

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

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

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) today (February 26) released the Audit Report on the sub-degree operations of the University of Hong Kong (HKU).

The Audit Report presents the findings on the quality of learning at the sub-degree providing units of HKU. The Chairman of the QAC, Mr Lincoln Leong, said, "The QAC is pleased that the Audit Panel concludes that given the volume and range of the sub-degree programmes on offer, there are excellent policies, processes and procedures in place to guide their development, approval, monitoring and review stages. In this Audit Report, the University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE) has been congratulated on the detailed informative documentation that guides all aspects of management and quality assurance regarding these programmes."

The QAC is pleased with the quality of educational provision at the sub-degree operations of HKU. The University's efforts in a range of areas are commended as positive features in the Audit Report. These include HKU SPACE's comprehensive and well-documented governance and management policies and procedures, as well as its comprehensive and effective quality assurance processes that include a meticulous approach to programme approval and reviews which draws on external input.

The full report (with HKU'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).

HKU 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 HKU

The quality audit on the sub-degree operations of HKU was undertaken by an Audit Panel appointed by the QAC. The Audit Panel was chaired by Emeritus Professor Rudi Lidl, and members included Professor Timothy Clark, Emeritus Professor Paul White, Dr Eva Wong and Professor Eric Yu. The Panel reviewed the Institutional Submission, which was prepared by HKU following a period of self-study, and visited HKU from March 20 to 22, 2018, to meet with its staff and students. It also met with a number of external stakeholders, such as local employers and graduates of HKU 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.