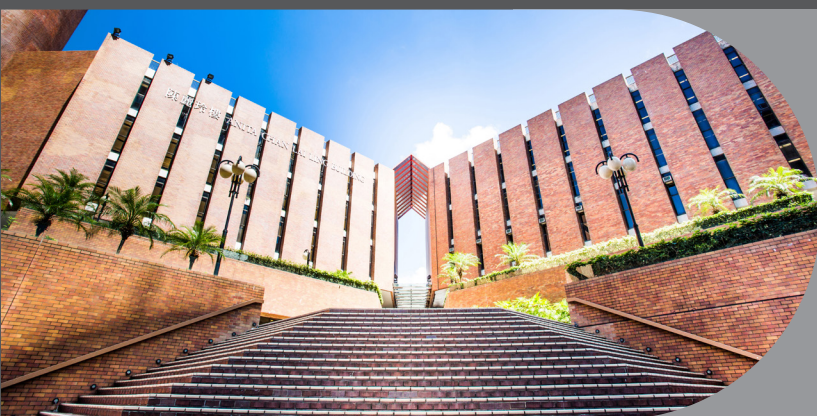


Third Audit Cycle of the Quality Assurance Council

Report of Quality Audit of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

November 2024

Quality Assurance Council



**Quality Assurance Council
Third Audit Cycle**

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

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

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PREFACE

Background

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

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

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

Conduct of QAC Quality Audits

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

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

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

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

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

Summary of the principal findings of the Audit Panel

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

The Audit Panel observed that PolyU aligns its strategic direction, operations, and activities with its Strategic Plan 2019-20 to 2024-25, titled ‘Shaping the Future’. The Vision and Mission are supported by five domains that define the University’s strategic direction. The University has a robust academic governance and management framework across its academic units, encompassing the College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE). Chaired by the President, the Senate stands as the highest academic governance committee with the authority to sanction new programmes and policy frameworks for overseeing academic departments and programmes. Supported by various standing boards and committees, the Senate ensures the University’s academic performance through a robust quality assurance framework. The University has also adopted a range of specific departmental (academic and academic support) outcome-oriented key performance indicators (KPIs). These indicators serve as cornerstones for academic planning, strategic development, and resource allocation.

PolyU ensures effective oversight of quality assurance and enhancement through a well-crafted Quality Assurance Framework Handbook detailing its ‘quality assurance framework, mechanisms and processes for academic departments’. This handbook

outlines the mechanisms and procedures for academic departments to formulate a structure for departmental quality assurance and enhancement, integrating external benchmarking and multi-level monitoring. The framework delineates the responsibilities of committees and academic departments across various tiers, spanning from programme to university level. PolyU employs a systematic and effective approach to utilising University and programme learning outcomes (PLOs) to gauge institutional effectiveness. Academic standards are set through various external reference points and mechanisms, such as Departmental Academic Advisors (DAAs), Departmental Reviews (DRs), and benchmarking against international universities. Around two-thirds of PolyU's academic programmes have received external accreditation from professional associations or statutory bodies. Additionally, the Panel found PolyU's transition from a programme-based to a scheme-based admission system to be effective.

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

The Audit Panel confirmed that PolyU has a consistent and mature process for programme planning, validation and review, facilitating their continuous improvement and updating. These processes, initiated by the programme planning committee (design of new programmes) or the programme leader (programmes review), are supported by a clear and coherent allocation of responsibilities among the various decision-making bodies within the University. A similar process, properly simplified and adapted, is also implemented for the approval and review of Continuing Education courses. These processes are well-known and accepted by the University community.

PolyU has adopted an outcome-based approach to curriculum design, defining the learning outcomes at the institution (ILOs), programme (PLOs), and subject (SLOs) levels, and aligning them through curriculum mapping. Based on this, the Audit Panel confirmed that the process is effectively implemented, highlighting, among other aspects, the connection to external references and the promotion of evidence-based practices. The Audit Panel is pleased to note that PolyU engages the DAA to ensure its programmes are benchmarked with international institutions and its programmes are aligned with societal needs. In addition, many of its programmes are accredited by external professional accreditation bodies. The Panel acknowledges the potential of the recent introduction of the Programme Learning Analytics Report (PLAR) as a tool for the continuous improvement of undergraduate (Ug) programmes. The data collected and managed by this report (learning outcome assessment, student feedback, etc.) are effectively integrated into the Annual Programme Review (APR), allowing for an agile and efficient process of continuous improvement of programmes. Results of this review include the recent revision, in 2022, of the General University Requirements (GUR) for academic programmes and Discipline-specific Requirements (DSR), as well as PolyU's decision to incorporate introductory subjects on Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics (AIDA) and Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IE) into all Ug curricula. The Audit Panel recognises PolyU's mature and rigorous systematic approach to programme design, monitoring, and review.

3. Review and enhancement of teaching and learning

The Audit Panel noted that PolyU ensures the quality of teaching being delivered by teachers (faculty and teaching staff) at the recruitment, induction, appraisal, and promotion stages. At the appointment, appraisal and promotion stages, there is a Framework for New Appointment, Promotion and Further Appointment of Academic Staff with the basis for the assessment of teaching ability. PolyU monitors the quality of teaching through a published framework for appraisal and academic reviews. The framework also sets out the criteria and processes for the promotion of academic staff. The Audit Panel concluded that PolyU has clearly communicated the criteria to be used for the assessment of teachers and that these effectively support decisions made regarding appointments, appraisals and promotions.

Student feedback on learning at the subject level is collected using the Student Feedback Questionnaire (SFQ). A new item, aimed at monitoring the extent to which students engaged in active learning, was added in 2022/23 academic year (AY). Student feedback on the broader student experience is collected using the Institutional Survey of Learning Experience. This collects student feedback at the institutional and departmental levels. Large-scale learning schemes have other routes for collecting evidence for evaluation. The mandatory scheme for large classes, Technology-enhanced Active Learning (TEAL) uses surveys to collect feedback from students and the data obtained was used to inform the setting of a general policy on active teaching in 2022. Service-Learning, currently a credit-bearing component of Ug programmes, is mandatory for Ug students. The Audit Panel noted that the significant participation by students, together with the implementation of review and enhancement processes, has made the PolyU Service Learning an award-winning Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Panel formed the opinion that the use of various surveys and feedback to gather evidence of student learning satisfactorily informs improvements and further developments in student learning.

4. Review and enhancement of student learning assessment

The Audit Panel observed that PolyU employs an outcome-based approach to teaching and learning, with learning outcomes and evaluation methods for each subject clearly defined and explained to students. The assessment of these subjects, based on criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) and the use of corresponding rubrics for all major assessment tasks, is satisfactorily implemented throughout the University. The current grading system, revised in 2020, is also deemed suitable, although there is evidence of variation in practice regarding feedback provision to students on their assessed work. The Audit Panel requests PolyU to review this variation in practice.

The assessment process follows well-established steps, including the involvement of a Subject Assessment Review Panel, a Board of Examiners, and an Academic Appeals Committee (AAC). A consistent internal moderation process ensures the adequacy of assessment tasks. The Audit Panel also noted PolyU's current processes for enhancing moderation. The appeal process is considered adequate and students are

aware of the opportunity to make an appeal. Assessment practices and outcomes are externally benchmarked by the DAA, which plays a significant role in driving improvement through result analysis within the University and benchmarking with internationally prestigious institutions. Consequently, student satisfaction with assessment practices has increased consistently.

The Audit Panel noted that PolyU is committed to the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools in teaching and assessment, including the appropriate introduction and approval of a policy which could be further developed in subsequent strategies and regulations. Moreover, the Audit Panel's attention is drawn to PolyU's commitment to ensuring its students act with academic integrity, duly appreciating the various tools deployed, as well as the establishment of clear guidelines for misconduct and the implementation of a new reporting system for less severe offences. The Audit Panel noted that overall, consistent and transparent systems are in place to ensure student assessment, both in UG and Continuing Education programmes, as well as in postgraduate (Pg) studies.

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

The Audit Panel noted that PolyU has set clear objectives and mechanisms for supporting students. Key student attributes spelled out in the strategic plan emphasise whole person development of its graduates. The plan has been executed under the leadership of the University, through academic departments and academic support units for all students. Graduate attributes are articulated at commencement and in induction activities organised by departments/programmes, and details are well understood across different offices.

The recent adoption of a one-tier advising system in 2023 provides student support at the academic department level while central units are providing training and consultation for academic advisors as well as support on demand. The Graduate School (GS) supports research postgraduate (RPg) students for their holistic development and progress monitoring. With clear guidelines to ensure academic rigour of the programmes, the discipline-related skill and language requirements are well structured within academic programmes. Academic departments also drive various discipline-related career-advising tasks for students.

There is a rich variety of activities to support student personal development, wellness, residential education and career planning. The co-curricular activities under different schemes have offered the student body broad exposure to diverse opportunities related to disciplinary knowledge, sports, career opportunities, arts, cultural interest, language training and entrepreneurship. Collectively, the activities constitute the broadening of education at the University, with student participation mostly on a voluntary basis. For underperforming students, academic departments take the lead in supporting them through study plan advising. For other student needs, such as counselling, support for special educational needs, and non-local student integration,

designated teams from the Student Affairs Office (SAO) have been leading the effort. The University will wish to consider how the coordination of the departments and units contributing to the strategy of whole person development could be enhanced.

The Audit Panel is pleased to note that PolyU has a sound mechanism to facilitate student participation in programmes development and promoting wellbeing of students. Student representatives gather input from their fellows on various decisions and issues of concern and the University is encouraged to consider how representatives might be facilitated to have more consistent links with the students they represent.

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

The Audit Panel found that PolyU effectively gathers, analyses, and utilises data across all facets of its operations, spanning institutional strategic planning to resource allocation, programme development, and quality assurance and enhancement. To facilitate data utilisation, PolyU has implemented a unified set of quantitative and qualitative departmental outcome-oriented KPIs to support University resource allocation and improve departmental performance. In supporting programme development, a variety of data sources are utilised, including insights from industry obtained through departmental advisory committees (DACs), student demand, and societal needs. Furthermore, learning outcome data, student feedback, input from DAAs, and programme statistics are effectively utilised in the APR process.

PolyU's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) scrutinises all student data and findings, subsequently distributing them to departments as a crucial data source for incorporation into the APR process. To advance PolyU's strategic utilisation of data, the University has made investments in a Learning Analytics Platform and a Student Life Management Platform (SLMAP). Both platforms enable Ug and TPg teachers and advisors to access and utilise pertinent records and analytical data to pursue improvements to the student learning journey. Additionally, a new data hub is being developed at the RPg level to facilitate decision-making and enhance the quality of research student experiences. The Institutional Planning and Analytics Office at PolyU facilitates the use of institutional data for strategic planning and decision making. A data governance framework has been implemented to oversee and regulate data access, ensuring departments utilise data consistently and effectively while maintaining a minimum threshold of data compliance. To strategically oversee data centralisation, connectivity, and the development of a 'next-generation student information system', a Digital Transformation Committee has been established. The Audit Panel confirms that PolyU systematically and effectively incorporates benchmarks into its quality assurance and improvement processes, consistently integrating student-related data, including feedback from current students and alumni, into these processes.

INTRODUCTION

Explanation of the audit methodology

This is the report of a quality audit of PolyU by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the QAC. It is based on a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) which was prepared by PolyU and submitted to QAC on 15 December 2023. Initial Private Meetings of Panel members were held on 20 and 22 February 2024 to plan for the audit visit and this was followed on 26 February 2024 by a Preparatory Meeting with the University to discuss the detailed arrangements.

The Audit Panel was able to scrutinise a range of relevant documentation provided by the University, including its SER and Appendices, the Core Information, Audit Trail documentation, and additional information provided before and during the Audit Visit. The Panel also considered a presentation by representatives of University staff of the Learning Analytics Platform.

The Audit Panel conducted an Audit Visit with the University between 15 and 23 April 2024. Panel members met with the President, Deputy President and Provost, Vice Presidents, and senior team; a representative group of students on taught programmes; a representative group of research postgraduate (RPg) students; academic managers including Deans and heads of departments; programme managers and teaching staff and instructors; RPg supervisors and managers; staff from academic support services; external stakeholders. The Panel also received demonstrations of the University Learning Analytics Platform.

The Audit Panel evaluates:

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

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

Introduction to the University and its role and mission

PolyU was founded as a government trade school in 1937. The original trade school developed into a technical college in 1947 and then transformed into a polytechnic in 1972 before it became a self-accrediting university in 1994.

PolyU's vision is to be a leading university that advances and transfers knowledge and provides the best holistic education for the benefit of Hong Kong, the Nation, and the world.

PolyU's mission is to:

- pursue impactful research that benefits the world
- nurture critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers and socially responsible global citizens
- foster a University community in which all members can excel in their aspirations with a strong sense of belonging and pride

PolyU (main Kowloon campus) enrolled 29 611 students for the 2023-24 AY in the following categories: 16 313 Ug students; 10 137 TPg students; and 3 071 RPg students.

PolyU (main Kowloon campus) employs 5 686 full-time in the following categories: 1 555 academic staff; 1 582 research staff; and 2 549 administrative and support staff.

PolyU's CPCE enrolled 12 231 students for the 2023/24 AY, including 10 519 full-time students and 1 712 part-time students.

In the 2023/24 AY, Poly U offered the following taught degrees in 67 Ug programmes, 89 master's level programmes and 7 doctoral level programmes. In addition, it offered 30 top-up honours degrees and 36 SD programmes. The number of research degree programmes included 28 Doctor of Philosophy degrees and 25 Master of Philosophy degrees.

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

- 1.1 The Audit Panel observed that PolyU aligns its strategic direction, operations, and activities with its approved Strategic Plan 2019-20 to 2024-25, titled 'Shaping the Future'. The Vision and Mission are underpinned by five domains that shape PolyU's strategic direction, these include: Quality of the Student Experience of Teaching and Learning; Quality of Research Performance and of Research Postgraduate Experience; Knowledge Transfer and Wider Engagement; Enhanced Internationalisation and Engaging the Nation and Financial Health and Institutional Sustainability. The mission was last reviewed in 2018 when an updated ambition was developed to 'nurture socially responsible global citizens, critical thinkers, effective communicators and innovative problem solvers'.
- 1.2 The existing strategic plan was crafted through extensive consultation with various stakeholders, including open forums attended by 250 individuals comprising staff, students, members of the University Council, Court, alumni, and external industry advisory committee members. PolyU follows a six-year

cycle for its strategic planning process the development of the next strategic plan is presently underway. The Audit Panel observed that PolyU's operations and activities are guided by and closely aligned with its Mission, Vision, and the five strategic domains outlined in the 2019/20 to 2024/25 strategic plan. To facilitate the achievement of the strategic plan, PolyU has delineated strategic priorities and actions under each domain. For example, for the domain of quality of the student experience teaching and learning, seven strategic priorities were set out, encompassing a range of actions for enhancing student learning experience, continuous consolidation and refinement of the Ug curriculum, and creating a supportive environment for teachers.

- 1.3 A key focus of the strategic plan centres on enhancing 'the quality of the student learning experience', with a dedicated investment for its execution. Efforts to demonstrate effectiveness are overseen by the central management team (CMT), which monitors progress and submits annual reports to the council. The Strategic Planning Task Force supervises the advancement and achievement of the strategic plan, with the latest progress update reported on 27 February 2024. Notably, during the Task Force's second meeting, a comprehensive report highlighting the progress and achievements of the strategic plan from 2019/20 to 2024/25 was presented. The plan's five domains prioritise strategic priorities directly influencing student learning, including Domain 1, focusing on the quality of the student learning experience in teaching and learning; Domain 2, addressing research performance quality and the experience of RPg students; and Domain 4, aimed at enhancing internationalisation and promoting engagement with the nation. The Audit Panel identified evidence of the CMT regularly reviewing and enhancing the strategic plan to ensure its ongoing relevance and achievement of objectives.
- 1.4 The University Council and the Audit Committee supervise risk management. In 2019, the University implemented an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Framework, which is overseen by the CMT.
- 1.5 The Audit Panel determined that PolyU maintains effective oversight of academic standards and quality, and promotes enhancement, through its well-defined Quality Assurance Framework, which underscores the responsibilities of committees and academic units at various levels from programme to university levels. In addition, PolyU maintains strong academic governance over its academic units, which includes oversight of the CPCE. The Senate stands as the highest academic governance body, possessing the power to approve new programmes and set policy frameworks for the management of academic departments and programmes. The Senate carries out its duties through a range of committees, including Faculty, School, and College Boards, the Graduate School Board, the Academic Planning and Regulations Committee, the LTC, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC), the Research Committee, and the AAC. The Audit Panel noted that committee terms of reference and membership were clearly defined, and the minutes of the Senate and its

committees indicate the effective discharge of responsibilities regarding the oversight and maintenance of academic standards.

- 1.6 Academic departments serve as the central organisational entity. The management of quality assurance and enhancement for their activities is overseen through the Senate framework, which is implemented by faculties and departments. APRs constitute a fundamental element of the Quality Assurance framework for academic departments.
- 1.7 Since the last audit, the Senate and its committees have undergone two internal reviews but have not undergone any external review. As a result of these reviews, there have been some changes to the committees, albeit limited in scope. A benchmark study led to the revision of the Senate's terms of reference in 2019, specifically strengthening its formal role in ensuring academic standards. In 2023, two Senate committees, namely the LTC and the AQAC, underwent additional streamlining to align with university practices locally. It may be beneficial for the University to consider initiating a more granular internal or external governance review covering university, faculty and programme level committees. This would ensure that the entire governance structure continues to meet the evolving needs of the University, particularly in light of the development of a new strategic plan.
- 1.8 PolyU replaced the balanced scorecard approach with departmental outcome-oriented KPIs (DoKPIs) in 2021. The Audit Panel noted that DoKPIs serve as a cornerstone for academic planning, strategic development, and resource allocation. These indicators were incorporated into DR starting in 2022 to facilitate planning. Academic support units also employ KPIs for non-academic units, consisting of two components: 'work plan and management' and 'outcome-based KPIs'. These units are encouraged to incorporate students' overall satisfaction with the learning experience as one of the KPIs.
- 1.9 PolyU has established a risk management process overseen by both the University Council and the Audit Committee. In 2019, the University implemented an ERM Framework, which includes a Key Risk Register. An update on the progress of implementing the ERM and the Key Risk Register was presented to the Audit Committee on 29 February 2024. Additionally, the Risk Management Guide has been revised and updated. The ERM Framework is deployed to establish a structured approach aimed at maintaining a robust risk management system while guiding strategic priorities to uphold institutional quality and governance standards. The CMT oversees the ERM Framework, ensuring its implementation and assessing its effectiveness. As part of the review and oversight process, the CMT evaluates the implementation of mitigation strategies for Key Risks and identifies any emerging risks facing the University. Subsequently, an annual report outlining these assessments is submitted to the Audit Committee. Within the ERM Framework, Key Risks represent strategic and critical operational hazards that could potentially jeopardise the University's

achievement of strategic objectives, financial stability, or institutional reputation. The University maintains a Key Risks Register, which provides a comprehensive list of identified Key Risks, along with their respective Risk Owners and mitigation strategies. The designated Risk Owners regularly assess the relevant Key Risks and oversee the progress of mitigation measures. Additionally, they annually declare and conduct self-assessments on the implementation of the ERM Framework. The Audit Panel formed the opinion that the University has a robust and efficient approach to the oversight and management of risk.

- 1.10 Overall, the Audit Panel formed the view that **the consistent implementation of university strategies, including the current strategic plan, supported by effective performance monitoring using departmental KPIs to enhance overall university performance across all levels, is regarded as a Feature of Good Practice.**
- 1.11 PolyU's central management structure enables efficient oversight of standards and quality. Central management members support the President and, each with clearly defined portfolios of responsibility. For instance, the Vice President (Education) oversees taught programmes, while the Vice President (Research and Innovation) is in charge of the GS. The University's six faculties, three schools, and the CPCE are effectively led by Deans and Heads of Schools, respectively.
- 1.12 PolyU's Handbook on the Quality Assurance Framework, Mechanisms, and Processes for Academic Departments establishes the framework for departmental quality assurance and enhancement, incorporating external benchmarking and multi-level monitoring. The framework consists of two review cycles: the APR and a six-year DR. APR concentrates on academic standards and the quality of individual programmes, guided by external inputs from academia and industry, including the DAA and the DAC. On the other hand, DR involves a more comprehensive, forward-looking process to inform departmental strategic planning, with an interim update conducted three years after the initial exercise. The Audit Panel observed that PolyU consistently reviews and improves its Quality Assurance framework, with a specific focus on the 'Handbook on the Quality Assurance Framework, Mechanisms, and Processes for Academic Departments'. Additionally, the utilisation of the APR and DR processes was found to be effective and well-established within the University.
- 1.13 The APR and DR result in improvement actions. Reports are assessed by the faculty board, which compiles summaries for the AQAC. The AQAC oversees the implementation of the Quality Assurance Framework. From 2018 to 2022, PolyU implemented improvements to the DAA and DR systems. These enhancements included strengthening benchmarking related to academic standards, standardising reporting procedures, clarifying roles and functions, and facilitating the utilisation of trend data. Additionally, the Annual Operation Plan

(AOP) was abolished in 2021 with the introduction of the DoKPIs. The AOP was replaced by the APR, allowing the annual review to concentrate on academic programmes, while the DR captures improvements at the departmental level.

- 1.14 In 2022, the departmental overview template underwent refinement to incorporate a thematic framework, aiding departments in approaching enhancements from a holistic perspective. Departments have employed various data sources in the APR to improve curriculum design, teaching quality, assessment practices, student support, and the learning environment, all aimed at enhancing the overall learning experience.
- 1.15 The Audit Panel identified evidence of effective reporting both upwards and downwards from programme to university levels through the governance structure. Moreover, appropriate actions for enhancement were evidenced in the minutes of the Senate and its standing committees, as well as in an APR and Departmental Review audit trail.
- 1.16 To establish and uphold academic standards, an outcome-based approach is employed by PolyU, incorporating external reference points and the assessment of students' learning. Programme design and quality assurance processes are grounded in the principles of outcome-based education. Graduate attributes are translated into ILOs at Higher Diploma, Ug, TPg, and RPg levels, serving as a benchmark for PLOs. Curriculum design and learning outcomes serve as tools to oversee the effectiveness of both programmes and the institution. Each programme is equipped with a Programme Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan to assess the attainment of PLOs. The results are reported and deliberated upon in the APR.
- 1.17 At the institutional level, the implementation of learning outcomes is gauged through an Institutional Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan, and the results are subsequently reported to the LTC.
- 1.18 Learning outcomes are formulated with input from various external reference points, including DAA, DR. Additionally, International English Language Testing System (IELTS) and Collegiate Learning Assessment are employed as part of the Institutional Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan to evaluate the institutional effectiveness in producing relevant outcomes. In 2018, PolyU aligned its learning outcomes with the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF)'s Generic Level Descriptors. Subject-level definitions underwent revision in 2020. These definitions have empowered programme teams to rationalise the assignment of subject and programme levels against the HKQF.
- 1.19 A total of 63% of PolyU programmes have secured external accreditation from professional associations or statutory bodies, such as the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers (HKIE). In 2023, twelve programmes offered by six departments

within the Faculty of Engineering pursued accreditation from the HKIE. All of them successfully achieved full accreditation for five years. As part of the accreditation process, a progress report addressing the recommendations outlined in the HKIE Board's decision letter will be submitted to the Board by 30 June 2026. This submission will occur two years before the conclusion of the accreditation period.

- 1.20 Taught programmes at PolyU are regulated by the University's General Assessment Regulations, guaranteeing a rigorous assessment of student learning (See also Criterion 4). The assessments are outcome-based and criterion-referenced to accurately gauge student attainment of learning outcomes. Assessment moderation is carried out by DAAs or external examiners. The finalisation of results is overseen by the Subject Assessment Review Panel and the Board of Examiners.
- 1.21 The Audit Panel observed that a fundamental aspect of PolyU's method in establishing and upholding academic standards involves the utilisation of benchmarks. PolyU consistently employs benchmarking with local and international universities through the use of graduate attributes, ILOs, and external programme accreditation. The universities selected for benchmarking are chosen based on their performance and overall ranking as heard by the Audit Panel. The Audit Panel also learnt that academic support units, like the Library, compare their offerings and services with those of other UGC-funded institutions and international universities using systems like LibQUAL.
- 1.22 PolyU has formulated admission policies for student admission and registration. Embracing students from various personal and educational backgrounds, PolyU offers a wide array of subjects encompassing over 160 Pg and Ug programmes. Scholarships are available to exceptional local and international students, with financial aid provided to those requiring assistance.
- 1.23 The admission of students adheres to the guidelines outlined in the academic regulations, applicable to both UGC-funded and self-funded programmes. University entry requirements encompass academic qualifications and language proficiency. In exceptional cases where applicants do not meet the specified entrance criteria, the Vice President (Education) may grant admission. The Audit Panel learnt that it is government policy for up to 40% of students to be international or non-local in the future. PolyU confirmed that the University would continue to apply the same admission standards.
- 1.24 A range of diverse methods are employed to draw students to the University, encompassing online information sessions, engagement on various social media platforms, hosting summer schools for secondary school students, and offering scholarships for high-performing students.

- 1.25 During the 2022/2023 AY, PolyU shifted from programme-based admission to scheme-based admission. The scheme-based admission process enables students to initially enrol in a broad discipline and select their major later, fostering a more comprehensive foundational knowledge base and providing flexibility in study pathways. This approach offers advantages such as a more adaptable mechanism for the University to address societal needs. The University has affirmed the intention to ultimately extend the departmental scheme-based admission to the university level. In 2022-2023, the Committee on UG Admissions assessed the admission process for 2022-2023, which marked the inaugural implementation of the scheme-based admission process. Based on the outcomes of this review, several modifications were implemented for the subsequent admission exercise in 2023-2024. These adjustments included changes to the ratio between the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) and non-JUPAS admissions, allocations for special admission schemes, and the distribution of non-local quotas among departments.
- 1.26 PolyU fosters a culture of quality and standards that ensures the student experience is aligned with its objectives. With clear governance structures and robust quality frameworks, PolyU safeguards the standards and quality of its academic offerings at all levels, facilitating ongoing enhancement. These frameworks undergo continual improvement through external benchmarking and evidence-based practices. The strategic shift towards a scheme-based admission process has expanded study pathways for PolyU students.

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

- 2.1 PolyU conducts academic planning on a triennial basis, with the most recent being Planning Exercise Proposal (PEP) for the 2022-2025 triennium. Aligned with PolyU's aspiration to become a world-class university, the PEP clearly outlines the characteristics of the University's portfolio for the next three years to meet societal needs over the next decade. The PEP also accounts for the challenges and opportunities presented by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The Audit Panel confirms that this exercise thoroughly analyses the institution's potential in meeting societal demands, drawing upon various sources of quantitative data, resulting in numerous actions for implementation.
- 2.2 As one of the outputs of the PEP, PolyU has decided to incorporate introductory subjects on AIDA and IE into all UG curricula. Although these two subjects carry fewer credits (two and one credit respectively), they have been very well received by the community, and students in particular. The Audit Panel considers it a strong example of the continuous revision of the institution's general offerings with a higher impact on the entire community. Additionally, the switch from programme-based to scheme-based admission has been a result of the last PEP.

Both proposals have been formally included in the recent 2022 revision of the GUR for academic programmes and DSR.

- 2.3 The guidelines and regulations for programme planning, validation, and review of academic programmes, updated in July 2023, are established within the Quality Assurance framework. Continuous Education courses follow an adapted version of this framework. Both categories of framework are overseen by the AQAC. These frameworks encompass the entire life cycle of academic programmes at all levels. The Audit Panel confirmed that all of these processes are supported by a clear and coherent allocation of responsibilities among the various decision-making bodies within the institution. The Audit Panel also confirmed that these processes are well-known and accepted by the community, and their implementation is effective.
- 2.4 PolyU programmes adopt an outcome-based approach to curriculum design. Learning outcomes are formulated at the institution (ILOs), programme (PLOs), and subject (SLOs) levels, and aligned through curriculum mapping. It is noted that the ILOs have been reviewed based on a benchmarking exercise (See also paragraphs 1.16-1.18). The panel noted that, in designing ILOs, they are compared not only with the HKQF but also with benchmarks from other international institutions, especially the requirements established by professional accreditation. The alignment of these learning outcomes with established requirements is corroborated through institutional surveys on learning experiences, assessments carried out by the DAA, and SFQs. It is confirmed that students are satisfied with the expected learning outcomes of the programmes.
- 2.5 Developing new academic programmes follows two distinct processes: planning and validation. The planning phase is designed to assess whether the proposed programme aligns with PolyU's strategy, societal needs, and the institution's expertise and capabilities. The validation phase ensures that the entire programme is designed in accordance with the required standards for comparable programmes. Both processes are initiated by the department and conclude with approval from the Senate. Noteworthy is the significant and proven role of two external actors who ensure the programme's relevance to industry: The DAC in the planning process and the DAA in the validation process. The Audit Panel has confirmed their significant impact within their respective roles.
- 2.6 Given that new degrees are primarily proposed by individual departments, there may be a reduced capacity to design more interdisciplinary degrees, even though the institution has the potential to do so. PolyU acknowledged the 'increased demand from industry and society for broader-based education and interdisciplinary talents'. Therefore, the Audit Panel suggests that the University consider clarifying its existing policies, strategies, or processes to better align programmes with society's interdisciplinary expectations.

- 2.7 The programme review process is initiated annually by the programme leader through the APR, which was introduced in 2022. The process concludes with approval by the Senate of the annual report prepared by the AQAC. The APR is constructed from various data sources, including learning outcome assessments, results from the student feedback survey, and reports from the DAA. In this way, the APR supports departments in reviewing their programmes in four main aspects: academic standards, academic quality, programme operation, and continuing relevance. The APR has recently been updated to further facilitate quality enhancement approaches. The SER includes different evidence of programme-level and departmental-level enhancement emerging from monitoring and review. The programme review is conducted systematically and oriented towards continuous improvement. The Audit Panel, noting the improvements made, considers the APR to be a very effective tool for the continuous improvement of programmes. However, during meetings with University representatives, the Audit Panel found a lack of clarity in explaining the APR and understanding who is responsible for its production. This led to the conclusion that there is still a need to consolidate and disseminate the APR's use as the main tool, known by all, not just the programme leader.
- 2.8 Among the inputs used in the preparation of the APR, the DAA report stands out significantly. The Audit Panel detects a high level of detail, analysis, constructive criticism, and consistency in the reports conducted by the DAA that have been analysed. Consequently, the Audit Panel highlights the high impact of the programme assessment periodically conducted by the DAA. These assessments involve monitoring academic standards through benchmarking with international institutions and ensuring the connection with external stakeholders of the programme, particularly industry. Their contribution is highly valued by the entire community, and their real impact on the improvement of degrees is clear. Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that **the role of the DAA ensures the continuous updating and improvement of programmes independently, with an international orientation and external vision. This role is effectively regarded as a Feature of Good Practice.**
- 2.9 Recently, the APR process for Ug programmes has been complemented with the introduction of the PLAR. The Audit Panel acknowledges the potential of this tool for the continuous improvement of Ug programmes. The data collected and managed by this platform, covering metrics such as dropout rates, student satisfaction, grade point average (GPA), etc., are effectively integrated into the APR, enabling an agile and efficient process of continuous programme improvement. PolyU is committed to further advancing the PLAR for programme review, moving beyond internal and descriptive data analysis by considering the integration of external data into the system, such as employment rates and employers' opinions, which the institution already possesses. Furthermore, PolyU is committed to integrating PLAR across all educational levels. The Audit Panel noted that the current focus is on the use of descriptive data and its analysis which does not necessarily provide the opportunity to

consider links between different variables and the identification of causal relationships.

- 2.10 63% of the programmes offered by the institution have been accredited. The accreditations come from a variety of institutions, such as the HKIE for engineering programmes, as well as internationally recognised bodies including EFMD Quality Improvement System (EQUIS), the AACSB or the United Nations World Tourism Organisation. The Audit Panel considers the professional accreditation of PolyU's programmes highly relevant for all sectors. It serves as a source of continuous improvement and ensures alignment with society's external requirements, making it crucial for designing, reviewing, and enhancing programmes.
- 2.11 A similar procedure for approving and reviewing academic programmes has been recently implemented for Continuing Education. This procedure consists of a programme approval phase and an annual review phase, with the necessary fundamental stages adequately designed. This process is initiated by the subject leaders and concluded by the AQAC. The Audit Panel considers the similarity between the processes linked to Continuing Education courses and academic programmes ensures the continuous improvement of their quality. The link between this process and that established process for academic programmes is also considered to be highly appropriate, specifically the inclusion of consolidated subject review reports in the APR for academic reports.
- 2.12 Consequently, the Audit Panel considers that PolyU has a rigorous systematic approach to programme design, monitoring, and review, ensuring the effectiveness of its continuous improvement processes for academic and non-academic programmes. The effective implementation of these processes is evident in, among other aspects, the connection to external references and the promotion of evidence-based practices.

3. REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

- 3.1 PolyU has articulated its overarching goal to nurture holistic professionals for the future in its Strategic Plan 2019/20 – 2024/25. Within the strategic domain focusing on the Quality of Student Experience in Teaching and Learning, this Strategic Plan outlines seven strategic priorities along with their corresponding implementation plans. These priorities are designed to enhance educational outcomes, foster innovative teaching practices, and ensure that students receive a well-rounded and future-ready education.
- 3.2 The LTC of Senate oversees the governance of teaching and learning at the institutional level. At the departmental level, Domain 1 constitutes 40% of the DoKPIs and incorporates the SFQ, which includes questions on overall satisfaction with the teaching and learning experience into the overall score calculation. At the implementation level, PolyU has adopted an educational

approach characterised by active student engagement, blended learning modes, and an authentic and internationalised experience. This approach ensures that students are actively involved in their learning processes, benefiting from a combination of online and face-to-face instruction. Additionally, it provides students with real-world learning opportunities and a global perspective, preparing them for success in an increasingly interconnected world.

- 3.3 PolyU encourages teaching innovation through a university-wide approach. Teaching quality is regularly reviewed at multiple levels: through the use of ISLE, department KPIs and at subject level via the SFQ, as outlined in the Handbook on Teaching Evaluation.
- 3.4 PolyU emphasises the significance and quality of active learning, blended learning, experiential learning, and the internationalisation of the student learning experience. The Audit Panel noted PolyU's comprehensive strategies for reviewing and enhancing teaching and learning. These initiatives ensure a dynamic and globally relevant educational experience, fostering continuous improvement in teaching methodologies and student engagement.
- 3.5 The University employs an effective approach in reviewing and enhancing teaching and learning and has implemented several review and enhancement processes to continually improve the quality of education. This includes regular assessments of teaching methodologies to ensure they meet current educational standards; comprehensive evaluations of the student learning experience to identify areas for improvement; implementation of advanced technologies and blended learning techniques to enhance instructional delivery and continuous professional development opportunities for faculty to promote teaching excellence. Specific examples include:
 - The Learning to Learn approach, which encourages lifelong learning, has been adopted by PolyU and incorporated into all Ug curriculum levels at the departmental level, following clear guidelines.
 - The Undergraduate Research and Innovation Scheme was established to provide Ug students with opportunities to conduct research projects under the supervision of the University's teaching staff. Several internally funded projects have resulted in new subjects and pedagogies for integrating research into the Ug curriculum.
- 3.6 Student surveys conducted in the 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 AYs revealed that students were highly receptive to the active learning approaches. The 2022/2023 AY demonstrated 82% of students agreed that their teaching and learning activities encouraged active learning. The Audit Panel considered these survey results show that the implementation of active learning approaches has successfully reached a significant proportion of students.

- 3.7 Since 2005, PolyU has mandated Work-integrated Education (WIE). Departments are strongly encouraged to adopt an action research approach to enhance their Service Learning subjects. In 2012, PolyU made Service-Learning compulsory for UG studies. The extensive provision of Service Learning is evidenced by high student ratings and significant learning gains. Departments adopted an action research approach to enhance their Service Learning subjects. In 2021, a total of 4 505 students enrolled in 69 subjects, contributed over 180 000 hours of community service. This initiative earned PolyU the Teaching & Learning Strategy of the Year award at the Times Higher Education Awards Asia 2022.
- 3.8 The Audit Panel heard directly from students, that the majority had engaged in Service Learning. The Panel acknowledges and supports the enhancements made to the ‘Service-Learning Program’, noting the significant scale of student participation and the overwhelmingly positive feedback from interviewed students. These improvements reflect PolyU’s commitment to providing impactful, real-world learning experiences that resonate well with the student body.
- 3.9 Academic staff undergo selection via international recruitment procedures, necessitating external references from prestigious universities. Shortlisted candidates are required to demonstrate their teaching proficiency by delivering a sample lecture to senior colleagues and academic peers. The Panel acknowledges and endorses this approach, recognising it as an effective method for assessing and ensuring high teaching standards.
- 3.10 Newly recruited teaching staff must undergo an induction course delivered by the Educational Development Centre (EDC). These courses are consistently refreshed and have been favourably received by those who have undertaken them. The Introduction to University Teaching (IUT) programme is mandatory for new full-time teaching staff, while part-time teachers are required to complete the Orientation to University Learning and Teaching courses within the initial six months of their contract period. The EDC additionally provides an induction course, ‘Becoming an Effective Teaching Assistant (BETA)’, tailored for RPg Students serving as teaching assistants, which has also received positive feedback. The BETA course has been conducted between four to eight times annually from 2020/2021 AY to 2022/2023 AY, with yearly completion rates ranging from 559 to 857 participants. Based on these figures, each offering typically trains between 107 and 225 participants on average. All teaching assistants have completed the BETA training course. Achieving a 100% completion rate for RPg students undertaking the BETA course before teaching is a significant accomplishment.
- 3.11 The criteria for new appointments, further appointments, major reviews, conversions to regular terms, and promotions to various academic positions are thoroughly evaluated. Teaching is one of the three key criteria outlined in the

Framework for New Appointment, Promotion, and Further Appointment of Academic Staff. This comprehensive evaluation ensures that teaching quality remains a central focus in the career progression of academic staff.

- 3.12 The EDC offers ‘open-for-all and consultation sessions’ and provides data on participation in its workshops and professional development services. Approximately 55% of staff engaged in EDC activities each year during 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 AYs. Data from 2023/24 AY up to March 2024 shows that participation rates among various ranks of academic and teaching staff ranging from 20% to 59%, with some rates reaching as high as 50% to 74%. New members of staff are required to undertake the ‘Introduction to University Teaching’ course in their first year. Part-time staff undertake the ‘Orientation to University Teaching’ course. The ‘Orientation to University Teaching’ course is not a substitute for the ‘Introduction to University Teaching’ course. The Panel was informed that there were some occasions when academic teaching staff, who were required to undertake the ‘Introduction to University Teaching’ course, had for various reasons not completed the training before the commencement of teaching duties. PolyU may wish to review this situation to ensure all staff who are required to undertake teaching training are provided the opportunity to gain such fundamental teaching knowledge and skills before they undertake direct teaching activity with students.
- 3.13 At the departmental level, a DoKPI focuses on teaching innovations and external recognition, constituting 5% of the assessment process. This underscores dedication to promoting innovative teaching methods and valuing external achievements in teaching and learning. At the individual level, section 4.2 of the Handbook on Teaching Evaluation outlines the educational leadership criteria, which encompass various forms of contributions, including those that lead to system-wide impact, which are listed among seven categories of evidence. Within this handbook, educational leadership excellence is defined as fostering a culture of quality teaching at the departmental level or beyond.
- 3.14 The Audit Panel found minimal reference to succession planning for academic leaders in the PolyU submission to the Panel. Nevertheless, the Panel heard from academic managers that succession planning strategies are in place. The outlined process involves elevating individuals to faculty-level positions and providing support through collaboration with Associate Deans, considering factors such as experience, capability, and diversity. In smaller departments, staff members are assigned administrative roles as they arise based on necessity.
- 3.15 Information on leadership and management development training included the Skill Enhancement Series which covers 19 different topics, and the High-Impact Series, which has eight different topics. In total, 759 participants have benefited from the 40 programmes conducted. Out of these 40 programmes, the programmes marked for leadership training, namely, ‘Skills for New

Mangers/Leaders’, ‘Leadership Skills Workshop’ and ‘Art of Leadership’ have each been offered once and had a total of 60 participants.

- 3.16 The Panel concluded that PolyU may wish to make succession planning more visible to the wider university to enable smooth transitions and continuity in leadership roles, thereby safeguarding the stability and effectiveness of academic operations. Adopting such a proactive approach would facilitate continuity, foster leadership development, and support the institution in achieving its strategic objectives.
- 3.17 The Audit Panel acknowledged the commendable efforts made by individual departments and senior management in training and advancing academic managers. It is essential to recognise the critical role played by academic managers in facilitating effective operations and fostering academic excellence within the institution. Furthermore, these efforts reflect a commitment to nurturing leadership talent and promoting professional development opportunities, contributing to the overall success and advancement of the University’s academic mission.
- 3.18 The University’s learning environments have undergone significant improvements, with all 166 general teaching rooms and lecture theatres now furnished with new features like smart panels, ceiling microphones, and pan-tilt-zoom cameras. These upgrades have facilitated hybrid teaching methods and enabled lecture recording. The University has established several Cave Automatic Virtual Environments (CAVEs) in the Industrial Centre and various departments. These CAVEs facilitate immersive teaching through the utilisation of Virtual/Augmented/Mixed Reality technologies. One notable example is an interactive facility tailored for Building Information Modelling, as detailed in the SER. PolyU’s library has been expanding its electronic collections to ensure continuous accessibility. Presently, all academic journals and 87% of books are available in electronic format. In 2019, the University introduced an Open Educational Resources portal, offering access to chosen public resources for teaching.
- 3.19 PolyU’s Learning Management System has been upgraded by incorporating library resources. The Library has also introduced innovative features like the i-Space experiential learning space. This dynamic environment integrates books, people, and technology to facilitate the creative process for students. Additionally, i-Space hosts workshops, seminars, and competitions, earning two QS Reimagine Education Awards. This resource played a pivotal role in the transition to online teaching and learning amid the pandemic.
- 3.20 Since 2016, the University has mandated the use of TEAL in large classes, encouraging interactive pedagogies and blended learning approaches to foster active participation. In meetings with students the Audit Panel learnt that many of those present had participated in large classes, defined as those with more than

50 students per class. Some students had engaged in blended learning exercises that can be completed remotely and contribute to the larger classes. Examples cited include the use of online software for reading and making annotations and the UReplay platform to review other students' responses to questions.

- 3.21 PolyU is preparing students for the AI era by embracing AI technology, the EDC had adapted to changes in pedagogy driven by AI, introducing new faculty to its usage. Additional initiatives include the establishment of a Language Education Institute, where technology-enhanced learning and teaching will serve as the primary pedagogical tool. Furthermore, in the Department of Building Environment and Energy Engineering, teachers are collaborating with students who have expertise in AI to explore its integration into assessments. PolyU has also established an AI Playground and implemented programmes/tools available for trial prior to purchasing a subscription. Additionally, over 20 programmes offer the option to combine with a Secondary Major in AIDA.
- 3.22 In response to market feedback, some programmes have introduced tailor-made subjects incorporating AI. Additionally, CPCE is developing a range of short AI courses designed for mature students with practical training needs. RPg students, reported using AI for learning purposes. Examples cited include the use of AI to assist with sentence construction, to generate presentation content based on personal ideas and to draft reports, assignments, and/or coding for programmes.
- 3.23 The Audit Panel acknowledges the substantial investment made by PolyU in enhancing the campus environment and resources, which significantly contributes to creating a conducive learning environment for students. The efforts and strategic initiatives undertaken by senior management to improve the educational infrastructure and support systems are well-noted and highly recognised. Such investments demonstrate a strong commitment to fostering an optimal educational experience for the student body, ensuring they have access to state-of-the-art facilities and resources.
- 3.24 The sources of evidence for teaching evaluations encompass student feedback on teaching quality gathered from questionnaires, institutional and departmental surveys on learning experiences, and regular assessments of postgraduate research supervision. This data informs APRs aimed at guiding improvements. Demonstrating strong teaching performance serves as the foundation for salary increases and is a prerequisite for promotion.
- 3.25 The GS arranges induction programmes to provide RPg supervisors with the essential knowledge required to effectively support and mentor students.
- 3.26 The University acknowledges exceptional teaching accomplishments through the President's Awards and the Faculty/School Awards. In 2023, a new award category was established specifically for early-career teachers. Furthermore, an annual symposium titled 'Excellent Teachers on Teaching Excellence' is

convened to honour teaching excellence at PolyU. PolyU teachers have achieved numerous prestigious international teaching awards. To bolster colleagues in their quest for teaching excellence, mentorship, and financial support initiatives were initiated in 2021 and 2023. Additionally, a subsidy scheme was introduced in 2023 to aid applications for Advance HE Fellowships.

- 3.27 For RPg students, the University ensures that all students have the opportunity to engage in research at other institutions, either locally or internationally. Supervisors are actively seeking methods to provide resources to facilitate this opportunity. In one department, approximately 30% of students pursue studies abroad, although precise figures are not available at that time. Supervisors and students maintain regular communication, either weekly or bi-weekly, with those students studying abroad.
- 3.28 The Audit Panel acknowledges the effective mechanisms in place for evaluating both teaching and research supervision. These serve as valuable tools for assessing the quality and effectiveness of instructional practices and mentorship provided to students. Additionally, they contribute to ongoing improvements in teaching methods and research supervision strategies across the institution.
- 3.29 The Audit Panel concluded that the University has implemented a thorough and effective strategy for reviewing and enhancing teaching and learning (T&L). There has been a significant shift towards digital T&L, highlighting the institution's ability to adapt to evolving educational environments. Policies related to this shift are carefully assessed, executed, and tracked, particularly regarding the transition to Virtual Teaching and the integration of AI. The University has established effective processes for the development and recognition of teaching and support staff, promoting their involvement and external engagement. Additionally, learning resources have been efficiently managed to meet the demands of the post-pandemic era, ensuring they remain relevant and effective in supporting student learning.

4. REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Assessment in all Ug programmes and Continuing Education subjects and courses is governed by the University General Assessment Regulations. The Audit Panel confirms that these guidelines are clear, comprehensive, integrated into the Quality Assurance processes, and well-known throughout the institution.
- 4.2 For RPg programmes, assessment is regulated through the Guidelines and Regulations for Research Postgraduate Studies. It outlines a procedure for monitoring students' research work as well as a thesis defence procedure. These processes, which include external examiners for thesis examination, are aligned with common practices adopted in the wider international higher education

sector. The guidelines and procedures are clear, consistent and well-understood by all involved parties.

- 4.3 The Audit Panel confirmed that PolyU employs an outcome-based approach to teaching and learning, with concise definitions of the learning outcomes for each subject and widely understood evaluation methods. The assessment of these subjects is based on CRA and the use of corresponding rubrics for all major assessment tasks, and is satisfactorily implemented throughout the University and well understood by both professors and students. Additionally, the current grading system, revised in 2020, is understood and accepted as fair by students. The results of the 2022 internal study, along with the opinions of students and professors, confirm the widespread adoption of CRA. This was further validated during the Audit Panel's interactions with students and professors in Meetings.
- 4.4 The analysis of a sample of subject descriptions confirms that the subject description form includes communication about learning outcomes and assessment to the students. Students' evaluation of their understanding of the assessment criteria is high, scoring 4.2 out of 5 in the 2022/23 AY. The Audit Panel has also been able to verify how students confirm the alignment of assessment with the expected learning outcomes of each subject and its adequate dissemination of this information at the beginning of each subject.
- 4.5 According to the General Assessment Regulations, the assessment process follows established and well-understood steps. Once the subject is graded by the lecturers, the Subject Assessment Review Panel (SARP) determines the final subject grades, and students can request their marked examination scripts. Finally, the Board of Examiners (BoE) decides the final award classification.
- 4.6 The appropriateness of examination papers and assessment tasks is ensured through internal moderation. The moderation process for assessment tasks and results is highly appropriate and widely understood by all academic staff. Additionally, the moderation process is continuously and periodically analysed and improved. Currently, it is being reviewed through a structured process: benchmarking against other internationally renowned institutions, the development of a task force for analysing external and internal data, and the development of a new moderation policy proposal. The Audit Panel considers that the current moderation process, although coherent and robust in its design, will be enhanced through the proposals for a new moderation process. Thus, the implemented process ensures the adequacy of assessment tasks and their continuous improvement.
- 4.7 The assessment process also includes an appeal process through the AAC, and it is disseminated to students through the Student Handbook. The Audit Panel has been able to confirm its adequate design and implementation, and even a high level of awareness among both teachers and students. However, its usage is very

limited, a factor that does not detract from its impact but possibly could even be considered a positive indicator of the effective assessment of the programmes.

- 4.8 According to students, the marks they receive are highly consistent with their subject knowledge. It is important to note that student satisfaction with the assessment is very high (4.3 out of 5 on average in the 2022/23 AY) and has steadily increased since the 2016/17 AY (with a rating of 4.1 out of 5).
- 4.9 The University General Assessment Regulations clearly state that ‘timely feedback should be provided to students so they are aware of their progress and attainment for the purpose of improvement’. In general, teachers provide feedback on continuous assessment to students before the final evaluation. However, the Audit Panel has identified some variability in this practice among teachers. Therefore, the Audit Panel recommends that **the University should establish mechanisms to ensure consistency of practice in providing feedback to students on their assessed work across different subjects.**
- 4.10 PolyU places great importance on academic integrity and assessment security. Various tools have been designed to implement PolyU’s policy in this regard, such as a dedicated section on the website, mandatory subjects for all Ug students, research ethics subjects for all RPg students, and online tutorials for new students. Students are made very aware of these academic integrity measures through the Student Handbook, and actions are taken accordingly. The Audit Panel acknowledges PolyU’s commitment to ensuring the academic integrity of its students, appreciating both the various tools deployed and the knowledge and awareness of all students regarding this matter.
- 4.11 PolyU has clear guidelines for cases of misconduct. The design of two subjects of action is based on severity of offence, including a new reporting system for less severe offences. This approach is appropriate, and students have confirmed that they are aware of the guidelines.
- 4.12 Students have channels for communication and participation to report errors or misconduct. Pg students indicated that procedures can sometimes be informal, however, they were satisfied that the procedures were effective. Improvement suggestions from students are, in one way or another, addressed by the institution and implemented where possible.
- 4.13 The Audit Panel highlighted the recent introduction and approval of a policy and commitment to the use of generative AI tools, which has the potential to be further developed in subsequent strategies and regulations. The institution’s high level of involvement in the appropriate use of such tools, aiming to enhance education and assessment, has been noted. The University is expecting that the deployment of this policy, carried out through the EDC, will contribute to the improvement of the quality of education at the institution in the medium term.

- 4.14 PolyU has three main tools for the periodic review of assessment practices. Firstly, more than half of the Ug programmes obtain periodic accreditations from professional associations such as ACCSB or HKIE. Secondly, the University conducts the annual analysis of all programmes through the APR. Thirdly, the annual evaluation conducted by the DAA is included in the APR. After reviewing samples of the outputs generated by implementing these tools, the Audit Panel acknowledges the detailed analyses conducted and their contribution to improving assessments.
- 4.15 Of the tools for reviewing assessment practices, it is important to highlight the significant role of the DAA in the periodic review, effectively driving the improvement of such practices through result analysis within the University and benchmarking with internationally prestigious institutions. This high level of involvement ensures an effective improvement of student learning assessment processes within the institution. Additionally, a strong commitment from the institution is detected in implementing the improvements proposed by the DAA, leveraging the DAA's involvement to enhance its programmes, particularly in assessment.
- 4.16 The institution has recently and progressively implemented the PLAR as a support tool for the APR. While its implementation is still in the early stages, the potential of this tool to analyse the alignment between expected learning outcomes and assessment practices in each subject is highlighted, aiming to improve assessment practices and consequently enhance students' achieved learning outcomes.
- 4.17 The Audit Panel confirms PolyU's commitment to ensuring its students act with academic integrity, duly appreciating the various tools deployed, as well as the establishment of clear guidelines for misconduct and the implementation of a new reporting system for less severe offences. Overall, the Audit Panel noted the consistent and transparent systems in place to ensure student assessment, across Ug, Continuing Education programmes and Pg studies.

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

- 5.1 PolyU has set a clear educational goal to support students, as illustrated in its strategic plan. It aims to promote whole-person development, through student support by central support units, including career advising, sports, arts, culture, and wellness. The provision of opportunities to meet people in different student activities allows students to explore new ideas and unleash their potential. Collectively, the activities constitute an effective effort to create a supportive environment for teaching and learning. All the supporting measures account for an essential and integral part of the pastoral care offered by the University.

- 5.2 Graduate attributes are articulated at the commencement of the AY and in induction activities organised by departments/programmes, and the details were well understood across different offices. PolyU translates graduate attributes into ILOs which then provide the basis for assessing the attainment of graduate attributes over time.
- 5.3 The admission process is managed by the Academic Registry, while the subsequent orientation and induction are managed by the SAO/CPCE Student Affairs Office (CSAO) and academic departments. There is a clear separation of responsibility. Although CSAO and SAO appear to run independently as separate entities in the preparation of the orientation activities, there has been ongoing collaboration between PolyU central offices and CPCE to coordinate these activities. This includes sharing resources to ensure that students on both campuses receive all necessary information at the beginning of their university studies.
- 5.4 Academic advising is provided to support students in their learning. The previous two-tier advising system for students conducted by the Office for Undergraduate Studies and academic departments was recently abolished following review. It was replaced by a single-tier academic advising system led by academic departments in 2023 to ensure students are assigned an academic advisor who will work with them throughout their university studies at PolyU. This close advisor-student relationship is highly valued, as it provides students with a stable connection to the academic units and a dedicated contact person to work with. It was noted that the proportion of students participating in advising sessions under the new one-tier scheme is maintained at around 60 – 70%. As a consequence, some 30 – 40% of students may not be benefitting from academic advising and the support it provides in facilitating progression. This presents an opportunity for further securing the quality of student learning. Therefore, the Audit Panel recommends that **the University should investigate available opportunities for enhancing the level of student engagement with academic advising.**
- 5.5 All staff involved in the advising process are supported with appropriate training as academic advisors. Central counselling colleagues in the SAO and OUS provide ongoing support to academic advisors, especially with regard to students with specific needs. The existing mechanism demanding proper training of at least 50% of advising staff is mandatory, and the OUS monitors their participation. The Office of the President offers additional resources for coordination and allocates extra funding to support staff, enabling advisors to connect with advisees in more relaxed environments. With a specified staff-to-student ratio set at 1:30, the quality of the advising sessions can be maintained without advisors being overwhelmed by large numbers of advisees.
- 5.6 For poor-performing students, academic departments take the lead in providing support using a study plan to help them catch up by establishing a manageable study pattern. However, academic units are taking an auxiliary role in other

personal aspects when additional support for special needs is provided by central units, such as counselling, language centre, etc.

- 5.7 The number of activities organised for professional development is extensive and comprehensive. A survey regarding student satisfaction with WIE is included. The evaluation of WIE is very positive, with a consistent growth from year to year from 8.0 (out of 10) in the 2017/18 AY to 9.0 in the 2022/23 AY. Given this positive evaluation, the Audit Panel supports PolyU in the continuance of WIE and encourages the University to explore ways of further enhancing this activity and expanding its range. The Panel further encourages PolyU to explore how other co-curricular activities can be evaluated systematically for the improvement of the broad range of educational activities.
- 5.8 PolyU offers a very wide-ranging portfolio of co-curricular activities which are aimed at optimising the whole-person approach to education that the University promotes. The co-curricular activities under different schemes have offered the student body broad exposure to diverse opportunities related to disciplinary knowledge, sports, career opportunities, arts, cultural interest, language training, and entrepreneurship promotion, etc. Individually the activities are well organised and well received by students. However, it was not clear to the Audit Panel how the individual activities are coordinated to align with the University's strategic plan and contribute to the specific attributes to be achieved. PolyU might wish to explore enhancing the planning and coordination of co-curricular activities through a university-wide approach.
- 5.9 With increasing numbers of non-local students coming from different ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds, PolyU has put in place a strategic plan for recruitment. This includes facilitating the integration of non-local students into the local community through schemes such as the Exploring Hong Kong Series, and a Host Family Scheme. Recent developments have also included the establishment of the Amigos Global Peer Support Scheme and the creation of the Global Student Hub, which provide a venue for cross-cultural mingling on campus. Over 50 activities involving local and non-local students have been held at the Global Student Hub since its opening in 2021. The Global Student Ambassador Programme is welcome and having the Global Student Hub operate through the SAO is a sound initiative to provide support for international students. It may be of value to the University to consider how the Global Student Hub might enhance its activity beyond the provision of information and activities.
- 5.10 Research postgraduate students are provided with comprehensive support by the GS for their holistic development and progress monitoring. With clear guidelines in place to ensure the academic rigour of the programmes, the discipline-related skill and language requirements are well structured within the academic programmes. Academic departments also play a crucial role in driving various discipline-related career-advising tasks for students, demonstrating the University's commitment to their success.

- 5.11 The tracking system SLMAP is an effective monitoring tool to track student activity participation and the data can be used more extensively to inform future planning of both non-academic activities and the development of students, particularly on how to better engage students with different needs and how it can support the specific requirements of the academic programme.
- 5.12 The University has a strong and effective mechanism to encourage student participation in programme development and promoting wellbeing of students. Under the current terms of reference, student representatives are present in most key university, school, and departmental committees. These student representatives gather input on various issues of concern from their fellows. While the process is generally robust, these student members gathered inputs from other students differently. After collecting feedback from students, the University engages in thorough discussions in relevant committees and provides responses. The information is then shared with academic and non-academic units to promote a collective understanding of the University's state and changes. However, this information, mostly in the form of reports, might not reach relevant students in a timely manner. The University may wish to consider establishing a regularised process to facilitate student members to relay information back promptly, thereby having more consistent two-way links with the students they represent and fostering stronger partnerships.
- 5.13 The Audit Panel concluded that PolyU has in place a comprehensive system to support both Ug and Pg students. It has clearly articulated the expectations of students and provides necessary resources in central supporting offices and academic units to facilitate delivery. In light of the switch to departmental scheme-based admission, and new demands in the changing environment in the local higher education sector, revision was made to the advising system, offering a diverse set of activities to enhance the whole person development goal. Active engagement of students in the governance of the University also ensures that feedback from users can be gathered allowing timely adjustments to be made.

6. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND USAGE OF DATA

- 6.1 The Audit Panel observed PolyU's extensive utilisation of a diverse range of data to evaluate and improve its educational offerings. To ensure a strategic and systematic approach to data usage and learning analytics, PolyU has instituted a university-wide 'Digital Transformation Committee' aimed at refining its data utilisation approach.
- 6.2 PolyU ensures that the collection, analysis, and utilisation of data are integrated and embedded into all aspects of its operations, including strategic planning, resource allocation, programme development, and quality assurance and enhancement. Through this approach, PolyU adopts a scientific approach to institutional development and promotes evidence-based practices in programme management.

- 6.3 To support PolyU's approach to developing and reviewing its strategic plan and other strategies, the University has adopted a unified set of quantitative and qualitative DoKPIs. This initiative aims to streamline resource allocation and enhance departmental performance.
- 6.4 A Digital Transformation Committee has been established to formulate strategies for data centralisation. The latest meeting of the Digital Transformation Committee was held in February 2024, where discussions centred on enhancing the Projects and Grants Management System. Furthermore, updates were given regarding the GS Data Hub project and other relevant initiatives. Since its establishment, the Committee has submitted an annual report to the President. The most recent report covers the period from July 2022 to June 2023.
- 6.5 To support programme development, a variety of benchmarking data is employed, including insights from industry gathered through DACs, student demand, and considerations of societal and community needs. This information is mandatory at the initial stage of proposing a programme.
- 6.6 At the programme management level, various data sources are employed, including learning outcome data, student feedback, reports from DAAs, and programme statistics within APRs. These reviews identify strengths and weaknesses, prompting improvement actions in relation to programme academic standards.
- 6.7 In support of teaching and learning, PolyU has made investments to improve its student record systems and learning analytics platform. This allows teachers and advisors to easily access pertinent student records and analytical data. To aid staff, AR and EDC conduct workshops for teaching staff on utilising the student record systems and the Learning Analytics Platform.
- 6.8 In 2015, PolyU founded the Institutional Research and Planning Office to enhance the utilisation of data in strategic planning and decision-making. In 2021, IRPO underwent restructuring, becoming the Institutional Planning and Analytics Office, reflecting an expanded role in coordinating institutional surveys and data analytics. The IPAO strives to foster ongoing enhancement by delivering timely and precise information and analysis. This supports the CMT in planning, decision-making, and performance monitoring.
- 6.9 For all institutional surveys, a shared platform, Qualtrics, has been implemented to streamline the collection and compilation of survey data. Additionally, new dashboards have been created to facilitate the analysis and review of institutional data. PolyU has also developed the SLMAP to integrate student records of academic performance and co-curricular activities, including trend and peer group data. For RPg a new data hub is in development to support the analysis of data for decision making and quality enhancement. The GS Data Hub was conceived after a proposal by the Digital Transformation Committee in January

2023, with project implementation starting in March of the same year. The most recent progress report on its development was presented to the Digital Transformation Committee during its sixth session in February 2024.

- 6.10 To safeguard the University's data management approach and ensure the security of its data, protocols such as data security policies and risk assessments are established through a data governance framework. The primary objectives of the data governance framework are to: establish clear roles and responsibilities for stakeholders and delineate lines of accountability regarding data; outline a data classification scheme; establish a framework for managing the data lifecycle; and formalise an approval process for data requests both within departments and from external parties, including mechanisms to determine approvers and a set of assessment criteria. This framework oversees the management, utilisation, and protection of the University's information systems and data. It encompasses aspects such as definitions and interpretations, data governance structure, data classification, data handling procedures, and the data request approval process. Additionally, the framework includes data handling guidelines, examples of data requests, and a data request form.
- 6.11 The Audit Panel observed that PolyU's strategic planning process is forward-looking. PolyU's evidence-based practices are well-founded, backed by a data governance framework that regulates data access.
- 6.12 While the institutional framework sets the parameters for consistent and robust practices across departments, the Audit Panel observed that PolyU also permits flexibility for individual departments to adopt additional practices to facilitate internal coordination or meet programme accreditation requirements. As an illustration, the Faculty of Business has devised an additional template to streamline the review of data, external benchmarking, and the closing-the-feedback loop process within their departments. Moreover, besides conducting its own survey to gather user feedback, the library utilises LibQual+, a web-based survey provided by the Association of Research Libraries and the Joint University Librarians Advisory Committee (JULAC), for external benchmarking.
- 6.13 The Audit Panel observed that PolyU has dedicated significant time to developing and advocating for the integration of evidence-based principles into its quality assurance processes. As a result, a culture of evidence-based quality enhancement has been firmly established. An illustration of this evidence-based practice includes the following: In 2021, the Department of Building Services Engineering underwent a name change to become the Department of Building Environment and Energy Engineering. This decision was informed by a diverse array of data sources, encompassing admission statistics, feedback from professional institutions and employers, input from DAAs, as well as perspectives from students and alumni. The restructuring was complemented by a redesign of the programme curriculum and intensified recruitment endeavours.

As a result, there was a notable surge in applications, rising from 1 510 in 2021/22 to 2 436 in 2022/23, representing an 85% increase in Band A applicants.

- 6.14 The Learning Analytics Platform has been created with the aim to simplify the utilisation of data in curriculum reviews and subject teaching. The LTC examines all findings, disseminating them to departments as a key data source for inclusion in the APR. A manual and a template have been created to promote the systematic utilisation of data and the formulation of enhancements within the APR process. Another facet of data utilisation involves the library's utilisation of LibQUAL+, a web-based survey provided by the Association of Research Libraries. This survey is also employed by the JULAC libraries for external benchmarking purposes.
- 6.15 The Audit Panel found that the Learning Analytics Platform, catering to Ug and Pg programmes, has provided programme leaders with a monitoring tool. This tool has empowered them to utilise data for evidence-based improvements in learning and teaching, thus facilitating timely enhancements.
- 6.16 As previously highlighted, PolyU consistently integrates data into its quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Throughout programme design or review stages, departments solicit feedback from prospective applicants, current students, alumni, and employers to substantiate assertions regarding market demand, professional relevance to potential employers, and internship and employment. The Audit Panel found that PolyU regularly monitors and makes improvements to each programme by utilising a range of student achievement data, including data on recruitment and retention, as well as the attainment of learning outcomes, completion rates, and employment statistics.
- 6.17 The Audit Panel observed that the APR process underscores the development of enhancement actions and the completion of the 'feedback loop'. PolyU implements enhancements utilising various data sources formulated at both departmental and programme levels. As a result of PolyU's approach, departments regularly monitor programme statistics and adapt their strategies and practices accordingly. For instance, in 2020, the School of Accounting and Finance revamped the BBA (Hons) in Financial Services programme after assessing industry needs and the programme's historical admission statistics which had demonstrated a drop-in recruitment number. After conducting various promotional initiatives like school visits, contests, talk series, and information days, the aim was to attract high-quality students from secondary schools to counteract the decline in applicants.
- 6.18 The Institutional Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan, revised in 2022, systematically oversees and assesses the success of generating graduate attributes. This assessment involves student surveys and two benchmarking measures: the IELTS and the Collegiate Learning Assessment. Additionally, Institutional Surveys on Learning Experience integrate student feedback.

- 6.19 The Audit Panel observed that the review of learning outcomes assessment data typically results in improvements in curriculum design and academic support. For instance, the Hong Kong Community College analysed the learning outcome assessment findings of an associate degree programme and identified three areas for enhancement: Information Technology and quantitative skills, problem-solving, and application of knowledge. To enhance the provision, additional in-class and online revision exercises, sample assignments, past examination papers, and extra study workshops were provided as follow-up measures.
- 6.20 PolyU collects, analyses, and acts upon data regarding the student learning experience within programme management. Various data sources are utilised, such as learning outcome data, student feedback reports from DAAs, and programme statistics obtained from APRs. These reviews identify specific strengths and weaknesses, as well as improvement measures pertaining to programme academic standards.
- 6.21 PolyU employs data to monitor and enhance the performance of programmes, faculties, and departments university-wide. The University has instituted an evidence-based approach to its quality assurance processes, supported by a culture focused on enhancing quality, examples include the Rebranding of an academic Department, Decision-making during the pandemic, Optimising learning resource usage. Programme Development.
- 6.22 The Audit Panel determined that PolyU adopts a systematic and data-driven approach to improving student learning, as evidenced by the APR process. This process is dedicated to formulating enhancement actions and ensuring the closure of the feedback loop. Improvements are implemented by drawing upon various data sources at both departmental and programme levels. Progress on these enhancements is subsequently detailed in the APR report for the following year. Academic support units employ a distinct reporting format owing to their diverse nature, yet their review methods are grounded in the same principles.
- 6.23 PolyU adopts an evidence-based approach focused on enhancing existing mechanisms and processes. The University is adept at facilitating the collection, analysis, and utilisation of data for quality enhancement. The culture of evidence-based quality enhancement at PolyU is both well-established and mature. Continuous efforts to improve and innovate current practices are evident, including the development of the APR template and the incorporation of the Learning Analytics Platform. Anticipated enhancements involve reinforcing orientations for programme leaders and fostering more comprehensive discussions on the utilisation of data in the APR. This includes incorporating examples of good practices gleaned from APR reports. To spearhead strategies for data centralisation and connectivity, as well as to develop a next-generation student information system, a Digital Transformation Committee has been instituted.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The University aligns its strategic direction with its Strategic Plan 2019-20 to 2024-25, titled ‘Shaping the Future’. Supported by five domains, the Vision and Mission guide the University’s path. The robust academic governance framework spans academic units, including the CPCE. The Senate, chaired by the President, oversees academic performance using specific outcome-oriented KPIs. These indicators inform academic planning, strategic development, and resource allocation. PolyU ensures effective quality assurance through a comprehensive handbook detailing mechanisms and processes for academic departments. This framework integrates external benchmarking and multi-level monitoring. Academic standards are set using external reference points, including DAAs, DRs, and international benchmarking. Around two-thirds of PolyU’s academic programmes have received external accreditation. Additionally, the transition to a scheme-based admission system has been effectively implemented.
- 7.2 PolyU has a consistent and mature process for programme planning, validation, and review. These processes involve the programme planning committee for the development of new programmes, and programme leaders for periodic reviews of existing programmes. Clear responsibilities are allocated across decision-making bodies within the University, including Continuing Education courses. PolyU has adopted an outcome-based approach to curriculum design. Learning outcomes are defined at the institutional, programme, and subject levels, and these are aligned through curriculum mapping. The process effectively connects to external references and promotes evidence-based practices. PolyU engages DAAs to benchmark its programmes against international institutions. Many of its programmes are accredited by external professional bodies. The recent introduction of the PLAR enhances continuous improvement processes. Data from this report, including learning outcome assessment and student feedback, are used to inform the APR. Recent revisions include GUR and the incorporation of AI, Data Analytics, and IE.
- 7.3 PolyU ensures quality teaching through a comprehensive process. At the recruitment, induction, appraisal, and promotion stages, a Framework for New Appointment, Promotion, and Further Appointment of Academic Staff outlines the assessment criteria. Core criteria include impact on student learning and quality of teaching, while role-dependent criteria cover development, management, and educational leadership. New full-time staff complete an extended programme on PolyU’s teaching approach. High-quality teaching, including innovations and external engagement, serves as a departmental performance indicator. Student feedback mechanisms include the SFQ (subject-level feedback, including active learning), the Institutional Survey of Learning Experience (broader student experience feedback), and the use of surveys in schemes like TEAL. Furthermore, the mandatory Service-Learning component

for all Ug students since 2012 has contributed to an award-winning Teaching and Learning Strategy.

- 7.4 PolyU employs an outcome-based approach to teaching and learning, clearly defining learning outcomes and evaluation methods for each subject. The assessment process is consistently implemented based on CRA and corresponding rubrics. The current grading system, which was revised in 2020, is suitable. However, there is some variation in the feedback provided to students on their assessed work, which merits further review. The assessment process involves a Subject Assessment Review Panel, Board of Examiners, and AAC. Internal moderation ensures task adequacy. The appeal process is adequate and is understood by students. Student satisfaction with assessment practices has consistently increased. PolyU embraces generative AI tools for teaching and assessment. Clear guidelines address academic integrity, and a new reporting system handles less severe offences. Overall, PolyU has consistent and transparent systems in place to ensure student assessment across its Ug, Continuing Education, and Pg programmes.
- 7.5 PolyU emphasises whole person development for students. The strategic plan is executed through academic departments and support units. Graduate attributes are articulated during commencement and induction activities. The recent adoption of a one-tier advising system in 2023 has provided student support at the academic department level, while central units offer training and consultation for academic advisors. The GS supports RPg students for holistic development. Clear guidelines ensure academic rigour and academic departments drive discipline-related career advising. A rich variety of co-curricular activities broadens education experience, with student participation mostly voluntary. For underperforming students, academic departments provide study plan advising. SAO teams handle other student needs, such as counselling and non-local student integration. The Audit Panel encourages the enhancement of coordination among contributing departments and units. PolyU facilitates student participation in programme development and promotes student well-being, with room for further improvement in two-way exchanges between student members and those they represent.
- 7.6 PolyU effectively gathers, analyses, and utilises data across its operations. Quantitative and qualitative outcome-oriented KPIs support resource allocation and departmental improvement. Insights from industry, student demand, and societal needs inform programme development. Learning outcome data, student feedback, and input from DAAs enhance the APR process. PolyU invests in a Learning Analytics Platform and SLMAP for strategic data utilisation. A new data hub supports research postgraduates. The Institutional Planning and Analytics Office oversees data analysis. A governance framework ensures consistent and compliant data use. The Digital Transformation Committee oversees centralisation and connectivity. PolyU integrates student-related data,

including feedback from current students and alumni, into quality assurance and improvement processes.

APPENDIX A: THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

[Information provided by the University]

History

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) was founded in 1937, originally as the Government Trade School located in Wan Chai. It was the first publicly funded, post-secondary technical institution in Hong Kong. After World War II, the institution was renamed the Hong Kong Technical College, and in 1957, it moved to new premises in Hung Hom, ushering in a new chapter of industrial education in Hong Kong. In 1972, the Hong Kong Polytechnic was established with the mission to meet the community's manpower needs. In 1994, the institution was granted self-accrediting status and was formally upgraded to The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Today, PolyU has grown into a sizable university with 29 611 students and 5 686 staff members, leading locally and globally in several subject disciplines.

Vision and Mission

Vision

Be a leading university that advances and transfers knowledge, and provides the best holistic education for the benefit of Hong Kong, the Nation and the world.

Mission

- To pursue impactful research that benefits the world.
- To nurture critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers and socially responsible global citizens.
- To foster a University community in which all members can excel in their aspirations with a strong sense of belonging and pride.

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 (RPg) 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 Executive Vice President, 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.

Academic Organisation and Programmes of Study

The University has six Faculties and three independent Schools, plus the CPCE. The Faculties and CPCE are overseen by Deans while the three Schools are headed by Deans and overseen by the DP. There are currently 34 academic units at PolyU, including 28 departments organised under six faculties, three independent schools, two self-financed units under CPCE, and a graduate school.

In 2023/24, PolyU offers 163 taught programmes from bachelor's to professional doctoral levels, including 67 UGC-funded undergraduate (Ug), 89 self-financed master's and 7 professional doctoral programmes. It also offers 53 RPg programmes at master's and PhD levels. The subject disciplines covered include business, construction and environment, engineering, humanities, health and social sciences, sciences, design, fashion and textiles, and hotel and tourism management. CPCE offers a further 36 sub-degree programmes and 30 top-up honours degree programmes in a similar range of subject disciplines.

Staff and Student Numbers

As of October 2023, PolyU had 90 sub-degree, 16 313 Ug and 1 362 postgraduate students in UGC-funded programmes. Enrolments in self-financed programmes accounted for a further 11 846 students. Academic and teaching staff comprises 1 555 full-time and 607 part-time and short-time contract staff to give a total of 2 162. During the same period, CPCE had 12 231 students and 253 academic staff.

Revenue

Consolidated income for the year 2022/23 was HK\$9,005.0 million of which HK\$4,507.1 million (50.1%) came from government subvention and HK\$4,497.9 million (49.9%) 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 is grateful to the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) Audit Panel for the rigorous and positive review. We are pleased with the Panel's confirmation that PolyU has 'a culture of quality and standards', 'clear governance structures' and 'robust quality frameworks' to align student experience with its educational objectives, safeguard standards and quality, and facilitate the ongoing enhancement of its academic offerings at all levels [paragraph 1.26]. We are gratified at the Panel's characterisation of our strategic planning process as 'forward-looking' and our evidence-based practices as 'well-founded' [paragraph 6.11]. We are encouraged by the Panel's agreement that our strategic shift towards scheme-based admission 'has expanded study pathways for PolyU students' [paragraph 1.26].

As the Audit Panel observed, PolyU maintains 'strong academic governance' over its academic units, 'effective oversight' of academic standards and quality [paragraph 1.5], and 'well-defined' quality assurance frameworks to promote enhancement [paragraph 1.5]. These frameworks undergo 'continual improvement through external benchmarking and evidence-based practices' [paragraph 1.26]. The audit report draws attention to two notable enhanced processes, namely the Annual Programme Review (APR) and Departmental Review. Both were found to be 'effective and well-established' [paragraph 1.12] and 'result in improvement actions' [paragraph 1.13]. The University has also instituted a 'robust and efficient' framework for risk management [paragraph 1.9] and implemented a set of departmental outcome-oriented key performance indicators (DoKPIs). We are delighted that the Panel has identified the consistent implementation of university strategies supported by effective performance monitoring using DoKPIs as a Feature of Good Practice [paragraph 1.10].

PolyU has effectively implemented a 'consistent and mature' process for programme planning, validation, and review [paragraph 7.2]. The Audit Panel finds the link between the processes for academic programmes and continuing education courses to be 'highly appropriate' [paragraph 2.11] and considers the approach 'rigorous', 'systematic' and 'effective' in ensuring continuous improvement [paragraph 2.12]. We are encouraged to see that our continuous efforts in improving both the academic provision and the quality process were recognised by the Audit Panel. The audit report highlights the introduction of the Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics and Innovation and Entrepreneurship components to the undergraduate curriculum as 'a strong example of the continuous revision of the institution's general offering with a higher impact on the entire community' [paragraph 2.2] and acknowledges the potential of the Programme Learning Analytics Report (PLAR) for the continuous improvement of academic programmes [paragraph 2.9]. We are particularly pleased to note that the role of the Departmental Academic Advisor (DAA) in the continuous improvement and benchmarking was identified as a Feature of Good Practice [paragraph 2.8].

PolyU implements a 'thorough and effective strategy' for reviewing and enhancing teaching and learning [paragraph 3.29]. In addition to effective international recruitment

procedures [paragraph 3.9], mechanisms for evaluating teaching and research supervision [paragraph 3.28], and processes for the development and recognition of teaching and support staff [paragraph 3.29], the University has invested heavily in improving the educational infrastructure and support systems [paragraph 3.23]. The induction programmes for new teachers by the Educational Development Centre are also ‘consistently refreshed’ and ‘favourably received’ [paragraph 3.10]. The audit report draws attention to the successful implementation of active learning approaches [paragraph 3.6], the ‘overwhelmingly positive feedback’ received for the Service-Learning programme [paragraph 3.8], and the efficient management of learning resources to meet the demands of the post-pandemic era [paragraph 3.29]. The significant progress in the transition to Virtual Teaching and the integration of AI illustrates the University’s ability to adapt to evolving educational environments [paragraph 3.29]. We appreciate the Audit Panel’s comment that PolyU has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering an optimal educational experience, ensuring access to state-of-the-art facilities and resources [paragraph 3.23], and providing impactful, real-world learning experiences ‘that resonate well with the student body’ [paragraph 3.8].

The University has made continuous efforts to improve its student assessment practices. The Audit Panel confirms that the assessment-related guidelines are ‘clear, comprehensive, integrated into the Quality Assurance processes’ [paragraph 4.1]. An outcome-based approach and criterion-referenced assessment are ‘satisfactorily implemented throughout the University and well understood by both professors and students’ [paragraph 4.3]. Various tools have been deployed to promote and safeguard academic integrity [paragraph 4.10]. The moderation process is ‘highly appropriate’, ‘coherent and robust in its design’ [paragraph 4.6]. Student satisfaction with assessment practices has increased consistently [paragraph 7.4]. We appreciate the Audit Panel’s recommendation regarding providing feedback to students [paragraph 4.9] and will explore ways to enhance the consistency of this practice.

PolyU offers a ‘very wide-ranging’ portfolio of co-curricular activities to support students’ whole-person development and these activities are ‘well organised and well received by students’ [paragraph 5.8]. Ongoing support to individual students in taught programmes is provided through a department-based academic advising system, while research postgraduate students are provided with ‘comprehensive support’ by the Graduate School [paragraph 5.10]. We are gratified at the Audit Panel’s conclusion that ‘PolyU has in place a comprehensive system to support both Ug and Pg students’ [paragraph 5.13] and ‘a strong and effective mechanism to encourage student participation in programme development and promoting wellbeing of students’ [paragraph 5.12]. Moreover, we appreciate the Panel’s recommendation regarding enhancing the level of student engagement with academic advising [paragraph 5.4]. We have already taken corresponding actions for improvement and obtained some encouraging results. We will continue our efforts to fully address this and other suggestions raised by the Panel.

Evidence-based quality enhancement is at the heart of many recent developments at PolyU. We are glad to see our efforts to integrate evidence-based principles into the quality assurance processes recognised by the Audit Panel [paragraph 6.13]. We are pleased with the observation that ‘PolyU effectively gathers, analyses, and utilises data across all facets of its operations, spanning institutional strategic planning to resource allocation, programme development, and quality assurance and enhancement’ [Executive Summary item 6] and our use of surveys and feedback ‘satisfactorily informs improvements and further developments in student learning’ [Executive Summary item 3]. The audit report highlights the development of the APR template and the incorporation of learning analytics platforms as evidence of the University’s ‘systematic and data-driven approach to improving student learning’ [paragraph 6.22] and ‘continuous efforts to improve and innovate current practices’ [paragraph 6.23]. We are delighted with the Panel’s conclusion that the culture of evidence-based quality enhancement at PolyU is ‘both well-established and mature’ [paragraph 6.23].

PolyU sees the QAC audit as a valuable occasion for reflection and enhancement. We are appreciative of the opportunity afforded by this exercise to engage in a dialogue with peers from the wider academic community. We are impressed by the Audit Panel’s professional and collegial approach, which has made the exercise both credible and useful. We would like to thank the Audit Panel once again for its commendations and constructive comments on various aspects of learning and teaching at PolyU. The positive outcome of this exercise is a tremendous encouragement to us and will fuel our continuous efforts to enhance the student learning experience at PolyU in the years to come.

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AAC	Academic Appeals Committee
AACSB	Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIDA	Artificial Intelligence and Data Analytics
AOP	Annual Operation Plan
APR	Annual Programme Review
AY	Academic Year
BETA	Becoming an Effective Teaching Assistant
CAVE	Cave Automatic Virtual Environment
CMT	Central Management Team
CPCE	College of Professional and Continuing Education
CRA	Criterion-referenced Assessment
CSAO	CPCE Student Affairs Office
DAA	Departmental Academic Advisor
DAC	Departmental Advisory Committee
DoKPI	Departmental Outcome-oriented KPI
DR	Departmental Review
DSR	Discipline-specific Requirements
EDC	Educational Development Centre
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management
GS	Graduate School
GUR	General University Requirements
HKIE	Hong Kong Institution of Engineers
HKQF	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework
IE	Innovation and Entrepreneurship
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
ILO	Institutional Learning Outcome
JULAC	Joint University Librarians Advisory Committee
JUPAS	Joint University Programmes Admissions System
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LTC	Learning and Teaching Committee

PEP	Planning Exercise Proposal
Pg	Postgraduate
PLAR	Programme Learning Analytics Report
PLO	Programme Learning Outcome
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
RPg	Research Postgraduate
SAO	Student Affairs Office
SD	Sub-degree
SER	Self-Evaluation Report
SFQ	Student Feedback Questionnaire
SLMAP	Student Life Management Platform
SLO	Subject Learning Outcome
TEAL	Technology-enhanced Active Learning
TPg	Taught Postgraduate
Ug	Undergraduate
UGC	University Grants Committee
WIE	Work-integrated Education

APPENDIX D: POLYU AUDIT PANEL

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Mark HUNT FRSA (Panel Chair)
Non-Executive Director, Board Chair, Higher Education Consultant and
Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University for the Creative Arts

Professor Martí CASADESÚS FA
Professor of Business Management, Department of Business Management and Product
Development, University of Girona

Professor CHENG Shuk-han
Chair Professor of Molecular Medicine, Department of Biomedical Sciences and
Department of Materials Science and Engineering, City University of Hong Kong

Professor CHOW King-lau
Acting Dean of Students; Professor of Life Science, Chemical and Biological
Engineering, and Public Policy, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Audit Coordinator

Mr Alan WEALE
QAC Secretariat

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

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

Mission

The QAC's mission is:

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

Terms of Reference

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

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

Membership (as at November 2024)

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

Ex-officio Member

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

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