

香港學術評審局

HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR
ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION

HKCAA

ACCREDIT
NOTE

ISSUE NO.15 JUNE 1997

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

June 1997 is a significant time as this marks the last month before the change in political sovereignty in Hong Kong. Our bi-annual Council meeting is traditionally scheduled in early June and its coincidence with the Handover period this year lent a special meaning to the meeting. It provided an opportune time for us to ponder upon the role and future directions of the HKCAA, to explore the long term development of the Council in the new era as well as the implications of the political changes upon our work.

As 1997 was approaching, many friends and colleagues asked about the future position of the HKCAA and whether there will be any changes brought about by the change in Government. When our Council sent a delegation to China nearly two years ago, we already posed these questions to the Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council, whose officials gave a very positive reply and assured our Council and similar organisations playing an advisory role to Government of their continuation of present roles after 1997. Thus no major change in policy was foreseen either for the role or the functions of the Council. Indeed, it is stated in the Basic Law for Hong Kong Special Administrative Region that policies regarding the recognition of educational qualifications shall be formulated on the basis of the previous educational system.

We have also felt encouraged by the importance being attached to the development of quality assurance in higher education in mainland China. During our past years of liaison with education authorities on the mainland, we have witnessed a continuous growth of both theory and practice devoted to the enhancement and assurance of quality in higher education. We are heartened to find that the work of our Council is viewed positively by our counterparts on the mainland.

In recognition of this historical moment in 1997, our Council organised a seminar on Quality Assurance Development and Processes which featured speakers from mainland China, and from the UK and US. The presence of speakers from the PRC and the participation from both Government and educational circles is perhaps symbolic of the close links between Government initiatives and institutional initiatives in quality assurance in both Hong

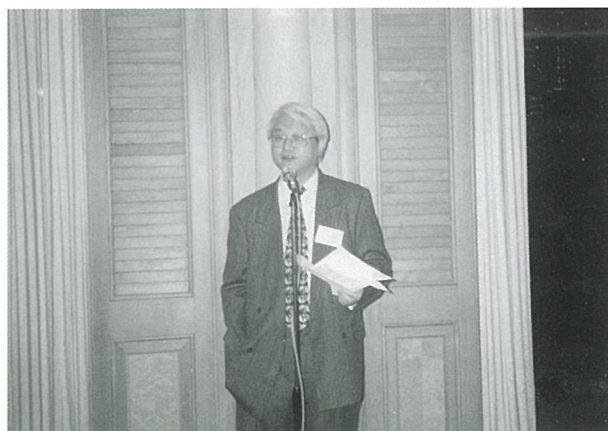
Kong and the mainland. The participation of speakers from the UK and the US is symbolic of the international nature of education in Hong Kong and our concern for international comparability. It was gratifying to find that the seminar was well supported by colleagues from many tertiary and educational institutions and Government organisations.

As Hong Kong enters a new era under the limelight of the whole world, our Council will embrace its mission with even greater earnestness than before. We shall hold steadfast our goal to promote the awareness and the practice of quality assurance in education in Hong Kong.

Andrew Chuang
June, 1997

REAPPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

We are pleased to announce that the Council's current Chairman Dr Andrew Chuang, JP has accepted reappointment for another year as from 8 June 1997. It is a boost to Council's morale that our Chairman for the past five years will lead us into a new era upon the reversion of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China at this time. The continuity provided by the experience and dedication of Dr Chuang will further affirm the standing of the Council as a Quality Expert in Higher Education for this transitional period.



Dr Andrew Chuang, Chairman, speaking at the Council dinner in June 1997.

Dr Chuang was appointed a member of the HKCAA in 1990 and appointed Chairman in 1992. He has led the Council in its initial growing days and successfully steered its development through many different phases, widening both the scope of the Council's work as well as broadening its contacts and links internationally and regionally. Dr Chuang has dedicated valuable time to the Council, himself being a leading industrialist with world-wide interests. We are pleased that he has been persuaded to change his original plans and stay on to lead the Council during a crucial time of development.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Outgoing Members

Two current members of Council Professor Kam Wai Kee and Professor David Meredith will be leaving in June/July 1997. The HKCAA wishes to thank these members for their dedicated service on the Council.

Professor Kam joined the Council in June 1992, and had been reappointed by the Governor to the Council for another two terms since then. Professor Kam has continuously contributed to the Council's work, sharing with fellow members his vast knowledge and experience of higher education. At the same time he retires from the Council, Professor Kam will also retire from active university life.

Professor David Meredith will be leaving Hong Kong after he leaves the service of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in July.

The Council offers Professors Kam and Meredith best wishes in their future endeavours. Although he has only been on Council for one year, Professor Meredith has participated actively in the Council's forums and discussions and demonstrated a serious concern for the Council's work.

New Appointments

Some of the newly appointed members had been introduced in the last issue of *Accredit Note*. Brief notes on the others are included in this section.



Mr Joseph W P Wong, Secretary for Education and Manpower, chatting with Council members and the Chairman at Council dinner on June 6, 1997.

Professor Barry John Bannister

Professor Bannister is a graduate in English and Psychology (BA), Letters (BLitt), Education (MEd), Curriculum Development (Graduation Diploma), and Educational Evaluation (PhD). He has worked in government and the private sector as well as in schools and universities in the Asia Pacific region.

He started his academic career as a lecturer in liberal studies and during twenty five years has worked in six different universities holding head of department, Dean and Director positions. He worked at Hong Kong Polytechnic from 1990-1993 as coordinator of postgraduate studies and Head of the Management Department. Following this he held the Chair of Management Education at the Graduate School of Business at RMIT in Melbourne, where he was also Executive Director. Since March 1996 he has been Associate Vice-President (Academic) at Lingnan College.

Professor Bannister has a special interest in education and institutional development in China, is honorary Professor of Management at Lanzhou University and also has formal relationships with the People's University of China and Fudan University in Shanghai, where he has been instrumental in establishing an executive development centre. He is a member of Governing Boards in four countries, including that of the International Business Ethics Institute, headquartered in Washington. Professor Bannister has been the founding editor of three academic journals, as well as the *Evaluation Journal of Australia*. In his spare time he enjoys walking in Hong Kong's country parks and is a supporter of the Hong Kong Philharmonic and the Hong Kong Ballet.

Professor Peter N Dobson

Professor Peter Dobson received his BS degree in Physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1958, and worked for several years in defense related research and development for Raytheon Corporation in Waltham, Massachusetts and Westinghouse Corporation in Baltimore, Maryland. He began postgraduate study in 1960 at the University of Maryland and was awarded the PhD in Physics in 1965.

Professor Dobson entered the academic profession as an Assistant Professor at the University of Hawaii in Honolulu. He was involved in research and teaching as a member of the High Energy Physics Group in the Department of Physics and Astronomy. His research interests included quantum field theory and other theoretical approaches to elementary particle physics. He was promoted to Professor of Physics in 1975.

In 1978, he took on an administrative assignment as Assistant Vice-Chancellor for Faculty Affairs at the University of Hawaii's main campus. He subsequently served as Acting Chancellor of the University of Hawaii at Hilo, and Assistant Vice-President for Academic Affairs for the University's seven campus system. During this

latter period, he was the acting Vice-President for Academic Affairs for two periods of more than a year.

In 1985-1986, on leave from the University of Hawaii, Professor Dobson lived in Beijing where he served as a consultant to Wang Computer China, Ltd. He returned to Hawaii in 1987 as chief executive of Leeward Community College, a two year campus in the University of Hawaii system.

In June 1989, Professor Dobson came to Hong Kong to take up the post of Director of Planning and Co-ordination for the new University of Science and Technology. He served in that capacity until 1994, when he took up his current post as Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs. His current responsibilities include academic planning, and administration of the University's undergraduate programmes.

Professor David Dunkerley

David Dunkerley, BA, MSc(Econ), PhD is Professor and Head of Sociology at the University of Glamorgan in South Wales, a post he has held for the last two years. Prior to that he was Professor of Applied Sociology at the University of Plymouth since 1980. His career has also involved him in teaching and research posts at the University of Leeds, Griffith University (Australia), Iowa State University and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw.

He has a long experience of validation and accreditation matters, having been a member of the Committee for Social Sciences and Vice Chair of the Committee for Research at the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). As a CNAA member he was involved in validation events in Hong Kong before the establishment of the HKCAA. With the formation of the latter, Professor Dunkerley has chaired and been a member of a number of validation panels at a variety of Hong Kong tertiary institutions.

In the UK he has been active member of the Economic and Social Research Council, having sat on both the Training Board and the Research Grants Board. He is also a very experienced examiner of first and higher degrees.

Professor Dunkerley's research interests span two broad areas - the investigation of social exclusion and organisational governance. With the former he is conducting a large pan-European study of exclusion in areas of recent de-industrialisation; the latter involves a study of middle management in private and public sector organisations and is funded by the ESRC. He has been a prolific writer of ten books and dozens of refereed articles.

His major spare time activity is an extension of his professional activity and involves working with and for Citizens Advice Bureaux on matters of social welfare, debt management and benefit entitlements. He has recently been elected Chair of the South Wales Area of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Dr Richard M W Ho, JP

Dr Ho received his BA and MPhil degrees in Chinese from the University of Hong Kong in 1969 and 1972 respectively, and his PhD degree in Chinese Studies from the University of London in 1975. In 1974, he went from London to the University of Wisconsin, where he taught Chinese literature and Chinese philosophy for two years before returning to Hong Kong to become a television executive. In 1979, he joined the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he taught classical Chinese literature. In 1996, he was appointed the University's Registrar.

Dr Ho has a long history of community service in Hong Kong. He was a member of the Regional Council from 1986, the year of the Regional Council's inception, to 1995, and was instrumental in the cultural development of the New Territories.

Mrs Marie-Odile Ottenwaelter

Mrs Marie-Odile Ottenwaelter had degrees in French and classics, and taught at the Collège Chantierine and École normale d'instituteur of Auteuil for many years. She also held visiting professorships to universities in Paris and University of California. She has published widely on methodological research concerning evaluation of teaching and research.

Mrs Ottenwaelter is currently Programme Manager of the Evaluation Commission of France, and was a member of Management Group for the European Pilot Project for Evaluating Quality in Higher Education. This Management Group was responsible for the implementation of the evaluation project in seventeen participating countries.

Mrs Ottenwaelter was a panel member in the institutional review of the Hong Kong Institute of Education. She was also a speaker at a seminar on Teacher Education Developments conducted by the HKCAA in early 1996.

More New Members

The Secretary for Education and Manpower has recently appointed another four new members to the Council. They are: Mr Herbert Ho-ming Hui, Managing Director of Guangdong Investments Limited; Mr Eddy Sau-hung Li, Managing Director of Campell Timer Limited; Professor Wong Hoi-kwok, Principal of Higher Vocational Studies, City University of Hong Kong; and Professor Danny Shek-nam Wong, Vice President, The Open University of Hong Kong.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

The fourteenth Council meeting was held on 6-7 December 1996. A three-year work plan as well as a three-year financial plan were scrutinised and approved by members.

Members considered the impending registration of non-

local courses as required by the Government and the role of the Council as advisor to the Government in implementing the concerned legislation. The procedures and criteria to be adopted in carrying out the task were discussed.

In other discussions, the Council noted that it has the relevant experience and expertise to undertake academic accreditation of local sub-degree programmes, and believed that the Council's work could be further developed in this direction.

New projects enhancing the Council's link with China, which was deemed an important area of development, included the future publication of a Glossary of Terms and a Newsletter, both in cooperation with the Shaanxi Education Commission. The Council and the Commission had reciprocated visit delegations in June and October, 1996 respectively.

There were also activity reports on accreditation, qualification assessments and evaluation of professional examinations.

At the fifteenth meeting of Council held on 6-7 June 1997, discussion continued with the consideration of the forthcoming implementation of the Ordinance for the control of non-local courses and the planning of advisory work in relation to this. Council noted an increase in the number of non-local courses and thus the implication of a greater workload than originally expected.

Council also discussed matters of principles relating to the assessment and comparability of qualifications.

At this meeting Council also reviewed in general its role and activities and formulated plans and strategies for future development.

STAFF NEWS

Dr Herbert Huey joined the Secretariat as Registrar from January 2, 1997 on secondment from the University of Hong Kong. He will work with the Council for two years. Dr Huey has degrees from the University of Hong Kong and the Australian National University, and had taught in universities in Hong Kong and Australia. He had also worked as an administrator in the Hong Kong Polytechnic and Lingnan College before becoming Assistant Registrar at the University of Hong Kong.

REGISTRATION OF NON-LOCAL COURSES

In the past months the HKCAA Secretariat has intensified preparatory work for HKCAA's advisory role with regard to the impending implementation of the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance targetted at protecting local consumers against the marketing of sub-standard non-local courses offered in Hong Kong.

The Council has been involved in the formulation of procedures and criteria for evaluating overseas courses;



The Announcement of the Implementation of the Non-local Higher and Professional Education Ordinance.

the updating/reviewing of its database on overseas courses currently on offer; and discussion with and provision of assistance to the Education Department (ED) regarding registration procedures and design of application forms.

The ED will engage the HKCAA's advisory service in respect of the registration of both academic and professional courses and all courses will be referred to HKCAA for advice on initial registration.

A Standing Committee on Non-local Courses has been formed under the HKCAA Council to consider and approve all cases referred to HKCAA for advice. The Committee is chaired by Professor John Leong/Dr Andrew Chuang and comprise other Council members; and the Committee will co-opt external members as appropriate.

The Secretary for Education and Manpower officially announced on 20 June 1997 that the NIHPE Ordinance and Rules had come into operation with effect from that date, and applications for registration were invited. The offence provision will come into effect on 1 December 1997 and this means that after that date, new courses cannot commence unless they are exempted or registered. The statutory 6-month grace period for existing courses will end on 1 June 1998 by which time existing courses cannot operate unless they are exempted or registered.

A briefing session for operators of non-local courses was jointly conducted by the Council and the Education Department on 5 July 1997.

OBSERVATION VISIT OF PRC VALIDATIONS

By invitation of the Shanghai Institution of Higher Education Evaluation, the HKCAA Executive Director and Registrar Ms Connie Lok visited Shanghai in late April 1997 to attend, as observers, the evaluation exercise for the Shanghai Institute of Tourism scheduled during 21 to 25 April 1997. This visit was the first time that HKCAA was able to observe an accreditation exercise conducted in the P.R.C.

The visit to Shanghai was arranged in the spirit of the cooperation agreement, signed by the Council and the

Shanghai Institution of Higher Education Evaluation in May 1996, which stipulates that the two parties will, inter alia, organise visits on a regular or ad hoc basis for study purposes, or participate in each other's accreditation activities.

The evaluation exercise was jointly organised by the Shanghai Education Commission and the Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administration for the purpose of assessing the standard of the tourism management studies offered in all (a total of 9) higher education institutions in Shanghai. The two organisations also provide financial support to the exercise and were responsible for announcing the final result of the evaluation. The planning and administration of the evaluation exercise were carried out by the Shanghai Institution of Higher Education Evaluation (SIHEE).



Meeting of the panel to formulate its conclusions.

The evaluation system adopted by the SIHEE compares closely with that of this Council. Some similarities and differences can be drawn. The similarities include the formation of evaluation panels drawing on the expertise of both academics and professionals in the particular discipline; the conducting of a critical self-evaluation by the higher education institution on which the external evaluation is based; the use of similar criteria such as those relating to the structure and content of programmes, teaching and resources, staffing and staff development, links with industry, etc. Thus the evaluation is focused on the academic standard attained by the programme as well as their applicability to society. And similar to what is done in Hong Kong and other systems, a site visit to the institution is arranged at the end of which a report is submitted by the SIHEE to the commissioning authority.

The major differences which were observed include the use of a standardized list of evaluation criteria in both the self-evaluation and the evaluation by the panel; the design of a grading system for evaluation and the use of indicators which are graded quantitatively; and the inclusion of evaluation criteria pertaining to the moral and political attributes of students.

It was also found that heavier emphasis is placed by the

SIHEE on the appraisals by graduates and employers in the industry. A survey by the use of questionnaires was conducted by SIHEE the results of which provided part of the basis for evaluation

In addition to participating in the evaluation visit, the HKCAA representatives also met with the Director of the SIHEE (who is also Director of the P211 Office of the Shanghai Education Commission) and other officers from the Shanghai Education Commission during the visit.

COUNCIL'S VISIT TO TAIWAN (CHINA)

In March 1997, a delegation from the HKCAA comprising the Executive Director, Miss W S Wong, and one of the Registrars, Ms Emily Leung, visited Taiwan (China) to obtain better understanding of the higher education system in Taiwan and its quality assurance developments. Visits were paid to the "Ministry of Education" ("MOE") and a number of tertiary institutions including three national universities, two private universities and a junior college.

The delegation found that there has not been any major change in the higher education system in Taiwan since the Council's last visit in 1993. There are currently a total of 16 national universities and 8 private universities, plus 19 national colleges, 2 municipal colleges and 22 private colleges. A large proportion of the population in Taiwan has access to further and higher education. The participation rate indicates that for the 95/96 academic year, around 28% of the relevant age group has access to higher education.



HKCAA Executive Director Miss W S Wong (second left) and Registrar Ms Emily Leung (far left) exchanging souvenirs with representatives of the Chinese Culture University, Taiwan after the visit.

The MOE still exercises considerable control over the higher education institutions, including the grant of resources, curriculum design, the approval of new departments and new degree programmes, the accreditation of programmes, and the appointment and

promotion of staff. Nonetheless, in respect of staff appointment and promotion, one major step taken by the MOE in recent years is the delegation of this authority to a number of eligible institutions.

Admission to universities and colleges in Taiwan is based almost entirely on the results obtained in the **Universities and Colleges Joint Entrance Examination (UCJEE)** (大學聯合招生考試), which is supervised by the MOE. Only about half of those sitting the examination are successful.

It is a long time practice in Taiwan to publish the results of the UCJEE in details. The weighted average marks and weighted minimum marks for entry to each programme in individual universities/colleges are released. This enables candidates seeking admission to undergraduate programmes to make their choices accordingly.

With a view to upgrading the quality of education in the private universities and colleges, the MOE undertook a pilot institutional review project in 1996 and all private universities and colleges were asked to submit an Interim Institutional Development Plan for MOE's review. The project covered all the 8 private universities, 6 private technical colleges, 6 private medical colleges and 5 private management colleges. The institutions took the exercise seriously as the results would affect MOE's allocation of grants to them.

It was noted that a similar institutional accreditation project will be conducted by MOE amongst the public universities and colleges very soon.

The delegation considered the visit a fruitful one as it was able to obtain more up-to-date information about current developments of higher education in Taiwan and it also fostered closer links with educational counterparts in Taiwan.

CONFERENCE

The Vice-Chairman of the Council, Professor John Leong and Dr Herbert Huey, Registrar, participated in the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education Conference, held in South Africa between 24-28 May, 1997. Professor Leong presented a paper on "The Control of Non-local Courses Offered in Hong Kong by Overseas Institutions and the Role of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation". The paper was well received; and fervent discussion was generated which showed that global transaction of educational programmes is a popular topic. Dr Huey presented two papers: "Assuring Quality in Teaching and Learning - A University of Hong Kong Review" and "The Accreditation of a Distance Learning Institution and Its Achievement of Self-Accreditation Status: The Role of an External Agency" (the latter on behalf of Ms W S Wong). A summary of Professor Leong's paper on "Non-local courses" is as follows:

The Control of Non-local Courses offered in Hong Kong by Overseas Institutions and the Role of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation *Professor John Leong*

Over 300 courses leading to the award of post-secondary academic or professional qualifications are being offered in Hong Kong by overseas institutions, including institutions from the UK, Australia, US, China, and other places. So far there has been no control by the Government over the operation of non-local institutions in Hong Kong. Although no serious complaints have been received there are also concerns that the quality of some of the courses offered is dubious. The Government has therefore recently introduced legislation aimed at regulating all overseas courses being offered in Hong Kong. The Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance was passed in July 1996 and will take effect in the latter part of 1997.

Under the new legislation non-local courses leading to the award of post-secondary academic qualifications or professional qualifications cannot be conducted in Hong Kong unless the course is registered or exempted from registration. Courses conducted in Hong Kong, for the purpose of the legislation, refer to a course of education consisting of any of the following activities: examinations, lectures, tutorials, seminars, group discussion, instructions or dissemination of information or materials. Existing courses will be given a grace period of six months to apply for registration after the law takes effect but new courses will not be allowed to operate until registration is completed. Under the new legislation it will be illegal to conduct a course or act as an agent for such a course, and also illegal to advertise any such course, unless it is registered or exempted from registration.

The purpose of the legislation is to protect local consumers against the marketing of substandard courses conducted in Hong Kong. To achieve this objective, only courses which are recognised by the awarding institution, the accreditation authorities and the academic communities in the home countries, may be conducted in Hong Kong. A further criterion for registration is that the standard of such courses should be maintained at levels comparable to those achieved in the home countries. For professional courses which lead to professional qualifications, these have to be recognised by the professional body in the overseas country. It is possible to apply for exemption under the Ordinance and this is granted only to courses which are conducted in collaboration with local tertiary institutions in Hong Kong as defined in the Ordinance.

The Registrar of courses is the Director of Education. The Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation, a statutory body in Hong Kong, is the named advisor to the Registrar under the Ordinance.

The process of registration is not a process of

accreditation and it does not aim at requiring that courses offered in Hong Kong are of a certain standard, whether of international standard or Hong Kong standard. Rather, the criteria of registration, as mentioned before, are the comparability of the course with the standard of a course offered in the home country leading to the same qualifications, and its recognition by the home institution.

The HKCAA will be required to offer advice on the 'registrability' of such courses according to the stipulated criteria. For assessing these courses the HKCAA will not be conducting an accreditation according to its usual procedures for accreditation, but an evaluation of the courses will be made according to criteria which are of particular relevance to the quality of off-campus courses.

The first stage of assessment will be for the purpose of initial registration. According to the Ordinance, non-local courses should be able to demonstrate that 'effective measures' are in place to guarantee that standards are being maintained in accordance with standards in the home country.

The HKCAA will not set specific mandatory requirements as to what these 'effective measures' are: institutions should have the autonomy to put in place measures which it regards as effective to maintain and guarantee quality. However, there are rudimentary questions which can be asked of any institution, and its answers to some of these questions can throw light on 1) whether it has paid attention to the quality of off-campus courses 2) whether it has designed effective systems for the maintenance of quality of these courses.

These questions will broadly concern the following areas:

- (1) The overall control of the institution over its off-campus courses.
- (2) The control and monitoring processes put in place for maintaining the quality of the off-shore teaching programme: its delivery and assessment, its student intake, and its teaching support including staffing.
- (3) The systems put in place to ensure that control and monitoring processes named in (1) and (2) are operating effectively.

The first type of questions concerns whether the overseas institution has formal structures and policies for the conduct and control of off-campus courses, and whether the off-campus courses are recognised as of comparable standard and status by the home institution.

The second type of question addresses issues concerning the detailed operation of these off-campus courses:

- whether the programme content and structure are comparable to that of a similar programme in the home country; and if adaptations to content and structure have been made whether standards have been compromised;
- whether modes and methods of delivery are of comparable standard and where these have been adapted, for instance, to a distance learning mode,

whether standards can still be maintained;

- whether teaching support such as staff (whether deployed from overseas or locally appointed) and other learning support are of comparable standard;
- whether the quality of student intake is maintained;
- whether assessment methods and criteria used will maintain the quality of courses.

In seeking answers to these questions it will be necessary to examine the measures which are in place to ensure that the responsible department/staff in the home institution have sufficient control over the above areas of the operation of the course. Where control is delegated to a local agent/representative office, whether formal control and reporting procedure continue to be maintained; whether the local agent is sufficiently equipped to deal with the academic operation of the course as opposed to its administration.

There is no set formula for how effective measures of control and monitoring of quality should be maintained, as these would be influenced by the nature of the off-campus operation, its size and mode of delivery, and the nature of any twinning or partnership arrangement with local bodies.

The second stage of quality control of these non-local courses in Hong Kong happens at the time when the courses need to submit an annual return to secure continuous registration. The HKCAA will be required to evaluate whether the courses continue to satisfy the criteria for registration.

This is the stage when the effectiveness of the control and quality assurance mechanisms of the overseas institution and/or its agent will be assessed. This is actually a stage which begins immediately after the initial registration and the HKCAA will be engaged in a continuous process of monitoring of the quality of overseas programmes. This process of monitoring will focus on the gathering of information on specific indicators of quality; this may be done as part of a comprehensive monitoring exercise or in response to complaints received, or when dubious operation is suspected from misleading advertising etc. Courses which are found to be no longer satisfying registration criteria can have their registration cancelled.

The legislation provides for the first attempt to control the quality of off-campus courses in this part of the world and it will certainly be of interest to other countries/territories wishing to do the same. The legislation is not ideal, as there are potential limitations in it. Firstly, pure distance learning programmes are not regulated by this law. Secondly, the yardstick of quality is not any international standard or any prescribed standard other than the standard of courses in the home country. This limits the opportunity to raise the quality of those off-campus courses in Hong Kong whose standard is of dubious quality but which is comparable to that in the home country. However, it has been argued that these

potential limitations have to be balanced against the advantages of the freedom of communication and the freedom of choice in the society of Hong Kong.

SEMINARS

Last December the Council organised a seminar on the quality assurance developments in tertiary education in Europe, People's Republic of China and Australia. Four distinguished professionals and current members of our governing Council presented their papers followed by questions and answers. They include Professor Kwong Lee Dow, Dean of the Institute of Education of the University of Melbourne, Professor Wang Zhong Lie, Deputy Secretary-General of the Office of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, PRC, Dr Christian Thune, Director of Danish Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education and Mrs Marie-Odile Ottenwaelter, Programme Manager of the Evaluation Commission of France.

The speakers described the main features of quality assurance within Australia, New Zealand, the People's Republic of China and France, and also current cross-national initiatives in Western and Eastern Europe.

In May, the Executive Director, Miss W S Wong spoke at a seminar jointly organised by the Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union and the Teachers Association of the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The theme of the seminar was centred on "Teacher Education for the New Era". Miss Wong gave an overview of the role played by the Council in monitoring the quality of teacher training programmes which are available to students in Hong Kong through the accreditation of local teacher training programmes and the registration of non-local courses of study offered by overseas institutions in Hong Kong.

The Council held a public seminar in June 1997 focusing on recent developments of quality assurance systems in the PRC, UK and USA. The speakers from the PRC were Professor Wang Yajie, Associate Director of the Office of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, Professor Zhang Tailing, Deputy Director-



Executive Director, HKCAA presiding at the Seminar of June, 1997.

General of the Department of Higher Education of Guangdong Province, Professor Xu Demin, Vice President of the Northwestern Polytechnical University and Mr Huang Yusheng, Division Chief of Teaching Affairs of the South China Normal University. Two current members of the Council who spoke at the seminar were Professor David Dunkerley, Head of Sociology at the University of Glamorgan and Dr John Petersen, the former Executive Director of the Accrediting Commission of Community and Junior Colleges of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, USA.

The seminar was organised with plenary presentations and group discussions. The speakers delineated key features of the quality assurance mechanisms in the PRC at state and institution levels, recent developments regarding the single quality assurance agency in the UK and the coordination of higher education accreditation in the USA. The audience participated in interactive group discussions on how these developments and new initiatives are of relevance to the Hong Kong higher education context.



Dr Andrew Chuang, Chairman presenting souvenir to Professor Xu Demin at the June Seminar.

Due to the limitation of space, excerpts from two of the papers presented are included in this issue.

Mr Wang's and Professor Dunkerley's papers are summarised as follows:

Structure of Academic Degrees and the Quality Assurance System in the People's Republic of China *Mr Wang Yajie*

The Chinese academic degree system has started since 1 January 1981. It has now developed into a well-established, multi-disciplined and quality-assured system in which degrees are primarily awarded by institutions of higher education.

Academic Degrees Administration

Academic degrees in China are administered by a three-tier system: State, Provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities), and relevant departments and degree conferring units in the State Council.

The major responsibilities of the State Council Academic Degree Committee (ADCSC) are: to develop state-wide academic degrees policies and coordinate with relevant departments in implementation; to approve bachelor, master, doctoral degree conferring units and the corresponding disciplines and specialisms; to organise degree conferment and quality assurance at all levels; to organise regular meetings to discuss major problems and define key issues. The ADCSC has established an executive office - the Office of the ADCSC.

The ADCSC establishes discipline evaluation groups for different disciplines. These discipline evaluation groups are academic organisations responsible for considering and approving disciplines for which degrees can be conferred; approving new doctoral and master degree conferring units and institutions; evaluating the quality of degree and postgraduate education.

The ADCSC has approved the establishment of provincial academic degrees committees in 16 provinces and municipalities. These provincial bodies are responsible for approving applications for new master degrees and evaluating standards and qualities in their own provinces.

“The Directory of Subjects and Specialisms of Doctoral and Master Degrees and Postgraduate Education” is an important guideline for the effective macro-management of postgraduate education by the State Government. Its functions are to: define the specialism areas of degree conferring authority; define the type of degrees to be conferred; set out a programme of postgraduate education; outline procedures for enrolment and training, etc.

The Directory is categorized by fields of study, first-level disciplines and second-level disciplines. At present, there are 88 first-level disciplines and 381 second-level disciplines on the Directory.

Chinese higher degrees are in generally divided into two types, namely research and applied studies: Higher degrees of applied studies refer mainly to professional degrees which currently comprise MBA, architecture, law, education, engineering and clinical medicine.

Approval of Degree-Confering Status

Approval of degree-confering status of higher institutions or research institutes is a primary mechanism for the government’s control on the quality of academic degrees. The approval process covers evaluation on the overall conditions of the degree conferring unit as well as individual subjects and specialisms. It is conducted by the discipline evaluation groups, established under the ADCSC, which approve the status for conferring doctoral and master degrees. The list of degree conferring units is then finalised by the ADCSC. Doctoral and master degrees are primarily based upon the second-level discipline classification in the Directory of Subjects and Specialisms.

Quality Assurance Mechanisms of Degree and Postgraduate Education

The evaluation of quality of degree and postgraduate education focuses primarily on disciplines, and is targeted on first-level and second-level disciplines respectively. Evaluation is divided into pass evaluation (evaluation against certain standards) and best practices evaluation depending on the nature of evaluation. In addition, evaluation is organised at different levels: The ADCSC organises either evaluation of doctoral degrees on its own, or in conjunction with relevant ministries; or the ADCSC commissions relevant ministries to conduct evaluation of master and doctoral degrees in subject disciplines which are more professional-oriented; or it commissions provincial academic degree committees to conduct evaluation of master degrees in subject disciplines which are more general in nature.

Evaluation covers the current situations of the teaching team and supervisors, standards of scientific research, teaching quality, administration, standards of dissertations of postgraduate students, etc. In general, evaluation is divided into various stages: The unit under evaluation first undergoes a self-evaluation and submits a self-evaluation report together with relevant statistic and proforma. Then, further data are sought and a panel is formed to provide comments by correspondence and to conduct grading (pass/fail or Grade A, B, C) or ranking. At the same time, a random review of the graduation dissertations is conducted. The overall results are then analysed and confirmed by the panel, and an on-site visit is conducted.

Reform in Degree and Postgraduate Education

Quality development will continue to be the current focus in higher education in China. It means that while the number of degree-confering units remains unchanged, the scale of operation is optimised, structure is refined, and quality and effectiveness are substantially improved through reform and internal adjustments. Accordingly, it is necessary to plan the scope and the pace of the development of postgraduate education, to adjust curricula and also the distribution of degree-confering units. The procedure for the approval of degree-conferment is also being reformed. It is intended that the scope of the conferment of first-level disciplines be broadened, in order that the approval of degree-conferment can better align with the evaluation of degree and postgraduate education. Also, it is necessary to further strengthen quality control and evaluation work. Currently, one of the most important roles of evaluation is to establish rules and systems. In addition, institutions are requested to develop regular self-evaluation mechanisms, which is a foundation for good evaluation work.

P211 Project and Key Disciplines Development

P211 Project is a plan of China to build up about 100 key institutions of higher education and key disciplines by the 21st century such that the education quality, scientific research, standard of management and overall effectiveness of these 100 key institutions and disciplines can be substantially improved by the 21st century.

P211 Project comprises three major components: the development of the general conditions of the institutions, the development of key subject disciplines, and the development of higher education public service systems.



Recent Quality Assurance Developments in the UK *Professor David Dunkerley*

Background

The last five years have witnessed remarkable changes in the UK higher education system and in the procedures for assuring quality in UK universities and colleges of higher education. The catalyst for the changes was the 1991 White Paper leading to the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. Possibly the most significant consequence of the latter was the abolition of the so-called binary line between the polytechnics and universities.

Responsibility for quality assurance has been divided between the funding councils (one each for England, Scotland and Wales together with the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI)) and the institutions. The funding councils' responsibility became that of undertaking quality assessment of teaching and learning at subject and programme levels. The 1992 Act also provided for an institutionally owned quality audit unit.

The funding councils have undertaken a very wide-ranging quality assessment programme. The English funding council (HEFCE), for example, has now published reports on over 800 quality assessment visits and 23 subject overview reports which contain the findings of all assessments in a particular subject.

The universities, through the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), in 1990, established a modest academic audit unit. This was expanded in 1992 through the formation of the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) that had responsibility for quality and standards as well as quality enhancement. All publicly funded institutions of higher education have been required to subscribe as members of HEQC. The principal work of the HEQC has, in fact, been concerned with quality audits - the external evaluation of the internal processes for maintaining quality in each university and college.

Recent Development

Given that both the funding councils and the HEQC were

making time-consuming demands upon institutions and individuals in terms of paperwork preparation and the actual period of assessment, the duplication of effort and often the over-lapping of activity proved to be frustrating and, at times, counter-productive.

In 1995 the HEFCE, the CVCP and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) united in an initiative to form a Joint Planning Group to look again at quality assurance arrangements in the UK.

The Quality Assurance Agency

The most significant recommendation of the Joint Planning Group (JPG) was that *a single quality assurance agency* for the UK should be established. Quoting from Paragraph 6 of the final report,

"The relationship between it (the agency), the institutions and the funding council should be one of partnership and co-operation. It should replace the HEQC, all of whose functions should be transferred to the new agency, as should the main quality assessment functions of those funding councils choosing to contract with the agency for the discharge of these functions."

The Agency was established in April 1997 as an independent body, being a company limited by guarantee and registered as a charity. The specific mission includes:

- the promotion and maintenance of quality and standards in higher education;
- the identification, promotion and enhancement of teaching and learning;
- the provision of information and the publication of reports on quality and standards in UK higher education;
- the provision of advice to government.

The 14 member Board of Directors include six 'independent' directors "representative of the wider community with an interest in quality and standards" and the members are the representative bodies of the heads of higher education institutions. The first Chairman has been appointed - William Kenyon - Chairman of an international manufacturing group, Chairman of the Council of the University of Manchester and a board member of the HEQC.

The Agency will be funded by two types of service level agreements (involving payment by the customer for services received) between the Agency and the funding bodies and the institutions' representative bodies. The link between these service level agreements is to be provided by a common foundation document. For the funding bodies the agreement results in published reports and information thereby satisfying the need for public accountability; for the institutions the agreements provide for the integration many have sought, public reports and information of institutions' themselves, their subjects and their programmes, quality enhancement activities and Access Courses recognition. The Agency can therefore

confirm that an institution's internal quality assurance procedures are working effectively and at the same time identify and disseminate information about innovation and best practice in teaching, learning and student assessment. The expectation is that funding councils and DENI will make it a condition of their grants to institutions that they use the Agency's services in order that the service level agreements with the funders can be accomplished. It is proposed that the new arrangements be implemented in October 1998.

The Integrated Quality Assurance Framework

There will be a national eight-year timetable for institution-wide and subject/programme area reviews. Areas will be grouped into blocks of subjects in two-year periods. So, each subject/programme will be reviewed once in every eight-year cycle and at some agreed point in that cycle there will be an Agency review of the institution's overall management of its quality assurance processes.

The Chair of each review team will be appointed by the Agency; other members of the team will be nominated by the head of the institution and agreed with the Agency. Thus all members of a team will be academics (in some relevant cases there may be professional peers). This could be regarded as a lost opportunity for engaging with the 'user community' by not having team members from industry, commerce, the public sector or the arts.

Other Developments

On 17 July 1997, the report of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the Dearing Inquiry) will be published. Nothing is known for certain as to what the Report will contain. As far as quality assurance is concerned, the submissions from the funding councils have been to support the notion of a single quality agency to a greater or lesser degree. Thus HEFCE, in its submission, said that "The Council will work with the new quality agency and with institutions to secure the objectives that it pursues through quality assessment: public accountability, public information and quality improvement." The Welsh Funding Council was rather less positive in its evidence, "The sector has been considerably exercised at the prospect of having to relinquish the Welsh QA system with the advent of the UK Joint Quality Agency it has taken some reassurance from the extent to which the system proposed for the Agency reflects that which has been developed and operated in Wales."

Conclusion

Although it is a truism to say that higher education in the UK has been in a state of change for at least two decades, the pace and breadth of current change is nothing short of remarkable. Regardless of what recommendations the Dearing Inquiry arrives at (and the new Government has publicly stated it will accept the recommendations) and

however sweeping these consequent changes will be, it is nevertheless the case that there has to be a fundamental basis to the system. The fact that the system has withstood massive expansion at a time of declining unit of resource and considerable 'efficiency gains' is a tribute to the basic structures already in place. The work of the new QAA is likely to acknowledge these structures and to build upon them.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

The former Open Learning Institute (OLI) of Hong Kong was renamed the Open University of Hong Kong as from 30 May 1997. The HKCAA offers its congratulations to the new University upon its new status.

The University was formerly accredited by the HKCAA. After an institutional review and a transition period of one year, the HKCAA recommended self-accreditation status for the OLI. This recommendation was accepted by Government last year and the change of name was approved by the Legislative Council early this year. The University offers programmes leading to degree and postgraduate awards.

ACCREDITATION NEWS

The HKCAA undertook accreditation exercises regarding the following:

Hong Kong Institute of Education

Following the institutional review in February 1996, the HKIED submitted its response document in March 1997. The HKCAA is in the process of considering the response document and monitoring follow-up actions on the part of the Institute.

Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

In January 1997, a new Applied Arts stream within the BFA(Hons) degree programme in Theatre Technical Arts was given unconditional approval for five student intakes from September 1997. At the same time, the four existing streams (namely, Stage Management, Theatre Lighting Design, Set and Costume Design, and Sound Design) within the same degree were revalidated and given unconditional approval.

Lingnan College

The BA(Hons) in Chinese Programme was revalidated in May 1997, and granted unconditional approval for five student intakes from 1997 to 2002.

Reminder: Colleagues who have not yet responded to the Council's earlier invitation in March 1997 to update their particulars are reminded to do so urgently.

*Published by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation
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