16 November 2009

Dr C H Leong, GBS, OBE, JP
Council Chairman
The University of Hong Kong

Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, JP
Vice-Chancellor and President
The University of Hong Kong
Pokfulam Road
Hong Kong

Dear Council Chairman and Vice-Chancellor,

Quality Audit of the University of Hong Kong (HKU)

I write to congratulate HKU on the successful completion of the quality audit. The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) has endorsed the Audit Report produced by the audit panel chaired by Professor Brian Robinson, and submitted the Report to the University Grants Committee (UGC). I am now conveying to you the comments of both the QAC and the UGC on the Report.

QAC Comments

The QAC is appreciative of the HKU’s commitment to quality assurance and enhancement, and the positive outcomes of HKU’s efforts in enhancing teaching and learning quality. The QAC would like to congratulate the University on the way it has embraced the opportunity of the new 4-year curriculum, and the audit self-review, to review and enhance its strategy, educational aims, objectives and operations. Below are more detailed observations arising from the Audit Report.
The audit findings reveal that HKU is responding positively to the educational challenges of the 21st century, including changes in the higher education landscape in Hong Kong. The Report confirms HKU’s commitment in enhancing teaching and learning, which are core to the success of any universities. In particular, the University’s central leadership in the planning of major educational initiatives and quality enhancement, as well as extensive use of external examiners in assuring the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards are highly commendable.

There are also other positive features, including HKU’s serious consideration of student feedback, provision of wide range of co- and extra-curricular learning activities, and comprehensive support for research students. In particular, HKU’s Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching has been commended for offering successful staff educational development programmes and for its work with Faculties in promoting high quality teaching and learning, and innovations in pedagogy. The QAC observed that there were eight Commendations of good practice and ten Affirmations of improvements that HKU is making following its self-review.

The QAC noted the nine recommendations, which do not reveal major problems with the teaching and learning quality of the University’s programmes. A few recommendations are related to streamlining and clarifying the decision-making structures; use of templates for course and programme design and approval, standardization/codification of policies and practices; and systematic dissemination of good practices. These problems are not entirely unexpected given that HKU is a relatively large comprehensive university.

The QAC also noted that the issues of teaching-research nexus (Recommendation 5) and assessment policy (Recommendation 6) are shared by many other institutions in Hong Kong and elsewhere, and may warrant attention from the entire higher education sector.

It is reassuring to note that the HKU has already been working on these issues as indicated in the University’s Institutional Response.

UGC Comments

The UGC fully shares the QAC’s views. In particular, it is gratifying to note that, while attaching great importance to research, HKU is also fully focused on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning – which are equally important. The Report confirms that HKU is providing a high quality student learning experience, underpinned by good and effective support to students.
The UGC is pleased to note that HKU is responding to the audit panel’s findings positively, and will consolidate the established good practices and address the issues identified in the Recommendations. I have every confidence that HKU will translate the Report’s findings into actions for further improvement and even greater success. We look forward to receiving a progress report from HKU within 18 months.

Yours sincerely,

( Laura M Cha )
Chairman

c.c. Mr Philip Chen, Chairman, Quality Assurance Council