

# **EDB announces Saint Francis University becomes university of applied sciences**

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (November 1) announced that Saint Francis University (SFU), having successfully gone through a stringent institutional review by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and fulfilled all relevant criteria as confirmed by the EDB, has become a university of applied sciences (UAS).

An EDB spokesman said, "The Government actively promotes the development of UASs to enhance the status of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) at the degree level and provide an alternative pathway to success for young people. The EDB is pleased that SFU has demonstrated its vision, commitment, capabilities and experience in providing high-level VPET programmes in close collaboration with relevant industries, and has successfully gone through the stringent review by the HKCAAVQ and met all of the relevant criteria, becoming the second UAS in Hong Kong."

In assessing SFU's application for becoming a UAS, the Government has taken into account relevant factors, including the outcome of the institutional review for UAS by the HKCAAVQ, and SFU's experience in operating applied degree programmes and other VPET programmes. The institutional review by the HKCAAVQ focuses on the commitment and competence of SFU to operate as a UAS at both institutional and programme levels, based on three domains, namely governance, management and quality assurance; learning environment and learner support; and industry collaboration and recognition.

SFU was founded as the Caritas Francis Hsu College. It began offering degree programmes and changed its name to the Caritas Institute of Higher Education in 2011, and was conferred a university title and was approved to change its name to SFU in January 2024. In the 2024/25 academic year, SFU offers two master's degree programmes, 13 bachelor's degree programmes (including two applied degree programmes) and four higher diploma programmes, with about 3 800 full-time and 800 part-time students in total.

Similar to the Hong Kong Metropolitan University, the first UAS in Hong Kong, SFU is subject to ongoing reviews by the HKCAAVQ to ensure further development of its maturity and competency as a UAS. It is also required to submit annual progress reports to the EDB.

To bolster the UAS development, as announced in "The Chief Executive's 2024 Policy Address", the Government has allocated a start-up fund of \$100 million to support UASs and aspiring institutions to establish a UAS alliance this year to embark on joint promotion with the industries and stakeholders, including organising international conferences, strengthening collaboration with applied sciences institutions from other places and initiating collaboration and research on applied education at the post-secondary level.

Priority will be accorded to eligible programmes of a UAS for inclusion under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors and eligible applications from UASs when considering applications for relevant support measures, including the EDB's Quality Enhancement Support Scheme and Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education.

Self-financing post-secondary institutions planning to apply for becoming a UAS should have a university title and possess the vision, commitment, capabilities and experience in operating an institution that embodies the key features of a UAS, including:

(a) the vision, maturity and capability in providing high-level VPET programmes ranging from Levels 5 to 7 under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, blending theory and practice with substantial workplace learning and assessment, having flexibilities in curriculum design, admission and delivery mode, and having recognition and support from industries and professions; and

(b) the experience in providing (an) applied degree programme(s) in at least one area of applied sciences for which it has attained the programme area accreditation or self-accrediting status, and the commitment to developing and providing more applied degree programmes.

The relevant criteria and application procedures are set out in the Manual for Institutional Review for UAS on the HKCAAVQ website ([www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/accreditation/institutional\\_review/](http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/accreditation/institutional_review/)). Applications are accepted all year round. Eligible institutions may apply for combining the institutional review for becoming a private university and that for a UAS, subject to the EDB's approval.