Report of a Quality Audit

of **The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

February 2017
Quality Assurance Council

Report of a Quality Audit of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

February 2017

QAC Audit Report Number 15

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Background

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

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

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 universities are fulfilling their stated mission and purpose and confirm the procedures in place for assuring the quality of the learning opportunities offered to students and the academic standards by which students' level of performance and capability are assessed and reported. The QAC Audit also examines the effectiveness of a university's quality systems and considers the evidence used to demonstrate that these systems meet the expectations of stakeholders.

Full details of the audit procedures, including the methodology and scope of the audit, are provided in the QAC 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 The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU, the University) 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 university, 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)   It was apparent to the Audit Panel that the University has been committed to addressing the QAC concerns raised during the first cycle of quality audits in 2010. The progress PolyU has made in responding to the commendations, affirmations and recommendations that resulted from the 2010 Quality Audit are discussed under the relevant heading of this report.

(b)   The report confirms the findings of the Audit Panel under the following headings: The setting and maintaining of academic standards; The quality of learning opportunities; Student achievement; Quality enhancement; Postgraduate provision; and the two audit themes - *Enhancing the student learning experience* and *Global engagements: strategies and current developments*, respectively. For ease of reference, the report addresses these headings in the same order.

(c)   PolyU has established a sound approach to setting and maintaining academic standards. The Audit Panel noted the comprehensive framework for learning outcomes and graduate attributes, programme design and review, academic regulations, and assessment. The report indicates, however, that Senate's responsibility for academic standards could be more formally articulated. The University has taken considerable steps in embedding outcome-based education (OBE) and criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) across undergraduate (Ug) and taught postgraduate (TPg) provision. Approaches to validation and review ensure effective alignment between graduate attributes and programme and subject learning outcomes. Programme learning outcome

assessment plans systematically collect, review and use student outcomes data to analyse student achievement against academic standards. Programme learning outcome assessment plans are considered in annual programme review reports, which are part of the annual operation plan considered by programme, departmental and Faculty committees. The report indicates the need to strengthen the definition and communication of graduate attributes for research postgraduate (RPg) programmes. Benchmarking is undertaken with universities of similar academic mix and aspirations and with reference to the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework and overseas quality assurance bodies. Some programmes, particularly those with professional accreditation, may have external examiners who comment on maintenance of standards. The report endorses the steps the University is taking to secure regular and comprehensive external comment on academic standards via the existing Departmental Academic Advisor (DAA) system to complement that obtained from the six-yearly Departmental Review (DR) system, which involves broader and more in-depth external benchmarking and evaluation than the DAA system.

(d)   There was much evidence that the University has successfully managed the introduction of its four-year Ug curriculum, demonstrating the ability to overcome initial issues concerning the knowledge base of incoming students in key subject areas. This concern led to an enhanced orientation programme, and the establishment of a two-tier academic advising system, which is supported by a variety of staff development initiatives, and has been very well received by staff and students. The report draws attention to the two-tier academic advising system, which provides complementary support for students, particularly during their transition to tertiary education, as an important feature of student support. The University describes the four-year curriculum as innovative, focusing on academic relevance, real-world experience, professional practice and international understanding and experience, a view with which the Audit Panel concurs. There is also an extensive co-curricular programme with a wide range of activities, some of which are integrated into the curriculum across different programmes in order to provide a holistic learning experience. There was clear evidence that the University has built further on the staff development activities provided by the Educational Development Centre (EDC), which were commended in the 2010 Quality Audit. The report comments upon the extensive range of staff development courses and workshops on learning and teaching practice, provided centrally through the EDC, which are a major factor in ensuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

(e)   PolyU clearly articulates the attributes of the graduates the University aims to produce through its Ug and TPg provision. The Audit Panel noted that the graduate attributes and the general university requirements (GURs) for Ug students form a well designed framework that underpins the curriculum and co-curriculum and facilitates the demonstration of student achievement

through CRA. The focus on providing higher education in professional and applied fields has been appropriately complemented by making the work-integrated education (WIE) placement a requirement in the four-year curriculum. The Audit Panel found a comprehensive range of mechanisms designed to enable and monitor student achievement, which included a range of assessment instruments and various surveys. There was much evidence, including comments from employers and alumni and employment statistics, that confirms the achievement of PolyU's graduates. The report draws attention to the University's comprehensive approach to monitoring student achievement against University graduate attributes, which includes the analysis of employer, graduate and student feedback, and student achievement data. The University is also planning to introduce an integrated student record system to track student participation across curricular and co-curricular programmes and activities; data of which are currently fragmented. The report encourages PolyU to introduce such a system as soon as possible, better to enable students and the University to understand and evaluate the full impact of the educational provision it offers.

(f)   The University has an effective framework in place for quality enhancement, which is embedded in strategic planning and quality assurance. Implementation of quality enhancement is monitored, internally reviewed and externally benchmarked. Mechanisms for evaluation and identification of enhancement opportunities include annual programme and six-yearly DRs. The Institutional Research and Planning Office was established in 2015 to devise measurable indicators to facilitate evaluation and monitoring of institutional and academic performance. The report encourages the University to refine further its evidence-based monitoring and improvement processes. The University's Academic Quality Assurance Team provides support for the development and monitoring of quality assurance and enhancement policies. Within taught programmes, the electronic student feedback questionnaire and student-staff consultative groups are the main methods for collecting student feedback to facilitate quality enhancement. Departments are required to produce timelines for action items relating to quality assurance and enhancement and provide an interim update to the Faculty dean, who in turn reports to the Quality Assurance Committee. An audit trail, requested by the Audit Panel, illustrates the effective operation of quality enhancement processes from subject to institutional level, including action plan timelines and sign off.

(g)   The University has gradually expanded its RPg numbers over the last few years and recently adopted OBE for RPg programmes. The Audit Panel found evidence that the quality assurance processes relating to RPg and TPg programmes are well articulated; for example, the three-phase monitoring process for RPg programmes. RPg and TPg students are well supported and feedback is largely positive. The Audit Panel noted that the University recently mandated the establishment of student-staff consultative groups to

collect feedback from TPg students. The University and departments in particular have responded positively to suggestions from students for improvements. Since 2012/13, RPg students have received formal training for their duties as teaching assistants. The Audit Panel received mixed messages about graduate attributes for RPg students and their relationship to subject, programme and institutional learning outcomes. The report therefore encourages the University to define precisely, articulate clearly and communicate effectively the graduate attributes for RPg programmes. It also suggests that the quality assurance and enhancement of offshore TPg programmes should be strengthened to ensure that they are demonstrably comparable in every respect, including student achievement when the offshore programme bears the same name on the award parchment as that of the programme offered at the home campus.

(h)   The audit themes of *Enhancing the student learning experience* and *Global engagements: strategies and current developments*, afforded the Audit Panel the opportunity to focus more closely on these cross-cutting lines of enquiry. In considering the theme of *Enhancing the student learning experience*, the Audit Panel noted that the University has initiated various projects for enhancing the student learning experience, ranging from further development of the learning environment to curriculum design. The University has a clear strategy and defined processes for development of physical and electronically-based resources to enable the best use of innovative teaching and technology. Student survey data and meetings with Ug, TPg and RPg students indicate high levels of satisfaction with the development of learning spaces and the use of electronic resources overall, although students would like to see further improvements. The report suggests that the University continue in its development and creation of new learning spaces and in the increased use of blended learning technologies. Library resources receive very positive feedback from students at all levels. There is extensive staff support on the use of learning technology, with the development of significant blended learning resources, including four Massive Open Online Courses (or MOOCs) in 2015/16, which has reinforced the use of new approaches to learning for Ug students. The report highlights the requirement that all students complete an academic subject that integrates a service-learning element and also engage in WIE, which is a particularly strong feature of the curriculum. The Audit Panel found evidence that these aspects of the curriculum are well implemented, professionally supported by dedicated student service units and highly rated by students. The Audit Panel noted the initiatives the University is taking to promote blended learning and e-learning and found evidence that staff and students are engaging with these initiatives and consider them valuable.

(i)   In considering the theme of *Global engagements: strategies and current developments*, the Audit Panel noted that the University has included 'Internationalisation' and 'Engaging the Nation' as two of the five priority

areas, in the new Strategic Plan and found evidence that the importance of these themes has been effectively communicated to and embraced by students, faculty and academic support staff. Globalisation-related learning outcomes are now included in all Ug programmes. Two out of the four cluster areas in the general university requirements also contribute explicitly to the globalisation themes. The focus on the internationalisation theme also has an impact on recruitment of academic staff, the benchmarking of academic standards and academic staff exchange and collaboration initiatives. The report highlights the University's strategic focus on internationalisation and the way in which faculty, academic support staff and students have embraced adopted and implemented the theme within both the core and co-curriculum. The Audit Panel noted, however, that the graduate attributes do not explicitly refer to the globalisation theme and hence student achievement in this respect may not be measured and monitored. The report suggests that the University give greater prominence to globalisation within the graduate attributes, given the strategic importance it attaches to this theme. The Audit Panel also noted that participation rates in the overseas exchange programme are relatively low and that some academic units face challenges in securing appropriate partners, establishing credit-transfer arrangements and accommodating inbound exchange students. The report acknowledges the ways in which the University is striving to increase opportunities for Ug students to experience international exposure via overseas WIE and service learning placements within the core curriculum. RPg students receive a budget for presenting at a minimum of one overseas conference and may also benefit from overseas attachment programmes. The report comments on the challenging implications for resource allocation presented by the University's ambitions in relation to globalisation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Explanation of the audit methodology

1.1 This is the report of a quality audit of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU, 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 PolyU following a period of self-review and submitted to QAC on 1 February 2016. A one-day Institutional Briefing and Initial Meeting of Panel members was held on 10 March 2016 to discuss the detailed arrangements for the audit visit.

1.2 The Audit Panel visited PolyU from 4 to 6 May 2016. They met the President and senior team; academic managers including deans, heads of department and programme leaders; staff with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement at both University and Faculty/School levels; teaching staff; those responsible for supervision of research postgraduate (RPg) students; non-academic professional staff including those who facilitate and support service-learning and Work-Integrated Education (WIE); a wide range of students, including student representatives, 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 university, 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 The Hong Kong Polytechnic was founded in 1972 with a mandate to provide application-oriented education to meet the community's need for professional manpower resources. The Polytechnic has undergone extensive development and rapid expansion and launched its first five degree programmes in 1983. With the approval for self-accreditation of degree programmes, the Polytechnic assumed full university status in 1994, changing its name to The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

1.4   The University's mission states that it is committed to:

> ➢ Nurture graduates who are critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers, lifelong learners and ethical leaders
> ➢ Advance knowledge and the frontiers of technology to meet the changing needs of society
> ➢ Support a University community in which all members can excel through education and scholarship

1.5   PolyU's vision is to be a leading university that excels in professional education, applied research and partnership for the betterment of Hong Kong, the nation and the world.

1.6   Of PolyU's students in 2014/15, 21 871 are undergraduate (Ug), 7 719 are taught postgraduate (TPg) and 694 are RPg students. PolyU employs 4 049 teaching, research, support and other staff in its academic departments.

2.   THE SETTING AND MAINTAINING OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS

2.1   The University states that it has various integrated strategies to ensure that all of its programmes are set and maintained at an international standard compared to PolyU's benchmarking universities. These strategies include: rigorous multi-level programme approval and review; extensive use of benchmarking, professional accreditation and external input; mandatory adoption of outcome-based education (OBE); and robust assessment of student learning.

2.2   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 institutional learning outcomes, 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*.

2.3   The Audit Panel tested the University's management of academic standards by scrutinising institutional policy and procedures including guidelines and regulations for programme planning, validation and management; the quality assurance handbook; policy and guidelines on learning outcomes for PolyU graduates; the PolyU institutional learning outcomes assessment plan; the handbook on academic regulations and procedures; and guidelines for the implementation of criterion-referenced assessment (CRA). The Audit Panel also studied relevant committee minutes and university reports, including for example, Faculty boards and departmental programme committees, and the review of the University's RPg programmes.

2.4   In meetings with senior and academic managers and staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement (QAE), the Audit Panel discussed benchmarking, the relationship between programme intended learning outcomes (PILOs) and institutional learning outcomes and the ways in which PolyU ensures comparable academic standards across its provision.   In meetings with students, including students from offshore TPg programmes, the Audit Panel explored students' understanding of assessment criteria applied to their work and how to avoid plagiarism.

2.5   The Audit Panel was informed that overall responsibility for academic standards rests with Senate which delegates some of its functions to its committees such as the Academic Planning Committee, Academic Regulations Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments), and Research Committee (RC).   Detailed annual reports of each of these committees are submitted to Senate for approval.   Faculty/School boards also consider programme proposals with respect to their academic standards. While it was clear that in practice Senate does approve significant academic developments, such as the framework for outcomes-based RPg programmes, the Audit Panel noted that Senate's terms of reference do not explicitly mention academic standards. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University articulate more formally Senate's responsibility for academic standards.

2.6   PolyU has well embedded graduate attributes for Ug provision. Institutional learning outcomes have been developed and continually refined, based on the role statement submitted to UGC in 2004.   The current version, which was approved by the University Council in 2011, includes six institutional learning outcomes, namely: professional competence, critical thinking, effective communication, innovative problem solving, lifelong learning, and ethical leadership.   OBE for TPg programmes was introduced in 2011 with three institutional learning outcomes, namely professional competence, strategic thinking, and lifelong learning capability. OBE was recently extended to RPg programmes in 2014/15, when two 'overarching university aims', relating to the acquisition of competence in research methods and scholarship, and the display of sustained independent effort and independent original thought, were approved by Senate.

2.7   Key university documentation explains clearly how departments are required to consider the institutional learning outcomes alongside the programme's aims, accreditation requirements, and industry's expectations, in the formulation or review of PILOs. In the four-year Ug curriculum, general university requirements (GURs) and discipline-specific requirements specify expectations for all Ug students in terms of content and competencies. PILOs must take the form of a single, integrated and succinct set of outcomes descriptive of the qualities and abilities that a typical graduate from the particular programme should possess and be able to demonstrate.

2.8   The validation process is designed to confirm academic standards. Validation may take place via a panel, including an external member, or by circulation where a programme has been previously validated and changes are considered minor. In both cases, externality is expected. The report of a validation conducted by correspondence seen by the Audit Panel included comments from the Departmental Academic Advisor (DAA), but little explicit discussion of the PILOs. A report of a validation event involving a panel with four external members, including a professional, documented explicit and comprehensive consideration of the match between graduate attributes and programme and subject intended learning outcomes (SILOs). In one case, a programme was required, as a condition of validation, to make reference to PolyU's graduate attributes in setting PILOs and SILOs. Documentation also includes a completed programme learning outcomes assessment plan (P-LOAP) demonstrating how achievement will be measured and assessed (see paragraph 2.17 below). The Audit Panel also saw clear evidence of how Faculties/Schools and programmes respond to recommendations including via a comprehensive mapping of where PILOs are introduced, reinforced and assessed.

2.9   To meet the University's commitment to external benchmarking, external reference points and specialists are utilised in several contexts. Outcomes are developed and confirmed with reference to the generic learning outcomes of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework and other examples from overseas quality assurance bodies.

2.10   DAAs are external experts appointed to 'monitor and maintain the standard of all academic functions of the department'. This includes consideration of alignment of teaching, learning and assessment with PILOs and SILOs, P-LOAPs and results 'relative to international standard'. DAAs are nominated by heads of department, endorsed by Faculty deans, and approved by the Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments). They are expected to visit and report annually.

2.11   External examiners may be appointed, in addition to a DAA, for 'exceptional reasons' such as a programme being new, or where there is a need to meet requirements of the various professional associations and statutory bodies that accredit PolyU programmes. External examiners are approved by Faculty/School board. Duties include consideration of assessments, moderation of internal marking, confirming the appropriateness and comparability of standards and endorsing students' awards.

2.12   Where external examiners are appointed, they explicitly comment on maintenance of standards via comment on assessments, grading, achievement of outcomes and level of award. The Audit Panel noted, however, that annual DAA reports for the most part do not discuss achievement of standards or

outcomes, reporting instead on other matters including student recruitment, staffing and research. The Audit Panel noted that DAAs are required to 'monitor and maintain the standard of all academic functions of the Department'. This includes advising on P-LOAP and their results as well as advising on the benchmarking of programme and subject outcomes relative to international standards. However, the Audit Panel could not locate a formal requirement for DAAs to comment on academic standards and student achievement in either University guidance or the DAA role description. It was evident that there are practical difficulties in that DAAs may be required to report on a number of programmes within a department, some of which go beyond their direct expertise. The University has instituted the policy that departments can appoint more than one DAA if they offer programmes in more than one discipline. In addition, departments can draw on the expertise of two or more Overseas Academic Members, who visit every two or three years. Together the DAA(s) and Overseas Academic Members help to ensure that the review of different programmes within the same department is comprehensive.

2.13   The Audit Panel was informed that the University had recognised that DAA reports are variable and that DAAs do not necessarily comment on academic standards every year. Further, it was noted that where DAAs lacked the expertise to comment on certain subjects within the department, heads of department had been empowered since 2015 to appoint additional external academic advisors (EAAs). This had been implemented in four departments. The University is currently reinforcing the mechanisms for external moderation of subject level assessments by requiring DAAs and departmental review (DR) panels to comment on syllabuses and teaching materials of sample subjects and benchmark the outcomes of programmes with international standards. As this specific enhancement was only put into effect in 2015/16, the DAA and DR reports available to the Audit Panel did not yet reflect this change. The Audit Panel endorses the steps PolyU is taking to enhance the DAA system and further recommends that the University identify and implement the means by which it can obtain regular and comprehensive external comment on academic standards and student achievement.

2.14   For each level, the University establishes academic standards by benchmarking against 'universities of similar academic mix and aspirations'. The general criteria for selecting benchmarking partners include the international ranking of the cognate programme, the department or the institution as a whole, and the academic and/or research strength of the (external) department concerned. The programmes and institutions selected for benchmarking should 'generally be of high academic and professional standing'.

2.15   DR takes place every six years and has a focus on quality enhancement, strategic planning of academic departments, and international benchmarking.

The DR panel has three overseas members, including the DAA. Student achievement against learning outcomes is addressed but the quality assurance handbook does not explicitly record a requirement for DR to comment on the 'baseline' standard of the programme, for example, in terms of benchmarked institutions.

2.16 The Departmental Advisory Committee (DAC) system facilitates inputs from external specialists in Hong Kong. DACs are advisory with no governance role but are taken into account by Faculty/School boards.

2.17 P-LOAPs are employed for the systematic collection, review and use of student learning outcomes data, as a key source of evidence for maintaining academic standards. They include comparative data for three years, including award and progression data. Improvement plans with actions and timelines, based on analysis of P-LOAPs, are reported on in annual programme review reports (APRRs) and included in the department's annual operation plan (AOP). Initial responsibility for the review and maintenance of academic standards lies with departmental programme committees, which report on findings to Departmental LTCs and then Faculty LTCs. Heads of department are also required to present AOPs at Faculty/School boards, which in turn feed in to the Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments).

2.18 The University also produces an annual institutional learning outcomes assessment plan (I-LOAP) which includes various university-level outcome measures, including an alumni survey and a new graduating students survey. As an overall plan, it provides an overview of the broad range of outcomes assessment exercises undertaken by different stakeholders within the University.

2.19 The Audit Panel found much evidence that the University undertakes comprehensive analysis of employer, graduate, student feedback and achievement data which supports PolyU's claim that it promotes effective consideration of student achievement against university academic standards. APRRs and P-LOAPs seen by the Audit Panel included exit surveys measuring graduate views on their own achievement of PILOs, a work-integrated education (WIE) employers survey evaluating student performance and achievement of PILOs to assess 'job readiness skills', student feedback questionnaires (SFQs), and a report on alignment of assessment components with learning outcomes for all subjects. In all cases there is comparative data for three years. Where results diverge from stated success criteria for achievement of learning outcomes, responses are described and in some cases may involve an adjustment to learning, teaching or assessment. These adjustments are included in action plans and progress reports. The reports conclude by affirming that the programme(s) has met its stated programme objectives and outcomes.

2.20   A thorough validation process for RPg programmes in 2015 required academic departments to indicate how structure, content, coherence and progression, and level, meet PILOs at an appropriate standard. Teams also had to demonstrate that the PILOs are aligned with the two overarching university aims and that assessment enables PILOs to be achieved. DAA reports are largely positive about the outcomes for each academic area.

2.21   The Audit Panel noted that the current audit had prompted critical self-review of a number of topics covered by the QAC Quality Audit process. The Academic Quality Assurance Team (AQAT) will continue a regular review of quality assurance practice.

2.22   The University's graduate attributes were reviewed as part of strategic planning in 2011. They have also been subject to longitudinal study since 2012, comparing PolyU with other institutions. It is intended that this review will be strengthened in 2017 to include graduates of the four-year Ug programme for the first time. An interim review of the four-year curriculum, conducted in the summer of 2015, suggested that the new programmes have been effective in achieving their intended learning outcomes (ILOs). The curriculum has also been effectively reviewed by the monitoring of student achievement in P-LOAPs.

2.23   Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the University's management of the setting and maintaining of academic standards is fit for purpose. However, there is room for improvement in articulating the role of Senate in relation to academic standards; clarifying the relationship between graduate attributes and RPg provision; and in strengthening the role of DAAs with respect to commentary on academic standards.

3.   THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

3.1   PolyU's 2012-18 Strategic Plan is aligned with the University's mission and vision statements, and has 'learning and teaching' as a core function. The University aims to provide a value-added education in a holistic learning environment, through a curriculum that widens students' exposure to academic development, facilitates career and personal development, enriches their experience of industry, and enhances their experience, nationally and internationally. To complement the curriculum, PolyU provides a co-curricular experience with a wide range of activities that enable students to engage in a culturally rich academic community, where they are encouraged and supported to broaden their horizons, attain the graduate attributes, and develop into responsible global citizens and leaders of tomorrow. PolyU is committed to providing physical and virtual learning environments that enable the best use of technology for an effective and innovative mix of modes of learning and teaching. The University considers the quality of its teaching to be of the utmost importance in fulfilling its mission.

3.2   To establish how effectively PolyU's strategic approach to support and develop the quality of learning opportunities is working in practice, the Audit Panel examined relevant documentation supplied by the University, including the 2012-18 Strategic Plan; various reports such as the interim review of the four-year Ug curriculum and the report of student feedback on WIE; several project proposals including the proposal to develop an institutional e-learning platform and another to conduct a longitudinal study of GURs; and a plethora of staff development material provided on site, including details of staff development workshops, co-curricular activities and the 2015 WIE Yearbook.

3.3   During meetings with senior managers and other academic managers including deans, heads of department and programme leaders, the Audit Panel explored some of the challenges encountered by PolyU and the ways in which the University is addressing them. Teaching and non-academic professional support staff provided the Audit Panel with insights into the way staff and students at all levels have been enabled to develop and embrace new learning and teaching opportunities. The Audit Panel met a wide range of students at all levels, including student representatives, and found out about their experiences of the quality of learning opportunities provided by PolyU. In particular, discussions focused on orientation and transition into tertiary education; the use of learning technologies and innovative learning and teaching practices; the learning environment and the benefits of incorporating co-curricular activities, such as service-learning, WIE and exchanges, within the formal Ug curriculum.

3.4   There is considerable evidence that PolyU has successfully managed the introduction of its four-year Ug curriculum. The University describes the four-year curriculum as innovative, focusing on academic relevance, real-world experience, professional practice and international understanding and experience, a view with which the Audit Panel concurs. A key feature of Ug programmes are the mandatory GURs, encompassing some co-curricular components, with which PolyU aims to foster development of important generic skills. These include the enhancement of English language skills through a UGC-funded institutional project on developing English across the curriculum and the requirement that all students participate in a service-learning project and a WIE placement (see *Enhancing the student learning experience* paragraph 7.4 below).

3.5   The University took a number of constructive steps to address initial concerns about the knowledge base of incoming students in key subject areas and to support students' transition to the new curriculum. The orientation programme was enhanced and is regarded as helpful and thorough by Ug and TPg students whom the Audit Panel met. e-Assessment and e-learning resources were developed to enhance new students' knowledge of English, Science and Mathematics. To underpin these innovations, the University

established a two-tier academic advising system, supported by a staff handbook, which includes the pedagogy of advising; an online course for staff; communities of practice, each run by a senior member of staff; and a staff forum. The Audit Panel commends the establishment of the two-tier academic advising system, which provides complementary support for students, particularly during their transition to tertiary education and is positively regarded by students and staff.

3.6   There is a comprehensive range of mechanisms that have been used to evaluate the new curriculum, including annual programme review reports (see paragraph 2.17 above), which include feedback from students through electronic student feedback questionnaires (eSFQs) and student-staff consultative groups (SSCGs) (see paragraph 5.6 below), with annual action plans produced and implementation problems resolved. Feedback on departmental programmes is also provided by DAAs (see paragraph 2.10 above). In meetings with the Audit Panel, Ug and TPg students cited examples of changes made as a result of their feedback. An interim review of the four-year curriculum was largely positive, with areas identified for improvement. There will be a full review of the curriculum in summer 2016.

3.7   The University also makes effective use of student survey data in relation to student services. Non-academic professional support staff whom the Audit Panel met referred to their use of staff and student feedback to evaluate and improve their services.

3.8   PolyU has policies and procedures to support excellence in teaching, which include links to promotion and merit-based pay awards, evaluation of teaching quality through peer review and student feedback, and courses and workshops for promotion of professional development in teaching. Teaching quality is considered in APRRs and is discussed at LTC and in consultations with departments.

3.9   The Audit Panel recognises that PolyU has built significantly on the staff development activities provided by the Educational Development Centre (EDC), which were commended in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit. A wide range of both targeted and general staff development courses and workshops, for new and established staff, are available on teaching and learning practice, provided centrally through EDC. All full-time incoming staff who are new to teaching are assigned a mentor and must complete the introduction to university teaching (IUT) course. All teaching assistants must complete the course on becoming an effective teaching assistant (BETA) which was introduced in 2012/13. RPg students whom the Audit Panel met commented on the benefits of the BETA course. IUT and BETA courses are now available online for part-time staff. EDC courses are very well attended, were commented on positively by teaching staff in meetings with the Audit Panel and, from examples provided, show demonstrable impact. Some staff are

seconded to EDC for a year; returning to their department to champion the use of e-learning. The Audit Panel commends the extensive range of courses and workshops available for staff development, which is a major factor in ensuring and enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities.

3.10   Teaching staff also drew the attention of the Audit Panel to the role of communities of practice in enhancing teaching practice. In addition, PolyU provides overseas teaching scholarships (established in 2013), which allow staff to explore innovative teaching practices at overseas institutions, as well as funding for teaching projects.

3.11   Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that PolyU has built on the strengths identified in the 2010 QAC Quality Audit and provides high quality learning opportunities for its students with a four-year Ug curriculum that includes mandatory GURs, and a rich co-curricular programme available to students. Both the two-tier academic advising system and the comprehensive and proactive programme of staff development provision were singled out as strong features of a learning environment characterised by a commitment to continual improvement.

4.   STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

4.1   In its vision statement, the University clearly articulates its vision with its focus on professional education, applied research and partnerships with stakeholders including business, industry, professional sectors, employers and the community for the betterment of Hong Kong, the nation and the world. In the 2012-18 Strategic Plan, one of the five strategic priority areas focuses on knowledge transfer, entrepreneurship and service to the community. PolyU's role statement further specifies professionally oriented programmes, application-oriented teaching, professional education and applied research. It emphasises the high value it adds to students, the balanced approach of the University and its goal of producing students who are competent professionals and 'all-rounders'.

4.2   In order to evaluate the effectiveness of PolyU's approach to student achievement in practice, the Audit Panel examined an extensive range of documents provided by the University on student and alumni accomplishment, including student and graduate self-assessment survey results, objective competency test results in English language proficiency, student performance in capstone projects, graduate destinations and employer evaluations. The Audit Panel also read minutes of Faculty/School boards, departmental programme committees (DPCs) and Ug and TPg studies committees; examined handbooks and guidelines on CRA; and looked at examples of APRRs, curriculum maps, subject description forms and P-LOAPS.

4.3   The Audit Panel also talked to students and non-academic professional support staff about student learning experiences in both the formal curriculum and the co-curriculum, focusing in particular on service-learning and WIE opportunities. Teaching staff and students discussed with the Audit Panel the ways in which PolyU's programmes enable students to achieve the graduate attributes. In a meeting with alumni, employers and other stakeholders, the Audit Panel explored the extent to which PolyU graduates manifest the graduate attributes set by the University.

4.4   The University's general assessment regulations are set out in the handbook on academic regulations and procedures. This includes fundamental information on setting assessments, examination requirements, assessment criteria, marking and moderation, and Boards of Examiners. Examination questions and assessment tasks are subject to internal moderation and all subject results must be ratified by a subject assessment review panel (SARP).

4.5   The framework for ensuring that students have appropriate learning opportunities to develop the Ug graduate attributes is well designed; various GURs and curricular components are explicitly and carefully mapped to the graduate attributes. Expected student achievement in the formal curriculum is clearly specified during programme design and approval. Required documentation includes a definitive programme document that includes the PILOs and a P-LOAP, which together help set the academic standards of the award. The P-LOAP is seen as a critical means for programmes and the University to monitor achievement of learning outcomes. It includes an articulation of PILOs, measures for assessing student achievement of those outcomes, and a statement of success criteria. Programme curriculum maps and subject description forms for each individual subject demonstrate where in the programme each PILO is to be taught and assessed.

4.6   Staff have access to comprehensive guidance, including training sessions delivered by EDC, on developing a P-LOAP. Requirements are illustrated with examples from other universities and regulatory frameworks. Academic staff whom the Audit Panel met showed a sound awareness and understanding of the role and significance of PILOs.

4.7   The University's approach to CRA requires assessment based on criteria and academic standards derived from the SILOs, as set out in the subject description form.   There are clear and comprehensive guidelines for implementation of CRA which provide information on identifying SILOs; selecting assessment methods aligned with ILOs; setting assessment criteria; communicating criteria to students and assessors; assessing and grading; and feeding back to students. The text on grading differentiates between levels of student performance in assessment using adjectives such as 'fully meets', 'largely meets', or 'marginally meets'. The Audit Panel considers that levels

of performance could be differentiated more precisely and meaningfully and encourages the University to do so.

4.8   APRRs reveal the way in which the CRA approach has been systematically and comprehensively adopted. Subject co-ordinators are required to report on alignment of assessment components with learning outcomes in APRRs. Minutes of two exam boards requested by the Audit Panel, indicate that SARPs and Boards of Examiners operate in line with University expectations by considering assessment tasks and results and deciding on awards, respectively. All SARPs are chaired by heads of department and are held in Hong Kong to facilitate comparisons of student achievement across provision.

4.9   Departments may develop their own models for operating SARPs, but guidance specifies that 'the mode of operation must not undermine the effectiveness and trustworthiness of a SARP as a mechanism for safeguarding consistency and fairness of assessment'. The University states that decisions are made in the light of the standard of student achievement appropriate to the award to which the programme is designed to lead, the aims of the programme, the performance on the programme in previous years, the general assessment regulations of the University and the specific programme regulations, and good practice established in the University and elsewhere.

4.10   The University took advantage of the move to the four-year Ug degree to strengthen opportunities for students to develop a sense of social responsibility within both the formal curriculum and the co-curriculum. The focus on providing higher education in professional and applied fields was appropriately complemented by incorporating WIE as a requirement within the formal curriculum. Service-learning, with its emphasis on ethical leadership is also a mandatory element within all Ug programmes (see paragraphs 7.4 - 7.5 below). Employers and alumni whom the Audit Panel met testified to the quality of student achievement facilitated by WIE.

4.11   The Audit Panel noted that PolyU invests significant time and resource into monitoring and ensuring student achievement. Using both direct and indirect measures, I-LOAP provides a comprehensive framework for evaluating overall student achievement at institutional level. Multiple surveys conducted regularly by PolyU include: the first year experience survey; SFQs, through which students self-assess their achievement of SILOs on a particular subject; the self-assessment of all-round development, which provides a student self-assessment of achievement of graduate attributes. These surveys serve as examples of the multiple indirect measures of student achievement made by the University. Direct measures using validated assessment tools including International English Language Testing System (or IELTS) and Collegiate Learning Assessment provide objective measures on some aspects of the graduate attributes. Employment statistics and further studies in graduate schools are all systematically collected and indicate that PolyU graduates are

well prepared for the market. The Audit Panel noted that employer feedback on graduates' performance is collected by departments and endorses the University's plan to set up an institutional level data collection mechanism to complement departmental surveys.

4.12   The Audit Panel was interested to ascertain whether integrated data are available illustrating student achievement across the curriculum and co-curriculum. The University reported that while data on student participation in co-curricular activities exist, they are currently fragmented and separate from curricular records. The Audit Panel recognises the complexity of bringing data sources together but nevertheless strongly endorses the University's plans to introduce a comprehensive student record system.

4.13   Action plans and progress reports are routinely included within AOPs and considered by DPCs and Ug and TPg studies committees before being forwarded to Faculty/School boards. Minutes of meetings of the studies committees viewed by the Audit Panel revealed constructive discussion of the relationship between PILOs and assessment as part of careful consideration of student achievement within each subject. Discussion at Faculty boards appears less extensive though there is consideration of generic issues such as the move to outcome-based RPg provision.

4.14   Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the University's comprehensive approach to monitoring and fostering student achievement of institutional graduate attributes, which includes employer, graduate and student feedback and draws on student achievement data, is commended.

5.   QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

5.1   PolyU's framework for quality enhancement (QE) in teaching and learning is embedded in its strategic planning and quality assurance (QA) processes. The University's approach is evidence-based and predicated on a combination of strong central leadership and extensive staff involvement. Successful enhancement initiatives are ultimately consolidated into regular practices.

5.2   To determine whether PolyU has an effective strategic framework for managing QE, the Audit Panel held meetings with the senior managers; other academic managers, including deans, heads of department and programme leaders; teaching staff including those responsible for supervision of RPg students; and non-academic professional support staff. PolyU's formal processes and procedures for QE were explored, at each institutional level, in relation to identification, implementation and dissemination of enhancements in learning and teaching and associated support structures and processes. The Audit Panel also held meetings with a wide range of students, including student representatives, to understand their role in the QE process and their experience of enhancements in learning and teaching.

5.3   The Audit Panel also examined relevant documentation supplied by the University, including the QA handbook; guidelines on collecting and using student feedback; educational quality indicators; examples of ongoing improvements to programmes and subjects in a department; and areas identified for further improvement within the four-year curriculum. An audit trail, requested by the Audit Panel, focused on a single department that claimed to have identified and exploited enhancement opportunities through the processes of annual programme monitoring and review. This enabled the Audit Panel to test the ways in which different levels of the University play their part in enhancing learning opportunities, including taking account of feedback from students and a variety of external advisors.

5.4   Every six years, the President appoints a committee, including staff and Council members, to develop the University's Strategic Plan. Operation of the strategic framework for QE is owned by the Deputy President (DP) and Provost and the Vice Presidents, with the President having overall oversight, including resourcing. Enhancement proposals are discussed at LTC meetings and approved by Academic Council, Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments), and/or Senate to decide whether they should be adopted by the University as policies for implementation.

5.5   At institutional level, strategic goals and actions are determined by a combination of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (or SWOT) analysis, annual and six-yearly reviews, external benchmarking, academic development planning exercises, QAC audit advice and advice from local and international experts. Institutional projects include addressing challenges arising from the introduction of the four-year curriculum (see *The quality of learning opportunities* paragraph 3.4 above). Mechanisms for evaluation and identification of enhancement opportunities include annual programme reviews and six-yearly DRs. The International Advisory Board (IAB) and International Research and Planning Office (IRPO) were formed to facilitate evidence-based monitoring and improvement; examples include IAB's focus on service-learning and entrepreneurship, which has led to changes in approach in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management. The University has also formed AQAT, which will support the development and monitoring of QA and QE policies and procedures, and conduct regular surveys to confirm departmental compliance with these procedures. AQAT will provide training to programme leaders on QA and QE.

5.6   At subject level, the eSFQ and SSCGs are the main methods for collecting student feedback to facilitate QE. Staff are encouraged to improve their teaching by adding questions to the eSFQ on specific aspects of their teaching. An eSFQ analytic function was introduced in 2015 to facilitate the use of eSFQ data. This will enable heads of academic units to explore the trends and patterns in SFQ scores by subject, teacher and class size. SSCGs have been

mandatory for Ug since 2012 and for TPg programmes since 2014. Examples of enhancements arising from discussions at SSCGs were provided by both students and staff.

5.7   Programme leaders have primary responsibility to respond to student feedback. At programme level, P-LOAPs were extended to TPg provision in 2014 to ensure all taught course are regularly improved based on learning outcome data.

5.8   At departmental level, the annual business plan and QA report are combined into the AOP to facilitate business planning. Reporting templates have been revised to reinforce requirements to discuss actions in relation to survey findings and learning outcomes data in the AOP. Departments are required to produce timelines for action items relating to QA and QE and provide an interim update to the Faculty dean, who in turn reports to the Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments). The audit trail illustrated the effective operation of QE processes from subject to institutional level, including action plan, timeline and sign off. It was clear to the Audit Panel that AOP and P-LOAP processes are working well.

5.9   New key performance indicators (KPIs) include items relevant to QE of teaching and learning, such as staff engagement in teaching development projects, teaching-related publications, and adoption of innovative teaching approaches. The Audit Panel found substantial evidence of enhancements in teaching development co-ordinated by EDC (see *The quality of learning opportunities* paragraph 3.9 above). For example, a 'learning and teaching café' inspired by PolyU's monthly 'research café', provides an occasional forum in which learning and teaching issues can be discussed informally. eSFQ data show high levels of satisfaction with teaching quality.

5.10   Student representatives cited various examples of an enhanced curriculum, including programmes designed for solving problems with a syllabus that directs students to industry. Learning spaces have been updated, and are now more suited for interactive learning (see *The quality of learning opportunities* paragraph 3.3 above).

5.11   The Audit Panel found evidence that PolyU has established mechanisms to ensure that enhancement opportunities are identified systematically. For example, the interim review of the four-year curriculum usefully identified areas for improvement.

5.12   A critical review of QA implementation led to reinforcing the review of subject objectives, assessments and learning outcomes by making it mandatory for these to be included in DAA reports and in DRs from December 2015. AQAT will conduct regular surveys with departments to

confirm compliance with QA requirements and to assess the degree of rigour in closing the quality loop.

5.13   The follow-up to DR has been strengthened, with departments required to produce timelines for action items and provide an interim update to the Faculty dean, who in turn reports to Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments). Enhancement plans are included in departmental AOPs and their outcomes are included in departmental KPIs and monitored by IRPO.

5.14   Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that PolyU has an effective framework in place for QE, which is embedded in strategic planning and QA. Implementation of quality enhancement is systematically monitored, internally reviewed and externally benchmarked. The Audit Panel saw ample evidence that PolyU collects and analyses qualitative and quantitative data to enable improvements in the quality of learning and teaching.

6.   POSTGRADUATE PROVISION

6.1   The University aims to offer RPg, TPg, and offshore TPg programmes to meet an overwhelming demand for critical enquiry, continuing professional development and life-long learning. In particular, the University aims to offer world class RPg programmes focusing on scientific inquiry and knowledge creation as well as aligning with its mission, role, and QA mechanisms; and to provide a range of TPg programmes to nurture professionals and leaders for society, including a number of offshore TPg programmes in the Mainland and Macau.

6.2   The Audit Panel discussed the issues of graduate attributes, overarching institutional aims and PILOs for RPg students with senior management, academic managers, RPg supervisors and RPg students. The Audit Panel also discussed at length the issue of ensuring comparable academic standards and quality of learning opportunities for the University's offshore TPg programmes with senior management and academic managers responsible for those programmes.   Noting that the OBE framework had recently been adopted for RPg programmes, the Audit Panel explored the main challenges in its implementation with academic managers and RPg supervisors. The services and learning technologies available to RPg and TPg students and the ways in which student feedback is collected and taken into account were discussed with student support units, teachers, academic managers and students.

6.3   The Audit Panel examined a range of relevant documents including: a summary of changes in students' learning experience after adopting OBE in RPg programmes; performance data of RPg graduates; the thesis examination process for RPg programmes; the benchmarking mechanism established by RC; the research degree graduate survey; curriculum structure and content of

PolyU TPg programmes; and the findings of a survey on the implementation of programme QA processes for TPg programmes.

6.4   The University adopts the same QA framework and strategies, policies, and processes for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing academic quality for all its programmes, including its postgraduate provision. Both TPg and RPg programmes have adopted OBE in recent years. The PILOs for RPg programmes have been well articulated for each discipline, based on two overarching aims. Departmental programme documents, outlining ILOs and curriculum, are reviewed by DAAs for validation or benchmarking purposes and endorsed by Faculty research committees/School boards and RC.

6.5   The Audit Panel was informed that the University's graduate attributes/institutional learning outcomes apply equally to Ug, TPg, and RPg students, but also that they are tailored to RPg students. The Audit Panel noted that documents mapping PILOs for each RPg programme against the two overarching university aims do not mention the University's graduate attributes nor institutional learning outcomes specific to RPg programmes. The University explained that the two aims are derived from the Ug institutional learning outcomes but that this remains implicit rather than explicit within institutional processes and documentation. It was also made clear that the PILOs for RPg programmes were developed in 2014/15 and that the impact of their implementation will be reviewed in due course. The Audit Panel formed the view that the distinction between the standard of RPg and other levels of degree is not clear and therefore recommends that the University define precisely, articulate clearly and communicate effectively its graduate attributes/institutional learning outcomes for RPg programmes.

6.6   All TPg programmes have adopted P-LOAPs to facilitate evidence-based improvement of student learning, starting from 2014/15. The University requires each department to implement P-LOAPs for RPg programmes from 2015/16, with the first results and an associated action plan to be submitted to RC by the end of 2015/16.

6.7   Taking into account the increasing number of applicants from the Mainland and the diversity of their academic qualifications, admission guidelines for Mainland applicants have been implemented to ensure adequate intake quality. Responding to a recommendation made by the 2010 QAC Quality Audit about exploring strategies other than surveys to collect student feedback, the University mandated the establishment of SSCGs for TPg programmes from 2015.

6.8   As a manifestation of its commitment to engaging the nation and enhancing the impact of its professional education, PolyU offers a number of offshore TPg programmes. The University makes considerable efforts to ensure that it

delivers a comparable quality of experience to its offshore TPg students.   For example, the University adopts the same staff profile as far as possible, the same QA mechanisms, similar support systems, and the same curriculum, programme learning outcomes and assessment strategies.

6.9   Close examination of relevant documents and meetings with senior management and academic managers responsible for the offshore TPg programmes revealed, however, that in two cases considered by the Audit Panel there exist differences between the offshore programme and the programme offered on the home campus that could affect the standard and quality of the student experience.   The differences related to language of instruction and assessment, and the volume and nature of content and assessment.   This becomes an issue when the offshore programme and its corresponding programme offered on the home campus bear the same name on the award parchment.   Furthermore, the Audit Panel found no evidence that student achievement of the home campus and offshore cohorts is systematically compared.   Therefore the Audit Panel recommends that the University strengthen the QAE of offshore TPg programmes to ensure that they are demonstrably comparable in every respect, including student achievement, when the offshore programme bears the same name on the award parchment as that of the programme offered at the home campus.

6.10   The Audit Panel found that RPg and TPg students are well supported and generally enjoying their studies at PolyU.   In addition to the support services provided for Ug students, RPg students enjoy additional guidance and support such as attachment programmes, conference funding, academic and career guidance, English enhancement programmes, and a training programme on teaching to enhance their learning and prepare them for their future career.   The University also promotes a vibrant research environment through various means such as research workshops, state-of-the-art research facilities, and dynamic learning spaces.   The quality of RPg programmes is maintained through a three-phase monitoring process which moves through admission procedures to middle-term registration confirmation and finally to thesis submission and examination.

6.11   PolyU gathers a range of data which it uses effectively to monitor its postgraduate provision.   For example, a mechanism has been established to benchmark all RPg programmes against overseas and/or local universities.   The first two rounds of departmental results on benchmarking were reviewed by RC recently with positive outcomes and action plans.   Most RPg students, including 95% of Doctor of Philosophy students, have published journal or conference papers before graduation over the last five years.   A majority of RPg graduates acquired research/teaching jobs following graduation.   Annual RPg graduate survey data from the past three years indicates very positive responses from RPg graduates.   The University plans to conduct an employer survey to evaluate RPg graduates' contribution to the workplace.

6.12   The University conducted a comprehensive review in 2014 of the implementation of QA processes in TPg programmes, which showed that academic regulations and procedures, and programme QA processes are closely observed. Issues revealed by the review were subsequently addressed. A few low demand TPg programmes have been discontinued.

6.13   The University, and, in particular, its departments, respond constructively to suggestions from students for improvements. Students whom the Audit Panel met were able to provide many illustrations of enhancements they have experienced. For example, more recently registered RPg students receive training for their duties as teaching assistants. Most of the students whom the Audit Panel met had attended the compulsory course and reported very positively about the impact it had had on their teaching practices.

6.14   Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that QAE of PolyU's postgraduate provision is closely modelled on Ug provision, with appropriate adjustments, and is generally fit for purpose. Postgraduate students are well supported and the University takes account of their feedback which is largely positive. Further attention is required to clarify matters giving rise to confusion about RPg institutional learning outcomes/graduate attributes and to secure all aspects of the QA of offshore TPg programmes.

7a.   AUDIT THEME: ENHANCING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

7.1   The University's objectives in enhancing the student learning experience are embedded and articulated within its 2012-18 Strategic Plan. The University's overarching aim is to provide students with 'a high quality, effective and rewarding learning experience'. The University continuously seeks to enhance provision with a reflective and responsive approach.

7.2   The topic of enhancing the student learning experience was raised in meetings with senior management, academic managers, teaching and non-academic professional support staff and students at all levels. The Audit Panel was also keen to hear about the progress of the ten-year revitalisation plan for existing learning spaces and other resource issues in conversation with key staff and students. In order to ascertain the success of specific initiatives to enhance the student learning experience, the Audit Panel invited Ug students to describe and evaluate the opportunities they had taken up.

7.3   The Audit Panel examined a range of relevant documents including the University's 2012-18 Strategic Plan; the interim major findings of the five-year longitudinal evaluation on GUR; the report on satisfaction with the quality of first year experience for four-year curriculum students; the report on student feedback on learning experience in WIE 2013-14; a brief report on

the interim review of the four-year Ug degree programmes; an Academic Council paper entitled 'Key Performance Indicators for Departmental Performance Evaluation'; and documents provided as part of the audit trail, described above (see *Quality enhancement* paragraph 5.3 above).

7.4   As noted earlier in this report, the University has incorporated and mandated within the formal curriculum some activities that hitherto formed an optional part of the co-curriculum. All Ug students are now required to complete an academic subject that integrates a service-learning element to cultivate a greater sense of social responsibility and ethical leadership. In similar vein, an enhanced version of WIE has been mandated and incorporated within the formal Ug curriculum, now with more overseas placements, reinforced discipline relevance, and strengthened work-based learning preparation and employer support.

7.5   The Audit Panel found convincing evidence that the WIE experience increases students' exposure, improves their capacity for learning and is well implemented, managed and supported by a range of student services units, notably through thorough pre- and post-placement training. The Audit Panel also heard through first hand reports from employers and alumni, who uniformly welcomed these developments, that PolyU graduates acquire sound practical knowledge that enables them to start in the workplace without much further training. They described typical PolyU graduates as having a very positive attitude and a willingness to explore new solutions and approaches to the challenges presented to them. The Audit Panel learned that WIE provides crucial experience in certain professional programmes and that making it mandatory has given PolyU graduates a unique advantage in certain graduate employment fields. Students whom the Audit Panel met described the ways in which such experiences had challenged and ultimately transformed their learning. The Audit Panel commends the requirement for all Ug students to complete an academic subject that integrates a service-learning element and an enhanced WIE placement.

7.6   The enhanced curriculum is complemented by a richer co-curricular experience. Faculties/Schools, departments and designated academic support offices, offer between them a very wide range of co-curricular learning opportunities that have high take-up figures and are appreciated by students and employers alike. In addition to mandatory components for all Ug students, the co-curricular programme also offers a wide range of other opportunities, including cultural activities, participation in entrepreneurship schemes, open lectures, research seminars and conferences, and information literacy workshops. There is a strong emphasis on internationalisation, including promotion of student exchange programmes, together with short exchanges and overseas visits to help overcome the relative shortage of overseas placements available (see *Global engagements* page 28 below).

7.7   The University identifies its responsibility to provide students with a sufficient amount of learning space of sufficient quality as one of the major challenges it faces in the medium term. PolyU has a clear strategy and defined processes for development of physical and electronically-based resources to enable the best use of innovative teaching and technology for an effective mix of different modes of learning. A working group drives the ten-year revitalisation plan for campus learning spaces, supported by two further working groups that devise strategies and implementation plans and manage resource planning. The University has set itself the goal of refurbishing 20 classrooms per year over the period of the plan. All learning spaces will be innovatively designed and equipped with technology to support collaborative and student-centered learning.

7.8   The University has identified e-learning development as a strategic priority and has established a central e-learning support team, including instructional designers and information technologists to provide a one-stop solution for staff. Significant developments in blended learning resources at PolyU include the introduction of four Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in the past year, which has reinforced the use of flipped classrooms and collaborative learning tools for Ug students. Developments in the use of e-learning are supported by an information technology (IT) strategy, which has led to improvements in the IT infrastructure. Use of e-learning has also helped support the transition of students from secondary to tertiary education, following the introduction of the four-year curriculum. The Audit Panel noted the key role played by EDC and its central e-learning team. Students at PolyU's offshore TPg programmes have access to both PolyU's library and learning resources and to those of the partner institution. The Audit Panel found evidence that these initiatives are enthusiastically embraced by academic managers, staff and students.

7.9   The University continually monitors at institutional level the extent to which the student body as a whole achieves institutional learning outcomes as a means of gathering evidence to inform and guide enhancement efforts. Benchmarking mechanisms are introduced or reinforced, evaluation criteria and KPIs are elaborated, and many report templates are being revised to include discussion of results/evidence to identify gaps and to propose action plans. Results of institutional surveys and the international student barometer are critically reviewed to identify issues needing improvement in relation to the student learning experience. AOPs with inputs from DAAs and EAAs at departmental level facilitate the use of review results as the basis for identification of further enhancement initiatives.

7.10   Student survey data and meetings with students at all levels indicate high levels of satisfaction with improved Library resources in particular and with the development of learning spaces and the use of electronic resources overall, although students would like to see further improvements and developments.

The Audit Panel encourages the University to continue in its development and creation of new learning spaces and in the increased use of blended learning.

7.11   Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the University has a firm commitment together with comprehensive strategies and plans to enhance the student learning experience, ranging from large-scale revitalisation of the learning environment to detailed but significant modifications to curriculum design.

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

7.12   PolyU states in its institutional submission that it fully embraces the importance of global engagements for the development of the University, its staff and students. The overarching goal of global engagements is to 'imbue the University's education and research with international perspectives to achieve global impact'. While PolyU's mission statement is silent on the matter, the theme of global engagements is firmly embedded in the University's vision and role statements. Two of the five key areas of focus identified in the 2012-18 Strategic Plan 'Internationalisation' and 'Engaging the Nation' guide PolyU's policies, procedures and resource allocation in relation to globalisation. The Audit Panel was informed that internationalisation is an end in itself, part of the University's 'DNA', and a means to enabling students to achieve the University's graduate attributes.

7.13   In order to establish how the University's approach to global engagements manifests itself in practice and evaluate its effectiveness, the Audit Panel discussed different components of PolyU's strategic approach to global engagements with senior managers and explored the implications of this approach at the Faculty/School and department levels with academic managers. Conversations with teaching staff focused on the ways in which individuals had revised their subjects to contribute to the incorporation of globalisation within every programme. Students supplied accounts of their international experiences at home and abroad, while non-academic professional support staff explained the ways in which they facilitate and support such opportunities.

7.14   The Audit Panel also paid close attention to the structure and content of both the curriculum and the co-curriculum; the framework of institutional learning outcomes/graduate attributes; the components of the curriculum and co-curriculum that facilitate achievement of graduate attributes; and a variety of documents, data and statistics relating to the theme including, for example memoranda of understanding, international collaborative research projects and accounts of student participation overseas exchanges, service-learning projects and WIE placements.

7.15   PolyU has made the strategic decision to mandate the incorporation of a global perspective within the Ug curriculum. Two of the four cluster areas under the GURs for all Ug programmes emphasise global issues and at least one of the broadening subjects is required to be 'China-related'. PILOs related to globalisation are now included in all Ug programmes. The previous Strategic Plans (2001-2008 and 2008-2012) included graduate attributes on global engagements, such as global outlook and cultural appreciation. However, although the Audit Panel found evidence of global perspectives, this theme is not specifically mentioned in the current set of graduate attributes. The Audit Panel therefore encourages the University to consider whether the theme of global engagements could be given greater prominence within the Ug graduate attributes.

7.16   In all other respects, the Audit Panel found that the global engagements theme permeates the University's thinking and operations. For example, benchmarking the curriculum with overseas comparator institutions is implicitly built in to the University's QA processes at both the institutional and departmental levels in relationship to curriculum design, setting of academic standards, and evaluation of student and staff achievements. DAAs and DR panel members are drawn from the selected benchmarking institutions.

7.17   PolyU has invested significantly in the development of a global network of institutions and professional organisations to promote collaboration and to enhance the global perspectives of students and staff. Collaborative activities include student and staff exchanges, joint degree programmes leading to dual awards, research projects, participation in MOOCs and staff engagement with professional and other global organisations. The Audit Panel also heard that RPg students are given a budget for presenting a paper at an overseas conference, and that overseas attachment programmes are in place. Initiatives for overseas activities (including Cluster Area Requirements subjects, service-learning subjects and WIE) have been implemented and dedicated funds (such as the International Exchange and Partnership Fund and the PolyU Community Service Fund) have been set up to facilitate overseas activities for Ug students. However, the Audit Panel formed the view that the budgets for the Ug student exchange programme and the RPg budget for overseas activity will need to be increased further if they are to match up with the University's ambitions in relation to globalisation.

7.18   The University has introduced processes to increase the numbers, cultural mix and quality of international academic staff. The University's framework for appointment, promotion and retention of academic staff, introduced in 2011, uses international benchmarking for both recruitment and retention of staff. Sabbaticals and an overseas scholarship scheme for teaching development are available and departments are encouraged to facilitate academic staff exchange and engagement in international conferences in Hong Kong and overseas.

7.19   A critical self-review conducted in 2014/15 provided the University with assurance that the majority of Ug and TPg programmes manifest a global outlook, either through explicitly stated PILOs or via the international themes permeating subjects.

7.20   The University monitors non-local student numbers and has recorded steady increases in recent years repaying and further encouraging the efforts made to enhance the orientation, induction and integration of local and non-local students on campus. Targets have been set for the next three years and the University has set up the Mainland and International Student Services Office and restructured the Student Affairs Office to support student integration. Attrition rates for non-local students are low and falling. Recruitment of international staff is included in two of the five priority areas of the 2012-18 Strategic Plan while the 2011 framework for appointment, promotion and retention of academic staff ensures that recruitment, promotion and retention processes include the use of international searches and benchmarks. The Audit Panel also noted that the distinguished chair professor scheme, the sabbatical policy, and the policy encouraging attending and organising international conferences are in place and functioning effectively.

7.21   It has not proved possible, however, to achieve such positive results in relation to participation rates in the overseas exchange programme which remain relatively low.   The Audit Panel was informed that certain Faculties/Schools and disciplines, especially professionally accredited programmes, find it more difficult than others to identify suitable exchange partner institutions, particularly those with whom it would be possible to establish credit-transfer arrangements. These programmes have to meet very strict requirements to get through local statutory bodies' accreditation. The University is circumventing these problems by looking into credit transfer mechanisms, particularly those in respect of GUR subjects and generic subjects like science/engineering/ business for which it is relatively easy to arrange credit transfer. The University is organising International Summer Schools to invite international students to visit the Hong Kong campus. In addition, the University is striving to provide opportunities for international exposure through service-learning projects and WIE placements at home and abroad. These experiences are closely monitored, evaluated and enhanced and are highly rated by students.

7.22   In response to students' concerns about limited improvements in their language ability, the University has increased the Chinese and English language requirements in the four-year curriculum and some disciplines have introduced language-related discipline-specific requirements.

7.23   Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that PolyU's proactive and creative approach to global engagements is working effectively and commends the

University's strategic focus on internationalisation in the Strategic Plan and the way in which teaching staff, non-academic professional support staff and students have embraced, adopted and implemented the theme within both the core and co-curriculum.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 PolyU was founded in 1972 with a distinctive mission to provide applied and professional education. Its vision now is to be a leading university that excels in professional education, applied research and partnership for the betterment of Hong Kong, the nation and the world, and it can be justifiably proud in its achievements in pursuit of that aim.

8.2 The University has successfully introduced a four-year Ug curriculum which is innovative, relevant, professionally and practically embedded and attentive to the development of international understanding. There is an extensive co-curricular programme which aligns effectively with the requirement for students to complete a WIE placement and a service-learning element. Employers and alumni are appreciative of the University's approach.

8.3 The University has established a sound framework for setting and maintaining academic standards. There is a comprehensive strategy which has helped embed OBE and CRA across Ug and TPg provision, and which is being extended to RPg. Standards are benchmarked against similar universities as well as national and international frameworks.

8.4 Since its 2010 QAC Audit, PolyU has continued to strengthen its approach to QAE with various well received initiatives to improve the student experience, the curriculum and learning resources. EDC helps deliver an extensive range of staff development opportunities designed to enhance the quality of the student learning experience. The approach to QE is monitored effectively and externally benchmarked.

8.5 This report recognises the University's notable recent achievements, and makes suggestions intended to help the University build on those achievements as it progressively implements its strategic aims.

APPENDIX A: THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY (POLYU)

History

The Hong Kong Polytechnic was established in 1972 with a mandate to provide application-oriented education to meet the community's need for professional manpower resources. The Polytechnic has undergone extensive development and rapid expansion and launched its first five degree programmes in 1983. With the approval for self-accreditation of degree programmes, the Polytechnic assumed full university status in 1994, changing its name to The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Vision and Mission of the University

Vision

To be a leading university that excels in professional education, applied research and partnership for the betterment of Hong Kong, the nation and the world.

Mission

- To nurture graduates who are critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers, lifelong learners and ethical leaders.

- To advance knowledge and the frontiers of technology to meet the changing needs of society.

- To support a University community in which all members can excel through education and scholarship.

Role Statement

PolyU:

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

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

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

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

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

(f)   emphasizes high value-added education, with a balanced approach leading to the development of all-round students with professional competence;

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

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

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

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

Governance and Management

Established under the PolyU Ordinance, the Council is the University's governing body, including members from the business and professional sectors as well as staff, alumni and student representatives. The Senate, chaired by the President, is the highest authority on academic-related matters. Its membership comprises representatives from all Faculties/Schools, the College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE), academic Departments, major support units, and the student body. Under the Senate, Faculty/School/College Boards and standing committees oversee various policy/functional issues.

The President is responsible to the Council for the management, conduct and administration of the University. He is supported by the Deputy President (DP) and Provost, the Vice Presidents, the Associate Vice Presidents and the Deans, who manage the planning, development and operation of the University's academic and non-academic enterprises. The University has 15 institutional level committees/consultative groups that facilitate the realisation of its Vision and Mission.

Academic Organisation and Programmes of Study

The University has six Faculties and two independent Schools, plus the CPCE. The Faculties and CPCE are overseen by Deans while the two Schools are headed by Deans and overseen by the DP. The University offers a wide range of programmes in different disciplines such as engineering physics, fashion and textiles, environmental engineering and sustainable development, geomatics, physiotherapy, optometry, design, transportation systems engineering, etc.

Staff and Students Numbers

In 2014/15, the University had 13 954 undergraduate and 709 postgraduate students in UGC-funded programmes. Enrolments in self-financed programmes accounted for a further 15 621 students. Teaching staff comprises 814 regular and 393 short-term contract staff to give a total of 1 207. 77.6% of teaching staff members have doctoral degrees.

Revenue

Consolidated income for the year 2014/15 was HK$6,353 million of which HK$2,964.3 million (46.7%) came from government subvention and HK$3,388.7 million (53.3%) from tuition, programmes, interest and net investment income, donations, auxiliary services and other income.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) welcomes the audit findings and wishes to thank the QAC Audit Panel for the rigorous review process and a very positive report. We are gratified by the fact that the Panel found good practices worthy of commendations in all five areas and the two audit themes reviewed in this exercise. We are pleased to note that the Panel found concrete evidence to confirm that our QA mechanisms and procedures have been effective in assuring academic standards and enhancing student learning experience, which ultimately contributes to the success of our students and graduates.

As a university that puts students at the centre and strives to provide a value-added education, we are proud of the finding that "there was much evidence, including comments from employers and alumni and employment statistics, that confirms the achievement of PolyU's graduates" [para. (e)]. The consistently high quality of our education is founded on a "comprehensive approach to monitoring and fostering student achievement of institutional graduate attributes" which the Panel found commendable [para. 4.14]. The University "has established a sound framework for setting and maintaining academic standards" [para. 8.3] in which outcome-based approach and criterion-referenced assessment are embedded and standards are benchmarked against international frameworks as well as other universities.

In launching the new four-year undergraduate (Ug) curriculum. PolyU seized the opportunity and invested significant efforts and resources to create an enhanced and enriched learning experience for students. The Panel acknowledged our Ug curriculum to be "innovative, focusing on academic relevance, real-world experience, professional practice and international understanding and experience" [para 3.4], and that it is complemented by a co-curricular experience "with a wide range of activities that enable students to engage in a culturally rich academic community, where students are encouraged and supported to broaden their horizons, attain the graduate attributes, and develop into responsible global citizens and leaders of tomorrow" [para. 3.1]. We are encouraged by the commendation given to the requirement for all students to engage in service-learning and work-integrated education [para. 7.5], which the Panel described as "a particularly strong feature of the curriculum" , "well implemented, professionally supported by dedicated student service units and highly rated by students" [para. (h)], and appreciated by employers and alumni [para. 8.2]. We will continue to develop these unique features of our curriculum in an effort to help students develop the skills and qualities that are much valued by employers and the contemporary world and to better interface university education with the industry and society.

The report draws attention to the strong support that we offer to our students. The Panel found that our "orientation programme was enhanced and is regarded as helpful and thorough by Ug and TPg students", "e-Assessment and e-learning resources were developed to enhance new students' knowledge of English, Science and Mathematics"

[para. 3.5], and "RPg and TPg students are well supported" [para. 6.10]. The Panel also commended "the establishment of the two-tier academic advising system, which provides complementary support for students, particularly during their transition to tertiary education and is positively regarded by students and staff" [para 3.5]. The University is in the process of creating a comprehensive student record system that will further strengthen our ability to facilitate student achievement across the curriculum and co-curriculum, and we thank the Panel for endorsing this development.

Our "comprehensive and proactive programme of staff development provision" was highlighted as "strong features of a learning environment characterised by a commitment to continual development" [para. 3.11]. PolyU accords great importance to teaching quality and has built significantly on our highly acclaimed staff development programme since the last QAC audit [para 3.9]. The Panel commended the "extensive range of courses and workshops", made available for both new and established staff through the University's Educational Development Centre (EDC), which is "a major factor in ensuring and enhancing the quality of student learning opportunities". The Panel also noted that EDC courses are "very well attended", are "commented on positively by teaching staff", and "show demonstrable impact" [para 3.9].

Our efforts to enhance student learning experience through the development of physical and electronic resources and the innovative use of technology in teaching and learning have been met with approval by students and staff [para. 7.8]. The Panel found evidence in student survey data and meetings with students at all levels which indicates "high levels of satisfaction…with the development of learning spaces and the use of electronic resources overall" [para 7.10]. We welcome the Panel's endorsement of our "firm commitment" and "comprehensive strategies and plans" to enhance the student learning experience [para. 7.11], and will continue our efforts in creating new learning space and promoting blended learning.

With regard to our efforts in global engagement, the Panel commended "the University's strategic focus on internationalisation in the strategic plan and the way in which teaching staff, non-academic professional support staff and students have embraced, adopted and implemented the theme within both the core and co-curriculum" [para 7.23]. We concur with the Panel's observation that "the global engagements theme permeates the University's thinking and operations" [para 7.16]. International themes are a common feature in our programmes; international benchmarking is built into our QA processes; strategically developed international networks are used to create more overseas learning opportunities for students; and staff and student recruitment strategies are honed to create a more diverse cultural mix on campus. We appreciate the Panel's conclusion that "PolyU's proactive and creative approach to global engagements is working effectively" [para 7.23].

Our commitment to continual quality enhancement (QE) for the betterment of student learning is testified by numerous QE efforts, including initiatives to review the four-year curriculum, promote e-learning, and revitalise the learning space. The Panel took

note of these "well-received initiatives" [para. 8.4] and the way we approach QE, and concluded that "PolyU has an effective framework in place for QE" that is "systematically monitored, internally reviewed and externally benchmarked" [para 5.14]. The Panel also "found much evidence that the University undertakes comprehensive analysis of employer, graduate, student feedback and achievement data" [para 2.19]. The audit trail further illustrated "the effective operation of QE processes from subject to institutional level, including action plan, timeline and sign off" [para 5.8].

In the same spirit, we treat this quality audit as an opportunity for QE. We are grateful to the Panel for identifying areas in our current practice where further improvement is called for. We will thoroughly consider all suggestions made by the Panel, particularly the recommendations to more formally articulate the role of Senate regarding academic standards; to make explicit the role of Departmental Academic Advisors concerning commentary on academic standards; and to clarify the relationship between institutional graduate attributes and research postgraduate programme learning outcomes.

To conclude, we would like to thank the Panel for its commendations as well as its useful and constructive comments on various aspects of our educational provision. We are impressed by its rigorous yet collegiate approach to conducting the audit, and by the enormous efforts it has expended in the process. We welcome the opportunity afforded by this exercise for us to engage in a dialogue with peers from the wider academic community, and believe that the audit findings will make a valuable contribution to our continuous quest for quality assurance and enhancement at PolyU.

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AOP	Annual operation plan
APRRs	Annual programme review reports
AQAT	Academic Quality Assurance Team
BETA	Becoming an effective teaching assistant
CPCE	College of Professional and Continuing Education
CRA	Criterion-referenced assessment
DAA	Departmental Academic Advisor
DAC	Departmental Advisory Committee
DP	Deputy President
DPCs	Departmental programme committees
DR	Departmental review
EAAs	External academic advisors
EDC	Educational Development Centre
eSFQ	Electronic student feedback questionnaire
GURs	General university requirements
I-LOAP	Institutional learning outcomes assessment plan
IAB	International Advisory Board
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILOs	Intended learning outcomes
IRPO	International Research and Planning Office
IT	Information technology
IUT	Introduction to university teaching
KPIs	Key performance indicators
LTC	Learning and Teaching Committee
MOOCs	Massive Open Online Courses
OBE	Outcome-based education
P-LOAP	Programme learning outcomes assessment plan
PILOs	Programme intended learning outcomes
PolyU	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
QA	Quality assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
QAE	Quality assurance and enhancement
QE	Quality enhancement
RC	Research Committee
RPg	Research postgraduate
SFQs	Student feedback questionnaires
SARP	Subject assessment review panel

SILOs	Subject intended learning outcomes
SSCGs	Student-staff consultative groups
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats
TPg	Taught postgraduate
Ug	Undergraduate
UGC	University Grants Committee
WIE	Work-integrated education

APPENDIX D: POLYU AUDIT PANEL

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Dr Neil Casey (Panel Chair)
Review Manager, The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Professor Roger Shu-kwan Cheng
Associate Provost (Teaching & Learning) and Professor of Electronic and Computer Engineering, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Professor Gary Feng
Associate Provost (Academic Planning and Undergraduate Education) and Chair Professor of Mechatronic Engineering, City University of Hong Kong

Professor Denis Wright
Former Director of Student Support, Imperial College London

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 UGC of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Mission

The QAC's mission is:

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

(b) To encourage universities to excel in this area of activity.

Terms of Reference

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

(a) To advise the UGC on quality assurance 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 universities;

(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 January 2017)

Mr Lincoln LEONG Kwok-kuen, JP (Chairman)	Chief Executive Officer, MTR Corporation Limited
Professor Adrian K DIXON	Emeritus Professor of Radiology, University of Cambridge
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, Massey University
Professor Amy TSUI Bik-may	Chair Professor of Language and Education, The University of Hong Kong
Dr Don WESTERHEIJDEN	Senior Research Associate, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente

Ex-officio Member

Dr Richard ARMOUR, JP	Secretary-General, UGC

Secretary

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