



香港學術評審局

HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR  
ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION

HKCAA

ACCREDIT  
NOTE

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## **THE RECOGNITION AND ACCREDITATION OF ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS IN HONG KONG AND THE PRC**

In recent months there has been considerable public discussion and debate in Hong Kong about the recognition and accreditation of overseas qualifications, particularly those from China.

It has been proposed by a Preliminary Working Group (a committee of Hong Kong residents appointed by the PRC to discuss matters pertinent to the transition of Hong Kong to Chinese administration in 1997) that, after 1997, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region should automatically recognise all PRC degrees. Also, comments have been made to the effect that degrees from Britain and some Commonwealth countries should not generally be acceptable, but scrutinised individually.

The HKCAA has been drawn into these discussions. However, despite providing information and contributing to various events on these topics, in November last the HKCAA became sufficiently concerned about misunderstandings about accreditation, recognition and the current systems for evaluating qualifications which had arisen, that it issued a public statement and held a press conference (on 10 November 1994).

The press conference was well attended, over 30 representatives of the media were present and the event received newspaper, radio and TV coverage.

A summary of the issues and the HKCAA's statement follows:

### **Accreditation and recognition**

There has been some confusion between "accreditation" and "recognition" of degrees. Accreditation relates to academic activities through which the standards of degrees are evaluated and qualifications are assessed. Accreditation is carried out for maintaining and improving the standards of academic qualifications and the institutions which offer them; whereas recognition concerns a broad set of criteria relating to qualifications which employers may refer to and use as a threshold when they consider applications for employment purposes.

Since 1990, the HKCAA, as an independent statutory body established by Government, has carried out

accreditation and related activities. Degrees offered by Government funded non-university institutions including the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong, Lingnan College, The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Institute of Education are accredited by the HKCAA. The Council is also responsible for providing authoritative advice to Government and others with regard to academic qualifications both local and overseas. Local universities accredit their own degrees.

With regard to recognition, the Hong Kong Government's Civil Service Branch assesses degrees for the purpose of graduate employment only and makes it quite clear that such an assessment is not an academic evaluation or accreditation.

It is understood that Government makes its assessment on a case-by-case basis for degrees from non-local tertiary institutions. However, traditionally, the education systems, academic standards and the methods of evaluation for academic qualifications in countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia, are familiar and well-known in Hong Kong and, consequently, it is easier for both Government and other employers to assess such qualifications. This gives the impression that these qualifications are accepted without question.

### **Accreditation in Hong Kong**

The HKCAA carries out accreditation through two major activities; validation of degree programmes and institutional reviews. Both adopt rigorous peer review methods, using acknowledged specialists from home and abroad to serve on panels set up for individual accreditation exercises. For validation, each proposed degree programme is examined against criteria related to academic standards and to the aims of the programme. Comparability with international standards is a crucial component of this work. An institutional review is a review of the academic and general standards of an institution to ascertain whether the academic environment is suitable for implementing degree programmes.

Owing to the scope of work, the Council has maintained a relatively low profile among the public. However, it operates an open door policy and responds to enquiries from both organisations and individuals. In addition, it produces reports and publications which are generally available.



The HKCAA has no remit for the accreditation of degree programmes and institutions outside the territory. It is also not practical to conduct any such work because of the substantial resources that will incur. To carry out the work of providing advice to the Government and others about non-local qualifications, the HKCAA adopts an approach different from local accreditation but is applicable to all countries, including the PRC.

The HKCAA has built up and maintains close contact and collaboration with established overseas accreditation and evaluation agencies. For example, the HKCAA liaises with the USA Commission on Recognition of Post Secondary Accreditation (CORPA). For the UK, the HKCAA has links with the Higher Education Quality Council and the various funding councils which audit and assess institutions and programmes. Also, in the governing Council of the HKCAA, eminent overseas educationists have been appointed as members to further strengthen HKCAA's international ties. Through these links the HKCAA has access to expert advice and information, and with the information included in its database of overseas institutions and degree programmes, it is able to evaluate the comparability of overseas programmes with those in Hong Kong.

For a number of years now, the HKCAA has been exchanging information and views with colleagues in the PRC about each others' higher education and accreditation systems. The HKCAA has also visited Taiwan to obtain similar information.

### **Academic standards**

In connection with academic standards in the PRC, it should be noted that the baseline for the two higher education systems is very different which has to be taken into account when one attempts to make a rough comparison.

The significant investment in higher education in Hong Kong in recent years, and the sophisticated level of development of Hong Kong's society and economy, has enabled Hong Kong's higher education system to provide access to it by 18% of the relevant age group for degree level education. The system produces graduates comparable with those in developed countries elsewhere.

China's higher education system is still undergoing development, and access to degree level education is only about 1.5% of the relevant age group. One expression of the stage of development of the system is the 'P211' project with which China aims at 100 world class institutions by the 21st century.

The very large size and variety of the higher education system in China has led to a range of standards. The extent of this range is evident through China's policy of preferential investment in a minority of 'key' and 'premier' universities.

Since 1980, China has introduced legislation and has been developing evaluation and accreditation mechanisms

and processes for its degree programmes. It has a centralised degree approval system set up by the State Education Commission based on an Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council (ADCSC).

### **The Basic Law**

The Basic Law is quite clear about the recognition of academic qualifications in Hong Kong and also about the professions' responsibility for assessing qualifications. Article 136 of the Basic Law states that "the Government of the HKSAR shall, on its own, formulate policies on the development and improvement of education, including policies regarding ..... the system of academic awards and the recognition of educational qualifications". Also, Article 142 specifies that the HKSAR "shall, on the basis of maintaining the previous systems concerning the professions, formulate provisions on its own for assessing the qualifications for practice in the various professions".

### **The employers and the professions**

As previously mentioned, recognition of qualifications is generally used for employment purposes. Employers use degree qualifications in the first instance, as indicators of a general level of academic attainment and, secondly, from the point of view of their appropriateness in terms of content. They may also need to take into account a number of factors such as language and cultural knowledge in addition to content. For example, a law degree which relates to a system dissimilar to that in Hong Kong and in languages other than Chinese and English, no matter the level of academic attainment, might not be suitable for Hong Kong.

With regard to the professions, there are factors other than a degree which need to be considered for practice. Individual professions have their own training and experience requirements, such as appropriate knowledge of local legislation, in addition to academic qualifications.

In recent debates about the recognition of PRC qualifications in relation to job opportunities of local people, it should be pointed out that even if there are increasing numbers of non-local qualifications which become formally recognised, the Hong Kong and SAR governments will apply immigration controls to safeguard an influx of "qualified" people. As for those living in Hong Kong who hold non-local qualifications, they will have to enter competition in the job market, as in any free market economy.

### **The number of accreditation bodies**

The question has been raised as to whether there should be one accreditation body for the PRC and Hong Kong after 1997. The Basic law is quite clear on a division of responsibilities for the recognition of qualifications, but on a more pragmatic level, both owing to differences in the systems and the level of investment in them, it is more logical to let them coexist. Indeed, it is quite



The Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Michael Leung, attended part of the meeting and expressed his appreciation for the work that HKCAA has done for the maintenance of educational standards in the tertiary institutions and the promotion of self-regulation in the institutions. He commended other aspects of the Council's work in particular in relation to its provision of advice to Government on overseas qualifications and education systems. He urged the Council to explore new areas of activities where the expertise of the Council may be further deployed to the benefits of the community.

Other topics discussed at the meeting include forthcoming reviews at the various tertiary institutions, developments in teacher education and the HKCAA's advisory role in these, publication of the Academic Programmes Guide, and the planning of an international conference on quality assurance in 1996 to be co-sponsored with the Chinese Society for Higher Education Evaluation.

At the meeting Dr John Petersen and Dr Christian Thune, members of Council, gave presentations on quality assurance initiatives in the United States, Denmark and Europe, respectively.

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

Two of the new Council members are being introduced in this issue.

### Mr Anthony Kan

Until his recent early retirement Mr Anthony Kan was the Chief Executive of New Zealand Reinsurance Co Ltd for the Asian Pacific Region - a post he had held since 1985. He was formerly a director and Deputy General Manager of Associated Bankers Insurance Co Ltd. Mr Kan was one of the earliest graduates from the University of Hong Kong to seek professional insurance qualifications and became qualified as an Associate of the Chartered Insurance Institute of London in 1967. He also has a MBA, and is a life member of the Stanford Graduate School of Business, and a Chartered Insurer.

Over the past 30 years Anthony Kan has served the insurance industry in different capacities, locally and regionally. He was Chairman of the Five Insurance Association of Hong Kong; President of the Hong Kong Insurers Club; President of the Insurance Institute Training Board; member of the Hong Kong Government Insurance Advisory Council; Director of the East Asia Insurance Conference etc.

Mr Kan is also a Council member of the Sir Edward Youde Memorial Fund and an external examiner of Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His interest in education goes beyond the boundaries of insurance and tertiary education as he presently holds a chairmanship and a directorship of two theological seminaries in Hong Kong, Evangelical Seminary and China Graduate School of Theology.

reasonable for different higher education and accreditation systems to coexist constructively within a country or community. (The USA, which has nearly 100 national accreditation organisations, and a range of higher education initiatives is one example. The European Community is another.) There is no reason to believe that the higher education and accreditation systems of Hong Kong and the PRC cannot exist in a mutually beneficial fashion after 1997.

## Blanket recognition

It is over-simplistic to consider blanket recognition of qualifications from anywhere. Hong Kong has its own system for evaluating and recognising qualifications within the territory. Similarly, Hong Kong's understanding now, and after 1997, of qualifications from the PRC and elsewhere, will be based on information and advice from experts, and such advice will be as valuable as the level of the expertise from which it stems. The HKCAA anticipates being one such expert advisory body. It should be emphasised that the recognition of qualifications should be mutually acceptable. While Hong Kong has been examining and has accepted non-local qualifications, reciprocal countries should do likewise.

## Liaison and cooperation

It has already been mentioned that there is close liaison between the HKCAA and the ADCSC. In addition, Hong Kong's tertiary institutions have increasingly been working with institutions in the PRC such that there is considerable exchange of staff and many cooperative projects. It is such collaboration and exchange which will allow for a sensible understanding of both systems and enable qualifications to be valued by worth rather than rules.

## TENTH COUNCIL MEETING, DECEMBER 1994

The tenth Council meeting was held on 9 and 10 December 1994. At this meeting Council reviewed the current activities of the HKCAA and discussed possible new areas of activities. There was a consensus that in the face of the changing education scene in Hong Kong, the increased demands for public accountability and consumer information, and in view of the trends towards globalization of educational standards, HKCAA has an increased role to play in the promotion of quality assurance and the upkeep of standards. The Council will respond to these evolving new situations and set up appropriate initiatives.



Anthony Kan is an active sportsman. He has been participating regularly in both golf and tennis tournaments. Mr Kan is married to Kwok Ying and has a son and daughter.

### **Professor Christian Thune**

Professor Thune was born in Aalborg, Denmark in 1940. He did his graduate studies in history at the University of Copenhagen and obtained his PhD degree in 1968 in Contemporary History. In the same year he joined the newly established department of Political Science at the University of Copenhagen and over the next twenty years he was mainly responsible for developing teaching and research in international relations. He became a professor in 1974. From 1976-1982 he was Director of the Department.

Professor Thune has published widely, especially on Western European Integration and has been an active participant in several international projects. In 1981 he was appointed by the Foreign Minister member of the Government Commission on Security and Disarmament. From 1983 he has been Chairman of the board of the Danish Institute of International Affairs, and from 1988-1992 he was editor of the international quarterly *Cooperation and Conflict*, *Nordic Journal of International Studies*.

From 1984 to 1989 Professor Thune was Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences (which offers studies in Law, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Anthropology) at the University of Copenhagen. In 1989 he was appointed by the Minister of Education Chairman of the Educational Council for the Social Sciences and in 1990 Chairman of the Committee of Chairmen of the Five Educational Councils. (Advisory bodies appointed directly by the Minister of Education). During this period he also chaired several other government committees, including the Government Committee for the reorganization of the Danish system of external examiners.

In 1992 the Minister of Education appointed Professor Thune director of a new Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education. The mandate of the Centre is directed towards the evaluation of study programmes which lead to the award of degrees. The scope of the Centre's activities covers a total of seventeen universities and university level institutions, and also a very substantial number of non-university institutions, especially within the health sector. The Centre plans to finish its first cycle of evaluation by 1998.

In 1993 the Minister of Labour appointed Professor Thune chairman of the Danish National Council for Educational and Vocational Guidance.

Professor Thune was appointed in 1992 a member of the Working Group of Experts set up by the European Commission to plan a pilot project for evaluation in the EC member countries, and in 1993 he became a member of the Management Group for the EC pilot project on

evaluation. This project covers 46 higher education institutions in 17 European countries.

(For details of the European Project see page 7)

## **HKCAA STAFF**

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### **Miss Wong Wai Sum**

We are pleased to announce that Miss Wong Wai Sum has been appointed the Council's Senior Registrar.

Wai Sum joined the Provisional Council as a Registrar on 2 January 1990, six months before the Council was formally established and has made a significant contribution to its initial development and subsequent activities. She has been very much involved in coping with the onslaught of accreditation exercises brought about by the expansion of Hong Kong's tertiary education system. As Senior Registrar she deputises for the Executive Director, in his absence. In Wai Sum, the HKCAA has a highly experienced and competent professional, able to take on a greater role with the HKCAA, and we wish her every success in the post.

### **Dr Suzanne Richard**

Demands on the HKCAA's professional services over the past six months have expanded and we are delighted to announce that Suzanne Richard has rejoined us from 1 January 1995, as a Registrar, on a short term contract to help us meet our commitments.

## **ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES GUIDE**

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The HKCAA's Academic Programmes Guide, mentioned in the previous issue of *Accredit Note*, was published in September. The Guide has received a favourable response from the public, including schools and companies. There has also been good feedback from participating institutions. In addition, the HKCAA has been contacted by overseas institutions not included, who have expressed interest in sending in their entries for the next issue.

The Guide provides ready information on educational opportunities in Hong Kong, but states clearly that it should not be considered as a list of accredited courses. Its aim is to assist readers in making an informed choice and to enhance their awareness of standards and quality of study programmes.

As a result of the response to this issue, the HKCAA plans to publish a 1995/96 Guide.

## **INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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The International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education will hold its third biennial conference in Utrecht, The Netherlands, on 21-23 May 1995.



The aim of this conference is to have an international overview of issues and challenges in the daily practice of a quality assurance agency. The emphasis will be on small working groups in the setting of a working conference. Discussions will focus on these themes:

- a) improvement and accountability
- b) follow up of External Quality Assessment (EQA)
- c) role of governments and institutions
- d) Total Quality Management: suitable for higher education?

The conference fee is hfl700 (approximately HK\$3,150) payable before end of March. Pre-registration has commenced. The number of participants will be restricted to 150.

Further information about the Conference can be obtained from the HKCAA, or the following organizers in The Netherlands:

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The Netherlands  
Park Voorn 4  
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Tel: 31 3406 65704  
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## **LINKS WITH THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

### **Seminar on Qualification Assessment**

Two members of staff, Allan Sensicle and W S Wong, were invited to attend a seminar on Qualification Assessment and Registration for Professional Engineers and Quality Assurance in Higher Education, organized by the Chinese Society for Higher Education Evaluation, held at Tongji University in Shanghai in early November 1994. Two concurrent meetings took place, one to consider the setting up of an accreditation system for civil engineering in China, and the other to discuss the proposed 1996 conference.

At the seminar, Allan Sensicle presented a paper on "Aspects of the UK and USA Experience of Accreditation and Registration for the Engineering Profession". One of the central themes of the seminar was an exploration of the professional accreditation systems for engineers in countries such as the US and UK, which were to provide learning experiences for China as the country was trying to set up an accreditation system for its engineers. Other presentations at the conference related to the development of academic accreditation in China.

### **Professional accreditation**

Following the seminar, HKCAA delegates took part in a separate meeting conducted to discuss the proposed accreditation system for China's civil engineering profession. Participants included representatives from the Ministry of Construction and from the engineering profession and academics. Draft documents on Civil Engineering (Building) Accreditation in the PRC were discussed. The accreditation of civil engineering will be the responsibility of the National Board of Civil Engineering (Building) Accreditation. Members of the Board are to be appointed by the Ministry of Construction, on the recommendation of the National Steering Committee on Civil Engineering (Building) Programs in Higher Education Institution, the Architectural Society of China, and the China Civil Engineering Society.

It is understood that accreditation of civil engineering programmes will begin this year and all institutions with engineering programmes will be accredited in stages.

### **The 1996 International Conference in China**

A meeting was held by the Chinese Society for Higher Education Evaluation to discuss the proposed 1996 international conference on quality assurance. HKCAA had been invited to co-sponsor the conference and to join the organizing committee. Other co-sponsors include the Centre for Quality Assurance in International Education, established by Marjorie Peace-Lenn (former HKCAA Council member), and the Educational Exchange Service with China. Additional co-sponsors might be enlisted at a later stage.

The proposed theme of the conference is "Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Higher Education" and proposed topics include, the organization of quality assurance and evaluation in China, the evaluation of teaching quality and teaching processes, and international comparison of education evaluation.

It is planned that the conference will be held in May 1996 at the Beijing Normal University, with participants from China and from overseas. The first meeting of the organizing committee will be held in Hong Kong in April 1995.

### **Developments in academic accreditation**

New developments have occurred in the organization of academic accreditation in China. A new office was set up last year under the State Education Commission (SEC), called the Office for Accreditation of Higher Education which has the responsibility for the accreditation of higher education institutions. Pilot schemes were conducted last year and full-scale accreditation has begun this year. Institutions which are being accredited fall into two categories: existing/established institutions, and institutions newly set up in the last few years. Results of accreditation will have funding implications, and will affect funding not only for institutions under the State



Education Commission but also institutions under the jurisdiction of ministries. Results will also affect the operation of the institutions and those institutions failing accreditation could be required to stop recruitment or cease operation.

The accreditation of post-graduate programmes, currently conducted by the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, is expected to be coordinated by this new Accreditation Office in future.

### **Visit to the HKCAA**

In October 1994 a delegation from the State Education Commission, led by the Director of its Department of Policy and Legislation, Mr Wang Mao Gen, visited the HKCAA for discussion and information on Hong Kong's accreditation system. The delegation comprised other members from the Department and representatives from the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council.

### **RECOGNITION OF NON-LOCAL TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS**

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The HKCAA is represented on the Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications (ACTEQ) and its two sub-committees (Education and Qualifications). The recognition of non-local graduate teachers was one of the issues recently discussed at sub-committee level.

All primary school teaching posts at present have a non-graduate rank. In secondary schools, the overall proportion of graduates is less than 70%. In her last press release (mid-December), the chairperson of ACTEQ, Professor Felice Lieh Mak, stressed that in order to improve quality in education, teachers' qualifications should be enhanced. To this effect, ACTEQ proposes a scheme requiring holders of non-local degrees to go through a period of training and obtain a local Post-graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). Possession of the local PGCE will allow non-local graduates to be appointed as graduate teachers in secondary schools. The long-term aim is to require all graduate teachers, whether local or non-local, to acquire the PGCE. (Under the present system local graduates may be appointed as graduate teachers even without the PGCE, that is, without any professional training). The recommendation is for the PGCE requirement to apply to non-local graduates by September 1997, and then extended to holders of local degrees in about 2004. It is expected that the recommendation will be endorsed by the full ACTEQ Committee and forwarded to the Secretary for Education and Manpower shortly.

### **ACCREDITATION IN THE USA**

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In the USA a National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation (NPB) was established in June 1993, by the heads of nine regional accrediting

commissions and seven national higher education associations, to consider the future of academic accreditation in the US and to propose a framework for it. This initiative has come about in the wake of the disbandment of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), and in the face of increased public demand for accountability, and also federal attempts to put greater control on institutions and on accreditation agencies.

Deliberations by the NPB have resulted in a proposal to set up a Higher Education Accreditation Board (HEAB), membership of which will comprise institutional representatives, and members from industry and commerce. This Board will be chartered with powers to evaluate accreditation bodies, and to ensure that recognition standards and policies are developed.

More specifically the NPB hopes to achieve the following through the establishment of the HEAB.

- (a) defining common eligibility requirements for institutions seeking membership in regional accrediting bodies. Currently each of the six accrediting associations have their own criteria;
- (b) requiring regional accrediting agencies to have common accreditation standards;
- (c) encouraging the availability of public reports on results of accreditation; and
- (d) emphasizing the outcome of student learning in the accreditation process.

This proposal, contained in the Special Report on Accreditation published by the NPB in October 1994, will be considered for adoption by each of the regional agencies in the next few months. The specialized agencies have not yet been involved.

Dr John C Petersen, a member of the HKCAA Council, and Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, is member of the National Policy Board. He briefed Council members on developments at the NPB at the Tenth Council meeting.

### **EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN DENMARK**

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Dr Christian Thune, a member of the Council, made a presentation at the Tenth Council meeting on the topic of evaluation of higher education in Denmark. Dr Thune is director of the Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education. The following is based on Dr Thune's presentation and also a paper he presented at the Conference on 'Evaluation of Higher Education: European Experiences & German Perspectives' in September 1994.

The Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education was established by the Ministry of Education and Research in 1992 and funded



by the Ministry. It is an institution independent of the Ministry and also of the universities. The Centre is governed by a board composed of the five chairmen of the National Education Councils, and staffed by a Director, six academics in charge of projects, and a number of short-term staff employed on various projects.

The general mandate of the Centre is to initiate evaluation processes of higher education in Denmark. It conducts evaluation of degree programmes upon the request of either the Ministry of Education, the five National Education Councils, or the universities or schools of higher education themselves. In effect, in the first six years most of the evaluations are conducted at the request of the Education Councils. It is obligatory for the institutions to undergo evaluations requested by the Ministry or the Councils.

The other part of the Centre's mandate relates to the provision of guidance to higher education institutions in aspects concerning evaluation and quality, and compiling national and international experiences on educational evaluation.

The Centre has decided to base its activities on the evaluation of all study programmes within a specific discipline. Programmes will be evaluated on a rotating basis every five years. There are also ad hoc evaluations in respect of programmes where problems have arisen. By the end of 1994 the Centre has concluded the first fourteen full-scale evaluations, in the disciplines of history, biology, and building engineering. The Centre is at the same time making preparations to start evaluation in the non-university further education sector.

Generally an evaluation of programmes covers a period of nine to twelve months and comprises the stages of planning, self-evaluation, user surveys, visit, and reporting and conference.

The planning phase includes the establishment of a steering committee of four experts; and the holding of a general meeting to inform all departments concerned of the aims and procedures of the evaluation. The steering committee comprises subject experts, at least one person with a general expertise in higher education, and two representatives of the employers of graduates.

The experts are appointed either from within Denmark or from other Nordic countries.

A self-evaluation report is produced by an internal evaluation group of the department concerned and follows a standard set of guidelines issued by the Centre.

In the user survey phase the Centre conducts surveys of graduates, students, and employers, using various sampling techniques. This is followed by the visiting phase when a panel consisting of representatives of the steering committee, sometimes supplemented with independent experts, visits departments and discusses the self-evaluation report, the user survey results and external examiners reports with the institution's management, teaching staff and students.

A draft report is then discussed during a one-day conference when representatives of institutions have an opportunity to comment on the evaluation. In the final stage, the Education Council will advise the Ministry on the specific recommendations in the evaluation report.

## **THE EUROPEAN PILOT PROJECT FOR EVALUATING QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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Dr Christian Thune also reported on recent developments concerning a European pilot project for evaluating quality in higher education which involves the member states of the European Community. At present, the Project covers 46 higher education institutions in 17 European countries.

This Project, started in 1994, is based on the existing methods and procedures of quality assurance in practice in the UK, France, the Netherlands, and Denmark, which are the four countries having a national system of quality assurance. It will adopt criteria which are common to these four systems, aiming to set common measurable objectives for quality, and secondly, at dispersing and disseminating these methods to other European countries. The project does not aim to rank the institutions which are evaluated.

The Project will involve both university programmes and vocational training programmes at higher educational levels, so as to permit participation of both university and non-university institutions. Participation by institutions is voluntary.

The methodology used is derived from the following elements common to the four national evaluation systems mentioned above:

- autonomy and independence of procedures and methods concerning quality evaluation from the government as well as from the higher education institutions;
- self-assessment in the discipline involved as an important part of the evaluation process;
- external assessment by a peer review group (group of experts) and site visits as another part of the evaluation process; and
- publication of a report.

A specific objective of the Project is to concentrate on methods of evaluating teaching quality. The Project could at the same time evaluate research activities and the management of higher education institutions in so far as these impact on the quality of teaching.

The evaluation process will consist of the following steps: self-assessment of the participating institutions according to a checklist; external assessment by a peer review group including site visits resulting in a department report; and finally the writing of the national report and the European report.

At the initial stage a self-assessment group has to be formed at the department/discipline level. This group



will be responsible for producing a self-assessment report according to a checklist, the purpose of which is to facilitate ease of analysis through the use of a consistent format. The checklist consists of headings such as institutional context, aims and objectives of programme, teaching and learning practice, assessment of students, staff, facilities, quality management, and external relationships. Supplementary data are required for student study load, drop-out and completion rates, employment rates etc, and also a number of data relating to staff.

The Peer Review Group shall be formed comprising a chairperson, two experts from the academic field, an expert from the relevant employment sector, at least one expert from one of the other participating countries, and one secretary who could also be a member of the group. Members of the Group will be appointed by the National Committees in each country.

Prior to the site visit, the Peer Review Group will have two preliminary meetings at which members will discuss their initial views on the report and formulate terms of reference for the review. At the site visit, it is expected that the Group will have meetings with the university authorities, with the self-assessment group, staff members, students, and representatives of relevant committees. Facilities will be looked at, and classroom visits may also be conducted.

In assessing the quality of the department/programme, the Peer Review Group will look for the following factors: 1) stated goals and aims of the programme; 2) how these are translated into the curricula; 3) whether student assessment reflects the content of the programme; and 4) whether the graduates have acquired the expected skills, knowledge, and attitudes. The Review group will keep in mind the aims and objectives as stated by the Department and there is no intention to impose criteria and standards from outside.

The Peer Review Group drafts the department report and the institution/department will have an opportunity to comment on the factual accuracy of the report before it is submitted to the National Committee. The national report will be written by the National Committee based on the reports of the Peer Review Groups and the experiences of the evaluation. The National Committee comprises representatives of the national authorities, of the academic community, and of professional organizations as appropriate.

At the final stage the national reports are forwarded to the European Committee, which is composed of the chairmen and/or secretaries of the National Committees and members of the management group. The management group then prepares the European report. The European report, as well as the national reports, are sent to all the National Committees of the participating countries.

Starting with a launch conference in November 1994 the pilot project will go ahead in 1995 and it is planned that the preparation of the final report will take place towards the end of 1995.

## **ACCREDITATION EXERCISES**

Some of the accreditation exercise activities that have and are being conducted are listed below:

### **LINGNAN COLLEGE**

#### **VALIDATION**

##### **BA Chinese: conversion programme**

A conversion programme for the former graduates from the non-honours diploma and higher diploma programmes of the College was approved for offer from September 1994 to 1996. This conversion programme leads to a non-honours BA in Chinese.

#### **REVALIDATION**

##### **BSocSc(Hons)**

This degree completed its revalidation in December 1994. The revalidated degree was approved to offer two new streams of study, International Political and Legal Affairs, and Public Policy and Resources Allocation. The new streams will be available to current Year 2 students.

#### **MONITORING**

##### **BA Chinese (Hons)**

A condition placed on this degree which was approved in 1993, relates to the appointment of new staff. The condition has now been met.

### **ACADEMY FOR PERFORMING ARTS**

There was a condition placed on the institutional review of the Academy which relates to the submission of an Academic Development Plan. The Academy had submitted the required Plan and the condition is considered to have been met.

The HKCAA also had discussions with the APA with regard to Advanced Entry to degree programmes and commenced an interim institutional review.

### **OPEN LEARNING INSTITUTE OF HONG KONG**

#### **MONITORING**

##### **School of Business and Administration**

Validation of the Bachelor of Business Administration, Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) Accounting and Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) Business Information Systems programmes was carried out in December 1992. The programmes were approved with conditions which have been met except one, being the external scrutiny of courses which have not been developed but have been planned for at the time of validation.

The HKCAA has since received and considered blueprints from the School of Business and Administration for these planned courses. All were found satisfactory. Submission of four more courses is expected in 1995/96.