

## PREFACE

The review that generated this report originated as an assessment of the implementation of the Higher Education Review 2002. It became apparent, however, that much had changed in the higher education landscape since 2002. Some of these changes had been caused by that review; others were the consequence of the dynamism of Hong Kong – its higher education, society and economy, and the global context.

This review thus had a wider aim than originally intended, although it certainly examined the implementation of its predecessor's recommendations. It made no sense to us to examine higher education without looking at both the local context of post-secondary education provision and the global context of rapid change that inevitably shapes the challenges and opportunities of Hong Kong's system.

Our aim was to assess the present post-secondary education landscape and the UGC-funded sector within it. We sought to identify new issues with a view to devising a forward-looking document that would assist the Government and the public in reflecting on the purposes of post-secondary education and hence strategies for Hong Kong's post-secondary education system. With this in mind, we aimed to arrive at a set of practical recommendations that could help the system to progress and meet new challenges.

Part I of this report examines general contextual issues and those posed by the growth in the post-secondary education sector with the increase in the availability and diversity of post-secondary education opportunities. Part II identifies ways of facilitating UGC-funded institutions in their pursuit of excellence and to enhance their contributions to Hong Kong. Finally, in Part III we reflect on the present regulatory structure's fitness for purpose, including the role of the UGC itself.

In general terms, we believe that available comparative data point to a healthy UGC sector in which marked improvements have been made over the last decade. The high levels reached by Hong Kong universities in recent rankings indicate considerable success. This report thus does not stand upon an identified need for a major system reform. This is not to say that there are no significant issues that need addressing. These issues require firm and in some cases urgent action. That is the principal subject matter of this report.

Undoubtedly, the biggest challenge to us is how to best utilise limited resources in providing our next generations with the best education, in order for them to be competitive in a globalised world. The trend towards globalisation also means that our system faces direct competition from better established and mature systems (such as those in Europe and North America) and younger systems that are catching up rapidly (such as the system in Mainland China). Remaining globally relevant amidst fierce competition for quality staff and students is a tremendous task for the Government and the post-secondary education sector.

The review was conducted by the Higher Education Review Group, which comprised members of the UGC (the Group's Terms of Reference and Membership are in **Annex A**). This report has been discussed in detail and adopted by the whole UGC. The Higher Education Review Group commissioned a number of studies of higher education organisation in other parts of the world and of the issues confronting them, obtaining contextual and comparative material. The Group also consulted widely in Hong Kong. In response to an invitation issued in May 2009, more than 30 organisations and individuals provided written views. Individual face-to-face discussions were held with the key stakeholders in the sector, such as the heads of institutions, heads of quality assurance bodies and other personalities, to gauge their views on the development of the sector.

To enhance communication and interaction with stakeholders, the Group also held two consultations for staff and students of UGC-funded institutions in September 2009, attracting 150 participants. Having identified a number of leading issues of concern to stakeholders, the Group then cast a wider net in April 2010 by issuing invitations to another round of consultative sessions with the whole of the post-secondary sector, and attracted over 100 staff and students from UGC-funded and non-UGC-funded post-secondary institutions, as well as representatives of quality assurance bodies, etc. We are grateful to all of the organisations and individuals who shared their views and ideas, which helped to shape the content and recommendations of this report. The list of consultees is in **Annex B**.

Finally I would like to convey my personal gratitude to Sir Colin Lucas, Convenor of the Higher Education Review Group, and to the other members of the Group, for their dedication, wisdom and immense contribution in taking forward this review.

This is a report to the Government, and with the Government's agreement it is being simultaneously released to the public. I hope that it will stimulate interest and debate on the future direction of post-secondary education in Hong Kong.



**The Hon Laura Cha May-lung, GBS, JP  
Chairman, University Grants Committee**