



香港學術及職業資歷評審局  
Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of  
Academic & Vocational Qualifications

# **ACCREDITATION REPORT**

**HONG KONG SHUE YAN UNIVERSITY**

**PERIODIC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

**FOR**

**COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOLOGY**

**MAY 2023**

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## **1. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

1.1 Based on the Service Agreement (No.: AA805), the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), in the capacity of the Accreditation Authority as provided for under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592), was commissioned by Hong Kong Shue Yan University (the University / the Operator) to conduct a Periodic Institutional Review with the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To conduct an accreditation test as provided for in the AAVQO to determine whether the University can be approved to maintain the Programme Area Accreditation status for the Programme Areas (as listed under the Specifications of the Programme Areas undergoing Periodic Institutional Review) for a specified validity period; and
- (b) To issue to the University an accreditation report setting out the results of the determination in relation to (a) by HKCAAVQ.

### **1.2 Specifications of the Programme Areas Undergoing Periodic Institutional Review**

<b>Area of Study and Training</b>	<b>Sub-area</b>	<b>Programme Area</b>	<b>Claimed QF level</b>
Social Sciences	Social Services	Counselling	6
	Social and Behavioural Sciences	Psychology	6

## **2. HKCAAVQ'S DETERMINATION**

2.1 HKCAAVQ has determined that the University can be approved to maintain the Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status for the programme areas of (i) Counselling and (ii) Psychology at QF Level 6 under the Area of Study and Training "Social Sciences" with a validity period of five years.

2.2 The Operator is considered as meeting the HKCAAVQ accreditation standards of the Periodic Institutional Review for the

PAA status listed in Para. 2.1. The Operator's policies are in line with the strategic plans and are consistent with the overall mission, aims and objectives of its operation. The Operator continues to have appropriate mechanisms and management procedures to ensure effective academic development, quality assurance, staffing and staff development. Its resources allocation supports the development and management of the programme areas. The Operator also has robust internal processes in place that ensure its learning programmes meet the stated objectives and QF standards.

### 2.3 Validity Period

2.3.1 The validity period will commence on the date specified below. Operators may apply to HKCAAVQ to vary the commencement date of the validity period. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2.4 The determinations on the maintenance of the PAA status are specified as follows:

<b>Name of Operator</b>	Hong Kong Shue Yan University 香港樹仁大學	
<b>Address of Operator</b>	10 Wai Tsui Crescent, Braemar Hill Road, North Point, Hong Kong	
<b>Name of Award Granting Body</b>	Hong Kong Shue Yan University 香港樹仁大學	
<b>Area of Study and Training</b>	Social Sciences	
<b>Sub-area</b>	Social and Behavioural Sciences	Social Services
<b>Programme Area and Scope of Programme Area</b>	<u>Psychology</u> Study and training in the research techniques, theoretical frameworks and their applications in Psychology, in regard to the way people think and behave	<u>Counselling</u> Study and training in the provision of counselling psychology services and psychotherapeutic services that aim to improve the well-being of people
<b>QF Level</b>	Level 6	

<b>Start Date of Validity Period</b>	1 September 2023
<b>End Date of Validity Period</b>	31 August 2028
<b>Address of Teaching / Training Venue</b>	10 Wai Tsui Crescent, Braemar Hill Road, North Point, Hong Kong

## 2.5 Recommendations

HKCAAVQ also offers the following recommendations for continuous improvement of the Operator.

- 2.5.1 The Panel **recommended** that the University should pay further attention, for example by the departments under the two programme areas, to the measures and ways in which external partners can be better informed of the University's digitalisation scheme in order that the external partners can also better utilise the scheme and mesh more effectively their engagement with the master schemes in relation to the digitalisation initiatives in the two programme areas. (Para. 4.1.6)
- 2.5.2 The Panel **recommended** that the University should review how to further strengthen the engagement with employers, internship/placement partners and professional bodies in order to be assured that trainees/interns and graduates meet the jointly-agreed and codified standards of professional practice and that the related information is unified as a datum that comes to notice within the relevant quality assurance reports. (Para. 4.5.5)
- 2.6 HKCAAVQ will subsequently satisfy itself on whether the Operator remains competent to achieve the relevant objectives as claimed by the Operator by reference to, amongst other things, the Operator's fulfilment of any conditions and compliance with any restrictions stipulated in this Accreditation Report. **For the avoidance of doubt, maintenance of accreditation status is subject to the fulfilment of any condition and compliance with any restriction stipulated in this Accreditation Report.**

## 3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSJU / the University) was founded in 1971 as the Hong Kong Shue Yan College and subsequently registered under the Post-Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) in 1976. It was granted the university title by the Chief-Executive-in-Council in December 2006 and became the first private university in Hong Kong.
- 3.2 The University was granted PAA status for 14 programme areas at QF Level 5 in 2006, and underwent Periodic Review exercises (PR) in 2011 and 2016. Arising from a change to the classification of Areas of Study and Training in the Qualifications Register (QR), the 14 programme areas were consolidated into eight in the PR in 2016. The University was also granted PAA status at QF Level 6 in 2018 for the two programme areas Psychology and Counselling. As of 2022/23, the University is operating 18 undergraduate degree programmes, seven taught postgraduate programmes, and 12 postgraduate research programmes, up to QF Level 7, under the Qualifications Register (QR).
- 3.3 The University commissioned HKCAAVQ to conduct a Periodic Institutional Review (PIR) covering the approved programme areas of Counselling and Psychology under the PAA status at QF Level 6. HKCAAVQ formed an expert panel (the Panel) and engaged a financial expert for this PIR exercise (Panel Membership at **Appendix**). HKCAAVQ's *Manual for the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework* served as the guiding document for the University and the Panel in conducting this exercise. Due to the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the site visit for this exercise was conducted via video-conference on 4 - 6 January 2023 to reduce social contact.

#### **4. PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS**

*The following presents the Panel's deliberations on a range of issues pertinent to its major findings. For aspects of the accreditation standards where no observations are made they are considered to be appropriately addressed by the Operator.*

##### **4.1 Organisational Effectiveness and Planning**

*The Operator must demonstrate that it is meeting its educational/training objectives, aligned with its vision and mission,*

*and informed by comprehensive review of organizational effectiveness and implementation of strategically planned initiatives.*

- 4.1.1 The Board of Governors (BoG) is the supreme governing body of the University, advised by the Senior Management Resource Allocation Group on all financial matters. The University Council (UC) functions as the Executive Committee of the BoG and is the point of focus for planning and monitoring activities within the University, advised by the Academic Staff Appraisal Committee and the University Senior Promotions Committee. The Academic Board (AB) is the supreme academic decision-making body of the University and is responsible for overall quality assurance.
- 4.1.2 To continuously drive the achievement of the University's vision and mission, the University has in place a strategic planning process which involves the formulation, implementation and review of strategic plans at regular intervals at the institutional level. Strategic Plans are developed on a 5-year cycle. The Academic Vice President and Vice President (University Administration) assume responsibility for Strategic Planning in their respective domains, and the Senior Vice President coordinates efforts across units to achieve the Strategic Plan collectively. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and the Academic Board (AB) review annually at the start of the new academic year the key performance indicators (KPIs) that reflect the academic health and vitality of the University. And, the BoG and UC monitor closely the University's progress towards achieving the Strategic Plans, for example, via KPIs, University Status Reports, Progress Reports on the Strategic Plan, and Review of the achievement of the Strategic Plan.
- 4.1.3 In response to a recommendation made in the previous Programme Area Accreditation exercise in 2018 stating that the BoG and UC should strengthen their oversight of the strategic plan through the use of key performance indicators and annual operational plans, the University has incorporated its annual operational plans and key performance indicators (where applicable) into the Progress Reports on Strategic Plan 2016-2020, which were submitted to the BoG and UC each year from 2018 to 2020, to demonstrate the oversight of the University's performance with respect to its strategic goals and in accordance with the University's vision and mission, for regular monitoring of the fulfilment of the exiting Strategic Plan and for the crafting of the next Strategic Plan. In 2021, the BoG and UC approved the Strategic Plan 2021-2025. Likewise, the Progress Report on Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and

annual operational plans (including key performance indicators where applicable) were submitted to the BoG and UC.

4.1.4 Towards the end of the Strategic Plan period for 2016-2020, the University started the development of the Strategic Plan for 2021-2025, which were duly taken under the university's quality assurance mechanism. The Panel also had the following observations:

- (i) The proposed process and timelines for the development of the Strategic Plan 2021-25 were approved by the UC.
- (ii) A SWOT analysis and a preliminary view of strategic areas and development initiatives were presented to UC in November 2019, and a reassessment of the operating environment was conducted in December 2020.
- (iii) Inputs from members of the Senior Management, Heads of Department and Heads of Unit were solicited, and refinements were made to the draft version before the final version was approved by the UC and BoG in March 2021.
- (iv) The Five-year Development Plans of the Departments were aligned with the Strategic Plan 2021-2025.
- (v) The Strategic Plan 2021-2025 set out a new vision of the University "to reinvent liberal arts education for the Digital Era", and identified 16 key priorities under five strategic goals.

4.1.5 Regarding the implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Plans and the monitoring of the performance of the University during the validity period, the Panel reviewed the following documents:

- (i) Strategic Plans 2016-2020 and 2021-2025;
- (ii) University Status Reports from 2017/18 to 2021/22;
- (iii) Progress Reports on Strategic Plan 2016-2020;
- (iv) Review of the achievements of the Strategic Plan 2016–2020; and
- (v) Meeting minutes of the QAC, AB, UC and BoG.

4.1.6 During the site visit meetings with various stakeholders of the University and upon reviewing the accreditation documents, the Panel learnt about the scale and ambition of the University's

digitalisation strategy as stated in the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and the staff and students' positive perception of its impact. The Panel observed that the external partners were comparatively less aware of the digitalisation strategies and how it might impact upon their roles and relationship with students and staff. The Panel therefore **recommended** that the University should pay further attention, for example by the departments under the two programme areas, to the measures and ways in which external partners can be better informed of the University's digitalisation scheme in order that the external partners can also better utilise the scheme and mesh more effectively their engagement with the master schemes in relation to the digitalisation initiatives in the two programme areas.

- 4.1.7 In summary, the Panel concluded that the University has demonstrated the achievement of educational/training objectives continuously. The achievement of educational/training objectives has also aligned with the University's vision and mission, and informed by comprehensive reviews of organisational effectiveness and implementation of strategically planned initiatives.

#### 4.2 **Organisational Leadership and Staffing**

*The Operator must demonstrate that it continues to have a sufficient number of qualified and competent programme leaders, teaching and support staff, as a result of effective staff planning and development, and that these arrangements align with the development of the programme area(s).*

- 4.2.1 The senior management team comprises the President, Provost, Deputy President, Senior Vice President, Academic Vice President, Vice President (University Administration), four Associate Academic Vice Presidents, and Associate Vice President (Student Affairs). In the last validity period, the Director of Graduate School had been included as part of the Senior Management team since August 2020, and was retitled as Associate Academic Vice President (Graduate School) in August 2021, and the post of Director of University Research was upgraded to Associate Academic Vice President (University Research) in August 2019. At the faculty and departmental levels, faculties are groupings of cognate departments which cooperate closely in the development and delivery of academic programmes and the implementation of academic policy and initiatives. While there are no Faculty Deans, Heads of Departments (HoDs) report directly to the Academic Vice President (AVP) to promote interdepartmental collaboration and

maximise subject-specific input to academic decision making, and report directly to the AVP, QAC and AB for matters related to the delivery of programmes.

- 4.2.2 At the departmental level, leadership is provided by the HoDs who play an important role in providing academic leadership and initiating changes at departmental and institutional levels and in providing guidance to junior colleagues in both research and teaching. HoDs are represented in the University Council, the Programme Validation and Review Committee, the Quality Assurance Committee, the University Research Committee, the Senior Academic Staff Promotions Committee and they are all ex-officio members of the Academic Board and the Examinations Results Committee. The two programme areas are administered under the Department of Counselling and Psychology (the Department) with the HoD taking up the Chairmanship of the Departmental Committee, the Departmental Board of Examiners, the Programme Committee and the Academic Advisory Board.
- 4.2.3 In relation to the staff profile under the two programme areas, as of June 2022, all full-time and part-time staff of the Department of Counselling and Psychology (the Department) held a doctoral degree, and the ratio of the full-time and part-time staff was around 4:1. The total number of full-time academic staff remained around 24 during the last validity period. Compared with the last PAA exercise in 2018, the Department had five more staff members at the rank of Associate Professor, three of whom were internally promoted and two were new recruits including an Associate Professor of Practice, a new track introduced in 2016 to recognise the experience of clinically trained staff. The Department also introduced a new position which is the Placement Liaison Coordinator who liaises with placement agencies and potential partners, and prepares annual placement reports detailing the communication, partners' feedback and students' performance. The Panel reviewed the CVs of the HoD and the teaching staff of the Department, and Directors of other academic units, and considered them appropriate for the profile needed for the two programme areas.
- 4.2.4 The Department is currently running three QF Level 6 postgraduate programmes under the two programme areas, namely (i) Master of Social Sciences in Psychology (MSScPSY), (ii) Master of Social Sciences in Counselling Psychology (MSScCP), and (iii) Master of Social Sciences in Play Therapy (MSScPT) offered from September 2022, in addition to other QF Level 5 programmes.

Teaching, administration and supervision duties of the three QF Level 6 programmes were shared by 19 full-time staff and five part-time staff in the academic year 2022/23, including Counselling Psychologists and Clinical Psychologists. And there were six other Counselling Psychologists supervising MSScCP clinical practice on a part-time basis to achieve the required individual supervision hours.

- 4.2.5 The Panel noted that the Student-Teacher Ratio (STR) of the Department ranged from 11.5 to 15.7 (including both postgraduate and undergraduate programmes) from 2017/18 to 2021/22, which was generally lower than the University-wide STR which was 19.3 in 2021/22. In terms of staff workload, the Panel noted that the annual workload of full-time staff teaching in the MSScCP and MSScPSY in 2021/22 ranged from 24.5 to 34.5 credits (the number of credits equals to the number of contact hours every week, and 30 credits is the usual total of 15 credits for Fall and 15 credits for Spring Semester), while teaching staff are usually required to teach 15 to 18 hours per week in a semester. Staff with additional administrative duties, those who are beneficiaries of the University's Research Active Teaching Relief Scheme and those who hold external research grants that provide funding for teaching relief could teach fewer hours.
- 4.2.6 In response to the Panel's observation that the turnover rates of teaching staff teaching the two programme areas were specifically higher in 2021/22 during the last validity period, the University expressed that the staff turnover rates were acceptable to the University as the turnover rates included staff who retired and who left at the end of the contract. In addition to the University's staff retention strategy which is a combination of flexible salary packages, a caring and collegial atmosphere, and a flat management structure, the University also shared with the Panel the other measures for staff retention, including but not limited to (i) allowing applications for fast-track promotion to Associate Professor and Professor, (ii) having progressively relaxing eligibility requirements for application for research-active teaching relief, (iii) providing a supportive environment by the University's Research Office to staff in facilitating collaborative research projects and directing staff to experts inside or outside the University for advice in research, and (iv) providing research grants from the research matching fund for colleagues to conduct research on specific topics in addition to the regular University Research Grants and University Conference Grants. The Panel **advised** the University and the management staff of the two programme areas to be more

proactive to review the current staff retention policy in an attempt to better retain talented teaching staff and researchers.

- 4.2.7 In terms of the policy and practice in staff appraisal, the Panel noted that the University has its annual performance appraisal system for academic staff, with established procedures that involve individual academic staff, Department Heads, and the Academic Staff Appraisal Committee which is chaired by the Academic Vice President.
- 4.2.8 Regarding academic staff promotion, as detailed in the *Staff Handbook and Guidelines and Eligibility Criteria for Promotion for Professoriate Staff*, there are established criteria and procedures that involve the Department concerned, the University Senior Promotions Committee (USPC), the Provost, as well as mandatory external peer assessment for promotion to full Professor.
- 4.2.9 On staff's teaching development, all academic staff are required to participate in at least one activity per semester organised by the Advancement of Teaching and Learning Committee (ATLC) under the University's Teaching and Learning Development Office, and to reflect on how the activities have impacted their classroom performance in the annual performance appraisal exercise.
- 4.2.10 On research support for staff, Associate Academic Vice President (University Research), supported by the Research Office, provides grant proposal review services to colleagues and inform staff of relevant sources of funding and organise regular grant application seminars. Other research support measures include University Research Grants (URG), Competitive Research Funding Schemes (CRFS), internal funding for research, and Research Active Teaching Relief Scheme.
- 4.2.11 In consideration of the above information and the discussion with various stakeholders, the Panel formed the view that the University has demonstrated sufficiency in terms of the number, quality and competence of its management, and teaching and support staff, for effective staff planning, management and development in alignment with the development of the two programme areas.

#### 4.3 **Programme Area Development and Management**

*The Operator must demonstrate that the processes for programme approval, development, review, as well as the formulation of*

*strategic plans at both the organisational and programme area levels, are linked and continue to remain effective to meet its educational/training objectives within the approved programme area(s).*

- 4.3.1 Three QF Level 6 postgraduate programmes under the programme areas of Counselling and Psychology are currently being managed and run by the Department, namely (i) Master of Social Sciences in Psychology (MSScPSY), (ii) Master of Social Sciences in Counselling Psychology (MSScCP), and (iii) Master of Social Sciences in Play Therapy (MSScPT), in addition to other QF Level 5 programmes run by the Department.
- 4.3.2 In terms of the development of new programmes in the programme areas of Counselling and Psychology in the last validity period, the Panel noted that in view of the need for Play Therapy professionals and related training at the postgraduate level in Hong Kong, the University had developed and launched its MSScPT programme in September 2022. MSScPT was the first programme validated by the Programme Validation and Review Committee (PVRC) under the University's PAA status at HKQF Level 6 in the Counselling and Psychology programme areas. The development and launch of the new programme at QF Level 6 echoes with one of the Action Items of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025, which is to "identify and implement new undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that are in line with the University's vision and projected manpower needs of Hong Kong". The Panel also noted that the University had established procedures that involved the host Department, AVP, Internal Vetting Committee, AB, Departmental Committee, Programme Committee and Programme Director, for the programme development process and Annual Postgraduate Programme Review.
- 4.3.3 To demonstrate that the University continues to have the capacity and capability to operate and assure the quality of its learning programmes in the approved programme areas, the University provided the Panel with some sample materials and information below on the three master's programmes and the host Department during the last validity period for review:
- (a) Five Year Development Plan of the Department from 2021/22 to 2025/26;
  - (b) Minutes of the Departmental Committee;
  - (c) Minutes of the Programme Committee;
  - (d) Minutes of the Academic Advisory Board;

- (e) Minutes of the Faculty Meetings (for MSScCP and MSScPT);
- (f) External Examiner's Annual Reports and Departmental responses from 2018/19 to 2021/22 (for MSScPSY and MSScCP);
- (g) Comments from External Programme Assessor (EPA);
- (h) Annual Postgraduate Programme Review Reports from 2017/18 to 2019/20 (for MSScPSY and MSScCP), and 2020/21 (for MSScPSY, MSScCP and MSScPT);
- (i) Programme Validation and Review Committee (PVRC) Report on MSScPT in 2021;
- (j) Reports of Graduate Surveys (for MSScPSY and MSScCP);
- (k) Statistics on admission and attrition (for MSScPSY and MSScCP);
- (l) GPA distribution and award classifications (for MSScPSY and MSScCP);
- (m) Summary results of the Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ) (for MSScPSY and MSScCP);
- (n) Programme Specifications and course outlines;
- (o) Samples of marked student assessments and the associated rubrics; and
- (p) Samples of examination papers, dissertations and research projects.

4.3.4 Having reviewed the above information, the Panel noted the evidence that the two programme areas have appropriate systems in place to assure the quality of the programmes under the two programme areas of Counselling and Psychology. Given the positive development and management of the programme areas of Counselling and Psychology which may support and stimulate more widely claims to excellence and disciplinary leadership, the Panel **advised** the University and the management staff of the two programme areas and partners to consider whether and how the University would bring this claim for excellence in the areas of Counselling and Psychology to wider notice at regional and international levels.

4.3.5 The Panel noted that the University had taken corresponding follow-up actions to address the two recommendations made in the last PAA exercise in 2018 for the purpose of continuous improvement, as follows:

- (a) On expediting the planning regarding the Programme Validation and Review Committee (PVRC) to ensure its timely and effective implementation for QF Level 6 programmes within an approved PAA status, PVRC revised its

Membership and Terms of Reference and Benchmark Standards in 2018 to accommodate the validation and review of postgraduate programmes in Counselling and Psychology.

- (b) On issues with student attrition and graduation rates of the MSScCP programme, the University had improved the attrition and graduation rates during the last validity period, and the University was planning a major curriculum change to reschedule the curriculum to balance out workload through the study period, to be implemented to the 2023 cohort.

- 4.3.6 To summarise, the Panel was of the view that the University has demonstrated the processes for programme approval, development and review, which has remained effective, and the strategic planning at the organisational and programme area levels are linked and continue to contribute towards the realisation of its educational/training objectives.

#### 4.4 **Management of Resources and Services**

*The Operator must demonstrate that, within the approved programme area(s), the mechanisms for management and deployment of resources and services continue to be effective to meet the educational/training objectives, as a result of implementing organisational resource allocation policies and financial budgets.*

- 4.4.1 The University's campus consists of the Main Academic Building, Library Complex, Residential and Amenities Complex, and Research Complex. Under the leadership of the Deputy President and the Vice President (University Administration), the Facilities Management Office, supervised by the Director of Campus Development, is responsible for developing and maintaining campus facilities.
- 4.4.2 The Research Complex established in 2017 is the newest building of the University. General teaching facilities include 15 regular classrooms and two lecture theatres, and specialist teaching facilities consist of one Special Educational Needs (SEN) room, five media production rooms and one language centre. The establishment of the Research Complex had significantly expanded useable space on campus by about 73% and had achieved a comprehensive enhancement of the overall environment, and amenities for the University. As of June 2022, the overall

occupancy rate of rooms in the Research Complex for academic and administrative purposes was around 88%. In terms of the total floor area, the occupied area amounted to 5,911 square meters with an overall occupancy rate of 99%. Only a few individual office spaces remained unoccupied. The Research Complex had already operated almost up to its maximum capacity, enabling the University to sustain its vibrant growth and to make large-scale rotational maintenance possible.

- 4.4.3 In addition to the new Research Complex, a staged renovation project to upgrade the existing teaching and learning facilities of the Main Academic Building including the Lady Lily Shaw Hall was scheduled in the summer months of June to August of 2017/18 and 2019/20. The renovation of 26 classrooms, two computer rooms, four lobbies and one sports hall in the Main Academic Building as well as the 35th Anniversary Plaza and the auditorium in Lady Lily Shaw Hall was completed by September 2020. The Main Academic Building is the major venue for class teaching and learning. A total of three lecture theatres and 35 regular classrooms are available for lectures, seminars and tutorials. The additional teaching and learning facilities that had been made available in the Main Academic Building over the last validity period are three specialist rooms: (i) a studio for media production training, (ii) a specialist room for social work training, and (iii) a counselling room for psychological and counselling training.
- 4.4.4 Regarding research centres and laboratories, the total number of research centres and laboratories is 25, including 12 research centres and 13 research laboratories, most of which are grouped into strategic research clusters in the Research Complex to facilitate regular academic exchange and research collaboration. To support the University's strategic development in the areas of digital humanities and computational social science, the iFREE GROUP Innovation and Research Centre was established in 2020 supporting interdisciplinary research using digital technology. The four digital technology laboratories under the Centre facilitate the pursuit of digital humanities and computational social science research at the University, namely (i) Big Data Laboratory, (ii) Social Robotics and Digital Living Laboratory, (iii) Innovation Incubation Hub, and (iv) Virtual Reality Laboratory.
- 4.4.5 On ICT facilities, as of June 2022, there were 11 networked computer laboratories on the campus with a total of 430 computers and an additional 85 computers dedicated for student self-access in the Library. A total of \$32.62 million had been spent on ICT

hardware and software between 2017/18 and 2021/22. The provision of new ICT facilities between 2017/18 and 2021/22 was also provided to the Panel for review.

4.4.6 Regarding library services, the Library Management and Development Committee (LMDC) advises the Library on its operations and development, consisting of representatives from all academic departments as well as representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students. LMDC provides regular feedback to the Library from both staff and student users, and submits a report to the AB on an annual basis. Based on the review of the information above and in the accreditation documents as well as the observations below, the Panel considered that there is an appropriate system in place to assure the quality of the library services.

- (a) In August 2019, Counselling and Psychology Postgraduate Shelf was established in the Library's Special Collections to meet the borrowing needs of Counselling and Psychology postgraduate students. The book list for the Shelf is updated by Counselling and Psychology faculty twice a year.
- (b) In 2019/20, the Library conducted an internal review of its services and facilities, and the findings were put in the *Library Evaluation Report (May 2020)*.
- (c) In October and November 2020, the Library also conducted its Library Survey 2020, which was an online survey for staff and students, to solicit feedback on Library services and facilities.
- (d) Based on the internal review and feedback from the Library Survey 2020, and in light of the University's focus on "reinventing liberal arts education for the digital era" in the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan period, the Library had also developed its Library's Five Year Plan 2021-2025.
- (e) In 2022, the Library had begun to collaborate with the Advancement of Teaching and Learning Committee (ATLC) and the Computing Services Centre to integrate Library e-resources with Moodle so that such resources could be more directly accessible through the University's e-learning environment. The integration project included e-databases from EBSCO and ProQuest, and became operational in 2022/23.

- (f) With the growth of the University's postgraduate student population and corresponding needs where reference materials are concerned, the Library had been conducting focus group discussions (FGDs) with postgraduate students on an annual basis since 2020 to collect feedback on their specific library needs. As Counselling and Psychology students constitute a major proportion of postgraduate students, the FGDs had included representatives from the Counselling and Psychology postgraduate programmes. The feedback was reported to the LMDC.

4.4.7 Regarding services offered by the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), under the supervision of the Associate Vice-President (Student Affairs), OSA provides a range of support services to students including co-curricular activities and amenities, personal development programmes and counselling services, student financial assistance and scholarships, physical education and sports activities, career services, and alumni liaison. The Panel noted that the organisational structure of the OSA was revised in 2018/19 in response to the doubling of the number of student residence places following the opening of the new student accommodations at the Research Complex, with the Counselling Service divided into two separate sections, the Career Service and Counselling Service. A separate Hall Management Unit (HMU) was also established. OSA conducts the New Postgraduate Students Profile Survey in July-August each year and analyses the non-academic background of new students admitted to the University. The survey report is released through the OSA website to all faculty members and administrative staff in January. OSA also conducts the Postgraduate Employment Survey annually.

4.4.8 On financial resources, the University provided the audited financial statements of the past five years from 2016/17 to 2020/21, and information on the estimated financial standing of the three master's programmes under the two programme areas for the coming five years for review. The Financial Expert engaged in this PIR exercise advised the Panel that the financial position of the University had been strong throughout the past five years, and the funds and reserves had been increasing. High level of cash had been maintained, and no loans were ever obtained in the past five years. In respect of the University's income and expenditure account, its income had been steadily increasing and it continued to have surplus over the past five years. The Financial Expert also had the following observations:

- (a) The Senior Management Resource Allocation Group, which is responsible to advise the Board of Governors on all financial matters, meets bi-monthly to discuss major items pertaining to operating costs and capital expenditure.
- (b) The University had continuously managed its resources allocation. In particular, additional budget was allocated to establish the facilities and equipment for research development in the digital humanities.

4.4.9 In consideration of the above information and the discussion with various stakeholders, the Panel formed the view that the University has in place mechanisms for effective management and deployment of resources and services, such as institutional resource allocation policies and financial budgets, to continue to meet its educational objectives.

#### 4.5 **Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

*The Operator must demonstrate its on-going maintenance of an effective quality assurance system for ensuring the quality and standards of its learning programmes at the stated HKQF level(s) in the approved programme area(s), aligning with its educational/training objectives.*

4.5.1 The University has an academic committee structure to oversee the key aspects of the quality of academic programmes. The committees established under the Academic Board (AB) include those below. The membership and Terms of Reference of these committees are included in the University Committee Handbook.

##### Institutional level

- Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)
- Graduate Studies Committee (GSC)
- University Research Committee (URC)
- Examination Results Committee (ERC)
- Programme Validation and Review Committee (PVRC)
- Substantial Change Evaluation Committee (SCEC)

##### Departmental and Programme levels

- Departmental Committee
- Academic Advisory Board
- Departmental Board of Examiners

- Departmental Research Committee
- Programme Committee

4.5.2 QAC is responsible for the development and implementation of the academic quality assurance framework. It also monitors the implementation of the stipulations in the guidance notes and requirements issued by the HKCAAVQ, particularly in relation to Periodic Review, Programme Validation, and academic standards. All functions of the QAC with respect to programmes at QF Levels 6 and 7 had come under the purview of the GSC since September 2022.

4.5.3 GSC, chaired by the Associate Academic Vice President (Graduate School), is responsible for the development and implementation of academic quality assurance of postgraduate programmes. GSC seeks recommendations from the QAC for matters related to quality assurance of postgraduate programmes, such as course design, curriculum changes, annual postgraduate programmes review, new programme proposals, and draft submissions for (re)accreditation to HKCAAVQ and PVRC.

4.5.4 The Panel noted the examples below as on-going maintenance of the quality assurance system of the University during the validity period:

- (a) Student feedback is an essential part of the quality assurance of programme delivery. Following a QAC review of the Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ) system, a revised SLEQ questionnaire had been implemented from 2018/19.
- (b) In July 2020, AB established a Task Force to review the operation of QAC in response to feedback from some departments on the QAC approval process for course outlines and programme changes. The Report of the Task Force was submitted to AB at its October 2020 meeting and various measures for finetuning QA processes had been progressively pursued under the purview of the AVP.
- (c) The University established the SCEC in February 2022 under AB and it is chaired by the AVP. The purpose of the SCEC is to determine and carry out the follow-up actions related to substantial changes to the accreditation status of the University and review changes to learning programmes and the University on an annual basis.

- (d) From September 2022, the QA structure was so revised that the duty of monitoring the quality assurance of postgraduate programmes was reassigned from QAC to GSC. QAC focuses on QA matters relating to undergraduate programmes and GSC handles QA matters relating to postgraduate programmes. GSC runs parallel to QAC to guarantee a clearer and enhanced QA system. To ensure parity of QA mechanisms across the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, the Chair of QAC remains an ex-officio member of GSC, while a representative of the GSC is appointed an ex-officio member of QAC.

4.5.5 The Panel, however, observed during the review of accreditation documents and in discussions with various stakeholders of the University during the site visit that while feedback of employers, placement partners and other external stakeholders on the performance of trainees/interns and graduates was sought after, it was not always clear how effective the corresponding improvement measures had been achieved and reported systematically within the quality assurance system. The Panel therefore **recommended** that the University should review how to further strengthen the engagement with employers, internship/placement partners and professional bodies in order to be assured that trainees/interns and graduates meet the jointly-agreed and codified standards of professional practice and that the related information is unified as a datum that comes to notice within the relevant quality assurance reports.

4.5.6 Overall, the Panel considered that the University had demonstrated a comprehensive and effective quality assurance system for ensuring the quality and standards of its learning programmes under the two programme areas, aligning with its educational objectives.

## **5. IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THIS ACCREDITATION REPORT**

### **5.1 Variation and withdrawal of this Accreditation Report**

5.1.1 This Accreditation Report is issued pursuant to section 5 of the AAVQO, and contains HKCAAVQ's substantive determination regarding the accreditation, including the validity period as well as

any conditions and restrictions subject to which the determination is to have effect.

- 5.1.2 HKCAAVQ may subsequently decide to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report if it is satisfied that any of the grounds set out in section 5 (2) of the AAVQO apply. This includes where HKCAAVQ is satisfied that the Operator is no longer competent to achieve the relevant objectives and/or the Programme no longer meets the standard to achieve the relevant objectives as claimed by the Operator (whether by reference to the Operator's failure to fulfil any conditions and/or comply with any restrictions stipulated in this Accreditation Report or otherwise) or where at any time during the validity period there has/have been substantial change(s) introduced by the Operator after HKCAAVQ has issued the accreditation report(s) to the Operator and which has/have not been approved by HKCAAVQ. Please refer to the '*Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status*' in seeking approval for proposed changes. These Guidance Notes can be downloaded from the HKCAAVQ website.
- 5.1.3 If HKCAAVQ decides to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report, it will give the Operator notice of such variation or withdrawal pursuant to section 5(4) of the AAVQO.
- 5.1.4 The maintenance of the PAA status will lapse immediately upon the expiry of the validity period or upon the issuance of a notice of withdrawal of this Accreditation Report.

## 5.2 Appeals

- 5.2.1 If the Operator is aggrieved by the determination made in this Accreditation Report, then pursuant to Part 3 of the AAVQO the Operator has a right of appeal to the Appeal Board. Any appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the receipt of this Accreditation Report.
- 5.2.2 If the Operator is aggrieved by a decision to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report, then pursuant to Part 3 of the AAVQO the Operator has a right of appeal to the Appeal Board. Any appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the receipt of the Notice of Withdrawal.
- 5.2.3 The Operator should be aware that a notice of variation or withdrawal of this Accreditation Report is not itself an accreditation

report and the right to appeal against HKCAAVQ's substantive determination regarding accreditation arises only from this Accreditation Report.

- 5.2.4 Please refer to Cap. 592A (<http://www.legislation.gov.hk>) for the appeal rules. Details of the appeal procedure are contained in section 13 of the AAVQO and can be accessed from the QF website at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.

### 5.3 **Qualifications Register**

- 5.3.1 The PAA status as defined by the approved programme area(s) will enable the Operator, upon the completion of the Periodic Institutional Review exercise, can continue to offer programmes up to the QF level specified for the approved programme area(s) without prior learning programme accreditation. The programmes offered by the Operator up to the QF level specified for the approved programme area(s) are eligible for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR). All other programmes offered by the named Operator falling outside the approved programme area(s) and which have not obtained accreditation status will not be considered as accredited programmes.
- 5.3.2 Upon completion of relevant procedures by Operators as determined by the Qualifications Register Authority, Operators may enter the qualifications covered within the scope of the PAA status into the QR at <https://www.hkqr.gov.hk> for recognition under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF).
- 5.3.3 Only learners who commence the study of a qualification covered within the scope of the PAA status during the validity period and who have graduated with the qualification listed in the QR will be considered to have acquired a qualification recognised under the QF.

**Hong Kong Shue Yan University**

**Periodic Institutional Review for Counselling and Psychology**

**4 - 6 January 2023**

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