Report of a Quality Audit
of Sub-degree Operations

of **The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

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QAC Audit Report Number 21

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PREFACE

Background

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) was established in April 2007 as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

UGC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the quality of UGC-funded universities and their activities. In view of universities' expansion of their activities and a growing public interest in quality issues, QAC was established to assist UGC in providing third-party oversight of the quality of the universities' educational provision. QAC aims to assist UGC in assuring the quality of programmes (however funded) offered by UGC-funded universities.

Since its establishment, QAC has conducted two rounds of quality audits, the first between 2008 and 2011 and the second between 2015 and 2016. By virtue of its mission, however, these audits conducted prior to end 2016 include only first-degree level programmes and above offered by the UGC-funded universities.

In 2016, UGC has assumed the role of the overseeing body of the external quality audits on the sub-degree operations of the UGC-funded universities, with the involvement of QAC as the audit operator. The sub-degree audit cycle commenced in end 2016 with the promulgation of the Audit Manual.

Conduct of QAC Quality Audits

Audits are undertaken by Audit Panels appointed by QAC from its Register of Auditors. The Audit Panel composes of three auditors who are either international or regional experts in higher education quality assurance, drawn from a higher education system based outside of Hong Kong. The Panel also includes at least two local members, at least one of whom should be drawn from another UGC-funded university.

QAC's core operational tasks derived from its terms of reference are:

- the conduct of institutional quality audits
- the promotion of quality assurance and enhancement and the spread of good practice

QAC's approach to quality audit is based on the principle of 'fitness for purpose'. Audit Panels consider the nature and strength of those operations in terms of the vision, mission and goals of the university and the Sub-degree Providing Unit(s) (SDPU(s)) within it. The degree of alignment between the SDPU(s) and the university's vision, mission, goals and strategic priorities is also considered.

Full details of the audit procedures, including the methodology and scope of the audit, are provided in the QAC Audit Manual on Sub-degree Operations of UGC-funded Universities which is available at http://www.ugc.edu.hk/doc/eng/qac/manual/auditmanual_sub-degree.pdf.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the report of a quality audit of the sub-degree (SD) operations of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU; the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council. The report presents the findings of the quality audit, supported by detailed analysis and commentary on the following Dimensions:

1. governance, management, university planning and accountability
2. approach to programme quality assurance
3. curriculum design, programme development and approval processes
4. programme delivery, including pedagogical approaches, learning environments and resources, scheduling
5. support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development
6. student learning assessment
7. student participation and student support services
8. systems for acting on quality assurance data to make ongoing enhancements to student learning

The audit findings are identified as features of good practice worthy of commendation, recommendations for further consideration by the University, and affirmation of progress with actions already in place as a result of its self-study.

Summary of the principal findings of the Audit Panel

1. Governance, management, university planning and accountability

The SD provision at the University proper and PolyU's semi-autonomous College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE) reflects the strategic priorities and mission of the University. The PolyU Senate has overall responsibility for the quality of all the University's programmes. Governance and quality assurance (QA) structures at CPCE are aligned with those for faculties and departments at the University proper. Academic planning and QA in CPCE are overseen by PolyU's Academic Planning and Regulations Committee and Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments). The Audit Panel (the Panel) found the University has a sound approach to setting and maintaining academic standards, with approval and revalidation of SD programmes taking into account Generic Level Descriptors of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework. Benchmarking with internationally comparable levels, the use of an outcome-based approach to teaching and assessment, and standards-based certification assure academic standards. However, the University is encouraged to review the terms of reference of Senate and its committees, in order to make them more explicit in relation to the assurance of standards, including benchmarking of subject levels, for SD provision.

2. *Approach to programme quality assurance*

The University is consistent in the application of its QA policies and procedures, which enables it to meet international standards and the professional requirements for its SD programmes. PolyU systematically collects and reviews student outcomes data to analyse student achievement and identify areas for improvement in Programme Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans, which are considered in annual Programme Review Reports at Departmental and Faculty level. The Associate Degree (AD) awards offered by CPCE's Hong Kong Community College (HKCC) are subject, with minor exceptions, to the same academic regulations as the Higher Diploma (HD) awards offered by HKCC and the University proper, although the Panel found that only academic regulations for HD awards are available. The Panel suggests that a specific document for AD awards, similar to that for HD awards, be produced and made accessible. The University proper has consolidated QA processes for its Continuing Education (CE) courses with effect from April 2018. The revised procedures mirror those already used by CPCE's School of Professional Education and Executive Development for its CE courses. The Panel supports the University proper's intention that the unified QA procedures introduced from April 2018 will be implemented for all its CE provision by the end of the 2018/19 academic year.

3. *Curriculum design, programme development and approval processes*

The University's framework for developing new AD, HD and CE programmes is strong and is clearly articulated in the University's quality documentation, though standardised processes for CE programmes are new. The Panel confirmed that the framework is effectively deployed. Attention to learning outcomes features heavily in the processes, where learning outcomes are used at various levels and, in general, there is good constructive alignment with assessment tasks. Admissions arrangements conform to the University's policies, and academic requirements for admission are well set-out in the regulations for the various types of SD operation. Though there is considerable variation in practice, commensurate with programme type, the Panel found admissions processes were all based on principles of fairness and equity.

4. *Programme delivery, including pedagogical approaches, learning environments and resources, scheduling*

The University has a clear framework for monitoring programme delivery, requiring annual and periodic reviews at programme and course levels. SD students are well supported by high-quality physical learning and e-learning environments which contribute to their academic experience. Student feedback is systematically sought and utilised in initiating improvements to students' learning opportunities. Part-time students taking typically short, professionally relevant CE courses, have a less participatory pattern of engagement in the University community but they are appreciative of the quality of their experience.

5. *Support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development*

The University's policies, strategies and procedures for support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development, are fit for purpose. PolyU has a clear human resources policy in place for the recruitment and retention of academic staff working on SD provision. The Educational Development Centre provides professional development opportunities for SD staff. Mandatory training is provided for newly recruited full-time staff and it is a common practice for existing programme and course leaders to serve as mentors for part-time staff. Staff teaching SD programmes can apply for awards to encourage quality teaching. The quality of teaching is monitored at multiple levels with clear guidelines for the evaluation of performance.

6. *Student learning assessment*

The University has in place a robust framework of policies and practices, with outcome-based assessment at its core, that assures the quality of student learning assessment. Approaches to informing students about assessment requirements, appeal mechanisms and academic integrity requirements are sound. The use of external examiners, academic advisors and annual reviews ensure assessment standards are benchmarked against external and international standards. Student assessment practices would be strengthened were there greater clarity in the definition of grading descriptors and once implementation of a more consistent approach to the application of assessment rubrics linked to learning outcomes has been fully implemented. The University is encouraged, in the interests of providing more comprehensive guidance to academic staff and students, to complete its review of 'whole of university' academic integrity reporting and monitoring processes.

7. *Student participation and student support services*

Full-time students on HD and AD programmes are widely engaged and participate in governance through representation on key committees and Student/Staff Consultative Group meetings across the University's Sub-degree Providing Units (SDPUs). Students report high satisfaction and participation rates on a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. They are also appreciative of support both from teachers and from the comprehensive personal and career development services provided by CPCE and the University. Together, these enrich the SD student experience. Given the part-time, shorter-term character of their courses, CE students are not as involved in student governance and engage less with student support services.

8. *Systems for acting on quality assurance data to make ongoing enhancements to student learning*

Because SDPUs are spread across the University, with no single locus of activity, the University does not routinely collect data concerning its SD operations as a whole. However, at the level of programmes the University collects and analyses data from various sources, principally, but not exclusively, surveys, and these are typically analysed in Programme Review Reports and departmental Annual Operation Plans, which are ultimately distilled into reports to Senate. The Panel saw effective use of action planning in responding to data on programme quality, including analysis of temporal trends.

INTRODUCTION

Explanation of the audit methodology

This is the report of a quality audit of the sub-degree (SD) operations of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU; the University) by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on an Institutional Submission (IS) which was prepared by PolyU following a period of self-study and submitted to QAC on 19 June 2018. A Mutual Briefing was held on 28-29 August 2018 which provided an opportunity for PolyU to brief Members of the Audit Panel (the Panel) on the context of the University's sub-degree operations.

The Panel visited PolyU from 23 to 25 October 2018. They met the President and senior team; managers of SD provision, staff teaching on SD programmes, academic support services staff, external stakeholders including graduates, employers and external examiners, and full-time and part-time students.

The Panel evaluates:

- governance, management, university planning and accountability
- approach to programme quality assurance
- curriculum design, programme development and approval processes
- programme delivery, including pedagogical approaches, learning environments and resources, scheduling
- support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development
- student learning assessment
- student participation and student support services
- systems for acting on quality assurance data to make ongoing enhancements to student learning

and identifies its audit findings, including features of good practice worthy of commendation, recommendations for further consideration by the University, and affirmation of progress with actions already in place as a result of its self-study.

Introduction to the University

The origins of the University can be traced to 1937 and the founding of the Government Trade School, the first publicly funded, post-secondary technical institution in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Polytechnic was formally established in 1972 with a mandate to provide application-oriented education, initially at SD level and then for undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degrees. It gained self-accreditation status in 1994, becoming The Hong Kong Polytechnic University offering a full range of programmes from Higher Diploma (HD) to Doctor of Philosophy. A brief history of the University is provided at Appendix A.

The University's vision is "to be a leading university that excels in professional education, applied research and partnership for the betterment of Hong Kong, the nation and the world." PolyU's mission states that the University is committed to: nurturing graduates who are critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers, lifelong learners and ethical leaders; advancing knowledge and the frontiers of technology to meet the changing needs of society; and supporting a University community in which all members can excel through education and scholarship.

The University delivers SD programmes run by academic departments as well as non-academic units (NAUs) at the University proper, and by Hong Kong Community College (HKCC) and the School of Professional Education and Executive Development (SPEED), which together form the semi-autonomous College of Professional and Continuing Education (CPCE). As of August 2018, there were 14 UGC-funded HD programmes (at Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF) Level 4) delivered at the University proper. Self-funded SD programmes are offered mainly at the CPCE campuses in Hung Hom Bay and West Kowloon. At the time of the Audit, there were six HD programmes and 30 Associate Degree (AD) programmes (at HKQF Level 4) delivered at HKCC. Of 27 current Continuing Education (CE) courses (at HKQF Levels 1-4; of less than 180 notional learning hours), 12 are hosted by SPEED and 15 by NAUs and academic units at the University proper.

At the time of the Audit, the University had a total of 1 570 SD students at the University proper, 743 on HKCC HDs, and 8 722 on HKCC ADs, as well as students on short-term, part-time CE courses.

1. GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1.1 PolyU's Strategic Plan includes a commitment to professional and continuing education, which the University delivers through SD programmes run by Sub-degree Providing Units (SDPUs): academic departments and NAUs at the University proper, and academic units at the semi-autonomous CPCE: HKCC and SPEED.

1.2 The Panel found the SD programmes at the University proper and at CPCE have clear aims, which align with PolyU's vision, mission and strategic priorities, and from meetings with staff that there is a strong commitment to the SD provision across the University.

1.3 PolyU aims to provide an alternative pathway to university study through its two-year, full-time AD programmes at HKCC; a professional education to meet the community's manpower needs through its two-year, full-time HD programmes at the University proper and HKCC; and to promote knowledge transfer and economic growth in partnership with the community, business and industry through its CE courses at the University proper and SPEED.

1.4   The Panel reviewed the University's governance, management, planning and accountability of its SD programmes through scrutiny of PolyU's IS, associated supplementary material and additional documentation. The Panel also held meetings with members of the University's senior executive, staff involved in the management and delivery of SD programmes, external advisors and representatives of various stakeholders.

1.5   PolyU Senate has overall responsibility for the quality of University programmes, including its SD provision. The implementation of quality assurance (QA) processes is monitored by Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments) (QAC(AD)), a committee of Senate. This committee is supported by the Academic Quality Assurance Team (AQAT) in the Academic Secretariat, and which manages the University's QA policies and procedures. Quality Assurance Committee (Non-academic Units) (QAC(NAU)), which reports to the Executive Vice President, monitors the overall quality of non-academic units (NAUs). Continuing Education courses offered by NAUs are approved and monitored by Continuing Education Review Committee (CERC) under QAC(AD). Governance and QA structures at CPCE are aligned with the University proper's faculties and academic departments, with CPCE representation on the University's QA committees. CPCE uses the University proper's QA guidelines and regulations. PolyU's Academic Planning and Regulations Committee (APRC) and QAC(AD) oversee academic planning and QA in CPCE and CPCE's annual business plan and annual QA report are consolidated into an Annual Operation Plan (AOP). A member of QAC(AD) sits on the Continuing Education Review Committee (CERC) in order to help ensure consistency across the University.

1.6   The Panel found the University has a sound approach to setting and maintaining academic standards, with approval and revalidation of SD programmes taking into account the Generic Level Descriptors of HKQF. Academic standards are also assured by benchmarking with internationally comparable levels, the use of an outcome-based approach to teaching and assessment, and standards-based certification.

1.7   PolyU's QA framework ensures multi-level monitoring through programme planning, validation, AOPs and six-yearly Departmental Reviews (DRs) ('Unit Review' in CPCE), with formal mechanisms for obtaining external input at each of these points in the academic life cycle, including, for some programmes, professional accreditation. There is also a robust process of evidence-based improvement in learning and teaching through Programme Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans (P-LOAPs). While it was clear to the Panel that Senate does in practice approve all major academic developments, it was noted that the terms of reference for Senate do not formally articulate its role in ensuring academic standards, something that was also mentioned in the February 2017 QAC Quality Audit Report for PolyU. The Panel therefore recommends that

the University review the terms of reference of Senate and its committees, in order to make more explicit Senate's overarching role in relation to the assurance of standards, including benchmarking of subject levels, for SD provision.

1.8   Formal mechanisms for obtaining external input are considered by PolyU to be a strong feature of the QA framework, a view shared by the Panel. Departmental Academic Advisors (DAAs) at the University proper and an Academic Advisor at CPCE are external, international experts who comment on standards for programmes and are members of their respective Departmental Advisory Committee (DAC) or the CPCE Advisory Committee respectively. DAA/Academic advisor reports are considered by Annual Review Panels at Faculty or School Boards (the University proper) or College Board (CPCE) and a consolidated report is submitted to QAC(AD). Most programmes have professional elements, and these are aligned with professional standards. 10 HD programmes and 13 AD programmes have professional accreditation. CE courses have external input from relevant practitioners, and for some CE and HD programmes, external examiners are appointed to meet professional body requirements.

1.9   SDPUs operate within PolyU's QA framework for academic departments and NAUs, described in their respective QA Handbooks, and in the Handbook for the Planning, Approval and Management of CE courses. The framework for ensuring academic standards is managed by the relevant Senate committees with the support of the Academic Secretariat.

1.10   PolyU graduate attributes are considered and assessed at subject level during programme development and approval. Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs), which take into account Institutional Learning Outcomes, are developed by programme planning teams and recorded in a curriculum mapping table, which also includes information on assessment. The DAA/Academic Advisor confirms the relationship between PILOs and Institutional Learning Outcomes.

1.11   The audit trails reviewed by the Panel showed a consistent application of PolyU's approval procedures, including the involvement of external inputs; how programmes are monitored, reviewed and improved, based on multiple sources of evidence; and how follow-up actions have had positive impacts. Approval is discussed further in Section 3.

1.12   The Panel saw examples of how performance data for SD programmes are monitored, evaluated and acted upon at the institutional to departmental level. Departmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are analysed by PolyU's Institutional Research and Planning Office (IRPO) to inform academic planning, strategic development and resource allocation decisions, and by departments to inform actions as part of the QA process. For example, a

critical review of performance data, which showed some HD programmes had consistently higher drop-out rates and lower graduate employment rates, led to the phasing out (2016 to 2019) of poorly performing programmes. PolyU has maintained oversight of the student experience on such programmes in order to ensure current students can successfully complete their studies.

2. APPROACH TO PROGRAMME QUALITY ASSURANCE

2.1   The principles of outcome-based education (OBE) are fully integrated into the planning, development, validation/re-validation, annual monitoring and review of PolyU's SD programmes. The standard and quality of the University's SD programmes is managed through its governance framework and QA mechanisms and processes which are informed by external advisors, survey data, and analysis of performance indicators (see Section 1). CE courses leading to a formal award follow an adapted QA framework commensurate with their structure but underpinned by the same principles of multi-level monitoring, external reference points, OBE and evidence-based improvement. QA processes and procedures for SD programmes are found in QA handbooks for academic departments and for NAUs. The University proper and CPCE QA frameworks (see Section 1) are overseen by QAC(AD) and updated annually.

2.2   Several built-in mechanisms are used in SD programme QA life cycles at the University proper to obtain external input: DAAs, senior overseas academics who visit annually; DACs, which include representations from industry, commerce and government; and six-yearly, DRs with DAAs and two additional overseas academics. At CPCE, external input operates at College level with Academic Advisors, a College Advisory Committee and a six-yearly 'Unit' Review.

2.3   The Panel found that PolyU's QA framework enables the standard and quality of its SD programmes to be set and maintained and that there is extensive and systematic use of external and internal inputs, including assessment of student learning outcomes, which ensures programmes set appropriate goals for students and that graduates can demonstrably achieve those goals.

2.4   Areas for improvement are identified in P-LOAPs, which form part of Annual Programme Review reports by programme leaders. Annual Programme Reviews are required to include a critical examination of student performance indicators and feedback from students, alumni and external advisors, identify areas of good practice, and discuss progress made with previous action plans. Within departments, Annual Programme Reviews are consolidated for inclusion in an AOP, which is considered at Faculty/School level for the University proper's academic departments or at equivalent level for NAUs and CPCE. The Chair of the Faculty Board (or equivalent) provides feedback to departments on the actions required, and reports to QAC(AD) on departments'

QA performance. The University's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) analyses student performance data and feeds back its observations to the relevant SDPUs.

2.5 PolyU monitors the quality of learning opportunities in subjects and programmes by collecting data on teaching quality, the learning environment (see section 4) and support services (see section 7).

2.6 At subject level, the electronic Student Feedback Questionnaire (SFQ) is a key mechanism for collecting feedback on subject design and teaching quality. The Educational Development Centre (EDC) analyses electronic SFQ data and an analytic function enables staff responsible for SD programmes to explore trends and patterns in SFQ scores by subject, teacher and class size. Programme leaders have primary responsibility to respond to student feedback; data are also evaluated by Heads of Department and Departmental Learning and Teaching Committee Chairs.

2.7 At programme level, Student/Staff Consultative Groups (SSCGs) provides a further channel for student feedback on programmes, including learning resources. A sample audit trail for an SSCG indicates an active and positive two-way engagement between students and staff (see section 7).

2.8 Institutional surveys, including surveys on first year experience, exit and of alumni, are also conducted for SD academic programmes. Data obtained inform annual programme reviews and are considered by programme leaders and programme committees.

2.9 The Panel found evidence of effective multi-level monitoring through AOPs. This was illustrated by an AOP for CPCE, which included student survey data and follow-up actions, graduate prospects, reviews of programmes, mapping of programme learning outcomes with methods and measures of assessment, criteria for success, and results; the minutes of the College Board meeting where the AOP was reviewed, the subsequent College Board report to QAC(AD) and the relevant QAC(AD) meeting minutes. Similarly, the Panel was able to confirm the thoroughness of the University's annual monitoring cycle. For example, annual monitoring of an HD programme illustrated how the programme was constantly monitored, reviewed and improved, using multiple sources of evidence. Follow-up actions were rated positively by HD students, and had a positive impact on attainment of Scheme Intended Learning Outcomes (SILOs) and on employment rates.

2.10 PolyU's General Assessment Regulations (GAR) apply to all taught programmes leading to academic awards, with rules and procedures to ensure assessments are criterion-based and reflect student achievement. The Panel learned that AD awards offered by HKCC are subject, with minor exceptions, to the same academic regulations as the HD awards offered by HKCC and the

University proper. However, only specific academic regulations for HD awards are available. Therefore, the Panel recommends that a specific document for AD awards, similar to that of HD awards, be produced and made accessible.

2.11 During preparations for the QAC audit of SD operations, PolyU conducted a critical review of QA procedures in SDPUs offering CE courses, which found that a more unified approach was needed across the University. A new QA framework for the University proper's CE courses was launched in April 2018, which mirrors the procedures used by SPEED for its CE courses. Under this framework, CERC and CPCE College Board are responsible for the approval and review of CE courses at the University proper and SPEED, respectively, and report annually on the status of the CE course provision to QAC(AD). The Panel affirms the University's intention that the unified QA procedures introduced from April 2018 will be implemented for all of the University proper's CE provision by the end of 2018/19.

2.12 From their review of the audit trails for AD, HD and CE programmes and from meetings with staff, stakeholders and students, the Panel found the University is consistent in the application of its QA policies and procedures, which enables it to meet international standards and the professional requirements for its SD programmes and that the quality of its SD programmes is assured.

3. CURRICULUM DESIGN, PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESSES

3.1 Development of new AD and HD programmes follows the framework set out in the Guidelines and Regulations for Programme Planning, Validation and Management. The process operates in the same way for UGC-funded and self-financed programmes at both the University proper and CPCE. There are two-stages, planning and validation. The Departmental or CPCE Advisory Committee considers early proposals before the department or College submits its formal and detailed Initial Programme Proposal to the relevant Faculty/School/College Board. If approved, the Initial Programme Proposal is forwarded to APRC which examines it against comprehensive criteria and makes a recommendation to Senate for final approval at the planning stage. The department or College then prepares a Definitive Programme Document containing information that regulates the programme, and submits it to the overseeing Faculty Dean or School/College Board Chairman. Following comment from the Departmental or College Academic Advisor, a panel, which must include an external member, may then be convened to consider the proposal. The revised proposal is then presented to the Faculty/School/College Board for endorsement prior to Senate approval at the validation stage. A Programme Planning Committee is specially convened to take each programme or group of cognate programmes through the process. All academic

programmes must align with external reference points, and principally the HKQF, and are then placed on the Hong Kong Qualifications Register.

3.2   As noted in Section 2, a new approach for developing CE courses that lead to a University award was introduced to bring all provision into a common quality framework. The procedures, as specified in the Handbook on Planning, Approval and Management of Continuing Education Courses are comprehensive. The relevant unit completes a Course Approval Form that is supported by at least one external advisor. Budget proposals must demonstrate the minimum number of students required to make the course financially viable. Following endorsement by the Head of Unit, the proposals go to CERC which convenes a panel that acts iteratively with the proposing unit to enable approval. Financial approval is given by the Associate Vice President (Learning and Teaching), following which CERC, reporting to QAC(AD), gives final approval. SPEED follows an equivalent process with the panel replaced by a Course Assessing and Monitoring Committee and the CERC by the College Board.

3.3   Self-financed programmes wherever they are delivered, are subject to additional checks on financial management and resourcing, including staffing. Programmes with less than a minimum number of students for viability are discontinued.

3.4   The Committee on Undergraduate Admissions oversees SD admissions policies and requirements, but ultimate responsibility lies with Senate, endorsing recommendations from the Academic Planning and Regulations Committee. Academic admission requirements are well set out in programme regulations, which include procedures to be followed for applicants who do not possess stipulated entrance requirements, and in definitive programme and course documents. Admissions quotas may be set by professional bodies, as with Social Work, or by physical space constraints, for example, Design programmes at HKCC. For admission to CE courses, there is no general minimum entrance requirement though the course operating unit may set specific entry requirements.

3.5   To establish the effectiveness of PolyU's strategic approach to curriculum design, programme development and approval, the Panel examined relevant documentation, including the Guidelines and Regulations for Programme Planning, Validation and Management, and the Handbook on Planning, Approval and Management of Continuing Education Courses, considered audit trails of planning and approvals processes for AD, HD and CE programmes, and scrutinised data on admissions and completions. During meetings with senior managers and other academic managers, the Panel explored some of the challenges encountered by PolyU and the ways in which the University is addressing them. Teaching and professional support staff provided insights into the way staff operationalise programme development and approval, paying

particular attention to the role of learning outcomes. The Panel also met a broad range of students to discover their experiences of recruitment material, admissions, and their learning development through the programmes.

3.6   Provision of SD programmes is market driven with the University responding swiftly as necessary. For example, pressure emanating from the reduction in school leavers has led to the development of innovative vocational programmes in engineering and in hotel management. The market is also heavily influenced by employers recommending or requiring their employees to take SD programmes. Some SPEED courses are being discontinued because of changes in the pattern of adult learners who are showing more preference for credit-bearing programmes. There are effective processes in place to secure and maintain the student experience where programmes close.

3.7   Audit trails for approvals of HD, AD, and CE programmes, spanning self-financed and UGC-funded awards, confirm that University procedures are appropriately followed and that attention is paid to students' educational experience. PILOs are developed with reference to Institutional Learning Outcomes. In some cases, programmes are grouped for validation into cognate 'schemes', which also have learning outcomes. Explicit links are made to HKQF, and input from external experts enables benchmarking. Senate maintains effective oversight of both programme planning and validation.

3.8   Any changes to the external regulatory framework, for example the 2018 revisions to the Generic Level Descriptors of HKQF, are communicated to programmes due for review, and considered by bodies responsible for validation, CERC or APRC, as appropriate. In preparing for the Audit, the University recognised that some of its CE courses showed variance from the HKQF Award Titles Scheme. To address this, in May 2018, CERC presided over revalidation of just over 45% of the University's CE courses, following the full standard validation procedure.

3.9   Staff are helped to understand programme design and development processes through University documentation such as the Handbook on Planning, Approval and Management of CE Courses, and in some cases, specific training. However, the Panel was informed that training is not yet systematic and often information is conveyed by informal discussions with more experienced staff.

3.10   Curriculum design is carefully managed so that HD programmes maintain their relevance to employers, and AD programmes prepare students for further study. Overseen by the Articulation Coordination Group, HKCC has a number of formal articulation agreements providing global opportunities for AD graduates in Hong Kong, China, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

3.11   There is an emphasis on learning outcomes and constructive alignment with assessments in programme planning and delivery. Programme teams develop

PILOs from course learning outcomes within curriculum mapping tables that include information on assessment. Student achievement against academic standards is considered in P-LOAPs which systematically collect, review and analyse student outcomes data. P-LOAPs and learning outcomes assessment results are considered in annual programme reports, discussed by the programme committee (or equivalent) with input from external academic advisors, and approved at College or Faculty Boards. The Panel concluded that programmes and courses are fully outcomes-based and are continually monitored.

3.12 Across SD programmes, PILOs and SILOs are, in general, fit-for-purpose, progressive from level to level, and reflective of the curriculum, assessments, HKQF, and the Generic Level Descriptors of HKQF. While mappings of PILOs and SILOs to the Generic Level Descriptors of HKQF are available in definitive documents and to students, staff were not always confident in their understanding of the relationship between teaching and levels, and how levels are set, often relying on experience and peer support. Moreover, while there is a clear understanding of OBE among full-time SD staff, the Panel heard that part-time teachers for some SD provision learn about OBE through informal on-the-job mentoring. In this context, the University may wish to consider strengthening training for part-time staff (see also Section 5).

3.13 While precise admissions arrangements vary across programmes, they are all based on principles of fairness and equity. The adequacy of admissions criteria is judged through an analysis of non-completion and articulation rates. Those for self-financed ADs and HDs are good but the non-completion rate for UGC-funded HDs is relatively high. The University attributes the position to the departure of students who retake the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) and on improving their results, and thus qualify for entry to a degree programme at PolyU or elsewhere. In general, students studying UGC-funded HDs have significantly higher admission scores than those studying self-financed SD programmes and are therefore more likely to re-take HKDSE. The University is responding by further promoting the value of HD programmes and related career paths, for example by inviting alumni and industry representatives to talk to students.

3.14 Recognition of Prior Learning is not formally used in admissions procedures but programme teams have the discretion to admit students on the basis of experience rather than formal qualifications, following an interview and on a case-by-case basis. Given the nature of the SD programmes there is no process for gaining exemption from any part of the programmes, except through established credit transfer procedures, where a mapping to learning outcomes would be made.

3.15 Students are appreciative of their programmes' vocational relevance, the networking opportunities afforded, and skills development that will help them

to progress within their chosen professions. Being able to study part-time, alongside paid employment, is also valued. Although many students who complete, in particular ADs, go on to study for a PolyU award, there is no formal articulation from SD to degree programmes, though students' academic credit may qualify for exemption from some parts of the degree. In situations where there is overlap in curriculum, teaching staff may work to ensure that progression opportunities are enabled, but the priority is the coherence of the individual programmes. For 2014 to 2017, articulation rates from HKCC SD programmes to degree programmes across all providers have remained high, at between 80% and 90%, with roughly half remaining at PolyU.

3.16   Although there are no formal opportunities for SD students to study abroad as part of their programmes, there are significant opportunities for co-curricular activities, including overseas tours, that enrich student life. Some SD students take advantage of these, viewing them as very positive (see Section 7). In 2017/18, 324 SD students participated in study tours to China or overseas, and 45 students served as interns in China.

3.17   Recruitment materials produced by teaching staff teams are scrutinised for accuracy by Faculty Boards, or for CPCE, by the Dean's Office. Students confirm the accuracy of recruitment and publicity material and, in particular, praise the course outlines they received prior to study.

3.18   In reflecting on its own performance in curriculum design, programme development and approval, the University analyses graduation, articulation and employment data, which it considers to be generally strong, giving it confidence in the design of its programmes.

3.19   In summary, PolyU secures academic standards and gives students appropriate learning opportunities through effective deployment of its robust frameworks for the design of programmes. An outcomes-based approach underpins the University's approach. In some areas there is some scope to better communicate institutional systems and practices to staff.

4.   PROGRAMME DELIVERY, INCLUDING PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES, LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND RESOURCES, SCHEDULING

4.1   The University has clear guidelines and regulations for programme planning, validation and management. The quality of programme delivery is monitored by annual and periodic reviews at programme level for all full-time SD programmes through Scheme and Programme Committees and Programme Leaders. The same quality processes for undergraduate level apply to all full-time SD programmes.

4.2   The Panel tested the effectiveness of PolyU's arrangements for monitoring programme delivery, their pedagogies, and their learning environment by scrutinising relevant documentation provided by the University and its SDPUs. This included the IS and a full range of supplementary materials. In addition, the Panel discussed programme delivery with the University's senior managers, senior SDPU managers and programme leaders, staff teaching SD programmes, representatives of academic support services, employers and alumni, and full-time and part-time students from SD programmes. The Panel also visited facilities where SD programmes are delivered at the Hung Hom Bay and West Kowloon campuses.

4.3   The University adopts an evidence-based approach for programme reviews. Data are collected from SFQs, SSCG meetings, student experience surveys, exit surveys and the graduate survey. They are analysed in annual programme reviews which also utilise comments from internal and external stakeholders, including external academic advisors, employers and articulation partners. Faculty Boards of the University and the College Board at CPCE use Programme Leaders to monitor programme quality at departmental/divisional level.

4.4   As discussed in Section 2, the system of QA for CE at programme level is in development, with the intention that the unified framework launched in April 2018 will apply to all CE provision by the end of 2018/19. The University is encouraged to follow through its implementation to ensure that a unified assurance framework is in place for CE programme delivery across SDPUs.

4.5   As previously noted, the University's pedagogical approach is outcome-based with teaching methods and assessment rubrics carefully aligned with course and programme intended learning outcomes. New full-time teachers are provided with outcome-based assessment (OBA) induction training at the University proper as well as at CPCE, either online or face-to-face. Part-time teachers are encouraged to take up the training (see further discussion in section 5). Staff training is provided by the University's EDC, which includes CPCE staff. Teaching staff find CPCE's own teaching development workshops useful.

4.6   The Panel heard from both full-time SD students and SD alumni that learning experiences and preparation for further studies and employment on their programmes were valuable and enriching. It is evident that the SDPUs are responsive to students' learning needs. Teachers are viewed as helpful and positive. Students reported that they have benefited from the support provided by the health clinics and Student Development Committee.

4.7   The Panel confirmed that SD students are supported by good quality teaching and learning facilities. Students at the University proper have the same access to all campus facilities, including the library, computing facilities and laboratories, as undergraduate students. The Panel was impressed by the Hung

Hom Bay and West Kowloon campuses of CPCE which offer interactive learning facilities to meet the specific learning needs of students. User satisfaction data show high student satisfaction ratings for learning spaces and laboratories at CPCE.

4.8 Both the University proper and CPCE provide a quality e-learning environment for SD students. The use of Moodle, the initiative to upgrade the wi-fi system, the implementation of mobile learning and an iPad policy at CPCE are well received by students and staff. Recent enhancements to the CPCE library service clearly demonstrate a responsive to student feedback and a commitment to maintaining quality support for students. Similarly, full-time SD students commented favourably on the quality of IT and facility support.

4.9 In this context, the Panel commends the University for its provision of high-quality physical learning and e-learning environments which contributes to SD students' academic experience.

4.10 CE students state that, in general, they have a positive learning experience and have found the courses useful and helpful for career development. However, while CE students at SPEED have access to CPCE learning resources such as the library, CE students at the University proper do not enjoy equivalent facilities. It was noted that the University is considering how to provide better access for CE students, when longer, more complex programmes are offered and the Panel encourages PolyU in this regard.

4.11 Overall, the Panel concluded that the University has a clear framework for monitoring programme delivery, requiring annual and periodic reviews at programme and course levels. SD students are well supported by high-quality physical learning and e-learning environments which contribute to their academic experience. Student feedback is systematically sought and utilised in initiating improvements to students' learning opportunities. Part-time students taking typically short, professionally relevant CE courses, have a less participatory pattern of engagement in the University community but they are appreciative of the quality of their experience.

5. SUPPORT FOR TEACHING QUALITY, INCLUDING PEDAGOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Competence in teaching is an appointment criterion for teaching staff and this is confirmed through a teaching demonstration at interview. Each academic area has a "unit staffing committee" which covers appointment, promotion and retention of academic staff at Principal Lecturer level or below.

5.2 The Panel tested the effectiveness of the University's policies and practices relevant to staff recruitment, induction, evaluation and professional development support for SD operations, by scrutinising relevant documentation

provided by the University and its SDPUs. This included the IS and a full range of supplementary materials. In addition, the Panel discussed staff recruitment, induction, evaluation and professional development support with University senior managers, senior SDPU managers and programme leaders, staff teaching SD programmes and representatives of academic support services.

5.3   The Panel found there is a clear human resources policy for the recruitment and retention of quality staff, which is periodically reviewed and benchmarked nationally and internationally. At the time of the audit, 73% of staff teaching UGC-funded HD programmes and 54% of HKCC staff teaching SD programmes had a doctoral qualification, respectively, and a number of staff were studying for doctorates. Part-time SD staff are required to have relevant professional experience.

5.4   PolyU is proactive in its support for teaching staff and has a high staff retention rate; the average turnover rate for academic staff at the University proper and HKCC over the past five years averaging 6.5% and 3.2% per annum, respectively. Programme leaders provide academic support and advice, and organisational leadership within programme teaching teams. Advice on administrative matters is provided at Departmental level. In the University proper, communities of practice provide peer support on different areas of pedagogical interest. Peer support in CPCE is organised into discipline-based clusters at College level. The Panel found the teaching staff they met were appreciative of the pedagogical support they received.

5.5   Over half the staff teaching UGC-funded HD programmes at the University proper are professorial grade and are active researchers. Teaching and clinical staff at the University proper are not required to engage in academic research but are eligible for the same financial support and leave entitlement as their professorial colleagues to support their continuing professional development. While teaching staff at CPCE are not required to conduct research, many engage in applied research and consultancy services to keep abreast of advancements in their field. The Panel noted that there are research collaborations between staff at CPCE and the University proper. Teaching staff who met the Panel were very positive about the support available for professional development.

5.6   The University, through EDC, provides professional development opportunities for all academic staff, including those working on SD programmes, on a cost-recovery basis. New full-time lecturing staff undertake a mandatory, 30-hour 'Introduction to University Teaching' course. Teaching assistants take a mandatory, 10-hour 'Becoming an Effective Teaching Assistant' course. Every new full-time staff member at the University proper and HKCC has an experienced peer mentor, who advises on teaching practice, including OBA.

5.7   Part-time staff may take the 'Introduction to University Teaching' or a 10-hour 'Online University Teacher Training' course, although these are not mandatory. The Course Leader has responsibility to recruit experienced part-time staff and to act as a mentor, although this is not yet formalised in a policy. At the University proper, not all HD programmes have part-time staff and generally numbers are low. The Panel learned that SPEED places emphasis on previous teaching and professional experience when recruiting part-time staff for its CE courses. Part-time staff involved with CE receive guidelines on OBA and support from Programme Leaders. There is no mandatory training for CE staff at the moment.

5.8   EDC courses are shaped by PolyU's Strategic Plan, which includes reference to e-learning and virtual tutorials, and a set of workshops on integrative curriculum design have been introduced. CPCE teaching staff have unrestricted access to EDC workshops and services. CPCE organises teaching development workshops in specific areas for HKCC staff, who must attend at least one CPCE workshop each year. A large number of teaching staff are engaged in teaching development projects each year. Clear guidelines and advice are available to staff for programme development and management.

5.9   In 2015, the University proper adopted a set of KPIs for the evaluation of teaching quality and to provide incentives for staff pedagogical development. Teaching quality is monitored in various ways, including via electronic SFQs on teachers' performance, and exit and other surveys such as the International Student Barometer. The Handbook on Teaching Evaluation provides staff and managers with clear guidelines on evaluation of teaching performance. Staff involvement in co-curricular activities for students is also assessed. Annual appraisals identify targets for improvement and customised support is provided for under-performing staff. There are more detailed appraisals for promotion and contract renewal.

5.10   Good performance in teaching is rewarded through merit-based compensation. There are teaching awards to recognise and reward good teaching.   The University proper has an annual 'Excellent Teachers on Teaching Excellence' event and has institutional and faculty awards presented biennially. CPCE has biennial teaching awards, while HKCC also has its own teaching awards, presented annually.

5.11   Overall, the Panel concluded that the University's policies, strategies and procedures for support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development, are fit for purpose. PolyU has a clear human resources policy in place for the recruitment and retention of academic staff working on SD provision.   EDC provides professional development opportunities for SD staff. Mandatory training is provided for newly recruited full-time staff and it is a common practice for existing programme and course leaders to serve as mentors for part-time. Staff teaching SD programmes can apply for awards to encourage

quality teaching. The quality of teaching is monitored at multiple levels with clear guidelines for the evaluation of performance.

6. STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 As previously noted, PolyU assessment practices are described as being outcome-based and criterion-referenced. The University intends that all SD programmes are governed by the same GAR as apply to other award programmes. For CE courses, assessment occurs in a manner consistent with the GAR principles and assessment regulations.

6.2 The University informs SD students of assessment expectations and grading policies through the Student Handbook, course outlines and other explanatory material provided as part of their studies. All SDPUs are required to follow University policies and procedures regarding academic misconduct and academic appeals. The University has clear policies in place for the certification of SD and CE courses.

6.3 The Panel examined the effectiveness of PolyU's management of student learning assessment in relation to SDPUs by examining relevant documentation provided by the University including: the GAR and Student Handbook; the Policy on Promoting Academic Integrity and the Policy on the Use of Rubrics in Major Assessment Tasks; sample minutes of meetings of Subject Assessment Review Panels and Boards of Examiners and trend data on, and actions taken in relation to, student appeals against academic progress decisions for both the University proper and HKCC; and samples of PolyU parchments for HD and AD awards and certification of CE courses.

6.4 In addition, the Panel discussed the student learning assessment framework and its application to SDPUs with senior leaders from the University proper and CPCE and academic managers of HD and AD programmes and CE courses. The Panel explored with a diverse group of teaching staff from the University proper, including NAUs, and HKCC and SPEED their experiences with applying PolyU's policies in relation to student assessment, the use of assessment rubrics and the grading framework and the application of PolyU's policy in relation to academic misconduct and plagiarism. In addition, the Panel met with a sample of programme advisors, academic advisors and external examiners to gain a deeper understanding of their contribution to internal QA and external benchmarking of SDPUs and discussed with HD and AD students their perceptions of the assessment practices. The Panel also observed as part of the Mutual Briefing examples of HD student project work outcomes at the University proper.

6.5 The Panel found that in general PolyU has a robust and comprehensive framework in place governing application of its assessment policies to SDPUs. The approaches are consistent across both the University proper and CPCE

organisational structures. Notwithstanding this, the Panel found that in respect of alignment of learning outcomes with assessment strategies, while PolyU has had in place since 2005 a criterion-referenced assessment policy that links assessment to learning outcomes and a criterion-referenced grading framework designed to support outcomes based education, challenges with the implementation of assessment rubrics, especially in relation to some Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines has meant that the policy is yet to be fully implemented including in relation to SDPUs. In 2016, the University introduced its Policy on the Use of Rubrics in Major Assessment Tasks and mandated the use of assessment rubrics in general by 2018-19, but for STEM disciplines by 2019-20. LTC established a Working Group on Subject Quality Assurance to provide advice on implementation of assessment rubrics. The Working Group met twice in 2016 and subsequently in April 2018 with a significantly changed membership. Through its activities considerable benchmarking has occurred and an international expert engaged to assist with the development of a 'rubrics culture' within PolyU. The Panel learned that although originally anticipated to have completed its work in two to three years, it is now expected that the Working Group will require a further 18 months to fulfil its purpose. In this context, the Panel recommends that the University reassess its timeframes and processes for the definition and implementation of a consistent and comprehensive policy linking assessment rubrics to learning outcomes and the grading framework, so as to ensure timely completion of the project.

6.6   PolyU's GAR sets out a criterion-referenced grading framework designed to align assessment grades to learning outcomes. While evidence was provided that PolyU policy in relation to OBA is that students are required to satisfy all the learning outcomes specified in order to pass a particular assessment task, course or programme, the wording of the grading framework in GAR is capable of being interpreted differently by academic staff and students. Accordingly, the Panel recommends that the University review its grading framework to clarify the requirement that in order to pass the assessment requirements, students must satisfy all the learning outcomes specified for the relevant programme, course or assessment element.

6.7   The Panel found that at both the University proper and within CPCE other aspects of PolyU's assessment framework occurred in a sound manner. This is noteworthy, given the complex deployment arrangements involving multiple campuses, dual academic entities, separate NAUs and multiple types of programmes. Academic leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to ensure University policies are applied in a consistent manner appropriate to the nature of the programme. Academic staff exhibit a solid understanding of assessment practices and attest that University induction and development activities provide appropriate guidance on assessment methodologies and their manner of implementation. Students are positive about the advice they receive on assessment tasks, the material provided in course outlines on grading policies,

and the opportunities to seek a review of assessment or academic progress decisions. Students indicated satisfaction with the timeliness and helpfulness of feedback on assessment tasks.

6.8 Evidence reviewed by the Panel confirmed that PolyU is applying appropriate practices in relation to the handling of academic appeals, the provision of information to students about appeal mechanisms and the monitoring and reporting of appeal cases and outcomes.

6.9 Students have the opportunity to provide feedback on the appropriateness of assessment via specific questions included in the SFQ and through representation on SSCGs and SD Programme Committees. Student satisfaction with assessment practices as expressed through the SFQ is high.

6.10 The Panel confirmed that both within the University proper and CPCE academic units, good academic practice occurs in relation to internal moderation and external QA of assessment for HD and AD programmes. The Panel was able to confirm that the University's policy in relation to moderation and double marking of assessment is being applied within SDPUs and that Subject Assessment Review Panels and Boards of Examiners are exercising an appropriate level of oversight of assessment standards within their respective programmes. Within PolyU, programme advisors, academic advisors and, in programmes requiring some level of professional validation, external examiners, all contribute to the quality and relevance of assessment tasks. Academic advisors attest to the value PolyU places on their contributions and confirm that actions are taken as a result of their advice. International benchmarking takes place in part through the input of external examiners and more systematically through periodic DRs. The processes in place for ensuring this occurs are robust and effectively handled within both the University proper and HKCC, with proper induction and context being provided to external examiners.

6.11 The Panel confirmed that the certification applied to SDPU awards complies with University policy in respect of award qualifications. HD and AD awards conform with general University policy, which provides for a slightly modified form of parchment that recognises the role HKCC plays in approving the award. A separate policy governs the issue of certificates that recognises the completion of CE courses. The Panel found appropriate regulatory oversight of both forms of award.

6.12 PolyU has a clear and unambiguous policy in relation to academic integrity and takes proper measures to ensure all students are aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and plagiarism. The requirement that all first year students, including those enrolled in HDs and ADs, must as a requirement complete an On-line Tutorial on Academic Integrity reinforces advice provided by teaching staff in course outlines and at the commencement of the course.

Students are required to use Turnitin software as part of the procedure for submission of major written assessment tasks.

6.13   The Panel was advised that administration of the University's academic integrity policy, including the handling of academic misconduct cases, is occurring appropriately at the department and programme level, including in relation to SDPUs.   However there has traditionally been limited central coordination and reporting of academic misconduct matters.   The Panel was informed that this risks differing approaches as to what determines academic misconduct and how instances of alleged misconduct are to be handled. Recently, in an endeavour to provide a stronger level of coordination and oversight, some of the academic misconduct casework has been transferred to the Academic Services unit.   While this is increasing consistency of practice it is also creating workload issues for Academic Services.   The Panel notes that this is a matter that warrants continuing attention.

6.14   To deal with these and related issues, PolyU's LTC established a Working Party on Academic Integrity.   The Working Party has met once to date, in January 2018, when it decided to undertake a major international benchmarking review of academic integrity practices.   The Panel noted that the focus of Working Party is central to the maintenance of a robust university-wide system of standards, review and monitoring of academic misconduct. Delineation of an agreed work plan and timelines will strengthen project delivery of this important review.   Accordingly, the Panel affirms the endeavours that the University is taking to develop an institutional approach to the identification, reporting and monitoring of cases relating to academic integrity.

6.15   The University has in place, with modest exception, a robust framework of policies and practices that assure the quality of student learning assessment. Approaches to informing students about assessment requirements, appeal mechanisms and academic integrity requirements are sound.   The use of external examiners, academic advisors and annual reviews ensure assessment standards are benchmarked against external and international standards. Student assessment practices would be strengthened if there were greater clarity in the definition of grading descriptors and if the University were to complete implementation of a consistent approach to the application of assessment rubrics linked to learning outcomes used in support of an outcome-based approach for its SDPUs.   The Panel also encourages the University, in the interests of providing greater guidance to academic staff and students, to complete the review of 'whole of institution' academic integrity reporting and monitoring processes and implement any actions identified from that review.

7. STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

7.1   At the University proper, UGC-funded SD students are provided with the same support as undergraduate students via Centre STARS (Student Advancement and Resources), the English Language Centre and other University academic support units. CPCE supports its full-time SD students at HKCC through the CPCE Student Affairs Office. In line with financial requirements, CPCE organises all activities for its students with no sharing of resources for student development with the University.

7.2   The Panel tested the effectiveness of PolyU's approach to student participation and student support services by scrutinising relevant documentation provided by the University and its SDPUs. This included the IS and a full range of supplementary materials. In addition, the Panel discussed student participation and student support with University senior managers, senior SDPU managers and programme leaders, staff teaching SD programmes, representatives of academic support services, employers and alumni, and full-time and part-time students from SD programmes.

7.3   The Panel confirmed that full-time SD students are widely engaged and have participated in University governance through student representation on key committees and SSCG meetings across SDPUs. Students reported that they also have representation at meetings with the Programme Leader, College Board and Campus User Group through which they have had productive responses and clear improvements from the College and the University.

7.4   PolyU's student support services help students to adopt a positive attitude towards their study and careers, broaden their horizons and develop as whole persons. Students and alumni met by the Panel appreciated the comprehensive personal and career development services provided by CPCE and the University through CPCE Student Affairs Office and Centre STARS.

7.5   SD students reported high participation and satisfaction rates on a wide range of co-curricular, extra-curricular activities and global initiatives available at HKCC. The opportunities to join overseas exchanges and work placements are valued. Students reported that their learning experience has been enriched through a wide spectrum of co-and extra-curricular activities as well as through the support of teachers who are helpful and approachable.

7.6   CPCE collects feedback from students through annual surveys on facility management (the Campus Facilities Management Survey), the Library Survey, the Health Centre Satisfaction Survey, the electronic Student Activity Questionnaire (SAQ) and the Survey on information technology services. The Panel found clear evidence of the College instigating improvements on the basis of student feedback. Students informed the Panel that the College has

supported them well and responded positively to feedback on online course evaluations.

7.7   English language support services and enhancement programmes provided by HKCC for its SD students are diverse and comprehensive. Feedback from students is collected through SAQs with prompt follow-up to issues raised. It is less evident as to how the English language enhancement activities serve the needs of SD students at the University proper as the data also cover undergraduate students.

7.8   UGC-funded HD students have the same rights to access student support services and campus facilities as undergraduate degree students at the University. In response to a relatively low participation rate in co-curricular activities by UGC-funded HD students, the University has set up an institutional task force to explore refining the curriculum and encouraging students to engage more actively in co-curricular activities. Teaching staff indicated that they would support greater student engagement in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, in a context where students are more concerned with their Grade Point Average. The Panel encourages the Task Force in its efforts to understand this student group's academic and non-academic needs and to promote better student engagement outside the curriculum.

7.9   While, increasing engagement of UGC-funded HD students remains a goal, in general, the University's support for full-time students is evident and appreciated by students. Accordingly, the Panel commends the wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, which, together with services oriented to personal and career development, enrich the experience of students who study full-time at SDPUs.

7.10   Recruitment of non-local students to SD programmes has not been a priority and only a small number has been admitted. However, HKCC provides appropriate support to non-local students via mentors, peer tutors and programme leaders.

7.11   Given the part-time and shorter-term character of CE programmes and courses, there is little student involvement in student governance and limited demand for student support services. CE students at both CPCE and the University proper do not have representation on formal committees and there are no plans to introduce this for CE students. While it is acknowledged that CE students would appear to be satisfied with the position, the University is encouraged to consider more formal meetings with CE students to better understand their support needs, for example with respect to library access.

7.12   While the part-time, shorter-term nature of study means that CE students are less engaged, full-time SD students on HD and AD programmes are widely engaged and active in student governance. Students are active on, and

appreciative of, extensive co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. They are also appreciative of support both from teachers and from the comprehensive personal and career development services provided by CPCE and the University proper.

8. SYSTEMS FOR ACTING ON QUALITY ASSURANCE DATA TO MAKE ONGOING ENHANCEMENTS TO STUDENT LEARNING

8.1 The University states that enhancement is 'at the heart' of its goals but also notes that it is a growing and rapidly maturing theme. Quality improvement is based on using indicators, typically data within the annual programme review process, to identify issues to be addressed; in that sense, the approach is primarily remedial, rather than pro-active. The University does not seek to maintain an overview of review and improvement its SD provision as a whole, because SDPUs are located throughout the University and are well embedded within their respective locations where data are effectively managed and analysed. Nonetheless, the University does compile a data dashboard, which enables comparison with benchmarks across its HD provision at the University proper. Financial considerations prevent the University from extending this practice to provision at CPCE.

8.2 In an attempt to tighten the quality enhancement loop, the University has very recently established a four-person Quality Enhancement Team within EDC. It has a remit to better link analysis of institutional data, policy formulation, and pedagogy, in part through the development and dissemination of new initiatives, but also to address emerging issues.

8.3 The Panel discussed with senior management, academic managers, teaching staff and professional support staff, the University's overall approach to 'quality enhancement', as well as systematic collection and use of data, particularly in the context of annual programme reviews and AOPs. The Panel also examined a range of documents including annual programme reviews and AOPs, the Handbook on the Quality Assurance Framework, Mechanisms and Processes for Academic Departments, and examples provided of instances where QA processes had prompted change.

8.4 Performance data are used by departments to inform improvement actions as part of the normal QA cycle. The annual Programme Review Report monitors trends in data on admissions quality, student performance, including in relation to learning outcomes, non-completion rates, articulation to other programmes, and employment. Programme Review Reports are distilled into departmental AOPs, which are considered by Associate Deans and Deans or the College Board as appropriate before being received by QAC(AD) and reported to Senate. Should analysis indicate that a programme is under-performing, a clear process may be followed to close the programme.

8.5　LTC analyses performance data from a variety of sources including the student experience survey, the exit survey and the graduate survey, and feeds back to relevant department or unit heads for incorporation into AOPs.

8.6　Programme Review Reports reveal effective use of trend metrics, and, where appropriate, detailed qualitative interpretations and action-planning. Similarly, AOPs use data from Programme Review Reports to formulate actions and expected outcomes. In addition, students met by the Panel were able to cite many examples where improvements had been effected in response to their feedback, some of which came via informal channels that were supplemental to, and not in lieu of, formal channels. Staff described examples of where the University's approach to quality improvement, including surveying alumni, had led to significant improvements to quality of provision, for example, in the introduction of mathematics workshops, increases to study space, and changes to programme titles to enhance employment prospects.

8.7　CE courses analyse data, particularly in individual course reports. This will be enhanced when annual reporting for CE courses is fully implemented across the University (see Section 2). Some cross-CPCE trend data is used in planning, for example in relation to student satisfaction with library services (where such access is granted). HKCC collects extensive graduate data, disaggregated by cognate area, on employment success and salary, which are presented as part of its AOP.

8.8　Data are also used to help understand the performance of individual staff. Trends in student feedback on staff performance are considered in annual academic staff appraisals.

8.9　In 2017/18, on completion of the first three-year cycle of P-LOAP used by HKCC, the College commissioned a comprehensive review culminating in a report considered by HKCC's Learning and Teaching Quality Committee and approved by the chair of the CPCE College Learning and Teaching Committee. The report was used across HKCC to inform improvement of individual programmes as required. An equivalent report for the University proper had been produced in 2013.

8.10　The University was able to supply many examples of effective change in response to evidence collected, particularly student comment, within the annual reporting process for SD provision. Moreover, as noted in Section 1, performance data for SD programmes are monitored, evaluated and acted upon in the context of IRPO's analysis used to inform academic planning, strategic development and resource allocation decisions. The Panel could therefore conclude that PolyU is making sound progress in its use of data to improve the quality of the student experience particularly at a local level. However, it was less evident as to how the University is proactive in identifying longer term measures to improve the quality of student learning. PolyU intends that the

establishment of the Quality Enhancement Team will help develop proactive capacity to identify areas for improvement at the institutional level. The Panel encourages the University in its commitment to identifying more effective systems for utilising QA data in enhancing its SD provision.

8.11 In conclusion, the University makes effective use of data to reflect on and improve its own performance in terms of improving the learning experience of SD students at programme and course level. The Panel encourages the University to continue with its goal to develop a more proactive approach in identifying areas for improvement.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 The University's SD provision reflects its strategic priorities and mission. Whether within the University proper or CPCE, there is sound governance, management and QA of SD programmes. Academic standards are aligned with the Generic Level Descriptors of HKQF and programmes are internationally benchmarked.

9.2 There is consistency in the application of QA policies and procedures. The introduction of consolidated QA processes, already introduced in the University proper, across CE courses will strengthen the framework. The University is effective in its use of action planning in responding to data on programme quality, including analysis of temporal trends.

9.3 An outcome-based approach to teaching and assessment is embedded, including in the University's approach to programme design and approval. Within the context of programme monitoring, student outcomes data is collected and reviewed to analyse student achievement and identify areas for improvement. Student learning assessment is framed by a robust set of externally benchmarked policies and practices. Students are given clear information about assessment requirements, appeal mechanisms and academic integrity though there is scope to clarify the definition of grading descriptors and strengthen the approach to the application of assessment rubrics linked to learning outcomes.

9.4 SD students are well supported by high-quality physical learning and e-learning environments which enrich their academic experience. They have ample opportunity to provide feedback and the University is swift to respond. Full-time SD students are actively engaged in governance, participate in a range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and are appreciative of support both from teachers and personal and career development services. Policies, strategies and procedures for support for teaching quality, including pedagogical development, are fit for purpose. Quality of teaching is effectively monitored while SD staff have a range of professional development opportunities.

APPENDIX A: THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY (POLYU)
[Information provided by the University]

History

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) is the second oldest tertiary institution in Hong Kong. Celebrating its 80th Anniversary in 2017, the institution has grown from a small government trade school to become one of the largest universities in Hong Kong. PolyU's role and mission evolved along the economic and social development of Hong Kong, and the range of programmes offered has kept pace with such developments. Today, PolyU offers more than 160 postgraduate, undergraduate and sub-degree programmes and has a student population of over 28 000 students.

Hong Kong Community College (HKCC) is the main sub-degree providing unit (SDPU) of PolyU. Established in 2001, HKCC is a self-financed institution created to offer quality sub-degree programmes that meet the changing needs of our community and prepare graduates for pursuing further studies or career development. Since its establishment, HKCC has helped over 25 000 of its graduates to articulate into Bachelor's degree programmes.

Vision and Mission

Vision

Be a leading university that advances and transfers knowledge, and provides the best holistic education for the benefit of Hong Kong, the nation and the world.

Mission

1. To pursue impactful research that benefits the world.
2. To nurture critical thinkers, effective communicators, innovative problem solvers and socially responsible global citizens.
3. To foster a University community in which all members can excel in their aspirations with a strong sense of belonging and pride.

Role Statement

PolyU:

(a)   offers a range of professionally oriented programmes leading to the award of first degrees, and a small number of sub-degree programmes;

(b)   pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;

(c) offers a number of taught postgraduate programmes and research postgraduate programmes in selected subject areas particularly in professional and applied fields;

(d) emphasizes application-oriented teaching, professional education and applied research;

(e) aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength;

(f) emphasizes high value-added education, with a balanced approach leading to the development of all-round students with professional competence;

(g) maintains strong links with business, industry, professional sectors, employers as well as the community;

(h) pursues actively deep collaboration in its areas of strength with other higher education institutions in Hong Kong or the region or more widely so as to enhance the Hong Kong higher education system;

(i) encourages academic staff to be engaged in public service, consultancy and collaborative work with the private sector in areas where they have special expertise, as part of the institution's general collaboration with government, business and industry; and

(j) manages in the most effective and efficient way the public and private resources bestowed upon the institution, employing collaboration whenever it is of value.

Programmes of Study offered by Sub-degree Providing Units

PolyU currently offers three types of sub-degree programme: Higher Diploma (HD), Associate Degree (AD) and Continuing Education (CE).

- HD programmes aim primarily to provide professional education to meet the community's manpower needs. Currently, PolyU offers 10 UGC-funded and five self-financed HD programmes in Applied Physics, Business, Chemical Technology, Social Work, and several Engineering disciplines. Many of these programmes have obtained professional accreditation.

- AD programmes aim primarily to provide school leavers with an alternative pathway to university study. Currently, PolyU (via HKCC) offers 29 self-financed AD programmes in Humanities and Communication, Science and Technology, Applied Social Sciences, Business, Design and Health Studies.

- CE courses are mainly short-term continuing professional development courses for businesses and industry. These courses form part of the University's continuing

effort to promote knowledge transfer and economic growth in partnership with the community, business and industry.

Staff and Enrolment Numbers of Sub-degree Programmes

A breakdown of staff and course enrolments in 2017/18 is as follows –

Sub-degree Providing Unit	Academic and Academic Supporting Staff Numbers		Course Enrolment Numbers	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
PolyU Proper – HD Programmes				
Faculty of Applied Science and Textiles	47	7	369	0
Faculty of Construction and Environment	65	6	587	0
Faculty of Engineering	36	2	333	0
Faculty of Business	6	8	77	0
School of Design	9	10	111	0
School of Hotel and Tourism Management	14	0	93	0
PolyU Proper – CE Courses				
Faculty of Applied Science and Textiles	7	4	0	397
Faculty of Health and Social Sciences	6	31	0	57
Industrial Centre	12*	0	0	10
Institute for Entrepreneurship	0	8	0	135
College of Professional and Continuing Education – AD & HD Programmes				
Hong Kong Community College	214	203	9 465	0
College of Professional and Continuing Education – CE Courses				
School of Professional Education and Executive Development	13	15	0	296

* Engineering staff

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) welcomes the audit findings and wishes to thank the QAC Audit Panel for a rigorous review process and a very positive report. We are gratified not only by the commendations highlighting our unique strengths but also by the many favourable comments about our current practice in all dimensions that attest to the maturity of our operations. We are pleased to note that the Panel found concrete evidence to confirm that our QA frameworks are robust and consistently applied to assure and improve academic standards and quality, that students are well supported and are satisfied with their learning experience at PolyU, and that our enhancement efforts have been systematic and impactful.

PolyU recognises the potential of all students to succeed and is committed to providing students with an educational experience that fosters holistic development and facilitates academic and professional success. The Panel confirmed that our curriculum design is "carefully managed so that HD programmes maintain their relevance to employers, and AD programmes prepare students for further study" [para. 3.10]. For Continuing Education courses, the Panel found that "students are appreciative of their programmes' vocational relevance, the networking opportunities afforded, and skills development that will help them to progress within their chosen professions" [para. 3.15]. We welcome the Panel's acknowledgement that "PolyU secures academic standards and gives students appropriate learning opportunities through effective deployment of its robust frameworks for the design of programmes" [para. 3.19].

Mindful of the special educational and psychological needs of sub-degree students, PolyU has a clear human resources policy to recruit and retain high quality teachers who are passionate and caring. We provide teachers with clear guidelines [para. 5.8 and 5.9] and support them with a wide range of professional development opportunities. We are glad to see confirmations that our teaching staff are "appreciative of the pedagogical support they received" [para. 5.4] and "very positive about the support available for professional development" [para. 5.5], and students find their teachers "helpful and positive" and the learning experience and preparation for further studies and employment "valuable and enriching" [para. 4.6]. We will continue to enhance our policies, strategies and procedures for supporting teaching staff and pedagogical development, which the Panel found "fit for purpose" and "proactive" [para. 5.11 and 5.4].

Our holistic approach to the quality of student learning experience also takes into account other factors such as learning environment and co-curricular activities. We believe that learning environment should be designed to meet specific learning needs and support desired forms of learning, e.g. interactive learning and mobile learning. We are delighted with the Panel's commendation of our provision of "high-quality physical learning and e-learning environments which contribute to [students'] academic experience" [para. 4.9]. We are also very pleased to note that the Panel was

impressed by our Hung Hom Bay and West Kowloon campuses, while confirming that students are highly satisfied with the learning spaces and facilities at CPCE [para. 4.7 and 4.8].

As a university committed to students' holistic development, we are glad that the Panel found our personal and career development services "comprehensive" [para. 7.12] and that they "help students to adopt a positive attitude towards their study and careers, broaden their horizons and develop as whole persons" [para. 7.4]. We are also very pleased with the commendation that our provision of co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities are wide ranging, significant and enriching [para. 7.9 and 3.16] and the confirmation that students are "active on, and appreciative of" the activities provided [para. 7.12]. Engaging UGC-funded HD students in co-curricular activities is a distinct challenge, and we thank the Panel for affirming the progress we have made in this connection.

In addition to providing students with an enriched learning experience that facilitates learning and development, the University is also committed to ensuring the recognition of students' efforts and achievements by academia and industry alike. We welcome the Panel's endorsement that the University has a "sound approach to setting and maintaining academic standards" [para. 1.6]. The Panel confirmed that PolyU's QA framework "ensures programmes set appropriate goals for students and that graduates can demonstrably achieve those goals" [para. 2.3]. The audit report describes our framework for programme approval and monitoring as "strong" and "clear" [para. (3) and (4)]. Evidence shows that the approval procedure is consistently applied with external inputs [para. 1.11] and that "attention is paid to students' educational experience" [para. 3.7]. Our programmes and courses are "fully outcomes-based and continually monitored" [para. 3.11]. The multi-level monitoring is effective, and the annual programme review process is thorough and "based on multiple sources of evidence" [para. 2.9 and 1.11]. There is heavy attention paid to learning outcomes in the processes and good constructive alignment with assessment tasks [para. (3)]. We agree with the Panel's assessment that the consistent application of this framework "enables [the University] to meet international standards and the professional requirements for its SD programmes and that the quality of its SD programmes is assured" [para. 2.12].

The University has made continuous effort to improve its student assessment practices. The Panel confirmed that PolyU's assessment framework "occurred in a sound manner". University policies and assessment practices are consistently applied with "strong commitment" and "solid understanding". Students are "positive about the advice they receive on assessment tasks" and indicate "satisfaction with the timeliness and helpfulness of feedback on assessment tasks" [para. 6.7]. The Panel highlighted that "good academic practice occurs in relation to internal moderation and external QA of assessment for HD and AD programmes" [para. 6.10] and that the University has "a clear and unambiguous policy in relation to academic integrity" [para. 6.12]. We are pleased with the Panel's confirmation that PolyU has a "robust framework of policies and practices" for assuring the quality of student learning assessment and

benchmarking assessment standards against external and international standards [para. (6)].

PolyU places great emphasis on quality enhancement as part of our QA framework. The Panel noted that student feedback is "systematically sought and utilised in initiating improvements to students' learning opportunities" [para. 4.11] and there is "effective use of action planning in responding to data on programme quality" [para. (8)]. The audit report highlights the "robust process of evidence-based improvement in learning and teaching through Programme Learning Outcomes Assessment Plans" [para. 1.7] and confirms that the University "makes effective use of data to reflect on and improve its own performance in terms of improving the learning experience of SD students at programme and course level" [para. 8.11]. We are pleased that the examination of audit trails confirmed that "follow-up actions have had positive impacts" [para. 1.11].

We share the Panel's observation that "there is a strong commitment to the SD provision across the University" [para. 1.2] and welcome the opportunity for improvement afforded by this audit exercise. We are grateful to the Panel for identifying areas in our current operation where further improvement may be needed. We will thoroughly consider all suggestions made by the Panel, particularly the recommendations to articulate more explicitly the role of Senate regarding academic standards; to improve documentation of academic regulations for AD programmes; and to complete the reviews of assessment policies in a timely manner.

Finally, we would like to thank the Panel once again for its commendations and constructive comments on various aspects of our sub-degree operations. We are impressed by the Panel's rigorous and collegiate approach, which has made the exercise both credible and useful. We are appreciative of the opportunity afforded by this exercise to engage in a dialogue with peers from the wider academic community. The positive outcome of this exercise is a tremendous encouragement to us and will fuel our continuous effort to enhance student learning experience at PolyU in the years to come.

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMNS

AD	Associate Degree
AOP	Annual Operation Plan
APRC	Academic Planning and Regulations Committee
AQAT	Academic Quality Assurance Team
CE	Continuing Education
CERC	Continuing Education Review Committee
CPCE	College of Professional and Continuing Education
DAA	Departmental Academic Advisor
DAC	Departmental Advisory Committee
DR	Departmental Review
EDC	Educational Development Centre
GAR	General Assessment Regulations
HD	Higher Diploma
HKCC	Hong Kong Community College
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKQF	Hong Kong Qualifications Framework
IRPO	Institutional Research and Planning Office
IS	Institutional Submission
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
LTC	Learning and Teaching Committee
NAU	Non-academic unit
OBA	Outcome-based assessment
OBE	Outcome-based education
PILO	Programme Intended Learning Outcome
P-LOAP	Programme Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan
PolyU	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
QA	Quality assurance
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
QAC(AD)	Quality Assurance Committee (Academic Departments)
QAC(NAU)	Quality Assurance Committee (Non-academic Units)
SAQ	Student Activity Questionnaire
SD	Sub-degree
SDPU	Sub-degree Providing Unit
SFQ	Student Feedback Questionnaire
SILO	Scheme Intended Learning Outcome
SPEED	School of Professional Education and Executive Development
SSCG	Student/Staff Consultative Group

STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UGC	University Grants Committee

APPENDIX D: POLYU AUDIT PANEL

The Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor Denis Wright (Panel Chair)
Emeritus Professor, Imperial College London

Dr Ella Chan
Director of the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Professor Mark Davies
Professor of Bioscience, University of Sunderland

Mr Ian Marshman
Associate Professor/Honorary Principal Fellow, Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education

Professor Ricky Wong
Associate Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) cum Academic Registrar, Hong Kong Baptist University

Audit Coordinator

Dr Neil Casey
QAC Secretariat

APPENDIX E: QAC'S MISSION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

QAC was formally established in April 2007 as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the UGC of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

Mission

QAC's mission is:

(a) To assure that the quality of educational experience in all programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above (however funded) offered in UGC-funded universities is sustained and improved, and is at an internationally competitive level; and

(b) To encourage universities to excel in this area of activity.

Terms of Reference

QAC has the following terms of reference:

(a) To advise UGC on quality assurance matters in the higher education sector in Hong Kong and other related matters as requested by the Committee;

(b) To conduct audits and other reviews as requested by UGC, and report on the quality assurance mechanisms and quality of the offerings of institutions;

(c) To promote quality assurance in the higher education sector in Hong Kong; and

(d) To facilitate the development and dissemination of good practices in quality assurance in higher education.

Membership (as at May 2019)

Mr Lincoln LEONG Kwok-kuen, JP (Chairman)	Former Chief Executive Officer, MTR Corporation Limited
Professor Chetwyn CHAN Che-hin	Associate Vice President (Learning and Teaching), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Professor Adrian K DIXON	Emeritus Professor of Radiology, University of Cambridge
Mrs Belinda GREER	Chief Executive Officer, English Schools Foundation
Dr Kim MAK Kin-wah, BBS, JP	President, Caritas Institute of Higher Education and Caritas Bianchi College of Careers
Professor PONG Ting-chuen	Professor of Computer Science and Engineering, The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Professor Jan THOMAS	Vice-Chancellor, Massey University
Dr Don F WESTERHEIJDEN	Senior Research Associate, Center for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente
Dr Carrie WILLIS, SBS, JP	Chairperson, Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals

Ex-officio Member

Professor James TANG Tuck-hong	Secretary-General, UGC

Secretary

Miss Winnie WONG Ming-wai	Deputy Secretary-General (1), UGC