The Senate

(a) RECEIVED recommendations from the Teaching and Learning Quality Committee (TLQC) for enhancing the current policy principles, guidelines and processes of Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) (document 108/109 amended: Appendix I);

(b) HEARD Professor A.B.M. TSUI, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning),

(i) explain the developments leading to the TLQC’s decision in March 2007 to initiate a review of SET, noting that the revamping of the SET Questionnaire (SETQ) and the overall review of the SET processes per se were two separate exercises; elaborate on the Faculty engagement, piloting and validation processes in revising SETQ as SET ’08, the consultation exercise on the review report’s recommendations on the dissemination and use of SET results which received Faculty support, and the further refinement of SET ’08 as SETL (Student Evaluation of Teaching and Learning) to address additional comments from Faculties;

(ii) advise that arising from concern expressed by some staff about needing time to familiarize themselves with SETL, it had been agreed with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Staffing) that academic staff would be given the choice as to whether to include the SET results of 2008-09 in their Academic Portfolio of Achievement for purposes of the Performance Review and Development (PRD);

(iii) introduce the TLQC’s recommendations in paragraphs 10, 13, 15 and 17 of the paper, noting that these could be grouped into three categories: reiteration and reinforcement of existing policy recommendations, enhancement of these policies and guidelines, and submission of new recommendations which were very much based on formalizing good practices operating in some Faculties; clarify that the dissemination of course effectiveness results via the Faculty/departmental webpage was only one of several channels suggested in Table 1 of the paper; and

(iv) advise that in addition to the core SETL items prescribed by the TLQC, Faculties were free to add Faculty-specific items (to be endorsed by Faculty TLQCs) to address other particular concerns;

(c) HEARD the following comments during the ensuing discussion:
(i) that there was concern about the following aspects of SETL: the wording of the SETL items, their focus on student learning, the inclusion of the items on medium of instruction, the actual administration of the questionnaire, the applicability of SETL items to PBL curricula, the risk of student dissatisfaction about the addition of further Faculty-specific items; a query as to whether Faculty Boards should be consulted about the SETL items; and a suggestion that it might be more appropriate to rename SETL as a “survey of students’ experience of learning”;

(ii) in response to concerns raised about SETL,

a. that although Senate had already tasked the TQC in 1998 with responsibility for laying down the guidelines for SET, the TQC renamed as TLQC had nevertheless tried its best when revising SETQ to engage all Faculties at each stage through Faculty representation in a working group, piloting of SET ’08 on two courses in each Faculty, and further refining SET ’08 as SETL to take account of further comments from Faculties; that the validity of SET ’08 had been confirmed by being piloted on more than 900 students and by subsequent analysis and focus group survey findings;

b. that the change from a teacher to student focus had been necessitated by the adoption of OBASL; that CAUT would be happy to discuss further with Faculties any concern they might have about the applicability of individual core questionnaire items to their curricula; that Faculty TLQCs were authorized to endorse Faculty-specific items;

c. that the inclusion of items on medium of instruction would give substance to the University’s language policy and was not unlawful as there was no statutory basis to requiring English as the medium of instruction; that these items were separate from the sections on the course and the teacher, and a “Not applicable” box had been included for use where appropriate;

d. that the detailed processes of administering the SETQ would be revisited as part of the review of the SET/SETL guidelines on the SSRC’s website; and

e. that to encourage student participation in SETL, it was important for students to be informed of the uses of the SETL data for improving teaching and learning;
(iii) that in recommending that SETL results be used for PRD purposes, the TLQC believed that while the overall effectiveness item was summative, the other core items would facilitate the provision of formative feedback to improve teaching; that it was appreciated that SETL provided a rough indication of teaching effectiveness only and its results should not be accepted mechanistically but should be interpreted judiciously, noting a member’s suggestion that it be specified on the SET course results summary that SET scores should not be the sole basis for evaluating teaching; and

(iv) that SET was a useful mechanism for improving students’ learning experience and its being updated as SETL was welcomed; that there was general support from members for SETL to be adopted, and for it to be reviewed after one year;

(d) APPROVED the recommendations from the TLQC as summarized in paragraph 18 of document 108/109 amended.”