

PART THREE: BVMTF'S MAJOR OBSERVATIONS AND CITYU'S RESPONSE

Role of Veterinary College in handling Infectious Diseases

BVMTF's Observation

3.1 According to CityU, one of their motives for establishing a veterinary college is to enhance Hong Kong's capability to deal with outbreaks of infectious diseases originating from animals (e.g. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Avian Influenza), such as providing expertise and facilities to assist in handling the crisis (e.g. facilities for isolating infected animals). BVMTF has asked CityU how the veterinary college can contribute in this area.

CityU's Response

3.2 CityU reported that the university has consulted the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) and explored a few options for further development. In line with practices in other jurisdictions, veterinary teaching staff and students, particularly final or penultimate year students may provide the government with additional personnel and expert advice in case an emergency disease response is required. CityU is planning to have BVM staff and students participate in the local emergency diseases response drills that AFCD does on an annual basis. Moreover, CityU's own Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL) can provide surge capacity at times of increased need, i.e. provide back-up for government diagnosticians that are called away to deal with emergency responses, or provide additional testing facilities/capacity. The Cornell residency training programme might also be used by AFCD to allow them to train future diagnostic leaders in their laboratory system.

Research and Academic Development

BVMTF's Observation

3.3 BVMTF understands from CityU's proposal that its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences has plans to develop research programmes in areas such as food safety, aquatic health, prevention and control of infectious diseases and animal welfare. BVMTF has asked CityU for more information on the research strategy and the time frame for development of its research work.

CityU's Response

3.4 According to CityU, the veterinary research foci fall under the broad themes of food safety, zoonoses control, animal and aquatic health and animal welfare using the One Health approaches. These themes are of particular relevance to Hong Kong, as Hong Kong imports most of its foodstuff and is a densely populated environment where humans and animals live closely together. Furthermore, Hong Kong is well connected to the rest of the world and hence is exposed to public health risks from different regions.

3.5 The research on infectious diseases will be underpinned by the development of platform technologies that will allow rapid detection and characterisation of pathogens through genomic sequencing and proteomic and metabolomics analysis. A dedicated research space will be developed, and once technical and bioinformatics support is available and new academic staff are in place, this research space will house core facilities for developing research programmes.

Accreditation

BVMTF's Observations

3.6 According to CityU, its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences has been working with the AVBC since mid-2014 to obtain international accreditation for its undergraduate veterinary medicine programme. CityU expected that accreditation of the BVM by AVBC would allow graduates

to register and to practise as veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong. However, AVBC is not an accreditation body currently recognized by VSBHK. CityU stated that the AVBC has a reciprocal agreement with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) in London, and AVBC-accredited schools are acceptable to national veterinary boards after further endorsement by the RCVS. The VSBHK has yet to endorse this process, which is subject to the findings of the study described in paragraph 3.8.

3.7 CityU first invited the AVBC for a consultative visit to its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences in December 2015 to ascertain its readiness for the launch of the undergraduate degree. In December 2016, the Veterinary Schools Accreditation Advisory Committee (VSAAC) was invited for a full site-visit to CityU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences. An assessment was made by the visiting team on the development of CityU's BVM programme, the curriculum, facilities, staffing plan and financing, etc. Based on the assessment, a "Letter of Reasonable Assurance" was granted to the BVM in March 2017 by the AVBC's governing board. In accordance with AVBC's procedures, the "Letter of Reasonable Assurance" was converted into "Provisional Accreditation" of the BVM programme on the date that the initial class was admitted, i.e. in September 2017. Repeat site-visits by VSAAC on a two-year cycle (thus the next visit for the CityU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences would be expected towards the end of 2018) will occur as the first cohort of students progresses through the BVM programme, followed by a final site-visit as the first cohort approaches graduation in 2023. CityU expects to retain "Provisional Accreditation" status for the BVM programme until the final site-visit, followed by full AVBC accreditation in 2023.

3.8 In January 2017, the UGC sought VSBHK's assurance of a viable pathway in terms of accreditation of the BVM programme proposed by CityU. VSBHK advised that although AVBC is not an accreditation body currently recognised by VSBHK for the purpose of registration as veterinary surgeons in Hong Kong, VSBHK nonetheless recognises qualifications conferred by veterinary colleges in Australia and New Zealand accredited by the AVBC through the reciprocal agreement between AVBC and RCVS. That said, VSBHK would conduct a study on AVBC's accreditation system/standards and

reciprocal agreements with its counterparts. The study should commence in 2018 and take fewer than two years to complete. VSBHK would take into account the findings of the study before deciding whether all institutions accredited by AVBC should be recognised for the purpose of registration in Hong Kong. VSBHK also advised that such change can be made by an amendment to the Rules of the Veterinary Surgeons Board (Registration of Veterinary Surgeons) and legislative amendments would not be required.

3.9 The UGC asked CityU whether its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences would aspire to accreditation by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in addition to AVBC and RCVS accreditation. The UGC also sought further clarification from CityU regarding the risk of accreditation being delayed and thus causing employment difficulties for early year BVM graduates.

CityU's Response

3.10 CityU explained that the AVBC pathway has the advantage of adopting a “reasonable assurance process” which provides continuous assessment and ongoing feedback on the state of the programme. This will enable CityU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences to make improvements or adjustment during the course of the programme's development in a timely and efficient manner to ensure quality and alignment with the required standards. By contrast, RCVS and AVMA assessments only occur just prior to the graduation of the first cohort of students, which is too late for adjustments to be made to address any weaknesses or inadequacies. CityU further explained in its proposal that the AVBC pathway is a more expedient process. The AVBC will accredit a developing school upon graduation of its first cohort of students, whereas RCVS and AVMA would only confer accreditation after at least five cohorts of graduates have been produced by a school. Thus achieving AVBC full accreditation status in 2023 will immediately give CityU's BVM graduates opportunities to apply for registration to practise from day one with the VSBHK.

3.11 Regarding AVMA accreditation, CityU explained in the proposal that its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences is also planning to seek AVMA accreditation after attaining full AVBC accreditation status for the

BVM. In fact, it became a member of the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges in October 2016. The College will enter accreditation discussions with AVMA following the earliest possible timeline allowed by AVMA criteria, i.e. either after at least a minimum of five years' worth of graduates have been produced, or 11 years from the current time.

3.12 CityU has assured UGC that the university is currently working closely towards the plan to establish all the required resources for a fully accredited veterinary college. CityU indicates that it:

- (a) has already established a veterinary diagnostic laboratory and acquired a local veterinary clinic;
- (b) is renovating the acquired premises at Trinity Towers for a special veterinary clinic;
- (c) is proceeding well on establishing dedicated teaching labs for anatomy and pathobiology;
- (d) has acquired land to develop a dairy farm at Lam Tsuen in Hong Kong; and
- (e) is in early discussions with the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC) for the establishment of a basic equine hospital/teaching facility at one of HKJC's riding schools.

CityU also indicates that plans for an ambulatory service (with financial backing from AFCD) are advancing well.

Exit plan

BVMTF's Observations

3.13 The UGC has invited CityU to consider an exit plan in case there is delay in securing full accreditation, and consider the welfare of the students and graduates should this happen. The UGC considers this issue to be most critical as there should be a clear pathway for the BVM graduates to practise veterinary medicine in Hong Kong.

3.14 CityU stated in its proposal that the university has a fallback plan for the BVM graduates in the event that full accreditation status of the BVM by

AVBC is not achieved in 2023. The plan involves arranging for the BVM graduates to take the Statutory Membership Examination leading to Membership of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS) offered annually by RCVS in London. Success in the MRCVS examination allows overseas veterinarians to register as members of RCVS. BVM students who pass the examination and are registered as RCVS members (by examination) will be able to practise in Hong Kong, the UK, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa after graduation from CityU. CityU is prepared to underwrite the full costs of examination fees, air travel and accommodation which the BVM graduates would incur in taking the MRCVS examination. This arrangement would be extended if another cohort should graduate before the BVM achieves full accreditation status.

3.15 UGC further advised CityU to provide special assistance and tutoring to students to familiarise themselves with a different context and curriculum in the event they need to sit the RCVS examination. CityU would need to consider what to do in the circumstance of a student failing the RCVS examination, for example, whether it would support students to retake the examination.

CityU's Response

3.16 CityU explained in the proposal that its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences has started engagement with the VSBHK to seek assurance that the MRCVS statutory examination will indeed be acceptable to the VSBHK for registration in Hong Kong, and will remain so in the foreseeable future. The response received from the VSBHK is that they are favourably disposed to CityU's fallback plan, as the MRCVS statutory examination is presently acceptable under Schedule 1(c) of the Rules of the Veterinary Surgeons Board (Registration of Veterinary Surgeons) of the Hong Kong Veterinary Surgeons Ordinance. In addition, CityU explained that where necessary, it would support each graduate to retake the MRCVS examination in London. CityU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences would also liaise actively with RCVS to facilitate its students' application process, and provide special tutoring assistance for students where necessary before they attempt the examination.

Collaboration with Cornell University

BVMTF's Observations

3.17 Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) has been involved in curriculum development of the BVM programme, for example, in assessing the curriculum and ascertaining that its respective Doctor of Veterinary Medicine pre-requisites were met. CityU expects that BVM students will spend four weeks on Cornell-affiliated farms in New York State in the summer of 2018 as part of their externship programme.

3.18 With regard to specialist facilities development, the VDL and the specialist clinic in Cheung Sha Wan are being planned and made operational with input from Cornell.

3.19 Cornell faculty was involved in the development of BVM student recruitment criteria, and participated in the first vetting and ranking of student applicants and in a round of individual interviews for the final selection in February 2017. Cornell faculty was also part of the special committee for the selection and interviewing of candidates for faculty positions of CityU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences, and provided input for the development and refinement of the College's strategic plan.

3.20 On quality oversight, Cornell faculty will oversee the ongoing quality of delivery of CityU's BVM programme. The Dean and senior faculty were in attendance with CityU staff to take part in the review of the BVM programme and site visits in December 2015 and 2016, which finally led to CityU's BVM being granted a "Letter of Reasonable Assurance" by AVBC in March 2017.

3.21 BVMTF would like CityU to explain the most recent progress with regard to the collaboration with Cornell.

CityU's Response

3.22 CityU stated in the BVM proposal that establishing the BVM as a joint degree programme at Cornell continues to be the University's long-term goal in its academic partnership with Cornell. Discussions between Cornell and CityU so far indicated that the process for establishing joint degree programmes at Cornell requires obtaining internal college and university authorization as well as approval and oversight by state and regional accrediting bodies. For CityU, it entails authorization by the School Board and approval by the University Senate. The process is invariably long and approval is unlikely before graduation of the first cohort of students. That said, it is also stated in the proposal that the granting of policy support and public funding by the Government to CityU's BVM will undoubtedly give an important boost to advance the process, as CityU continues its on-going discussion with its Cornell partners on this matter.

Funding Sustainability

BVMTF's Observations

3.23 In the course of exchanges with BVMTF, CityU proposed that UGC funding be provided for the BVM and presented two scenarios of student transfer plans. These were the "hybrid transfer model" which involves the conversion of 36 UGC-funded sub-degree places to 12 FYFD places for transfer to the BVM (in addition to the transfer of 18 FYFD places from various UGC-funded undergraduate degree programmes), and the "singular transfer model" which involves the transfer of 30 FYFD places from various UGC-funded undergraduate degree programmes to the BVM. The Secretariat would like CityU to confirm that the funding of the BVM programme will not adversely affect other UGC-funded programmes, given the relatively high cost of the veterinary programme.

3.24 Regarding the hybrid transfer model for proposed student transfer to the BVM programme, the UGC Secretariat advised CityU that the proposed conversion of sub-degree places to FYFD places would mean an increase of FYFD places to beyond the current 15 000 FYFD places. As the Government

has decided to maintain the FYFD level at 15 000, this scenario would be contrary to the Government's policy. In any case, the student number target should not be transferred across different study levels. CityU was advised that the BVMTF would only consider the singular transfer model. CityU was later asked to consider adjusting its budget on the BVM programme to ensure financial sustainability and that other UGC-funded programmes would not be affected. The UGC also pointed out that, in the steady state scenario, the BVM programme might involve up to HK\$32 million in UGC-funding per year starting from 2024/25.

CityU's Response

3.25 CityU plans to transfer 30 student places from its existing programmes for the six-year Bachelor of BVM programme, commencing from the 2019-22 triennium. CityU has submitted a plan on where the 30 student places would come from, and has reassured the BVMTF that the internal impact of such transfer of resources would be manageable. CityU has also given assurances that the process had been well-managed and the donation attracted also benefited other internal stakeholders. Eventually, CityU has confirmed acceptance of UGC's suggestion that, should CityU's proposal for a six-year BVM programme be approved, CityU would redeploy UGC funding of up to \$32 million per year when it reaches the steady state in year 2024/25. CityU has provided confirmation in this regard.

Cost Plan

BVMTF's Observations

3.26 CityU has developed a cost plan with detailed breakdown for the publicly-funded six-year BVM programme. Based on the model of calculation adopted by CityU, the highest operational budgetary expense would be reached at steady state, i.e. from 2024/25 onwards when a full complement of 30 students is enrolled in each of the six years of the BVM. The total number of BVM students in all six years would have reached 180. The budget plans envisage a total expenditure of HK\$123.1 million per year from 2024/25

onwards. In its comments to CityU, UGC stated that while the BVM programme has a high cost structure, it has an added role in attracting students to study in other related CityU programmes such as the Bachelor of Biomedical Science, lifting these related programmes in terms of demand and quality of students. This should be seen as a direct benefit of delivering the BVM, and so the financial impact on a collective of programmes at CityU should be considered. A six-year BVM programme meant that CityU needed to fund the difference between an annual provision of HK\$32 million in public funding from UGC and the total cost of the programme, to the extent of HK\$83.5¹ million per year being the shortfall under the steady state scenario. UGC also noted that CityU’s current veterinary programme has attracted substantial donations, including major donations of HK\$500 million from the HKJC. Some of the notable news reports on major donations received by CityU for the veterinary college are summarized below:

Date	Heading of Newspaper/Publication Reports
22 Nov 2017	Wenweipo: “HKJC donates HK\$500 million to CityU for establishing a vet college” (<i>similar reports by Sing Pao, Hong Kong Commercial Daily, Sing Tao Daily</i>)
8 July 2017	Ming Pao: “Bank of China donates HK\$180 million to support CityU’s Vet College” (<i>similar report by Hong Kong Economic Times</i>)
8 Sept 2015	Hong Kong Economic Journal: “Low-profile industrialist donates HK\$200 million to CityU in support of the vet college and other innovation projects” (<i>similar reports by Ta Kung Pao, Wenweipo</i>)
14 Feb 2015	Ta Kung Pao: “CityU received a HK\$100 million donation for veterinary medicine studies from businessman Dr Li Dak-sum” (<i>similar reports by Sing Pao, Hong Kong Daily News, Oriental Daily, Wenweipao, Hong Kong Economic Times</i>)

¹ HK\$123.1 million (Total Cost) – HK\$32 million (UGC funding by redeployment) – HK\$7.6 million (Tuition Fee Income) = HK\$83.5 million

CityU's Response

3.27 CityU responded that to further build on the University's strength to advance interdisciplinary research and education under the One Health paradigm, the University Council, based on the endorsement of the Senate, approved the development of the School of Veterinary Medicine into a new College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences (CVMLS) effective 1 July 2017. CityU explained that the increased collaboration between veterinary medicine and life sciences within the two departments of the new College will further enhance the quality of student intake as well as overall research capacity, as it will attract more students to consider CityU as an institute of choice for professional education and life sciences-related studies. CityU stated that there will also be benefits in leveraging some synergy in teaching the basic biology subjects, such as cell biology, ecology and biostatistics, although it is not anticipated that there will be any significant financial impact on the programmes operated by the respective disciplines within the College. CityU also suggested that the benefit of synergy can extend to strengthening research capacity, enabling the College to attract more funding and enhance its research impact and knowledge transfer initiatives.

Access to animals for learning and clinical teaching

BVMTF's Observations

3.28 The UGC invited CityU to elaborate on the progress toward gaining access to farms in the Mainland and in Hong Kong, and whether such farms in the Mainland would satisfy the AVBC requirements. UGC is concerned that given the lack of land in Hong Kong, there might be difficulties acquiring a farm in Hong Kong which would meet the AVBC requirements. The UGC noted the AVBC criteria for accreditation that "*Veterinary schools must either maintain herds or flocks of teaching animals of the main large animal species (cattle, sheep, pigs and horses) or arrange right of use at readily accessible premises*".

CityU's Response

3.29 CityU explained in the proposal that its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences is actively preparing and procuring facilities for

intramural and extramural support of student learning and experiences with a view to meeting in full the expectations of the AVBC. CityU has acquired land near Lam Tsuen in the New Territories to develop a small local dairy farm. CityU explained that the site and building plans had already been inspected by AVBC during their December 2016 visit and were found to be adequate. CityU also claimed that its College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences has signed memorandum of understanding (MoU) with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), Ocean Park and owners of several local poultry, pig and fish farms who have agreed to host its BVM students to engage in clinical activities, conduct practicum and carry out research. In addition, CityU is planning a basic, primary care equine hospital with the HKJC. The University is presently assessing the needs for this basic facility to achieve day one skills in support of teaching, and is developing a proposal in conjunction with the Head of Clinical Services at the HKJC. CityU also said that its plans for an ambulatory service, with financial backing from AFCD are advancing well. Furthermore, to further augment the Hong Kong experience, CityU is discussing animal access arrangements with its partners at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine (dairy cattle, beef cattle, sheep, horses), and on the Mainland (the University has MoUs with large dairy farms (50 000 heads) run by Fonterra/Abbot²). It is also stated that the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences will ensure that access arrangements with any providers outside of Hong Kong, if necessary, will include suitable arrangements for travel and accommodation, and appropriate monitoring and supervision by CityU employees.

Capital requirement/Accommodation

BVMTF's Observations

3.30 BVMTF wishes to know what progress CityU has made since the CityU launched the veterinary programme.

² Commercial dairy companies

CityU's Response

3.31 CityU's investments in capital requirement to support the BVM are as follows:

- (a) In 2015, CityU purchased off-campus premises with a total floor area of about 3 400 square meters, spread over three floors of the Trinity Towers in Cheung Sha Wan, Kowloon, for the amount of about HK\$450 million. The University has further committed an extra HK\$140 million as fitting-out cost to renovate the premises into a specialist animal clinic to serve the community and to provide training opportunities for the BVM students. The clinic will start operation sometime in 2018. The University has taken steps to address the concerns of local residents over the clinic.
- (b) In 2016, the University committed HK\$130 million for the acquisition of the Peace Avenue Veterinary Clinic (PAVC), the largest commercial veterinary clinic in Hong Kong. The clinic will provide the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences with access to a variety of clinical cases for problem-based learning before the specialist clinic in Cheung Sha Wan opens.
- (c) In late 2016, the University established the VDL on campus for conducting specialized research and diagnostic tests to support the study and diagnosis of disease processes that affect animals and humans. The laboratory cost HK\$60 million and is now in operation.
- (d) In 2017, CityU signed a 10-year lease for the Sha Tau Kok site of about 20 000 square meters for the establishment of an aquaculture research and training centre at the estimated cost of HK\$75 million; and
- (e) In the meantime, CityU has secured a piece of land in Lam Tsuen for the setting up of a local training facility for dairy medicine at an estimated cost of HK\$175 million. Added to this are a yet to be established equine hospital, planned in conduction with the Head of Clinical Services at the HKJC and estimated to cost around HK\$200 million, and an ambulatory service at HK\$50 million.

Biosecurity

BVMTF's Observations

3.32 A critical role for CityU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences and BVM programme will be monitoring, diagnosing, teaching and researching areas of infections and emerging diseases. The UGC felt that CityU's proposal should provide assurance that in the event of a diagnosis, say in a clinical setting, or diagnostic pathology setting, appropriate biosecurity is achieved. While this is the situation for any diagnostic government department or university diagnostic setting, the added concern for CityU relates to the density of population and the placement of facilities in mixed-purposes city buildings. Government diagnostic and research facilities will already have good plans in place for this, and CityU should ensure that similar plans are in place for each of its locations. The UGC Secretariat suggested that it would be important for CityU to ensure these plans are considered when engaging with tenants in multi-use buildings.

CityU's Response

3.33 CityU responded that the planning team, comprising CityU and Cornell faculty, is committed to ensuring that both the VDL and the veterinary clinic in Cheung Sha Wan are designed and operated to the highest relevant international biosecurity standards and similar to facilities at Cornell University. The VDL is working towards achieving ISO 17025 standard. This international standard governs veterinary diagnostic laboratories and also specifies the handling of specimens, in particular infectious ones, and procedures for ensuring the safety of personnel, the environment and the public at large. As such, CityU's VDL will meet the local standards of the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme which largely follows these international standards. The Trinity Towers clinic is designed and will be built and run to comply with the American Animal Hospital Association standards, which also address issues of infection control. The PAVC, which has operated at Liberty Avenue and its previous location in densely populated areas for over 30 years, has also been operating under the strict requirements of well-established policies and procedures.

Stakeholders Views

3.34 The BVMTF has consulted widely on CityU's most recent proposal, and sought the views of the external stakeholders. The BVMTF considers the following comments worthy of note:

- (a) The CityU BVM programme must be of very high quality to claim professional accreditation and gain the confidence of the public at large.
- (b) A veterinary college would provide research options and collaborations with the Government and other universities, and thus help to strengthen Hong Kong's position in the development of One Health, for example, in epidemiology and pathology. It can also provide more opportunities for veterinarians to do post-graduate research work and more opportunities for internship and residency training.
- (c) CityU's College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences can provide continued professional development and training to local veterinary surgeons wishing to further their knowledge, especially with continued professional development becoming compulsory in 2019-2021.
- (d) There is some concern that there may be an oversupply to the profession, and that graduates of the BVM programme may flood the market in Hong Kong. However, another view is that having a veterinary college in Hong Kong with around 30 students per year may not add dramatically to the supply as some of these students would have studied abroad if CityU's BVM programme had not been established. Moreover, while the pet animal veterinary market may not have a lot of room for further growth, there is still a number of opportunities for veterinary surgeons in other areas, including government, research, disease control, etc.

Profitability of clinics

BVMTF's Observations

3.35 CityU is expecting the PAVC and the clinic in Cheung Sha Wan to operate on a commercial basis, with some compensation for the teaching aspects

of student supervision. UGC understands that these facilities are very labour intensive, in part because of the teaching aspect, and in part because cases often require more time and resources that cannot be charged to clients. One way that such university clinics can be made more profitable is to undertake routine work at commercially competitive rates. UGC previously expressed concern that this would have the effect of undermining other local practices, which could damage relationships that are necessary for a range of other aspects (such as extra-mural placements, and referrals). The aspiration to have these clinics profitable is admirable, but in most contexts unachievable. Indeed the AVMA accreditation requirements state “*Clinical services, field services, and teaching hospitals must function as instructional resources. Instructional integrity of these resources must take priority over financial self-sufficiency of clinical services operations*”.

CityU’s Response

3.36 CityU asserted in its proposal that the university is fully committed to the priority of maintaining instructional integrity in the operation of its clinics and laboratory – a point that is strongly emphasized in the AVBC accreditation document. It explained that the CityU’s goal is to ensure that the operation of its resources can be both commercially profitable as well as meeting high international standards for teaching and research.

3.37 When CityU purchased the PAVC, it was already a profitable and very large practice with more than 90 000 consultations per annum. CityU is confident that there is no need to change its financial model or to lower the prices, while the clinic can also ensure exposure to a high volume and diverse range of small animal cases for its students. CityU also explained that currently the clinic has seven specialists and 20 veterinarians, and since not all of the BVM students will be taking a small animal class/rotation at any one time together, it is anticipated that the impact of student presence in the clinic will be manageable. Even at a full load of 30 BVM students, they are only required, for all species, to see 50 cases each (1 500 in total, for the cohort). According to CityU, it will continue to monitor the impact and its assumptions carefully, and adapt its plan as needed, to ensure teaching and learning are maintained at high standards.

3.38 Regarding the VDL, CityU has pointed out that there is no commercial veterinary diagnostic laboratory with ISO 17025 accreditation serving the commercial market of Hong Kong at present, meaning that there is an absence of competitors of similar standard in Hong Kong. This should favour the path of the College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences towards financial sustainability.

Risk Management

BVMTF's Observation

3.39 In addition to examining individual key issues, the BVMTF considers it important that CityU takes stock of all pertinent factors and draws up an overall risk management plan for the BVM programme to inform UGC of the University approach in dealing with possible future risks in various dimensions. Such risks may include fluctuation of donations and investment income, progress of accreditation, possible fluctuation in enrolment and cohort size of the programme, public perception of the programme, etc.

CityU's Response

3.40 CityU advises that the University is committed to the long-term sustainability and high quality of the BVM programme. The University has formed a high-level steering group led by the Provost and comprising members of the College of Veterinary Medicine and the management, to undertake holistic oversight of the development of the BVM as well as to monitor potential risks. The University has developed a set of mitigating measures for the key risks covering such topics as fluctuation of investment return, fluctuation of donation, progress in accreditation, student enrolment and cohort size, and public perception of the BVM programme.

3.41 The BVMTF is satisfied with CityU's effort to forming an internal steering group to oversee the BVM programme and undertake risk management. The BVMTF is also reassured by CityU's own assessment of the relevant risks.