

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

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

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) today (March 6) released the Audit Report on the sub-degree operations of City University of Hong Kong (CityU).

The Audit Report presents the findings on the quality of learning at the sub-degree providing units (SDPUs) of CityU. The Chairman of the QAC, Mr Lincoln Leong, said, "The QAC is pleased that the Audit Panel concludes that the University's strategic plan makes clear its overall commitment to the pursuit of excellence in research and professional education. Oversight of sub-degree provision by senior University committees, particularly the Senate, is at a high level, providing assurance about academic standards and compliance with University requirements. Despite differences in the structure and organisation of the SDPUs and variations in the application of University policies and procedures, the sub-degree programmes are fit for purpose and are meeting the expectations of students, employers and other stakeholders. Students studying for sub-degree qualifications are also appreciative of the support they receive from teaching staff and from the academic support services."

The QAC is pleased with the quality of educational provision at the SDPUs of CityU. The University's efforts in various areas are commended as positive features in the Audit Report. These include the close working relationship between the external advisors and the SDPUs, the University's approach to following up on cases of low Teaching and Learning Questionnaire scores and monitoring the subsequent progress of staff, and the University and its employer partners' management of student placements and internships.

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

CityU 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 CityU

The quality audit on the sub-degree operations of CityU was undertaken by an Audit Panel appointed by the QAC. The Audit Panel was chaired by Professor Jeremy Bradshaw, and members included Professor Martí Casadesús Fa, Dr Vicky Lee, Professor Isabella Poon and Dr Stephanie Wilson. The Panel reviewed the Institutional Submission, which was prepared by CityU following

a period of self-study, and visited CityU from May 29 to 31, 2018, to meet with its staff and students. It also met with a number of external stakeholders, such as local employers and graduates of CityU 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 were conducted from late 2017 to early 2019.