



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 Herbert Hui Ho Ming
Executive Director: Miss W S Wong

ACCREDIT NOTE

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SPEECH BY Mrs FANNY LAW, JP AT FORUM ON ASSOCIATE DEGREES

"My three priorities in education are quality, quality and quality. The HKCAA being an independent statutory accreditation body plays an important "gate-keeping" role." said Mrs Fanny Law.



▲ Mrs Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, at the Opening Address of the Forum on the Development and Quality Assurance of Associate Degrees on 7 December 2002.

Mrs Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education & Manpower, in her Opening Address, said, "I am grateful to the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation for organizing this forum on the Development and Quality Assurance of Associate Degrees. Today's event provides an excellent opportunity for us to take stock of progress since the Chief Executive announced in the Year 2000 an ambitious plan on the expansion of post-secondary education, to share experience both local and from overseas, and to reflect on what we have done right, where we can improve, and how we should proceed from now."

"In this academic year, 16 institutions together provide a total of 9,000 self-financing sub-degree places for Secondary 5 and Secondary 7 graduates. The overall participation rate in post-secondary education is now about 42%, up from 32%, two years ago. This is by no means a small achievement and is made possible because of the strong commitment of the Government, the enthusiastic response of continuing education providers and the

unfailing support of the Hong Kong Council of Academic Accreditation against the backdrop of a huge demand for post-secondary education as Hong Kong evolves into a knowledge economy.”

On the part played by the Government, Mrs Law reported that, so far, “we have secured \$5 billion to set up a loan scheme for training providers. Nine campuses rented or purchased with over \$1 billion of loan are already up and running; we have offered nearly \$200 million grants and loans for over 2,500 students attending self-financing sub-degree programmes; we have published a set of common descriptors on associate degree; we have set up a new web site to disseminate information on post-secondary education opportunities in Hong Kong (www.postsec.edu.hk); and we have taken the lead to recognize associate degrees in civil service recruitment.”

Mrs Law continued to point out that **“One of the biggest challenges we face is to gain acceptance in the community of the associate degree as an independent qualification** for the purpose of employment or further education. With a newly branded qualification, there are bound to be questions among students, parents, teachers and employers about the learning outcome, quality assurance, community recognition and progression pathway of associate degree. In Hong Kong, associate degree programmes provide a more flexible mode of learning, a wider variety of subjects and modules, with emphasis on classroom participation, and hands-on projects. Many students who may not do well in an examination-oriented education system regain confidence and interest in learning in an associate degree programme.”

“The Government also announced a blueprint on the further development of higher education in Hong Kong. One of the recommendations is to provide a level playing field for all by rationalizing the government subvention for sub-degree programmes. We expect most of the savings that may be achieved through rationalizing the allocation of resources in the sub-degree sector would be used to enhance the financial assistance for students. Faced with a growing fiscal deficit, we must ensure that resources are allocated where they are most needed to benefit more students and for the common good.”

Articulation is another area that the government is working on. The government outlined a plan “to fund additional second year places of undergraduate programmes and to introduce the Credit Accumulation and Transfer System in the next university triennium beginning in Year 2005. This is to provide more articulation opportunities for associate degree students and improve mobility between the sub-degree and university sectors. We estimate that about 200 first year associate degree students have transferred to year one of undergraduate programmes in this academic year through the non-JUPAS or other routes. For those who may not go to university immediately on graduation, they have acquired a valuable qualification with local and international currency. Their generic skills and language proficiency are sharpened. They possess more specialized knowledge in their chosen fields. And they are better equipped for employment and lifelong learning.”

“A common question in people’s mind is whether the Government would compromise quality in meeting a self-imposed quantitative target. I have no hesitation to give a categoric “no” as the answer. **My three priorities in education are quality, quality and quality. The HKCAA being an independent, statutory**

accreditation body plays an important “gate-keeping” role whereby non-university providers will have to go through institutional reviews and programmes validations before their programmes are recognized by the Government and their students eligible to apply for grants and loans.”

Commenting on the concerns expressed by course providers over the accreditation process, such as the “heavy administrative burden of meeting the Council’s requirements”, “the way panelists are selected, and insufficient transitional provision for new start-ups to grow and mature”, Mrs Law said that **“the quality assurance process adopted by the HKCAA is vigorous covering all aspects of the courses and the institutions”**, and the views from providers “are not unique in Hong Kong. There are bound to be criticisms that standards are either too tight or too loose. A certain degree of constructive tension is only natural and healthy.”

Mrs Law further informed the participants that “there are significant parallel developments with the establishment of the Manpower Development Committee which advises the Government on the provision of vocational education, manpower training, retraining, and continuing education. The MDC will eventually take over the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating the development and funding of sub-degree programmes. The Education and Manpower Bureau issued a consultation document last month proposing to set up a qualifications framework with seven levels of qualification and an entry level. The associate degree occupies a prominent position in this framework, providing a bridge between secondary and university education.”

“The integrity and credibility of the qualifications framework will depend on quality assurance. The Government will look to the HKCAA to provide the leadership and play the central role of a quality assurance and accreditation agency covering all levels of qualifications below the degree. This proposal, if implemented, would usher in a new phase in the development of the Council since its establishment in 1990 with a vastly expanded mandate. With an illustrious track record, and a team of dedicated and professional members, the HKCAA is well positioned to take up the challenge and I wish it continued success in the years ahead.”



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Council Chairman, presenting a souvenir to Mrs Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, after her Opening Address at the Associate Degrees Forum.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



The HKCAA welcomes the Government's recent initiatives to establish a Qualifications Framework for the post-secondary sector in Hong Kong. Early this year, a consultant was commissioned by the Government to explore the feasibility of establishing a framework for the standardization and quality assurance of post-secondary qualifications and to make recommendations for the parameters of such a framework. The consultancy report has been recently released and the HKCAA finds many of the proposals innovative and challenging, and designed to bring about many positive changes on a scale hitherto unknown.

A good part of the recommendations targets the post-secondary/sub-degree sector which is undoubtedly a sector urgently in need of some form of regularization. The Government's investment in public sector education, private entrepreneurship and the efforts of non-profit-making educational bodies, as well as an increased demand for qualifications have spurred the growth of post-secondary education in the last two decades. Participation rate of the relevant age-group in post-secondary education exceeds 30%, which figure does not yet include students going abroad.

The growth of the sub-degree/continuing education sector has been phenomenal and bewildering. Public funded and private institutions offer qualifications of various levels and nomenclature, with different entry and exit points and differences in study load and graduation requirements. The same title or award may mean different things in terms of standard, level and duration of study. There are as many providers as there are qualifications, each offering its own brand of qualifications. The unchecked proliferation of different types of qualifications leads to confusion for both students and employers.

The situation is definitely unsatisfactory. While Australia, New Zealand and the UK have set up their own Qualifications Framework, Hong Kong has been too preoccupied with other matters to give it much attention. The current Government initiative is timeous and it parallels the significant growth in post-secondary education planned for the next ten years.

Setting up a Qualifications Framework entails the formulation of levels, standards and learning outcomes, as explicated in the consultancy report. At the same time, the spirit of a Framework lies in the promise of the assurance of standards for qualifications on the Framework, because levels and level descriptors etc. can only be meaningful if their assigned value and standards can be verified.

The assurance of standards and quality is not new to the higher education system, as the HKCAA has been the guardian and gatekeeper of standards at the non-university tertiary institutions since its inception in 1990. The Council is most encouraged that the role it has been playing has been duly recognized in the consultancy report, and it stands ready to be an active player in the quality assurance work of the future Qualifications Framework.

Quality assurance is not limited to 'accreditation' and it has never been. The HKCAA has, in addition to its accreditation role, encouraged and assisted with the development of internal quality assurance at



▲ Council members pictured with Dr Alan Baker (third from the right), consultant to the Education and Manpower Bureau, at the HKCAA office.

the institutions. Its guiding principle is the fostering of the culture of quality and the ability for self-regulation at the institutions.

The HKCAA is encouraged to see that the report in its proposals acknowledges that some institutions are more mature and have better developed quality assurance mechanisms than others, and it recommends a differential approach with which the Council agrees.

There is the proposal that there should be some form of continual external audit, at regular intervals, even for the mature institutions. The HKCAA also agrees with this concept which is underpinned by the implicit recognition that quality assurance is an on-going improvement process, and that the process is better facilitated by an external organization acting independently. The role of the external agency is akin to the role of the auditor, acting according to commonly accepted principles whose role is never disputed or displaced even as the enterprise grows and matures.

Whilst the HKCAA is keen to fulfil its mission as an independent quality assurance agency, we are always cognizant of academic autonomy, which is crucial to academic freedom and development. As in the past, the HKCAA will take full account of the differences in the developmental stage as well as the individual characteristics of institutions and work closely with institutions as partners and peers, towards the maintenance and enhancement of quality. At the HKCAA we will also be looking inwards to see how we may adjust our orientation and improve our methods of work to prepare for the changes ahead. This may involve measures to ensure stakeholders' views are taken into account, for example through the inclusion of members from the continuing education and vocational sectors in the HKCAA, appointed in a personal capacity.

We are facing unprecedented development which we hope will work for the betterment of Hong Kong's higher education system.

Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP
Chairman, HKCAA
December 2002

REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

It is my pleasure and pride to share with readers the accomplishments that the Council has achieved in the past few months. Besides recurrent work, the Council is recently commissioned by the Education and Manpower Bureau to advise the Government on the assessment of Reimbursable Courses under the Continuing Education Fund (CEF), a new Government initiative to promote life-long learning so as to prepare the Hong Kong workforce to meet the challenges of a knowledge-based economy.

The overall objective of the CEF Scheme is to enhance the participants' skills with reference to the specific competencies defined by the five industries: Logistics, China Business, Financial Services, Design and Tourism Industry. Workplace language proficiency in English, Putonghua and written Chinese is also included as a training area eligible for CEF course reimbursement.

In our assessment of CEF Reimbursable Courses, we emphasize on the quality assurance arrangement of the training providers and the qualifications and experiences of instructors, among others, as assessment criteria. As regards the mode of study, such as part-time or full-time attendance, we encourage diversity. Providers are also given flexibility in the design of the course content as long as half of the course contact hours is devoted to specific competencies of a qualifying subject. The HKCAA values diversity and innovation in training provisions while maintaining quality and standards.


The Council has been very supportive of the promotion and advancement of continuing education as one of the essential means to enhance the total quality of the Hong Kong population. In early 2001, the HKCAA was invited by the Insurance Authority to be the sole assessor for the Continuing Professional Development Programmes for the Insurance Intermediaries Quality Assurance Scheme. In an age of knowledge explosion, new input is essential to rejuvenate the spirit of our society. It is axiomatic that the Council would further its involvement in assuring quality in continuing education programmes as a response to the needs of society, and as a reflection of our commitment to life-long education.

Until recently, our core business has remained in the area of accreditation and quality assurance of degree level education in Hong Kong. The introduction of associate degrees in 2001 and the Government's encouragement of private participation in the provision of tertiary education has significantly changed the higher education landscape. The diversity and expansion of tertiary places create new challenges and with that, new responsibilities to the HKCAA, reinforcing the importance of quality assurance through a system of accreditation.

As yet there is no legal requirement for all institutions providing post-secondary education to seek accreditation. The government encourages voluntary participation in accreditation, through financial incentives rather than coercion. As an independent body responsible for quality assurance and monitoring

of educational programmes, the HKCAA is currently undertaking the dual function of facilitation of quality improvement and programme validation.

On the one hand, the HKCAA is expected to uphold stipulated standards over institutions and programmes seeking approval. On the other hand, it adheres to the tradition of respecting the academic autonomy of individual institutions in allowing them the freedom to formulate their own programmes in accordance with their own mission. Accreditation is by no means a way to discourage less experienced providers from educational endeavours. Through provision of relevant assistance and advice, the HKCAA's role is to ensure that new institutions have the appropriate structures and processes to deliver what they pledge, and are ready to incorporate internationally recognized good practices and dimensions in their programmes, while meeting local needs. A healthy development of education requires the collaborative efforts of private educators. Indeed, it is one of the rationales behind the Government's policy of encouraging the development of private higher education institutions.



Miss Wong Wai Sum
Executive Director, HKCAA
December 2002



Institutional Reviews and Programme Validations:

Overview

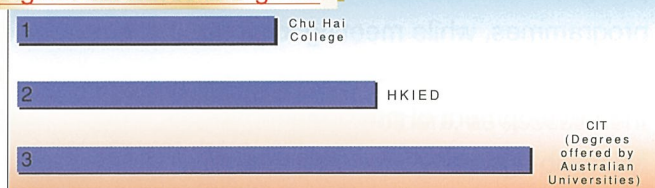
The HKCAA continues to engage in institutional reviews and programme validations as its core activities. Starting from early 2002, a total of 23 validations on degree, associate degree/higher diploma, and pre-associate degree programmes were successfully conducted for eleven institutions.

During the same period, five programme re-validations, one on a degree for the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts (HKAPA), two on postgraduate diplomas in education (PGDE) and two on degree programmes for the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), were completed. At the same time, the Council also conducted institutional reviews of the Hong Kong Learning Community College (LCC), Chu Hai College and the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) to assess whether they have the appropriate academic environment to provide accredited degree and sub-degree programmes.

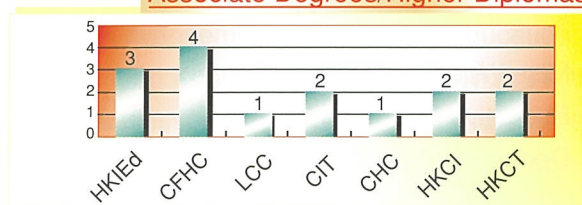
By September 2002 after a series of validation exercises, the HKCAA accredited a total of 20 associate degree and higher diploma programmes, which will create 2,000 new post-secondary places. These programmes cover a wide range of disciplines spanning business, information technology, design and general studies.

In the pages that follow, there will be brief accounts of validations conducted by the HKCAA in 2002. Some basic information is analysed and graphically presented below to enhance the transparency of our work.

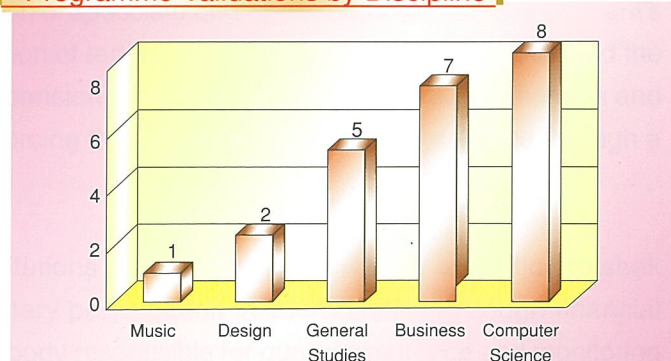
Degrees/Non-local Degrees



Associate Degrees/Higher Diplomas



Programme Validations by Discipline



The Open University of Hong Kong

The HKCAA was pleased to be invited by the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) to undertake its first institutional review since the University attained self-accrediting status in 1996. The remit of the review was to examine the continued evolution of the University's processes for the development and delivery of programmes, and to provide an external assessment of the effectiveness of quality assurance policies and mechanisms adopted by the OUHK.

Chaired by Professor John C Y Leong, HKCAA Chairman, a Panel of experienced HKCAA members and academics specializing in distance learning education from Australia, Canada, and the US convened to conduct the review during 16-18 May 2002. The Panel was impressed with the tremendous progress the OUHK had made, since the last Review, in its quality assurance systems and processes, in addition to the many significant developments undertaken by the University in the offering of new courses, as well as new modes of

course delivery including electronic delivery and a limited number of face-to-face courses.

In all, the HKCAA concluded that the OUHK had succeeded in devising and maintaining a sound and effective system of quality assurance for the delivery of its programmes at sub-degree, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels.



▲ Prof Tam Sheung-wai, President of the Open University of Hong Kong presenting a souvenir to Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA at the Institutional Review of the Open University of Hong Kong.

College of Info-Tech (CIT)

The College of Info-Tech, a private college which used to offer non-local degree and postgraduate courses in Hong Kong, has been granted accredited status for the delivery of the following non-local degree programmes starting from 2002/2003:

- Bachelor of Science (Computer Science), awarded by the Victoria University of Technology, Australia
- Bachelor of Business, awarded by the Southern Cross University, Australia
- Bachelor of Information Technology, awarded by the Southern Cross University, Australia

The Bachelor of Science (Computer Science), Bachelor of Business, and Bachelor of Information Technology programmes were all conditionally

approved commencing from the 2002/2003 academic year. After satisfactory fulfillment of stipulated conditions, the three programmes have now become the first ever accredited non-local programmes in Hong Kong, which means that their standards are considered as comparable to local and internationally recognized standards.

In the meantime, the College has also been accredited for the delivery of its own Associate Degree programmes. In this connection, the College sought accreditation for two Associate Degree programmes, namely Associate Degree of Business Administration in Finance Services, and Associate of Science in Computing and Information Technology which were approved for commencement for the 2002/2003 academic year.

Chu Hai College

Chu Hai College was founded in Guangzhou, China in 1947 as a private university, and was renamed "Chu Hai College" in 1949 in Hong Kong with a mission to provide an alternative access route to higher education. The College has rich post-secondary education experience and has produced over 1,600 graduates in the past 20 years.

Early in 2002, the College submitted a Bachelor Degree programme in Computer Science and an



▲ Members of the HKCAA Institutional Review panel during a visit to the Chu Hai College with Prof John C Y Leong, Panel Chairman (sixth from the right), Mr Kong Ho-pak, Chairman of Board of Governors of the Chu Hai College (seventh from the right) and Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA (eighth from the right).

Associate Degree programme in Computer Science for the HKCAA to validate. As a prerequisite for programme validation, an institutional review was undertaken on 25-27 April 2002 to assess the suitability of the academic environment of the College and the academic processes for the delivery of higher education. Impressed by the College's aspiration towards academic quality and improvement, and the strong sense of belonging and collegiality among staff members, the HKCAA recommended that the College be accredited, subject to the fulfillment of a few conditions and requirements, in addition to a number of recommendations for improvement.

The validation visits for the Associate of Science (Computer Science) and the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science were conducted on 20-21 and 24-26 June 2002 respectively, with local and overseas specialists as panel members. The HKCAA recommended that the proposed associate degree programme be approved subject to conditions and requirements.

The Hong Kong Learning Community College (LCC)

The accreditation of the LCC is a new venture of its kind, as the College is a newly established institution. The HKCAA adopted a three-phase review of the College, comprising: Phase I — Review of Institutional and Programme Plans; Phase II — Institutional Review and Programme Validation; and Phase III — Monitoring.

The first phase, reviewing the institutional and programme plans of the College, took place in September 2001. After the review, the HKCAA accepted the concept of the plans and supported the general direction to be taken by the College

to carry forward its proposed plans, subject to fulfillment of the conditions stipulated in the Review Report.

The second phase, in line with normal HKCAA practice, began with an Institutional Review which took place on 11-12 April 2002, followed by the validation of two programmes, namely, the one-year Pre-Associate Degree in General Studies and the two-year Associate Degree in General Studies on 17-19 April 2002. The Pre-Associate Degree and the Associate Degree programmes have been approved subject to the College fulfilling conditions

The Hong Kong Institute Of Education (HKIED)

The HKCAA continued to provide programme validations and revalidations for the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED). From December 2001 to July 2002, five validations and four revalidations were conducted. The four revalidated programmes comprised the 4-Year Full-time Bachelor of Education (Honours) Primary; the 3-Year Mixed Mode BEd (Honours) Early Childhood Education; the 1-Year Full-time Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) (Primary); and the 2-Year Part-time PGDE (Technology). Apart from the PGDE (Technology), which merged with the 2-Year Part-time PGDE (Secondary), the other three programmes were approved for student intakes.

In March 2002, the Council validated a new HKIED degree programme, the 3-Year Mixed Mode BEd (Honours) (Language Teaching).

In the same period, HKCAA also validated three associate degree and one pre-associate self-financed programmes submitted by HKIED's Division of Continuing Professional Education, a



▲ HKCAA Programme Revalidation panel at the Hong Kong Institute of Education with Panel Chairlady, Prof Collette Tayler (fourth from the left) and HKCAA staff.

self-funding arm of the Institute. Following the successful validation of HKIED's first associate degree programme, the Associate of Science (Information Technology), in December 2001, three other programmes, namely, the Associate of Arts (Music), the Associate of Arts (Art & Design), and the Pre-Associate Degree Foundation Certificate Programme, were assessed in July 2002. All validations were successfully completed and all programmes were approved for commencement in the academic year of 2002/2003.

stipulated in the two Final Reports.

The design of the two programmes mirrors a three-year Associate Degree curriculum. The Pre-Associate Degree forms an integral part of the Associate Degree. The curriculum attempts to provide both the breadth and depth of knowledge aimed to help students to become both generalists and specialists. Students are offered choices of two Tracks. The Transfer Track prepares them for entry to local or overseas universities; the Career Track grooms them to join the local workforce.



▲ Members of the HKCAA Institutional Review panel during visit to the Hong Kong Learning Community College with Dr Richard Ho, Chairman of the Panel (fourth from the right), Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA (fourth from the left) and Ms Elizabeth Li, Chief Executive Officer of the College (sixth from the left).

Caritas Francis Hsu College (CFHC)

Between February and March 2002, the HKCAA was invited by the Caritas Francis Hsu College to validate four associate degree programmes: the Associate of Arts in Bilingual Business Communication, the Associate of Business Administration in Financial Studies, the

Associate of Business Administration in Tourism and Marketing Management, and the Associate of Science in Business Information Systems.

These four associate degree programmes proposed by the College are all 2-year programmes preceded by a foundation year. Students at HKCEE level are admitted to the foundation year and those at Advanced Level are admitted to the 2-year programmes. The programmes aim to prepare students as para-professionals for the corresponding sectors and disciplines and provide them at the same time with the academic competency to proceed to the second year of three-year Bachelor programmes.

All programmes were recommended conditional approval and after satisfactory fulfillment of conditions in July, the College implemented the programmes for the academic year 2002/2003.



▲ Members of HKCAA Programme Validation panel during a visit to the Caritas Francis Hsu College with Prof Daniel Kane, Chairman of the Panel (third from the left, first row), Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA (fourth from the left, first row), Mr P C Liu, President of the College (second from the left, first row), and College staff.

Hong Kong College of Technology (HKCT)

The Hong Kong College of Technology offers vocationally based Diploma/Advanced Diploma courses for Secondary 5 and Secondary 7 students respectively. In 2001, the College established a School of Post-secondary Education to offer Higher Diploma programmes and sought the accreditation service of the HKCAA for these programmes.

Subsequent to the institutional review and the validations of three full-time 3-year Higher Diploma programmes in August 2001, the HKCAA was invited by the College to validate two other Higher Diploma programmes in Interactive Media Design and Business (with Majors in Marketing, Finance and China Business) for school leavers with stipulated HKCEE results. Expert validation Panels were formed by the HKCAA and the validation visits

for these two programmes took place in April/May 2002. The two validations were completed by September 2002 when the College had fulfilled all stipulated conditions for validation. The College implemented these two Higher Diploma programmes in October 2002, making a total of five HKCAA accredited Higher Diploma programmes being offered by the College.



▲ Members of the HKCAA Programme Validation panel during a visit to the Hong Kong College of Technology with Prof Bruce Brown, Chairman of the Panel (third from the right) and Mr Chan Cheuk-hay, Principal of the College (third from the left).

Hong Kong Computer Institute (HKCI)

The Hong Kong Computer Institute was established in 1981 as a private college. The Institute has years of experience in offering Higher Diploma programmes and non-local degree programmes in co-operation with overseas tertiary institutes. In response to the government initiative to increase the participation rate in post-secondary education, the Institute plans to offer the Associate in Computer Studies and the Associate in Business Administration. The HKCAA was invited to conduct an Institutional Review and Programme Validations for the purpose.

The Institutional Review and the two associate degree programme validations took place in July and August 2002 respectively. The HKCAA is currently reviewing the overall suitability for launching the two associate degrees in 2002/2003 and the review reports on institution and programmes are expected to be completed in December 2002. These reports will detail the observations and recommendations of the HKCAA on the Institute's submission with a view to



▲ Members of the HKCAA Institutional Review panel during a visit to the Hong Kong Computer Institute with Dr Richard Ho, Chairman of the Panel (fourth from the right, first row), Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA (third from the right, first row) and Mr William Chow, Principal of the Institute (second from the left, first row).

strengthen the future development of the Institute and its proposed programmes.

The Institute is currently planning a new campus for the new associate degrees. To fulfil the conditions and requirements set for campus and facilities, approval from the Education Department for use of the new campus for the associate degrees has to be sought and a site visit by the HKCAA Panel to assess the overall suitability will follow.

Hong Kong Academy For Performing Arts (HKAPA)

The Academy offers the three-year full-time Bachelor of Fine Arts (Hons) degree programme in Theatre Technical Arts with five specialist streams in Theatre and Film Design, Theatre Lighting Design, Sound Design and Music Recording, Stage and Technical Management, and Applied Arts. The programme underwent its first revalidation in 1997 and was further revalidated in March this year. The programme was granted unconditional approval for further student intakes from 2002/2003.

The Panel made a number of recommendations for the further refinement of the programme and in the context of the future development of the Academy with a special emphasis on international links.

The Panel was pleased to see, in this programme, the work demonstrated by the talented staff committed to preparing young artists for Hong Kong and was confident that the Academy would continue to make progress.

Council Meetings

The Twenty-fifth Council Meeting of the HKCAA was held on 7-8 June 2002.

At the meeting, the Council received activity reports on the work accomplished in the six-month period, in which the HKCAA conducted 16 programme validations and three institutional reviews on top of existing work and the new involvement as the sole advisor to the Education and Manpower Bureau in the assessment of reimbursement courses under the Continuing Education Fund.

The meeting also deliberated policies and issues related to the long-term development of associate degrees in Hong Kong, and the HKCAA's response to UGC's Report on the Review of Higher Education. The meeting was aware of HKCAA's essential gate-keeping role in a new era of higher education and life-long education development, and was appreciative of the hard work of members and the secretariat in maintaining this function on behalf of the Council. The meeting also considered the Council's budget and estimates for 2002/2003 and plans for the future.

The Secretary for Education and Manpower (retitled Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower since July 2002), Mrs Fanny Law, attended part of the meeting, and expressed interest in the HKCAA's progress in the validation of new degree-granting institutions and of associate degrees, and also the liaison activities with Mainland China. Mrs Law called upon the HKCAA to continue its good work in the quality assurance of new educational initiatives in Hong Kong. Mrs Law joined Council members for a breakfast meeting on 8 June.



▲ Miss W S Wong Executive Director of HKCAA (second from the left) pictured with Council members, Prof David Dunkerley (first from the left), Dr Judith Eaton (second from the right) and Mr Martin Liao (first from the right) at the June Council Dinner.



▲ Mr Herbert Hui (first on the right), Vice-chairman of HKCAA, and Mrs Marie-Odile Ottenwaelter (second from the right), Council member, welcoming two guests: Mr Wong Shiu Kwan (first on the left), Chairman of the Board of Educational Affairs, Hong Kong Institute of Architects, and Dr Y S So (second from the left), Lecturer of SPEED, Hong Kong Polytechnic University at the June Council Dinner.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA pictured with Mr Peter Cheung, Secretary-General of University Grants Committee at the June Council Dinner.



▲ Prof Kwong Lee Dow (left), Council member with Dr Andrew Chuang, former Chairman of HKCAA, at the Council Dinner in June 2002.



▲ Prof Arthur K C Li, Secretary for Education and Manpower, with HKCAA Council Members at the 26th Council Meeting on 6 December 2002.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA pictured with Mr Yeung Yiu Chung, Member of the Legislative Council, and Prof Kwong Lee Dow at the December Council Dinner.



▲ Mr Herbert Hui, Vice-Chairman of HKCAA, delivering a note of thanks at the Council Meeting in December 2002.

The Twenty-sixth Council Meeting of the HKCAA was held on 6th December 2002.

At the meeting, the Council likewise received activity reports on the work accomplished in the reporting six-month period in which the HKCAA conducted 7 programme validations and two institutional reviews, accredited over 50 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes for insurance intermediaries, assessed courses offered by both public and private providers under the Continuing Education Fund (CEF), continued a most constructive dialogue with the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) in relation to the designing and setting up of a Qualifications Framework territory-wide, undertook visits to Mainland Chinese universities, and organized a first-ever forum on associate degrees, while all the time being committed to other existing work and day-to-day operations.

Again policies and issues were discussed and deliberated at the meeting relating to qualifications assessment, accreditation of insurance continuing professional development programmes, Mainland China visits, and staff development.

The meeting also considered the Council's budget and estimates for 2003/2004 and plans for the future. Members also expressed appreciation for the hard work and contributions of the secretariat.

The current Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM), Professor Arthur K C Li, attended part of the meeting and carried on a lively discussion with members on a number of vital issues, not the least relating to the proposed establishment of a Qualifications Framework for Hong Kong and the role of the Council in this new development.

The Council Dinner, held on the evening of the Council Meeting, was honoured with the presence of

Dr Alice Lam, Chairman of the University Grants Committee (UGC), who shared with the Council and guests her thoughts on the quality of higher education in Hong Kong.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA, presenting a souvenir to Dr Alice Lam, Chairman of the University Grants Committee at the December Council Dinner.



◀ Prof John C Y Leong, Council Chairman (second from the left), Dr Alice Lam, Chairman of UGC (first on the left), the Hon Yeung Yiu Chung, Legislative Council Member (second from the right), and Miss W S Wong, Council Executive Director (first on the right) having a pleasant discussion at the December Council Dinner.

Speech by Dr Alice Lam on Quality of Higher Education

Below is the text of a speech delivered by Dr Alice Lam, Chairman of the University Grants Committee at the HKCAA Council Dinner.

“Ever since its establishment in 1990, the HKCAA has been a steady partner of the UGC in the promotion and assurance of quality in the higher education sector of Hong Kong. Although the Universities under the UGC are self-accrediting, the HKCAA actually plays a substantial role in helping them to get there. Take for an example, the Hong Kong Institute of Education at the moment is still having its programmes accredited and revalidated by the HKCAA, while steadily acquiring its own expertise and establishing its own processes to do it by itself eventually.

Throughout the world there has been a trend towards extending opportunities for education. Together with this move, there comes diversity. This diversity manifest itself in many respects: different sources of funding, different modes of supply, different kinds of academic programmes and different types of students.

Diversification is to be welcomed. But, to reap its benefits, there is one absolute prerequisite - Quality. Without quality or the sufficient assurance of it, any expansion of education opportunities will be to no avail. In Hong Kong, for the past twenty years, we have seen a rapid expansion of the tertiary sector, in the growth of the UGC sector, the continuing education arm of UGC institutions, vocational training courses and of late, the oncoming of a thriving sub-degree sector. All these are good for Hong Kong but these changes also pose strong challenges to bodies like the HKCAA and the UGC.

In the Higher Education Review which has just been accepted by the Administration, we have made a number of proposals focusing on the promotion of excellence and quality in our universities, such as the periodic comprehensive audit and the franchising arrangements, and I am pleased to see that the Administration has put forth a proposal for a Qualifications Framework, with the HKCAA as the centerpiece, for the assurance of quality.

Nobody will dispute that quality is the key to education. As public agencies, our goal should go beyond confirming good quality where there is. Our goal must be ‘to develop a quality culture all round’. This is a difficult goal and the road there will be long and winding. The HKCAA has a sound track record and appropriate expertise. The UGC is stepping up efforts in promoting excellence. We have a strong partnership and I am sure that Hong Kong will not lose out in this age for knowledge-based development, as the HKCAA builds success upon success.”



▲ Dr Alice Lam, Chairman of the University Grants Committee, delivering a speech at the Council Dinner on 6 December 2002.

Forum on the Development and Quality Assurance of Associate Degrees



▲ Mrs Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, with Council members, guests and speakers at the Associate Degrees Forum on 7 December 2002.

“The Government will look to the HKCAA to provide the leadership and play the central role of a quality assurance and accreditation agency covering all levels of qualifications below the degree.” With these encouraging words, Mrs Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, marked the opening of the HKCAA Associate Degrees Forum.

The Forum on the Development and Quality Assurance of Associate Degrees was organized by the Council and held on 7 December 2002 at the JW Marriott Hotel in response to the keen interest of stakeholders and the community at large in the proliferation of Associate Degrees and similar programmes. At the same time, it offered an opportunity for relevant parties to take stock of the development of Associate Degrees and the experiences gained in the past year.



▲ Prof T P Leung, Council Member, presenting a souvenir to Dr Alan Baker, consultant to the Education and Manpower Bureau, after a presentation by Dr Baker.

Our Council was honoured by the presence of Mrs Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, who officiated the opening of the Forum. In her Opening Address, Mrs Law reaffirmed the value of the Associate Degree programme in providing a more flexible mode of learning, a wide variety of subjects, modules, with emphasis on classroom participation, and hands-on projects. She found it encouraging that the overall participation rate in post-secondary education is now about 42%, up from 32% two years ago, with 16 institutions providing a total of 9,000 self financing sub-degree places. She attributed this



▲ (Left to right) Prof John C Y Leong, Council Chairman, Mrs. Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, Miss W S Wong, Council Executive Director, Mr Herbert Hui, Council Vice-Chairman, and the Hon Yeung Yiu Chung, Legislative Council Member attending the Forum.



▲ Local Associate Degree training providers presenting at the Session "Sharing of Experiences - Development Strategies of Associate Degree" at the Forum.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Council Chairman, presenting a souvenir to Mr Tony Cheng, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower after the Forum.



◀ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman (second from the left) and Miss W S Wong, Council Executive Director (first on the left) with the Hon. Yeung Yiu Chung, Legislative Council Member (second from the right), and Dr Andrew Ma (first on the right) at the AD. Forum.



▶ Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of the Council, introducing the functions and responsibilities of the HKCAA at the Forum.



▲ Mr Herbert Hui, Council Vice-Chairman, pictured with Dr Henry H L Hu and Prof Xu Demin, Council Member, at the Forum.



▲ Overseas Council members, (from the left) Prof David Dunkerley, Prof Kwong Lee Dow, and Dr Judith Eaton at the Session "Experience of Associate Degree in Other Countries" of the Forum.



▲ Mr Herbert Hui, Council Vice-Chairman, officially concluding the Associate Degrees Forum on 7 December 2002.

achievement to the **“strong commitment of the Government, the enthusiastic response of continuing education providers and the unfailing support of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation”**.

Mrs Law went on to inform the participants about the establishment of the Manpower Development Committee which will eventually take over the responsibility of overseeing and coordinating the development and funding of sub-degree programmes. Mrs Law affirmed that the Associate Degree occupies a prominent position providing a bridge between secondary and university education. Mrs Fanny Law went on to state that “the integrity and credibility of the qualifications framework will depend on quality assurance. **We look to the HKCAA to provide the leadership and play the central role of a quality assurance and accreditation agency covering all levels of qualifications below the degree.** This proposal, if implemented, would usher in a new phase in the development of the Council since its establishment in 1990 with a vastly expanded mandate.” She felt that **“with an illustrious track record, and a team of dedicated and professional members, the HKCAA is well positioned to take up the challenge.”**

In the welcome speech to the audience, Professor John C Y Leong, Chairman of the Council, thanked the Government for the confidence bestowed on the Council and reaffirmed the Council's commitment in working closely with course providers in developing and maintaining the quality of the Associate Degree, which is intended to become eventually part of the overall qualifications framework to be set up for Hong Kong.

Many distinguished guest speakers were invited to speak at the Forum to present different perspectives on the Associate Degree. These included Professor K M Cheng (Pro Vice-Chancellor



▲ Mrs Fanny Law, Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, with Council Members at the Associate Degrees Forum.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Council Chairman, addressing the floor at a Q & A Session at the Forum.



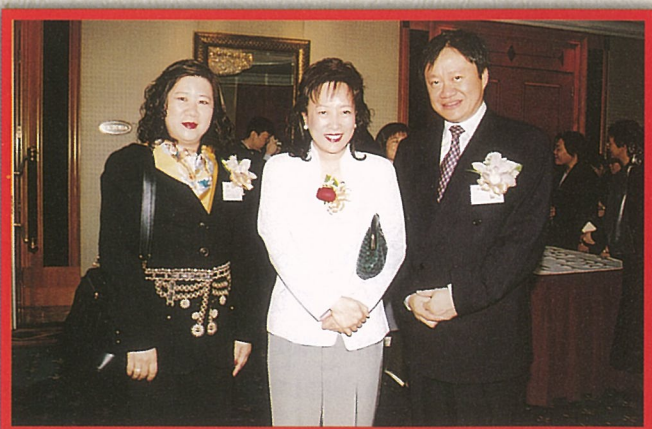
▲ Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of the Council, Dr Richard Ho, Council Member, and Mr Clement Leung, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower, responding at a Q & A Session of the Forum.



▲ Three hundred attentive audiences with guests at the Associate Degrees Forum.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Council Chairman, pictured with Prof K M Cheng, Pro Vice-Chancellor of University of Hong Kong, and Council Member Mr Roger Yuen at the Forum.



▲ Dr Rosanna Wong, Chairman of the Education Commission, pictured with Mr Herbert Hui, Council Vice-chairman, and Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of the Council at the Forum.

of the University of Hong Kong) from the Education Commission, Mr Eddie Ng (External Affairs Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resources Management) representing the community sector and employers, two private course providers Dr Andrew Y B Ma (Co-ordinator of the Caritas Adult & Higher Education Service), Ms Joy Shi (Principal of the College of Info Tech), as well as a representative from the University sector Dr Anthony Tam (Acting Director of the Community College, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University).

The Forum also included a presentation by Dr Alan Barker, a consultant of the EMB on the proposal of the development of a qualifications framework and a regulatory framework for Hong Kong. Council members also participated actively in the Forum. Dr Richard Ho and Ms W S Wong gave an explication on the HKCAA accreditation processes for Associate Degree and similar qualifications. Dr Judith Eaton and Professor David Dunkerley also presented an overseas perspective on the development of Associate Degree/ Foundation Degrees in the US and UK respectively.

The Forum attracted over 360 participants including course providers, interest groups in education, professional bodies, the Council's subject specialists, staff from universities and other higher education institutions, and secondary schools principals and teachers. Other honoured guests who attended the function included Dr Rosanna Wong, Chairman of the Education Commission, Legislative Councillors Mr Yeung Yiu Chung, Mr Tam Yiu Chung, members from the Manpower Development Committee, University Grants Committee, and the Education and Manpower Bureau.

The Forum ended with a Closing Address delivered by the Vice-Chairman Mr Herbert Hui following two interactive open discussion sessions by all participants.

UGC Report on Higher Education in Hong Kong

Summary of HKCAA's Comments

The HKCAA supports many of the Report's recommendations such as the further growth of private institutions and is gratified to see the emphasis placed on the quality assurance of education, in particular in the realm of continuing and further education. We shall comment specifically on the following selected areas pertinent to the issues of quality assurance.

THE PROPOSED FURTHER EDUCATION COUNCIL (FEC)

A Supervisory Body / Advisory Body for the Sector

We note with great interest the suggestion for the creation of a Further Education Council (FEC), to oversee the Associate Degree and 'the new community college sector'.

With the increased number of providers in the sub-degree sector (public and private providers), the need for a supervisory authority to introduce some forms of regularization and regulation into the system becomes more pertinent. A supervisory body can oversee inter alia matters relating to funding, strategic and manpower planning, the operation of private institutions, relations between the sub-degree and degree sectors.

We advise that this be constituted as an independent body - independent of the institutions/course providers.

We are therefore not in favour of the proposition that the UGC funded institutions should create 'a

joint self-funding body' to look after the qualifications franchised to their Continuing Education (CE) divisions, and those of other providers.

Experiences around the World show that quality assurance organizations owned by member institutions only work well with a sufficiently large number of institutions to eliminate the effects of conflicts of interest/vested interests, such as the ones in the US which have hundreds or over 1,000 member institutions. Hong Kong's small higher education sector is not suitable for this type of organization. Moreover, an organization created and owned by UGC funded institutions does not seem to allow room for representation of other (private) providers. This could easily lead to claims of disparity in standard employed in any policy decisions, or accreditation/quality assurance initiatives.

NEED FOR CONSISTENCY

We see the crucial need for some form of consistency in the quality assurance of institutions and programmes in the entire sub-degree/continuing education sector. At present, the HKCAA has been entrusted with the quality assurance of programmes

at the private institutions, whereas the provisions at the universities' continuing education divisions have been under the internal scrutiny of the self-accrediting universities. This dual system of quality control is not entirely satisfactory.

We feel that a new body such as a FEC, if it is created, should divorce itself from the quality assurance function and entrust it to an independent body. Independent of policy/political issues or financial considerations, the FEC could allow the outcome of quality assessment or quality audit to inform its funding and other regulatory decisions.

We would encourage the Government to consider the current role and experience of the HKCAA in the quality assurance of both degree and sub-degree provision, and to harness the expertise and experience of the HKCAA in any future scheme of regulation and quality assurance for the sub-degree sector.

ON THE PROPOSAL FOR MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

We note that a Manpower Development Committee is now under planning as a separate organization alongside the UGC and the proposed FEC.

We feel that the creation of both a Further Education Council and a Manpower Development Committee, could lead to anomaly in the system, as the divide between academic and vocational qualifications becomes increasingly blurred.

In light of the interchangeable nature of academic

and vocational qualifications, and the intended articulation between them, we suggest that the Government considers the establishment of a single body to oversee both the vocational and the further education sectors, in terms of funding, and strategic/manpower planning — while entrusting the accreditation/audit function to a body independent of both of the Government and institutions/course providers.

If the HKCAA were to act as this independent quality assurance body, the views and experience of stakeholders in the continuing education/vocational education sectors could be channeled and harnessed such as through the appointment of members from these sectors to the Council, in a personal capacity.

QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The work of the coordination body/bodies for the further/vocational education sectors should be aligned with the efforts to establish a Qualifications Framework for Hong Kong. One of the problems besetting these sectors is the lack of a consistent well-understood currency for the myriad qualifications and hence the absence of a common vehicle for transportability and accumulation of qualifications. The creation of a supervisory body/bodies for these sectors provides an opportunity for setting up such a Framework.

The accreditation experience of the HKCAA has straddled qualification in degrees, sub-degrees, continuing education and professional courses. We hope that our rich experience would be tapped for input into the future Qualifications Framework.

Mainland China Visit



▲ Prof Danny Wong presenting the Council's souvenir to the Prof Zhang Tai-ling, the Deputy Director-General of the Education Department of Guangdong Province, during a visit in August 2002.



▲ The HKCAA delegation with Prof Danny Wong (fifth from the left), Prof K C Chan (fourth from the right), HKCAA Council members, Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA (fourth from the left), and Prof Francis Chin (third from the right) pictured with the Dean of the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications during visit to the University.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA, pictured with the Vice President of the Northern Jiaotong University, Prof Yang Zhao-xia, during a visit to the University.

The Council has continued to strengthen liaison with educational authorities and institutions in Mainland China.

During March to November 2002, the Council has organized visits to Beijing, Shanghai and Suzhou for academic exchanges. The HKCAA visit delegation led by the HKCAA Council Chairman, Professor John C Y Leong, comprised two other Council members, Professor Danny Wong and Professor K C Chan, the Executive Director and three other subject specialists from Hong Kong and overseas.

The delegation visited the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications and the Northern Jiaotong University in Beijing in March 2002. In late October/early November 2002, the same delegation visited the Donghua University and the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics in Shanghai and the Soochow University in Suzhou.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA (left), have a meeting with Prof Tan Min, President of the Shanghai University of Finance & Economics.

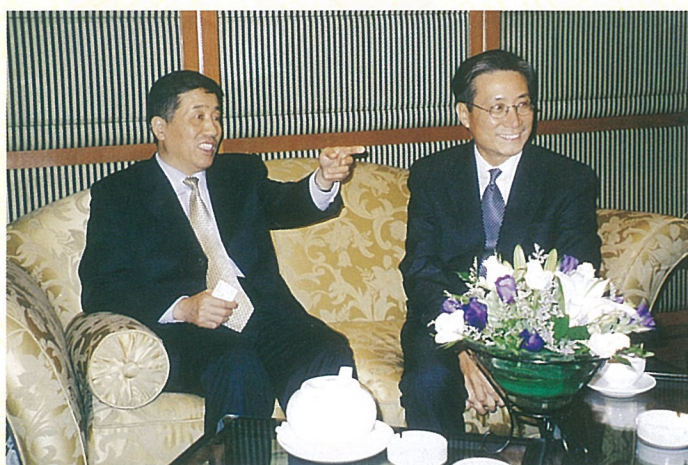
During the visits, the delegation had very useful and interactive discussions with the University staff on a wide range of issues about the development of academic programmes and quality assurance processes. The delegation also took advantage of these visits to meet the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Education, senior staff of the Office of Academic Degree Committee, the China Academic Degree and Graduate Education Development Centre, the Shanghai Education Commission and the Shanghai Educational Evaluation Institute and the Jiangsu Agency for Education Evaluation.

In August 2002, Council member Professor Danny Wong and the Executive Director visited the Jinan University and the South China Normal University. This was the first visit the Council made to universities in the Guangdong Province. This visit paved the way for closer links with institutions in the southern part of Mainland China where Hong Kong students have been studying.

During the visit to Guangdong, the HKCAA visit party also had the opportunity to meet the Deputy Director-General and staff of Education Department of Guangdong Province and had useful exchanges on matters of mutual interests.



◀ The HKCAA delegation, with Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA, at a visit to Dong Hua University.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong (right), Chairman of HKCAA, pictured with Dr Zhang Weijiang (left), Director-General of the Education Commission of Shanghai Municipal People's Government.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA, presenting a souvenir to Prof Qian Peide, President of the Soochow University.



▲ Mr Herbert Hui (third from the right, first row), Vice-Chairman of HKCAA and Miss W S Wong (first on the right, first row), Executive Director of HKCAA with other delegation members pictured with Mr Jing Tong Kang (second from the right, first row), Director of the Shanghai Educational Evaluation Institute and Institute's staff at a visit to the Institute.



▲ The HKCAA delegation pictured by the welcome sign for the HKCAA delegation at the Dong Hua University.



▲ The HKCAA delegation, with Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of the HKCAA (second from the right), Prof Danny Wong, HKCAA Council Member (fourth from the right), and Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA (first from the left), pictured with staff of the Northern Jiaotong University during the HKCAA visit in March 2002.

Visitations to HKCAA

The Council continues to receive many overseas and local visiting delegations from academic institutions and government bodies interested in obtaining information about the Hong Kong education system and our accreditation practices. In March, our Council members met a delegation from the Government of Macau, including representatives from the Government of Macau SAR Higher Education Bureau, University of Macau, Macau Polytechnic, Bureau of Administrative Services, and Bureau of Education and Youth Affairs met our Council members and shared with them our experiences in local accreditation and assessment of non-local qualifications. Later in the month, a delegation from the Government of Thailand including representatives from the Ministry of University Affairs, Kasetsart University, and

Mahasarakham University also visited the Council.

In April, another delegation with representatives from Mainland China institutions in Beijing, including Beijing University, Tsinghua University, Beijing Normal University, Beijing Broadcasting Institute, Beijing Polytechnic University, Beijing University of Physical Culture, Beijing Institute of Technology, Beijing University of Electric Power, and Beijing Municipal Education Commission, visited the Council. Representatives from the Mongolian National Council for Higher Education Accreditation, the Consortium of Management Development Institutions of Mongolia, and National Medical University of Mongolia also visited the Council later in the month.

In June and August, the Council's Executive Director, Miss W S Wong, received respectively the Executive Director of the Australian Universities Quality Agency, and the Executive Director of the Centre for Quality Assurance in International Education, the National Centre for Higher Education, USA. Through these exchanges, the Council can keep up with the development of quality assurance systems and practices in other countries.



▲ Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA and Council staff pictured with a delegation from Thailand in March 2002.

► Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA (fourth from the right), Prof Danny Wong, HKCAA Council member (third from the left) and Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA (first from the right) pictured with a delegation from Macau in March 2002.



Conference of the Korean Council for University Education

► The Chairman of HKCAA, Prof John C Y Leong (right), pictured with the Secretary General of Korean Council for University Education, Dr Hyun-Chung Lee (left) at the 20th Anniversary International Seminar of the Korean Council for University Education.



▲ Prof John C Y Leong, Chairman of HKCAA, as a keynote speaker at the 20th Anniversary International Seminar of the Korean Council for University Education.

The Korean Council for University Education (KCUE) with membership embracing all 193 four-year colleges and universities in Korea, both public and private, is a national advisory body established to enhance the quality of university education and to promote cooperation among member institutions in Korea.

To commemorate its 20th anniversary, the KCUE held an International Seminar in April 2002, and invited our Chairman, Professor John C Y Leong as one of the four international keynote speakers.

In his keynote speech, Professor John C Y Leong presented his view on "The Strategy and the Quality Management of Higher Education in Hong Kong", briefly introducing the accreditation functions performed by the HKCAA, and discussing the foci of concern in validation exercises. He emphasized that in an era of rapid changes, the accreditation body has to respect the academic autonomy of institutions while exercising its authority in the interest of the consumer, and has to balance comparable international standards with qualities having a specific local value.

The Executive Director, Ms W S Wong, also attended the Seminar.

The HKCAA Office accommodation located on the 14th Floor of Ruttonjee Centre had been in use since 1990 without any major alterations. With the increase in staff and changes in the activities of the Council, the office space was no longer adequate and the ageing fixtures and furnishings required frequent attention. The design could not serve present needs and the Council deserved a better image than the condition of the premises was able to project.

In February 2002, additional office space was rented on the 4th Floor in the same building, and this provided the opportunity for a major renovation of the 14th Floor offices. The work which started in May took about three weeks to complete and was carried out after office hours and at weekends, thus keeping disruption to normal office work to a minimum.

Offices were re-partitioned, the guest reception room was enlarged and carpets were replaced. In addition, the Council's logo mounted on a crimson panel in the foyer has brightened up the reception area and provides an appropriate welcome sign for visitors and guests.

Renovation of Council's Main Office

▼ The renovated guest reception room of HKCAA



▲ The renovated foyer of HKCAA

► HKCAA registrars pictured with Ms Susanna Chan, Director of Financial Services of Development Centre, VTC (second from the right) and Mr Raymond Chan, Training Officer, VTC (first from the right) at a site visit to the Insurance CPD training provider.

Insurance CPD Programme

The HKCAA is honoured and proud to offer its accreditation service to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programme for insurance intermediaries. Thanks to the support of the industry for the scheme, the number of applications far outnumbered our initial estimates. As at 19 September, there were 217 applications submitted by 49 institutions, of which 188 applications had been accredited. The applications were assessed by the HKCAA using the HKCAA accreditation criteria disseminated to the CPD providers. An assessment normally takes four weeks for completion, during which time the course contents and the instructors' credentials, inter alia, were scrutinized. To further add quality to the CPD courses, the HKCAA has, on different occasions, conducted site visits and advised the CPD providers to make improvements as appropriate.

From time to time, practitioners and academics coming from different specialist areas in the insurance industry were sought for balanced viewpoints regarding the quality of the CPD applications. We believe that the accredited CPD programmes, coming in various forms and contents, published and regularly updated on our website at <http://www.hkcaa.edu.hk/cpd.htm>, do provide a sufficient array of programmes to serve the diverse needs of the insurance intermediaries. Of particular interest is that a significant number of insurance companies are selecting some of their in-house training courses for accreditation, with a view to seeking an independent certification of the quality of training provision for their staff.



Continuing Education Fund

The Chief Executive announced in the 2001 Policy Address that the Government would set aside \$5 billion to subsidise those with learning aspirations to pursue continuing education, thereby preparing Hong Kong's workforce for the transition to a knowledge-based economy. The Continuing Education Fund (CEF) was established in April 2002 and the HKCAA was pleased to have been appointed as the advisor to the Government.

Under the Fund, priorities were given to four industry-specific sectors (Logistics, Financial Services, China Business, and Tourism) and three generic skill areas (Design; Language - English, Putonghua and Written Chinese; as well as Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Skills). Hong Kong residents aged 18 to 60 without a university degree, on completion of a registered reimbursable course, will be reimbursed up to 80% of the course fee or \$10,000 whichever is less. The Government has developed specified competencies for each of the priority sectors and skill areas in consultation with industry representatives through focus group meetings together with input from the HKCAA. The registrability of a reimbursable course depends on its potential ability to deliver the specified competencies.

The HKCAA has been tasked to provide an independent assessment of individual courses, except those categorized under Problem Solving, Team Building, and Change Management. The Council makes recommendations on the registrability of individual courses. The assessment of reimbursable courses is not an accreditation process. The courses are not assessed in terms of



▲ Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA, with representatives of the Education and Manpower Bureau at a CEF briefing session for prospective training providers.

their academic level or standard, but are considered as continuing education courses.

As at 30 September 2002 the HKCAA has completed 958 course assessments, of which 834 were submitted by the Continuing Education Divisions of local universities, and 124 were from the non-university sector. The Government has approved and put 853 of these courses on the Reimbursable Course List which can be accessed at <http://www.info.gov.hk/sfaa/cef/course.htm>.

The HKCAA will undertake ongoing monitoring of the quality of the registered reimbursable courses. The course providers are required to furnish updated information about their courses when requested and on-site audit visits may be carried out by the HKCAA with or without prior notice, as deemed necessary by the Government.

Staff News

Between March and September, HKCAA bade goodbye to a former colleague, Dr Felix Yuen, Registrar; and welcomed four new professional staffs: Dr John Cheong, part-time Consultant; Dr Thomas Y H Chan, Registrar, and Miss Bonnie Kan and Dr Jasmine Ng, Assistant Registrars. During the period, Mrs Susan Ha, appointed as Registrar, served the Council for seven months from March to October 2002.

● Prior to joining the Council, Dr John Cheong had been an academic and administrator at the University of Hong Kong for over 20 years, during which time he was involved in quality evaluation on higher degree committees of the University and two different faculties, and on one of the University's earliest quality assurance bodies. His track record in setting criteria for scholarships for graduate study in the University of Hong Kong and at the University of Oxford is almost as long as his service with the University. Dr Cheong had also been twice Visiting Fellow at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge University. Author of two books and forty refereed articles, Dr Cheong now prefers to act as a consultant rather than being a professor. Dr Cheong had previously been involved in the work of the HKCAA before joining the Council as a part-time Consultant.

● Dr Thomas YH Chan holds degrees from the University of Vienna, Austria, and the University of Hong Kong, and professional qualifications in education and applied linguistics from the University of Surrey, UK. For over 25 years, he taught and undertook educational development work at the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Lingnan University and the Hong Kong Institute of Education. Prior to joining the HKCAA, he had been initiating and conducting educational development programmes for university staff and students across UGC-institutions, in particular in IT in education.

● Miss Bonnie Kan holds degrees from the Chinese University of Hong Kong and a postgraduate diploma from the City University of Hong Kong. She has been a social worker and a government executive before entering the higher education sector. Prior to joining HKCAA, she worked in the Student Affairs Office at City University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

● Dr Jasmine Ng holds degrees from the University of Hong Kong, the National University of Singapore and Heriot-Watt University, UK, a post-graduate certificate in PRC Lawyer Training Programme of the People's University/China Examination Centre/Shue Yan College and a professional diploma in E-Commerce Engineering of the Hong Kong Productivity Council. Since coming to Hong Kong in 1991, Dr Ng has been extensively involved in teaching, design and development of courses and programmes at the City University of Hong Kong, the Open University of Hong Kong and the University of Macau, essentially in the areas of banking, economics and finance.

● Miss Augusta Chung, former Executive Officer I of the Council and a civil servant, left in July and Mr Neo Ng was seconded from the Government to succeed Miss Chung. Mr Ng joined the Government in 1991. Before joining the Council, Mr Ng worked in the Civil Aviation Department as Assistant Departmental Secretary (Personnel).



HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION

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, Accreditation Note by 30 May 2003 for the next issue.

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CONSULTATION PAPER ON THE PROPOSAL TO SET UP A QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (QF) ISSUED BY EDUCATION AND MANPOWER BUREAU OF THE HKSAR GOVERNMENT

*(Excerpts from the Consultation Paper, see HKSAR Government EMB Web Site:
URL: <http://www.emb.gov.hk> for full details)*

QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK (QF)

The Government has proposed a Qualifications Framework (QF) for Hong Kong, which is a proposed architecture, or skeletal structure, to order and support qualifications, and facilitate and promote lifelong learning. The QF is to be developed in association with requirements for the quality assurance of such qualifications. The Consultant has recommended that the HKCAA should perform this quality assurance function.

Undertaken by a consultant, the preliminary study of qualifications systems and developments in seven countries has been completed, with key lessons derived for Hong Kong. Key stakeholders, including the institutions and professional bodies, have also been consulted.

The QF architecture consists of seven levels and an open-ended Entry level below level 1. The seven levels are described by generic level descriptors, which include recognition of the cognitive skills of critical thinking and problem solving, and the commonly applied skills of communication, information technology and numeracy. These generic level descriptors are used to locate a qualification at one of the seven levels on the framework. The seven levels plus the Entry level cover the spectrum of qualifications in the post-secondary sector of education.

There is also a recommended set of qualification titles. Together, the title and level of a qualification sets its 'height'. Its 'depth' is indicated by its credit

total. Credits are assigned to each qualification. One credit equals 10 hours of notional study, based on the amount of time an average student would take to acquire the outcomes. Notional time includes, but is wider than, classroom hours. It also takes into account self-learning time, resource gathering, Internet work, field work, and other relevant ingredients.

In future, a qualification will be expressed by its title + level + credits (e.g. Certificate in Youth Counselling, Level 2, with 80 credits). To set the credits and the outcome standards that underpin the curriculum, content of qualifications and their components need to be identified. In a nutshell, learning outcomes together with assessment criteria will yield the outcome standards, which will constitute the building blocks of the QF.

GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE QF

A QF Steering Committee is recommended to create joint ownership, built around three core partners: EMB, UGC and the new Manpower Development Committee (MDC) that is proposed for the vocational education and training sector.

QUALIFICATIONS REGISTER (QR)

The public face of the QF will be a Qualifications Register, which will hold information on all quality assured post-secondary education qualifications in Hong Kong. This will include all qualifications in the Education sector, and hopefully all professional

qualifications, and overseas qualifications taught in Hong Kong.

The QR will operate as an on-line, web-based register or data warehouse of qualifications and units/modules/courses. A small unit in EMB will handle the administration of the Qualifications Register. Self-accrediting institutions like the universities will have direct entry. Non-self-accrediting institutions will need to achieve that status via HKCAA.

QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

The quality assurance framework refers to the accompanying quality assurance systems and regulations that support the QF.

It is proposed that the university sector continues to evolve its own quality assurance arrangements, noting the Sutherland Report's recommendation for a consolidation of the TLQPR, RAE and Management Reviews into a single institutional audit.

By contrast, the vocational education and training sector, and the evolving associate degrees sector are not self-accrediting. It is recommended that the existing mandate of the HKCAA be expanded to take responsibility for ensuring the quality of all qualifications below degree level. This would include sub-degree qualifications of the Continuing Education departments of the universities.

Rather than a number of competing accreditation bodies, which can produce efficiencies but at the cost of inconsistent standards and processes of accreditation, we consider one body should quality assure all sub-degree work.

In the recommendations for the quality assurance framework, a line is drawn between degree qualifications and those below degree level. The UGC is responsible for policy oversight of degree qualifications whether they are provided by UGC funded institutions or not. However, we envisage the UGC continuing to contract the HKCAA to provide quality assurance in the non-UGC funded institutions.

HKCAA will also need to refine its processes and criteria to manage its widened scope. To this end, a quality assurance framework with four legs is put forth below:

□ **Initial registration of an institution:**

is to provide an institution with a licence to practice. This first step in quality assurance must balance the reputation of Hong Kong's education system and the protection of consumers with the need for an open market, allowing new institutions and new offerings in a cost effective way. If the regulation is too heavy it prevents new providers and innovation. Hence institutional registration is a lighter touch than institutional accreditation.

□ **Programme or course validation:**

is applicable when an institution is not ready for a whole institution accreditation. This is an intermediate step, which institutions can minimise or skip if they are ready to advance to institutional accreditation. On account of its microscopic focus (on individual programmes and courses), programme validation is not cost-effective, and is viewed as a stage along the way that should be strictly limited.

□ **Whole institutional accreditation:**

this third step bestows an authority on the institution to accredit its own programmes and qualifications within an agreed scope. Some institutions are already deemed to be self-accrediting and this leg of the quality assurance cycle does not apply to them.

□ **Whole institutional audit:**

is a cyclical event, which should be repeated on a regular basis, the timing of which depends on the maturity of the institution. It also begins with a self-review, and in effect, reconfirms accreditation. For self-accrediting institutions the audit confirms the internal quality assurance processes that underpin their self-accrediting status. Conditions for improvement can be set where standards have slipped.

The HKCAA also welcomes views on the proposal, in particular on the proposed quality assurance framework. Please send your views to us.