

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The quality of student learning is the focal point of Quality Assurance Council (QAC) quality audits. Audits are intended to assure the Hong Kong University Grants Committee (UGC) and the public that institutions deliver on the promises they make in their role and mission statements in regard to their educational objectives. A QAC audit is therefore an audit of an institution's Fitness for Purpose in teaching and learning. The audit examines whether an institution has procedures in place appropriate for its stated purposes, whether it pursues activities and applies resources to achieve those purposes, and whether there is verifiable evidence to show that the purposes are being achieved.

This is the Executive Summary of a QAC quality audit of Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) conducted in 2009. The report presents the QAC's findings as elicited by the QAC Audit Panel, supported by detailed analysis and commentary. The findings cover each of the audit focus areas as well as the institution as a whole. Where appropriate, the findings are expressed as commendations of good practice; affirmations which recognise improvements the institution is already making as a result of its self-review; and recommendations for improvement. These are listed below. When considered in the context of the Report, the QAC findings confirm that HKBU achieves its goal of providing undergraduate students with a liberal, holistic education through the concept of Whole Person Education; and that this ethos, which is delivered in a caring and supportive environment, is clearly appreciated by students. Postgraduate students are also well supported. There are examples of good practices at the local level which could be used to enhance the quality of the student learning experience by the more systematic co-ordination and embedding of processes throughout the institution. The University's quality assurance systems and the quality of teaching and learning will therefore be enhanced further by implementation of the QAC's recommendations.

Commendations

1. The QAC commends HKBU's Council for its dedication and commitment to the strategic planning process that underpins the University's teaching and learning provision; and the role of the local external members in supporting the teaching activities of HKBU, often through serving on Advisory Committees. [Page 7]
2. The QAC commends HKBU for its commitment to ensuring that students on programmes delivered outside Hong Kong that lead to a HKBU degree enjoy a quality learning experience and that the associated awards are of equivalent standard to those of similar programmes delivered at the University. [Page 8]
3. The QAC commends HKBU for providing teaching in a caring and supportive environment that results in students enjoying a quality learning experience. [Page 8]
4. The QAC commends HKBU for its serious consideration of, and response to, student feedback that leads to enhancements of teaching quality. [Page 9]
5. The QAC commends HKBU for the effective delivery of its Whole Person Education philosophy, which is a major contributor to providing undergraduate students with a liberal and holistic education which is part of the University's mission and role statement. [Page 9]
6. The QAC commends HKBU for its rigorous procedures for the accreditation of new programmes, which includes external input as a means of benchmarking new educational provision. [Page 12]

7. The QAC commends HKBU for implementing a rigorous and effective system of Academic Consultation Panels (ACP) for the periodic review of academic provision; and for requiring all ACP members to be external to HKBU, which ensures a robust process and provides for the continual external benchmarking of HKBU's academic provision. [Page 13]

8. The QAC commends HKBU for requiring the majority of its undergraduates to complete a final year Honours Project as a graduation requirement, and invites the University to consider expanding the project in the new four-year normative curriculum from 2012. [Page 15]

9. The QAC commends HKBU for its support of students through the academic mentoring scheme and invites the University to consider formally extending this support to students throughout their entire undergraduate studies. [Page 17]

10. The QAC commends HKBU for clearly defining plagiarism and the rules that apply to cases of suspected plagiarism, and for ensuring that these are promulgated and made known to students and staff. [Page 20]

11. The QAC commends HKBU for the extent of student representation on committees, and invites HKBU to consider how student representatives can be better supported in their roles. [Page 23]

12. The QAC commends HKBU for providing and implementing an effective framework for the supervision of research postgraduate students, underpinned by clear and appropriate policies; and for the co-ordination of research degree education by the Graduate School. [Page 24]

Affirmations

1. The QAC affirms HKBU's development of Graduate Attributes for all graduates as it adopts an outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning. [Page 10]

2. The QAC affirms HKBU's establishment of a General Education Committee to improve co-ordination of whole person education activities and related support. [Page 15]

3. The QAC affirms HKBU's commitment to raising the language and literacy skills of its graduates through a range of compulsory courses, more stringent exit requirements and other language enhancement activities. [Page 15]

4. The QAC affirms HKBU's development of an e-Learning strategy to improve IT services and facilities, and to enhance programme delivery where deemed appropriate; and recommends that this be explored within appropriate committee structures rather than an *ad hoc* task force, with clear reporting lines and accountability. [Page 16]

5. The QAC affirms HKBU's recognition of the need to consider criterion-based referencing of student assessment as it moves towards fully adopting an outcomes-based approach to student learning and assessment. [Page 18]

6. The QAC affirms HKBU's commitment to review the Teaching Evaluation (TE) exercise; and invites the University to consider expanding the TE questionnaire to elicit student feedback on a range of course, department and institution-wide elements of teaching, with the review outcomes being considered by a formally-constituted committee. [Page 20]

Recommendations

1. The QAC recommends that HKBU review its committee structure and identify a clear locus for the development, monitoring, review and general oversight of teaching and learning (including assessment) policies and procedures, to include quality assurance and quality enhancement; and that the University clearly identify where responsibility and accountability lie for the implementation of the University's teaching and learning policies and procedures, and for shaping and driving new developments. *[Page 11]*
2. The QAC recommends that HKBU identify (i) more targets, benchmarks and performance indicators as part of the strategic planning process, to help provide more effective and transparent management; and (ii) a series of standard data sets, to include external reference points (and Key Performance Indicators) where appropriate, for use by Senior Management, Deans and Heads of Department, and by appropriate committees, on a regular basis as a means of ensuring University oversight of the quality of student learning in the devolved structure. *[Page 11]*
3. The QAC recommends that HKBU develop a systematic process to assure the quality of its programmes between the six-yearly Academic Consultation Panel visits; and ensure that this is embedded into the roles of relevant committees and those individuals with responsibility for the quality assurance of teaching and learning. *[Page 14]*
4. The QAC recommends that HKBU develop a comprehensive institution-wide policy on student assessment and suggests that this should be informed by international best practice. *[Page 19]*
5. The QAC recommends that all academic and teaching staff be formally appraised annually in accordance with HKBU's personnel policy guidelines and procedures; and that the University's expectations of performance be linked effectively with the identification of staff development needs. *[Page 21]*
6. The QAC recommends that HKBU consider establishing a deliberative forum to identify, develop, deliver and support a range of staff educational development needs; and to provide an institutional framework for quality enhancement in teaching and learning, to include the identification and dissemination of good practices and to drive pedagogical development. *[Page 22]*