

# UGC and QAC to drive long-term development of virtual teaching and learning

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

The University Grants Committee (UGC) and the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) will allocate additional funding of \$165 million to support the eight UGC-funded universities in implementing various initiatives between 2021 and 2023 to promote the strategic development of virtual teaching and learning (VTL) in the medium to long run.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, online teaching has been widely adopted and has become the prevalent mode of teaching and learning as the universities suspended face-to-face classes most of the time. Both the UGC and the QAC believe that, after the pandemic, universities will continue to make use of VTL to enhance the overall effectiveness and experience of teaching and learning. The UGC and the QAC will thus allocate additional funding of \$165 million (including \$15 million dedicated to inter-institutional collaborative activities) to the eight UGC-funded universities to facilitate more systemic collaborations among them to promote the strategic development of VTL in the medium to long run.

The universities are welcome to deploy the additional funding to implement a diverse range of project initiatives, including:

- (1) developing the governance framework, assessment methods, quality assurance system and professional best practices of VTL;
- (2) enriching the overall educational experience of virtual learning, such as organising staff development and encouraging interaction among students during online classes;
- (3) exploring new strategies, pedagogies, platforms and facilities in pursuit of longer-term visions on VTL; and
- (4) promoting the integration of VTL into scenarios such as practicums and on-site training.

The Chairman of the UGC, Mr Carlson Tong, said, "Teaching and learning is the most important mission of universities and enhancing teaching quality is crucial to the nurturing of talents. The UGC has all along attached great importance to the development of teaching and learning, and we devote substantial resources to the universities for such activities each year. While the pandemic has brought about immense challenges to teaching and learning on one hand, it has also offered opportunities for transformation on the other. The UGC and the QAC hope that the additional funding will catalyse innovative and strategic thinking among our universities, and prepare them for the ever-changing teaching and learning environment as well as their development needs under the 'new normal'."

The UGC and the QAC will invite the universities to submit their work plans and detailed proposals. The universities may use the funding to take forward various project initiatives from the first half of 2021 to mid-2023.