

Quality Assurance Council releases Audit Report on sub-degree operations of Chinese University of Hong Kong

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) today (June 21) released the Audit Report on the sub-degree operations of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK).

The Audit Report presents the findings on the quality of learning at the sub-degree providing units of CUHK. The Chairman of the QAC, Mr Lincoln Leong, said, "The QAC is pleased that the Audit Panel concludes that CUHK has developed a well-established and functional quality framework for its sub-degree, professional and continuing education programmes (SPCEPs) in alignment with its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes as well as the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework. CUHK is student-centred in its approach to course delivery and students are appreciative of the learning opportunities provided for them."

The QAC is pleased with the quality of educational provision at the sub-degree operations of CUHK. Its efforts in a range of areas are commended as positive features in the Audit Report. These include the strategic alignment of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, CUHK and the university; the rationalisation of the university's SPCEP portfolio; the consistent use of re-approval processes using external expertise; and the value and appreciation that the university places on teachers' contributions to the delivery of sub-degree programmes.

The full report (with CUHK's Institutional Response attached) has been uploaded to the website of the University Grants Committee (UGC) (www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/quality/sub_degree/report.html).

CUHK has agreed to submit a progress report within 18 months on its follow-up actions.

Background of the quality audit on sub-degree operations of CUHK

The quality audit on the sub-degree operations of CUHK was undertaken by an Audit Panel appointed by the QAC. The Audit Panel was chaired by Emeritus Professor Hilary Winchester, and members included Mr Ian Hawke, Professor Marilee Bresciani Ludvik, Dr Louis Ma and Dr Tracy Zou. The Panel reviewed the Institutional Submission, which was prepared by CUHK following a period of self-study, and visited CUHK from November 7 to 9, 2017, to meet with its staff and students. It also met with a number of external stakeholders, such as local employers and graduates of CUHK sub-degree programmes.

Background of the QAC and its auditing activities

The QAC was established in April 2007 as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the UGC. The UGC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the quality of the UGC-funded universities and their activities. In view of the institutional expansion of university 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 universities' educational provision. The QAC assists the UGC in assuring the quality of all programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above (however funded) offered in UGC-funded universities. The QAC fulfils this task primarily by undertaking periodic quality audits of the universities.

Auditing is an external quality assurance process that involves independent peer review by senior academics in the higher education sector. Its principal aims are to confirm that existing arrangements for quality assurance are fit for purpose, that the quality of provision is comparable to international best practices, that universities are committed to continuously improving the quality of their academic programmes, and that students are well taught and well supported so that they are able to achieve the expected academic standards.

Prior to 2016, the QAC's audit activities covered only first degree programmes and above. The first and second QAC audit cycles were completed in 2011 and 2016 respectively. In 2016, the UGC assumed the role of the overseeing body of the quality audits on the sub-degree operations of UGC-funded universities, with the involvement of the QAC as the audit operator. The audit visits to universities in this cycle are being conducted up till early 2019.