

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/19/24

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

17 June 2019

Agenda Item 15

INSTITUTIONAL RE-APPROVAL: HKU SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL AND
CONTINUING EDUCATION (SPACE)

COVER SHEET

In attendance to present: Mrs N Bartholomew

Action is required of the Committee as indicated below.

To receive the report for the Institutional Re-approval of HKU SPACE.

INSTITUTIONAL RE-APPROVAL: HKU SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION (SPACE)

A Recognition Panel from Ulster University met with senior member of staff from HKU SPACE in Hong Kong on 22 May 2019 to consider the re-approval of the School as an approved collaborative partner of the University.

Recognition Panel members:

Professor Ian Montgomery, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) (Chair)
Professor Carol Curran, Executive Dean, Faculty of Life and Health Sciences, Ulster University

Mrs Anne-Marie Knight, Programme Director Dietetics, Department of Nutrition and Dietetics, King's College London

Dr Lai K. Leung, Associate Professor, School of Life Sciences, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Ms Louise Sutton, Head of Sport and Exercise Nutrition, Carnegie School of Sport, Leeds Beckett University.

In Attendance:

Mr Hugh Deighan, Quality Enhancement Manger, Quality Enhancement (for institutional re-approval)

Ms D Troy, Academic Policy and Standards Officer, Academic Office (for programme evaluation/revalidation)

This report details the outcome of the review of documentation provided by HKU SPACE in their Institutional Re-approval Document (IRD) and the discussions the Panel had with senior management in Hong Kong.

1. BACKGROUND

HKU SPACE has been a collaborative partner of Ulster University since 1996, initially delivering and assessing validated programmes in Food, Nutrition and Dietetics. The last institutional re-approval visit was in March 2014. In recent years the suite of programmes on offer in HKU SPACE has increased and the School now works in partnership with a number of Faculties across the University.

The following programmes are offered in partnership with HKU SPACE:

Validated Provision

1. Master of Science/Postgraduate Diploma/Postgraduate Certificate in Human Nutrition
2. Master of Science/Postgraduate Diploma in Dietetics
3. BSc (Hons) Food and Nutrition
4. BEng (Hons) Energy and Building Services Engineering (The first cohort started at HKU SPACE in September 2018 – c.50 students)

Outcentre Provision

1. Master of Arts in Photography (Planned to commence early 2020)
2. MSc Global Investment Management (This programme is undergoing student recruitment for Nov 2019 intake).

In respect of a proposed MSc Management & Corporate Governance, the Faculty await the outcome of HKICS (Institution of Chartered Secretaries) from whom Professional Body accreditation has been sought.

HKU SPACE is a not-for-profit subsidiary of the University of Hong Kong providing full and part-time programmes of study to the local community. HKU SPACE acts as the continuing education arm of the University of Hong Kong. In June 2018 Ulster University became a Strategic International Partner of HKU SPACE.

Senior management confirmed that since the last institutional re-approval visit in 2014 there has been no significant changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Association of HKU SPACE which would impact on the partnership with the University. HKU SPACE has the legal capacity to sign the Memorandum of Association.

The Faculty confirmed that the conditions and recommendations arising from the Recognition Panel visit in 2014 have been addressed to their satisfaction.

The meeting commenced with a presentation by senior management which provided an overview of HKU SPACE and some background information.

2. VISION, MISSION AND CORE VALUES

2.1 Vision

In fulfilling the mission of the University of Hong Kong in extending lifelong learning opportunities for the community, HKU SPACE aspires to be a world-class centre of excellence for the provision of professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.

2.2 Mission

- Collaborate with the University and other institutions locally and globally in expanding lifelong learning opportunities for personal development, academic progression and professional and career advancement.
- Engage with stakeholders to deliver high quality education and training programmes to meet the needs of society in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.
- Be a strong advocate of lifelong learning for all to realise an educated citizenry and quality of life.
- Excel in the provision of professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region.
- Foster strategic partnerships locally and globally to promote international outlook and opportunities.

2.3 Core Values

- Supportive of our learners, our staff and our partners
- Pioneering new initiatives and passionate for change
- Accountable to stakeholders with professionalism and integrity
- Creative and innovative in teaching and learning
- Excellent in the quality of what we do to serve our communities.

The Panel were informed that HKU SPACE is into the third year of its seven-year Strategic Plan 2017-25. The Strategic Plan incorporates positioning, productivity, partnership and potential. They have identified aviation and related industries, building and construction, healthcare, and data and digital science as their key priorities. They have reduced the number of collaborative partners they have and are moving to a position of extending provision with existing, trustworthy partners. The Panel were satisfied that the Vision, Mission and core values of HKU SPACE align with the Universities 5&50 Strategy.

3. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Panel were informed that HKU SPACE has two principal Boards namely HKU SPACE Board of Directors and HKU SPACE Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning (CPE&LL).

The controlling members of the Company are the President & Vice-Chancellor, a Vice-President & Pro-Vice-Chancellor, the University Director of Finance, the University Registrar (on behalf of the University), the Director of HKU SPACE and the Chairman of the HKU SPACE Board of Directors. Members of the Company appoint the Board of Directors to set overall policy on resources. The Board of Directors draws its members from HKU, HKU SPACE and from the community.

Academic-related matters are monitored by the HKU Senate through the Board for CPE&LL. The Board has the authority, delegated by the Senate, to approve and oversee the operation of the academic and quality assurance and

improvement policies relating to continuing and professional education programmes offered by HKU SPACE. The Board is chaired by the President and Vice-Chancellor who is also Chairman of the University Senate.

The Director of HKU SPACE is the Chief Executive Officer and the senior management team comprises six Deputy Directors. The Deputy Director and College Principal represents HKU SPACE on the senior management team.

With regard to oversight and management of approved programmes of study there is an Academic Committee, which reports to a College Board and through to the School Academic and Management Board. The Academic Committees also report to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC).

The FPM reports that there is strong and effective leadership and programme management within Food, Nutrition and Dietetics. There is also strong senior management support for the strategic development of the partnership.

4. STANDARDS MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Panel noted that HKU SPACE complies fully with Ulster University standards management and quality assurance requirements. Each validated programme has an external examiner and an Ulster University subject specialist in place. The external examiner confirms that the quality of provision is comparable to other UK programmes. No issues of concern have been raised.

The FPM and subject specialist confirm that the quality assurance arrangements in place are adequate to provide an excellent learning experience for students.

The Panel noted that only one Staff/Student Consultative Committee meeting is held each academic year and asked senior management to explain what other arrangements are in place to get feedback from students.

They were informed that as well as the one formal meeting with students the Academic Committee also gets feedback directly from students. They further advised that each Academic Committee includes student representation. Issues raised by students are discussed at Academic Committee meetings and an action plan drawn up to address the concerns raised. The action taken, or proposed, is fed back to students. Themes arising from formal and informal student meetings are reported through to the QAC.

The Panel met a representative sample of current and past students who confirmed that any concerns they had were addressed speedily and effectively by staff. Students said they were aware of how to seek support and guidance for both personal and academic related matters.

When asked about attendance monitoring senior management said this is currently done manually but they are considering introducing an electronic attendance monitoring system. It is a requirement that students attend 70% of

classes. As the majority of students are self-funded the Panel acknowledged that this was the main driver in terms of good attendance and high success rates. If students wish to claim a rebate on their fees from the Continuing Education Fund then they must attend 70% of classes.

With regard to the accuracy of published information the Panel was informed that detailed scrutiny of material is undertaken at both College and School level. The accuracy of published information is seen as an area of risk for HKU SPACE. Twice a year Colleges are asked to highlight areas of risk and the action they are taking to eliminate and reduce the risk.

Senior management are well aware of the potential reputational risk to both parties so this is a key area of which HKU SPACE are mindful. In relation to a system of checking the use of partner's logos and particular identities, senior management advised that this was covered in contractual arrangements between the partners.

The University is satisfied with the accuracy of published promotional and marketing material produced by HKU SPACE. The FPM and subject specialist at Ulster University sign off on draft promotional information.

Senior management were asked to explain the arrangements in place to monitor student performance particularly with regard to retention, success, graduate destinations etc.

Currently the Academic Committee is responsible for monitoring both student and module performance. However, when preparing for the recent Hong Kong University Grants Committee (UGC) Quality Assurance Audit in 2018/19 the School realised they could be doing more with regard to monitoring student performance. As such they established a Centre for Teaching and Learning. The Centre will undertake more detailed monitoring and analysis of students at both module and programme level.

In the report from UGC in February 2019 HKU SPACE was highly commended for outstanding academic excellence.

The Panel noted the increase in programmes offered by HKU SPACE in partnership with Ulster University and asked senior management to explain their academic planning process and how they assess their position in the marketplace.

They were informed that each Budget Submission Unit completes a 3-year financial plan which is reviewed by the Finance team. An Annual Operating Plan (AOP) is based on Year 1 of the 3-year Financial Plan. The AOP looks at both the capital and revenue resources required to offer a programme. As a self-financed, not-for-profit educational institution, without public funding, the School scrutinizes closely all proposed and current programmes of study.

HKU SPACE has an Institutional Advancement Centre which reaches out to local schools. They are currently engaged in a Government funded project to

liaise virtually with local schools. Information seminars and School and College Open Days are held to promote HKU SPACE in the marketplace. Staff also engage with local industries and professional bodies to develop programmes to meet industry needs. A Development Fund is also available to which application can be made for new proposals by way of a business case.

The Panel noted that actual student intake (20) was more than double that projected and asked how this would be managed within existing resources. Senior management advised that projections were generally very conservative but that laboratory capacity catered for 48, which was the number of students enrolled. Where student numbers increase the School is able to draw from a pool of part-time and professional staff to deliver parts of the programme. The Faculty subject specialist is always informed when student intake is increased above the projected intake.

When asked about environmentally friendly policies and sustainability and how this was being addressed at both an institution and a programme level senior management advised that sustainability was included in the Annual Report and was promoted and featured strongly in many of the programmes.

5. RESOURCES

Prior to the meeting the Panel were taken on a tour of facilities and were very impressed with the resources in place to support the programmes, in particular the library and media services.

5.1 Financial

HKU SPACE is a wholly owned, not for profit University company limited by guarantee. In the Institutional Re-approval Document (IRD) they provided a consolidated statement of income for the year ended 30 June 2018.

5.2 Staff Resources

HKU SPACE currently employs approximately 1,000 full-time and 1,900 part-time staff. They have 18,426 FTEs enrolled in 2018/19.

With regard to full-time academic staff, the Schools adopts a meritocratic system in staff recruitment. The general requirement is possession of a relevant master's degree plus at least two years' professional and/or teaching experience for the basic grades of Programme Manager and College lecturer. More experienced academic staff are appointed at higher ranks such as Senior Programme Director and carry the functional role of Programme Leader, with the main duties of programme development and management, and a smaller capacity for teaching duties. Programme Leaders are responsible for selecting and recruiting part-time teaching staff mainly through open recruitment.

The Panel asked senior management to explain their staff induction and personal development processes, particularly with regard to part-time staff,

and taking account of the technology used to support teaching and learning.

Senior management explained that within the committee structure at HKU SPACE there is a Committee for Training and Staff Development. Since July 2017 an enhanced CPD scheme has been introduced for academic staff. Under the Scheme, all academic staff who are on fixed-term appointment, should engage in at least five hours of CPD activities in each CPD year, and 15 hours of academic-related CPD activities in a two-year cycle. Emphasis is also placed on the quality, rather than the quantity, of CPD activities pursued by staff.

The School also allocates resources for quality enhancement, including the provision of a Staff Development Fund for all levels of staff for further study. Research and conference grants and leave are available for application by academic staff for supporting research in subjects in continuing education.

Senior management clarified that no staff training was mandatory for distance learning programmes at present. However, measures were in place to ensure that staff were able to use the facilities and resources available for programme delivery. Staff undertake an annual performance appraisal which identifies individual professional and training needs.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning has been set up with the objective to enhance teaching and learning quality through providing inductions for both full-time and part-time new teachers, to share new learning pedagogies and good teaching and learning practices with teachers.

The Centre also provides induction and support for staff relating to new Technologies and IT systems in place within HKU SPACE with regard to e-learning. The e-Learning Unit provides technical support and training for staff. Staff in the main however tend to favour self-help facilities.

A dedicated Teacher Support UNIT (TSU) in the Registry Affairs Team coordinates the services for, and organises support to, the School's part-time teachers (PTTs). It maintains a PTTs database, provides management information as required, and co-ordinates various events/activities in support of staff/services development relating to PTTs. Part-time teachers of the School are provided with various supportive documents, such as

- Guidebook for Part-time Teachers
- Quality Assurance Manual
- Handbook on Effective Teaching
- Quick Guide for Teachers
- Easy Steps in Using Teaching Equipment

In their IRD HKU SPACE provided a copy of their recruitment and selection manual. The University is provided with the CV of all new teaching staff.

5.3 Library and IT Resources

The Panel were taken on a tour of the HKU Library resources, and were given demonstrations on the IT and technologies used to support teaching and learning.

The HKU Libraries consist of the Main Library and six specialist branch libraries. There are 3,093,115 volumes in the libraries, along with 6,012,706 e-books, 341,421 e-Journal subscriptions, and 214,018 e-Journal titles. Nearly 3,000 readers' places are available including the audio-visual and microcomputer sections. Students are allowed to use the HKU Libraries. Students may also remotely access the on-line electronic information resources via the HKU Libraries website or the SPACE Online Universal Learning Platform (SOUL 2.0).

The School IT facilities and services include computer laboratories, Cyberstations, Wi-Fi services, DIY E-Learning rooms and the Cave Automatic Virtual Environment (CAVE). There are over 1,200 PCs and Cyberstations in the computer laboratories, learning resources centres and student common rooms. All computer workstations, offering internet access, are equipped with a wide range of software for students' work and study. There is now high-speed Wi-Fi coverage in all campuses.

The Panel were impressed with the Library and IT resources available to students.

6. STUDENT SUPPORT

The Learner Portal is a "one-stop" information tool for students to access on-line resources and other e-Services provided by the School. Under the Learner Portal, the SOUL 2.0 e-learning solution has also been developed to facilitate blended learning. The School provides teaching and learning support to staff and students. There is a combination of traditional face-to-face classroom learning with a certain level of e-learning facilities, which is made available to students. The provision of SOUL 2.0 as a service to students aims at enhancing the quality of learning and teaching by ensuring that learners are provided with a greater variety of learning experience, plus greater interactivity among themselves and with teachers in a collaborative learning model.

For part-time students, who are mostly working adults, Programme Teams and teachers are responsible for offering academic guidance and career advice. The School also provides learning aids and facilities support when needed.

The student group told the Panel that studying part-time while holding down a full-time job was challenging but they were made aware of what was expected of them from the start and they were content with the level of support provided by teaching staff.

The Panel enquired as to the support available to students with regard to employability.

They were informed that the Counselling Services Department within HKU SPACE helps prepare students for employment. Full-time students are tracked 3 and 6 months after graduation. Most part-time students are already in employment.

The School has recently established a 'Careers Space' with an external company to help students construct CVs, look for job opportunities, prepare for interviews etc.

The student group said they felt they were well prepared for employment and were grateful that HKU SPACE has such good links with employers and placement providers.

At the end of each module students complete a Student Learning Experience Survey (LES). Responses are summarised by the QA Team and reported back to teaching staff and programme teams. A School-wide policy of no less than 60% achievement in the student Learning Experience Survey is a requirement for each lecturer.

The School initiated the End-of-Programme Survey (EoP) in 2017, with the aim to assess from the student perspective the achievement of the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes. Roll-out of the EoP should make a significant contribution to the evaluation of both the effectiveness of programmes and the levels of student achievement. The results of the EoP are reviewed by the QAC.

The Survey on Support Services (SSS) is conducted at all Learning Centres once a year and involves both students and teachers of part-time award-bearing programmes and non-award bearing courses. The Survey aims to collect feedback on facilities in the Learning Centres, Student Enquiry Services and IT Services.

Starting from 2018, the School engaged an external body to conduct a benchmarking exercise with international institutions. The School appointed an independent research organisation, i-graduate, to conduct the Student Barometer (SB). The SB is the world's largest student survey providing benchmarks for student satisfaction of the whole study experience including environment, learning, facilities and related support. The survey results will help the HKU SPACE to benchmark its provision against international best practice.

7. AREAS OF GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT

The Chair of the Panel thanked senior management for their engagement in the institutional re-approval process and the valuable contributions made during the meeting. He said that Ulster University welcomed the strategic development of the partnership evidenced by the number of new programmes recently started and those in the pipeline.

The Panel commended HKU SPACE on the following areas of good practice and enhancement:

- The introduction of an Enhanced CPD
- The student Barometer
- The high quality human and physical resources and facilities
- The commitment to continuing education.
- The quality of the student learning experience is excellent.
- The staff appraisal process.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review of documentation provided by HKU SPACE, together with the University's ongoing monitoring and review processes, provide broad confidence that, at an institutional level, HKU SPACE has effective policies and procedures in place to meet the University's standards assurance and quality management requirements.

The Recognition Panel recommended that HKU SPACE give further consideration to developing processes to capture and monitoring data relating to student attrition, success at first and resit, student satisfaction, and graduate destinations

The Recognition Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (ASQEC) that HKU SPACE be recognised as a collaborative partner of the University for a further five years (2019/20-2023/24).

RECOMMENDATION: That a Memorandum of Recognition be signed for a period of 5 years (intakes 2019/20-2023/24)