# Developing Experiential Learning: Experience at CUHK
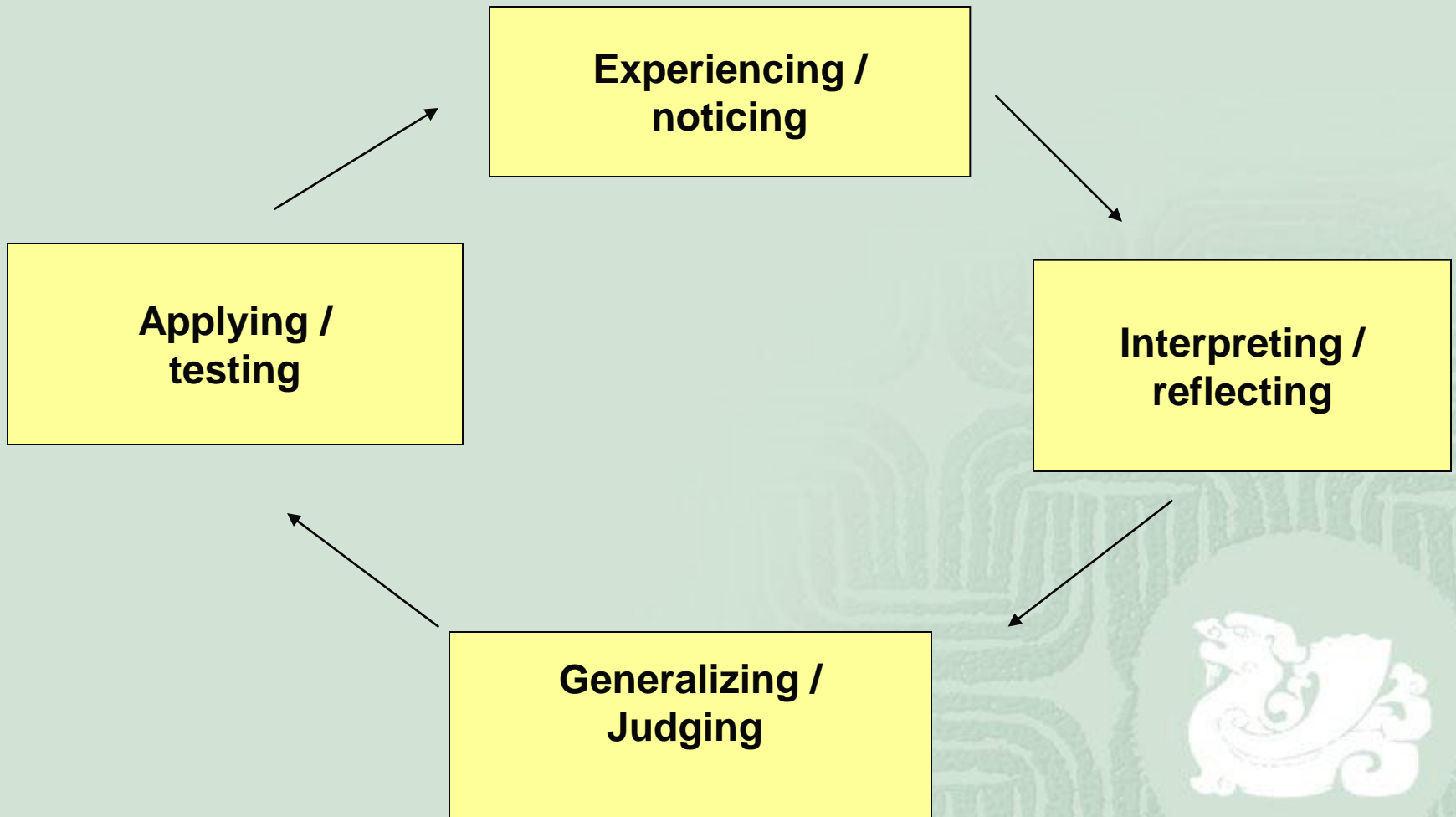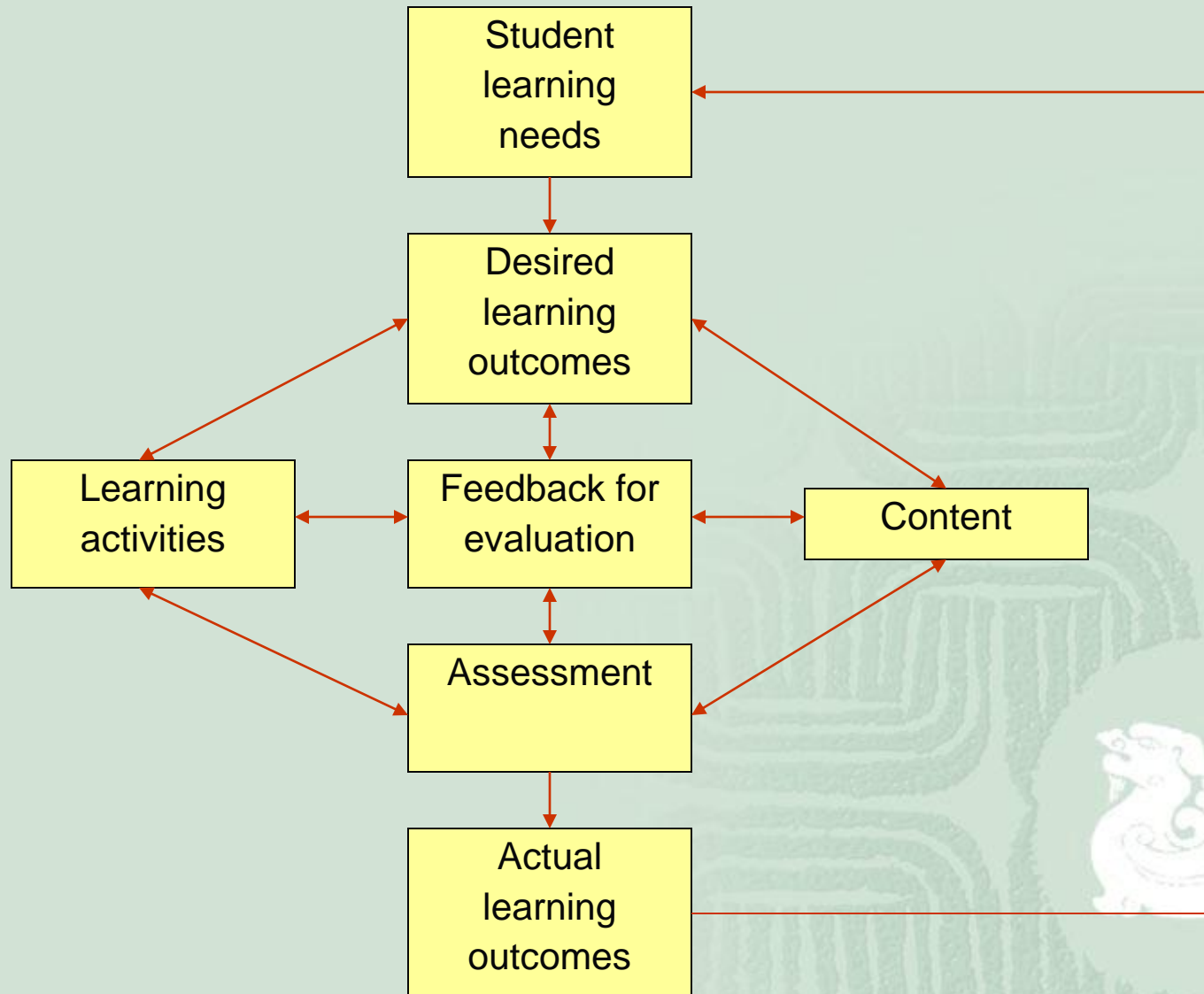
# Experiential learning

- It broadly indicates an educational approach that focuses on learning from authentic and naturalistic experiences.

- In general, refers to any meaningful interaction between individual learners and a unique environment which allows the learner to construct knowledge, skills and values.

- The term more typically refers to out-of-class activities

- Sometimes referred to as broadening experience at CUHK

# Experiential learning cycle

**Experiencing / noticing**

**Interpreting / reflecting**

**Applying / testing**

**Generalizing / Judging**

# Curriculum development at CUHK

# CUHK motto

- CUHK's motto:

博文約禮

   To broaden one's intellectual horizon; to keep within the bounds of propriety


- The University places equal emphasis on the intellectual and moral aspects of education.

# CUHK mission

- CUHK's mission:

  To combine tradition with modernity, and to bring together China and the West.

- Students are expected to cultivate a global vision and engage in a balanced programme of personal and social development.

# Expected graduate outcomes

- A depth of knowledge in a specialty
- Appreciative of the values of a broad range of disciplines and general knowledge
- Highly proficient in Chinese and English
- Possess a basket of skills appropriate to the modern age
- A deep understanding of Chinese culture and an appreciation of other cultures
- A high degree of inter-cultural sensitivity, tolerance and a global perspective
- Critical and independent
- An attitude of compassion, honesty and integrity
- Effective in communication and working in a team
- Ability to contribute as citizens and leaders
- A sense of purpose, responsibility and commitment in life
- A desire to serve
- Equipped to pursue life-long learning and professional development

(From Strategic Plan 2006)

# Expected graduate outcomes – main domains

1. A depth of knowledge in one specialty, supported by a broad range of general knowledge

2. A basket of skills appropriate to the modern age, e.g. languages, IT, numeracy, etc.

3. A range of affective attributes and values, e.g. cultural sensitivity, compassion, responsibility, integrity, taste, etc.
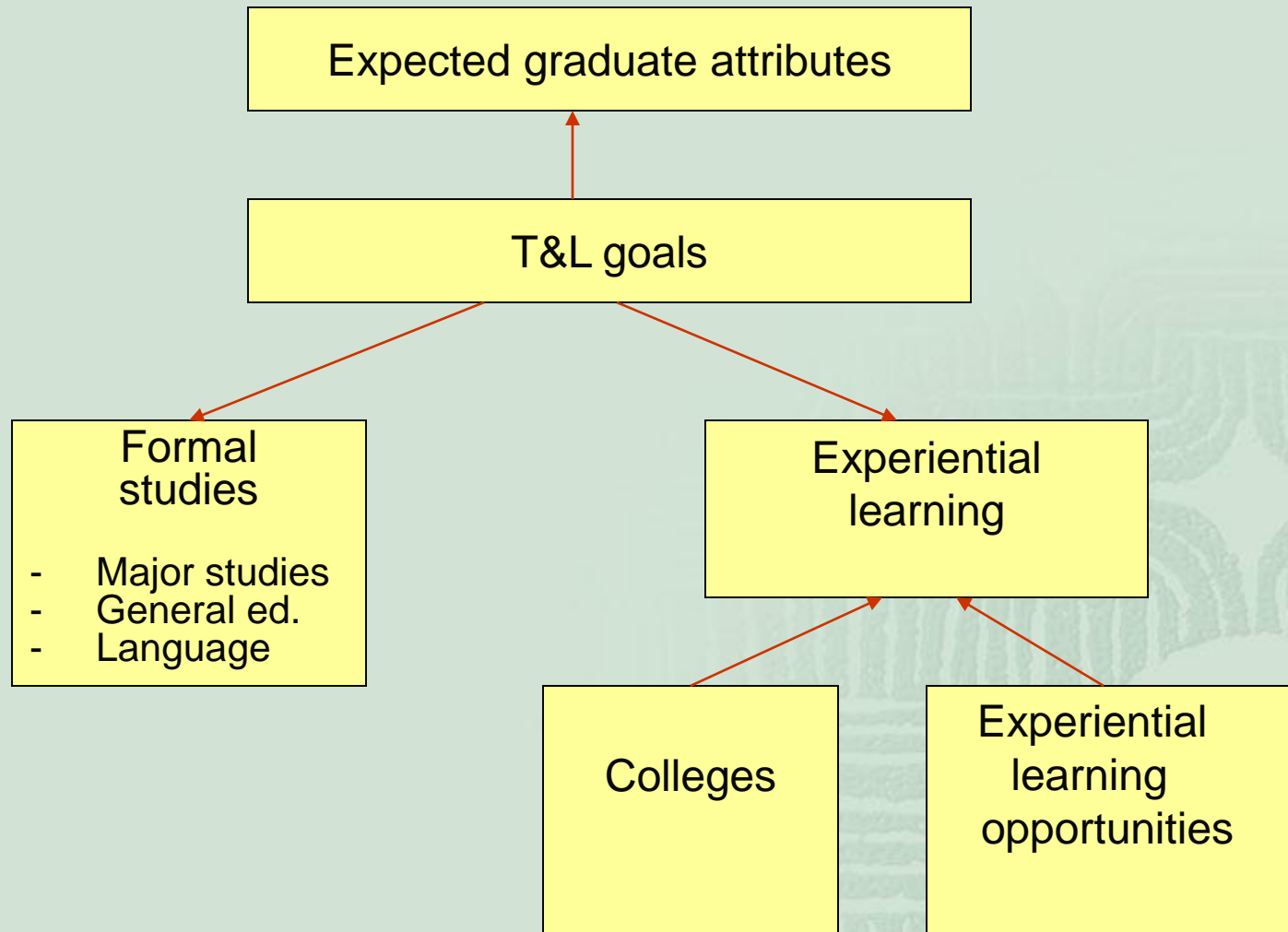
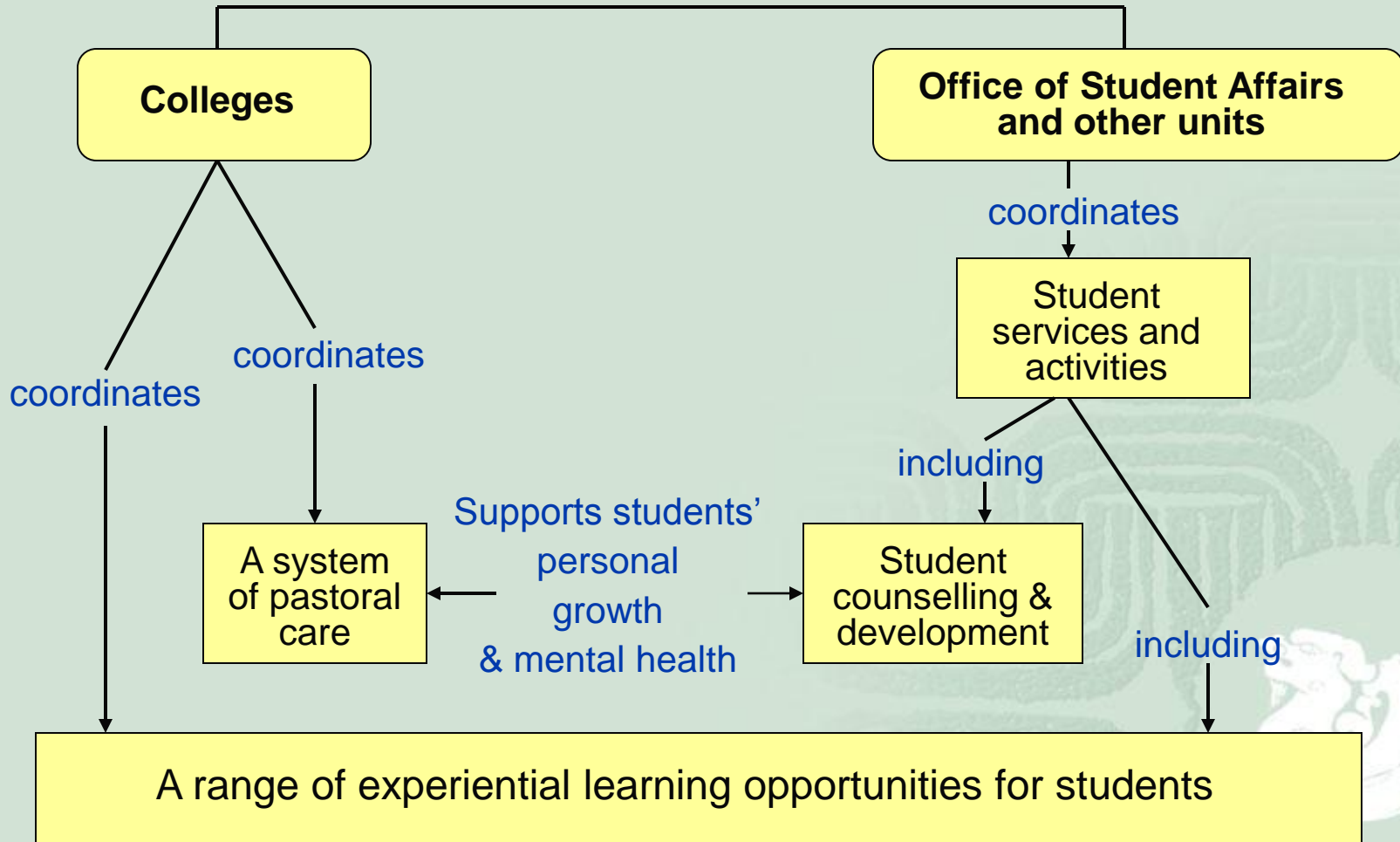# CUHK's educational target

- As the expected outcome is all-round graduates, the emphasis is on all-round education and whole-person development.

- It is the goal of the University that both formal curriculum and non-formal education contribute to the overall quality and competitiveness of our students and graduates.

# Overall T&L system

# General student support system at CUHK

**Colleges**

**Office of Student Affairs and other units**

coordinates

Student services and activities

coordinates

coordinates

including

Supports students' personal growth & mental health

A system of pastoral care

Student counselling & development

including

A range of experiential learning opportunities for students

# College system at CUHK

- Chung Chi (1951), New Asia (1949) and United (1956) federated to form CUHK (1963); Shaw (1986) added later. (Five new colleges to be added.)

- Every undergraduate student is assigned to a College (and a Faculty); every College contains nearly all disciplines within CUHK.

- Every teacher also assigned to a College.

- Typical strength of each College: ~2,600 UG students, ~150 exchange students and ~300 teachers.

- The important infrastructure is a number of hostels. Also facilities for sports and cultural activities.

# Roles of Colleges

- Second Fulton Report (1976):

    Disciplinary teaching

    → academic faculties/departments

    Whole-person education

    → Colleges


- Colleges support students to achieve goals especially in affective attributes, e.g. cultural sensitivity, compassion, responsibility, integrity, taste, etc.

# College programmes

1. College general education programmes
2. Informal co-curricular activities:
   - **Ethical** development through community services
   - **Intellectual** development through study tours and exchange programmes
   - **Physical** development through sporting activities and health education
   - **Social** development through leadership training, public speaking, debates, orientation and anniversary programmes
   - **Aesthetic** development through music, drama, art appreciation

# Key experiential learning activities

| Opportunity | Main coordinating bodies |
|---|---|
| Student exchange | Office of Academic Links |
| Internships | - Colleges<br>- Office of Student Affairs<br>- Departments and Faculties |
| Mentorship | - Office of Student Affairs<br>- Colleges<br>- Departments and Faculties |
| Leadership training | - Colleges<br>- General Education Office<br>- Office of Student Affairs |
| Student clubs | Student groups, supported by a variety of units |
| Participation in competitions | - Physical Education Unit<br>- Departments and Faculties |

# Student involvement

| Opportunity | Number of students (2008-09) |
|---|---|
| Student exchange | ~650 students participated in regular term-time exchange;  ~2,000 short-tem opportunities |
| Internships | ~3,500 internships in various programmes (13% outside Hong Kong) |
| Mentorship | ~1,200 students in various programmes |
| Leadership training | ~30 in credit-bearing Leadership Development Programme;  many others in various activities |
| Student clubs | ~260 student clubs and associations registered under University and College student unions |
| Participation in competitions | Students participate in local, national and international competitions |

# Purposes of experiential learning activities

| Opportunity | Some key purposes/outcomes |
|---|---|
| Student exchange | - New perspectives on knowledge<br>- Renewed intellectual curiosity and vigour<br>- Cross-cultural sensitivity and understanding<br>- Language skills |
| Internships | - Professional experience in diverse settings<br>- Better understanding of professional and career choices<br>- Improved interpersonal skills in a working environment outside of the classroom |
| Mentorship | - Individualized advice and support<br>- Better understanding of professional and career environment |
| Leadership training | - Professional responsibility<br>- Interpersonal and communication skills<br>- Organizational skills<br>- Strategic thinking |
| Student clubs | - Organizational skills<br>- Links between formal and informal study |
| Participation in competitions | - Sense of excellence<br>- Teamwork skills<br>- A spirit of fairness and sportsmanship |

# QAC Quality Audit

Commendation 7

The QAC commends CUHK for the variety and extent of experiential learning opportunities available to students, particularly the exchange and internship programmes, and its success in securing travel grants and other funding to enable students to participate in these various activities.

(2008)

# Development of programmes & activities
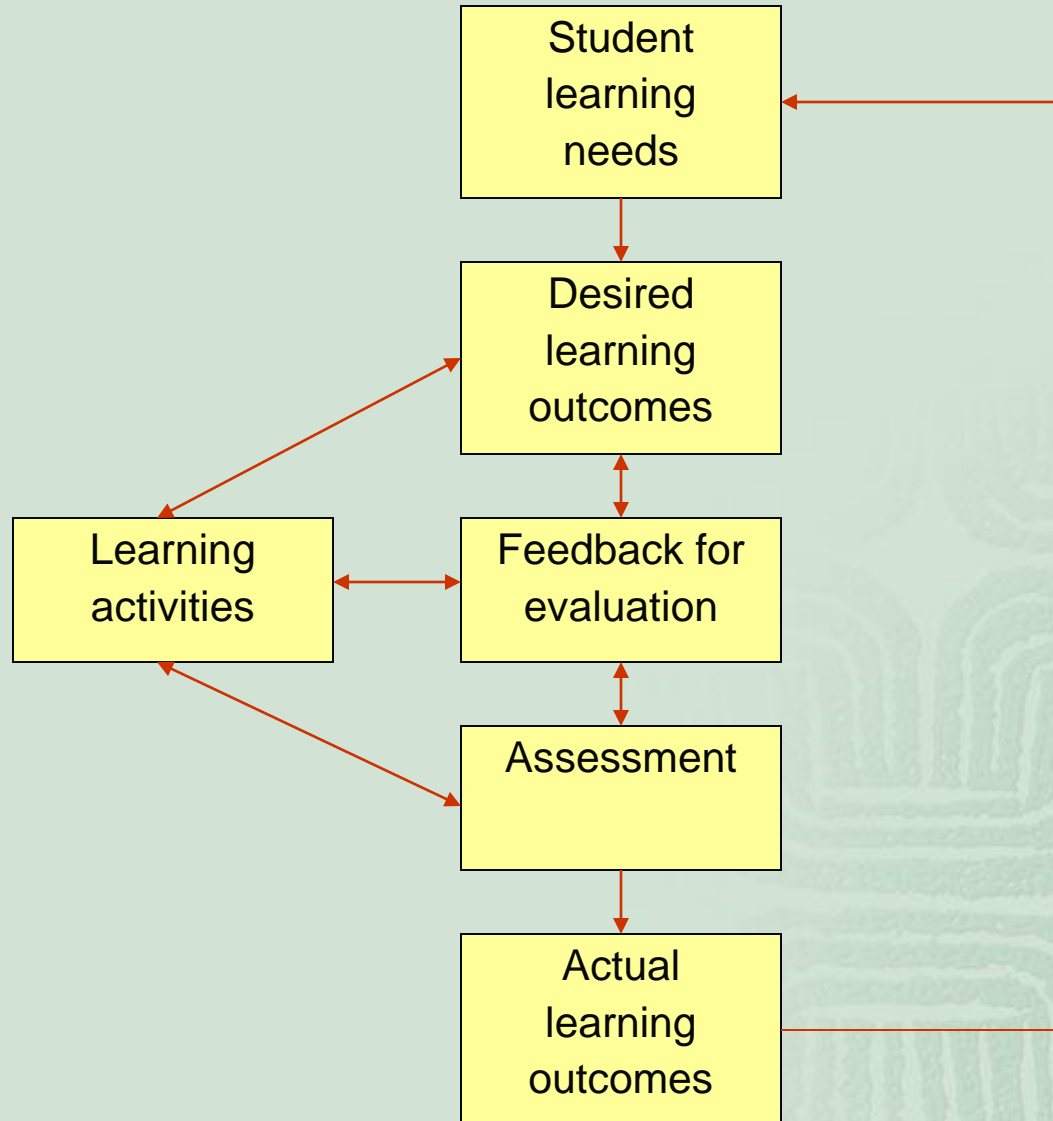
# **Elements in designing activities**

## 1. learning outcomes

The capabilities and skills students are expected to have developed during the programme

$\rightarrow$ expected graduate attributes

## 2. learning activities

## 3. assessment

## 4. feedback from students

# Development of
# experiential learning opportunities

Relevant units (often advised by relevant committees):

- focus at student outcomes

- review University policies and plans

- study the external environments

- review available resources

- assess the progress of existing projects

- evaluate past performance

- plan future activities

- gather feedback for evaluation

# Student participation

- Student perspective is central to programme development and review.

- Committees related to T&L have student representation:

    - Senate

    - Senate Staff-Student Consultative Committee

    - Senate Committee on T & L

    - Faculty Boards

    - Department Boards

# Student feedback

- A key component to experiential learning is reflection, facilitating student feedback.

- Student feedback on programmes via formal surveys, learning journals and interactive methods such as student panels, focus groups, forums and internet forums.

- Staff-student interactions facilitate the gathering of student feedback through informal discussions.

# Surveying students' views on experiential learning

- A survey of student feedback on impact of experiential learning
- Conducted by CUHK Centre for Learning Enhancement and Research (CLEAR) in 2009
- A qualitative approach to analyzing identified learning outcomes for student experience in five key EL activities
- The survey shows that most participants were satisfied with their student experience

# **Experiential-learning gains**

Survey shows that experiential learning activities have a positive impact on:

- Personal growth
- Social networking
- Cross-cultural exposure
- Career development
- Academic development

# 1. Exchange programmes

- Students' evaluation:
  - Greatly facilitated personal development, becoming more self-reliant and confident
  - Enhanced cross-cultural exposure
  - Also good for academic development and social networking
- Impediments to success:
  - Difficult to share experience with others
  - High academic performance criterion and financial costs
- Students' recommendations:
  - Other criteria to be considered for admission
  - More short-term exchange programmes
  - More reflection activities should be organized

# 2. Internship programmes

- Students' evaluation:
  - Greatly facilitated career development
  - Enhanced academic development
  - Also good for social networking and personal growth
- Impediments to success:
  - Financial and time constraints
  - Limited supply of internship opportunities
- Students' recommendations:
  - Students to gain such experiences on their own
  - More information on part-time jobs and internship work experience

# 3. Leadership training programmes

- Students' evaluation:
  - Enhanced personal growth
  - Enhanced cross-cultural exposure
- Impediments to success:
  - Limited places in such programmes
  - Students find the term "leadership training" less convincing and did not want to be trained as a leader through a set programme
  - Too much workload in the programmes
- Students' recommendations:
  - Increasing intake of self-recommended candidates
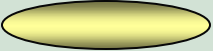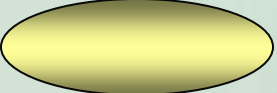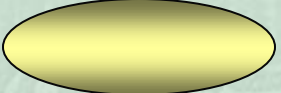
# 4. Mentorship programmes

- Students' evaluation:
    - Facilitated social networking
    - Also good for career development
- Impediments to success:
    - Success of the programmes relies heavily on the initiative of mentees in interacting with mentors
    - Students tend to put mentorship in a lower priority among other EL activities they joined
- Students' recommendations:
    - More preparatory activities could stimulate participants and enhance their sense of responsibility for cultivating a good relationship with their mentors
    - List of mentors needs to be renewed every year in order to ensure diversified nature of the schemes

# 5. Student clubs

- Students' evaluation:
  - Greatly facilitated social networking and personal growth
  - Able to acquire many generic skills and the qualities of being a good team player
  - Built up their leadership skills
  - Gains will facilitate career development
- Impediments to success:
  - Students required to accept the culture and values of the associations
  - Dominated by local culture, which may not match the needs of non-local students
- Students' recommendations:
  - Increase international activities and associations to create a more diversified campus culture
  - More support to students in establishing more diversified student associations for minority groups

# Summary of the experiential-learning gains in different programmes

| | Academic development | Career development | Cross-cultural exposure | Social network | Personal growth |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Exchange** | ⬭ | | ⬬ | ∘ | ⬬ |
| **Internship** | ⬭ | ⬬ | | ∘ | ∘ |
| **Mentorship** | | ∘ | | ⬭ | |
| **Student clubs** | | ⬭ | | ⬬ | ⬬ |
| **Leadership** | | | ∘ | | ∘ |

# Facilitating factors
# in experiential learning

Survey identified five facilitating factors that influenced student participation in experiential learning activities:

- Flexibility
- Personal interest
- Peer support
- Belongings to a related community/organization
- University culture

# 1. Flexibility

- Flexibility was an important factor in facilitating student participation in EL programmes, especially exchanges and internships

  e.g. residents had more access (i.e. information, freedom and time) to participate in EL programmes

- The flexibility that students can afford also influenced by curriculum designs and requirements

# 2. Personal interest

- Participants only joined the programmes that they were interested in

- Several factors explain their desire to participate in particular programmes

  - Personal motivation: Some students tended to show a stronger initiative to learn new knowledge

  - Reputation: Many students perceived some programmes as having higher status

  - Past experience: Positive experience of same type of programmes

  - Curiosity: Some students were curious about some unique experiences
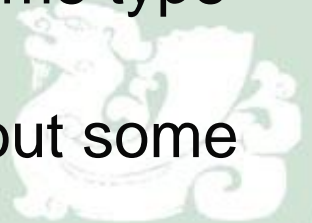
# 3. Peer support

- Most participants joined and sustained their participation in an activity based on the support received from their peers

- Facilitate participation in student clubs

- Two factors discouraging engagement in some activities:

  - peer conflicts

  - feeling of alienation

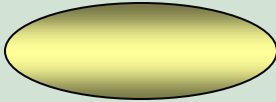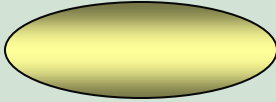# 4. Belongings to a related community/organization

- Students more eager to participate in activities when they agree with the value and culture of that community
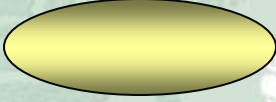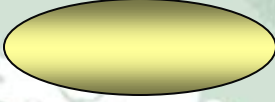
- A strong belonging to a related community (e.g. the organizing unit) encourages students' participation in activities organized by that community/organization,

  e.g. active participation in student clubs cultivated by strong sense of belonging to a College

# 5. University culture

- Students' behavior easily shaped by the University community's culture, tradition and value

- A general perception on campus that students should engage in multiple activities during their university studies, e.g. academic, social and recreational activities

- Participants generally believed that taking up positions on executive committees or working groups in student clubs and undertaking exchange programmes are valuable to their personal and career development

# The role of facilitating factors in experiential learning

|  | *Personal interest* | *Flexibility* | *University culture* | *Community belonging* | *Peer support* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Exchange** |  | ⬭ | ⬭ |  |  |
| **Internship** |  | ⬭ |  |  |  |
| **Mentorship** | ⬭ |  | ⬭ |  |  |
| **Student clubs** |  | ⬭ |  | ⬭ | ⬭ |
| **Leadership** | ⬭ |  | ⬭ |  |  |

# Implications of survey results

- Experiential learning activities offer students valuable experiences, especially with reference to personal growth and self-discovery, and contribute to students' whole-person development.

- Different experiential learning activities provide different learning experiences and contribute to various dimensions of learning development.

- Students can select different types of EL activities to participate in, and to acquire different desired attributes and skills through re-evaluating those particular experiences.

# Self-reflection

- Reflection is an essential means for turning experiences into learning.

- The value of EL activities is to create broadening and self-discovery experiences for students to recapture those virtues in different situations and to deepen their knowledge of virtues through reflection.

- The University should provide adequate facilitation support for transforming students' experiences into valuable learning.

- More guided reflection and sharing activities following the completion of activities should be organized in order to cultivate students' reflective learning processes.

# Further actions proposed

- Strengthen students' international exposure by diversifying and supplementing the mainly Cantonese-dominated social culture

- More evenly distribute access to particular experiential learning activities (e.g. exchange programmes and leadership programmes) to students in order to further utilize learning values to different students

- Integrate experiential learning activities into formal education in order to enhance generic skills training in courses

- Expand internship and exchange experiences in a 3+3+4 curriculum

- Enhanced coordination of EL opportunities at CUHK

- Enhanced documentation of participation in EL opportunities at CUHK

# Thank you