

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

City University of Hong Kong (CityU) sincerely thanks the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) of the University Grants Committee (UGC), the Audit Panel, the Audit Coordinator and UGC colleagues for their highly professional conduct in completing the audit exercise. CityU values the detailed assessment of its strategic approach to quality assurance and of the initiatives derived therefrom.

CityU is pleased that the Audit Panel recognized the University's significant quality-related improvements since the last audit. The Audit Panel commended the University for the implementation of the Discovery-enriched Curriculum (DEC), a path-breaking approach to discovery- and innovation-oriented education as the academic blueprint of the University. The Audit Panel also noted "the consistent efforts CityU has made to facilitate and promote the development of DEC" and found much evidence and many examples of "student achievement that demonstrate the success of DEC in enhancing students' learning experience" (para. 7.6). In terms of setting and maintaining academic standards, the Audit Panel found evidence of the University's effectiveness in deploying its approach to setting academic standards via thorough processes of programme design and approval. Furthermore, the Audit Panel commended CityU for the carefully-nuanced graduate attributes which emphasize the clear differentiation across the achievements represented by undergraduate, taught postgraduate, professional doctoral and research doctoral awards (para. 2.5). The University shares the Audit Panel's view that the graduate attributes could be more effectively communicated to stakeholders by emphasizing the contributions of curricular and co-/extra-curricular activities in achieving them (para. 2.5).

The University is also pleased with the Audit Panel's commendation of CityU's network of student services. Student services "are all working in the same direction to provide proactive and flexible support" for the two audit themes of enhancing students' learning experience and global engagements (paras. 7.8 and 7.20). The Audit Panel further acknowledged the "concerted effort of staff, students and other stakeholders of CityU to facilitating innovation among students and staff across a range of disciplines" (para. 7.7) and found clear evidence of CityU's continuing efforts to achieve ever more challenging global engagement goals.

The University is committed to continuous quality enhancement and concurs with the Audit Panel's conclusion that "[The University] has strengthened its arrangements for setting, maintaining and safeguarding academic standards since the 2010 Quality Audit, particularly in relation to the alignment of CILOs, PILOs and GAs; annual programme and 5-year reviews of academic excellence; the involvement of external stakeholders in quality QAE; and benchmarking of academic standards" (para. 2.12). CityU is encouraged by the Audit Panel's affirmation of "the thorough action the University is taking to ensure that OBTL and CRA are fully understood and firmly embedded, within all departments at every level" (para. 4.8). Following the health check in 2014, the University articulated and enacted plans to ensure that OBTL and

CRA will remain fully embedded and implemented in its academic infrastructure.

The Audit Panel found strong evidence that the University has “raised the profile of quality assurance processes and established a framework that includes guidance, regular review and clear lines of responsibility” (Executive Summary (f)). The University is satisfied that its periodic review schemes are all fit for purpose with effective systems for seeking feedback and making improvements. The University nonetheless accepts that existing processes will be strengthened by the recommended establishment of a “mechanism to ensure that outcomes of annual programme and 5-year reviews of academic excellence, including the recommendations of EAA’s, have been followed through and monitored systematically throughout colleges and schools” (para. 3.7).

Academic honesty is taken seriously by CityU staff and students. Students are made aware of it from their first day at the University and onwards. The Audit Panel observed that CityU has defined clear regulations which include procedures for preventing, detecting and dealing with breaches of its rules. Measures for preventing infringements, which include a mandatory online “quiz”, are comprehensive and engage students interactively. The University agrees that a system for monitoring and analyzing all reported breaches of academic honesty will be helpful (para. 2.11). The University will accordingly follow the Audit Panel’s guidance in setting institutional standards for compliance, with an accompanying framework for ensuring that penalties are commensurate with the seriousness of the offence and consistent across the campus (para. 2.8).

The University welcomes the Audit Panel’s recognition of the University’s commitment to the continuing professional development of academic staff (para. 3.16). CityU concurs that its implementation of a performance-based pay-review mechanism can be augmented by the Audit Panel’s recommendation for setting “minimum standards for training of staff who are new to teaching and/or supervision, and on establishing a framework of continuing professional development, tailored to both institutional and individual requirements, utilising processes of regular developmental review” (para. 3.18). While the existing system is fit for purpose and provides the University with evidence that staff performance has been satisfactory, the Audit Panel’s recommendation will yield consistency with the University’s approach of setting minimum expectations.

CityU thanks the Audit Panel for commending the University on its enhancements to the student learning experience. However, the Audit Panel recommended that “the University locate or develop an appropriate method that is capable of substantiating the University’s claim that its educational processes are the means by which value is added to cohorts of mid-range students” (para. 4.7). Further, the Audit Panel noted “a tendency to concentrate on outcome metrics at the expense of identifying and articulating the factors embedded within the processes of teaching, learning, assessment and support that are making a tangible difference to the achievements of mid-range students” (para. 4.7). The University notes the Audit Panel's detailed advice

on how to demonstrate that the added value to students is attributable to the excellent teaching and learning support provided. CityU believes that this kind of research is most appropriately pursued at the sector-wide level with leadership from the UGC.

Postgraduate education is a critical part of the institutional mission, and CityU aims to offer distinctive programmes that meet high international standards of programme quality. The Audit Panel acknowledged “the substantial amount of work CityU has undertaken in reviewing its postgraduate provision, endorses the changes it has implemented in response to its findings, particularly in respect of the extension of DEC 2.0 to all TPgs and encourages the University to continue to monitor and review the impact of these initiatives” (para. 6.15). The Audit Panel noted that “the curricular and co-/extra-curricular achievements of TPgs receive disproportionately less attention than that paid to Ug and RPg students” (Executive Summary (m)) and hence recommended that the University “determine the means by which it can more effectively enable, support, evaluate and celebrate the achievement of TPg students, taking full account of these characteristics” (para. 6.9). The University agrees with the Audit Panel’s comments and will explore appropriate means to enhance opportunities for TPg student achievement.

As a University which aspires to become a leading global university, excelling in research and professional education, CityU views the Quality Audit exercise as a meaningful opportunity to identify areas for improvement. The Audit Panel’s measured, professional advice is a valuable contribution to the further enhancement of the University’s educational provision, for which CityU is grateful.