

Principles, Policies & Practices

I. Principles for Quality Education

1. City University of Hong Kong is committed to the provision of a high-quality education and learning experience for all its students.
2. The University believes that education quality and quality assurance are an institutional and collective responsibility. This responsibility is implemented through the University's system of governance, and through maintaining a culture of quality among staff and students.
3. The University is committed to the continual development, recognition and reward of quality in all aspects of staffs' activity in the provision of high-quality education at the University.
4. The University ensures that the awards granted by the University Senate are equivalent in standard to similar awards granted by other internationally recognized universities.
5. The University recognizes an obligation to be accountable to stakeholders, including the community that funds the University.

II. Policies for Quality Education

Section A - Roles and Responsibilities

Governance

1. Under the City University of Hong Kong Ordinance, the Senate of the University is required to “plan, develop, and maintain the academic programmes offered by the University”, “direct and regulate the teaching at the University”, and “decide on the award of degrees and other academic awards of the University”.
2. In undertaking these functions, Senate relies on the Quality Assurance Committee, the Academic Policy Committee and the Board of Graduate Studies to provide advice on policies and plans relating to the academic life of the University.
3. The day-to-day task of assuring the quality of education and maintaining academic standards at CityU falls to the “Colleges and equivalent bodies” and “Departments and equivalent bodies”, established by Council, on Senate’s recommendation. Under their statutes, the academic boards of colleges/equivalent bodies have the duty to advise Senate, the Dean (or equivalent) and Heads of Departments (or equivalent) “on all matters pertaining to the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of the academic work of the College”, and “reporting thereon annually” to Senate (in the case of postgraduate programmes through the Board of Graduate Studies).
4. Under their statutes, the work of colleges* and departments should be undertaken “within the policies, procedures and priorities established by Senate”. Notwithstanding its delegation of authority, Senate is available to all members and is the final authority for the resolution of disagreements.

A Quality Culture

5. The University has charged the Quality Assurance Committee with the responsibility to promote quality assurance, and to foster a culture of quality teaching and learning at the University.
6. The University has established Teaching Excellence Awards to promote good teaching and reward our best teachers.

* “colleges” include the schools

7. The University expects all staff and students to participate in, and feel ownership of, policies and processes for the assurance of quality and academic standards.
8. The University supports a self critical and reflective approach to its work, and welcomes and responds appropriately to criticism, including criticism from students and other stakeholders.
9. The University's framework of governance provides for academic staff a wide range of opportunities to participate in the academic management of the University. Moreover, in their areas of expertise, the University expects academic staff to exercise the maximum discretion and professional autonomy to further educational goals.
10. Students are also included as members of key University committees, and are encouraged to participate in the work of departments and colleges. The University calls on students to make an active contribution to the improvement of education quality on their own behalf and on behalf of the University.

Section B - Arrangements for Quality Assurance and Maintaining Academic Standards

1. Arrangements and activities to maintain and improve education quality and academic standards should be characterized by:
 - (a) A forward-looking view, oriented to the task of improving education quality.
 - (b) Coverage of all aspects of students' educational experience.
 - (c) Clear definition of policies and procedures.
 - (d) Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning quality within formal systems capable of operating independently of particular individuals.
 - (e) Recognition of the importance of feedback from 'stakeholders' (e.g. students, employers, professional bodies).
 - (f) Recognition of the importance of external benchmarks in establishing the quality of teaching and learning and of academic standards.
 - (g) Establishment of mechanisms to identify and disseminate examples of good professional practice.
 - (h) Provision of the facilities and resources necessary to support activities to enhance and improve the quality of teaching and learning.
2. Arrangements to maintain and enhance education quality should be subject to regular review and periodic audit to ensure their continued effectiveness.

Section C - Academic Planning, and Curriculum Development

Senate's Responsibility

1. Senate exercises its responsibilities for academic planning and the development of the curriculum by reserving key decisions for Senate policies, consideration and delegating authority to colleges and departments. The decisions reserved for Senate consideration are:
 - (a) Approval of the titles in English and Chinese of all degrees and awards of the University.
 - (b) Approval of general regulations for the conferment of academic awards.
 - (c) Approval of academic plans on the basis of recommendations from the Academic Policy Committee (APC), including plans for the introduction or discontinuation of programmes of study, and student intakes and enrolment in academic programmes.

2. In relation to these decisions, Senate seeks the advice of the Board of Graduate Studies, with respect to postgraduate academic programmes.
3. College boards/equivalent bodies have the authority to manage the curriculum of academic programmes, within the framework of Senate policies, regulations, guidelines, and approved academic plans, making further delegation of this authority to departments/equivalent bodies, as appropriate.

Approval of Academic Plans

4. In making recommendations to Senate for the academic development of the University and the management of student numbers, Academic Policy Committee receives proposals for academic developments and student numbers from colleges and equivalent bodies, and acts on the advice of the Board of Graduate Studies. APC considers these proposals in the light of the broad criteria agreed by Senate. *(Refer to Section A – Criteria for Academic Planning, Good Practices and Guidelines for Quality Education)*

Process for Curriculum Development

5. The details of arrangements for curriculum design, development and approval are matters for the relevant college to decide. However college boards exercising the delegated authority of Senate should establish arrangements for curriculum development that have the following features:
 - (a) Where changes or new developments under consideration go beyond the authority of individual academic staff delivering courses, proposals should be subject to scrutiny by colleagues, and students should be consulted.
 - (b) Where changes may have a significant impact on learning outcomes or academic standards, these changes should be subject to review by members of the University not directly involved with the academic programme, and the views of external experts, professional bodies, former students, and employers should be actively sought and taken into account.
 - (c) With regard to taught post-graduate programmes, approval should be sought from the Board of Graduate Studies.
 - (d) Proposals for changes, and approved changes, should be documented clearly, so that stakeholders are informed of proposals that affect them, and the University catalogue of courses and programmes can be maintained accurately.
 - (e) To ensure that the quality and standards of educational programmes offered through the self-financing mode are the same as those receiving funding support through the University Grants Committee, the process for curriculum development, approval and management should be the same for both types of programmes.

Approval of Changes to the Curriculum

6. The delegation of Senate authority over the curriculum of academic programmes is made on the understanding that colleges and equivalent bodies will ensure that:
 - (a) The structure of programmes is consistent with the academic regulations.
 - (b) The assignment of credit units to student work is consistent with University standards.
 - (c) The academic standard of programmes is appropriate, given the level of the award, and is comparable with the academic standard of similar programmes elsewhere.
 - (d) The curriculum of courses and programmes is consistent with the University's overall objectives for students' education.

- (e) Teaching, learning and assessment strategies have been given appropriate attention, and are aligned to the intended learning outcomes of courses and programmes.
- (f) Resources to deliver programmes and courses are adequate.
- (g) Where necessary, arrangements for the transition of students to new curriculum requirements have been made.

Section D - Assuring and Improving the Quality of Education

1. In discharging its responsibility for the University's academic programmes, Senate relies on departments to maintain and improve the quality of the educational provision for which they are responsible. Senate has adopted general guidelines for departmental quality assurance, under which departments are asked to operate. *(Refer to Section B – Departmental Activities to Assure and Improve the Quality of Education, Good Practices and Guidelines for Quality Education)*
2. Departments should ensure that new, full-time academic staff, and any teaching or research support staff, e.g. teaching assistants, research assistants, who are assigned significant teaching duties, have received an adequate orientation to their teaching role at City University.
3. Departments are asked to pay particular attention to the work of part-time teachers to ensure that the quality of instruction delivered by part-time staff is comparable to that of full-time staff in the University. In this regard, Departments should make reference to the Code of Good Practice for part-time teaching approved by the Senate. *(Refer to Section C – Code of Good Practice for Part-time Teaching, Good Practices and Guidelines for Quality Education)*
4. Departments are required to report annually to the relevant College board (or equivalent body) on the courses and programmes for which they are responsible.

Section E - The Evaluation of Teaching

1. Colleges and equivalent bodies are required to evaluate the teaching of their staff on an individual basis. The primary purpose of any teaching evaluation scheme should be to improve teaching.
2. Colleges are responsible for devising, implementing and maintaining their own teaching evaluation schemes, including determining who should initiate evaluations, who should receive the results, how often evaluations should occur, how they should be administered, and what follow-up procedures will result from the evaluation outcomes.
3. Evaluation schemes should provide the most valid (accurate), reliable (consistent), comprehensive and credible information on the quality of an individual's teaching performance consistent with the costs of the scheme, where costs include the time and effort of both students and teachers.
4. Where evaluation of teaching is undertaken as part of a summative assessment of performance, in addition to student feedback, evidence must be included from other appropriate sources such as peer review, individual reflection, and expert observation.
5. College schemes for teaching evaluation should be consistent with the guidelines adopted by Senate. *(Refer to Section D – Guidelines for the Evaluation of Teaching, Good Practices and Guidelines for Quality Education)*

Section F - Student Assessment and Academic Standards

Please refer to the 'University Assessment Policy and Principles for Taught Programmes'.

http://www.cityu.edu.hk/qac/assessment_policy/Assessment_Policy_revised_July_2011_WD_definitions.pdf

III. Good Practices and Guidelines for Quality Education

Section A - Criteria for Academic Planning

Academic Policy Committee considers proposals for academic developments and student numbers in the light of the following criteria:

1. **Community Needs** - As expressed by government through the University Grants Committee, by employers, professional associations, and through the University's own contacts with the wider community.
2. **University's Strategic Considerations** - As set out in academic development proposals and in the University's strategic plans.
3. **Student Demand** - The demand by new applicants as measured by the band-adjusted applicant-to-place ratio, the quality of applicants and intakes, and internal demand for courses, where students are able to exercise choice.
4. **Academic Merit** - Consistency with the professional and research priorities of staff and contribution to the University's ability to enter emerging academic areas.
5. **Quality of Outcomes** - Ability of units to facilitate sound learning outcomes and to encourage the whole person development of students.
6. **Adjustment Problems** - Contribution to maintaining minimum effective size and full use of the existing staff establishment.

Section B - Departmental Activities to Assure and Improve the Quality of Education

1. Departments are asked to assure and improve the quality of education across the following areas of responsibility:
 - (a) **Design and implementation of the academic curriculum** for discipline areas and professional specialisms under the management of the department, including the approach to teaching and learning, the assessment of students, and maintenance of academic standards.
 - (b) **Design and implementation of an out-of-class educational experience** for the department's students, including: orientation; mentoring; developmental and skill-building activities; and placement.
2. Departments are asked to establish for these areas of responsibility a mechanism for maintaining and assuring quality that has the following features:
 - (a) **Forums for academic staff** to engage in discussion about the design and implementation of educational programmes in the department, encouraging a sense of collective responsibility for quality, innovation and out-of-the-box thinking, and the use of the department's own professional resources to support the development of staff in their teaching role.
 - (b) **Peer review** of the design and implementation of academic programmes by academics and practitioners, to assist in the calibration of students' grades and academic standards against international norms, the transmission of good practice, and benchmarking.
 - (c) **Consultation with stakeholders**, including other academic units, students, employers, alumni and professional bodies.
 - (d) **Assessment of learning outcomes** as a means to evaluate and improve the department's performance.

- (e) An **orientation to improvement** by the development of concrete action plans, with a well-identified assignment of responsibility and timelines, and a commitment to the evaluation of the impact of actions taken.
 - (f) Encouraging research and publications on teaching and learning.
3. Departments should report annually to their college board/equivalent body on the courses and programmes under their responsibility, and on their implementation of systems to assure and improve quality and academic standards.

Section C - Code of Good Practice for Part-time Teaching

To ensure that the quality of instruction delivered by part-time staff is comparable to that of full-time staff in the University, Senate has adopted the following Code of Good Practice for Part-time Teaching to provide a standard for reference, and a basis for action to enhance the performance and quality of part-time teaching:

1. The recruitment standards in terms of qualifications and experience required for a part-time teaching position should as far as possible be identical to that required for a full-time position.
2. The employment of part-time teachers should be confirmed as soon as possible after a decision to hire a person has been made to enable that person to use University facilities, e.g. Library and Computing Services Centre, for the preparation of materials before starting teaching. Furthermore, honoraria payable for part-time teaching must be handled expeditiously.
3. A senior staff member should be appointed by each department to oversee all part-time teaching matters and to ensure that part-time teaching is of a high quality. Formal recognition for this job should be reflected in the workload of the staff member.
4. Handbooks or other material containing practical information at both University and departmental levels should be made available by departments to part-time teachers.
5. Briefing(s) should be conducted for part-time teachers about their role and duties, course aims and learning outcomes, assessment policy and guidelines, teaching evaluation, background of students, etc.
6. Part-time teachers should be invited as far as possible to curriculum development activities, Programme Committee meetings, and in social departmental/University functions, etc. to enhance their sense of commitment to part-time teaching.
7. Part-time teachers should be invited to participate in staff development workshops organised in the University, whenever necessary. These workshops should be held at a convenient time for part-time teachers who should be paid an additional honorarium for their attendance.
8. Adequate space (working space and lockers) and other facilities including clerical support, stationery, photocopy service, etc. should be provided for part-time teachers.
9. Teaching evaluation should be conducted for part-time teachers in accordance with Senate policy, as for full-time teachers, through student evaluation of teaching, peer review or other means. Departmental reports to the college board should contain a section reporting specifically on part-time teaching and on any deviations from this Code of Good Practice.

Section D - Guidelines for the Evaluation of Teaching

General

1. Teaching evaluation schemes should include student feedback as a substantial, primary element in the process.

2. An individual's teaching should be judged in context – the type and purpose of the teaching, the background of the students, the resources available, the nature of the courses, etc.
3. Teaching evaluation data should cover a representative sample of an individual's teaching activities, for example to include a variety of student groups and types of activity – lecture, tutorial, project supervision, etc.
4. Evaluation schemes should clearly separate questions relating to an individual's performance from questions relating to the contributions of others involved in the course. For example, the teacher to be evaluated might not be responsible for the syllabus, the assessment design, etc.

Evaluation Instruments

5. Evaluation instruments should be based on recognized good practice, teaching-learning theory and accepted research findings.
6. Evaluation by students for the purpose of judging and assessing teaching must include a customized version of the Teaching Feedback Questionnaire.
7. Evaluation instruments to be used with students should have accompanying Chinese translation where this will increase the validity of the data collected.
8. Each evaluation instrument should be designed for a specific audience and should only include items for which this audience is capable of giving informed responses.
9. Evaluation instruments should include sufficient data to allow the teaching context to be readily identified e.g. FT/PT students, core/service courses, etc.

Summative Evaluation and Personnel Decisions

10. Where the results of teaching evaluations are to be incorporated into decision-making related to career progression, the differences between information collected from formative and summative evaluations must be taken into account, since information obtained for the sole purpose of improving teaching, and often collected before that teaching is complete, may be inappropriate to consider when making judgments.
11. Those entrusted with using the information from teaching evaluations for decision-making related to career progression should be skilled in interpreting and drawing together the different sources of information.

Administration

12. The administration of teaching evaluation should follow adequate, standardized procedures in order to protect the validity of the information obtained.
13. Evaluation schemes should include clear guidelines as to who may initiate an evaluation and for what purposes. In all cases the staff member being evaluated must be fully consulted.
14. Evaluation schemes must include clear rules governing the confidentiality of evaluation information and reports. This is particularly the case, where the emphasis is on development and improvement (Formative Evaluation Tools for example).
15. Colleges must provide feedback on the outcomes of evaluations to those involved in providing evaluation data.
16. Teaching evaluation schemes must be documented and provided to the Quality Assurance Committee for information.
17. Provisions should exist for regular review of College/School evaluation schemes and of the institution's evaluation procedures.

Section E - Guidelines for Student Assessment

Please refer to the 'University Assessment Policy and Principles for Taught Programmes'.

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Section F - Guidelines for Assigning Course Grades

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Section G - Guidelines for External Academic Advisors

These guidelines are drawn from the University's experience with the External Examiner system. Departments that wish to benchmark the academic standard of their courses and programmes and student work by employing External Academic Advisors may find them of value.

1. Departments should ensure that their External Advisors have the **essential experience** relating to the assessment of candidates for similar awards in other universities of international standing, and that they have the qualifications necessary to lend credibility to the advice they offer to the department.

Role of External Academic Advisors

2. While the principal role of External Academic Advisors is to assist the University to maintain the international standard of its awards, departments are encouraged to seek their advice on broader academic issues.
3. External Advisors may be asked to advise on assessment tasks and strategics related to a course, moderate examination papers, scripts and other written work of students, and tender advice before decisions are made by an Assessment Panel. This is particularly the case where hands-on involvement as members of an assessment team is a requirement imposed by professional bodies. However, External Advisors are normally invited to comment on assessment decisions after Assessment Panels have completed their work, on the understanding that the decisions of properly constituted Assessment Panels are final.

Work of External Academic Advisors

4. Departments should establish a plan of work for the Advisors to cover: the courses to be reviewed over their period of appointment; arrangements for the review of the relevant materials, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks, and the timing and objectives of visits to the University.
5. External Advisors should sample an appropriate range of students' work which may include examination scripts for any course under review, selected from the range of student grades. Where coursework is a major component of assessment, a similar sample of coursework should be reviewed by prior co-ordination between the Advisor and the Department.
6. For any courses selected for review, the External Academic Advisors should consider whether:
 - (a) Assessment arrangements validly address intended learning outcomes and allow for a reasonable judgment to be made about the performance of students;
 - (b) Students are required to achieve an appropriate academic level in the assessed coursework and examinations for the course;
 - (c) Assessed work requires students to marshal the range of information and its application, and display the technical and other skills identified as learning outcomes for a course;

- (d) Assessed work relates to the course outcomes; and
 - (e) Student work has been carefully and competently graded.
7. In their calibration of student work, Advisors are asked to pay special attention to the boundary between pass and fail grades, and to the calibration of the distinction between grades at the upper end, B and A, and the lower end, F and D. If the University is able to set these basic boundaries in line with external standards, it can rely on internal moderation to maintain finer grades.
 8. While the programme approval process and mechanisms for programme review ensure that the syllabus of any course is pitched at the right academic level, where External Advisors feel that this is not the case, they are encouraged to include this finding in their reports.

Briefing of External Academic Advisors

9. External Academic Advisors should be adequately briefed. Department concerned should make available:
 - (a) Senate policy and guidelines relating to the assessment of students;
 - (b) The Academic Regulations;
 - (c) A full description of the curriculum, including an explanation of the assessment strategies being followed; and
 - (d) Reports of previous External Academic Advisors, with any response to these reports.

Report

10. The report of the Advisors should have two sections. Section 1 provides a signed assurance that the academic standard of assessment in the area of the Advisor's responsibility is being maintained. This assurance may be unqualified, or qualified. When a qualified assurance is provided, Advisors are asked to note these qualifications. Section 2 is a free format report. The basis for this section is a checklist of issues. This checklist is provided to the Advisors when they are appointed.
11. Departments should arrange for the reports of Advisors to be forwarded to the relevant Dean, at the end of each academic year.
12. Reports from the Advisors are essential inputs for staff seeking to maintain the quality and level of assessment of courses. Reports should therefore be made widely available to staff, and action should be taken as appropriate on the advice of the Advisors to bring the academic standard of awards into line with international standards.

Section H - Decisions on Academic Awards

Please refer to the 'University Assessment Policy and Principles for Taught Programmes'.

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