



香港學術評審局

HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR
ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION

HKCAA

Chairman : Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP
Vice-Chairman : Mr Edmund K H Leung, OBE, JP
Executive Director : Miss W S Wong

ACCREDIT

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NOTE

ISSUE NO. 20 MARCH 2000

MESSAGE FROM THE NEW CHAIRMAN

**PROFESSOR JOHN C Y LEONG,
OBE, JP**



I am honoured to be appointed by the Secretary for Education and Manpower (in exercise of the authority delegated to him by the Chief Executive of the

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region) to be Chairman of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation. It will be difficult to emulate the excellent leadership of our Former Chairman, Dr Andrew Chuang, JP. I will certainly need the support and advice from all erudite members of our Council, as well as the hard-working and excellent colleagues of the secretariat headed by Ms W S Wong.

The HKCAA was formed by statute to accredit institutions in the post-secondary and tertiary sectors, as well as individual programs and courses offered by them. It also performs an important function advising Government on the quality of qualifications obtained from institutions outside of Hong Kong for employment and other purposes; and more recently on the comparability of non-local courses offered in Hong Kong by overseas institutions, with their home courses. The sum total of these functions, and others that I have not mentioned, of the HKCAA is to ensure the

RESIGNATION OF HKCAA CHAIRMAN

DR ANDREW S L CHUANG, JP

Dr Andrew S L Chuang stepped down from the Chairmanship of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation at the end of his current term in September 1999, after being Chairman for seven years since 1992 and a member of the Council since 1990. In his full time position, Dr Chuang is a professional engineer and currently the Executive Director of Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Ltd. Dr Chuang contributed greatly to the development of the Council and devoted much of his time to its work. Since 1996, he had been repeatedly persuaded to stay on as Chairman, and he did so for three further terms. The Council wishes to record its sincere gratitude and appreciation for the excellent leadership of Dr Chuang in the past years. (See also p.6)



quality of post-secondary and higher education in Hong Kong.

In the 21st century, quality assurance through the internal mechanisms of tertiary institutions is not only mandatory, but must also be sufficiently transparent so that the public and stake-holders are fully aware of them. Furthermore, and this is a world-wide trend, a periodic review of these quality assurance

processes by a body independent of the concerned institution is most desirable.

The HKCAA will be celebrating its 10th Anniversary this year in June. A special Conference relating to quality assurance in higher education is planned for December of this year, with international participation. With 10 years of experience, wisdom, and practical experience behind it, our Council is committed towards the promotion of quality assurance throughout the vocational, subdegree, and degree level education sectors in Hong Kong.

We advocate establishing a qualifications framework that will enable education experience acquired at any time to be accumulated in the future to lead to higher qualifications (e.g. from vocational qualification to a degree), thus genuinely enshrining the concept of life-long learning.

Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP
Chairman
March 2000

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

Appointment of new Chairman

Professor John Leong, OBE, JP has been appointed as Chairman of the Council with effect from 1 October 1999. Professor Leong joined the Council as Vice-Chairman in June 1996.

Professor Leong is the Professor and Head of Department of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Hong Kong. He was concomitantly the Director of Postgraduate Medical Education and Training at the University from 1993 to 1999.

Professor Leong is an orthopaedic surgeon, with special research interests in spinal problems and children's orthopaedics. He is presently President-Elect of the Societe Internationale de Chirurgie Orthopedique et de Traumatologie (SICOT), which is a 70-year old world orthopaedic association with 103 member nations. He is also former President of the Hong Kong College of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the Hong Kong Orthopaedic Association and the Western Pacific Orthopaedic Association.

Professor Leong takes part actively in community affairs, presently being Chairman of the Hospital Governing Committee of Castle Peak Hospital. He is also a member of the Executive Committee of the Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation,

member of the Executive Committee of the Society for Relief of Disabled Children, member of the Education and Accreditation Committee of the Medical Council of Hong Kong, member of the Hospital Governing Committee of Duchess of Kent Children's Hospital, Maclehole Medical Rehabilitation Centre and Ruttonjee Hospital. He was Chairman of the Government Joint Committee on Student Finance (for tertiary institution students) from 1 May 1992 to 30 April 1999.

Appointment of new Vice-Chairman



Mr Edmund Leung Kwong Ho, OBE, JP has succeeded Professor John Leong as Vice-Chairman of the Council. He has joined the Council as member since June 1996. He is also the Chairman of

the Council's Committee on Qualifications.

Mr Edmund Leung is a professional engineer and Chairman of Hyder Consulting Limited. He has 30 years of experience in the construction field and has acquired a very broad base experience in many facets of engineering sectors in the wide spectrum of the construction

industry. His more recent experience focuses on design management of infrastructure projects, both in Hong Kong and in the neighbouring regions.

Mr Leung has served as President of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers from 1995-96, and is presently the Branch Chairman of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (UK). Born of a family which is intimately connected to education, Mr Leung is always keen on education matters. He is a Council Member of the Lingnan University, and has also served on numerous advisory committees and as external examiner for tertiary education institutes.

Mr Leung also takes part actively in public service, being Chairman of the Advisory Board for Vocational Education of the Vocational Training Council, member of the Energy Advisory Committee, Panel Member of the Board of Review (Inland Revenue) and many other commitments.

Outgoing Council Members

The terms of office for three members of the Council Mr Alex Sun Hsu Hsien, Mr Alex Wong Po Hang, JP and Professor Wang Zhong Lie expired in September 1999. The HKCAA wishes to thank these members for their dedicated service on the Council.

New Appointments

Four new Council members have been appointed since 1 October 1999. Brief notes on these four members are included in this section.

Mrs Elizabeth Li received her Master of Science Degree in Organization Development from Pepperdine University. She is a global and cross-border consultant specializing in organization development and change management and has worked in this field since 1986.

In 1987 she joined Wilson Learning Corporation

as a consultant where she developed, integrated and executed training programs and consulting initiatives for specific organizational needs based on business results. She has been consulting in the PRC for over 10 years and has worked with Henkel, ABB and public and private enterprises in Hong Kong. She is an author and lecturer conducting change management courses for students and executives in Greater China.

Mrs Li is the founder and CEO of the Elizabeth Li Group, comprising Elizabeth Li Management Consultants Limited and other companies. The companies provide a wide range of training and consulting services, organize local and international conferences and promote economic, cultural and educational interchanges in the Hong Kong and international business environment.

Mrs Li is active in public service, being a Committee Member of the Grantham Hospital and an Executive Committee Member of the Hong Kong Society for the Protection of Children.

Mr Martin Liao received his BSc (Econ) and LLM degrees from University College London. He was called to the Bar of England and Wales in 1984 and to the Hong Kong Bar in 1985. He is also qualified as an Advocate and Solicitor in Singapore since 1993. He commenced practice as a barrister in Hong Kong in 1986, specializing in commercial and intellectual property litigation.

Mr Liao has served as a Member of the Bar Committee, now re-named "the Bar Council", from 1987 to 1989 and as a Member of the Duty Lawyer Council from 1988 to 1997. In 1994, he was appointed by the then Chief Justice as a temporary District Judge. In 1999, he was appointed by the Chief Justice and serve as a Panel Member of the Barristers Disciplinary Tribunal.

Mr Liao is the contributing writer on Trade Libel in the Halsbury Laws of Hong Kong and one of the contributing writers on Atkins Hong Kong Court Forms.

Mr Roger Yuen received his BComm and MBA degrees from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Being a fellow of the Institute of the Canadian Bankers, Mr Yuen started his banking career with the Chase Manhattan Bank, N.A. in 1973 and joined Citibank, N.A. thereafter. In 1986, he joined China Resources (Holdings) Co Ltd, a Hong Kong based trading conglomerate under the auspices of Beijing's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperations, as Assistant General Manager for Finance and was seconded in 1993 to its 50% owned the Hongkong Chinese Bank Ltd as Executive Director.

For all his banking experience, Mr Yuen is also active in community services. He was the President of the Overseas Graduates Association in Hong Kong in 1986-87, Vice Chairman for the Hong Kong United Youth Association Ltd, and Executive Committee member of the Financial Committee of the Hong Kong Chinese Enterprises Association. On the academic front, Mr Yuen is a member of the Divisional Advisory Committee, Division of Social Studies of the City University of Hong Kong. He is also a member of the Advisory Committee on Social Work Training and Manpower Planning, the Health and Welfare Bureau of the HKSAR.

Professor Xu Demin

graduated from undergraduate and postgraduate studies in the College of Marine Engineering of the Northwestern Polytechnical University (NWPU) in 1961 and 1964 respectively. Since then, he has been engaged in teaching and research at

NWPU. He was a visiting scholar in the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Michigan in 1987-1988. He held the Vice President, Dean of Graduate School and some other posts at NWPU in 1991-1998. During this period, he was devoted to the establishment of quality assurance and evaluation systems.

He has served as a Group member of the Academic Accreditation of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, member of the standing committee of the China Research Association for Higher Engineering Education and the Chinese Society of Cooperative Education, the Vice Chairman of the Chinese Society of Aeronautical Education and the Shaanxi Society of Higher Education. He was also a member of the Chinese Society of Academic Degree and Postgraduate Education (1994-1999) and Vice Chairman of the Shaanxi Society of Academic Degree and Postgraduate Education (1995-1999).

Professor Xu's research interests include the areas of autonomous underwater vehicle, control theory and control engineering. Currently he is Director of the Institute of Autonomous Underwater Vehicle and the Academic Commission of Underwater, Information and Control Laboratory.



Local Council Members and the Executive Director bid farewell to Dr Chuang, the outgoing Chairman

COUNCIL MEETING

The Twentieth Council Meeting was held on 17 December 1999. It was also the first meeting chaired by the new Council Chairman, Professor John Leong.

At this meeting, Council reviewed our role as advisor to the Registrar of Non-local Higher and Professional Education Courses, and the assessment work considered in respect of the registration of non-local courses, the monitoring of conditions and of annual returns. Professor Y K Fan was appointed Chairman of the Standing Committee on Non-local Courses succeeding Professor John Leong.

There were activity reports on accreditation and qualification assessments. Some current issues relating to the principles of assessment and comparability of qualifications were discussed. The membership of the Committee on Qualifications, chaired by Mr Edmund Leung, Vice-Chairman of the Council, was extended for one year.

The meeting considered consultancy projects, being proposed by Government bureaux and departments. It also considered and approved the Council's work plan and budgets and estimates for 2000/2001. Progress on the planning of the HKCAA International Conference was also reported at the meeting.

The Council discussed the Education Commission's Consultation Document on the Framework for Education Reforms and formulated its response to the Document.



(From left) Professor Xu Demin, Professor John Leong, Mr W K Lam, Secretary for the Civil Service, Dr Andrew Chuang and Miss W S Wong at the Council Dinner



(From left) Professor John Leong, Mrs Fanny Law, Director of Education, Professor Rosie Young, Dean of Student (the University of Hong Kong) and Professor Enoch Young, Director, SPACE (the University of Hong Kong) at the Council dinner

The Secretary for Education and Manpower, Mr Joseph Wong, attended part of the Council meeting and discussed with members a number

of issues concerning the work of the Council, including the registration of non-local courses, the assessment and benchmarking of qualifications, and possible developments and new areas of work. Members found the exchange of views to be most fruitful.

Following the Council Meeting, a Council Dinner was hosted at the Island Shangri-La Hong Kong Hotel. The Council Dinner was a



Secretary for Education and Manpower Mr Joseph Wong (middle in the first row) being pictured at the HKCAA Twentieth Council Meeting with Council members and staff members

special occasion to bid farewell to the Council's outgoing Chairman, Dr Andrew Chuang, and to welcome the new Chairman, Professor John Leong.

Many distinguished guests and friends of the Council attended the Dinner and Cocktail Reception. The memorable evening ended with lingering memories of the past Chairman and exciting thoughts of future challenges under the new chairmanship.



New Council Chairman Professor John Leong delivering his speech for bidding farewell to the outgoing Council Chairman Dr Andrew Chuang

Farewell to Dr Andrew Chuang, Speech by Professor John Leong, delivered at the Council dinner on 17 December 1999

"Tonight we shall bid farewell to Dr Andrew Chuang, a chairman who has served the Council for the past nine years. Dr Chuang was appointed as a member of the Council in 1990, the year when the HKCAA was formally set up by law. One year later he was appointed as Vice-Chairman, and after a further year, in 1992, appointed as the Chairman of the HKCAA. Therefore not only is he the longest serving chairman, but he is also the longest serving member of the Council.

Right from the beginning, Dr Chuang has visualised the significant role that the HKCAA was going to play in the higher education system and from the day he took up the chairmanship

he lost no time in building up the expertise and professionalism of the Council, which being the first and only accreditation body to be set up in Hong Kong, had to start from scratch with designing and implementing systems of accreditation and quality assurance which are appropriate for Hong Kong's tertiary institutions.

While perfecting the Council's own procedures and criteria for accreditation work, on the external front, there was also work to be done in convincing the tertiary institutions of the need and the desirability for external quality assurance, and overcoming their initial resistance. Being a professional engineer himself, Dr Chuang was able to bring home closely the message of quality, and the implications of good quality for maintaining competitiveness in today's society, and no less important, for maintaining accountability to clients and stakeholders. At the same time, the significance of self improvement and self regulation was an important message spread to the tertiary institutions. As a result of these hard work and tireless efforts, the first five years of Dr Chuang's leadership of the Council saw the accreditation of no less than seven



New Council Chairman Professor John Leong presenting a souvenir to the outgoing Council Chairman Dr Andrew Chuang

institutions, and over 100 degree programmes. This period also saw the upgrade of non-degree awarding institutions to degree-awarding status, and the achieving of self-accreditation status by three institutions, and this was followed by two other institutions in more recent years.

Dr Chuang also foresaw that quality assurance in higher education is a growing international trend, and that Hong Kong being among those at the forefront of development, should also be an international player in quality assurance. With this thought in mind, he championed taking an active role in regional and international liaison and activities. He supported the HKCAA in acting as the coordinator for the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, which the HKCAA had initiated, and then the holding of an international conference on quality assurance in Beijing in 1996. This latter activity in effect combined the Council's regional and international endeavours. Since the early days, Dr Chuang had urged the Council to develop close relationships with mainland China's educational and accreditation authorities, resulting in the building of many good relationships and networks, and

cooperative efforts such as joint seminars, conferences, and joint publications.

It was during the latter part of Dr Chuang's nine years' service at the Council that the HKCAA underwent much change and it was in no small part due to Dr Chuang's skillful leadership that

the HKCAA was able to transform and expand beyond its original portfolio of accreditation, and to take on a much wider advisory role as a quality assurance body. The last four years saw the expansion of the Council's work into the important area of assessing non-local courses of study offered in Hong Kong. This is an area of work for which Dr Chuang has expressed great concern and he has urged repeatedly for greater safeguards to be placed on these educational imports.

Many times Dr Chuang has called for the extension of quality assurance systems into areas and sectors hitherto untouched by its application. The difficulties posed by the assessment of individual qualifications, which has become an important portfolio of the Council's work, have reaffirmed Dr Chuang's belief that there should be more information and advice for the student and the consumer regarding the choice of institutions, and programmes. He promulgates the role of the HKCAA in acting not only as the evaluator, but



Former Council Chairman Dr Andrew Chuang speaking at Council dinner on 17 December 1999



Former Council Chairman Dr Andrew Chuang pictured at Council dinner with the Executive Director Miss W S Wong



Council Chairman Professor John Leong presenting a souvenir to an outgoing Council member Mr Alex Sun

also as the advisor. With this in mind, he set up the Committee on Qualifications under Council, to tackle this difficult area of work, and he has gracefully consented to continue as Advisor to the Committee even after he steps down from the chairmanship. In the same vein, he has on many occasions tried to convince Government that what Hong Kong needs is a comprehensive, consistent system of qualifications which are well articulated and understood by both students and employees. This message seems now to begin to bear fruit.

The last few years of transformation of the HKCAA have not been easy, taking place at a time of social and economic change, bringing about both financial pressures as well as pressures from different stakeholders, government departments, institutions, and clients. There is a greater need for more information, greater

accountability, and greater transparency, as well as greater efficiency and value for money. However, Dr Chuang was able to steer the Council through the changing times with great ease and deftness, and guided the Council to achieve many new things under pressurised circumstances.

Dr Chuang is a man of lofty vision and high principles. His belief in quality assurance and its importance for higher education, and for the Hong Kong society has guided the work of the Council to reach the accomplishments that it has today. He has motivated his fellow members, his staff in the Council, and colleagues in higher education, and aroused in them similar convictions and the same enthusiasm in promoting the cause of quality. We wish to

offer our sincere congratulations to Dr Chuang for his accomplishments, and our gratitude to him for his leadership and guidance in the past years."



New Council Chairman Professor John Leong presenting another souvenir to the outgoing Council Chairman Dr Andrew Chuang

THE COUNCIL'S VIEWS ON THE EDUCATION COMMISSION CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

The Education Commission has undertaken a review of the whole structure of Hong Kong's education to see how it should develop into the 21st century. A proposed framework for educational reform, covering the educational structure, the academic curriculum and the assessment mechanisms was drawn up for public discussion in the form of a Consultation Document.

In response to this initiative, the HKCAA has deliberated on the Consultation Document at its twentieth Council meeting and submitted its views to the Education Commission.

Overall, the Council supports the concept of life long learning and, the creation of opportunities

for everyone who wishes to pursue further learning.

Quality in Education

As a quality assurance body, the Council has particular concerns for the quality of education. The Council believes this idea about quality should be actively pursued by all those involved in the provision and promotion of education. The Council is somewhat disappointed, therefore, to see that the concept of quality in education is not given a higher profile, or indeed a central position, in the Consultation Document.

Whilst the Council agrees with the concept that learning should be attuned to the ability of

different learners, we feel it is dangerous if it is taken to mean that standards are to be adjusted for learners. Education providers have a duty to maintain the standard of their courses at a particular level (and for Hong Kong, it should be international level) and then allow learners to achieve educational levels/awards appropriate to their ability. Thus, quality should be more clearly defined in terms of educational standards.

Higher Education

The Council agrees that there should be expansion of study routes, and in particular for those who wish to be availed of second opportunities. Community colleges, and private universities as proposed in the Consultation Document, may be able to fulfil a need of the community. However, their roles and positions have to be clearly defined. The establishment of these new types of institutions will be able to gain credence and confidence only if their quality is guaranteed through processes of external review and accreditation.

The suggestion for credit transfer among tertiary institutions is in line with current ideology for student choice, portability of qualifications, and flexibility in study modes and duration. Whilst this should be taken on board, one should take care to avoid excessive flexibility being introduced, and to bear in mind that higher qualifications demand a certain amount of cohesion and progression in the student learning experience, and that there should be a limit as to how much could be achieved through mere accumulation of credits over time.

The issue of quality should not be under emphasised in the more established sectors of higher education. The present reforms focus on learning opportunities, but quality should not be taken for granted. The established universities should be encouraged to devise an agenda for the enhancement of quality, alongside other reforms.

Continuing Education

The Council also notes that at present, there is a large range of provision from the continuing education departments of the universities, as well as the operators of non-local courses from outside Hong Kong. There is at present little systematic control and monitoring of the range of education provision. The Council believes that there should be better rationalisation among the local institutions. And more importantly, better quality control should be instituted. Greater convergence between the quality systems inside the continuing education departments and the universities is to be encouraged.

Regarding non-local education courses, there is insufficient quality control through the existing Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance, as there are limitations to what can be done under the Ordinance.

The Council agrees, therefore, with the reform proposal "to put in place effective evaluation and accreditation mechanism in order to ensure the quality of continuing education".

Qualifications Framework

The Council has in the past advocated the idea of setting up a Qualifications Framework for Hong Kong, for standardizing the many different awards offered by public and private providers in Hong Kong at both the sub-degree and degree level. The Council is therefore pleased to see that the Education Commission reform proposals advocate the setting up of such a framework.

The absence of systematic standards and nomenclature, in particular in sub-degree level education, has been a disconcerting feature in Hong Kong's education system for a long time. Public and private providers are at liberty to award any type of qualification of varying standards and duration, and students and employers, as well as overseas governments/institutions are perplexed as to the comparative

standard of such programmes.

The Council is of the view that it is imperative to establish a Framework with consistent levels and standards, to encompass qualifications at the post-secondary/sub-degree, and degree sectors. Qualifications should be accredited/approved by a central authority for their appropriateness to join particular levels on the Framework. Such a Framework will facilitate transfer and integration across the vocational and academic sectors. Students should be able to accumulate credits for higher level qualifications in pursuit of life-long learning.

HKCAA WORKSHOP ON INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM, 22 OCTOBER 1999

Developing an effective quality assurance system is no easy matter. As pointed out in a statement from the former Higher Education Quality Council of the UK (predecessor of the Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education), an effective quality assurance and control system is underpinned by wide participation, effective channels of communication, the specification of standards and acceptable evidence, the acceptance of responsibility by staff and students, and an institutional commitment to staff development and training.

To promulgate good practices in quality assurance among local higher education institutions, HKCAA organised a workshop entitled "Internal Quality Assurance Systems: Lessons from three local cases" on 22 October 1999 at the Century Hong Kong Hotel. Speakers of this workshop included Council member Professor Wong Hoi Kwok, Principal, College of Higher Education, City University of Hong Kong, Dr David Mole, Senior Assistant Registrar of the City University of Hong Kong, Professor Leung Tin Pui, Vice-President (Quality Assurance) of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Mrs Pauline Mah, Senior Assistant Academic

Registrar of the Hong Kong Baptist University. The speakers gave very enlightening presentations about the development of internal quality assurance processes within their respective institutions (the programmes of which were validated by the HKCAA prior to 1994).

The workshop was well attended with 114 participants. The majority of the participants were academics and senior administrative staff of the eight local universities, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Hong Kong Institute of Education. The success of the workshop attests to the interest of local institutions in providing quality education through an effective internal quality assurance system.

Abstract of the paper presented by Professor T P Leung on the quality assurance system of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University is presented in this Accredited Note (Page 18).

ASSESSMENT OF NON-LOCAL COURSES

The Standing Committee of Non-local Courses has met three times in 1999 to consider recommendations in respect of applications for registration submitted by non-local courses. From July 1997 to 31 December 1999, a total of 360 applications were referred to the Council of which 325 were courses leading to academic qualifications.

The Council's assessment is based on the criteria stipulated in the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance, which emphasizes comparability of the non-local courses with the course in the home country. During the assessment process, the Council has identified a number of quality issues such as generous exemption policies, shortened course duration, the standard of local tutors etc, all of which pose questions in relation to the effectiveness of the Ordinance in giving consumer protection in respect of the quality of these non-local courses.

Courses which have been registered are required under the Ordinance to submit an annual return to the Registrar of Non-local Courses. The Council's assessment of these annual returns is mainly focused on any changes which may affect the fulfilment of the registration criteria and also the fulfilment of conditions imposed upon initial registration.

QUALIFICATION ASSESSMENT

The demand for the Council's qualification assessment service continued to be high. The clienteles of this service include government departments, non-government and private organizations, and individuals. The Civil Service Bureau continued to be the major client of the Council. In the last six months there was an increase in individual qualification assessment cases of about 28% as compared to the figure of last year. The majority of the assessment cases involved qualifications from places such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and the United States, and from Taiwan and Mainland China.

The Committee on Qualifications established a year ago met four times in the past year to provide guidance on assessment principles for the Council.

HKCAA INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "NEW MILLENNIUM: QUALITY & INNOVATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION", 4-5 DECEMBER 2000

Further to the previous issue of *Accredit Note*, we are pleased to announce that the following world renowned educationalists have kindly consented to speak at the HKCAA Conference to be held on 4-5 December 2000 at Sheraton Hong Kong Hotel, Hong Kong -

Sir John Daniel, Vice-Chancellor of the Open University, UK

Dr Judith Eaton, President of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, US

Dr Barry McGaw, Deputy Director of Education of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

Emeritus Professor K McKinnon, one of Australia's most senior educators, with experience at the highest levels in universities, schools and government.

Mr John Randall, Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, UK

The HKSAR Secretary for Education and Manpower and officials from the PRC Ministry of Education will officiate at the Conference.

In the new millennium, new technologies will certainly continue to bring about new forms of education and globalization of higher education. Governments in many countries are calling for life-long learning in order to boost up economic competitiveness. Self-accrediting universities in many countries are subject to increasing pressure for external review. All these phenomena will not only offer new opportunities for teaching and learning but also trigger new quality issues and challenge existing thoughts about teaching and learning. New thinking and new benchmarks may be required for quality assurance in higher education. The Conference is intended to provide the impetus for us to contemplate the intimate relationship between quality issues and innovations in higher education.

Academics and quality assurance experts from all sectors of education from the globe are invited to attend and to present papers to address the theoretical underpinnings, and share practical experience in areas relevant to the conference theme. The registration fee is US\$400/HK\$3,000 (on or before 30 September 2000), or US\$440/HK\$3,400 (after 30 September 2000). Those who are interested in presenting papers are requested to submit a proposal of about 400-500 words. Details about the call for paper are now available from HKCAA's Web site (<http://www.hkcaa.edu.hk/paper.htm>). Please submit the proposals for

review by **31 March 2000**. Decision on papers will be sent to applicants by 1 June 2000 and the full paper will be expected from authors by 31 July 2000.

Further details about the Conference including the sub-themes, are available from HKCAA's Web site (<http://www.hkcaa.edu.hk>).

As a self-financed body, HKCAA is calling for sponsorship for the Conference. In this regard, we owe special thanks to Mr Herbert Hui Homing, our Council member, to make available the first sponsorship. The Council welcomes more institutions or individuals to sponsor the Conference, either on the general Conference expenditure or on specific items.



Council members Dr Eddy Li, Professor Danny Wong and Professor H K Wong together with Miss W S Wong are receiving the souvenir from representatives of the delegation from mainland universities

VISITS TO THE HKCAA

The Council was paid a visit by Professor James R Lusty, the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Central Lancashire and two of his colleagues in October last year. Professor Lusty gave a brief

introduction about the quality assurance work at his

University.

Other visits included that of Mr Robert Horne, the First Assistant Secretary of the



Professor Y K Fan presenting souvenirs to Ms Li, leader of the delegation from mainland universities

Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs of Australia on November 12.

A delegation from mainland universities organised by the Hong Kong and Macau Office of the Ministry of Education visited the Council on October 11. The visitors were received by Council members Professor Y K Fan, Dr Eddy Li, Professor H K Wong, Professor Danny Wong and the Executive Director. The work of the Council was introduced during the visit. The visitors were particularly interested in the Council's advisory role in the registration of non-local courses.

Another delegation from the PRC Ministry of Education, organised by Hong Kong Pei Hua Education Foundation Limited, also visited the Council on December 16 to understand the work of the Council. The delegation was received by the Council's Vice-Chairman, Mr Edmund Leung, and Council members Professor Y K Fan, Mr Herbert Hui and Professor H K Wong and the Executive Director. The visit further strengthened the link of the Council with the Ministry of Education.



Group photo of the visit of the delegation from the PRC Ministry of Education

STAFF NEWS

In October the Council said good-bye to Registrar Mr Felix Leung who went back to Australia and in November, Senior Registrar Dr Herbert Huey also left the service of the Council.

The HKCAA appointed a new Registrar, Dr Felix Yuen, in September, and Dr Marina Wong and

Dr Andrew Chan joined the Council as Assistant Registrars in October and November last year respectively.

Dr Felix Yuen holds degrees from the University of London, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Wollongong in Australia. Felix has taught in universities in Hong Kong and Australia. He has particular interests in curriculum development and health related issues.

Dr Marina Wong obtained her BA (Hons) in Music and French, DipEd and MPhil in Musicology from the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She has a PhD in curriculum studies from the University of British Columbia. Marina is an experienced music educator and she has been a lecturer at the Hong Kong Institute of Education.

Dr Andrew Chan has degrees from the University of Texas (Austin), the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) and Purdue University (West Lafayette). Prior to joining the HKCAA, Andrew has been Assistant Professor (Accounting) for six years at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

RENOVATION OF COUNCIL OFFICES

On Tuesday 28 September 1999, a small informal ceremony was performed for the hanging up of an HKCAA signage at the Council offices, as part of our renovation works. The ceremony was officiated by Dr Andrew Chuang and Professor John Leong, together with Council members Mr Edmund Leung and Professor Y K Fan.



The former Council Chairman and Vice-chairman pictured at the informal ceremony for the hanging up of a signage at the HKCAA office



(From left) Professor Y K Fan, Professor John Leong, Miss W S Wong, Dr Andrew Chuang and Mr Edmund Leung pictured in front of the new HKCAA signage

ARTICLES

THE COUNCIL FOR HIGHER EDUCATION ACCREDITATION AND SELF-REGULATION IN THE UNITED STATES

*Judith S. Eaton, President
Council for Higher Education Accreditation*

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation will serve students, and their families, colleges and universities, sponsoring bodies, governments and employers by promoting academic quality through formal recognition of higher education accrediting bodies and will coordinate and work to advance self-regulation. (CHEA Mission Statement 1996)

In the United States, neither federal government nor state governments carry out accreditation activity#. While both levels of government have many laws and regulations that affect the operation of colleges and universities, there is a long tradition of accreditation as a private, non-governmental activity.

The exception is New York with a state higher education accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

The Council for Higher Education (CHEA), established in 1996, is a private (non-governmental), non-profit organization of United States colleges, universities and voluntary accrediting organizations. More than 3200 colleges and universities and 55 accrediting organizations are members of CHEA, making it the largest higher education membership association in the country.

CHEA represents higher education's commitment to self-regulation of colleges and universities through accreditation. Accreditation is a consultative peer review process in which volunteer faculty and administrators examine institutions and programs to determine academic quality. Thousands of individuals participate in such reviews each year. (Please see below for a profile of U.S. accreditation.)

The member colleges and universities of CHEA reflect the diversity of American higher education and include two-year, four-year, public, and private institutions that are accredited by CHEA participating accreditors. The 55 participating accreditors are either institutional accreditors (regional or national) or programmatic (specialized or professional). Colleges, universities, and accreditors pay dues to CHEA and provide its financial base.

CHEA is governed by an elected fifteen-person board of directors, twelve of whom must be institutional representatives (at least nine of whom must be sitting presidents) and three of whom must be public representatives.

CHEA has three major functions:

- * **Recognition.** To certify the quality of the accrediting organizations that it represents. This is done through the CHEA process of "recognition" - a periodic scrutiny of accrediting organizations based on five CHEA recognition standards. An accrediting organization is scrutinized to determine if it:

Advances academic quality: accreditors

are required to have a clear definition of quality and clear expectations that the institutions or programs they accredit have processes to determine whether quality standards are being met.

Demonstrates accountability: accreditors are required to have standards that call for institutions and programs to provide consistent, reliable information about academic quality and student achievement to foster continuing public confidence and investment.

Encourages purposeful change and needed improvement: accreditors are required to encourage planning for purposeful change and scrutiny for needed improvement through ongoing self-examination in institutions and programs.

Employs appropriate and fair procedures in decision-making: accreditors are required to maintain appropriate and fair organizational policies and procedures that include effective checks and balances.

Continually reassesses accreditation practices: accreditors are required to undertake self-scrutiny of their accrediting activities.

- * **Service.** To provide service to member institutions, organizations and the public through articulating key quality assurance issues, providing tools for strengthening accreditation, establishing itself as an authoritative source of information about accreditation, and sustaining a national forum for exchange of ideas and information. CHEA accomplishes this through its website that serves more than 45,000 individuals per month, publication of Occasional Papers, newsletters, updates, and research, and its annual calendar of conferences and meetings.
- * **Advocacy.** To represent the higher education community and accrediting community to the U.S. federal government: the Congress,

the Executive Branch, and the Department of Education.

Quality Assurance Issues in the United States

The major issues confronting CHEA and the U.S. higher education community are assuring quality in distance learning, responding to government and public calls for greater accountability through accreditation, and addressing the role of United States accreditation in international quality assurance.

Distance learning, whether offered by traditional site-based colleges and universities or through "new providers" such as virtual universities and web-based coursework, is expanding rapidly, altering classroom practices and faculty roles and changing student attendance patterns in U.S. colleges and universities. Institutional and program accreditors are scrutinizing current accreditation standards to determine their suitability for examining quality in distance learning. They are experimenting with new standards. The public is concerned that the quality of online learning courses and programs reflects at least the quality it has come to expect of traditional colleges and universities. CHEA has devoted publications, research, and conferences to the quality issues raised by increasing reliance on electronic delivery such as adequate support services for students and the role of a community of learning.

The second major issue for CHEA and higher education, accountability, requires attention to the adequacy of evidence of quality. It calls for examination of how well U.S. colleges and universities are performing and the basis for a claim of quality. Accountability has long been a state issue for public college and universities - most states have developed accountability measures or performance funding expectations or both. Accountability is more and more a federal policy issue as well, with increasing calls from Congress and the U.S. Department of

Education for evidence of student achievement. Accreditors are pressed to pay additional attention to the results that colleges, universities, and programs produce such as the number of graduates and demonstration of student competencies. This includes exploring whether an additional emphasis on accountability can be effectively accommodated by current accreditation standards and review.

Accountability expectations for higher education are influenced by the market as well. The public tends to view higher education as a consumer good - a product that it expects to be reliable and to provide value. Credentials and degrees are valued based on whether they culminate in employment, job advancement or the opportunity to attend graduate school.

The third major issue for CHEA is the role of U.S. accreditation as higher education engages in more and more international activity. Larger numbers of students are crossing national boundaries, putting more pressure on assuring stability in transfer. Growing numbers of U.S. institutions are opting to establish programs or campuses in other countries. Many countries are undertaking major expansions of higher education opportunity and want to benefit from the experience of the United States recent history of a similar expansion in the 1960s and 1970s. CHEA is identifying the issues that are central to this internationalizing of higher education, developing additional ways that quality assurance organizations around the world can work together, and serving U.S. students and institutions as they engage in more and more international activity.

For United States higher education and accreditation, the success of self-regulation through accreditation will be determined primarily by the capacity to deal with these changes. Diversification of providers of higher education, increased exchange of students and institutions around the world, a societal role that is increasingly defined by public expectations

of accountability and the market - as well as the traditional educational expectations of the academy itself - require our attention and deserve our best efforts.

Self-Regulation in the United States: A Brief Overview of U.S. Accreditation

What is U.S. Accreditation?

An external review process by which colleges, universities and programs are scrutinized for quality assurance and quality improvement.

What purposes does U.S. Accreditation Serve?

- * *Assuring quality:* Primary means by which colleges, universities and programs assure quality to students and the public.
- * *Access to federal funds:* Required for access to federal funds for student aid and other federal programs.
- * *Easing transfer:* Important to students for smooth transfer of courses and programs among colleges and universities.
- * *Engendering employer confidence:* Accreditation status of an institution or program important to employers when evaluating credentials of job applicants and when deciding whether to provide tuition support for current employees seeking additional education.

Who carries out U.S. Accreditation?

Non-governmental bodies organized for this specific purpose. There are three types:

- * *Regional accreditors:* accredit institutions, comprehensive review of all functions including public and private, two- and four-year non-profit institutions.
- * *National accreditors:* accredit institutions, frequently single-purpose institutions including distance learning institutions, private career institutions and faith-based institutions.
- * *Specialized and professional accreditors:*

accredit specific programs or schools including law schools, medical schools, engineering schools and programs, and health profession programs.

What are the key features of U.S. Accreditation?

- * *Self study:* institutions and programs prepare a written evaluation of performance based on accrediting organizations' standards.
- * *Peer review:* institutions and programs are reviewed by faculty and academic administrator teams. Teams also include public members (non-academics who have an interest in higher education). All team members are volunteers and are not compensated.
- * *Site visit:* accrediting organization sends a visiting team (see above) to institution or program after self-study completed.
- * *Action (judgment) by accrediting organization:* accrediting organizations have commissions (also made up of peers) that affirm accreditation for new institutions and programs, reaffirm accreditation for ongoing institutions and programs, and deny accreditation to institutions and programs.
- * *Ongoing external review:* all institutions and programs continue to be reviewed over time in cycles that range from one year to ten years. They prepare a self-study and undergo a site visit each time.

How are U.S. Accreditors monitored?

- * *Recognition (non-governmental):* the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) has standards by which it reviews accrediting organizations with primary emphasis on academic quality assurance and improvement for an institution or program.
- * *Recognition (federal):* the U.S. government has standards by which it reviews accrediting organizations with primary emphasis on whether an institution is of sufficient quality to be eligible for federal student financial aid

funds and other federal programs.

- * *Self-assessment:* accreditors are required to undertake an organizational self-assessment on a routine basis.
- * *Internal complaint procedures:* accreditors are required to have internal complaint procedures.

IT'S A QUESTION OF BALANCE

*Professor Peter Hodson
Dean of Quality Assurance
University of Glamorgan, UK*

There is no doubt that many will remember the 1990s as a decade of increased accountability in Higher Education. As the cost of higher education has increased through greater student participation rates, there has been a rising demand for greater control on the way universities delivered their 'product'. In the UK we have witnessed a quiet revolution in expectations and demands placed on universities by the central funding councils, and executed through the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

In the early part of the decade we saw a big impact on the governance of universities, with a major shift in new university sector as the old polytechnics moved out of local government control. Control has continued to be exercised and extended through activities such as teaching quality assessments, institutional audit and research assessment exercises. The QAA is in the process of rolling out a series of Codes of Practice. An example of such a code is in the area of how universities should use their external examiners. Whilst the principle of Codes of Practice, introduced in the spirit of guidelines to help individual universities reflect on their existing procedures, is a useful platform for creating a quality enhancement culture, the

current approach is of compliance. The QAA are setting dates by which they expect the sector to be compliant with each of the codes.

Of course, the QAA will argue that compliance will deliver enhancement, but there is a lack of recognition on their behalf of the reality within institutions. Whether intended or otherwise, many of the control mechanisms result in another performance indicator, e.g. the RAE represents the strength of research in a specific area. These indicators are then published in the form of league tables by the press and naturally have a direct consequence upon the 'business' of that university. Student recruitment, ability to attract research and consultancy etc are all sensitive to such publicity.

It is natural therefore for the management of institutions to take a firmer hand in implementing policies to respond to these external drivers. The faster the rate the external drivers are produced, such as codes of practice, the firmer the hand. The culture of universities can visibly be seen to move from a collegial culture to a managerial culture. But as any policy maker knows, once a policy is introduced, it needs monitoring for effectiveness and other unintended outcomes that result.

I would argue that one of the unintended outcomes is the distancing of the large body of the academic staff from the framework of decision making and ownership of the structures that the universities are introducing to deliver compliance. The 'silencing of the Dons' is a well reported phenomena, and many academics have moved to a model of enjoying the status of non-ownership, to the extent that they enjoy the ignorance of selectively not knowing current policy.

The outcome is less understanding and no real ownership. The greater the focus on compliance rather than quality enhancement, the greater the lack of ownership. The result is no real progress. The conclusion must be that finding a balance between the control and compliance approach

versus the quality enhancement and encouragement to reflect upon best practice is critical. The current approach in the UK may result in some unintended outcomes, which could damage the sector.

INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM OF THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

(Abstract of paper presented at the HKCAA
Workshop on Internal Quality Assurance)

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Components of the QA System

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) has a long history of commitment to teaching quality and of operating a comprehensive validation system. The following processes, which are aimed at promoting and maintaining programme quality, have formed the backbone of the University's Quality Assurance system:

- * Validation of all new programmes prior to implementation
- * Revalidation of all on-going programmes every 5 years or less
- * Annual review of all programmes
- * Solicitation of feedback from external and internal sources
- * Staff development and staff appraisal

Evolvement of QA System

The University's commitment to teaching quality is a gradual internalization of quality processes developed as a result of external validations. Prior to 1980, the then Polytechnic was basically a teaching institution offering sub-degree and degree-equivalent (associateship) programmes. Academic quality was sustained by informal quality processes, relying mainly on individual

effort and hence on the quality of staff recruited. Since then, due to the strong wish to offer degree programmes of international standard, the Polytechnic willingly subjected these programmes to the rigorous process of external validation firstly by the U.K. Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and later by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA). In preparation for these external validations, formalized internal validation processes were developed and applied to all sub-degree and degree programmes, and the beginning of a strong quality culture gradually emerged.

All academic programmes have planning committees which discuss in detail perceived needs, programme objectives, design of curricula to meet these objectives, teaching and learning methodology, and methods to assess students with respect to such objectives. Input is obtained from prospective employers via surveys and Departmental Advisory Committees, and from External Examiners. Further discussion and interactive changes take place during the internal and external validation processes. Once a programme is successfully validated and offered, it is then fully documented in definitive programme schemes. These documents are available to all staff members, briefer versions being available to all students. A programme committee is formed to look after the implementation and continuous development of the programme. The entire process takes one to two years, and is applied to every programme. On average, each staff member would have gone through 2 to 3 such exercises every 5 years validating new programmes or revalidating existing programmes. The annual programme reviews provide additional opportunities to collect feedback and think through issues.

For the first 12 years since 1980, this formalized system was rigorously implemented and monitored centrally by the then Academic

Validation & Review Committee of the then Academic Board. Over the last 7 years, implementation of the system has been devolved to the six Faculty Boards and monitored by a central committee presently called the Quality Assurance Committee.

Generic QA System

With a firm quality culture being established over the years, the University has decided in 1997 to move from a centralized control quality assurance system to a decentralized one giving ownership to Faculties and Departments, and from a programme-based quality assurance system to a broad-based generic quality assurance system. As a result, a "Generic Quality Assurance System" was introduced for all major academic, administrative and academic support units. The system includes annual reporting and a 5-year cycle review. For academic departments, the framework dovetails with the other QA processes such that the annual reporting, in the form of an Annual Quality Assurance Report, incorporates the former annual programme review and covers issues and improvements pertaining to other academic and administrative functions. The 5-year review will be in the form of a new system called Departmental Assessment.

In accordance with the Generic Quality Assurance System, each unit must set up and operate its own QA system in conformance with a common framework. All units, including academic and non-academic units, are required to submit an annual QA report detailing feedback obtained and improvement actions to be taken.

In addition, the University has its own Internal Audit Unit, an independent appraisal function reporting directly to the President, to assess the structure and operational performance of all departments, with total authority to undertake its function.

Departmental Assessment

The introduction of Departmental Assessment is a further important development in the institution's quality assurance mechanism. It implies a change to the pre-existing programme validation and review system, shifting the focus of quality assurance from programme basis to departmental basis. It can be seen as a positive and logical development evolved over the years and in line with the institution's direction of devolving responsibilities for quality assurance to the operating units. This is also in line with the concept of Total Quality Management to entrust a department with self-governing responsibilities which include accountability not only for the quality of its programmes, but for quality performance in all aspects of work of the department including its operation, its staff and its response to community needs at large. Under this system, each department, be it academic or non-academic, has to undergo assessment at regular intervals at least once every 5 years. The assessment process includes an assessment of all major functions of the department, undertaken over a period of 3 to 4 days by a specialist panel comprising of both external and internal members. The ability of the department to self-monitor its own standards, to critically review its own strengths and weaknesses and to bring about changes and improvements, i.e. the department's quality assurance system in broad terms, will also form a major part of the assessment process.

Feedback System

The University places great emphasis on the acquisition and analysis of feedback from its advisors and users and particularly, those of its students. Apart from using informal channels to obtain regular user feedbacks, views and comments are formally obtained through Department Academic Advisors/External Examiners, Departmental Advisory Committees and Student Feedback Questionnaires.

The Departmental Academic Advisors/External Examiners system is an effective means for continuous quality improvement since the annual reports they produce often lead to action plans, which are initiated and implemented by the Departments, and monitored by the Faculty Board.

Academic departments are required to each set up a Departmental Advisory Committee. These Committees provide feedback on the relevance of the academic programmes offered in relation to the community demand and the type of graduates required.

Staff Development and Staff Appraisal

The quality of the academic staff is deemed the most important single factor underpinning teaching and learning quality. Hence, the University has well-defined policies, guidelines and committee structures for the appointment and promotion of academic staff. It is a University policy that, for appointment and promotion, the same weight should be placed on the candidate's teaching performance and his research performance.

Monitoring of Quality

Under the new philosophy of devolved responsibility, quality assurance of all aspects is

taken up primarily by Heads of Departments and Faculty Deans. The University ensures that quality is maintained through the system and the processes involved.

The University has a well-defined quality monitoring structure which starts from the Faculty Boards, the Quality Assurance Committee and the Senate. The Quality Assurance/Committee is responsible to the Senate for the formulation, review and evaluation of institutional quality assurance policies and procedures pertaining to the academic functions of the University.

Conclusion

Quality is the hallmark of all functions performed by the PolyU. It is an on-going and evolving process. As a higher education institution, we have come a long way in developing and implementing various quality assurance system. We have made and will continue to exert conscious efforts to constantly review and modify our system to make it more comprehensive and cost-effective. However, we must not forget that in spite of the existence of all the mechanisms and processes, quality cannot be sustained unless a quality culture can be developed and is genuinely shared by staff concerned.

CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLES

Any article (or information) relating to accreditation or quality assurance issues in higher education is welcome. Please send your contribution to the Editor, Accredited Note **by 30 April 2000** for the next issue.

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