

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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## *Message from the Chairman*



**Q**uality as a requirement in education is propounded and accepted by all, and is therefore not controversial.

Quality assurance, on the other hand, raises a lot of debate and controversy, including such issues as what form it should take, the processes involved, the targets to be quality assured, and whether it should be a continuous or episodic phenomenon, etc. When one raises the question of whether quality assurance should be the internal remit of the institution, the remit of its funding body, or the remit of an entirely independent body, there is even wider diversity of opinion, with not infrequently substantial resistance from institutions against reviews by an independent body. Finally, it is also difficult to arrive at a consensus regarding the issue of what benchmark one should use for quality assurance in higher education given the variations in size, complexity, maturity, scope of work, nature of their mission, and funding source of such providing institutions.

The HKCAA, as a quality assurance body, was set up in 1990 to ensure quality in mainly UGC-funded tertiary institutions, before they eventually became self-accrediting, including the then City Polytechnic, Hong Kong Polytechnic, Baptist College and Lingnan College. Other public-funded institutions including the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the Hong Kong Institute of Education, and the self-financing Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong were later included, as were private-funded providers such as Shue Yan College, Chu Hai College, and Colleges belonging to Caritas Hong Kong and others.

Our Council adopts the dual mode of Institutional Review and Programme Validation as the basis to ensure quality. Central to these processes is the all-important principle of peer review, strengthened by an international perspective while at the same time the academic autonomy of the institutions is respected.



Our quality assurance processes have received both positive and negative comments. The main negative comments have been that some parts of the processes are too detailed and even cumbersome, that it is unfair to use the same benchmarks for public-funded and private-funded institutions, that the requirements for achieving satisfactory accreditation are not transparent, and that the costs involved are high. The HKCAA has in fact continuously reduced the complexity and duration of its processes. It gives generous recognition to the differences between public-funded and private-funded institutions, as well as the state of their maturity; and generally focuses more on the appropriateness and completeness of the quality assurance processes vis-a-vis the stated objectives of the institutions, rather than on physical and manpower resources. It publishes widely its *modus operandi*. The level of its fees must be seen in the context of a completely self-financing body.

The last few years saw a flurry of educational activities at the sub-degree level. The main impetus was the Government policy of boosting the percentage of students, of the relevant age group, receiving higher education from 30% to 60%. Thus, private providers are encouraged, with substantial help from Government loans, to mount such programmes, particularly at the associate degree level. Other initiatives by the Government to provide alternative educational pathways are the Project Yi Jin, Continuing Education Fund, Employees Retraining Fund, etc. HKCAA has been requested, and has taken up with alacrity, the responsibility for quality assurance of these new programmes. The Council has exercised substantial flexibility in designing processes with an appropriately “lighter touch” suited to such heterogeneous programmes, and charging markedly reduced fees.

There are two other main areas of work of the HKCAA which I would like to refer to. The first

is the assessment of qualifications obtained by individuals who are applying for jobs in the civil service or in the private sector. At the request of the individual or the potential employer, HKCAA scrutinizes the educational experience of the person in totality and offers an opinion of the level achieved when compared to a local degree or sub-degree. The educational experience required to obtain a degree or sub-degree in an overseas institution may not match that of a semantically similar degree or sub-degree in our local tertiary institutions. For complete fairness, our Council uses peer review by local subject specialists for such assessments, where necessary.

Secondly, HKCAA is empowered by the Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance to assess courses offered in Hong Kong by overseas/non-local institutions, with reference in particular to the comparability between the programmes and courses offered in Hong Kong and the same or similar programmes/ courses offered in their home countries. This is an extremely important consumer protection function, since more than 900 such courses are currently offered, with our citizens spending close to HK\$1.6 billion per year.

In addition to the present work of quality assurance for degree and associate degree programmes offered by non self-accrediting institutions, the HKCAA has been given the remit by the EMB to expand its role significantly in the vast sub-degree and vocational sectors, in conjunction with the imminent launching of the Qualifications Framework. We have responded by embarking upon a comprehensive self-review in conjunction with an external consultant, to identify strengths and weaknesses of our current processes, to implement changes necessary for the future, after taking into consideration the view points of our past, present, and potential future clients. This



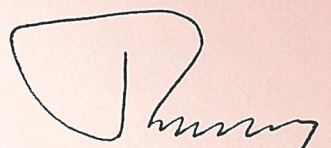
review will be completed by September this year.

I have been privileged to be a member of the Council since 1996, initially as Vice-Chairman, and since October 1999 as Chairman. All members, both local and overseas, have rendered me full support, and injected much wisdom into our thinking and policies. Because all members serve on an honorary, part-time, and personal basis, the work could not have been done without a very able secretariat of professional and support staff, led by a firm and competent Executive Director. My heartfelt thanks goes to all.

After 38 years as a teacher in a tertiary institution, and 7 years as a member of a quality assurance body, I feel qualified to make the following observation. Higher education is changing rapidly in its characteristics, its mode of delivery, its contents, its scope, its mission and targets. To a

great extent it is now driven by market forces. Responding to market forces and rendering education available and affordable to as many people as possible is obviously necessary and appropriate. But response to market forces must not undermine quality, and quality assurance. Quality assurance protects not only the students and potential employers, but also the providers.

The Council, under my guidance, has steered a balanced course between ensuring consumer protection and satisfying market forces, but never compromising quality. 🇭🇰



Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP  
September 2003

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## HKCAA Vice-Chairman Mr Herbert Hui was Elected Chairman of the Hong Kong Institute of Directors



Upon retirement of Founder Chairman Mr Moses Cheng, Mr Herbert Hui, Vice-Chairman of the HKCAA, was elected Chairman at the Annual General Meeting of the Institute held on 8 July 2003, to succeed Mr Cheng, who was named Honorary President of the Institute and Chairman Emeritus of the Institute's Council with effect from the same date.

We would like to congratulate our Vice-Chairman with all our hearts on this special honour! 🇭🇰

◀ Mr Herbert Hui at a closing ceremony of the Associate Degrees Forum hosted by HKCAA in December 2002.



# Welcoming the Incoming HKCAA Chairman

## DR YORK LIAO, MBE, JP

**D**r York Liao has been appointed Chairman of the HKCAA by the HKSAR Government and will take up the chairmanship from October 2003.

Born in China and raised in Hong Kong, Dr Liao went to the U.S. in the early sixties after finishing his high school in Hong Kong. He obtained his B.Sc. from California Institute of Technology in Physics in 1967 and continued his graduate studies in Applied Physics at Harvard University. He was awarded a M.A. degree in 1968 and Ph.D. in 1973.

After working for the United Nations for one year, Dr Liao returned to Hong Kong in 1974 and started teaching at the Chinese University of Hong Kong as a lecturer in the Electronics Department. In 1978, he and a number of his colleagues, students and staff founded Varitronix Ltd., one of the very first Liquid Crystal Display manufacturers in the world and the first such indigenous venture. In 1984, Dr Liao left the University and devoted his full time to the company as its Executive Director. Varitronix became a listed company in 1991 and was selected to be one of the constituent stock of the Hang Seng MidCap 50 Index in 1995. Varitronix now operates out of Hong Kong, China and Malaysia and has sales offices and distribution networks in over 30 countries. After serving in the company for 24 years, Dr Liao retired in 2002 and has since been devoting his time to social service, charity and investment activities.

Dr Liao has served and still serves on several academic and industrial committees for the

Hong Kong community. He was on the Councils of City Polytechnic (now City University) and University of Science and Technology. Since 1994 he



has been an active member of the University Grants Committee. On the industrial side, he served on the Council of Advisors for Innovation and Technology as well as its predecessor the Industrial and Technology Development Council. He was appointed by the Government to the Boards of the Science and Technology Park and the Applied Science and Technology Research Institute, as well as a non executive director of the Securities and Futures Commission. In addition, he sits on the boards of several public and private companies.

In January, 1997 Dr Liao was awarded the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) for his services to Hong Kong community in education and hi-tech industry. Twelve months later the HKSAR Government appointed him Justice of Peace.

In 1998, Dr Liao was appointed by the Chief Executive to the Commission on Strategic Development. Early the same year he was elected to the Board of Trustees of California Institute of Technology in the U.S. 



# Accreditation Activities .....

## Hang Seng School of Commerce

**T**he Hang Seng School of Commerce (HSSC) was established by the Hang Seng Bank as a private school in 1980 and had offered a post-secondary, two-year Diploma in Business studies course to secondary school leavers until 1992. The expansion of first-degree places in local universities in the early 1990's saw the demand for post-secondary diplomas fall tremendously. The two-year diploma course was replaced for a short time by a one-year diploma course, which came to an end in 1995.

With the phasing out of the diploma courses, the HSSC began offering Form 6 and Form 7 courses in 1992. It became a Direct Subsidy School in 1992 and has since concentrated on sixth-form teaching with a focus on business education.

In view of the recent Government initiative to expand post-secondary places, the HSSC took the initiative to transform from a sixth-form school into a college offering post-secondary/higher education courses.



▲ The HKCAA Institutional Review Panel at the Hang Seng School of Commerce.

The HSSC invited the HKCAA to conduct an institutional review during 16-17 October 2002. The Review Panel recommended granting the HSSC accreditation status as an Associate Degree granting institution from 2003/04. The validation of the Associate in Business Administration took place during 28-29 November 2002. The Validation Panel recommended the implementation of the programme starting from 2003/04. 🇭🇰

## Hong Kong College of Technology

**T**he Council validated the new additional Major in Tourism of the Three-Year Higher Diploma in Business programme on 21 May 2003. This additional Subject Major (Tourism) adopted the original curriculum framework of the accredited Higher Diploma in Business with Majors in Marketing, Finance and China Business.

The additional Major was approved starting from 2003/2004. The College was required to satisfy requirements regarding appointment of staff, course revision, review of assessment scheme and arrangement for compulsory industrial placement. 🇭🇰



## The Hong Kong Institute of Education

The Council revalidated the One-Year Full-Time and Two-Year Part-Time Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) programmes on 15 - 17 January 2003. The two-year part-time programme designed for untrained graduate secondary school subject teachers was first launched in 2000 while the one-year full-time programme for pre-service degree holders commenced in 2001.

With a view to providing more opportunities for

interactions and experience-sharing between both programme participants, the two programmes were revalidated as one umbrella-programme with two different modes of delivery. The programme was granted approval subject to one condition related specifically to the new Subject Major of Integrated Humanities and two requirements concerned mainly with participants' needs and the operational integration of the two delivery modes of the programme. ■



▲ The HKCAA Programme Revalidation Panel at The Hong Kong Institute of Education.



## Po Leung Kuk Community College of Hong Kong

**T**he Po Leung Kuk Community College of Hong Kong developed from the Po Leung Kuk Vicwood K T Chong Sixth Form College, founded in 1991 to meet the demand for sixth form places. The College acquired the official name of Community College in 2002, sharing to date the same campus with the Sixth Form College.

In January 2003 the College submitted to the HKCAA an application for accreditation of a Pre-Associate Degree Programme designed to facilitate articulation with the College's Associate Degree Programme that had already been accredited by

the HKCAA in 2002. A Validation Panel was assembled and the validation took place in early April 2003.

After careful consideration of the philosophy, aims and objectives of the proposed programme and plans for its implementation by a Validation Panel, the HKCAA recommended that the Pre-Associate Degree Programme be approved starting from 2003/2004. To further support the College, apart from the stipulated condition, the Panel also put forth several recommendations for improvement to the College. 🇭🇰



▲ Members of HKCAA Programme Validation for Po Leung Kuk Community College of Hong Kong.



## Chu Hai College

Founded in 1947, Chu Hai College has been offering a variety of academic programmes, including four-year programmes, to provide Hong Kong people an alternative route to higher education with the College Mission of “Lenient Entry, Stringent Exit”.

In the reporting period the Council had been invited to accredit three four-year degree programmes, viz. Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Journalism and Communication; Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Accounting and Banking; and Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese Literature. Three successive validations had been

scheduled to take place in April 2003. However, the outbreak of SARS in March - June 2003 necessitated rescheduling the validations to August 2003.

Consequently, the validation of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Journalism and Communication Programme took place on 4 - 6 August 2003 and was unconditionally approved. The Bachelor of Commerce (Honours) in Accounting and Banking Programme was validated on 20 - 22 August 2003, and the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese Literature Programme was validated on 27 - 29 August 2003. 🇭🇰



▲ The HKCAA Panel members with representatives from Chu Hai College.



## Hong Kong Shue Yan College

**T**he College has become the first privately funded degree-granting institution in Hong Kong since the 2001/2002 academic year. Four Honours Degree programmes are currently on offer in the areas of Accounting, Journalism and Mass Communication, Chinese Language and Literature, and Social Work.

In June 2003, the Council validated the fifth Degree programme proposed by the College: The Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) to

start from 2003/2004.

Current development: The College has invited the HKCAA to validate three additional Degree programmes in Economics, Sociology, and Counselling and Psychology for commencement in the 2004/05 academic year, as well as to conduct an external review of the institutional aspects of the College. The above accreditation activities have been scheduled for the period of December 2003 to April 2004. 🏠



◀ Chairman of the Programme Validation Panel (right) with the senior management of the Hong Kong Shue Yan College.



▲ The HKCAA Panel with the representatives of the Hong Kong Shue Yan College during a Programme Validation visit.



# ..... Accreditation Activities

## College of Info-Tech

**T**he College invited the HKCAA to conduct validation on three programme, viz. Bachelor of Business (Banking & Finance, Accounting, Financial Risk Management, and Transport & Logistics), and Bachelor of Business (Hospitality Management and Tourism Management) offered in partnership with Victoria University in Australia, and Associate Degree in Business (Hospitality Management and Tourism Management) - College own programme.

Three validations conducted by two panels

chaired by Professor Trevor Watkins of South Bank University in the United Kingdom took place on 10 - 12 February 2003.

The Bachelor of Business (Banking & Finance, Accounting, Financial Risk Management, and Transport & Logistics) Programme, the Bachelor of Business (Hospitality Management and Tourism Management) Programme, and the Associate Degree in Business (Hospitality Management and Tourism Management) Programme were all approved to start from October 2003. 🇭🇰



▲ Validation Panel for Associate & Bachelor of Business (Hospitality Management and Tourism Management) pictured on Campus Visit with HKCAA Staff.



# *HKCAA hosted the INQAAHE Asia Pacific Sub-network Forum*

*17-18 January 2003 in Hong Kong*

## INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION (INQAAHE) — ASIA PACIFIC SUB-NETWORK FORUM

**A**t the Bangalore Conference in 2000, the HKCAA volunteered to host a forum to facilitate the formation of the Asia Pacific Sub-network and to explore the innovative developments in quality assurance in higher education in the region. The Forum was held at Hong Kong Sheraton Hotel on 17 - 18 January 2003.

Following the welcoming speech by HKCAA Chairman, Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP, the Forum was formally inaugurated by Mr Philip K F Chok, JP, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government.

The Forum was organized into three major parts including two series of parallel and plenary discussion sessions held on the first day as well as workshops in the ensuing half-day.

The HKCAA was honoured to have 19 prominent academics and experts from education and accreditation authorities from 11 countries in the region presenting papers on the following themes:

- Import and Export of Higher Education - How to Sustain Quality?
- Mutual Recognition of Qualifications
- How does Accreditation Work?

To facilitate exchange of views among speakers and participants and to collate the experience from the parallel sessions and workshops, 9 rapporteurs were invited to report the gist of discussions at the three plenary sessions.

The one-and-a-half-day Forum attracted 229 delegates representing 19 countries mainly from the Asia Pacific region and 100 participants attended the optional dinner in the Jumbo Palace Floating Restaurant in Aberdeen, a famous tourist spot.



▲ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman giving a Welcoming Address.





▲ Mr Philip K F Chok, JP, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (middle of the first row), pictured with guests and speakers at the INQAAHE Asia Pacific Sub-network Forum on 17 January 2003.




▲ Council Chairman, Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP, giving a Welcoming Address.

The meeting to set up the Asia Pacific Sub-network was co-convened by Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA and Professor Arum Gnanam, Chairman of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, India on the second day of the Forum. Fifty-six participants attended the meeting and contributed to a lively discussion. It was agreed at the meeting that the Asia Pacific Regional Sub-network should be established. It was also agreed that short-term and long-term projects should be identified so that working groups could be formed to accomplish specified tasks.

It was proposed at the meeting that Hong Kong and India should continue acting as Co-convenors and that a Working Group comprising the Co-convenors - Miss W S Wong and Professor Arum Gnanam - and the Project Convenors as well as Mr John Jennings, Director of New Zealand Universities Academic Unit, should be established. Project proposals would be developed by respective Convenors, and the Working Group would meet to

coordinate the implementation of the projects. The meeting also invited the HKCAA, editor of the QA - INQAAHE's official Newsletter - to add a regional section to the QA, covering key issues for members of the Sub-network.

The HKCAA is pleased that participants considered the Forum successful for establishing the Asia Pacific Sub-network, providing opportunities for the exchange of views and experience-sharing, and fostering regional and global cooperation. Participants also found the Forum well organized and the presentations very informative and useful. Furthermore, the atmosphere of the Forum as well as the HKCAA's hospitality and support were found to be very impressive. The HKCAA treasures the experience in organizing the Forum and is pleased to see the establishment of the Asia Pacific Sub-network.

For abstracts or papers or presentations as well as photos taken at the Forum, visit HKCAA web site: <http://www.hkcaa.edu.hk>. 





▲ Mr Philip K F Chok, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower receiving a souvenir from Council Chairman after delivering an Opening Address.



▲ Ms Georgina Chan (left), Director of Education & Training, Hong Kong Society of Accountants, receiving a souvenir from rapporteur Ms Andrea Hope (right), Associate Academic Vice-President, Hong Kong Shue Yan College, after presenting on the experience of the accountancy profession.



▲ Mr Edmund Leung Kwong Ho, OBE, JP, former Vice-Chairman of HKCAA and Past President of the Hong Kong Institution of Engineers, giving a presentation with focus on the professional qualification of engineers.



▲ Council Chairman (second from right) and Executive Director (right) proposing a toast to dinner participants at Jumbo Palace Floating Restaurant.



◀ Creative participants singing a song composed instantaneously at the dinner.



# HKCAA's Other Services.....


## Accreditation of CPD Programme for Insurance Intermediaries

As reported in the last issue, the HKCAA has been appointed by the Insurance Authority to serve as the sole accreditation body for the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Programmes for Insurance Intermediaries launched in January 2002. As at the end of July 2003, the HKCAA received 287 applications.

Except for one application which was withdrawn by the provider, all applications were approved consequent upon a rigorous assessment undertaken for each of the CPD courses. In a number of cases changes in the proposed CPD activities were required, as advised by the HKCAA, before accreditation was granted, to enable such courses

to meet specified criteria, or expected quality assurance standards.

Overall, there is great diversity in the accredited CPD activities, in terms of objectives and contents, formats and delivery, and the types of CPD providers. This is desirable because there will be a better chance of meeting the diverse professional development needs of insurance intermediaries.

So far there are 56 CPD providers, which may be classified into three main categories according to their core business, as shown in the following table. 

**CPD Providers According To Their Core Business**


	Total Number of CPD Providers
Insurance Companies, Brokers and Agencies	34
Education and Training Institutions	10
Others: Professional Bodies, Commercial Companies, etc	12
Total	56

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## Continuing Education Fund

Since the inception of the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) in April 2002, the HKCAA has been providing independent advice to the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) on the suitability for courses to be included in the List of Reimbursable Courses under the CEF. Up to 31 July 2003, on the basis of HKCAA recommendations the EMB has approved 1,623 courses, of which 1,287 courses are offered by the Continuing Education Divisions of local universities

and 336 courses are offered by non-universities. The List of Reimbursable Courses is available for public access at <http://www.info.gov.hk/sfaa/cef/course.htm>.

To monitor the quality of the registered reimbursable courses the HKCAA, in consultation with the EMB, is currently considering an audit schedule so that on-site inspections will be conducted in the last quarter of 2003. 




# HKCAA's Involvement in the Proposed Qualifications Framework

The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) commissioned PWC Consulting in May 2002 to conduct a study on the development of a qualifications framework (QF) and its associated quality assurance mechanism in Hong Kong. The study resulted in a Consultation Paper which proposed eight qualification levels ranging from secondary three to doctorate awarded in the mainstream, vocational and continuing education sectors, namely, the following seven levels plus an open-ended entry level.

To assure and sustain quality, all programmes will be subject to a quality assurance mechanism before they can be put on the QF. The Consultation Paper recommended that " rather than a number of

competing accreditation bodies, which can produce efficiencies but at the cost of inconsistent standards and processes of accreditation, one body should quality-assure all sub-degree work". The Consultation Paper has also recommended that the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) should perform this quality assurance function.

The HCKAA is supportive of the recommendations. As a first step towards contributing to the implementation of the proposed QF, the HKCAA is currently conducting a self-review in preparation for its expanded role, particularly in the vocational education and training sector. 

Levels	Title
7	Doctorate
6	Masters, Postgraduate Diplomas/ Certificates
5	Degree
4	Associate Degree, Higher Diploma
3	Diploma
2	Certificate
1	Certificate



# Interviewing Professor John C Y Leong, President Designate



**Professor John C Y Leong, OBE, JP (梁智仁教授)** Vice-Chairman of the Council from 1996 and Chairman since 1999, and Head of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, University of Hong Kong, has been appointed President Designate of the Open University of Hong Kong.

*In a good humoured chat, he dwells on some of the adjustments that he will make to his professional career and we explore what he might be able to bring to his new job.*

**I** Professor Leong, congratulations on your appointment to the Presidency of the Open University of Hong Kong (OU). Please tell us your reaction to the appointment.

**JL** I was flattered to have been elected to such an office. I have always believed that a good system of administration, steered by good administrators, can add much value to the work of front-line workers. This is an excellent opportunity for me to turn to full-time administration.

**I** I am sure the University will disagree with your modest estimation of your ability, but would you like to share your thoughts with the readers?

**JL** To begin with, one does not accept the presidency of a University in a cavalier fashion. Secondly, the OU is distinctive among Hong Kong tertiary institutions in its reliance on distance and



▲ Receiving certificate of Academician of Chinese Academy of Sciences from the President.

part-time study. The campus, profile of teachers and students, workstyle and administration would be different. For one who has spent a lifetime in an institution modeled on a traditional English University, the OU seemed like a brave new world. I needed to think things through.

**I** Few people become President of a tertiary institution, so your caution is normal, but if you had qualms, why did you seek the appointment?

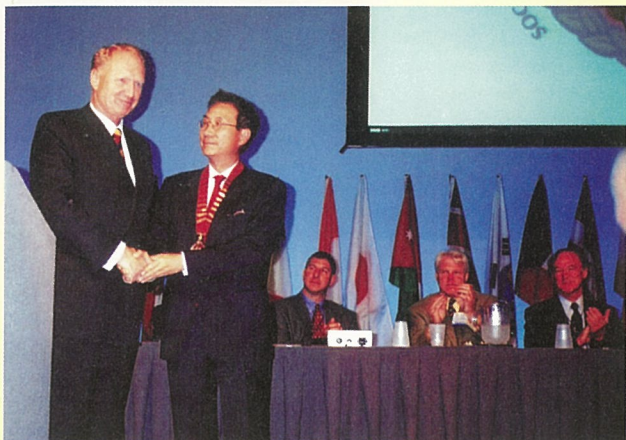
**JL** Although every successful academic may have a vague aspiration to reach the top some time, I never thought my turn would come at this time and it would be the OU; both were surprises. I only got a good understanding of the OU last year in the course of work at the HKCAA. I did not actively solicit the job. When it came, its uniqueness intrigued me and I accepted it because of the challenge.



▲ Professor John C Y Leong, the center of the photograph, doing en bloc removal of a whole vertebra containing a tumour.



# Chairman of HKCAA and President Designate of Open University of Hong Kong



▲ Transferring the Medal of Office to Professor John C Y Leong by the outgoing President of SICOT (World Orthopaedic Association).

**I** How will your professional career be affected by this new job?

**JL** It was the first question I asked myself. Over the years, administration has steadily reduced my time at the operating table; this job may bring it to an end. I shall retire from the Chair of Orthopaedic Surgery at the University of Hong Kong and retain collaboration in research with the University. The Presidencies of the local and international orthopaedic surgery bodies will be decided at term. My community work and chairmanship of the Castle Peak Hospital Board should be unaffected.

**I** Conversely, what can a surgeon bring to the job?

**JL** (Chuckle). Since you prompt me, let me use a metaphor from surgery although it should not be construed that the OU needs radical surgery. One could cut away dead sinews, remove spurs or bone chips and repair blood vessels and tissue and hope things will grow back or seek alternative pathways. It seems so easy but it is in reality complicated like most conditions in life. There must be reliable clerking to get the history right and more help in the theatre; that is team work. A new man at a job has to be specially careful precisely because

he is new, so as not to misread the symptoms and treat the wrong damage; you may even want to choose the stitch to produce a more pleasant visual result and plastic surgery to beautify, to finish the job. (smiling)

More seriously, my experience as department head, faculty dean and administrator at the University of Hong Kong could be invaluable, as all large educational institutions seem similar. For example there is always work with committees, government and outside bodies, but there are major variations. For example only three Universities have large estates, only two teach medicine and one dentistry, and as I said, the OU is unique. The nature of the institution rather than simple size also determines the work and its complexity. I will have to learn how to deal with a largely invisible student population and staff working more from computers and phones than at the lectern and the printed and audio-visual rather than the live delivery. I suspect that the University will be liveliest after other people's office hours and many other new things remain to be learnt. I do not expect to manage a University like a business.

**I** Your amusing analogy of the job to a medical procedure suggests your relaxed state of mind and your deft touch in broaching the work will surely go down well. Moving on, tell us what you feel about the HKCAA as you prepare to leave.



▲ Professor John C Y Leong (fourth from right) pictured with Officials of SICOT (World Orthopaedic Association) at the Triennial Congress in San Diego in August 2002.





▲ Professor John C Y Leong receiving the Honorary University Fellowship from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

**JL** I shall relinquish the chairmanship of the HKCAA with regret, not least because I am going to miss the most exciting development of the Council to date. In my seven years with HKCAA, notably the four as chairman, it has become a major player in promoting quality in post-secondary education. Government initiative in continuing education in 2000 provided the fillip for this sector's growth and with it, the HKCAA's brief and work. The ranks of providers have increased rapidly; accreditation has gained currency and quality assurance is accepted across the spectrum of institutions. Growth and maturity have come in a rush for HKCAA.

I leave the HKCAA in good conscience. It is much better known and in safer financial health than it has ever been. It is in the process of a self-review with assistance from external consultants, to re-invent itself for its greatly expanded brief. Just ahead are the new frontiers for which we worked for years: Qualifications Framework and monitoring the sub-degree and vocational sectors. Change is the word.

**I** Is there anything from the HKCAA useable in the new job?

**JL** Lessons from the HKCAA will always be at my side forthwith. Necessity concentrates the mind. I realized recently that quality assurance is germane to the bread and butter work of the OU, more than to that of any other UGC-institutions. In the pursuit of excellence tertiary institutions rest



▲ Professor John C Y Leong as Chairman of the Hospital Governing Committee of Castle Peak Hospital making a speech at the hospital Christmas party.

their reputation on the quality of the graduates. As the OU's delivery mode is distance and part-time study, a facet of formal teaching assessment is truncated. This is because staff-student contact and lectures in English and more effective communication in the colloquial are limited by the numbers and anonymity created by the mode and contact may occur at the time of day when the receptive and responsive levels are low. Interpersonal skills, accents, body language and personality, perhaps more important than content in student feedback, are vitiated by the infrequency of contact. Face-name recognition and casual contact, triggers in staff-student rapport, become difficult. The onus is thus on effective and continuous quality assessment with a heavy premium on the written word: the course material, instructions and written exchanges. This is an axiom inherent in the distance learning and part-time mode.

**I** Thank you for giving us such a succinct view of your work and perception of the job ahead. Your work at the HKCAA has been invaluable



▲ Professor John C Y Leong, new President of SICOT (World Orthopaedic Association) delivering his Inaugural Address.

and we hope you will continue to support the Council's work in your new capacity. 🇭🇰




# Self-Review of the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation

**T**he Government Consultation Paper on the Proposal to set up a Qualifications Framework and an Associated Qualifications Assessment Framework recommended that to underpin the quality of the future Qualifications Framework, the HKCAA should take up responsibility as the sole quality assurance authority for all sub-degree level programmes from all sectors, including vocational education. To prepare for this new role, the Consultation Paper further recommended that the HKCAA should undertake a self-review.

The HKCAA has defined the purpose and parameters of the self-review with reference to the recommendations of the Consultation Paper for "an expanded role of the HKCAA" and will cover the domains of governance, quality assurance process,

funding and operating model of the HKCAA.

The HKCAA has set up a Steering Committee to monitor the progress of the review. The Steering Committee comprises HKCAA Council members, local and overseas educationalists and experts appointed in their personal capacity, and a representative from the EMB. A Working Group for the self-review with all local HKCAA members has also been formed to provide input to the self-review.

The HKCAA has appointed IBM Business Consulting Services as the external consultant who will work in conjunction with the Steering Committee and the Working Group. It is expected that the review will be completed by the end of September 2003. 



▲ Members of Steering Committee of Self-review at one of its meetings.



# INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

## *Attendance at CHEA Conference and International Commission Meeting*

To address issues and questions relating to quality assurance in international education, an International Commission was established by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) in 2001 in the United States.

Early in the endeavour, HKCAA Council Chairman, Professor John C Y Leong and Executive Director, Miss W S Wong, accepted CHEA's invitation to serve as members of the International Commission. In this connection, Council Chairman and Executive Director attended the Commission Meeting hosted by the International Commission on 29 - 30 January 2003 in Phoenix, Arizona in the United States during which a forum on the theme "Assuring Quality in Importing and Exporting of Higher Education" was organized and took place on 30 January 2003.

Upon CHEA's invitation, Professor John C Y Leong presented a paper in the forum, entitled "Import of Higher Education – Problems Encountered and Implementation of Quality Assurance". The presentation succinctly captured key features and recent developments of quality assurance of imported higher education courses in Hong Kong including the local transformation, the principles and process of quality assurance, the registration of imported courses, the concept of totality of the learning experience, the accreditation of imported courses, the monitoring of registered courses, and problems encountered.

Just before the International Commission Meeting, the Executive Director, Miss W S Wong also attended the CHEA 2003 Annual Conference held on 27 - 29 January 2003. The main theme of the Conference was "Emerging and Ongoing Issues for Accreditation and Quality Assurance".



▲ Miss W S Wong (left), Executive Director of HKCAA at the CHEA Conference (2003) in Phoenix, USA.

▼ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman, as forum speaker at the International Commission Meeting (2003) in Phoenix, USA.





# The Experience of HKCAA Accreditation

## – A personal perspective

by Professor C N Chang, President, Chu Hai College

When I arrived in Hong Kong and started thumbing through the documents that had been prepared by my colleagues for the Institution Review, my immediate reaction was – “You’ve got to be kidding!” I had experience and opportunities of preparing and reviewing various documents such as business plans, proposals soliciting for research grants; merging and acquisition agreements, even patent disclosures, but nothing like this. To do this kind of IR documents, I was compelled to work away from my comfort zone. In a way, I felt exposed and naked. I needed to reveal everything of our College, good or bad, without the protection of legal language, without the sugar coating of pro forma statements that would paint a rosy picture however unrealistic, and without the familiar old-buddy system to maintain dignity.

After the College had successfully passed the IR and had a few programs validated, I had a breather to do some soul searching to examine the process from tangible and intangible perspectives. The unfortunate breakout of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome pushed back many validation schedules we had planned but it also brought me unexpected extra time for my task of soul searching.

I did such soul searching by answering the following questions:

1. Is the process merely a formality?
2. Does the process indeed improve the quality of the human pool in the region?

Each of the above questions does not have a simple “yes” or “no” answer because the seemingly

simple questions in words do have rather complicated content and implications in ideas.

The answer to the first question depends on one's view of the process. The view can take two different schools of thinking. The first is to view it as a necessary evil, so one just goes through the process in order to meet the requirements with minimal efforts. The other is to take on the opportunity to review the whole institute and the associated programs seriously. From the business perspective and measured by the tangible return of investment, the first school of thinking is very attractive because one can maximize one's return while minimize investment – you try to get the process over with as little pain as possible and get on with your business as usual. On the other hand, the alternative has no such obvious benefit.

Our College has chosen the latter route. From the very beginning, we have decided to cut through the rhetoric and to use the opportunity to review the good, the bad and the ugly by leaving no stone unturned. There are two main reasons for our choice. The first is the long history of the College and all that have come with the evolvement with the society in the past half a century. During the period programs have been added, changed or removed. We have not had a chance to seriously review and study the legacy of those previous programs both in their content, structure and impact to our current programs. We have decided that this was as a good time as ever to review the conceptual foundations and operating structure from the top down and inside out, so we can get on with our tasks of weeding, trimming and enhancing. The second reason is that



we would like to know if we are up to the challenge offered by the education reform launched by the education authority.

Now we can conclusively declare that the benefits of doing this way have exceeded our original expectation. If nothing else, we have come out knowing ourselves a lot better than before. There were certain subtle points that would not have been discovered and understood had we not gone through with the process. This knowledge of ourselves is going to be the foundation of what we do in the future to make us a better education service provider for the community.

To answer the second question we must first differentiate between “intention” and “result”. A good intention may not guarantee a good result unless it is backed up by good execution. Execution has the tangible procedural part and the intangible non-procedural part. The procedural part is easy to identify and to evaluate by using a checklist. A thorough deliberation of procedures could ensure the effective execution of the procedural part. But the non-procedural part is difficult, if not impossible, to itemize and quantify. This non-procedural part reflects the devotion and passion of teachers, lecturers and administrators working together toward a common goal and this is always difficult to be quantified. The only sure way to evaluate this is from the performance of students in their future employments or advanced studies.

Alternatively, the question is equivalent to asking: “How does one evaluate a student’s knowledge and competency?” We can use question-and-answer sessions to fully evaluate students’ knowledge but using the same approach we can only get a vague idea of students’ competency. What we need is perhaps an extensive database of all students’ records before and after graduation, handled by an impartial organization such as HKCAA, to address the long-term effect of this issue.

In my humble view, HKCAA has managed the procedural part quite well but left the non-procedural part to no one. Under the current system, one can only ensure the intention but no one performs the monitoring and the evaluation of the effect of execution – subsequently the question “Does it improve the quality of human pool in the region?” remains largely unanswered. ■



▲ Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA at a graduation ceremony of Chu Hai College.



# REFLECTIONS

## from Panel Chairmen

### From being Adversarial to Collegial

**Professor David Dunkerley**  
**Professor and Head of Sociology**  
**School of Social Sciences**  
**University of Glamorgan, UK**  
**and HKCAA Council Member**

My experience of being involved in the validation of academic programmes in Hong Kong actually pre-dates the establishment of the HKCAA. I was a member of two or three validation events organised by the former UK Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and had the opportunity of visiting what were then Hong Kong Polytechnic, City Polytechnic and Baptist College. At that time, the validation process mirrored exactly the process extant in the UK polytechnics and colleges of higher education. Huge amounts of documentation were required and, at times, an atmosphere of 'them-and-us' prevailed. How things have changed!

Probably the most significant change has been in the way things have moved from being adversarial to collegial. This has been a gradual shift brought about by attitude change on both sides. Programme providers became more confident when meeting visiting panels and panel members themselves made a determined effort to see themselves sharing experiences rather than imposing their own experiences and ideas. On many an occasion, for example, I have returned from a validation event with good ideas that I have introduced into my own Department.

This loosening up of the process has not,

however, compromised rigour. Validation panels are charged with testing various criteria such as the course structure and content, the teaching and learning methods, admissions, staffing, resources, course management and quality assurance. Panels and indeed HKCAA need to be assured that such criteria meet certain thresholds before a programme can be recommended for approval.


Another important development during the last two to three years has occurred with the introduction of associate degrees in the Hong Kong higher education system. There is recognition that institutions offering this qualification may have less qualified or experienced staff who may be part-time, that libraries and IT provision may be more basic and that a campus in the normally accepted meaning of the term may be more rudimentary. In all these respects, (smaller) validation panels adopt a much more flexible approach. There is an understanding that some of these institutions and their staff are recent entrants to the higher education system and allowance is made for this.

It is interesting that the changes and developments are similar to those experienced in the UK. Here, foundation degrees (virtually the same as associate degrees) have been introduced and are now offered by many universities and by colleges new to higher education. Similarly, new institutions have been established. For example, I have been involved with the social sciences courses at an exciting venture in Scotland aiming to be the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) where much of the teaching is conducted using video



conferencing because of the large distances, the remoteness of some of the islands and the sparse population. With the demise of the CNAA, there is no equivalent in the UK of the HKCAA so many programmes such as those at UHI are validated by the Open University using very similar procedures to those of the HKCAA.

This is a time of considerable change occasioned, in part, by the aim of enabling 60% of the relevant

age group to experience higher education by the year 2010/11. HKCAA is committed to ensuring that 'more' does not mean 'worse' and that the educational standards of Hong Kong remain as enviably high as ever. Course validation is one of the key ways of realising this objective but undertaken in an enabling, flexible and understanding manner and far more so than in those early validations in the late 1980s. 

## Fear of Panel Chairing

**Professor Hugh Baker**  
**Professor of Chinese**  
**School of Oriental and African Studies**  
**University of London**

Course validation is like going to the dentist: a few really weird people may actually like it, but the vast majority would always rather be somewhere else.

Naturally, sympathies are mostly with the patient, and there is no doubt but that the greatest pain in validation exercises is felt by those whose work and planning are being scrutinised. So many hours of preparation, meetings, writing and re-writing to produce a rigorously coherent and fully documented summary of what for the most part is to the compilers obvious everyday practice; so much tedious justification of what seems only necessary to be taken for granted; so much time spent in self-examination when there is work to be done in getting on with the job itself....

But the dentist can suffer too (if only from referred pain, which is why so many of them have

ulcers, I believe) and there is nothing inherently attractive to most validation panel members in the prospect of deliberately drilling holes in the proposals and practices of others.

A great deal depends on the spirit in which the validation exercise is approached.

Aggressive peremptory inquisition on the one side and defensive denial of the possibility of improvement on the other are not likely to produce the positive results which we all aspire to. In reality, while the pain on both sides undeniably exists, the outcome of a validation is usually a worthwhile one.

Having chaired two panels and been a member of two panels before that, I have come to appreciate the extent to which the stress and potential tedium of the validation process is avoided by good sense, commitment and accommodating attitude. For the panel members and especially for the Chair, the local knowledge, organizational skills and professional cooperation of the HKCAA staff take away much of the anxiety over the responsibilities



and over the over-stretch which comes with taking several days out of normal busy schedules. For the Council and for the Chair, the participation of panel members who are acknowledged specialists in the relevant field of study means that matters of greater and lesser detail can be safely entrusted to them. And for the institution whose course is under scrutiny and for the Chair, there is the consolation of the assurance that those doing the validation will understand what they are trying to achieve and just how much work has gone into the attempt even if they do not wholly agree with it.

The astute reader will have noted that the Chair is the beneficiary of the good qualities to be found in all the other parties. I have tried to take my responsibilities seriously, but I feel constantly thwarted by the professionalism of the other players,

so that I have been able to coast through my role and even (dare I say it?) enjoy it. Maybe I have just been lucky, but it's simply not fair! Like Mark Tapley in Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit* I want to have a tough time, I want to have to grit my teeth and smile and say that at last there is "some credit in being jolly."

Seriously though, I have been most impressed with the validation exercises I have been part of, and I have found that the quiet efficiency of the Council, the easy comradeship of the panel members and the thoughtful commitment of the scrutinised and those other parties brought in to assist all combine into a formula which has an excellent chance of successfully delivering better quality education. It is so rare to have that warm feeling that everyone is driving in the same direction. 🇬🇧

## **SARS - impact on Council's work**

**T**he outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in Hong Kong during the last few months affected the daily lives of many people and organizations. The HKCAA was no exception.

Three validation exercises scheduled for May had to be deferred due to the World Health Organization's recommendation that people should postpone all but essential travels to Hong Kong during the time. At the same time, regrettably, the Council's delegates had to cancel their trip to the

INQAAHE 2003 Conference held in April in Dublin, Ireland. Nevertheless, some validations scheduled during the period continued to be held and all took extra precautions. Special thanks goes to panel members who took part in validations during that time.


Measures were also taken to prevent possible spreading of the disease in the office environment. The HKCAA survived the ordeal splendidly and we thank the effort of all those involved. 🇬🇧




# Staff News

**D**espite disturbing days in April and May with SARS prevailing in the territory and indeed worldwide, the Council witnessed colleagues carving landmarks in their careers and welcomed new staff joining the professional force. At the same time, Dr Jasmine Ng, after a fruitful term of service as Assistant Registrar in the Council, resigned to embark upon an academic career. We bade her goodbye and wished her all the best in her future endeavours.

Ms Connie Lok, long-serving Registrar of the Council, was promoted to the position of Senior Registrar in April 2003. We all congratulated her on her promotion and wished her even more success in her new position. Mr Choi Hiu Sing had been promoted to the rank of Clerical Assistant from Office Assistant on 12 February 2003 in recognition of his effort and hard work serving the Council's Secretariat since January 2001.

In April and July 2003 respectively, Miss Julianne W Y Wong and Miss Fiona K W Lam joined the Council as Registrar and Assistant Registrar. 

**M**iss Julianne Wong holds a BA in Communications, a Postgraduate Certificate in Trans-national Business Curriculum and a Master of Education (in Educational Communication and Technology) from the University of Hawaii, a Postgraduate Diploma in English from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and a Higher Education Management Training Certificate from Tsinghua University. She is currently a doctorate candidate.

Julianne possesses rich academic and professional experience spanning a number of areas, from media production at RTHK, through educational technology and professional development at both the then Hong Kong Polytechnic and the City University, setting up audio visual and studio facilities and internal quality assurance mechanisms at the Hong Kong Institute of Education, while contributing in collaboration with sister University Grants Committee institutions to funded teaching development projects, instructional design and technology in education. 

**M**iss Fiona Lam holds degrees from the City University of Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong. Prior to joining the HKCAA, she had been teaching in Singapore and Hong Kong on academic programmes ranging from diploma level to masters degree level.

Apart from teaching, she had been a facilitator in a number of problem-based learning projects and IT development projects. She had also been involved in the development and implementation of various academic programmes, such as associate degree programmes and Project Yi Jin (formerly named as Project Springboard), in the continuing education sector. 



# Visitations to HKCAA.....



▲ Delegation from the Ministry of Education, PRC visited the HKCAA on 30 November 2002.



▲ ◀ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman and Mr Zhou Ji, the then Vice Minister (now Minister) of the Ministry of Education, PRC exchanged souvenirs.



▲ ▶ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman exchanged souvenirs with Mr Zhang Xin Sheng, Vice Minister, Ministry of Education.



▲ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman and Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA pictured with Mr Zhang Xin Sheng, Vice Minister, Ministry of Education, PRC (left) at the HKCAA Office on 22 January 2003.





◀ Delegation from the Ministry of Education led by Mr Zhang Xin Sheng visited the HKCAA on 22 January 2003.

▶ Representatives from the Hong Kong Institute of Company Secretaries (HKICS) visited the HKCAA on 18 March 2003.



▼ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman and Miss W S Wong, Executive Director of HKCAA pictured with delegation from the Association of Chinese Graduate Schools of Mainland China at the HKCAA Office on 20 March 2003.



▲ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman (left) presenting souvenir to 葉取源教授, delegation leader of the Association of Chinese Graduate Schools of Mainland China.





▲ Miss W S Wong, Executive Director received Dr Iur Peter Jen-Huong Wang, President of National University of Kaohsiung in Hong Kong.



▲ Representatives from Macquarie University, Australia visited the HKCAA on 3 July 2003.



◀ Representatives from the Sara Beattie College visited the HKCAA on 10 July 2003.



▶ Consultants from TAFE New South Wales, Australia visited the HKCAA on 28 July 2003.



# PHOTO CORNER



▲ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman of HKCAA pictured with Mr Yeung Yiu Chung, Member of the Legislative Council (second, right) at the December (2002) Council Dinner.



▲ Council Chairman, Professor John C Y Leong pictured with professional staff of HKCAA at the December (2002) Council Dinner.



▲ Dr Alice Lam, Chairman of the University Grants Committee (centre), attended the Council Dinner hosted by HKCAA in December 2002.



▲ Mrs Fanny Law (centre), Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower, with Council Members at the Associate Degrees Forum hosted by HKCAA in December 2002.



▲ HKCAA Validation Panel pictured with College of Info-Tech Senior Management and Staff from Victoria University.



▲ HKCAA Validation Panel having a tour of facilities at Chu Hai College.

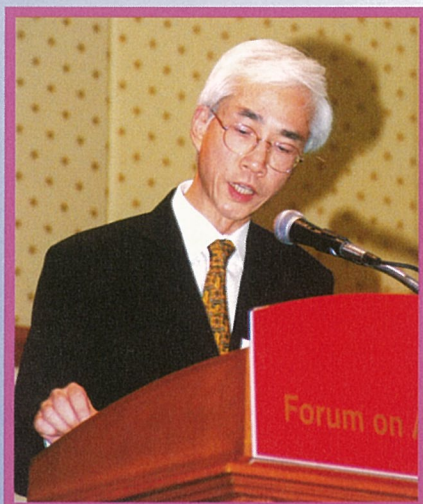




▲ Professor John C Y Leong, Council Chairman (second left, first row), and Mr Andrew Chuang, former Council Chairman (third left, first row) pictured at a Council's social function.



▲ Professor John C Y Leong, Guest of Honour at the graduation ceremony (2003) of Hong Kong Computer Institute in collaboration with London Metropolitan University.



▲ Council Member Dr Richard Ho Man Wui, JP, giving a speech to explicate the external accreditation role of HKCAA during the Asia Pacific Sub-network Forum (2003).



▲ Council Member Dr Judith Eaton (right) and Professor David Dunkerley (left) sharing the experiences of Associate Degrees in the US and UK, with Council Member Professor Kwong Lee Dow (middle) chairing the session.



▲ Council Chairman and Executive Director presenting prizes donated by Council Members to lucky draw winners at a dinner party during the Asia Pacific Sub-network Forum (2003).



▲ Council Chairman receiving a souvenir from Mr Wong Li Sheng (right), Office of Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council, China.





## HONG KONG COUNCIL FOR ACADEMIC ACCREDITATION

### *Contact Us*

### *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 31 December 2003 for the next issue.

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