

Quality Assurance Council releases Audit Report on sub-degree operations of Lingnan University

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

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) today (November 6) released the Audit Report on the sub-degree operations of Lingnan University (LU).

The Audit Report presents the findings on the quality of learning at the sub-degree providing unit of LU. The Chairman of the QAC, Mr Lincoln Leong, said, "The QAC notes that the Audit Panel concludes that Lingnan Institute of Further Education (LIFE) is a valued component of LU and has a clear place in the University's planning processes. LIFE is taking seriously its commitment to supporting and ensuring teaching quality by providing professional and pedagogical development opportunities, monitoring teaching performance and recognising outstanding teachers. There are, however, some issues that can be further improved. For example, further work is required to clarify the governance relationships between LU and LIFE and to ensure internal consistency across various levels of enabling policies, statutes and ordinances."

The QAC notes that the University's efforts in various areas are commended as positive features in the Audit Report. These include the positive attitude of the senior leadership of the University and LIFE, and the action taken to address and resolve the consequences of the previous enrolment management issues; the Language Enhancement Programme; the quality of LIFE's teaching staff; and LIFE's provision of extra-curricular and student development activities and support services. On the other hand, the Audit Panel has also raised a number of important issues, which would require attention.

The full report (with LU'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).

LU 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 LU

The quality audit on the sub-degree operations of LU was undertaken by an Audit Panel appointed by the QAC. The Audit Panel was chaired by Professor Sandra Vianne McLean, and members included Dr Sara Booth, Professor Cecilia Chun, Professor Robert Harris and Professor Michael Yam. The Panel reviewed the Institutional Submission, which was prepared by LU following a period of

self-study, and visited LU from January 22 to 24, 2019 to meet with its staff and students. It also met with a number of external stakeholders such as local employers and graduates of LU 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 QAC as the audit operator. The audit visits to universities in this cycle were conducted from late 2017 to early 2019.