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

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Quality Assurance Council

Quality Assurance Council
Second Audit Cycle

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

Conduct of QAC Quality Audits

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

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

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

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

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

Summary of the principal findings of the Audit Panel

(a) The Audit Panel noted the University's detailed and conscientious response to the 2009 QAC Quality Audit Report. The great majority of recommendations were addressed within a few years of the publication of the 2009 report, while other, more complex recommendations have taken longer to implement. Developments affirmed in the 2009 report have either been completed or are progressing well. The University has actively sought to extend good practice identified in the report across the institution. The progress HKU has made in responding to the commendations, affirmations and recommendations which resulted from the 2009 Quality Audit are discussed under the relevant headings of this report.

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

(c) The University maintains high academic standards, as evidenced by reports from external examiners, professional accreditation and Faculty and curriculum reviews, graduate destinations, and employer surveys. The expectation of high academic standards was apparent in several parts of the Institutional Submission and was evident in discussions the Audit Panel had with staff at all levels. Academic standards are mentioned in general terms in the University's

Vision and Mission Statement and in its Educational Aims (EAs). These documents use terms such as 'graduates of distinction' and 'academic/professional excellence' – terms which imply an expectation of high standards but which are nowhere precisely defined. To assist in promoting and assuring high standards across the University, the report suggests that HKU articulate explicitly and promulgate an overarching approach to setting the academic standards of its awards.

(d) The University has an established and robust approach to quality assurance across its taught and research programmes. Among other things, this approach is based on cycles of curriculum and Faculty review, both of which include external input and facilitate the sharing of good practice and identification of common issues. The report draws attention to the detail and thoroughness of these reviews. It notes that the implementation of review recommendations is regularly monitored at Faculty level, where particularly effective connections are made between different processes. The University collects data and produces overviews of the quality of the annual student intake and institutional surveys of the student learning experience, student achievement and graduate destinations. The external examiner system assists HKU in benchmarking curricula against international peer institutions. Individually and collectively these mechanisms produce valuable data capable of informing the enhancement of curricula and the student learning experience. While various senior committees of the University are fully informed of the outcomes of these processes, overview reports are not consistently and systematically considered by Senate. Given that Senate is the principal authority responsible for all academic matters, the report encourages the University to review the terms of reference for Senate and its sub-committees to ensure that Senate is fully and regularly briefed on the outcomes of the University's quality assurance processes and the progress of its enhancement initiatives.

(e) The academic achievements and broader attributes of HKU students make them attractive candidates for graduate employment, further study or careers in academic research in top universities around the world. The University has clearly defined EAs for its graduates at undergraduate (Ug), taught postgraduate (TPg) and research postgraduate (RPg) levels. HKU has facilitated the adoption of outcome based learning by means of a framework in which all courses have defined learning outcomes that contribute to overall programme learning outcomes (PLOs). These PLOs, in turn, contribute to the achievement of the relevant set of EAs. At present HKU has indirect evidence from student, graduate and employer surveys of the extent to which PLOs and EAs are being achieved. HKU also collects direct evidence from external examiners' reports and professional accreditation reports. The report endorses the efforts HKU is currently making to enhance the collection of direct evidence through PLO Achievement Portfolios and proposes that the University expedite the implementation of the project to ensure that all staff

and students benefit as soon as possible from the positive outcomes identified through the pilot scheme.

(f) Students at all levels were aware of learning outcomes but expressed uncertainty about what was expected from them in assessment assignments and how grades awarded to their work related to these expectations. As a consequence they were unsure how to benefit from feedback and improve their performance. The University's assessment policy requires staff to develop grade descriptors for assessment. The report suggests that the University facilitate students' understanding of grade descriptors contained in the Course Information Template of the Student Information System and through advice from teachers and academic advisors.

(g) Extensive experiential, co- and extra-curricular activities are also designed to contribute significantly to the achievement of EAs. The University does not, however, currently document individual student participation in co-/extra-curricular activities or link these activities systematically to the relevant set of EAs. The report encourages the University to develop a conceptual framework capable of encompassing academic, co- and extra-curricular learning activities and an appropriate mechanism for documenting student achievement across the spectrum.

(h) Since the last audit HKU has undertaken a number of initiatives primarily aimed at enhancing the quality of learning opportunities within the new four-year Ug programmes. Evidence was found that formal learning opportunities for undergraduates have been enriched by the creation of the enabling curriculum structure, the development of the common core curriculum, the introduction of the academic advising system and the expansion of overseas international experiences. The report draws attention to the impact of the common core courses on the intellectual, social and ethical development of undergraduates across the University. The Audit Panel noted that attention is now progressively turning to RPg and TPg programmes.

(i) The Audit Panel found evidence that RPg education is aligned with the University's mission to engage in innovative, high impact and leading edge research within and across disciplines. The high standard of RPg education is attested by the quality of applicants, associations with top research institutes worldwide and reports from external examiners. RPg students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their experience and were appreciative of the opportunities and support they are offered to attend international research conferences and participate in various fellowship and exchange schemes. It was noted, however, that not all students have equal opportunity to acquire teaching experience prior to graduation. Since the last audit, HKU has articulated EAs for RPg programmes. Provision has been further enhanced by expanding arrangements for supervision to include co-supervisors and advisory groups, introducing mandatory training and development for both new and

established supervisors and developing a mandatory common taught component for all RPg students. The report highlights two recent innovations: the thorough biannual monitoring and review system that tracks the progress of RPg students; and the recently developed research postgraduate handbook which provides clear guidance on good practice, procedures and roles and responsibilities for students, staff and Faculty committees. The Audit Panel noted, however, that not all RPg students are aware of the channels available to them for making their voice heard or for seeking advice.

(j) External examiners' reports, surveys of graduate destinations and the comments made by employers all indicated to the Audit Panel that the University's TPg programmes are achieving a high academic standard. The volume of local and non-local applications indicates that these programmes are welcome, particularly to local applicants who are in employment and wishing to study part-time. The Audit Panel noted that TPg programmes are also attracting increasing numbers of non-local students, and considers that these students could both benefit from and contribute to the internationalisation of the learning environment proposed in paragraph (l) below. TPg provision has recently been enhanced by the articulation of EAs which are yet to be fully implemented. As an integral part of HKU's taught provision, TPg programmes share the robust quality assurance processes enjoyed by Ug programmes and the report draws attention to the well established guidelines for review of TPg programmes, which ensure that the review process facilitates enhancement. The report also suggests that the University identify additional ways in which the TPg learning experience could be enhanced by adopting and adapting the enrichment initiatives now operating across Ug programmes.

(k) The audit themes of *Enhancing the student learning experience* and *Global Engagement: strategies and current developments* offered the Audit Panel the opportunity to focus more closely on these cross-cutting lines of enquiry. In considering the theme of *Enhancing the student learning experience*, the Audit Panel noted that HKU regards this activity as integral to its strategic development and found much evidence of its continuing commitment to enrich the educational environment and enhance student support. Formal academic curricula increasingly incorporate opportunities for experiential learning. Ug students in the new four-year degree programmes described the way in which common core courses expand their horizons and lay the foundations for future learning. A rich menu of co-and extra-curricular activities offered by the General Education Unit, the Centre of Development and Resources for Students and residential Halls and Colleges is greatly appreciated by students and viewed as adding considerable value to their formal learning experiences. The report draws attention to the wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities routinely made available to a significant and increasing proportion of the student population, and to the creative and proactive approach to supporting students and promoting their holistic development adopted by the University's integrated network of student services.

(l) In considering the theme of *Global Engagements: strategies and current developments*, the Audit Panel noted the centrality of global engagement as one of the University's '3i' strategic themes of internationalisation, innovation and impact. It was clear to the Audit Panel that HKU organises itself and invests significant human and financial resources to fulfil its commitment to internationalisation and achieve its goal of supporting students to become global citizens. Active and practical steps are being taken to secure the continuing presence of high calibre international staff and students. Care is taken to support non-local students within and beyond the curriculum. While orientation programmes have been effective for Ug and TPg students, there is evidence that not all non-local RPg students are fully aware of and benefit from the orientation programmes because they do not arrive together in a cohort. Ambitious targets have been set for student international experiences, building on recent success at both Ug and RPg levels. While TPg students are less likely to be able to undertake overseas international experiences, the report notes the provision of such experiences for a large and increasing number of Ug and RPg students. The Audit Panel noted the University's ongoing efforts to internationalise the student learning environment but formed the view that 'internationalisation at home' could be strengthened for all students and the report proposes that the University broaden its strategy for the internationalisation of the student learning environment to address both curriculum content and pedagogical practice. The report draws attention to HKU's well-articulated aims for international engagement, which are supported by a comprehensive range of strategies, support services and funding.

1. INTRODUCTION

Explanation of the audit methodology

1.1 This is the report of a quality audit of The University of Hong Kong (HKU, the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on an Institutional Submission which was prepared by HKU following a period of self-review and submitted to QAC on 17 August 2015. A one-day Institutional Briefing and Initial Meeting of Panel members was held on 16 September 2015 to discuss the detailed arrangements for the audit visit.

1.2 The Audit Panel visited HKU from 10 to 12 November 2015. They met the President and senior managers; deans and heads of department; staff with responsibility for quality assurance of both taught and research programmes; teaching staff; those responsible for supervision of research postgraduate (RPg) students; academic support staff; a wide range of students, including undergraduates, taught postgraduates and research postgraduates; and external stakeholders including employers and alumni. The Audit Panel evaluates:

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

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

Introduction to the institution and its role and mission

1.3 HKU was founded in 1910 and is the oldest tertiary education institution in Hong Kong. Since its foundation, the University has grown substantially and now embraces a wide range of teaching and research programmes.

1.4 HKU's mission states that the University will endeavour:

- To advance constantly the bounds of scholarship, building upon its proud traditions and strengths
- To provide a comprehensive education, developing fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students while developing and extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community

- To produce graduates of distinction committed to lifelong learning, integrity and professionalism, capable of being responsive leaders and communicators in their fields
- To develop a collegial, flexible, pluralistic and supportive intellectual environment that inspires and attracts, retains and nurtures scholars, students and staff of the highest calibre in a culture that fosters creativity, learning and freedom of thought, enquiry and expression
- To provide a safe, healthy and sustainable workplace to support and advance teaching, learning and research at the University
- To engage in innovative, high-impact and leading-edge research within and across disciplines
- To be fully accountable for the effective management of public and private resources bestowed upon the institution and act in partnership with the community over the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge
- To serve as a focal point of intellectual and academic endeavour in Hong Kong, Mainland China and Asia and act as a gateway and forum for scholarship with the rest of the world.

1.5 Of HKU's students, 16 017 are undergraduate (Ug), 8 950 are taught postgraduate (TPg) and 2 544 are RPg students. HKU employs 5 415 teaching, research, support and other staff in its academic departments.

1.6 HKU's vision is to attract and nurture outstanding scholars from around the world through excellence and innovation in teaching and learning, research and knowledge exchange, contributing to the advancement of society and the development of leaders through a global presence, regional significance and engagement with the rest of China.

2. THE SETTING AND MAINTAINING OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS

2.1 This report addresses academic standards from two perspectives: first, the academic standards set and maintained for programmes of study and their manifestation in the University's overarching Educational Aims (EAs), which are addressed in this section of the report; and second, levels of individual student achievement against those academic standards, as measured by assessment, which are addressed below under *Student Achievement*. Together these two sections primarily address academic standards and student achievement within taught programmes (Ug and TPg); academic standards for RPg programmes are addressed in the section on *Postgraduate Provision* (see paragraph 6.4 below).

2.2 Academic standards are mentioned in general terms in the University's Vision and Mission Statement and in its EAs. The Mission states that 'The University of Hong Kong will endeavour to … produce graduates of

distinction', while the EAs for Ug programmes include 'pursuit of academic/professional excellence'. The EAs for postgraduate programmes make no reference to academic standards. Though the terms 'distinction' and 'excellence' imply an expectation of high standards, they are nowhere precisely defined. Despite the lack of formal definition, the expectation of high academic standards is implicit in HKU's procedures for programme design, approval and review, and was evident in discussions the Audit Panel had with senior staff and with teaching staff at all levels.

2.3 In order to test how effectively the University sets and maintains the academic standards of its awards, the Audit Panel requested and examined lists of programme learning outcomes (PLOs) for two specific programmes. The Audit Panel also explored in meetings with programme directors and teaching staff how the University's EAs are incorporated in PLOs, and how course learning outcomes in turn contribute to achievement of PLOs. Moreover, the Audit Panel examined examples of reports from external examiners and professional accreditation panels, and established that critical comments are appropriately handled by the relevant University processes. Audit trails of two curriculum reviews and one Faculty review were requested by the Audit Panel. These documents provided evidence that the respective recommendations of curriculum and Faculty reviews had been implemented and that progress was being monitored.

2.4 Informed by the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, HKU has clearly articulated sets of EAs for graduates at Ug, TPg and RPg levels respectively. The University has facilitated the adoption of outcomes based learning by means of a framework in which all courses have defined learning outcomes that contribute to overall PLOs. These PLOs, in turn, contribute to the achievement of the relevant set of EAs.

2.5 In practice, academic standards are set by the expectations of staff for student achievement of course learning outcomes (CLOs), which in turn feed into achievement of PLOs. The setting and maintaining of appropriate standards is also facilitated by the experience of the significant number of academic staff appointed from outside Hong Kong. The Audit Panel heard evidence in meetings with staff that mapping from PLOs to CLOs and to relevant assessment is widespread practice.

2.6 The appropriateness of expected levels of achievement is set through reference to external comparators. These include the use of external academic and professional expertise in the design of new programmes and external benchmarking during development of University assessment policies.

2.7 Academic standards are maintained through a wide range of feedback mechanisms. These mechanisms include reports from external examiners, generally appointed from prestigious international universities, curriculum

reviews, Faculty reviews and professional accreditation, together with data about graduate destinations and from employer surveys. The Audit Panel saw evidence in the sample of reports and reviews it inspected that feedback mechanisms are working effectively.

2.8 There is a wealth of indirect evidence of the high standards of HKU's taught programmes. These include institutional surveys of graduates and employers and students' self-assessment of attainment of learning outcomes. Discussion with employers, representatives of professional bodies and other external stakeholders presented a picture of high academic standards, though several participants warned against complacency. HKU also points to its high position in various international ranking schemes, though the Audit Panel considers that such rankings bear limited relation to the standards of Ug programmes.

2.9 HKU attracts many of the highest achieving students in Hong Kong and Asia to its Ug programmes. It also attracts a high number of applications for TPg and RPg programmes, which allows admissions to be highly selective. While the high academic quality of incoming students is no guarantee of a high standard of outcomes, it does make it realistic to set high academic standards.

2.10 Direct evidence of high academic standards comes from the positive comments of external examiners and the destinations of graduates. The Audit Panel particularly noted the prestigious universities at which many graduates are accepted for further study. There is also evidence of high standards in the reports of professional accreditation bodies. The Audit Panel therefore commends HKU's high academic standards, as evidenced by external examiners' reports, professional accreditation and Faculty and curriculum reviews, graduate destinations, and employer surveys.

2.11 HKU is seeking further direct evidence of high academic standards through development of PLO Achievement Portfolios which are currently being piloted in a variety of programmes. A critical element of the PLO Achievement Portfolio is that it requires staff to specify not only learning outcomes (what is to be learned) but also the expected levels of achievement (how well it is to be learned). The extent of students' achievement of PLOs can then be assessed against the specified expectations. Deployment of the PLO Achievement Portfolio will, among other objectives, ensure that grade descriptors and assessment rubrics are better aligned at the programme level. These developments are discussed further in the section on *Student Achievement* (see page 13 below).

2.12 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University sets and maintains high academic standards through a variety of effective mechanisms, with due regard to external expertise and comparator institutions. The University would benefit, both internally and externally, from a more public and explicit

articulation of its strategic approach to setting academic standards. One benefit would be to facilitate staff definition and student understanding of expected levels of student achievement. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that HKU articulate explicitly and promulgate its overarching strategic approach to setting the academic standards of its awards.

3. THE QUALITY OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 HKU has an established and robust approach to assuring the quality of learning opportunities across its taught and research programmes which is predicated on the University's mission to develop 'fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students'. The Audit Panel found evidence that HKU's quality assurance and enhancement systems fully support the University's EAs notably, for Ug students, 'the pursuit of academic/professional excellence, critical enquiry and lifelong learning'; for TPg students, 'critical intellectual enquiry and acquiring up-to-date knowledge and research skills in a discipline/profession' and 'application of knowledge and research skills to practice or theoretical exploration, demonstrating originality and creativity'; and for RPg students, 'engage in critical intellectual enquiry', 'demonstrate a thorough understanding of research methodologies and techniques at an advanced level' and 'conduct innovative, high impact and leading edge research'. HKU's approach incorporates external examiners, peer review and student feedback.

3.2 The Audit Panel tested the efficacy of the University's approach to assuring the quality of learning opportunities by requesting an audit trail of specified curriculum and Faculty reviews and scrutinising the supporting documentation. In addition, the Audit Panel examined minutes of meetings, the University's procedures relating to external examiners and a sample of external examiner reports. During the audit visit, the Audit Panel took the opportunity to discuss the operation of University committees with senior management, and cycles of review with senior management, deans, heads of department and staff with responsibility for quality assurance in taught programmes. The Audit Panel discussed the ways in which the University gathers and responds to student feedback in meeting with staff and students.

3.3 Central to HKU's system is a six-year cycle of curriculum reviews and a five-year cycle of Faculty reviews. Reviews of taught curricula draw on a wide evidence base, including a detailed and self-reflective self-evaluation document, student feedback via responses to surveys including the Hong Kong University Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (HKUSLEQ) and the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning (SETL) Survey; minutes of staff-student consultative committees, graduate and employer feedback, external examiners' reports and an external member who is 'preferably an external examiner'. Faculty reviews are broad-based and comprehensive examinations of operational and strategic effectiveness. They

involve a self-evaluation document and a visit from a panel of internal and external reviewers. The two review cycles are complementary: both address quality assurance and quality enhancement through the examination of curriculum, programme and course design and effectiveness, and through deliberation upon teaching and learning processes and practices. The Audit Panel commends the University's comprehensive and effective quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that include a meticulous approach to curriculum and Faculty review and draw upon external input. The Audit Panel noted, however, that the University prefers to appoint its external examiners as external members of curriculum review panels. Given that these external examiners/external members may find themselves commenting on curriculum enhancements that they themselves have promoted, the Audit Panel encourages the University to consider using external members with a higher degree of independence.

3.4 Both cycles of review contain strong feedback loops with responses and action plans from Faculty Boards being considered and approved by appropriate Senate Committees. Implementation of recommendations resulting from cycles of review is regularly monitored via an approved action plan at Faculty level. Cycles of curriculum, Faculty and RPg review each report to different bodies within the University. Some cross-fertilisation between these bodies is effected by cross-membership**,** permitting the sharing of good practice and identification of common issues. It was clear to the Audit Panel that connections between these different processes are particularly effective at Faculty level where Associate Deans with responsibility for both teaching and learning and RPg programmes sit on Faculty Board and actively lead on the implementation of the various reviews.

3.5 In addition to curriculum and Faculty review, the University collects data and produces overviews of the quality of the annual student intake, institutional surveys of the student learning experiences (HKUSLEQ) and the effectiveness of individual courses (SETL), and graduate and employer surveys. As well as being used as a source of evidence in curriculum and Faculty reviews these data sources are monitored by individual academics, departments and University and Faculty Teaching and Learning Quality Committees (TLQCs). Each mechanism has a clear feedback loop involving the development of an action plan, oversight of implementation and feedback to students. Individually and collectively these mechanisms produce valuable data that enable active reflection at different levels in the University. Members of staff and students whom the Audit Panel met reported concrete examples illustrating how these processes underpin subsequent enhancement to the curriculum and to the student learning experience.

3.6 The external examiner system also enables the University to benchmark curricula against peer institutions. Appointment processes are clear and rigorous, with nominations from Faculty boards being approved by TLQC.

The consideration and implementation of external examiners' reports and recommendations are overseen by a chief examiner in each Faculty and the Faculty TLQC. Scrutiny of how external examiner feedback has been addressed, together with evidence given to the Audit Panel during its visit, indicate that the external examination process is taken seriously. Feedback loops appear to be working well at Faculty level.

3.7 Enhancement mechanisms are built into curriculum and Faculty reviews and the data gathering exercises that the University undertakes. While the senior committees of the University are fully informed of the outcomes of these processes, the Audit Panel was informed that overview reports on the annual cycle of external examiners' reports and curriculum and Faculty reviews are not systematically submitted to Senate for consideration. Given that Senate is the principal authority responsible for all academic matters the Audit Panel recommends that Senate's capacity for exercising oversight be enhanced by reviewing the terms of reference for Senate and its sub-committees to ensure that Senate is appropriately and regularly briefed on the outcomes of the University's quality assurance processes and enhancement initiatives.

3.8 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the University has a strong and widespread commitment to the quality of learning opportunities and has put in place an appropriate and comprehensive quality assurance and quality enhancement system that supports its over-arching strategic goal to be a leading international institution of higher learning. Dialogue between the Audit Panel and staff and students of the University revealed a reflective academic community committed to attaining world-class academic standards and an enhanced student experience. The role of Senate, as the principal authority for all academic matters, could, however, be strengthened by increasing its capacity for exercising institutional oversight.

4. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

4.1 The University's mission statement contains two commitments that explicitly express its approach to student achievement, both within and beyond the curriculum, as follows: 'To provide a comprehensive education, developing fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students while developing and extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community' and 'To produce graduates of distinction committed to lifelong learning, integrity and professionalism, capable of being responsive leaders and communicators in their fields.' These aspirations are embodied in the sets of EAs the University has developed for Ug, TPg and RPg students respectively.

4.2 To establish how effectively the University is defining, facilitating and calibrating the various forms of collective and individual student achievement it espouses, the Audit Panel considered both curricular and co-/extra-curricular learning opportunities. The PLOs for two specified programmes

were scrutinised in relation to the EAs HKU has developed. The Audit Panel explored with programme directors and teaching staff how the University's EAs are reflected in PLOs, and how CLOs in turn contribute to achievement of PLOs. The Audit Panel also discussed with academic support staff how co-/extra-curricular activities may contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes and EAs. Conversations with students at all levels focused on how well they understand assessment processes and benefit from them and the part co-/extra-curricular activities play in enriching the student learning experience.

4.3 HKU has facilitated the adoption of an outcome-based approach to student learning (OBASL) by means of a framework in which all courses have defined learning outcomes that contribute to overall PLOs which in turn map on to the relevant set of EAs. HKU's assessment policy indicates that staff should explicitly articulate the expected levels of achievement in the form of grade descriptors for each course, and that Faculties should develop programme-level grade descriptors related to academic standards for all programmes. Discussion with academic staff indicated that many of them find it difficult to formulate grade descriptors. This impression was confirmed in discussions with senior management and academic support staff. Nonetheless, staff reported benefits in using grade descriptors during implementation of the PLO Achievement Portfolio Project, making the effort worthwhile. For example, the exercise helped staff reassess their teaching and assessment practices as a result of the transition to OBASL and criterion-referenced assessment. The Audit Panel formed the view that the deployment of the PLO Achievement Portfolio will ensure that grade descriptors and assessment rubrics are better aligned at the programme level (see paragraph 2.11 above).

4.4 Students on taught programmes whom the Audit Panel met spoke confidently about learning outcomes but were less clear about what was expected from them in assessment assignments and how grades they received for their work related to these expectations. This made it difficult for them to work out how they could build on strengths, address shortcomings and improve their grades in future assignments. The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University facilitate students' understanding of grade descriptors contained in the Course Information Template of the Student Information System and through advice from teachers and academic advisors.

4.5 HKU currently provides extensive opportunities for experiential, co-/extra-curricular activities, designed to contribute significantly to the achievement of the EAs. Participation rates are already high and systematic steps are being taken to achieve the ambitious target of 100% participation in bespoke Mainland/international experiences for all Ug and RPg students by 2021/22. The different circumstances of TPg students, who are mostly in employment, mean that 'internationalisation at home' is considered the most practical approach (see *Global engagements: strategies and current developments* page

26 below). Ug and RPg students, whom the Audit Panel met, spoke enthusiastically about the various experiences they had taken up and were articulate about the ways in which they had benefitted from them. While Ug students were able to relate their achievements to the EAs, the Audit Panel recognised that EAs are not yet fully implemented in postgraduate programmes.

4.6 The University recruits many of the highest achieving young people in Hong Kong to its Ug programmes and is able to select postgraduate students for its taught and research degree programmes who have an equally strong track record and demonstrate the potential to succeed. The Audit Panel also found evidence that HKU graduates enjoy considerable success in the workplace and/or progress to careers in academic research in high-ranking universities around the world. Employers, alumni and representatives of professional bodies whom the Audit Panel met attribute this success to the academic achievements and broader graduate characteristics that distinguish HKU graduates.

4.7 The University remains committed, nevertheless, to ensuring that it continues to add value to the high achieving students it admits to its programmes and is actively seeking the means to do so. To date it has direct evidence of the academic achievements of its students through degree results, endorsed by external examiners' reports and supported by professional accreditation reports. It also has indirect evidence of the extent to which the achievement of PLOs and EAs is being facilitated by programme design and assessment. This indirect evidence is gathered mainly from student, graduate and employer surveys, including SETL surveys administered at the end of every course. The Audit Panel therefore affirms the significant efforts the University is now making to acquire further direct evidence of individual student achievements via the PLO Achievement Portfolio Project. Following a two-year pilot, the project is now rolling out over a further four-year period. As well as the reported benefits to staff and students, the PLO Achievement Portfolio promises institutional benefits as a source of direct evidence of the achievement of learning outcomes (see paragraph 2.11 above). The Audit Panel considers that the proposed six-year roll out period is unnecessarily conservative, and therefore recommends that the University expedite the implementation of the PLO Achievement Portfolio Project to ensure that all staff and students benefit as soon as possible from the positive outcomes identified through the pilot scheme.

4.8 The University does not currently have a system capable of collecting data and documenting individual student participation in co-/extra-curricular activities and relating this to the achievement of the EAs on which these activities are predicated. The Audit Panel was informed that the Centre of Development and Resources for Students (CEDARS) has plans to develop such a system in the near future by bringing together the various databases

they currently use to record student participation in different types of co-/extra-curricular activities. Given the significance accorded to these aspects of the broader curriculum, the Audit Panel recommends that, to maximise the alignment and value of formal and informal learning opportunities, the University expedite the development of a conceptual framework capable of encompassing academic, co- and extra-curricular learning activities, so that student achievement across the spectrum can be meaningfully captured, documented, monitored, evaluated and enhanced.

4.9 HKU has systematic enhancement mechanisms which have already led to the development of the PLO Achievement Portfolio Project and the plan to capture and evaluate student achievement in the co-/extra-curriculum. These developments in turn will become mechanisms not only for measuring but also for enhancing student achievement in its broadest sense.

4.10 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University is committed to adding value to the high achieving students it attracts, and is actively taking steps to ensure that all are enabled to gain the maximum benefit from the curricular and co-/extra- curricular activities it provides. To realise this aspiration, the University needs to facilitate students' understanding of grade descriptors, and to expedite the development of a conceptual framework capable of encompassing academic, co- and extra-curricular learning activities.

5. QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

5.1 HKU states that enhancing the student learning experience is integral to HKU's strategic development. The 2009 QAC Audit recommended that HKU strengthen centralisation of its traditionally 'bottom-up' approach to enhancement. The University now describes its approach as a cyclical model in which central policies facilitate Faculty innovations and the outcomes of Faculty initiatives inform campus-wide teaching and learning initiatives**.** Emphasis is placed on growing diversity in the student population, investing in the new post-2012 curriculum, enriching the educational environment and enhancing student support.

5.2 Since the last QAC Audit, the University has undertaken a number of quality enhancement initiatives aimed at developing and expanding the range and integration of learning opportunities. The main purpose of these initiatives has been to focus on the students' whole person development and preparation for their future working life. The development of the four-year curriculum has enabled the University to develop a range of common learning experiences that has helped underpin the conception of the curriculum as a 'totality of student learning experience'.

5.3 To test how effective the University's approach to quality enhancement is in practice, the Audit Panel engaged in dialogue with the senior management

following a presentation in which they evaluated their current position and set forth the rationale for their plans to enhance provision**.** In addition, the Audit Panel examined supporting documentation and discussed the efficacy of arrangements for academic advice with academic support staff, deans and heads of department, teaching staff and students. Having scrutinised documents that evaluate the Common Core Curriculum, the Audit Panel discussed its impact with staff with responsibility for the quality of Ug programmes and with students**.** The Panel similarly discussed the impact of co-/extra-curricular activities with the same groups. Examination of documentary evidence about e-learning informed the Audit Panel's exploration of its impact with teaching staff and senior managers.

5.4 Since the last audit, the University has sought to develop a stepped approach to the Ug student learning journey beginning with the first year experience (FYE) and culminating with a capstone experience. In between the first and fourth year of studies the student's learning experience is supported by an academic advising system, and augmented by international experiences and a wide range of extra-curricular activities such as the Student Development Programme offered by CEDARS.

5.5 Since 2011 the University has implemented a broad-based academic advising system for Ug students which is overseen and monitored by the Academic Advising Committee. The quality of academic advising is also monitored through HKUSLEQ. Each student is assigned a member of staff as an academic adviser. In addition, the Halls and Colleges have residential student advisers, trained by the Academic Advising Office (AAO). The front-line academic and residential advisors are supported by specialist advisors in CEDARS and the AAO. The AAO also offers walk-in appointments to students. In addition, a virtual student adviser (Annie) has been developed to offer a twenty-four hour service for students seeking general academic information. To support academic advisers the University has developed a tailor-made online tool (SIS Advising System) so that advisers can monitor the progress of their students through their programme of studies as well as ensure continuity of support across the various forms of academic advice available.

5.6 A review of the academic advising system was conducted by the Academic Advising Committee in February 2014. Subsequently a review of academic induction was undertaken under the auspices of TLQC. These demonstrated that take-up of the range of advice available was high and that students found the advice offered from the different sources helpful. Documentary evidence and meetings with staff and students during the audit visit persuaded the Audit Panel that students appreciate the wide range of advice offered and that the system is working well. The availability of advisers with different areas of expertise, together with an effective system of referral, enables students to access appropriate support at the point of need.

5.7 The academic advising system does not apply to TPg students. Generally, for those who are obliged to undertake a dissertation, the supervisor is the academic adviser. For TPg students who are not undertaking a dissertation, a Faculty adviser is allocated. The Audit Panel observed that students find the support they require but that the arrangements for TPg students are not as comprehensive and systematic as those for Ug students, nor as self-evident as those for RPg students, who rely almost exclusively on their supervisors and fellow students for support.

5.8 A major curriculum development afforded by the move to four-year Ug degrees has been the Common Core Curriculum. The Common Core is structured in relation to four Areas of Inquiry (AoIs). All students must take six Common Core courses, with at least one from each AoI. The Common Core Curriculum Committee oversees the development and monitoring of the suite of Common Core courses. A formal review of each course is conducted at the end of the second year of its offering. The review takes into account, among other things, the enrolment history, SETL reports and external examiners' reports. Examination by the Audit Panel of reports of such reviews indicates that the process has appropriate feedback loops, with recommendations being considered by the Common Core Curriculum Committee and receiving appropriate responses and action plans from individual teachers.

5.9 Students are making extensive use of opportunities within the Common Core and described the ways in which the courses expand their horizons and lay the foundations for future learning. Ug students whom the Audit Panel met reported that the development of the Common Core Curriculum has provided additional learning opportunities for team-working across programmes, as well as between local and non-local students. The Audit Panel commends the Common Core Curriculum which has had significant impact on the intellectual, social and ethical development of undergraduates across the University. Students whom the Audit Panel met suggested that the University could further enhance this provision by giving more thought to course design for students without a relevant academic background (for example, non-scientists taking science courses); and by freeing up the timetable to encourage the full participation of Medical and Dentistry students.

5.10 In March 2012 Senate established six goals underpinning the FYE of students. These goals are delivered through a range of co-curricular components, such as the Common Core, group project work and extra-curricular activities such as those provided by CEDARS and Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre (GHELC) and supported throughout by the academic advising system. The co-/extra-curricular activities are monitored by the First Year Experience Committee and evaluated through HKUSLEQ. In line with HKU's overall educational approach, these activities have been aligned to the University's

EAs. A review of the FYE was conducted in May 2015. This involved focus groups and interviews with students and identified that FYE initiatives were broadly valued by students but that areas such as course design, the promotion of extra-curricular activities, social integration between local and non-local students and orientation, for example, could be improved.

5.11 The University updated its e-learning Strategy in May 2015. The intention was to ensure that e-learning was embedded in regular academic provision and in the student learning environment, rather than being a separate initiative. The revised strategy established a steering committee, chaired by the Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), charged with providing central oversight and monitoring progress. During a meeting with deans and heads of department, it emerged that a number of e-learning initiatives were being developed and the Audit Panel formed the view that the emergent approaches to e-learning by a range of staff in different Faculties are creative and imaginative. The Audit Panel noted that Teaching Development Grant (TDG) are stimulating some innovative practice at this early stage of pedagogic development.

5.12 It was clear to the Audit Panel that HKU systematically builds into its enhancement initiatives scheduled commitments to monitor and evaluate progress and identify further opportunities to enhance the student learning experience. As illustrated above, the academic advising system was scheduled for review under the aegis of the Academic Advising Committee in 2014, three years after its inception, with positive results. A review of the FYE and Academic Induction also took place in 2015, three years after the transition to the four-year Ug degree, as did the review of the e-learning strategy. The Common Core Course Committee oversees the routine review of Common Core Courses, two years after they are initially offered.

5.13 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that there is much evidence that the University is actively pursuing its strategic agenda for quality enhancement by creatively exploiting the possibilities of the post-2012 curriculum, enriching the educational environment and enhancing student support.

6. POSTGRADUATE PROVISION

Research postgraduate provision

6.1 RPg education is aligned with the University's mission to engage in innovative, high impact and leading-edge research within and across disciplines. The University states that it regards RPg education as a joint responsibility of the University, Faculties, departments and supervisors. Responsibility for quality assurance and programme management is assigned to the Graduate School, which sets guidelines and implements policies on admissions, academic progress and examinations.

6.2 In order to evaluate the quality of the University's RPg programme, the Audit Panel held several meetings during the audit visit dedicated to this area of provision. The Audit Panel met with staff at all levels of seniority with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement of RPg programmes, with RPg students at different stages of their studies and with staff responsible for supervising RPg students. Informed by reading of the relevant documents provided by the University, the Audit Panel explored the following topics in each meeting: review of RPg programmes; RPg EAs and the transition to OBASL; supervision arrangements; training for both supervisors and RPg students who teach; common taught courses; the RPg handbook and biannual progress reviews.

6.3 Since the last audit, the Graduate School has facilitated a review of HKU's RPg curriculum in 2011 and 2012. At the request of the Faculties, the implementation of recommendations of the review, including the introduction of the new coursework model, was delayed to take effect from 2013/14 since the University, in common with the rest of the Hong Kong sector, found it necessary to focus on the substantial changes occurring at Ug level as the transition to the four-year degree programme was effected. As a result of the review, the University has recently articulated eight EAs for RPg students, which are aligned with Levels 6 and 7 of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework and are currently in the process of being aligned with pre-existing RPg PLOs. Neither supervisors nor RPg students whom the Audit Panel met were aware of the EAs, though when asked how their programmes had enabled them to achieve a specific educational outcome, RPg students were all able to provide rich illustrations. To date there are no mechanisms available whereby either students or the University can establish whether individual RPg students have achieved their EAs though optional workshops are available to help students do so. The Audit Panel encourages the University to address this matter.

6.4 Academic standards for RPg programmes, as for taught programmes (see paragraph 2.2 above), are implicit rather than explicit. The setting and maintenance of high standards is assured through the experience and expertise of staff, the calibre of incoming students, reports from external examiners, and associations with top research institutes worldwide. As with taught programmes, the Audit Panel considers there would be external and internal benefit in explicitly articulating expected academic standards, and it encourages the University to do so.

6.5 Enhancements to RPg provision since the last audit include the introduction of supervisory teams: all students are now allocated a supervisor together with a co-supervisor and/or an advisory group. Mandatory training and development has been delivered to all new supervisors and is now being extended to experienced staff. All of the supervisors whom the Audit Panel met, both new

and established, had completed training. Certificated mandatory training is also provided to RPg students who undertake teaching duties. Staff responsible for quality assurance of RPg programmes emphasised the importance of this qualification for those who aspire to an academic career but it became clear to the Audit Panel that not all RPg students are necessarily able to acquire teaching experience for discipline-specific reasons. The Audit Panel noted that the University's regulation provides the flexibility that any services under supervision that carry educational benefits to the student will form part of the student's training.

6.6 Four mandatory common taught courses have been introduced for all RPg students. They have generally been well received although some disciplines have offered their own course when the level of the common course was deemed too basic for their students. The Audit Panel commends another recent innovation of particular note, the recently developed RPg handbook, which provides clear guidance on good practice, procedures, and roles and responsibilities for students, staff and Faculty committees. While not all students whom the Audit Panel met had consulted the handbook and remained unaware of help available to them or the channels through which they could make their voices heard, they assured the Audit Panel that they would consult the handbook should the need arise.

6.7 Results all point to the rude health of HKU's RPg programmes. Confirmation of candidature enjoys a high success rate of 96.8%, 97.9% and 99% for 2011, 2012, and 2013 respectively. Thesis submission times are being held at an average of three years which is exceptionally good. Furthermore the Board of Graduate Studies Annual Report (2013/14) reports high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their experience among graduating students. RPg students whom the Audit Panel met were appreciative of the opportunities and support they are offered to attend international research conferences and participate in various fellowship and exchange schemes.

6.8 Despite the delay, significant improvements have been brought about by the Graduate School's review of the RPg programme. The Audit Panel formed the view that this exercise has helped to establish more firmly the responsibility of the Graduate School for quality assurance and programme management. It has also set in motion a sequence of systematic enhancement activities as the innovations are implemented and evaluated. One of these innovations, the biannual system of monitoring and review, tracks the progress of all RPg students throughout their studies. The Audit Panel commends this development, which serves both to support individual student learning and achievement and to identify enhancement opportunities for RPg provision as a whole.

6.9 Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that the calibre of successful applicants, reports from external examiners and associations with top research institutes

worldwide all attest to the high quality of the RPg programme at HKU. More needs to be done to work through the full implications of applying OBASL to RPg education and opportunities should arise to accomplish this as recent innovations and developments become embedded and are subjected to systematic monitoring and evaluation.

Taught postgraduate programmes

6.10 TPg programmes have a distinct set of EAs. As taught programmes share similar quality assurance and enhancement processes, TPg provision is regarded as more closely aligned with Ug than RPg provision and is presented in this way throughout the Institutional Submission.

6.11 In order to test the effectiveness of HKU's arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement of its TPg programmes, the Audit Panel met with staff with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement of taught programmes and separately with a range of TPg students that included local, Mainland and international students from different Faculties and departments. At the request of the Audit Panel, other relevant meetings included participants who were able to speak about this aspect of provision. In addition, the Audit Panel scrutinised documentation relating to TPg curriculum review and EAs and a range of policies and procedures specifically for TPg provision.

6.12 Drawing on the experience of developing Ug EAs, HKU has developed a parallel set of EAs for TPg students. Building on its comprehensive TPg curriculum review process, HKU has recently linked explicitly the new TPg EAs and learning outcomes to the University's mission. This ensures a degree of consistency across all taught programmes, though the TPg EAs are yet to be fully implemented. The Audit Panel commends the guidelines for review of TPg programmes, which provide a robust quality enhancement process.

6.13 The University acknowledges that TPg students, for whom there are no explicitly international EAs, are least likely to experience bespoke international experiences, given that the majority of them are in work. The importance of 'internationalisation at home' to both local students who are unable to travel and to students who come from other countries to study in Hong Kong was noted under *Student Achievement* (see paragraph 4.5 above) and is discussed further under *Global engagements: strategies and current developments* **(**see paragraph 7.15 below). TPg students whom the Audit Panel met reported that HKU attracts students because of its reputation as an internationalised learning environment, and the proportion of Mainland and international students enrolling in TPg programmes is increasing. The Audit Panel formed the view that these students could further benefit from and contribute to the internationalisation of the learning environment proposed above. The Audit Panel encourages the University to leverage the greater

proportion of international students studying at TPg level further to enhance 'internationalisation at home', the in-class and on-campus international experience.

6.14 The volume of local and non-local applications indicates that HKU's TPg programmes are in high demand, particularly by local applicants who are employed and wishing to study part-time and increasingly by Mainland and international prospective students. The Audit Panel noted that HKU maintains high standards for admission to its TPg programmes and that the University is prepared to terminate partnership arrangements with prestigious overseas institutions rather than compromise these standards.

6.15 External examiners' reports, surveys of graduate destinations and the comments made by employers and alumni whom the Audit Panel met all indicate that the University's TPg programmes are achieving a high academic standard.

6.16 Student feedback mechanisms such as SETL are working well. TPg students whom the Audit Panel met were unaware of the existence of Staff Student Consultative Committees. The Audit Panel encourages the University to promote this means of gathering and responding to TPg student feedback.

6.17 TPg provision has doubtless benefited from the outcomes of Ug curriculum review. For example, the University provided good illustrations of the way in which curriculum review closes the enhancement loop. The Audit Panel formed the view that the sheer scale of the transition to the Ug four-year degree has had a positive impact on the change at TPg level. In addition, in response to an affirmation in the 2009 Quality Audit report, HKU recently undertook a major review of its TPg provision. The Audit Panel therefore encourages the University to identify additional ways in which the TPg learning experience could be enhanced by adopting and adapting the enrichment initiatives now operating across Ug programmes.

6.18 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that, as an integral part of HKU's taught provision, TPg programmes share the robust quality assurance processes enjoyed by the University's Ug programmes. They observed that the transformation of Ug programmes has had a positive impact on TPg programmes in the last decade.

7a. AUDIT THEME: ENHANCING THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

7.1 HKU regards enhancement activity as integral to its strategic development and the Audit Panel found much evidence of its continuing commitment to enrich the educational environment, particularly at Ug level.

7.2 The enabling structure of the four-year Ug curriculum defines the totality of experiences afforded to students to achieve the EAs. Students, supported by advice from academic advisers, course teachers and senior students, can select their own combination of disciplinary majors, minors and electives alongside Common Core courses. Other non-discipline-specific EAs can be achieved via co-/extra-curricular learning experiences, which are delivered by CEDARS, the General Education Unit, GHELC and residential Halls and Colleges. These include: the Common Core curriculum, experiential learning, global experiences, e-learning environments, academic induction and FYE, capstone experience and Ug research opportunities, and an internationalised learning environment. The Audit Panel commends the wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities routinely made available to a significant and increasing proportion of the student population, which is carefully designed to enable students to achieve the various learning outcomes.

7.3 In the transition to the four-year degree programme, CEDARS has stepped up its transformation from an administrative support unit to being the driver of the co-curriculum in addition to providing a comprehensive range of student services. The Audit Panel found evidence of widespread engagement with the extensive experiential and co-curricular activities offered by various units. Examination of evaluative documentary evidence was supported by the meeting with Ug students who indicated that these activities are rated highly and viewed as adding considerable value to the formal learning experiences associated with their academic programme. The Audit Panel commends the creative and proactive approach adopted by the University's integrated network of student services to developing and managing this range of activities and to supporting students and promoting their holistic development.

7.4 The 2009 QAC Audit suggested that HKU should strengthen the nexus between teaching and research. In response, the links between teaching and research are mentioned explicitly in the current learning and teaching strategy. Furthermore, senior management told the Audit Panel that explicit mention is likely to be made in a refreshed mission and vision statement scheduled for development in 2016. Senior management also pointed out that the '3i' strategic themes of internationalisation, innovation and impact, which guide the Academic Development Plan 2016-19, emphasise enquiry-based learning.

7.5 HKU has already strengthened the teaching-learning nexus in a number of ways. Perhaps the most obvious is the capstone experience embedded in the final year of all Ug programmes. These experiences are enquiry-based, and may comprise projects, research, internships or other activities designed to integrate the knowledge and skills already acquired. The Undergraduate Research Fellowship Programme offers opportunities for a few outstanding Ug students (the top 5%) to undertake research under the guidance of appropriately experienced academics. Some Faculties also have student research programmes.

7.6 More broadly, the University encourages staff to develop enquiry-based courses through TDG, through staff development modules offered by the Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, and through the use of innovating learning environments.

7.7 In discussions with staff the Audit Panel formed the view that most staff regard the capstone courses as the primary foci for enquiry based learning. It is difficult to judge the success of these courses, as only one cohort of students has so far reached the final year of the four-year curriculum. Ug students whom the Audit Panel met appreciated the variety of learning experiences available, but none mentioned the capstone courses specifically or enquiry-based learning in general. TPg students indicated that Masters dissertations are strongly aligned with the research activities of the host departments, but those students who do not undertake a dissertation were unclear about how the research-related EAs were to be achieved.

7.8 The Audit Panel considers that HKU is making significant attempts to develop the teaching-research nexus in the four-year Ug curriculum. Since the capstone courses are currently the vehicle most likely to benefit the majority of students, it is probably too early to evaluate success. In TPg programmes, the teaching-research nexus is currently most clearly evidenced in the dissertation. From 2016/17, a capstone experience will be a compulsory component of all Master's degrees. The Audit Panel encourages the University to continue its efforts to strengthen the teaching-research nexus at Ug level.

7.9 The Audit Panel recognises the reasons why the University has focused primarily on enhancing the Ug student learning experience since the last QAC Audit and acknowledges the differences between the circumstances and learning needs of Ug and postgraduate students. The enrichment of the RPg student experience has been discussed earlier in this report under *Postgraduate provision* (see paragraphs 6.4-6.5 above). The Audit Panel found much less evidence of systematic efforts to enhance the TPg experience through appropriately tailored co-/extra-curricular activities (see paragraph 6.17 above) and reiterates here the suggestion that the University might identify additional ways in which the TPg learning experience could be enhanced by adopting and adapting the enrichment initiatives now operating across Ug programmes.

7.10 It was noted earlier in this report, under *Student Achievement* (see paragraph 4.8 above), that HKU does not currently have a system capable of collecting data and documenting individual student participation in co-/extra-curricular activities and relating this to the achievement of the EAs upon which these activities are predicated. The Audit Panel therefore reiterates here the recommendation that the University address this by expediting the

development of a conceptual framework capable of encompassing academic, co- and extra-curricular learning activities, so that student achievement across the spectrum can be meaningfully captured, documented, monitored, evaluated and enhanced.

7.11 As noted above under the heading *Quality Enhancement* (see paragraph 5.12 above), it was clear to the Audit Panel that HKU systematically builds into its enhancement initiatives scheduled commitments to monitor and evaluate progress and identify further opportunities to enhance the student learning experience. The Audit Panel formed the view that the potential for improvement would be increased once data on student achievement across the spectrum of formal and informal learning opportunities become available for analysis.

7.12 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University has enthusiastically and systematically seized the opportunities opened up by the transition to the four-year degree to transform the Ug formal and informal learning experience. While RPg students are benefiting from an appropriate range of enhancement initiatives, more could be done to ensure that TPg students also benefit from tailored enrichment opportunities.

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

7.13 HKU aims to be a leading international institution of higher learning in Asia and its Academic Development Proposal 2016-19 is guided by the '3i' strategic themes of internationalisation, innovation and impact. One of the EAs for Ug students is to develop intercultural understanding and global citizenship. The EAs for TPg students do not yet include an international dimension, though senior managers informed the Audit Panel that this is being considered.

7.14 The University invests significant human and financial resources towards its commitment to internationalisation and its goal of supporting students to become global citizens. In August 2015, the University appointed a Vice President/Global to coordinate and drive forward its internationalisation strategies. Just before the Audit Visit, Senate approved establishment of a new HKU Horizons Office which will consolidate responsibility for a wide range of international activities.

7.15 Major strategies for internationalising the student experience include increasing student mobility, internationalising the curriculum, and recruiting international students to Hong Kong. HKU has coined the term 'internationalisation at home' to cover the latter two strategies: students who are unable to take up learning opportunities outside Hong Kong may still benefit from internationalisation at home. Each of the three strategies is

considered separately below. Internationalisation for RPg students has been discussed above under the heading *Postgraduate Provision* (see paragraph 6.7 above).

Student mobility

7.16 HKU regards the opportunity to study outside Hong Kong as a vital way of allowing Ug students to attain the EA related to global citizenship. Its target is that by 2018/19 50% of Ug students will have the opportunity for one Mainland and one international learning experience, and that by 2021/22 all Ug students will have such an opportunity. Learning opportunities are broadly defined, including study abroad, exchange programmes, service and experiential learning, field trips and internships.

7.17 To achieve its ambitious targets, HKU has established a wide variety of international linkages at both University and Faculty levels. In July 2015, there were 326 exchange partners in 41 countries and all Faculties had developed opportunities for international learning experiences. Management of linkages and support for outgoing students is effected by the Office for International Student Exchange (OISE), the China Affairs Office (CAO) and CEDARS. HKU also offers significant financial support to outgoing students, with 850 students receiving scholarships in 2014/15.

7.18 The Audit Panel reviewed the data provided by the University and discussed aspects of student mobility in its meetings with senior management, leaders of support services and Ug students.

7.19 The University has made considerable progress toward achieving its targets. In 2014/15 about 4 100 students undertook a learning experience outside Hong Kong. Of these, the majority (1 400) were student exchanges, while 750 were service and experiential learning and 700 were field trips. The total of 4 100 is an increase of around 40% over the previous year.

7.20 Students report high levels of satisfaction with their international learning experiences – the overall satisfaction level in 2015 was 92%. A 2014 analysis of student exchange reports provides evidence of alignment between reported learning and HKU's internationalisation EAs. The Audit Panel's meeting with students confirmed the high value students place on international learning experiences and their high regard for the services provided by OISE, CAO and CEDARS. Therefore the Audit Panel commends HKU for the provision of international learning experiences to a large and increasing number of students.

7.21 HKU is aware of the challenges imposed by its target of 100% Ug participation in international learning experiences. These challenges include:

- provision of sufficient accommodation for incoming reciprocal exchange students;
- streamlining the mechanisms for awarding appropriate academic credit for study abroad;
- engaging partners to ensure that all international experiences provide meaningful learning; and
- ensuring that all students have the financial means to participate.

From its meetings with senior management and support staff, and the evidence of success to date, the Audit Panel is confident these challenges are being and will be vigorously tackled.

7.22 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University is making significant progress towards achieving the University's student outward mobility goals and noted the substantial scale and success of the operation to date.

Internationalising the curriculum

7.23 The global engagement EA for Ug students is to develop intercultural understanding and global citizenship. HKU considers that ensuring all curricula include many international components and perspectives is fundamental to achieving this aim. To date the focus has been on Ug programmes, recognising that TPg students, many of whom are in full-time employment or come from outside Hong Kong, require a different approach. As noted earlier, the EAs for TPg students do not yet include an international dimension, though the Audit Panel heard that this is being considered.

7.24 Proposals for new curricula must include reference to international comparators and must incorporate the report of an external assessor. In line with the OBASL, all programmes include PLOs that contribute to the global citizenship EA. Two of the Common Core Curriculum AoIs relate to international themes, and courses in both AoIs are compulsory for all Ug students. Most programmes also include courses addressing international aspects of the relevant discipline. The Audit Panel was informed that there are over 260 such courses at Ug level and over 150 at TPg level.

7.25 HKU also employs a large proportion of non-local academic staff who bring international experience and perspectives with them. In 2014/15 about 40% of academic staff came from Hong Kong, 20% from the Mainland and 40% from elsewhere.

7.26 There is also a small number of joint degrees, mainly at postgraduate level, and the Audit Panel heard that the University plans to increase the number as suitable partners are identified.

7.27 The Audit Panel requested PLOs for two specific programmes and satisfied itself that the PLOs for both programmes have an international dimension. The Audit Panel found similar evidence in the sample PLO Achievement Portfolios provided with HKU's Institutional Submission. The Audit Panel also discussed internationalisation of the curriculum in meetings with academic staff at all levels, students, and relevant support staff.

7.28 It was clear from the Audit Panel's discussions with deans and heads of department that most of those present thought of an internationalised curriculum in terms of opportunities to study overseas. Programme leaders and academic staff, indicated that achievement of international PLOs relies primarily on the Common Core Curriculum and on the courses that address international aspects of various disciplines. The Audit Panel heard of only one example of cultural contextualisation of material taught on courses other than those specifically designed to address international topics. Some TPg students felt that their courses were orientated too much to Hong Kong issues and experiences. The Audit Panel also heard from support service heads that staff development courses have not to date included intercultural sensitivity, although there are plans to do so.

7.29 The Audit Panel formed the view that many staff at all levels regard internationalisation of the curriculum as being limited to those courses that specifically address international topics. The concept of culturally contextualising disciplinary material outside internationally focused courses seems to be little understood and not widely implemented. The Audit Panel considers that 'internationalisation at home' would be strengthened by a broader view of internationalising the curriculum.

Recruitment of international students

7.30 HKU states that the recruitment and integration of high quality non-local students is central to its aim of developing a global community that can support internationalisation. It sees non-local students as a catalyst for achieving the internationalisation EA for all Ug students, while at the same time the University provides educational opportunities for non-local students which may not be available in their own countries.

7.31 Support for non-local students is aimed toward helping them adjust as quickly as possible, and then providing routes through which students can seek the level of help appropriate to their needs. A further principle is that after the adjustment period all non-local students are treated similarly to local students.

7.32 The Audit Panel reviewed the data provided by the University and discussed aspects of the integration and teaching of non-local students in its meetings with staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement of taught

programmes, teaching staff, leaders of support services and students. They also explored HKU's strategic directions with senior management.

7.33 The University recruits high-achieving non-local students using its reputation, international networks and links with other institutions. Admissions standards are set by the University Admissions Committee in the context of standards for local students.

7.34 Support for incoming non-local students includes:

- finding accommodation for all newly admitted non-local Ug students
- an orientation programme covering academic, health and safety issues
- a buddy system with local students
- Chinese language courses for non-Chinese speakers
- the online iMAP platform for connecting students with common interests or complementary expertise**.**

7.35 Integration of non-local and local students is facilitated through a number of schemes, including:

- a funding scheme (supported by the UGC) for supporting integration projects or activities planned and organised by students
- the Weeks of Welcome (WoW) programme, lasting six weeks and incorporating over 100 intercultural events and activities organised by CEDARS, General Education Unit, OISE and student groups
- the Family Sharing Programme in which local families host non-local students in family functions
- the mixing of local and non-local students in residences.

7.36 HKU has been very successful in recruiting non-local students. Applications far exceed the number of places for non-local students, of which the ceiling is regulated by the UGC. In 2014/15 there were over 10 000 Ug applications from Mainland China and almost 3 000 applications from elsewhere. These numbers have increased many-fold over the last few years, allowing the University to be highly selective in admissions. In 2014/15 there were over 7 200 non-local students on campus, of whom about 6 000 were normal enrolments, 1 000 were incoming exchange students and the remainder were visiting students.

7.37 Applications from the Mainland outnumber those from elsewhere by a factor of four, and there is a similar preponderance of Mainland enrolments. Senior management told the Audit Panel that they would like greater diversity among non-local students, and expressed an aspiration for HKU to become a university of choice not only for Mainland students but also for students from the rest of the world.

7.38 The Audit Panel heard that in some TPg courses there is a majority of Mainland students, which in some cases inhibits class discussion and the teaching methods used. Staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement of taught programmes indicated to the Audit Panel that they believe local students benefit from the presence of non-local students in classes but did not advance specific evidence. Teaching staff whom the Audit Panel met had varied attitudes toward classes with large numbers of non-local students. Some indicated that it made teaching more difficult, most thought that local students benefited in some way from the presence of non-local students, but only one provided an example of taking advantage of the presence of non-local students by adapting teaching methods to enrich the classroom experience. Staff indicated that they had received no training in adapting teaching methods to the presence of non-local students, and the Audit Panel confirmed with support service heads that staff development courses do not currently include support in adapting teaching practices to exploit cultural background and experiences and take account of cultural sensitivities.

7.39 There is evidence that non-local students are generally satisfied with the support services provided, and that the WoW programme, initiated in response to student feedback, is particularly well regarded. Non-local students whom the Audit Panel met also expressed high satisfaction with the services they had used, but some students were unaware of the range of services available. Non-local student perceptions of the FYE are similar to those of local students, suggesting that most non-local students successfully adjust to their new environment.

7.40 Overall the Audit Panel concluded that the University is enjoying considerable success in recruiting non-local students. HKU recognises and responds to the challenges of integrating non-local students and has enhanced support services in response to student feedback. The Audit Panel considers that HKU is increasingly successful in effecting the social integration of non-local students, but that it has not yet adequately addressed integration in the classroom, in the sense of adapting teaching methods to enrich the learning experience for all students.

7.41 Reflecting on the theme of Global Engagement as a whole, the Audit Panel concluded that the University is making significant progress towards achieving its goals for global engagement which are ambitious in terms of both breadth and scale. Activity in this area is steered by HKU's strategic approach and supported by the evident commitment of human and financial resources. It is clear that the Ug student learning experience has benefitted substantially. The Audit Panel commends the University's well-articulated aims for international engagement, supported by a comprehensive range of strategies, support services and funding.

7.42 The Audit Panel considers that HKU's global engagement strategies would be enhanced by taking into account the findings on internationalisation of the curriculum (see paragraphs 7.23-7.29 above) and on the integration of non-local students into the learning environment (see paragraphs 7.35-7.40 above). The Audit Panel therefore recommends that the University broaden its strategy for the internationalisation of the student learning environment to address both curriculum content and pedagogical practice.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 HKU positions itself as a leading international institution of higher learning in Asia. Its teaching programmes are complemented and informed by extensive research activities, and it is consistently placed highly in international rankings. The University has embraced the opportunities offered by the recent changes to the Hong Kong educational system, in particular the normative four-year Ug curriculum and the move to OBASL. Taught programmes have clearly defined EAs which are mapped into programme and course learning outcomes and supported by appropriate assessment. RPg programmes benefit from the richness of the research environment, the calibre of staff and well defined supervisory processes.

8.2 Since the 2009 QAC Audit HKU has enhanced its quality assurance processes, which now incorporate a wide range of internal and external data. There is strong evidence that feedback loops are used to further enhance the quality of teaching programmes. HKU is also providing students with learning opportunities of increasing variety and richness, including extensive co- and extra-curricular activities and opportunities for learning experiences outside Hong Kong.

8.3 The University seeks to build on its current achievements through its '3i' strategy of internationalisation, innovation and impact. The internationalisation component is already well developed through collaborative research activities, inward and outward student mobility, and attempts to internationalise the curriculum.

8.4 This report recognises notable recent achievements, and makes suggestions intended to help the University capitalise on those achievements as it progressively implements its '3i' strategy.

APPENDIX A: THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG (HKU)

History

Founded in 1910, HKU is the oldest tertiary education institution in Hong Kong. HKU has grown from three Faculties with only 23 graduates at its first Congregation to ten faculties with an enrolment of over 27 000 students in 2014/15.

Vision and Mission of the University

Vision

The University of Hong Kong, as a leading international institution of higher learning in Asia, strives to attract and nurture outstanding scholars from around the world through excellence and innovation in teaching and learning, research and knowledge exchange, contributing to the advancement of society and the development of leaders through a global presence, regional significance and engagement with the rest of China.

Mission

The University of Hong Kong will endeavour:

- To advance constantly the bounds of scholarship, building upon its proud traditions and strengths;

- To provide a comprehensive education, developing fully the intellectual and personal strengths of its students while developing and extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community;

- To produce graduates of distinction committed to lifelong learning, integrity and professionalism, capable of being responsive leaders and communicators in their fields;

- To develop a collegial, flexible, pluralistic and supportive intellectual environment that inspires and attracts, retains and nurtures scholars, students and staff of the highest calibre in a culture that fosters creativity, learning and freedom of thought, enquiry and expression;

- To provide a safe, healthy and sustainable workplace to support and advance teaching, learning and research at the University;

- To engage in innovative, high-impact and leading-edge research within and across disciplines;

- To be fully accountable for the effective management of public and private resources bestowed upon the institution and act in partnership with the community over the generation, dissemination and application of knowledge;

- To serve as a focal point of intellectual and academic endeavour in Hong Kong, Mainland China and Asia and act as a gateway and forum for scholarship with the rest of the world.

Role Statement

HKU:

(a) Offers a range of programmes leading to the award of first degrees and postgraduate qualifications in subject areas including Arts, Science, Social Sciences, and Business and Economics;

(b) incorporates professional schools such as Medicine, Dentistry, Architecture, Education, Engineering and Law;

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

(d) offers research postgraduate programmes for a significant number of students in selected subject areas;

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

(f) as an English-medium University, supports a knowledge-based society and economy through its engagement in cutting-edge research, pedagogical developments, and lifelong learning; in particular, emphasises whole person education and interdisciplinarity;

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

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

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

Governance and Management

The Court

The Court is the supreme advisory body of the University comprising University and lay members. The purpose of the Court is to represent the wider interests of the communities served by the University. It has the power to make, repeal and amend statutes.

The Council

The Council is the supreme governing body of the University, and is responsible mainly for the management of resources, including financial, and human and building resources of the University and for the University's future developments. The Council comprises University members (both staff and students) and lay members (i.e. persons who are not employees or students of the University), with a ratio of lay to university members of 2:1. Members are serving on the Council as trustees in their personal capacity.

The Senate

The Senate is the principal academic authority of the University. It is responsible for all academic matters and welfare of students. Its 50 members are mainly academic staff while there are also student representatives.

Academic Organisation and Programmes of Study

Since its foundation, the University has grown substantially. There are now ten Faculties (Architecture, Arts, Business and Economics, Dentistry, Education, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Science and Social Sciences) offering a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate taught and research programmes.

Staff and Students Numbers

In 2014/15, the University had 15 411 undergraduate and 3 100 postgraduate students in UGC-funded programmes. Teaching staff comprises 1 222 regular and 7 short-term contract staff to give a total of 1 229. 94.2% of teaching staff members have doctoral degrees. Enrolments in self-financed programmes accounted for a further 9 000 students.

Revenue

Consolidated income for the year 2013/14 was HK$9,232 million of which HK$4,170 million (45%) came from government subvention and HK$5,062 million (55%) from tuition, programmes, interest and net investment income, donations, auxiliary services and other income.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

The University of Hong Kong is very appreciative of the opportunity afforded by the second round of quality audits conducted by the Quality Assurance Council to undertake a self-critical review with the aim of further enhancing teaching and learning and the student learning experience. We are gratified by the many commendations and positive comments in the Audit Report, and remain firmly committed both to upholding the highest academic standards, and to making continuous improvement in all aspects of teaching and learning befitting the University's international status.

We are extremely pleased that the Audit Panel commended the University's "high academic standards, as evidenced by external examiners' reports, professional accreditation and Faculty and curriculum reviews, graduate destinations, and employer surveys" (para. 2.10). The Panel also commended "the University's comprehensive and effective quality assurance and quality enhancement processes that include a meticulous approach to curriculum and Faculty review and draw upon external input" (para. 3.3). It is clear from the Audit Report that the University's quality assurance and quality enhancement mechanisms are well-established, evidence-based and robust, and that its teaching and learning framework is operating at a high international standard.

Enhancing the student learning experience, which is one of the two audit themes in this exercise, is integral to the University's strategic development as acknowledged by the Panel. Since the last quality audit, the University has been widely engaging staff at all levels to respond to the challenges presented by the curriculum reform. Our 4-year undergraduate curriculum is defined as the totality of learning experiences both inside and outside the classroom, on- and off-campus, in the University and in the community, and in Hong Kong and outside. This is made possible by the enabling curriculum structure which allows students to select their own combination of majors, minors and electives. The common learning experiences in the enabling structure are designed to facilitate student achievement of the University's educational aims, and cultivation of core moral values and dispositions essential for engaged global citizens. The University's innovations and hard work in the past few years have borne fruit, leading to a transformation of the student learning experience. Our common learning experiences are predicated upon the Common Core Curriculum, first year experience and academic induction, academic advising, experiential learning, global experience, internationalised learning environment, capstone experience, advanced information technology and e-learning. The Panel commended "the Common Core Curriculum which has had significant impact on intellectual, social and ethical development of undergraduates across the University" (para. 5.9). Given the effort we have devoted to developing more than 150 courses and making the Common Core Curriculum central to the University's undergraduate curriculum, we are particularly pleased with this recognition. Our formal curriculum is complemented by co-/extra-curricular activities both inside and outside of Hong Kong, residential education and student

activities. In this regard, the Audit Panel commended "the wide range of formal and informal learning opportunities routinely made available to a significant and increasing proportion of the student population, which is carefully designed to enable students to achieve the various learning outcomes" (para. 7.2).

Also, the Panel "found evidence of widespread engagement with the extensive experiential and co-curricular activities offered by various units. Examination of evaluative documentary evidence was supported by the meeting with Ug students who indicated that these activities are rated highly and viewed as adding considerable value to the formal learning experiences associated with their academic programme". The Panel therefore commended "the creative and proactive approach adopted by the University's integrated network of student services to developing and managing this range of activities and to supporting students and promoting their holistic development" (para. 7.3). The Panel's findings are consistent not only with the results of our own student surveys, but also with those of external stakeholders, attesting to their high satisfaction with the quality of our graduates.

The University places great emphasis on its taught postgraduate provision, which adopts the same robust quality assurance and quality enhancement processes as those applicable to the undergraduate curriculum. This resonates with the view of the Panel: "External examiners' reports, surveys of graduate destinations and the comments made by employers and alumni whom the Audit Panel met all indicate that the University's TPg programmes are achieving a high academic standard" (para. 6.15). Our guidelines for review of taught postgraduate programmes, "which provide a robust quality enhancement process", were commended by the Panel (para. 6.12). The introduction of the capstone requirement in all Master's curricula fully demonstrates the University's commitment in strengthening the teaching-research nexus and in promoting academic excellence. The University's cosmopolitan and multicultural campus and its highly internationalised staff and students have further enhanced the student learning experience, and we will endeavour to continue to enrich their experience.

The University has also made substantial enhancements to its research postgraduate provision, and welcomes the Panel's view that "the calibre of successful applicants, reports from external examiners and associations with top research institutes worldwide attest to the high quality of the RPg programme at HKU" (para. 6.9). In particular, the Panel commended the development of the biannual system of monitoring and review, which "tracks the progress of all RPg student throughout their studies" and "which serves both to support individual student learning and achievement and to identify enhancement opportunities for RPg provision as a whole" (para. 6.8). Further, it commended the formulation of the research postgraduate handbook "which provides clear guidance on good practice, procedures, and roles and responsibilities for students, staff and Faculty committees" (para. 6.6).

On the second audit theme of global engagement, "the University's well-articulated aims for international engagement, supported by a comprehensive range of strategies,

support services and funding" received a commendation from the Panel (para. 7.41). Internationalisation is embedded in every facet of HKU life encompassing impactful research, quality teaching and learning, innovative curriculum design and development, global recruitment of outstanding students and world-class scholars, and inbound and outbound student mobility programmes. It is one of the core strategies set out in the University's Academic Development Proposal for 2016-19. On this front, the Panel recognised the University's considerable progress towards achieving its student mobility targets, and commended the University "for the provision of international learning experiences to a large and increasing number of students" (para. 7.20). Nevertheless, the University is not complacent about the achievements made thus far, and will strive to develop an even stronger global network to offer more enrichment opportunities to our students.

The Audit Report acknowledged the University's strength in attracting many of the highest achieving students to its undergraduate curriculum, and the highly selective admissions to its taught and research postgraduate curricula (para. 2.9). It "found evidence that HKU graduates enjoy considerable success in the workplace and/or progress to careers in academic research in high-ranking universities around the world" (para. 4.6). The University is immensely proud of its students and all their achievements, in relation to which the Panel made a succinct and apt comment: "Employers, alumni and representatives of professional bodies whom the Audit Panel met attribute this success to the academic achievements and broader graduate characteristics that distinguish HKU graduates" (para. 4.6). The Audit Panel was of the view that "the University is committed to adding value to the high achieving students it attracts, and is actively taking steps to ensure that all are enabled to gain the maximum benefit from the curricular and co-/extra-curricular activities it provides" (para. 4.10). Certainly, we will continue to explore effective and meaningful ways in which more value can be added to our education provision.

Alongside the commendations, the University greatly appreciates the recommendations for further consideration made by the Panel. In particular, we will move quickly in three key areas outlined in the Audit Report, viz. articulation and promulgation of an overarching strategic approach to setting the academic standards of our awards (para. 2.12), continued development of a conceptual framework to capture student achievement across the spectrum (para. 4.8), and broadening of our strategy for internationalisation of the student learning environment (para. 7.42). The University is starting now to prepare an action plan with details of how the Panel's recommendations will be addressed within a clear timeframe.

Overall, the Audit Panel concluded that "the University sets and maintains high academic standards through a variety of effective mechanisms, with due regard to external expertise and comparator institutions" (para. 2.12), and that "the University has a strong and widespread commitment to the quality of learning opportunities and has put in place an appropriate and comprehensive quality assurance and quality enhancement system that supports its over-arching strategic goal to be a leading international institution of higher learning. Dialogue between the Audit Panel and

staff and students of the University revealed a reflective academic community committed to attaining world-class academic standards and an enhanced student experience" (para. 3.8).

We would like to reiterate our gratitude to the Audit Panel for its valuable advice and suggestions. We are very pleased with the positive and constructive outcomes of the audit exercise, and will take on board all the recommendations made by the Panel in reviewing our teaching and learning strategy and action plan. As a leading global university, we will continue to work concertedly to make further contributions to Hong Kong and the international academic arena. We are confident that we will be able to meet all the challenges that come our way.

February 2016

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMNS

AAO	Academic Advising Office
AoIs	Areas of Inquiry
CAO	China Affairs Office
CEDARS	Centre of Development and Resources for Students
CLOs	Course learning outcomes
EAs	Educational Aims
FYE	First year experience
GHELC	Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
HKUSLEQ	Hong Kong University Student Learning Experience Questionnaire
OBASL	Outcome-based approach to student learning
OISE	Office for International Student Exchange
PLOs	Programme learning outcomes
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
RPg	Research Postgraduate
SETL	Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning survey
TDG	Teaching Development Grant
TLQC	Teaching and Learning Quality Committee
TPg	Taught Postgraduate
Ug	Undergraduate
UGC	University Grants Committee
WoW	Weeks of Welcome

APPENDIX D: HKU AUDIT PANEL

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Andrew Lister (Panel Chair)
Emeritus Professor, The University of Queensland

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

Professor Timothy Clark
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Social Sciences and Health) and Professor of Organisational Behaviour, Durham University

Professor Hau-chung Man
Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Chair Professor of Materials Engineering, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Audit Coordinator

Dr Melinda Drowley
QAC Secretariat

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

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

Mission

The QAC's mission is:

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

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

Terms of Reference

The QAC has the following terms of reference:

(a) To advise the University Grants Committee on quality assurance matters in the higher education sector in Hong Kong and other related matters as requested by the Committee;

(b) To conduct audits and other reviews as requested by the UGC, and report on the quality assurance mechanisms and quality of the offerings of institutions;

(c) To promote quality assurance in the higher education sector in Hong Kong; and

(d) To facilitate the development and dissemination of good practices in quality assurance in higher education.

Membership (as at May 2016)

Mr Lincoln LEONG Kwok-kuen, JP (Chairman)	Chief Executive Officer, MTR Corporation Limited
Professor Adrian K DIXON	Master of Peterhouse and Emeritus Professor of Radiology, University of Cambridge, UK
Dr Kim MAK Kin-wah	Executive Director (Corporate Affairs), The Hong Kong Jockey Club
Professor PONG Ting-chuen	Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Mr Paul SHIEH Wing-tai, SC	Senior Counsel, Temple Chambers
Dr Michael SPENCE	Vice-Chancellor and Principal, The University of Sydney, Australia
Professor Amy TSUI Bik-may	Chair Professor of Language and Education, The University of Hong Kong

Ex-officio Member

Dr Richard ARMOUR, JP	Secretary-General, UGC

Secretary

Ms Eva YAM	Deputy Secretary-General (1), UGC