP) activities are open to them. They were confident, however, that the professional training elements of TPg programmes adequately fulfilled this function of promoting whole-person education.

- (k) The audit themes of *Enhancing the student learning experience* and *Global engagement: strategies and current developments* offered the Audit Panel the opportunity to focus more closely on these cross-cutting lines of enquiry. In considering the theme of *Enhancing the student learning experience*, the Audit Panel identified several initiatives worthy of note. The report highlights the ILP for UG students that supports the University's mission to provide quality whole-person education through an array of courses that empower students and optimise their co-curricular learning. It also notes the University's recent achievement of its key performance indicator (KPI) of full residence, which promotes a culture for learning in Living Learning Communities.

- (l) In considering the theme of *Global engagements: strategies and current developments*, the Audit Panel noted that internationalisation is one of the five key teaching and learning performance indicators selected by the University in response to a recommendation in the 2010 Quality Audit. The report draws attention to the clarity of LU's updated internationalisation strategy, which has its own KPIs, capable of providing the University with meaningful data about progress. The Audit Panel noted the range of international opportunities provided for students and the University's success in raising funds to support these activities. The report endorses the efforts the University is making to strengthen mechanisms for assuring the quality of the student learning experience in international exchanges. It also encourages the University to revise further the criteria for selection of exchange partners to assist it in achieving this goal.

1. INTRODUCTION

Explanation of the audit methodology

1.1 This is the report of a quality audit of Lingnan University (LU, the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on an Institutional Submission which was prepared by LU following a period of self-review and submitted to QAC on 2 November 2015. A one-day Institutional Briefing and Initial Meeting of Panel members was held on 4 December 2015 to discuss the detailed arrangements for the audit visit.

1.2 The Audit Panel visited LU from 26 to 28 January 2016. They met the President and senior managers including the deans; heads of department and programme directors; staff with responsibility for quality assurance of both taught and research programmes; teaching staff; those responsible for supervision of research postgraduate (RPg) students; academic support staff; a wide range of students, including undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research postgraduates; and external stakeholders including employers and alumni. The Audit Panel evaluates:

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

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

Introduction to the institution and its role and mission

1.3 Founded in 1999, LU is the youngest of the eight UGC-funded universities. It has a long history, however, which dates back to 1888 and spans both the Mainland and Hong Kong. It is the only liberal arts university within the UGC-funded sector.

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

- providing quality whole-person education informed by the best of Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions

- nurturing all-round excellence in students, including such attributes as critical thinking, broad vision, versatile skills, socially responsible values, and leadership in a changing world; and
 - encouraging faculty and students to contribute to society through original research and knowledge transfer.
- 1.5 In 2014/15, of LU's students, 2 532 are undergraduate (Ug), 415 are taught postgraduate (TPg) and 82 are RPg students. LU employs 439 teaching, research, support and other staff in its academic departments.
- 1.6 LU's vision is to excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement.

2. THE SETTING AND MAINTAINING OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS

- 2.1 LU is a self-accrediting University and is therefore responsible for the setting and maintenance of academic standards at undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degree levels. This report addresses academic standards from two perspectives: first, the academic standards set and maintained for programmes of study and their manifestation in the University's overarching graduate attributes, which are addressed in this section of the report; and second, levels of individual student achievement against those academic standards, as measured by assessment, which are addressed below under *Student Achievement*.
- 2.2 The University's commitment to setting and maintaining high academic standards is implicit in its mission statement, which states that its provision is informed by 'the best of Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions' and nurtures 'all round excellence in students'. Academic standards are defined in terms of the expected levels of achievement of LU students that reflect the acquisition of knowledge, the development of capability and the exercise of intellectual skills. LU makes clear statements about its approach to maintaining academic standards. While the University does make reference to the level descriptors of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, the Audit Panel found few other explicit references in the *Academic Quality Assurance (AQA) Manual* to the ways in which the University, as a self-accrediting body, sets the academic standards of its awards for verification through quality assurance processes such as validation, revalidation and assessment. Staff whom the Audit Panel met were not able to offer a clear account about how this occurs. The Audit Panel therefore encourages the University to articulate explicitly in its academic quality policies and procedures its approach to setting the academic standards of its awards.

- 2.3 The Audit Panel considered how effectively LU sets and maintains the academic standards of its awards by reviewing the key reference documents relating to the setting and maintenance of academic standards including the Vision, Mission and Core Values of LU; the *AQA Manual*; LU's Ideal Graduate Attributes; and a recent review of the University's policy on external examiners/external academic advisors. In addition the Audit Panel tested the management of academic standards via the processes of programme design, approval, monitoring and review by sampling relevant documents including admissions criteria and examples of annual programme and programme review reports.
- 2.4 During visits to the University, the Audit Panel discussed the ways that academic standards are set and maintained at university, department and programme levels with senior managers, deans, heads of department, programme directors and other staff with responsibility for quality assurance.
- 2.5 Senate exercises its overall responsibility for academic standards via two main committees: the Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) and the Postgraduate Studies Committee (PSC), which are the key committees responsible for setting and maintaining academic standards, for Ug and TPg programmes, respectively. In addition, LU states that academic standards are safeguarded at all levels and by several bodies, systems and processes including: departmental committees, programme committees, boards of examiners, the external academic advisor system, and processes for programme approval, monitoring and review. Staff at all levels whom the Audit Panel met were well aware of the University's structures, systems and processes and the part they played within them.
- 2.6 Academic standards, including admissions standards, are set and maintained within the University's academic communities, with reference to a range of external and internal reference points, which are considered below. Standards are approved, monitored and maintained through comprehensive and rigorous processes of programme approval, annual and periodic review and the assessment cycle, all of which benefit from the critical appraisal of a variety of external experts.
- 2.7 The Audit Panel was informed that reference is made to the relevant level descriptors within the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework and that the external reference points used by individual departments include similar programmes offered in other institutions and subject-based communities such as those within Business. Professional accreditation does not feature highly in the University, but within the Faculty of Business the professional standards of the accrediting body, Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, inform the academic standards of programmes, providing an extra

layer of assurance. Further evidence is gathered from external academic advisers (EAAs) and employers.

- 2.8 The Audit Panel noted that the expanded role of the EAA, which has replaced the role of external examiner, is adding value at departmental level. The EAA system is intended to provide an external and impartial check that internal standards are being fairly and consistently applied and that LU's standards of curriculum and assessment are comparable with similar degrees inside and outside Hong Kong. EAAs undertake an overview of assessment arrangements, sample student work, confirm that academic standards set by the Board of Examiners are appropriate and comparable and report to the President.
- 2.9 Individual courses are submitted to EAAs for approval of academic standards on a rolling cycle: this cycle can vary in length from two to five years. The Audit Panel was concerned to note that academic standards at course level may therefore be scrutinised only once in a five-year period. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University ensure that moderation mechanisms are in place to check that academic standards are rigorously maintained and monitored regularly at course level, as an integral part of the assessment process.
- 2.10 Internal points of reference for setting and maintaining academic standards include the statements on LU's Vision, Mission and Core Values and The Lingnan Ideal Graduate Attributes. The *AQA Manual* contains comprehensive policies, procedures and templates for key quality assurance processes such as admissions, programme approval, monitoring and review. LU has a clear regulatory framework for each level of award that is predicated primarily upon the outcome-based approach to teaching and learning (OBATL) and criterion-referenced assessment (CRA), though with some caveats. The process for programme approval is appropriate and fit for purpose. Examples of completed course outline/syllabus documents seen by the Audit Panel demonstrate that curriculum developers and course designers are adhering to the full and clear guidance provided in the *AQA Manual*. The Audit Panel noted that course intended learning outcomes are clearly mapped to programme intended learning outcomes, which are in turn aligned to graduate attributes.
- 2.11 The Audit Panel noted that there is no standard metric of credit defined for Master's degrees at the University and that discretion is given to departments to determine the credit value of individual Master's degrees, within a relatively broad range. While the programmes in question gave rise to no concerns about quality, the Audit Panel encourages the University to take steps to reassure itself that such variations do not constitute a threat to equity of learning opportunities and comparability of academic standards between programmes.

- 2.12 LU states that it places strong emphasis on academic integrity and that students committing plagiarism or other dishonest practices are penalised. The Audit Panel was informed by both staff and students whom they met that the University takes academic integrity very seriously and that very few cases of plagiarism have been detected. Ug and TPg students are reminded about academic integrity at the start of each course and submit their work via Turnitin. Under the University's procedures, all suspected infringements are to be forwarded to the Student Disciplinary Committee for consistency. A summary of the outcomes of cases is subsequently presented to AQAC or PSC, as appropriate. One such report seen by the Audit Panel supports the claim that few cases are detected.
- 2.13 The Audit Panel also noted that serious concerns about academic integrity had recently been raised and discussed at a meeting of the Sub-Committee on Teaching and Learning and discussed this with senior managers. By questioning a wide range of staff and students, the Audit Panel formed the view that the University's unequivocal position on academic integrity is not always explicitly or consistently applied within the student learning environment. The meeting with senior managers made it clear, however, that the University is already responding constructively to the full and frank discussion that had taken place. The Audit Panel therefore affirms the steps the University is taking to safeguard the academic standards of its awards by assuring itself that staff and students across the institution have a shared understanding of its requirements in relation to academic integrity and the procedures for dealing with infringements and to achieve greater consistency towards reporting and processing cases.
- 2.14 The Audit Panel noted that a key element in replacing the external examiner system with the external academic advisers scheme was to focus on the benchmarking of academic standards at programme and curriculum level. Beyond this, the Audit Panel found little evidence that LU gathers evidence and evaluates the effectiveness of its arrangements for setting and maintaining academic standards. Until recently, LU has been benchmarking against five international liberal arts institutions and has sought input from these benchmarking partners when, for example, developing the core curriculum, identifying best practice in the outcome-based approach to teaching and learning and establishing a degree auditing system. LU has published a document which outlines the rationale for benchmarking, assesses the progress made and identifies future directions. The Audit Panel encourages the University to take this opportunity to consider further enhancing confidence in the setting of its academic standards by benchmarking them against local, regional and international comparator institutions (see para 5.13 below under *Quality Enhancement*).
- 2.15 The Audit Panel reviewed comments provided by EAAs and found them both rigorous and generally positive. Feedback provided by the professional body,

AACSB was found to be fair, insightful and developmental, assisting the Faculty in enhancing its provision.

- 2.16 Mechanisms for systematic enhancement of programmes operate cyclically at yearly and five-yearly intervals. Each programme is reviewed annually by the relevant committee which systematically analyses data and identifies areas where modifications would improve the programme. Content and timings of annual reviews are clearly stated and there are appropriate mechanisms for approving minor and major curriculum changes. Periodic review, which occurs every five years and involves two or more external experts, is an evidence-based, rigorous, critical review which leads to revalidation. The process considers, *inter alia*, the attainment of academic standards and the achievement of intended learning outcomes (ILOs).
- 2.17 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University's academic standards are sound and well safeguarded through LU's committee structures by rigorous arrangements for programme approval, monitoring and review which are widely understood and generally effective. Confidence in academic standards could be further strengthened by benchmarking with comparator institutions, revisiting the credit structure of TPg programmes and by completing the task of ensuring that the University's position on academic integrity is understood and fully implemented across the institution.

3. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.1 LU's mission and vision both place a high value on the quality of learning opportunities. Its mission focuses on providing quality whole-person education informed by the best of Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions, while its vision is to excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university, distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship, and community engagement. More specifically, LU's approach emphasises the following key components. First, the University strikes a deliberate balance in the curriculum between breadth and depth, comprising 40% liberal arts studies and 60% discipline-specific training, respectively. Second, LU's commitment to deliver liberal arts education to a student body with a wide socioeconomic background requires the institution to provide substantial 'added value' through the learning experience: this is specifically supported by small class settings, hostel life, the Integrated Learning Programme (ILP), student services and international exchange (see para 4.5 below under *Student Achievement*). Third, internationalisation is employed as a means to enhance students' global awareness through study abroad and a diverse on-campus student body that includes non-local students (see para 7.18 below under *Global engagements*). Finally, LU aims to fulfil its strong commitment to civic engagement through service-orientated experiential learning (see para 7.8 below under *Enhancing the student experience*).

- 3.2 LU has deliberately chosen to rediscover its historical roots in the liberal arts, considering that this will enable it to turn its limitations in size and scope into strengths. The University is developing the profile of a niche player that distinguishes itself within the Hong Kong higher education sector and the region. Moreover, LU regards several components of the liberal arts model as particularly relevant for preparing students for the 21st century global context and locates itself within the revival of liberal arts education more broadly in Asia and elsewhere.
- 3.3 Two of the University's strategic priorities focus on clarifying the key elements of its liberal arts education and engaging selectively with other universities for benchmarking purposes, respectively. LU has recently identified four core values that underpin its mission and vision: a collegial community of learning and discovery for students and scholar-teachers; whole-person cultivation and all-round development; community engagement and social responsibility; and the Lingnan spirit. The Audit Panel considers that the clarity with which these values have been expressed will greatly assist the University in articulating and promoting the nature and benefits of its educational approach to both internal and external stakeholders (see paragraph 4.24 below under *Student Achievement*). There was evidence that these values are embraced by members of the LU community whom the Audit Panel met, including students, teaching staff, academic support staff and alumni. The Audit Panel noted, however, that a more restricted and utilitarian understanding of liberal arts as 'learning beyond the classroom' is sometimes applied to TPg provision, rather than one predicated on the critical thinking and interdisciplinarity that characterise those liberal arts institutions, alongside which LU aspires to stand.
- 3.4 In order to establish how effectively LU's approach to the quality of learning opportunities is working in practice, the Audit Panel scrutinised relevant key documents including the *AQA Manual*, the most recent University annual report (2014/15) and the criteria for promotion with substantiation for teaching staff. A variety of other documents provided by the University contained details about a range of teaching and learning initiatives including student assisted teaching; peer observation of teaching; a teaching mentoring scheme for new faculty; and podcasts and live webcasts of Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) workshops. Additional documentation and an Audit Trail were requested to enable the Audit Panel to establish how well LU is using business intelligence to assure and enhance the quality of student learning opportunities.
- 3.5 During both the Institutional Briefing day and the Audit Visit, the Audit Panel discussed LU's distinctive mission and the challenges it presents with the President and senior team. In separate meetings with student representatives, Ug, TPg and RPg students, the Audit Panel enquired about their experiences of the learning environment, the opportunities they have been offered and the

ways in which the views of students are taken into consideration. Discussions with academic managers, teaching and academic support staff included exploration of how they are embedding recent changes in learning and teaching.

The liberal arts curriculum

- 3.6 It was clear to the Audit Panel that LU considers carefully how best to operationalise its approach to delivering liberal arts education and in particular its goal of whole-person development through a variety of means. The University has deliberately opted to restrict its student intake, compared to the rest of the UGC-funded sector. This is designed to foster a liberal arts ethos through small class sizes and close staff-student relationships that allow for considerable interaction, both within and outside the classroom. In 2014, LU achieved its goal of full residential status, which was also the subject of an affirmation in the 2010 Quality Audit report. UG students are required to live on campus for at least two of their four years of study. Students whom the Audit Panel met commented positively on these aspects of the learning environment and, with certain reservations among RPg students (see paras 6.7 – 6.8 below under *Postgraduate provision*), regarded the scale of LU's operation as a distinct advantage. The broad-based curriculum provides both a liberal arts foundation and discipline-specific studies. Transferable skills are also acquired through a range of co-/extra-curricular activities, active service-learning, multi-faceted workplace experience, strong alumni and community support, and global learning opportunities.
- 3.7 Deployment of LU's liberal arts mission is paralleled by a relatively strong focus on professional training, in particular in the Faculty of Business. This emphasis contributes to ongoing discussions regarding the balance between depth and breadth in the curriculum, as represented by the relationship between disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning. One of the five educational performance indicators developed in response to a recommendation in the 2010 Quality Audit report focuses on the extent to which interdisciplinary studies enable students to develop a secure grounding in their chosen academic field(s) and an awareness of, and an experience in, possible cross-disciplinary applications. It was intended that achievement of this goal would be assisted by the introduction of broad-based admissions as part of the transition to the new four-year undergraduate degree. Broad-based admissions allow students (especially very young entrants who have completed only six years of secondary education) to orientate themselves before specialisation. A decision has recently been made, however, to introduce a hybrid model of admissions within the Faculty of Arts, whereby the majority of students will be admitted directly to their major while the rest will select their major a year later. The Audit Panel formed the view that this decision may put more pressure on curricular flexibility and breadth, which constitute a central aspect of the liberal arts model espoused by LU. In light

of this, the Audit Panel affirms the steps the University is taking to fulfil its commitment to increase interdisciplinary learning opportunities by resisting pressure to reintroduce early specialisation.

- 3.8 LU considers that a future-orientated version of liberal arts education must include a science component, in order to ensure that students acquire the knowledge and skills essential to be successful in the complex, technology-driven 21st century environment. The University also recognises that scope for expansion into the sciences is limited by lack of external and internal financial resources and insufficient student demand to justify a major pathway. Student representatives, whom the Audit Panel met, recognised science as an important element in a liberal arts education while understanding the challenge this presents for LU. A new Science Unit, established in 2014/15, plays a central role in the Science, Technology and Society cluster of credit-bearing courses within the core curriculum, to equip students with a firm grounding in statistics, knowledge of the scientific method, and technological literacy. These goals are also supported by the recently established IT Fluency Programme. These developments are still in very early development, making any assessment of their impact premature. The Audit Panel affirms the development of a science component within the undergraduate core curriculum as part of LU's commitment to provide a broad curriculum that delivers a liberal arts foundation and transferable skills.

Teaching and learning

- 3.9 The University is clear that while research is becoming increasingly important for funding purposes, teaching is LU's core business as a liberal arts institution and remains of paramount importance. The Audit Panel was informed that the teaching-research nexus has been an area of intense conversation at LU since the new President arrived in 2013. Following a recommendation in the 2010 Quality Audit that LU should clarify the relative weighting of achievements in research and teaching in the processes of staff appraisal, substantiation and promotion, teaching and research have now been rebalanced within the workloads of teaching staff and now carry an equal weight of 40%.
- 3.10 Members of the University at all levels are aware of the tensions created by competing demands on staff time to uphold LU's liberal arts mission while also holding their own with other institutions in respect of research. Some staff whom the Audit Panel met expressed the view that LU's workload model is too rigid and that greater flexibility could be facilitated by differentiated workloads. The provision of teaching development grants, which can provide remission from teaching to support research-informed teaching course development, is much appreciated. Others expressed the view that the historical emphasis on teaching at LU means that bringing the teaching-research nexus together is the only way research can progress. Several

measures are being taken to address the issues. For example, the University is exploring the possibility of introducing teaching professorships, is generating funding to support research initiatives and is revising its staffing plan with a view to supporting staff sabbaticals.

- 3.11 It was apparent to the Audit Panel that the teaching-research nexus is a live and urgent debate at LU but it remains unclear how research is currently informing and enriching the Ug and TPg learning experience. In light of this, the Audit Panel affirms the steps the University is taking to rebalance teaching and research in order to sustain its mission as a liberal arts university and encourages the University to articulate its strategic priorities and conceptualise its approach more explicitly.
- 3.12 In response to a recommendation in the 2010 Quality Audit report, LU has set five institutional key performance indicators (KPIs) to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness in achieving its goals in relation to the quality of learning opportunities. They address, respectively internationalisation, experiential learning, small classes, interdisciplinary courses and residential experiences. While some of the KPIs, for example internationalisation, are more highly developed than others, the Audit Panel found evidence that LU takes business intelligence seriously and uses it to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. In 2014/15, the University achieved its goal of 100% residency for students. Recently LU received external international recognition by being named as one of the top ten liberal arts universities in Asia.
- 3.13 The Audit Panel noted the significant contribution the TLC makes to the quality of learning and teaching by providing opportunities for teaching staff to evaluate and enhance their pedagogical skills. For example, staff with fewer than three years' teaching experience are required to undertake the Learning and Teaching Development Programme (LTDP) which is also open to more experienced staff on a voluntary basis. Other initiatives include the faculty teaching mentoring scheme; the online course, teaching and learning enhancement system 'for instructors to voluntarily conduct and devise their own online surveys to collect immediate and formative feedback from students at any time throughout a semester for the continuous improvement of course and teaching quality'; peer observation; live webcasting of TLC workshops; student peer learning facilitation; the student consultant programme; and the early alert system.
- 3.14 These developmental initiatives are generally formative in nature and voluntary, with the exceptions of the mandatory early alert system and the LTDP. Participation in the initiatives is variable: some have been discontinued and others are under review. The University states that time is needed to measure their effectiveness and that each will be monitored and measured regarding its effect on the quality of learning and teaching, with areas for improvement being identified. Participation in voluntary

developmental activities can enhance ratings influencing personnel decisions in regard to teaching performance and evaluation. The Audit Panel encourages the University to explore ways of integrating enhancement initiatives and broadening participation.

- 3.15 Teaching staff whom the Audit Panel met regarded these initiatives as a rich suite of opportunities through which they could, on a mostly voluntary basis, opt to access support by sharing good practice and engaging with mentoring and peer review. The TLC's approach was considered supportive, open and professional. There was a general consensus that the voluntary basis of most of these developmental activities fits well with LU's collegial tradition and the strong commitment to teaching quality that already exists across the institution. Of particular note is the student consultation programme, which creates a partnership between a member of the teaching staff and a pedagogical student consultant. This is much in demand and appreciated by those who have experienced it. Teaching Development Grants are seen as valuable support for the development of innovative approaches to teaching, such as interdisciplinary course design or technology-enhanced learning. The Audit Panel noted that the 2010 Quality Audit recommendation, which requires LU to articulate its distinctive strategic approach to teaching and learning in such areas as e-learning, has been implemented with detailed attention to the appropriate use of technology-enhanced learning in a learning environment that places a high value on face-to-face contact. The Audit Panel commends the mission-sensitive approach of the Teaching and Learning Centre to supporting the professional development of staff through a range of innovative initiatives.
- 3.16 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that students at LU benefit from a high quality learning environment distinguished by small classes and close relationships between staff and fellow students. It was evident that the University's leadership is conceptualising liberal arts at LU as a combination of the strengths of the Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions, based on a deep understanding of the history of these distinct but partially overlapping educational philosophies. The Audit Panel found much evidence of the University's commitment to achieve excellence through a liberal arts education and to provide a rich range of opportunities for whole-person development for its students.

4. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

- 4.1 The University states that its overarching objective is to 'produce graduates who leave the University with confidence, hope and pride in their academic achievements'. As part of its mission, LU is committed to providing 'quality whole-person education... nurturing all-round excellence in students, including critical thinking, broad vision, versatile skills, socially responsible values, and leadership in a changing world'. Student achievement is

measured through the assessment of students' curricular and co-curricular work against performance standards set for various types of programmes and activities.

- 4.2 The Audit Panel tested the University's approaches to recording, monitoring, evaluating and publicising students' achievement by requesting and examining documents and datasets that cover: students' qualifications on admission; student study skills support provided by academic programmes and other support units; summary reports on employers' surveys; data recording graduate destinations and graduate successes in the past three years; LU graduates' career achievements; students' self-rating on various attributes; and reports produced for committees at programme, Faculty and University levels, together with relevant extracts from minutes of various committee meetings.
- 4.3 In addition, the Audit Panel explored the attributes of graduates and their readiness for the labour market with employers and alumni and the value added to LU's atypical student body with senior managers. Senior managers, heads of departments, programme directors and teaching staff all participated in evaluative discussions about the academic advising system. Staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement of TPg and RPg programmes and academic support staff provided information about how the University measures and evaluates student achievement. Ug, TPg and RPg students shared their experiences of assessment, work-related learning experiences and careers advice while RPg students and supervisors talked about the ways in which graduate attributes can be achieved within and beyond the curriculum.
- 4.4 The Audit Panel found evidence that LU has taken proactive steps since the 2010 QAC Quality Audit to nurture its students and enable them to achieve the Lingnan graduate attributes. In order to accomplish its overarching objective, LU has made the strategic decision to keep its student body small so that it can provide a full residential campus life to its Ug students. In response to one of the affirmations in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit Report, LU is now requiring all of its Ug students to live on campus for a minimum of two years with compulsory hostel residence for all in their first year of study, while hostel residence is available but optional for TPg and RPg students.
- 4.5 The Audit Panel noted that the University has made good progress since the 2010 QAC Audit on the development of a core curriculum, which is monitored by the TLC with results disseminated to programmes and faculties. In meetings with various stakeholders during the audit visit, the Audit Panel found clear evidence that substantiates the University's claims to add value to its students' learning beyond formal and discipline-specific training. The wide-ranging co-curricular and experiential learning activities, including first year experience programmes, the ILP, hostel education, information skills

workshops and information technology skills courses, all contribute to the overall richness and success of the LU student learning experience. The Audit Panel noted how the 75-credit ILP, which has been a graduation requirement since 2001, operates as a form of student empowerment that strengthens LU students' civic engagement and social awareness.

- 4.6 Learning outside the classroom at LU takes a wide variety of forms. The Student Services Centre (SSC) is responsible for promoting students' whole person development by providing learning opportunities and support, as well as assessing students' generic skills. The SSC has a highly regarded Careers Team, which informs students via email of its career development programme and assists students in documenting their achievements appropriately. The SSC has developed a number of initiatives to help students start their career planning and preparation at an early stage. Business Intelligence is helping the University understand the challenges facing graduates, and thus assist in the planning and development of employer networks. Students commented favourably on the availability and usefulness of careers guidance and support. Employers and alumni whom the Audit Panel met talked enthusiastically about their participation in career mentoring programmes in which they are matched with students interested in a particular career path.
- 4.7 Students are encouraged to learn self-governance, leadership and organisational and communication skills through participation in student societies. The leadership enhancement programme, which encourages office-bearers to receive executive training under the ILP and provides recognition for their learning by experience, has been in full implementation since 2011. Training programmes for potential student leaders also have been strengthened.
- 4.8 The Audit Panel formed the view that the broad-based core curriculum, together with the compulsory ILP component, the closely monitored academic advising system, the structured hostel education programmes and service-learning opportunities designed to offer life-changing experiences, provide the basis of a distinctive liberal arts education, unique in Hong Kong, that offers LU students ample learning opportunities outside formal classroom learning. The Audit Panel commends the University for its effort in providing a wide and varied range of learning experiences and services designed to support student achievement.
- 4.9 The Audit Panel noted the socio-familial background of LU Ug students, 80% of whom are first generation university students, many of whom have transferred directly from community colleges and are often less confident and versatile than other Ug entrants. While other institutions in the UGC sector have a high percentage of first generation university students, the Audit Panel was reminded that LU is the only liberal arts institution in the sector and its student profile differs sharply from most liberal arts colleges elsewhere in the

world. In many other countries parents and students may more obviously connect to traditional liberal arts concepts and outcomes and bring with them more economic, social, and cultural capital. In light of this the Audit Panel commends the value added to the University's atypical liberal arts student body, which is realised through substantial financial and human investment in small class teaching and broad exposure to international and service-learning experiences.

Outcome-based teaching, learning and assessment

- 4.10 Following a recommendation concerning OBATL and CRA in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, the University developed assessment policies which are well understood by staff. The Audit Panel also noted that annual programme reports have commented on the progress made in implementing OBATL and CRA for several years. Development of a standard course outline/syllabus template for use by curriculum developers or course designers now ensures that each learning outcome is specifically referenced to an assessment assignment. Students and teaching staff whom the Audit Panel met confirmed that teachers have developed course learning outcomes, which are given to students during the first week of class. The Audit Panel was also informed that teaching staff are required to provide students with information on assignments and that 50% of teaching staff now use detailed assessment rubrics. The Audit Panel was informed that both staff and students consider OBATL and CRA useful in helping teachers develop more innovative assessment assignments, while grading student work against rubrics helps students understand where they have fallen short in their study.
- 4.11 The Audit Panel learned about the ongoing debate in the University on the full adoption of OBATL and CRA. Teaching staff are currently free to use their judgement in developing assessment tools, with no formal guidance at University level. While LU expects TPg programmes to adopt OBATL and CRA with associated assessment rubrics, there is no policy to enforce the adoption of OBATL and CRA. The Audit Panel noted that at present, only the Faculty of Business has fully adopted OBATL and CRA and follows the professional body's standards which map on to most, but not all, of the LU graduate attributes. The Faculty of Social Sciences has partially completed its migration to OBATL and CRA. Some staff in the Faculty of Arts, however, remain sceptical of CRA and believe that certain types of courses can only be assessed using norm referencing.
- 4.12 It thus became clear to the Audit Panel that the transition to OBATL and CRA has not yet been completed, despite a recommendation to do so in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit Report and the University remains reluctant to make OBATL and CRA mandatory. As a result, the final academic profile of an individual student could consist of an array of courses, some of which have been assessed by criterion-referenced assessment while others have been

norm-referenced and graded to the curve. The Audit Panel formed the view that, in the interests of comparability of academic standards and transparency of assessment for students, there is a pressing need for the University to deal decisively with this matter. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University implement OBATL and CRA fully, throughout the University by the beginning of the academic year 2017/18.

Monitoring Student Achievement

- 4.13 Examination of documentation about student learning and achievement provided evidence of systematic review and analysis in a variety of forms including: course teaching and learning evaluation (CTLE), core curriculum evaluation, graduate exit surveys and employers' surveys.
- 4.14 The Audit Panel noted LU's practice of inviting students to rate themselves on various attributes at both entry and exit point. For instance, students are asked to evaluate their attributes in the first year student survey and in the graduate exit survey. The mandatory CTLE exercise and the core curriculum evaluation exercise provide LU with student feedback on student learning and achievement of various attributes. Based on the data provided, it is clear that students' overall satisfaction ratings are relatively high for study skills support. Of the 19 abilities listed, the highest percentage improvements in the past three years are: computer literacy (+21.4%), English language ability (+20.7%) and time management (+16.1%), as reported by the University. The Audit Panel considered this mechanism an informative and useful contribution to assessing students' achievement of learning outcome.
- 4.15 Reports of graduate exit surveys, 2013 - 2015, indicate that respondents have been consistently positive about the close interaction between students and teachers and endorsed the 'soft skills and applied skills/knowledge learned from the major courses'. The Audit Panel noted, however, that graduates identify problem-solving skills and the relatively limited range and number of major and general education courses as areas that need improvement.
- 4.16 The Audit Panel was keen to explore how the strengths of LU graduates are perceived by employers, given the liberal arts approach of the University. The following aspects were of particular interest: opportunities for students to cross the boundaries between the disciplines and programmes, the impact of the new four-year degree, the relevance of liberal arts for the labour market and the fact that most alumni are classified as 'business professionals'.
- 4.17 Fresh graduate destinations are tracked by the Student Services Centre and a close look at the data provided shows a high engagement rate (over 94%) in the past three years, with over 85% securing a job within three months of graduation. The number of fresh graduates competing for promising positions in reputable local and international companies is on the rise, as reflected in

Employment Situation Highlights for 2012-2015. According to the annual graduate employment survey, available online, over half of LU graduates employed full time are engaged in careers relevant to their studies. Alumni and employers whom the Audit Panel met confirmed that there is strong support provided for student learning through internships and service-learning. All present commented favourably on the proactive approach to learning adopted by LU students and were impressed by their positive work attitude. They stated their view that LU students stand out because they take initiatives to learn and are ready to embrace the power of change.

- 4.18 Employers and alumni whom the Audit Panel met during the Audit Visit further attributed the success of LU graduates to the latter's passion to learn and serve, eagerness to excel, willingness to work harder and longer and make sacrifices. They praised LU graduates for their good leadership and communication skills. All acknowledged the importance of exchange opportunities and international internships which prepare students well as generalists pursuing a career in fields of specialists and give them a global perspective. The Audit Panel was also informed that both local and Mainland LU graduates are willing to explore alternative career paths or career options and possess a unique set of skills that the employers attribute to the balance between academic training and international exposure.
- 4.19 The value added to LU's atypical student body is clearly reflected in the rising number of fresh graduates competing for promising positions in reputable local and multi-national companies. The Audit Panel concluded that graduation destination data and the testimony of employers and alumni indicate that LU graduates are generally well prepared for the highly competitive employment market in Hong Kong.
- 4.20 Employers' surveys, which are conducted biennially, show that overall satisfaction with LU graduates is generally on par with that with other HK university graduates. Direct feedback from employers and alumni whom the Audit Panel met demonstrated broad agreement on the value and specific virtues of LU's liberal arts education: graduates are good generalists with a broad range of soft skills (including communication and foreign languages), able to manage a team of specialists and to work in a multicultural context. Graduates typically have an open attitude, are eager to learn, are creative and able to cross disciplinary boundaries. This adaptability is regarded as key for many jobs in the rapidly changing economy for which nobody can be perfectly prepared. Eagerness to excel and motivation to work hard are combined with a strong sense of responsibility and the willingness to demonstrate leadership. There was also a broad agreement that these qualities in LU graduates can be attributed to LU's distinguishing approach to teaching and learning: a broad curriculum and small classes with intensive staff-student interaction, and the exposure of students to international experience and civic engagement /service-learning.

- 4.21 Employers whom the Audit Panel met reported that LU graduates are as good as any Hong Kong students they hire in terms of their quantitative skills, numeracy, and their command of both English and Putonghua. However, employers' survey data show that LU graduates are more highly rated by local employers than by Mainland and multinational companies. Furthermore, employers and alumni still score relatively low on satisfaction with level of English. The 2010 QAC Quality Audit affirmed the steps LU was to taking to mandate rigorous testing of students' English (and Putonghua) language skills at entry and exit from the University but this has not been followed through adequately, nor has LU any intention of doing so. The Audit Panel was not convinced that the alternative measures adopted are fit for purpose: for example, visits by faculty from highly ranked US partner institutions are not capable of compensating for lack of rigorous language testing. Standards for the assessment of English proficiency of local students in courses are not set, and teachers' expectations in this regard may be lower for local students than for international students. The Audit Panel formed the view that English language competence remains an issue of direct relevance to student achievement. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University, with immediate effect, identify and implement suitable instruments for the rigorous testing of standards of English language competency, at entry and exit points, in line with the affirmation made in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit Report.
- 4.22 The Audit Panel found evidence that while policies and procedures for recording and analysing student achievements are in place, variations persist in practice. Students' academic achievements are collected by the TLC and shared with Faculties and programmes. All programmes are required to submit a self-critical annual programme report which includes evaluation of students' overall academic performance. Close examination of the reports and the minutes of a sample of faculty board meetings reveals variations between Faculties and programmes in the forms of analysis undertaken and the approaches adopted to addressing problems and/or enhancing practice by faculties and programmes.
- 4.23 The Audit Panel formed the view that while the TLC has been diligent in collecting data, such information has not been fully utilised by Faculties and programmes to generate constructive and systematic analyses of student performance and achievement and facilitate enhancement. One Faculty was aware of the issue and suggested that 'data difference, if any, should be discussed at faculty level in any future planning or noted for monitoring purpose in future years'. The Audit Panel endorses the recommendation made by one faculty board that 'any changes made to the programmes or particular courses to address any of the findings from surveys need to be recorded' and urges the University to make this a regular/general practice across all Faculties and programmes, including the academic support units.

- 4.24 Based on the extracts of SSC meeting notes since 2013, the Audit Panel concluded that LU is aware of the importance of ‘closing the quality assurance loop’ and recommendations have been made to publicise students’ success stories from different perspectives. Despite this, such success stories remain rather scattered amidst a wide variety of University publications such as annual reports, newsletters, press releases, press interviews, *Chronicle* and Corporate Brochures, LU YouTube Channel, LU FaceBook Fans Page, LU homepage rolling banners, or LU monthly e-news. The Audit Panel urges LU to make student achievements easily available to the general public who may be interested in the added-value or desirable learning outcomes of a fine liberal arts education in the region and encourages the University to establish and implement rigorous and systematic processes for recording, publicising, monitoring, evaluating and enhancing student achievement. In this context, the Audit Panel affirms the efforts the University is already making, for example through the production of the *Lingnan University Annual Report 2014/15*, to promote the distinctive characteristics of LU’s liberal arts education and the specific strengths of its graduates to prospective students, teachers, parents and employers.
- 4.25 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that much value is added to LU’s student body through the University’s distinctive educational offerings and its institution-wide commitment to enabling student achievement within and beyond the classroom. There is still much room for improvement, however, and urgent action is required in relation to the full implementation of OBATL and CRA and the reinstatement of mandatory English language testing. All stakeholders will benefit from a renewed effort to discover ways to promote LU more effectively as a preferred university of choice in Hong Kong among prospective students, teachers, parents and the general public, including employers.

5. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

- 5.1 LU’s vision is enhancement orientated, aspiring to excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement. Furthermore, enhancing the learning environment is named as one of LU’s five strategic priorities.
- 5.2 The University does not have a discrete policy for enhancement; its approach is to identify major University enhancement initiatives and to embed enhancement within relevant policy and procedural documents.
- 5.3 In order to establish how effectively LU’s strategic approach is working in practice, the Audit Panel scrutinised relevant documentation including the *AQA Manual*; the *Committee Handbook*; the *Lingnan University Annual*

Report 2014/15; summary reports of various surveys together with relevant extracts from committee minutes; and summaries of OBATL initiatives.

- 5.4 In addition, the Audit Panel discussed how the University gathers and responds to feedback with both teaching and academic support staff and with students at all levels. The enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment through OBATL and CRA was discussed with senior management and both teaching and academic support staff. The Audit Panel discussed the University's KPIs and the use of business intelligence with senior managers, other users and the Library staff and others who produce and manage the data. Benchmarking of various aspects of LU's provision was explored with a wide range of stakeholders including senior managers, deans and staff with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement of taught and research programmes.
- 5.5 Important responsibilities for quality enhancement are invested in the Sub-Committee on Teaching and Learning, which reports to AQAC, and has been given the following enhancement-related terms of reference:
- To promote outcome-based education and to enhance commitment at all levels of the University to an outcome-based approach to teaching, learning and assessment.
 - To monitor teaching and learning quality enhancement activities, including those related to recognition of exemplary teaching, and the evaluation of course teaching and learning quality.
 - To oversee plans/projects relating to teaching and learning enhancement supported by UGC grants.
 - To receive reports from the TLC on the enhancement of teaching and learning.
- 5.6 The Audit Panel found evidence that the University has been making great efforts to make OBATL and CRA work for LU since the 2010 QAC Quality Audit. The Centre for the Advancement of Outcomes-based Education, which is housed in the TLC, is responsible for providing workshops, newsletters and a repository of articles and books, as well as funding for initiatives in OBATL. The Audit Panel heard first-hand reports on the appointment of OBATL coordinators in each programme, the employment of external OBATL experts in some programmes or Faculties and the recognition of internal OBATL champions, as initiatives adopted to facilitate the transition to OBATL. LU operationalises its approach to enhancement through a range of instruments and mechanisms embedded in quality assurance processes and learning and teaching practices.
- 5.7 Excellence in teaching is rewarded over and above the biennial Teaching Excellence Award Scheme (TEAs). For example, the Distinguished Teacher

Award recognises those who have been awarded TEAs three times; another award, Outstanding Teaching Award for Early Career Teachers, has also been introduced. The Audit Panel observed that teaching performance benefits from the direct attention of the leadership at the highest levels: for example, data on teaching performance of potential new members of staff are made available to the President during the recruitment process.

- 5.8 Annual programme review reports require an analysis of programme and course evaluation and feedback from students. A major source of the former is the graduate survey, which is mandatory upon graduation; the latter relates primarily to CTLE scores. Staff-student consultation committees (SSCCs) are charged with the responsibility of providing feedback to students on changes made to courses and teaching, after taking into account their input through the CTLE exercise. Students are also encouraged to forward any views on the CTLE to the Chair of AQAC/PSC for consideration by the committee. Student representatives whom the Audit Panel met indicated that they would welcome some form of training for their roles: learning is currently done ‘on the job’ and by peer-to-peer interaction.
- 5.9 Scrutiny of annual and five-yearly programme review reports, minutes of meetings and student comments confirmed that student feedback is taken seriously and acted upon. The Audit Panel noted several examples of change in direct response to student feedback. Students at all levels whom the Audit Panel met also expressed satisfaction with their opportunities for feedback and representation, and with the University’s response to their concerns.
- 5.10 In response to a recommendation in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, LU has extended the range of methods it uses to measure the quality of teaching with a view to avoiding over-reliance on surveys of students as the main source of data. The Library plays a key role in this respect and notably in generating and disseminating data on LU’s performance, against its KPIs. It does so effectively, in cooperation with the Information Technology Services Centre and TLC. The Audit Panel formed the view that the LU has developed a strong and convincing approach to business analytics: the data-warehouse the Library has built and maintains provides feedback to Faculties and departments to inform evaluation and strategic planning.
- 5.11 LU gathers feedback systematically from employers and alumni on the outcomes of the student learning experience, employment opportunities, and career success. This is mainly achieved through biennial surveys. In addition employers join programme advisory boards and both employers and alumni are involved in giving guest lectures and mentoring current students about their future careers.
- 5.12 Conscious of its position as the only liberal arts university in Hong Kong, LU expends considerable time and energy benchmarking itself against

international standards and good practice in the liberal arts. Following a recommendation in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, LU identified five international institutions for institutional benchmarking purposes. The University acknowledges that its initial selection of benchmarking partners included some institutions that did not really fit the criteria in terms of mission and/or status. As a result, benchmarking partners are being changed. At present, benchmarking is done both locally and internationally and involves teaching and learning and research. LU also benchmarks against aspirant institutions that are part of the Global Liberal Arts Alliance (GLAA).

- 5.13 Benchmarking at LU is in flux at the moment with the university community as a whole trying hard to rationalise its selection criteria. Although some gains have been made through benchmarking activity (see paras 2.14 and 2.17 above under *Setting and maintaining academic standards*) benefits have not been commensurate with the efforts expended. The Audit Panel formed the view that such benefits are unlikely to be realised until LU clarifies its focus and identifies benchmarking methodologies appropriate to its purposes. Therefore the Audit Panel recommends that the University develop systematic methodologies with appropriate metrics for benchmarking academic standards, institutional performance, curricula and/or student profile with local, regional and international comparator institutions. In this context, the Audit Panel encourages the University to diversify by adding Asian liberal arts institutions to what has hitherto been an exclusively US-orientated list of potential partners.
- 5.14 The Audit Panel was informed that Senate has discussed benchmarking and set up a Task Force to explore deep collaboration, which is generally considered quite difficult. The University's emphasis is now on quality and relevance, rather than on the quantity of partnerships. For example, the Undergraduate Admissions Committee would make reference to the admission standards of local comparator institutions when setting LU's admission criteria while at validation admission standards for a particular programme are determined by referring, *inter alia*, to those of benchmarked comparator programmes. The Audit Panel noted that selection criteria for benchmarking partners are now more stringent, making it possible for LU to terminate some less appropriate partnerships.
- 5.15 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the University's commitment to quality enhancement is clearly demonstrated in the ways it rewards high quality teaching and gathers and responds to feedback from students, graduates, alumni and employers. Annual and five-year course and programme review procedures draw thoroughly on such data and are enhancement-orientated. Business intelligence augments these data and tracks LU's progress against the KPIs it has set itself. Given the distinctive mission of LU as a liberal arts university, the Audit Panel concluded that the

University rightly sets great store on benchmarking itself against similar local, regional and international institutions and would benefit greatly from clarifying, rationalising and focusing its approach.

6. POSTGRADUATE PROVISION

- 6.1 The University makes relatively few explicit statements about its mission, vision and values in relation to RPg provision. The purposes of TPg provision are more clearly articulated as contributing to LU's larger objectives, some of which could also apply to RPg provision. These include: promotion of lifelong learning; establishing a culture of vibrant research and discussion; interacting with sectors of the community; and meeting the needs of society by providing higher level education for graduates in related disciplines.
- 6.2 The University's core values related to whole-person education apply to students at all levels and graduate attributes have been identified for Ug, TPg and RPg students. As a liberal arts university, LU has historically emphasised Ug teaching and learning, which presents a range of challenges in respect of postgraduate provision.
- 6.3 In considering postgraduate provision at LU, the Audit Panel was mindful that the scale of the operation is small, not only in relation to the postgraduate provision of other UGC-funded universities but also in relation to the scale of LU's Ug provision, which is also comparatively small. The University's total postgraduate student population stood at 476 on 30 September 2015, a slight decrease compared to 2014/15: 77 RPg were registered for the degrees of Master of Philosophy (MPhil) or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in the three Faculties on UGC-funded programmes; and 399 students were registered on eight self-financed TPg programmes offered by the Faculties of Business, Arts and Social Sciences.
- 6.4 The Audit Panel discussed LU's strategic approach to the development of postgraduate provision with senior managers. The quality of postgraduate provision was discussed in separate meetings with research and taught postgraduate students from different Faculties and programmes and research student supervisors. The Audit Panel met staff involved in the delivery and management of TPg programmes alongside those involved in Ug programmes. A range of issues were discussed in a meeting that included staff responsible for the quality assurance of taught and research postgraduate programmes; the services targeted specifically at postgraduate students were explored with academic support staff.
- 6.5 Relevant regulations, policies, practices and guidelines were examined including the *Guidebook for Research Postgraduate Students, Regulations*

Governing Research Postgraduate Studies and Regulations Governing the Format of Theses, and the Management Handbook for TPg Programmes. Further information was viewed online, including departmental and programme websites. The Audit Panel also requested and scrutinised additional information, including committee minutes, reports to committees and a range of data.

Research postgraduate provision

- 6.6 The most recent Academic Development Proposals provide the rationale for RPg provision in relation to the University's strategy, mission and vision. While the number of RPg students has increased moderately over the years, it remains relatively small in keeping with the University's liberal arts mission to focus on UG education. The Audit Panel noted that the relatively small community of RPg students and the modest research base were not perceived as a concern: students and supervisors considered there were sufficient systems and procedures to secure an appropriate research environment, particularly in view of the opportunities for collaboration with, and the benefits of research support from, other local universities and the increasing opportunities for international collaboration. Students emphasised easy access to and strong interactions with staff and small class sizes for courses as positive features.
- 6.7 Beyond this, the Audit Panel noted that the liberal arts concept plays virtually no role in the learning experience of RPg students. Senior managers, supervisors and RPg students all reflected that research postgraduates can feel that they are unsuccessfully competing for attention with UG students, who remain the University's priority.
- 6.8 The PSC is concerned with quality assurance issues and the learning environment pertaining to postgraduate studies. Each Faculty has a Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee (RPSC) which is responsible to the PSC for issues relating to RPg student admissions, studentships, progression and graduation, as well as the appointment of RPg student supervisors. Committee minutes and reports, scrutinised by the Audit Panel, demonstrate that the University is operating a robust system of quality assurance and enhancement.
- 6.9 Arrangements for supervision at LU are well founded and operate effectively. Upon admission, each MPhil student is assigned a supervisor (with one or more co-supervisor(s) where appropriate); PhD students are assigned a chief supervisor and at least one co-supervisor. RPg students and supervisors whom the Audit Panel met were generally aware of, and confirmed adherence to, relevant policies and practices that underpin RPg student education and supervision. The Audit Panel noted that TLC offers a workshop within the LTDP aimed at RPg students and supervisors, although it was not clear

whether attendance by staff who are new to the role of supervisor is mandatory. Students spoke enthusiastically about the quality of their relationships with their supervisors and the amount of time they devoted to supporting them.

- 6.10 A wide range of information to support RPg students is provided in several documents. These variously set out, *inter alia*, the requirements for the following: supervision; RPg student training and development; progress monitoring and assessment; ethical review; information on taking courses at LU and on cross-institutional course/subject enrolment at other UGC-funded institutions; information on the format of theses and on financial assistance. The Audit Panel noted, however, that the University's policies on research conduct and academic integrity and on intellectual property rights are not included in key documents and are therefore not readily accessed. Supervisors and students whom the Audit Panel met showed limited awareness of these policies and their location. Documentary evidence presented to the Audit Panel confirmed that information and guidance on these topics is distributed across a range of documents and difficult to assimilate as a whole. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University ensure that its policies on research conduct and academic integrity and on intellectual property rights are articulated coherently and communicated systematically and effectively to all staff and students who undertake research by the start of academic year 2016/17 (see also para 2.13 above under *Setting and maintaining academic standards*).
- 6.11 In keeping with its emphasis on teaching and learning, the University provides training for RPg students to prepare them for their roles as teaching assistants (TAs). The LTDP became mandatory in 2015/16 for all PhD students who need to engage in teaching activity and for those MPhil students who are expected to serve as tutors responsible for running tutorials on their own. TAs indicated a range of support mechanisms for their roles: those who assess and grade UG student work agree rubrics with course instructors and receive course outlines that map assessments to intended learning outcomes; moderation of TAs' marking is undertaken; and examination scripts are marked by multiple markers to ensure appropriate standards are applied. These mechanisms are detailed within guidelines dedicated to TAs and are regarded as a feature of good practice by the Audit Panel.
- 6.12 The LTDP is complemented by a limited range of development workshops and seminars for postgraduate students; and by Faculty-based initiatives designed to create a supportive learning environment, such as the Faculty of Arts' Postgraduate Salon of the Arts. Academic units at departmental and/or faculty level are encouraged to enhance postgraduate learning beyond the immediate needs of students' research by organising activities such as reading groups, workshops, and directed readings as they deem appropriate, for biennial reporting to the PSC. RPg students can also take TPg courses at LU

that relate to their research studies, and may attend relevant courses at other Hong Kong universities. RPg students whom the Audit Panel met appreciated the personalised support provided by the library and other support services.

- 6.13 The University recognises its limited capacity to offer a comprehensive on-site RPg student training programme due to a lack of critical mass and students are encouraged to benefit from networks outside LU. Collaboration is considered key to the University's success in enhancing the RPg student learning environment. A specific responsibility of the relatively newly-appointed Vice-President is to develop RPg provision. An inter-university research platform to promote comparative international research and postgraduate studies, for international benchmarking and self-enhancement, was launched in 2015/16. A programme of events has been offered since September 2015, although the Audit Panel found awareness of this initiative limited.
- 6.14 Although yet to be implemented, the Audit Panel noted that RPg scholarship procedures are in place that provide for PhD students to undertake a six-month research visit at an overseas institution, with PhD students from overseas institutions joining LU as exchange students for six months. Students will be co-supervised by supervisors from both the home and host institutions.
- 6.15 The student learning experience for RPg students is enriched by opportunities to attend and/or present at international conferences and a further extension to this provision has recently been secured by the new Vice President via an agreement with a consortium of European universities. This arrangement is intended to enhance the RPg student experience and extend course provision, for example in research methodology, both abroad and on the home campus. Students whom the Audit Panel met reported that they had already benefited from attending and presenting at international conferences with financial support from the University, which they welcomed.
- 6.16 The Audit Panel formed the view that the University is giving serious consideration to the challenges and opportunities presented by a small research student community. The Audit Panel affirms the University's efforts to enhance the RPg student learning environment by its investment in a senior appointment with responsibility in this area and by the development of an array of local, regional and international networks, opportunities and initiatives.
- 6.17 The University systematically gathers feedback from RPg students on the quality of their learning experience. The Audit Panel noted evidence of changes made as a direct consequence of such feedback. RPg students whom the Audit Panel met expressed satisfaction with the effectiveness of the mechanisms for student feedback and representation. Faculty RPSCs collect

information on additional activities organised at Faculty and departmental level: this is presented to RPSCs for comment before submission to the University PSC.

- 6.18 The PSC is charged with tracking the placement of PhD and MPhil graduates, to better understand the impact and contributions of the respective programmes. A graduate exit survey among MPhil/PhD graduates is conducted each year to collect feedback on their studies at LU. Various measurements provide the University with confidence that its MPhil/PhD graduates achieve the intended learning outcomes: these include completion times and rates, research output and graduate destinations. The University (from 2015-16) conducts regular surveys of MPhil/PhD alumni every four or five years, better to track the career pathways of graduates.
- 6.19 The University has indicated its readiness to accept a modest increase in the number of RPg students, given its good track record in delivering quality RPg education. Expansion by offering joint degrees with appropriate partner institutions is under consideration. As the University's RPg graduate attributes are not as embedded in the learning environment as they are at Ug and TPg levels, LU is encouraged to give further consideration to how its mission and vision can be appropriately contextualised within RPg provision. In light of this, the Audit Panel affirms the decision to conduct an employers' survey specifically for RPg graduates from 2016, to collect more systematic data on employers' views and feedback, as part of ensuring the continual monitoring and enhancement of RPg programmes and achievement of RPg graduate attributes.
- 6.20 PSC conducted an overall review of RPg programmes in 2014. The review highlighted LU's success in RPg provision in regard to securing additional PhD places via the competitive Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme (HKPFS); the diversity of applicants and students admitted under the HKPFS; and the performance of LU's RPg students in courses taken at other UGC-funded institutions. The Audit Panel noted that the review also led to strengthened quality control in RPg admissions; improved training in teaching through the LTDP; and enhancements to the postgraduate learning environment by encouraging departments and Faculties to develop a culture of organising activities beyond the curriculum.
- 6.21 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that RPg provision at LU is offering students a high quality learning experience in which close and supportive relationships with supervisors, small class sizes, personalised student services and creative approaches to collaborating with other local, regional and international institutions compensate for any disadvantages arising from the small scale of the operation and the University's primary focus on Ug education.

Taught postgraduate provision

- 6.22 The University's strategic approach to TPg provision relates to its social responsibility to provide opportunities to those seeking to deepen their education. The small portfolio of self-financed taught postgraduate programmes has developed "bottom up" and complements the UGC-funded UG programmes to meet the needs of learners from a broad cross-section of society. The University considers the holder of a first degree is no longer sufficiently competitive at the workplace locally and internationally. LU's TPg programmes therefore are designed to provide an essential avenue for UG students to further their studies. They are also designed to benefit publicly-funded UG and RPg students by extending the provision of available courses and enhancing the University's reputation. As the student numbers of self-financed TPg programmes are not capped, the University may consider expanding provision, although the Audit Panel was not aware of a clear strategy to do so at the time of the audit visit.
- 6.23 The liberal arts concept is more relevant to TPg than to RPg provision, not least because of the central role of teaching and learning in TPg programmes. TPg students whom the Audit Panel met, like their RPg counterparts, acknowledged the benefits of small size classes and intensive staff-student interaction. They also commented enthusiastically on hostel life as a living learning community with an international character and considered that this is conducive to an open mind and the acquisition of intercultural skills. Interdisciplinarity is not prominent in the TPg experience and whole-person education is considered by TPg students as an aspect of UG education. TPg provision is distinguished by its focus on the application of learning in the workplace.
- 6.24 The procedures for approval of new TPg programmes, set forth in the *AQA Manual*, require the specification of 'educational and relevant aims and intended learning outcomes of the programme, expressed, as appropriate, to reflect knowledge, attitude and skills (e.g. analytical and communication skills), the intellectual and imaginative development of the student' and that 'particular emphasis be placed on what students are expected to learn'.
- 6.25 The University's expectation that TPg programmes employ OBATL and CRA is effectively work in progress. The requirements for programme and course design, and the guidance provided to assist staff in writing and assessing ILOs are clear and helpful. The *AQA Manual* provides a standard template for a course syllabus, to include the learning outcomes and how these would be measured, together with reference material on writing and measuring ILOs. TPg programme information provided online is variable, however, with inconsistent references to aims, objectives, ILOs and TPg graduate attributes. Nevertheless, TPg students whom the Audit Panel met confirmed that adequate information about their courses and programmes was provided from

the outset, including details of ILOs, grading schemes and graduate attributes. The University is encouraged to ensure that programme and course information approved by the relevant committee(s), and particularly that which relates to aims, ILOs and assessment, is provided consistently on relevant websites as well as in documentation made available to students.

- 6.26 Information to support TPg students' studies is generally provided via departmental handbooks and during orientation events. While the Audit Panel has no reason to doubt the quality of that information, it was not clear how the University ensures that it is consistent and fit for purpose across departments and Faculties. The Audit Panel encourages the University to address this matter.
- 6.27 The *AQA Manual* provides detailed information on the requirements for annual and five-yearly review of all taught programmes. Sample review reports and related committee minutes demonstrate a rigorous, robust and effective process of quality assurance and enhancement that results in the continued relevance of taught programmes and adherence to the agreed outcomes. The Manual includes the *Regulations Governing Undergraduate Studies* but not the regulations governing TPg studies. The *Management Handbook for TPg Programmes* includes substantial cross-referencing to other documents, particularly to the *AQA Manual*. As the *AQA Manual* is designed to bring all relevant policies and procedures in relation to the quality assurance and enhancement of teaching, learning and assessment of taught programmes in a single document, the Audit Panel encourages the University to rationalise the organisation, production and distribution of information about TPg provision, to optimise the effectiveness of communication with both staff and students.
- 6.28 There is evidence that TPg students are well supported in their studies. Students whom the Audit Panel met were aware of the University's TPg graduate attributes, their programme and course ILOs and how they would be assessed. They were satisfied with the information and feedback they had received on their assessments, which they considered to be timely and helpful, and were aware of the range of opportunities for providing student feedback, which were considered effective. Mechanisms for giving feedback include: a mandatory SSCC for all TPg programmes and participation in the CTLE system (see para 5.8 above under *Quality Enhancement*). Students were also aware of the regulations that underpin their studies, and of the procedures for possible review of course grades and re-assessment. Several examples of careers guidance and support were cited and students considered the range of opportunities to access academic and non-academic support to be effective.
- 6.29 Annual reports for all TPg programmes were provided as examples of good practice in teaching and learning. They include an action plan and addressed, *inter alia*, the following: progress on the previous action plan; student

admissions; progression and awards; graduate employment; assessment of learning outcomes. They also indicate very positive comments from EAAs, and from students via the CTLE and other surveys. Changes made to programmes as a consequence of stakeholder feedback were clearly identified.

- 6.30 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the delivery of TPg programmes and the support to students are of high quality. The embedding of annual programme reporting in the University's quality assurance procedures leads to the systematic enhancement of TPg provision and is regarded as good practice by the Audit Panel. Student satisfaction is high and EAAs confirm that the quality of LU's TPg programmes is strong, with academic standards comparable to similar programmes elsewhere.

7a. AUDIT THEME: ENHANCING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

- 7.1 The University's mission and core values include a commitment to provide quality whole-person education, nurture all-round excellence in students in a liberal arts environment, and encourage students to contribute to society through original research and knowledge transfer. Student development and enhancing the learning environment are key strategic priorities.

- 7.2 Actions to enhance the student learning experience are being implemented in five areas: younger cohort; stimulating residential experience; international exposure/multi-cultural campus (see *Global engagements* below); wide spectrum of co-curricular activities; preparing students for career success and their role as future leaders (see *Student Achievement* above). The Audit Panel explored progress in implementing actions in relation to the younger cohort and orientation for new students in conversations with student mentors and students at all levels including senior entrants. The co-curricular activities of the ILP in general and residential experience in particular were discussed with students at all levels and explored in greater depth with Ug students. Senior managers impressed upon the Audit Panel the contribution that the ILP and residential experience make toward the fulfilment of LU's liberal arts mission, while representatives of the SSC and the Office of Service-Learning (OSL), wardens of residential halls and other academic support staff provided insights into how it all works in practice.

- 7.3 Implementation was also evaluated through scrutiny of a range of evidence which included documents about the following: LU's strategic plan; the peer mentoring system; LU's graduate attributes; and courses with service-learning elements. In addition the Audit Panel examined relevant evaluative reports, committee minutes and information provided on the University and Faculty websites.

Orientation

- 7.4 The introduction of the four-year degree structure in 2012 resulted in the majority of students entering Hong Kong universities one year younger than hitherto. LU responded to this change in age profile of Ug entrants by enhancing its comprehensive orientation programme to help new students adjust to university life; by helping students better to understand their English standard and to set study plans at the University; and by strengthening the year-long peer mentoring programme. Within the strengthened programme, new undergraduate students each have three to five second or third year students as their mentors. The changed age profile has also meant that the University needs to prepare mentors better to understand and mentor younger and diverse cohorts. New students are also encouraged to incorporate an academic exchange programme into their studies, with relevant information and guidance being disseminated as part of the orientation programme. Non-local students are supported in their adjustment to LU through a variety of means: these include a tailor-made orientation to help new non-local students adjust to LU; a series of cultural activities for buddies and inbound exchange students; comprehensive training for outbound exchange students; a host family scheme; together with institution-wide cultural activities and Chinese language courses specially for non-local students.
- 7.5 Students whom the Audit Panel met appreciated their orientation and induction into University life and expectations. It was clear that peer mentors receive appropriate training about helping students settle in to university life and set their personal goals. Students who had benefited from the programme spoke about the way mentors had helped them with talks and campus tours and complimented their mentors on their effectiveness.

Integrated learning programme and whole-person education

- 7.6 All LU graduates are expected to possess a range of attributes that relate to knowledge, skills and attitude. The co-curricular non-credit-bearing ILP is a signature programme designed to facilitate Ug student learning beyond the classroom. There are six ILP learning domains: civic education; intellectual development; physical education; social and emotional development; aesthetic development; and hostel education. Students can develop new interests and explore learning opportunities from around 500 ILP courses each year. Ug students are required to complete 75 ILP units as a graduation requirement. The ILP is available to postgraduate students although take-up is relatively low.
- 7.7 To develop students' interest in lifelong learning, the ILP has evolved into two distinctive curricula: the first year experience programme (FYEP) and the advanced year experience programme (AYEP). FYEP aims at enabling new students to make good use of university life, build up a sense of belonging, sharpen learning skills and boost leadership skills. AYEP is offered mainly to

students in Year 2 and above and continues to fulfil the mission of enriching students' whole-person development, and enabling students to lead a fruitful university life.

- 7.8 Civic engagement, which nurtures students' sense of civic responsibility, has been a graduation requirement since 2012/13, with all students undertaking the four-year degree required to complete five hours of training plus 25 hours of practicum offered by the OSL, the SSC or the Office of Mainland and International Programmes (OMIP) partner institutions. Civic engagement is to be superseded as a graduation requirement by a credit-bearing service-learning requirement from the 2016 entry. The Audit Panel noted the efficient manner in which the University is ensuring institutional readiness for this new requirement which has significant resource implications. Emphasis is being placed on staff development, capacity building and cross-institutional co-operation. Deans are overseeing curricular development within departments and programmes, with the assistance and support of OSL. The Audit Panel noted that the number of service-learning opportunities required to enable students to fulfil the new requirement has already been secured and quality has been enhanced by the allocation of additional resources.
- 7.9 One of the University's strategies for co-curricular education is to create a fully residential campus and make each hostel a Living Learning Community where students are encouraged to acquire independence, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, a sense of community and responsibility, language skills, and an appreciation of different cultures, through the process of living and learning with other students. All Ug and RPg students have the option to reside in on-site residential accommodation; any spare capacity is offered to TPg students. The educational role of hostel accommodation has been enhanced by becoming the sixth domain of the ILP.
- 7.10 The Audit Panel noted that the University monitors the effectiveness of the co-curriculum as rigorously as the academic programmes, through a parallel quality assurance system under the Management Committee of the ILP and the Civic Engagement Programme. As part of this system, the ILP team within the SSC produces an annual report which includes details of ILP course offerings and participation rates, student feedback and evaluation, and future plans. Student feedback on the ILP has been very positive for the past three years, as evidenced by the high ratings in the individual programme and course reviews, online surveys and focus groups. Annual reports also demonstrate a clear commitment to quality enhancement, as shown by a number of improvements arising from student and staff feedback.
- 7.11 Residential experience is one of five institutional KPIs selected to provide critical measures of the University's performance and to inform academic and management decision making. This KPI assesses the contribution of hostel life to the whole-person development of students. Students whom the Audit

Panel met spoke positively about their hostel experience and were able to articulate how the Living Learning Community Programme contributes to their whole-person development through a wide range of activities encompassing social events, sports competitions and courses on topical social issues. Responding to an affirmation in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, the University finally reached its goal of full residence in 2014/15, an achievement which the Audit Panel regards as a strength.

- 7.12 The Audit Panel commends the ILP, which includes hostel education, and the array of co-curricular courses and activities the University offers that empower students and optimise their learning.
- 7.13 While hostel education contributes significantly to whole-person education at Ug level, the Audit Panel noted that opportunities for broadening the development of postgraduate students beyond their academic programmes are limited. When the ILP is reviewed in 2016, the focus will be on course offerings rather than structural reform. The Audit Panel encourages the University to consider and review the whole-person development of postgraduate students as part of this enhancement process, to ensure that its mission can apply to all students.
- 7.14 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the University has launched a wide range of initiatives to enhance the student learning experience, all of which contribute to a high quality learning environment that is appreciated by students. While these initiatives make a significant contribution to fulfilling the University's mission to provide quality whole-person education for Ug students, further consideration needs to be given to ensuring that postgraduate students also benefit.

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

- 7.15 Internationalisation is one of the five key teaching and learning performance indicators selected by LU in response to a recommendation in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit. The University aspires to become an internationally recognised liberal arts university and the provision of global learning experiences for LU students is an important factor in striving to realise this vision.
- 7.16 The Audit Panel examined a broad range of documentation that covers LU's mission and vision, internationalisation and recruitment strategies, curricular development with international themes or service-learning elements, student-initiated projects on promoting integration of local and non-local students, overseas and Mainland internships, summer programmes, opportunities for overseas study exchange, support for students' overseas conferences/research,

the global scholar programme, the visiting English tutor scheme, and selected benchmarking partnerships.

- 7.17 During visits to the University, the Audit Panel had ample opportunities to explore these different aspects of internationalisation with students at all levels who had participated in various global learning experiences and with staff responsible for developing and monitoring programmes and activities that foster global engagement amongst teaching staff and students.
- 7.18 LU deploys its approach to global engagements by setting clear key strategies and outcomes with tasks and authority specified in its internationalisation strategy, which was developed in 2011 and updated in 2014. The revised strategy is included as a chapter in the University's *AQA Manual*, which is available to all staff. It encompasses policies and operational procedures pertaining to recruitment of staff and students, curricular development, language enhancement policy, students' international projects, overseas internships, Mainland and international service-learning programme with over 70 service-learning projects worldwide, offshore student exchange, summer programmes, global scholar programme, as well as cultural activities such as tours and excursions that promote internationalisation on campus. The Audit Panel commends the University for the clarity of its internationalisation strategy, which specifies KPIs capable of providing meaningful data about progress made in this area.
- 7.19 The Management Board on Internationalisation oversees the development and monitoring of programmes and activities, as well as the provision of resources for fostering an internationalised learning environment for LU students. Examples cited during the Audit Panel's meeting with the President and senior management show that LU provides strong support to students when they engage in various types of overseas learning experience. Such activities are considered quite challenging experiences for some LU students, who have never travelled abroad before joining the University. Students' academic advisors and staff from the SSC play an important supportive role in working out a study plan for these students and helping them to make the necessary adjustment to their academic study and life during the period of exchange. UG and postgraduate students whom the Audit Panel met described the invaluable experience they gained by participating in overseas student exchanges, or internships, or by attending and presenting their research findings at overseas conferences with financial support from the University.
- 7.20 The Audit Panel found much evidence demonstrating that the University is keen to optimise students' opportunities for exposure to internationalisation and experiential learning. LU makes efforts to enhance students' awareness of global issues by, for example, incorporating international themes into the core curriculum, major core courses, and programme elective courses. The Audit Panel noted that there are 108 undergraduate courses with international

elements. In order to promote intercultural experiences on campus, the Audit Panel heard that teaching staff ensure that the 10-20% of non-local students are distributed across mixed study groups. Representatives of service-learning partner agencies whom the Audit Panel met also described their active participation in creating projects that facilitate multi-cultural, rather than merely international, exposure of LU students, by involving members of ethnic groups in Hong Kong.

- 7.21 Initial concerns that the relatively low percentage (15%) of ILP courses offered in English could disadvantage international students were allayed after the Audit Panel discussed the matter with staff and students and discovered that many hostel education courses are delivered in English. The Audit Panel learned about the strategic measures taken by the University to improve integration of local and non-local students on campus by encouraging local and non-local students to share hostel rooms, work in partnership, or participate in the buddies scheme. It became apparent to the Audit Panel that local students initially find such arrangements and learning experiences challenging but that many students eventually cherish such cross-cultural exposure which helps build their confidence in interacting with exchange or non-local students in English or Putonghua.
- 7.22 The Audit Panel noted, however, that there is no staff development provision supporting the development or sharing of pedagogies specifically attuned to teaching in international classrooms. Potential measures in the area of e-learning to support internationalisation are yet to be fully grasped, although LU recently participated in a GLAA survey and an Association of American Colleges and Universities conference on e-learning in liberal arts colleges, which may bring new and inspiring insights into this matter.
- 7.23 Supervisors of RPg students whom the Audit Panel met also confirmed the funding support for postgraduate students' research or participation in postgraduate student conferences overseas. They reported with confidence that LU's MPhil graduates have no difficulty getting admitted to prestigious overseas universities. The Audit Panel noted the University's recent initiative in setting up RPg scholarships for overseas research visits, which allows PhD students from LU to undertake a six-month research visit overseas, or for overseas PhD students to visit LU as exchange students for six months.
- 7.24 The Audit Panel was keen to hear about progress on the recent development of an inter-university research platform to promote comparative and international research and postgraduate studies and to enhance the global experience of its students and staff. RPg supervisors whom the Audit Panel met were unaware of this development. It became clear that, while policies and operational details are in place, there are no data available at this initial stage leaving the Audit Panel unable to assess the impact and effectiveness of this new initiative.

- 7.25 The Audit Panel found much evidence that the University is effectively deploying its strategic approach to producing graduates who are international citizens capable of embracing local, Mainland, or international communities with confidence and equal competence. It was evident from the documents made available to the Audit Panel that LU nurtures cultural leaders through service-learning, internships and offshore learning. Offshore learning opportunities may take the form of overseas summer internship programmes, under the SSC; Mainland and overseas student exchange programmes, under the OMIP; overseas service-learning, under the OSL; and participation in overseas research and fieldwork, conferences/workshops, summer schools or other regional/international study visits, which are coordinated by various academic units.
- 7.26 Progress reports on the Internationalisation KPI demonstrate that, in the academic year 2014/15, over 80% of each LU cohort either enjoyed a semester-long exchange experience, or participated in short-term summer programmes. The same reports also reveal a steady increase in the number of student exchange programmes from 16 partners in six countries in academic year 2001/02 to over 160 partners in 36 countries in academic year 2014/15. The Audit Panel noted that LU has supported a small number of staff to participate in a total of 33 local or international service-learning conferences or workshops in the past three years, regarding such funding as part of the University's staff professional development initiatives.
- 7.27 The Audit Panel formed the view that such activities demonstrate LU's commitment to enhancing the quality of the student learning experience through a variety of internationalisation initiatives including study exchange, overseas internships, offshore service-learning, on campus international cultural events, summer programmes and the global scholar scheme. The choice of international partners for benchmarking purposes, however, would benefit from the articulation of clearer strategic objectives and careful planning. At present, the Audit Panel recognises that the University is in a transitional stage while these matters are addressed.
- 7.28 While acknowledging the University's initiatives and progress on global engagements, the Audit Panel formed the view that more quantitative and/or qualitative data is required to assess the effectiveness of various types of experiential learning activities organised for internationalisation. For example, there are no data to evaluate how effectively the buddies' scheme and the Lingnan host family scheme help local LU students achieve or enhance their global perspectives. Furthermore there is no systematic plan to measure students' language abilities, with clear target levels set during students' period of study at LU (see para 4.21 above under *Student achievement*).

- 7.29 LU considers cultural diversification important in fostering an international learning environment for its students. At the time of the audit visit, the University's statistics indicated that 55% of its faculty members were non-local and 32.6% of its faculty members were both non-local and non-Mainland. Statistics on the internationalisation of the student body indicate that the number of inbound exchange students has remained quite stable, with non-local students constituting about 11-14% of LU's Ug population on campus. In order to develop further the international character of the student body, the Audit Panel urges LU to extend its exploration of means to promote the University as a preferred exchange partner institution for both Mainland and overseas students and to review the provision of resources in support of its internationalisation initiatives at both Ug and postgraduate levels.
- 7.30 The international exposure of students is enhanced through a number of measures: provision of increased opportunities for inbound and outbound student exchange, with comprehensive training for outbound exchange students; an increasingly diverse cultural background of non-local degree seeking students; and new partner universities. Interaction between non-local and local students and staff is fostered, and cultural diversity promoted.
- 7.31 While the quantity of opportunities for exchange has increased, it is less clear that mechanisms for improving the quality of the student learning experience in international exchange are fit for purpose. The Audit Panel formed the view that criteria for selection of student exchange partners fall short of international best practice, are too weak, insufficiently discriminatory and generally difficult to measure. It is also difficult to infer potentially consistent criteria for selection from the list of LU's international partners, which includes institutions that vary considerably in terms of profile and standing. The Audit Panel observed that adoption of the revised criteria has resulted in very few terminations despite the fact that pruning the list was a motivation for changing the criteria.
- 7.32 The Audit Panel also noted that processes for approval of new exchange partnerships are not systematically and consistently embedded within the quality assurance procedures overseen by AQAC. Some partnership proposals are forwarded directly by the Management Board on Internationalization to Senate, while others proceed via consultation with deans, heads of department or even individual professors. Senior managers acknowledged that the new criteria are applied more to newer partnerships than to older ones and confirmed that this area is in transition; it is expected that more older partnerships will be terminated. The Audit Panel affirms LU's effort in strengthening various mechanisms for assuring the quality of the student learning experience in international exchanges and encourages the University to revise further its criteria for selection of exchange partners to this end.

- 7.33 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University's emphasis on cultural diversity on campus and its promotion of cultural respect through various on-campus and service-learning activities are noteworthy. Students receive great encouragement and significant financial support for overseas exchanges internships and placements: opportunities are plentiful and provide a good basis for whole-person development. Given the centrality of internationalisation to LU's liberal arts mission, the Audit Panel encourages the University to strengthen its capacity to gather and analyse data to evaluate the effectiveness of its deployment and inform decision-making with a view to enhancing provision.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The vision of LU is to excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement. The University is committed to providing quality whole-person education informed by the best of Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions; nurturing all-round excellence in students, including such attributes as critical thinking, broad vision, versatile skills, socially responsible values, and leadership in a changing world; and encouraging faculty and students to contribute to society through original research and knowledge transfer.
- 8.2 A central University initiative associated with the introduction of the 3/3/4 system has been the development of the core curriculum. Since the 2010 QAC Quality Audit, the University has been reviewing and improving the structure, learning outcomes and delivery of the core curriculum to ensure it reflects the University's approach to liberal arts. This work continues.
- 8.3 Employers and other stakeholders testify to LU graduates being well grounded in a particular discipline, and able to demonstrate traits generally valued within the liberal arts tradition. The balance between disciplinary depth and broad-based education is reflected in the distribution of credit requirements across LU programmes. Music, Science and Art curricula are currently under development.
- 8.4 Under the 3/3/4 curriculum, students are admitted on a broad base to one of the three faculties, with a major being undertaken in the second or third year of study. LU strives to disseminate good practice in curriculum and course design throughout the institution. The University regularly reviews its degree programmes in light of evidence to ensure alignment of learning outcomes, teaching, learning activities and assessment. TLC engages in developmental activities such as the learning and teaching development programme, introduced in 2014.

- 8.5 The University offers a wide range of courses under the ILP which facilitates students' learning beyond the classroom. In the 2014/15 academic year, a total of 643 ILP activities were offered by the Student Services Centre, Library, Information Technology Services Centre, Wardens' Offices, academic and non-academic departments, and student societies. All hostels on campus have been reconceived as Living Learning Communities where students can acquire independence, interpersonal and problem-solving skills, and a sense of community and responsibility.
- 8.6 Service-Learning has proven to be an effective means by which knowledge of staff and students is extended to community groups in a variety of meaningful service programmes. Students are required to complete a minimum of five hours of training and 25 hours of service practicum. Since the previous audit, civic engagement has become a graduation requirement for UG students within the four-year system and service-learning will replace civic engagement as a graduate requirement from the 2016 intake.
- 8.7 LU's commitment to pursue internationalisation is reflected by the diversity of the student and staff population on campus. In the academic year 2014/15, 334 exchange students pursued their studies at LU for at least one semester. The University has also been building a dynamic staff profile to maintain its international standing and global competitiveness.

APPENDIX A: LINGNAN UNIVERSITY (LU)

History

Founded in 1999, LU, formerly Lingnan College, is the youngest university in the territory, yet with the longest established tradition among the local institutions of higher education. Its history, dates back to 1888, when its forerunner, the prestigious LU in Guangzhou (Canton), China was founded.

Vision and Mission of the University

Vision

To excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university distinguished by outstanding teaching, learning, scholarship and community engagement.

Mission

LU is committed to:

- providing quality whole-person education informed by the best of Chinese and Western liberal arts traditions;
- nurturing all-round excellence in students, including such attributes as critical thinking, broad vision, versatile skills, socially responsible values, and leadership in a changing world; and
- encouraging faculty and students to contribute to society through original research and knowledge transfer.

Role Statement

LU:

- (a) offers a range of programmes leading to the award of first degrees in Arts, Business and Social Sciences;
- (b) pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;
- (c) offers a number of taught postgraduate programmes and research postgraduate programmes in selected fields within the subject areas of Arts, Business and Social Sciences;

- (d) provides a general education programme which seeks to offer all students a broad educational perspective, distinguished by the best liberal arts tradition from both East and West, and enables its students to act responsibly in the changing circumstances of this century;
- (e) aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength, in particular in support of liberal arts programmes;
- (f) maintains strong links with the community;
- (g) pursues actively deep collaboration in its areas of strength with other higher education institutions in Hong Kong or the region or more widely so as to enhance the Hong Kong higher education system;
- (h) encourages academic staff to be engaged in public service, consultancy and collaborative work with the private sector in areas where they have special expertise, as part of the institution's general collaboration with government, business and industry; and
- (i) manages in the most effective and efficient way the public and private resources bestowed upon the institution, employing collaboration whenever it is of value.

Governance and Management

The University Council sets major strategic directions and priorities for development. The Senate is the supreme academic body of the University which supervises all academic development and curriculum planning, and approves policies and regulations on all academic matters.

The President and Vice-President are supported by three Associate Vice-Presidents (AVPs) (Academic Quality Assurance and Internationalisation, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs) and three appointed Deans (previously Academic Deans) (Faculty of Arts; Faculty of Business; Faculty of Social Sciences).

Academic Organisation and Programmes of Study

There are three Faculties in the University including Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Business and Faculty of Social Sciences offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

Staff and Students Numbers

In 2014/15, the University had 2 532 undergraduate and 82 postgraduate students in UGC-funded programmes. Enrolments in self-financed programmes accounted for a further 415 students. Teaching staff comprises 141 regular and 81 short-term

contract staff to give a total of 222. 90.1% of teaching staff members have doctoral degrees.

Revenue

Consolidated income for the year 2014/15 was HK\$814.3 million of which HK\$453.6 million (56%) came from government subvention and HK\$360.7 million (44%) from tuition, programmes, interest and net investment income, donations, auxiliary services and other income.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

The University would like to thank the QAC Panel for the in-depth and collegial exchanges with our staff and students during its site visit and the inclusion of the panel members' comprehensive and constructive comments in the QAC Audit Report. In respect of the first of the two Audit themes, 'Enhancing the Student Learning Experience', Lingnan is encouraged by the Panel's commendation of the 'value added' provision to our student body thanks to the University's substantial manpower and financial investment in small class teaching. We are in agreement with the Panel that this value added dimension is further enhanced by the broad exposure to international and service-learning experiences that we provide our students.

The University is also in full agreement with the Panel that the attainment of its goal of full residence in 2014/15, as an affirmation in the 2010 QAC Audit Report, is one of its unique strengths among Hong Kong's tertiary institutions, and forms a particularly invaluable part of liberal arts education.

Another notable commendation from the Panel is the mission-sensitive approach to supporting the professional development of staff through a range of innovative initiatives designed to enhance classroom dynamics, teacher-student relationship and delivery.

Moreover, Lingnan welcomes the Panel's recognition of the University's commitment to providing a wide range of learning experiences designed to support student achievement, in particular, the Integrated Learning Programme which includes an array of co-curricular seminars, workshops and other related activities that motivate students and strengthen their learning.

Specific to the second audit theme, i.e. 'Global Engagements: Strategies and Current Developments', we are most grateful that the Panel commends our efforts to reinforce the University's internationalization strategy through specifying relevant key performance indicators.

We welcome the Panel's affirmation of our steps to safeguard the standards and integrity of the University's academic awards. We are also thankful for the Panel's endorsement of our plan to increase interdisciplinary learning opportunities and our resistance to reintroducing early specialization, all of which reflect the University's commitment to the essence of liberal arts education.

Equally indicative of this commitment is the University's development of a science component within the undergraduate core curriculum through the recent establishment of a Science Unit, for which the University is most encouraged by the Panel's affirmation of this initiative. Furthermore, we welcome the Panel's affirmation of the steps we are taking to rebalance teaching and research in tune with our core mission.

The University agrees fully with the Panel of the need to publicise our many achievements and very much appreciates the Panel's affirmation of our efforts to promote the unique characteristics and strengths of the institution and our graduates. We also welcome the Panel's endorsement of our endeavor to enhance the learning environment of research postgraduate students through the development of an array of local, regional and international networks and initiatives.

Finally, Lingnan is most grateful to the Panel for the various recommendations made in the Audit Report, especially those related to the need to fully implement an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning by the beginning of academic year 2017/18. All these are viewed by the University as providing a clear and concrete set of goals for its future development. Once again, the University wishes to express our sincere gratitude to the Audit Panel for the comprehensive, constructive, and invaluable comments.

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AQA	Academic Quality Assurance
AQAC	Academic Quality Assurance Committee
AYEP	Advanced year experience programme
CRA	Criterion-referenced assessment
CTLE	Course teaching and learning evaluation
EAA	External Academic Advisor
FYEP	First year experience programme
GLAA	Global Liberal Arts Alliance
HKPFS	Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme
ILOs	Intended learning outcomes
ILP	Integrated Learning Programme
KPI	Key performance indicator
LTDP	Learning and Teaching Development Programme
LU	Lingnan University
MPhil	Master of Philosophy
OBATL	Outcome-based approach to teaching and learning
OMIP	Office of Mainland and International Programmes
OSL	Office of Service-Learning
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PSC	Postgraduate Studies Committee
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
RPg	Research Postgraduate
RPSC	Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee
SSC	Student Services Centre
SSCCs	Staff-student consultation committees
TAs	Teaching assistants
TEAs	Teaching Excellence Award scheme
TLC	Teaching and Learning Centre
TPg	Taught Postgraduate
Ug	Undergraduate
UGC	University Grants Committee

APPENDIX D: LU AUDIT PANEL

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Clare Pickles (Panel Chair)

Professor of Academic Quality & Enhancement

VP (Academic Affairs), Laureate online Education, UK

Doctoral Thesis Supervisor and Honorary Senior Lecturer, University of Liverpool
(Online Programmes)

Professor Marijk van der Wende

Dean of Graduate Studies, Professor of Higher Education, Utrecht University

Dr Trevor Webb

Senior Advisor to the Executive Vice-President and Provost (Quality Assurance and Enhancement), The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Professor Terry Siu-han Yip

Special Advisor to Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) on QAC Audit

Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Hong Kong Baptist University

Audit Coordinator

Dr Melinda Drowley

QAC Secretariat

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

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

Mission

The QAC's mission is:

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

Terms of Reference

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

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

Membership (as at October 2016)

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

Professor Adrian K DIXON Emeritus Professor of Radiology, University of Cambridge, UK

Dr Kim MAK Kin-wah, BBS, JP Executive Director (Corporate Affairs), The Hong Kong Jockey Club

Professor PONG Ting-chuen Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

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

Professor Jan THOMAS Vice-Chancellor and President, University of Southern Queensland, Australia

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

Dr Don WESTERHEIJDEN Senior Research Associate, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente, The Netherlands

Ex-officio Member

Dr Richard ARMOUR, JP Secretary-General, UGC

Secretary

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