

Report of a Quality Audit of Lingnan University



July 2010
Quality Assurance Council



Quality Assurance Council

**Report of a Quality Audit of
Lingnan University**

July 2010

QAC Audit Report Number 4

© Quality Assurance Council 2010

7/F, Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wanchai
Hong Kong
Tel: 2524 3987
Fax: 2845 1596

ugc@ugc.edu.hk

<http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/index.htm>

The Quality Assurance Council is a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the University Grants Committee of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	1
Background	1
Conduct of QAC Quality Audits	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
Commendations	2
Affirmations	3
Recommendations	4
1. THE LINGNAN UNIVERSITY AUDIT PROCESS	5
2. INTRODUCTION	6
3. OVERVIEW OF LU'S TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM	7
4. ARTICULATION OF APPROPRIATE OBJECTIVES	8
5. MANAGEMENT, PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES	10
Strategic Planning	10
Benchmarking	11
Management Information	11
6. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESSES	12
7. PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW	13
Reviews	13
Annual Programme Reports	14
8. CURRICULUM DESIGN	14
9. PROGRAMME DELIVERY	16
Language Development	17
Student Advising	17
Student Support Services	18
Hostels	18
Academic Support to Students	19
Information Technology	19

10. EXPERIENTIAL AND OTHER “OUT OF CLASSROOM” LEARNING	20
Internships	20
Whole-Person Development	20
Service-Learning	21
Student Exchange Programmes	21
11. ASSESSMENT	22
Marking	23
External Examiners	23
Academic Honesty	24
12. TEACHING QUALITY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT	25
Teaching and Learning Policy	25
Evaluation of Teaching	26
Staff Development	27
Promotion and Annual Performance Review	28
Recognition of Good Teaching	29
13. STUDENT PARTICIPATION	29
14. RESEARCH DEGREES	30
15. CONCLUSION	31
APPENDICES	
APPENDIX A: LINGNAN UNIVERSITY (LU)	33
APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS	35
APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS	37
APPENDIX D: LU AUDIT PANEL	38
APPENDIX E: QAC’S MISSION, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP	39

PREFACE

Background

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) was established in April 2007 as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC) of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

The UGC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the quality of UGC-funded institutions and their activities. In view of institutional expansion of their activities and a growing public interest in quality issues, the QAC was established to assist the UGC in providing third-party oversight of the quality of the institutions' educational provision. The QAC aims to assist the UGC in assuring the quality of programmes (however funded) at first-degree level and above offered by UGC-funded institutions. The QAC fulfils this task primarily by undertaking periodic quality audits of the institutions.

Conduct of QAC Quality Audits

Audits are undertaken by Panels appointed by the QAC from its Register of Auditors. Audit Panels comprise local and overseas academics and, in most cases, a lay member from the local community. All auditors hold, or have held, senior positions within their professions. Overseas auditors are experienced in quality audit in higher education. The audit process is therefore one of peer review.

The QAC's core operational tasks derived from its terms of reference are:-

- the conduct of institutional quality audits; and
- the promotion of quality assurance and enhancement and the spread of good practice

The QAC's approach to quality audit stems from recognition that the higher education institutions in Hong Kong have distinct and varied roles and missions, reflecting the UGC's vision of a differentiated yet interlocking system. The QAC does not attempt to straitjacket institutions through a single set of standards or objectives, but recognises that each institution has objectives appropriate to its mission. The QAC defines quality in terms of 'Fitness for Purpose', where institutions have different purposes which reflect their missions and the role statements they have agreed with the UGC.

A QAC audit is not a review against a predefined set of standards. It does, however, require institutions to articulate and justify the standards they set for themselves, and demonstrate how the standards are achieved. Since student learning is the focal point of the QAC audit system, audits examine all aspects of an institution's activities which contribute to the quality of student learning. Full details of the audit procedures, including the methodology and scope of the audit, are provided in the QAC Audit Manual, which is available at: <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/index.htm>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The quality of student learning is the focal point of Quality Assurance Council (QAC) quality audits. Audits are intended to assure the Hong Kong University Grants Committee (UGC) and the public that institutions deliver on the promises they make in their role and mission statements in regard to their educational objectives. A QAC audit is therefore an audit of an institution's Fitness for Purpose in teaching and learning. The audit examines whether an institution has procedures in place appropriate for its stated purposes, whether it pursues activities and applies resources to achieve those purposes, and whether there is verifiable evidence to show that the purposes are being achieved.

This is the Executive Summary of a QAC quality audit of Lingnan University (LU) conducted in 2009-2010. The report presents the QAC's findings as elicited by the QAC Audit Panel, supported by detailed analysis and commentary. The findings cover each of the audit focus areas as well as the institution as a whole. Where appropriate, the findings are expressed as **commendations** of good practice; **affirmations** which recognise improvements the institution is already making; and **recommendations** for improvement. These are listed below.

When considered in the context of the Report, the QAC findings confirm that LU provides a high quality liberal arts education that is well-aligned with the University's mission. A key feature of the University is the depth and extent of commitment to the enrichment of the whole-person through wide-ranging experiential learning strategies. Another feature of note is the University's goal to be one-hundred percent residential in a few years. The University has a positive and energetic approach to quality improvement. This attitude is pervasive throughout the institution and evidenced by the on-going refinements to its quality assurance system. Further enhancements will be effected by the implementation of the recommendations of this Report.

Commendations

1. The QAC commends LU for the introduction of improved arrangements for quality assurance of undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degree programmes. *[Page 8]*
2. The QAC commends the leadership and staff of LU for their commitment in providing a distinctive and valuable educational experience for students and in preparing graduates who are motivated and equipped to contribute to their communities as well as to their workplaces. *[Page 9]*
3. The QAC commends LU for the clarity of its educational objectives and its success in implementing a suite of programmes that is consistent with the distinctive mission of the University and its commitment to undergraduate, residential, liberal education. *[Page 9]*
4. The QAC commends LU for the way in which it operates and responds to external course advisory and review panels and uses these for effective quality improvement. *[Page 13]*
5. The QAC commends LU for the successful design of a curriculum embracing the whole-person philosophy and the decision to mandate Service-Learning as a requirement within the four-year curriculum. *[Page 16]*

6. The QAC commends LU for its language development initiatives and programmes which have demonstrably improved the English and Putonghua language skills of students. *[Page 17]*
7. The QAC commends LU for its effective Peer Mentoring Programme which intersects with, and supports, the formal advising system. *[Page 18]*
8. The QAC commends LU for the rich variety of its whole-person and Service-Learning programmes as well as the strong commitment to sustain the quality of the programme that is expressed through resource allocation practices. *[Page 21]*
9. The QAC commends LU for its commitment to a pedagogy based on small groups that facilitates staff in responding to individual students inside and outside formal class hours. *[Page 25]*
10. The QAC commends LU for facilitating high levels of student participation in University committees and activities and for the enrichment of their lives and leadership capacities this brings. *[Page 30]*

Affirmations

1. The QAC affirms LU's strategy of trialing the Core Courses for the four-year curriculum. *[Page 15]*
2. The QAC affirms LU's progress towards mandating rigorous testing of English and Putonghua language skills at entry and exit from the University. *[Page 17]*
3. The QAC affirms the decision by LU to have all students in residence on campus from 2012. *[Page 19]*
4. The QAC affirms the progress in implementing a renewed policy for External Examiners and urges the University to continue monitoring its implementation. *[Page 24]*
5. The QAC affirms LU's approach to preventing and addressing academic dishonesty and encourages the University to fully exploit the potential of the plagiarism detection software it has implemented. *[Page 25]*
6. The QAC affirms the work in progress to improve the validity and reliability of the Course Teaching and Learning Evaluation instrument and to exploit the data being generated through use of that instrument. *[Page 26]*
7. The QAC affirms the commitment of LU in revitalising and strengthening the role of the Teaching and Learning Centre to ensure its position as a key contributor to teaching quality. *[Page 27]*

Recommendations

1. The QAC recommends that LU revisit its Strategic Plan 2009-2016 to add further teaching and learning targets, performance measures and clear accountabilities to enable the University to monitor progress towards the goals of the Plan. *[Page 11]*
2. The QAC recommends that LU identify a set of international institutions focused on liberal arts and with missions similar to LU and pursue the exchange of information for benchmarking of LU activities and achievements. *[Page 11]*
3. The QAC recommends that LU design an evaluation framework to help focus and define appropriate educational indicators and to ensure the flow of empirical information for academic and management decision making. *[Page 12]*
4. The QAC recommends that LU revisit the structure and purpose of Annual Programme Reports to ensure they are analytical and reflective with clear indications of any actions to follow. *[Page 14]*
5. The QAC recommends that LU extend its work to further enhance the academic culture and support for students including strategies of strengthening of existing study skills activities and programmes based on the hostels. *[Page 19]*
6. The QAC recommends that LU review the application of its assessment policy across programmes and ensure that there is equity and comparability as well as congruence between assessment and learning outcomes as the University moves to full introduction of Outcome-based Approach. *[Page 22]*
7. The QAC recommends that LU articulate a teaching and learning strategy that sets out its distinctive approach to teaching and learning as a foundation for policy formation in areas such as the enhancement of e-learning and the design of teaching and learning facilities. *[Page 26]*
8. The QAC recommends that LU extend the range of methods it uses to measure the quality of teaching and avoid over-reliance on surveys of students as the main source of data. *[Page 27]*
9. The QAC recommends that LU further clarify the relative weighting of achievements in research and teaching in the processes of staff appraisal, substantiation and promotion. *[Page 29]*
10. The QAC recommends that LU explore the potential for further recognition of excellence in teaching over and above the successful Teaching Excellence Award Scheme. *[Page 29]*

1. THE LINGNAN UNIVERSITY AUDIT PROCESS

- 1.1 This is the report of an audit of the quality of the student learning experience at Lingnan University (LU) undertaken by an Audit Panel appointed by, and acting on behalf of, the Quality Assurance Council (QAC). It is based on a key document, the Institutional Submission, which was prepared by LU following a period of self-review and submitted to the QAC on 14 October 2009. A one-day Initial Meeting of the Audit Panel was held on 16 November 2009 to discuss the Submission. The Panel Chair and Audit Coordinator visited LU on 18 November 2009 to discuss and agree the detailed arrangements for the audit visit and the supply of additional materials requested by the Panel to deepen its understanding of the University. The Panel also requested documentation on a number of sample programmes to examine how the University's quality assurance processes operate in practice and impact on the quality of its offerings.
- 1.2 The Audit Panel visited LU from 18 – 21 January 2010 and met over 80 staff and 130 students from across the University, as well as a number of external stakeholders, including lay members of the LU Council, local employers and graduates of LU.
- 1.3 LU is one of eight institutions in Hong Kong funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC). LU, formerly Lingnan College, is a liberal arts university dating back to 1888 when it was founded in Guangzhou, China. LU offers programmes in Arts, Business and Social Sciences. At present, ten Undergraduate (Ug), nine Research Postgraduate (RPg), and seven Taught Postgraduate (TPg) programmes are offered. At the end of 2008 there were 2,336 UGC-funded Ug students; 53 UGC-funded RPg students; and 411 students in postgraduate self-financed programmes. A profile of LU is provided in Appendix A. It includes the University's role statement as agreed with the UGC and brief details of the University's history, vision, mission, strategy and academic structures.
- 1.4 The Institutional Response to the Audit Report is provided in Appendix B. A list of abbreviations, acronyms and definitions used in the Audit Report is provided in Appendix C. Details of the Audit Panel are provided in Appendix D. The QAC's Mission, Terms of Reference and Membership are provided in Appendix E.
- 1.5 Since student learning is the focal point of the audit system, QAC audits examine all aspects of an institution's activities which contribute to the quality of student learning. These activities range from management, planning and policy development, through programme design, approval and review, to teaching, assessment and student support; and how these relate to the achievement of an institution's educational objectives. The QAC has selected a set of such activities, common to all institutions, as the 'focus areas' of audit. Each focus area is a significant contributor to student learning quality and is sufficiently generic that it can be interpreted in a way which is relevant to each institution's activities and practices. Taken together, the focus areas effectively define the scope of a QAC audit.
- 1.6 The Audit Report follows the general guidance provided in the QAC Audit Manual¹

¹ <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/index.htm>

and covers the audit focus areas. The Report's structure is generally based on the format of LU's Institutional Submission.

- 1.7 The QAC and the Audit Panel wish to record their gratitude to the University for its collaborative approach to all aspects of the conduct of the audit process and for its support of the Panel's efforts to understand the University and its processes.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The stated Vision of LU is *to excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university distinguished by outstanding teaching and the highest standards of scholarship.*
- 2.2 LU seeks to achieve this Vision by providing an education that has the following characteristics: *a small student body; inter- and multi-disciplinary curricula; teaching and learning processes which feature close staff-student relationships; enriched campus life with a high residential rate; and emphases on language proficiency, student exchange, community service and extra-curricular learning experiences.*
- 2.3 The LU Mission states that it *adopts a whole-person approach to education which enables its students to think, judge, care and, ultimately, act responsibly in the changing circumstances of Hong Kong, the region and the world.*
- 2.4 LU plays a unique role among the UGC institutions. It is the smallest university in the system, is primarily Ug in enrolment and educational orientation, is largely residential for Ug students (with a commitment to become fully residential by 2012), and as noted in the University role statement is distinctive in that it *provides a general education programme which seeks to offer all students a broad educational perspective, distinguished by the best liberal arts tradition from both East and West, and enables its students to act responsibly in the changing circumstances of this century.*
- 2.5 The Audit Panel observed that LU has undergone numerous changes over the last decade. These include: the move of the campus to its present location; a major alteration in the institution's programme structure from 2/3 of its Ug enrolment in Business Studies to a more balanced distribution of enrolment among Arts, Social Sciences, and Business; and the award of university status with the addition of a small number of TPg and RPg degrees. In addition, the University has, in common with other Hong Kong universities, been engaged in making the transition from a three year Ug liberal arts curriculum to an Outcomes-based Approach (OBA) four-year Ug liberal arts curriculum.
- 2.6 A key feature of LU is the whole-person development programme and the extent of emphasis on providing enrichment to the individual person. (Section 10.4) The students interviewed were consistently positive about the LU experience and the close, diverse community engendered by the whole-person development programme. Some acknowledged that LU was not their first choice of institution but, once enrolled, the quality of their education and the atmosphere on campus had enthused them for LU's ethos and the benefits of a liberal education that nurtured all of their capacities. As one interviewee put it, 'the students arrive in tears but they also leave in tears as they

develop a deep appreciation of LU and what it provides'. The Panel concluded that LU 'adds value' to the students through its programmes and underlying philosophy and provides a unique option for students and their families when they are choosing a university.

- 2.7 But the students and the staff were also frank that despite, or because of, the distinctive characteristics of LU, many LU graduates face challenges in gaining employment. It was suggested that, as a general rule, employers and the Hong Kong community tend to assume that the academic qualifications of students at entry to a university, and the associated sense of 'prestige' attached to that institution, determines the level and quality of graduates. This assumes that the level of value added by an institution to the capacity and motivation of an individual is the same in each university so that the general level at entry is the same at graduation. Rightly or wrongly, as a result of this perception the distinctive achievements of LU and its students may not be getting the recognition they deserve in the wider Hong Kong context, especially from some employers of graduates. Those employers and other stakeholders who were interviewed by the Panel, however, spoke highly of the distinctive qualities of LU graduates noting their attitude to teamwork, language skills and their stability in positions.
- 2.8 In assessing the strength of the University's quality assurance processes, the Audit Panel took into account the institution's unique role and character as noted. These points are reflected in the commendations, affirmations, and recommendations that follow.

3. OVERVIEW OF LU'S TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

- 3.1 The quality assurance arrangements at LU are based on a set of committees responsible to the Senate. The committees include:
- Programme and Curriculum Committees (PCC)
 - Programme Review panels
 - The Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC)
 - The Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee (RPSC)
- 3.2 The work of these committees is facilitated by a set of processes such as:
- Programme review – annual and four-year reviews leading to production of reports with recommendations for change, action plans and evaluations as appropriate
 - Input from External Examiners and Advisory Boards
 - Collection of survey data from stakeholders such as alumni and employers
 - Input from students through Staff-Student Consultation Committees (SSCC) and surveys such as the Course Teaching and Learning Evaluation (CTLE)
 - Staff input from Department Boards and equivalent
- 3.3 The Panel was initially concerned that the committee structure was overly complex for a small university such as LU although there had been some work in recent years to

streamline arrangements. For example, the Panel questioned the need for the parallel AQAC and RPSC groups which have similar functions and differ mainly in the range of programmes they consider (Ug by AQAC and postgraduate by RPSC). They concluded however that the work of each committee is substantial and well differentiated and that the scale of the institution ensured that there was an appropriate overlap of memberships to avoid duplication of effort.

- 3.4 There was evidence from staff at different levels of a collegial approach to decision making existing over some time with formalisation of some activities having occurred only relatively recently. For example, the University Administrative and Planning Committee (UAPC) is a fairly new group made up of a number of the individuals who previously met informally as advisors to the President. It was decided that their discussions about resource allocation matters should be done in a more formal way and hence the UAPC was formed to bring transparency to the process of resource allocation.
- 3.5 The Panel noted that many of the policies it examined were relatively new or had been revised in recent times. In addition, there was evidence of a range of quality improvement projects including work on aspects of grading and quality assurance work over and above mandated processes such as reviews.
- 3.6 The University provided an Action Plan indicating its intentions for changes to its management structure and quality assurance arrangements as well as intentions for language enhancement and improvement of IT fluency. The plan included implementation time-frames and accountabilities. The Panel noted that these initiatives were well founded and appropriate although, as discussed later in this report, the Panel had opinions on the relative priority of the proposal to increase the number of students on international exchange.
- 3.7 In summary, the Panel concluded that the University has in place an appropriate and active quality assurance system that has been developed and refined over recent years.

Commendation 1

The QAC commends LU for the introduction of improved arrangements for quality assurance of undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degree programmes.

4. ARTICULATION OF APPROPRIATE OBJECTIVES

- 4.1 LU provides programmes in Arts, Social Sciences, and Business with the focus being on providing a liberal arts education. This focus on liberal arts studies and achieving a successful range of programmes appropriate to the Mission brings its own particular challenges in the Hong Kong environment. There was, however, evidence that the University was determined to pursue this goal even in the face of short term risk from strategies such as rebalancing the numbers of students in the different programmes.
- 4.2 The decision to limit enrolments in the field of Business is indicative of a determination to focus efforts on a spectrum of the liberal arts. This was also evident in the decision

by the academic community to decline a proposal for a new area of study primarily on the grounds that it would introduce a level of specialisation incompatible with the programme objectives and the general aims of LU.

- 4.3 The Panel was impressed by the dedication and commitment of the University community to the LU Vision and Mission and their determination to provide an education that makes a difference to its students and community. The sense of collaboration and enthusiasm of staff, students and Council for this orientation was pervasive and consistent across the University.

Commendation 2

The QAC commends the leadership and staff of LU for their commitment in providing a distinctive and valuable educational experience for students and in preparing graduates who are motivated and equipped to contribute to their communities as well as to their workplaces.

- 4.4 The University has articulated the characteristics of the Ideal Lingnan Graduate in the form of a comprehensive set of attributes. These attributes have been mapped onto programmes and individual courses to ensure alignment between the attributes and learning outcomes. The mapping was also applied to the General Education (GE) programmes and the Integrated Learning Programme (ILP) within the whole-person development programme. (Section 10.4)
- 4.5 While it was not within the Panel's ambit to evaluate progress towards adopting an OBA to student learning, the Panel noted that LU has been working steadily towards the introduction of outcomes-based education. The University has been working with a 2007-2012 Action Plan and has organised activities such as staff workshops, and Student Services Centre (SSC) sessions. The Panel considered the appointment of Programme and Departmental OBA Coordinators using Teaching Development Grants from the UGC to be an effective part of the strategy.
- 4.6 The Panel noted that there is some continuing debate at LU about the meaning of OBA as suggested by the acknowledged controversy over norm-based and criterion-based marking, as well as the possible implications for curriculum, teaching and learning. This is understandable while the University is moving to implement OBA. Nonetheless, the Panel advises caution in the implementation of OBA in the different disciplines to ensure there is due consideration to the interactions between OBA and programme objectives.
- 4.7 In summary, the Panel formed the view that there is congruence between the University's mission and the range of programmes it offers with depth in the understanding of that relationship among staff and students.

Commendation 3

The QAC commends LU for the clarity of its educational objectives and its success in implementing a suite of programmes that is

consistent with the distinctive mission of the University and its commitment to undergraduate, residential, liberal education.

5. MANAGEMENT, PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES

- 5.1 The context for management, planning and accountability measures is that of a small university characterised by positive, informal relations and a high level of trust. LU states that it seeks a balance between local autonomy and central control, and between executive authority and collegial responsibility. At University level this is based on the inter-relationship between the LU executive structure (President, Vice-President and managers at different levels) on the one hand and the Senate, department and programme and curriculum committees on the other. As mentioned in Section 3.1, key University level committees are the AQAC and RPSC which collect views, feedback and so on from the SSCCs and from the academic community more generally.
- 5.2 The primary role of the Vice-President and Associate Vice-Presidents (AVP) is to foster and manage the teaching and learning environment in the University while the academic deans and programme directors provide leadership and exercise responsibility for teaching and learning in their respective areas. The University has moved to re-instate a faculty structure for the University as a whole which the Panel agrees will facilitate the implementation of the new curriculum and provide flexibility in student choice. Individual academic staff members are responsible for providing support for student learning.
- 5.3 Input from students is gleaned through mechanisms such as student membership of committees, the SSCCs and feedback through the CLTE surveys as well as alumni surveys.

Strategic Planning

- 5.4 The current University Strategic Plan (SP) covers 2009-2016 and was developed by a President's Task Force. The outcome was adopted by the Senate in March 2009 but it was not clear that the Plan has been adopted by Council although the Plan is based on a revised Mission and Vision statements approved by Council in 2008.
- 5.5 The Panel considers the SP to be an underdeveloped document. Unlike the action plans attached to the Institutional Submission, the Action Plans in the SP document viewed by the Panel lack specificity and do not include clear accountabilities, specific targets or measurable performance indicators. It was noted however that in addition to the University-level SP there are some thematic or unit level plans focused on different aspects of the activities of the University. For example, the SSC initiates its own annual planning and monitoring activities and there is an action plan for promotion of OBA.
- 5.6 The Panel believes that the University is at a stage in its development when it needs to sharpen its strategic planning efforts, particularly with regard to the ongoing improvement of teaching and student learning, and ensure there is adequate monitoring of the educational activities that hitherto have been consistently aligned to the Mission

and objectives of LU. The Panel notes that the University's voluntary decision to cap enrolment in order to maintain its current small size means that establishing new programmes will likely require the reallocation of existing resources, which will enhance collective accountability and hence the need for more focused strategic planning.

Recommendation 1

The QAC recommends that LU revisit its Strategic Plan 2009-2016 to add further teaching and learning targets, performance measures and clear accountabilities to enable the University to monitor progress towards the goals of the Plan.

Benchmarking

- 5.7 There is no indication in the SP of how the University benchmarks, or plans to benchmark, its performance against similar institutions. It was argued that LU is benchmarked with all other Hong Kong universities through the data collection and collation processes conducted by the UGC but given the unique mission of LU in Hong Kong, in the Panel's view this is not an adequate reference point. Nor did the Panel consider that the mobility of staff from other institutions provides an adequate system of benchmarking as was suggested. At the programme level, it was clear that faculty members were aware of practices in other universities in Hong Kong, for example, in regard to plans for structuring the four-year curriculum. Staff members also mentioned some internationally recognised institutions as 'benchmarks' and the Panel heard of some collaborations with universities outside Hong Kong. But all of these connections seem to be driven by individual staff effort and contacts rather than as a result of a proactive University policy.
- 5.8 A carefully selected peer group would yield useful ideas for further improvement of LU's distinctive education. While caution needs to be exercised in ensuring that contextual factors are taken into account in selecting partners, benchmarking truly peer institutions should be a useful means for identifying approaches and models for addressing identified institutional challenges and problems. The Panel encourages LU to systematically search for and identify a set of peer institutions around the world that it can use for this purpose. These might be largely Ug, residential, institutions with a similar commitment to the liberal arts and with a similar student profile.

Recommendation 2

The QAC recommends that LU identify a set of international institutions focused on liberal arts and with missions similar to LU and pursue the exchange of information for benchmarking of LU activities and achievements.

Management Information

- 5.9 The University already collects a great deal of information from its students and more generally about the operation of LU but the Panel could not see evidence that the data are being exploited as an empirical foundation for decision making. For example,

there were no action plans attached to reports of data collecting exercises such as the Information Technology Services Centre (ITSC) survey. The large amount of data generated through various surveys, tests, programme reviews, External Examiner (EE) reports and so on should be put to more systematic and effective use. While the Action Plan submitted as part of the Institutional Submission identifies an intention to develop 'tracking surveys' from 2010 there was no indication of how these might be structured.

- 5.10 The Panel believes that there needs to be an overarching evaluation framework within which data are collected to show trends on the key operations of the University and to allow it to underpin decision making with hard data. In particular, the Panel believes that designing an effective means for monitoring and evaluating the attainment of its educational objectives, and most particularly a means for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the planned new four-year Ug curriculum, will be critical to the University's continued academic improvement. The design of this framework needs to include a specified set of indicators that can be set in place now and used into the foreseeable future to assess the institution's progress toward its educational goals. The planned tracking surveys and indicators of language enhancement and IT fluency will be useful to incorporate in the scheme and there may be value in tapping into measures that are already in use internationally such as the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) developed in the United States but being trialled and adapted in other countries.

Recommendation 3

The QAC recommends that LU design an evaluation framework to help focus and define appropriate educational indicators and to ensure the flow of empirical information for academic and management decision making.

6. PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL PROCESSES

- 6.1 The LU processes for guiding the development of new programmes are described in the Programme Proposal and Management Guidebook. There are three main stages: Initiating a Programme, Planning the Programme, and Validation and Approval.
- 6.2 The documentation of the first of the stages shows how a programme proposal goes through a series of discussions to the point where Senate may support the proposal and include it in the University Triennial Academic Development Proposal which is then forwarded to Council for transmission to the UGC. This first stage includes consideration of resource implications at the UAPC and input by Advisory Boards for each programme or department.
- 6.3 The second stage is driven by a Programme Planning Committee which prepares a full submission. The third and final stage is based on consideration of the proposal by the AQAC or RPSC as appropriate. A Programme Validation Panel is constituted by AQAC/RPSC to consider the proposal with the final step being the submission of a recommendation from AQAC/RPSC to Senate for approval and subsequent notification of Council.

- 6.4 The Panel concluded that the processes of development and approval of courses are effective in achieving a curriculum that combines appropriate content and subject level standards while remaining consistent with the LU liberal arts focus. The processes also take into account the role played by Service-Learning and other aspects of the whole-person philosophy. What at first sight appeared to be over-elaborate processes were found to operate sensibly with an appropriate balance of flexibility and rigour. In addition, as stated in Section 3.4, the processes are tempered by the collegiality and good relationships between staff as well as the scale of the institution.
- 6.5 The Panel was impressed by the structure and operation of external advisory bodies in programme development. The policy document supplied to the Panel was recently revised (in September 2009) but the members of the Advisory Boards met by the panel suggested that practices around advisory bodies are satisfactory from their point of view. The external members said that the University takes notice of their opinions citing examples of formal feedback they received on suggestions made whether the advice has been taken or not taken. Documentation on the programmes sampled supported the view that the work of advisory committees is important as part of the LU course development and approval processes. (See *Commendation 4* below.)
- 6.6 It was noted that as of 2009-10, the processes for approval of TPg programmes are identical to those for UGC-funded programmes.

7. PROGRAMME MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 7.1 The University's approach to programme monitoring and review is focused primarily around a four-year Programme Review with Annual Programme Reports. There is also a well-developed system for external examining. These are supplemented, as necessary, with retreats and other inputs on a more ad hoc basis.

Reviews

- 7.2 The Programme Review cycle starts with the PCC and Department Board (DB) which carry out a comprehensive self-evaluation following the Guidelines and Procedures for Four-Year Programme Review. AQAC/RPSC then appoints reviewers, including external members, to conduct a review meeting that is convened by a senior LU academic. The external members typically include academics and, where relevant, representatives of professional bodies. The Panel noted the comments of these external representatives who reported that the University was consistent in attending to their views and following through with action where appropriate. The reviewers' report, with a plan of action from PCC/DB and comments of AQAC/RPSC, is then submitted to Senate. The Review process appears to be effective and of genuine value to improving the academic quality of the reviewed programmes.

Commendation 4

The QAC commends LU for the way in which it operates and responds to external course advisory and review panels and uses these for effective quality improvement.

- 7.3 There were some differences in the content and orientation of the sampled programme review documents provided to the Panel, which may be due to the differences between UG and graduate level programme reviews and/or the recent articulation of programme review guidelines. Some AQAC-recommended data sources such as graduate employment surveys and EE reports did not always seem to be considered by the reviewers. This may suggest the need for AQAC to become more active in communicating with the external programme review teams as to their responsibilities and the nature and content of the expected report. The Panel also questioned whether the length of the review cycle is most efficient, for example, whether there might be a longer term between reviews. The Panel suggests that AQAC consider timing future programme reviews to better sequence them with the implementation of the new four-year UG curriculum so as to maximise the academic benefit of such reviews.
- 7.4 Among the data frequently utilised to monitor and review programmes are surveys of graduates and alumni. Given LU's stated ambitions to better relate to its communities and employers, this type of external information can be particularly valuable for programme monitoring and review. The University has contracted out for a general survey of employers and alumni while the programme reviews reveal that some individual programmes have also conducted graduate surveys for their specific purposes. This process could be more efficiently and effectively conducted and should be carefully aligned with the proposed new tracking surveys and within the recommended framework for data collection. (See *Recommendation 3*.)

Annual Programme Reports

- 7.5 From 2008/09 it is a Senate requirement that the Annual Programme Reports following a Four-year Review provide an indication on progress with implementing recommended changes. This stipulation has resulted in a revision of the guidelines for all annual reporting on programmes. The Panel examined a number of Annual Programme Reports but was not convinced that these are as open and reflective as they might be. There was a noticeable tendency to present a positive impression with little use of data, particularly trend data. It was not clear to the Panel how the compiling of these Reports contributed to the offering of the programmes, allocation of resources or to staff appraisal or staff development activities. It was considered that the Reports might be more useful with tightening of requirements for use of management information, as discussed earlier, to give a stronger empirical base within the common format being pursued through the Senate guidelines.

Recommendation 4

The QAC recommends that LU revisit the structure and purpose of Annual Programme Reports to ensure they are analytical and reflective with clear indications of any actions to follow.

8. CURRICULUM DESIGN

- 8.1 As indicated earlier, LU operates in three areas of the liberal arts: Arts, Business and Social Sciences. In addition to the usual disciplinary studies, the programmes provide

opportunities to achieve the whole-person goals of LU through the Service-Learning, Internships, Integrated Learning Programme (ILP) and other University activities.

- 8.2 The Panel noted some ambiguity about the meaning and usage by LU staff and students of the term ‘liberal arts’. Some see it as a set of subject areas or curriculum, ideally including Science, while others conceive of it as a way of approaching the development of the capacity of students through small groups, strong student staff relationships and opportunities created through having a residential environment. This reflects LU’s description in the Institutional Submission of its defining characteristics. In other words, liberal arts are seen in this case in terms of its defining features. Nonetheless, regardless of any looseness in the use of the term there is a strong commitment to making the disciplines in liberal arts the focal point of LU offerings.
- 8.3 As indicated in Sections 6.5 and 7.2, external input to curriculum matters comes through Advisory Boards, EEs, external members of Programme Reviews, professional bodies and employers. The sampled programme advisory committees reports, programme annual reports, and comments by advisory committee members interviewed by the Panel suggest that LU’s programme advisory committee structure has been particularly helpful and influential in the design of its Ug and TPg programmes as well as in better relating its course offerings to the needs of the Hong Kong community. In addition, the initiative by the AQAC through direct reviews and the programme review process to lessen course proliferation and overlap of course content is an important contribution to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the curriculum.
- 8.4 TPg programmes are based on a minimum of 24 credit points. The new Ug programme structure will be based on 120 credit points including a Core of 33 credit points and required English and Putonghua studies.
- 8.5 The new Core Curriculum will retain aspects of the GE courses that are to be replaced, namely a focus on personal, professional and social issues. The Panel was pleased to hear about the trialing of some OBA-designed Core Curriculum courses ahead of full implementation of Core Courses for the new four-year curriculum.

Affirmation 1

The QAC affirms LU’s strategy of trialing the Core Courses for the four-year curriculum.

- 8.6 The Panel was informed that breadth of choice is a distinguishing feature of programmes at LU and as suggested by an interviewee there is ‘a bias against becoming too specialised’. On the other hand, one of the major challenges of introducing the new curriculum is to ensure that the rigour of the individual disciplines is maintained. Lowering the credits for a Major from 57 to somewhere in the range of 48-54 could compromise the capacity of teaching to an appropriate depth in a particular discipline. While the Panel heard of discussions in an Arts area about strategies to ensure that depth of study is maintained within the new curriculum structure this is a matter that will need careful consideration by the Senate and its committees to ensure the breadth and depth of subject study are balanced in the new curriculum. The Panel also heard about the challenges posed by the new structure for a support department such as Chinese Language Education and Assessment Centre which provides teaching into a

range of programmes taught in English. The impact of the changes could adversely impact on the range of student choice in the Chinese language.

- 8.7 The new curriculum provides a great deal of flexibility for students to move across subject disciplines and build individual programmes of study to meet their preferences and needs. The Panel examined an ‘Indicative Study Plan’ for the four-year structure to demonstrate how this could operate. It will be important to ensure that there is academic coherence in the choice of subjects by students while ensuring that the design and broad objectives of the programme are not undermined. This may require more protocols about subject choice and consistent oversight by the Academic Advisors (see Section 9.6).
- 8.8 The introduction of the new four-year Ug curriculum provides the University with an excellent opportunity for taking forward its already considerable achievements in the design and delivery of a modern liberal arts curriculum. It is hoped that all staff will take the opportunity to review current curricula and practices and that the University will ensure there are mechanisms for the spreading of existing best practices more widely across the institution.
- 8.9 Directed Research Projects (DRPs) for all students during their last year were reported to have been a traditional part of the LU educational experience, at least in some programmes such as History. But because of the increased demands on faculty and/or changes in student interest, the provision and organisation of DRPs have been changed in a number of programmes. The Panel encourages LU to evaluate and update its current policy on DRPs as part of its educational and curriculum planning. Possible issues for consideration would include the necessary student Grade Point Average (GPA) to be eligible to pursue a DRP, appropriate criteria for approval of a programme’s provision of DRPs, faculty supervision requirements and so on.
- 8.10 The emphasis in the LU curriculum on whole-person aspects of the student experience is very strong and while a focus on developing general capacities and social responsibility of students is not unique to LU, the Panel was impressed by the extent to which these goals are incorporated into the individual LU programmes. These experiences, and the training and other supports offered to students are highly valued by students and represent one of the distinctive features of LU (see Section 10). All Ug students admitted from 2012 will be required to complete Service-Learning requirements, a development the Panel welcomes.

Commendation 5

The QAC commends LU for the successful design of a curriculum embracing the whole-person philosophy and the decision to mandate Service-Learning as a requirement within the four-year curriculum.

9. PROGRAMME DELIVERY

- 9.1 Policy directions for the delivery of support to educational activities comes from the Teaching, Learning and Information Services Management Board (TLISMB) which includes the Director of Information Technology Services Centre (ITSC) , the Librarian

and the Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) as well as representatives of academic staff and students. There is an intention to develop an e-learning strategy with the purpose of improving the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) in the learning process.

- 9.2 LU uses a variety of teaching and learning methods including what is referred to as a 'sectional' approach, lecture-tutorial models and projects. The Panel confirmed with interviewees that there is a student-centred philosophy in action that facilitates responses to individual student needs.

Language Development

- 9.3 The language of instruction at LU is English apart from courses in the Chinese and Translation Departments. There was evidence of improvements in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores recorded over recent years for LU students in the (voluntary) IELTS testing regime in Hong Kong. Student results from the Putonghua Proficiency Tests organised by the State Language Commission also show a steady improvement since 2003. In addition, the Panel heard from stakeholders that LU graduates are considered to have strong language skills, particularly in Putonghua.

Commendation 6

The QAC commends LU for its language development initiatives and programmes which have demonstrably improved the English and Putonghua language skills of students.

- 9.4 The Panel heard of efforts to refine diagnostic tools for pre- and post-testing of English being carried out in collaboration with two other local universities. It is intended that there will be diagnostic testing of students' English language proficiency at entry and exit from the four-year degree, a move that the Panel supports.
- 9.5 There is also a plan to administer, from 2012, a Chinese Entry Test using the State Language Commission Putonghua Proficiency Test which will allow international benchmarking. This was mentioned in the LU Action Plan attached to the Institutional Submission. The test is being piloted in 2010 with a view to making it mandatory for students, a decision the Panel supports.

Affirmation 2

The QAC affirms LU's progress towards mandating rigorous testing of English and Putonghua language skills at entry and exit from the University.

Student Advising

- 9.6 Students are supported through a face-to-face Academic Advisor system supplemented by a web-based advising, degree audit and transfer articulation tool called DegreeWorks. This software (to be implemented from March 2010) is designed to help students

navigate the structure of the four-year curriculum. The decision to provide a small budget to Ug Advisors as a means of encouraging them to get together socially with their advisees is a positive and potentially useful step in strengthening the advising system.

- 9.7 It was clear from discussions that while students use the face-to-face advising system in their first year at LU they tend to gradually migrate to the on-line system and to direct approaches to the teaching staff facilitated by the informal atmosphere at LU. The Panel concluded that the stated expectation for students with low GPAs to meet with Advisors several times a semester was not always met and several students reported that they were able to register for courses without the supposedly mandatory consultation with an Advisor. On the other hand, some students reported they had received effective advice from fellow students and/or from the Peer Mentoring Programme (PMP). The students interviewed consistently praised the SSC-run PMP. It not only provides valuable orientation and support for first year students, but the contacts established often continued beyond the first year and served as a useful supplement to the formal advising system.

Commendation 7

The QAC commends LU for its effective Peer Mentoring Programme which intersects with, and supports, the formal advising system.

- 9.8 Overall, students seemed satisfied with the opportunities they have for gaining advice on their academic programmes. However, the planned new curriculum will likely increase the need for informed student choice of both courses and programmes of study and therefore require well informed Advisors ensuring a more systematic application of policy for advising students.

Student Support Services

- 9.9 The SSC provides a wide range of services and is accountable to the Dean of Students. It is heavily involved in the whole-person development programme including the PMP, the First Year Experience Programme and the ILP and Career programmes.
- 9.10 The use by SSC of annual meetings and a planning-implementation-monitoring cycle facilitates the provision of support to students at a high professional level and was considered good practice. The Student Support staff are clearly highly motivated and enthusiastic although there were some comments by students that they consider there are not enough support staff in some areas.

Hostels

- 9.11 The hostel system was much praised and supported by interviewed students. Some students complained about noise and study conditions in the hostels, but overall students seem to have accommodated to existing conditions – students reported that there were many available places on campus for those seeking a place to study.
- 9.12 A strong element of the hostel programme is the emphasis on leadership development.

The Panel was impressed by the maturity and level of personal responsibility shown by the LU students and by the level of engagement with the University as an institution.

- 9.13 While students have informally organised some ‘thematic’ sections or hostels, the University does not seem to have maximised the academic potential of its comparative advantage as a residential institution. Many peer institutions support the formation of ‘programmatically’ hostels as an additional means of academic enrichment, a strategy that could be explored by LU.
- 9.14 In light of the evident success of the hostel system the Panel welcomes the University’s decision to introduce requirements for all students to be in residence. This will also further distinguish LU from other universities in Hong Kong.

Affirmation 3

The QAC affirms the decision by LU to have all students in residence on campus from 2012.

Academic Support to Students

- 9.15 Staff reported that incoming students often lack confidence in learning and that it is necessary to ensure they see the academic work as ‘relevant’ and engage with it. This means introducing strategies like team work and developing information literacy skills so that the students can be independent learners.
- 9.16 Academic support services to students are currently provided by the Library which instructs students on the use of the collections and related information resources; by the English Language Education and Assessment Centre (recently re-named as the Centre for English and Additional Languages - CEAL) which aids students in academic writing; and by the Counselling Office, which provides workshops on time management. The Senate approved Guidelines for Learning, however, indicates a greater emphasis on developing academic skills and norms among students may be warranted.
- 9.17 As previously noted, LU has developed a First Year Experience Programme designed to assist students in making the transition to university. The Panel suggests this programme as well might be further strengthened and/or better tied to the development of academic norms and skills. The Panel encourages LU to study the delivery of similar First Year Experience programmes and practices at peer institutions.

Recommendation 5

The QAC recommends that LU extend its work to further enhance the academic culture and support for students including strategies of strengthening of existing study skills activities and programmes based on the hostels.

Information Technology

- 9.18 The broad set of skills to be demonstrated by the Ideal Lingnan Graduate includes IT

proficiency. The University is also considering implementing an IT proficiency test.

- 9.19 The ITSC supports campus-wide services for all teaching venues as well as maintenance of IT facilities. Students had some complaints that were supported by data collected through an ITSC survey showing low levels of satisfaction with hostel network services.
- 9.20 Students consistently reported that there were wireless ‘dead zones’ on the campus and that the University’s service sometimes went down at crucial moments such as registration. The Panel heard that the University has already received budget funds to improve the wi-fi system and it was also suggested that the overloading of the system server often occurs when students are using the internet for recreational downloading. Given the University’s intention to increase the use of WebCT in its instruction as well as other uses of the internet in its educational activities, the implementation of a reliable wi-fi zone on the campus should be a high priority, especially given the close proximity of the students living in residence.

10. EXPERIENTIAL AND OTHER “OUT OF CLASSROOM” LEARNING

- 10.1 The extensive range of ‘out of classroom’ activities at LU is designed to contribute to the achievement of the attributes of the Ideal Lingnan Graduate. The activities are structured around four main programmes: Internships, whole-person development, Service-Learning, and Student Exchange.
- 10.2 The Panel was pleased to learn that 6% of the LU budget is allocated to student development with the norm reported as being in the range of 3-4% in other local universities. This signifies the commitment of the University to developing a well-rounded individual committed to contributing to society and the community at large. Graduating students are provided with a ‘Non-academic Transcript’ recording their contributions and involvements in student and community life where those are not integrated and assessed through the class-room curriculum.

Internships

- 10.3 LU’s internship programmes are organised by the SSC, academic programmes and departments and include local, mainland and international placements. Interns are supervised by internal and external supervisors and operate within a set of University Guidelines. The Cultural Studies Department Board has an internship subcommittee and internships have been implemented as credit-bearing courses so are assessed and graded according to University policy. Some students in summer internships are assessed by host employers as these do not have credit attached. Partners in the internship scheme have also been actively involved in assessment of student learning.

Whole-Person Development

- 10.4 The whole-person development programme involves a range of experiential and out-of-classroom activities which contribute to the graduate attributes identified by LU. The programme encompasses the PMP, First Year Experience Programme, ILP and

career programmes.

- 10.5 While the University's commitment to whole-person education is clear, some faculty members interviewed by the Panel observed that assessing student achievement of this educational goal is complex and that balancing this goal with the educational goals of academic programmes is frequently a point of contention among some members of the faculty. The Panel considered that more could be done to gauge the longitudinal development of students' academic and non-academic achievements through formal and informal programmes. On the other hand, the Panel noted the well conceived Student Enhancement Programme (SEP) in Accounting. This programme cleverly integrates whole-person education with the academic goals of the programme and provides clear guidance and incentives for selected students to better develop themselves in a holistic fashion while helping to prepare them for their chosen field. This is a valuable innovation which, if extended to other programmes in due course, could greatly enhance the opportunities for LU graduates.

Service-Learning

- 10.6 Overseen by the Service-Learning Programme Committee, Service-Learning aims to provide an educational opportunity as well as a meaningful service to the community. As mentioned in Section 8.10, LU intends making Service-Learning credits a graduation requirement within the four-year curriculum.
- 10.7 The Service-Learning programme has been well designed and implemented. At the institutional level, it echoes and aligns with LU's longstanding motto *Education for Service*. In addition, Service-Learning can be seen as both a reflective pedagogy and an approach to whole-person development. In terms of student participation, the Panel was provided with evidence that from academic year 2006/07 to 2007/08 the number of students participating in Service-Learning increased by more than 50%.

Commendation 8

The QAC commends LU for the rich variety of its whole-person and Service-Learning programmes as well as the strong commitment to sustain the quality of the programme that is expressed through resource allocation practices.

Student Exchange Programmes

- 10.8 The Management Board on Internationalisation formulates policy for internationalisation of LU. The University encourages Ug students to participate in the International Exchange Programme (IEP) or the Mainland Exchange Programme (MEP). Students in these programmes pursue one term of study away from LU and are provided with financial support according to needs.
- 10.9 LU's goal is to have 50% of students participating in exchanges when the four-year curriculum is implemented. The Panel was impressed by this goal but based on the observed strengths of LU, the Audit Panel would suggest that the University might wish to consider the relative priority of exchange among its goals. Establishing effective study abroad and exchange arrangements is a complex process. More importantly,

given the observed benefits of its residential form of liberal arts education, as well as the University's visibility, tradition and established contacts in the area of community service, it would appear that the goal for increased study abroad might more appropriately be phased in over a longer period of time.

- 10.10 In summary, the Panel was impressed with the impact of the education provided by LU in producing mature, well-rounded individuals who are committed to making a difference to society and the workplace. Nonetheless, there was some concern that the students appear to spend comparatively little time in study hours on work related to formal class-room work. The majority of students reported in a University survey that they spend less than 20 hours in study hours per week on formal academic work. The University needs to consider the balance between class-room and more informal learning activities to ensure it has the appropriate strategy in place with priorities in the most important arenas.

11. ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 LU has articulated a set of principles to underpin assessment procedures as the University moves to introduce OBA while recognising that forms of assessment are diverse and need to vary by academic discipline. The University's assessment guidelines spell out the parameters for design of assessment of both Ug and TPg courses and describe procedures for ensuring fair and disinterested assessment of work. Protocols for appeals and reviews of grades are also articulated. Students confirmed that they are informed of the assessment requirements during the first week of the semester with details explained by the course instructor.
- 11.2 Notwithstanding the existence of a general University guideline on assessment, the Panel noted a perception that there is some variation in standards and practices at programme level. If this is indeed the case, such variation can compromise comparability, if not equity, across programmes and faculties. There was also evidence that teaching staff with different cultural and academic background or traditions (e.g. American vs. Asian) have varying expectations and standards which need to be underpinned with very clear guidelines. LU might wish to examine how the guidelines are operating in practice to ensure shared understanding of the fundamental concepts set out in the University-level policy. It will be essential to ensure consistency in standards, learning outcomes, attainment objective, marking scheme, grading standard, and so on across sections of the same course, across programmes, and across different faculties. A further argument for a review of the use of University-level assessment guidelines is to ensure that there is congruence between assessment set for a course and stated learning outcomes in line with the principles of OBA. This will be an on-going challenge as the University moves to implement OBA.

Recommendation 6

The QAC recommends that LU review the application of its assessment policy across programmes and ensure that there is equity and comparability as well as congruence between assessment and learning outcomes as the University moves to full introduction of Outcome-based Approach.

- 11.3 As mentioned above in Sections 9.4, 9.5 and 9.18, LU is committed to implementing a system of ‘before and after’ assessments of language improvements in Chinese and English as well as in IT fluency. As the Panel understands it, these assessments would not be used to determine individual student marks or graduation results but would be used as performance indicators of the University’s educational efforts in these areas. In any event, the Panel considered that such a system could signal the value added by an LU education and welcomed the plan.

Marking

- 11.4 The University has established a university-wide policy on UG student marking and honours awards, developed and overseen by the AQAC/Undergraduate Examinations Board (UEB). In discussions with academic programmes and faculty members some seemed to be aware of this Board and its function, others unaware. More significantly, the data provided to the Audit Panel on the distribution of honours awards for recent years suggest a significant variation over time between numbers of honour awards in the Arts disciplines and numbers in the Social Sciences, a variation also observed in other universities internationally.
- 11.5 The Panel heard about the processes of moderation of grades and was satisfied that there is a system of checks and balances in place at LU. Nonetheless, consistent with the University’s goal of sending clear signals to the community about the academic achievements of LU graduates, a more transparent approach to assuring grading standards and honours awards across academic programmes may need to be considered. Such a development would ensure there is no compromise to LU standards as the University moves from norm-referenced to criterion-referenced assessment while implementing OBA.
- 11.6 A clear set of appeals procedures is in place for review of grades. Some students, however, lack confidence in the system and reported that few appeals against grades are upheld. This may well be an outcome of a robust and reliable marking system but not all students understand this. The Panel suggests that LU looks at the appeal procedures with a view to satisfying itself that the process is transparent from the student perspective. It may be useful also to consider double-marking or blind marking as a general practice at LU.

External Examiners

- 11.7 LU has implemented a comprehensive system of external examination of courses. The system is in place to look at academic standards; as a form of external benchmarking in some cases; and as a way of soliciting professional or external feedback on curriculum design and assessment modes. The Panel met with a number of EEs and learnt that the University pays attention to their reports.
- 11.8 The Panel noted the September 2009 policy on EEs which they found thoughtful and appropriate. Examples of EE reports provided to the Audit Panel revealed variation in the substance and potential contribution of these reports, which may be a consequence of a lack of clarity in earlier policy and procedures. The Panel believes it could prove helpful to clarify expectations of Examiners particularly in light of the new curriculum.

The point was made by a number of the EEs that they do not wish to be burdened with restrictive or onerous guidelines but some clarification on minimum coverage and level of originality of reports from year to year may be appropriate.

Affirmation 4

The QAC affirms the progress in implementing a renewed policy for External Examiners and urges the University to continue monitoring its implementation.

- 11.9 According to the Programme Proposal and Management Guidebook, academic programmes are expected to discuss their EE reports in their Programme Annual Reports. The Annual Reports of sampled programmes, as well as minutes of department meetings in several programmes, did suggest the relevant faculty members had found the EE reports of educational value and that they had led to improvements in the programmes' assessment regime. One faculty member reported that a recent change permitting EE reports to be filed after marks have been submitted had usefully lessened the stress on faculty members under pressure to return marks to students within a semester deadline. There was no reference to, or discussion of, EE reports in the four-year programme review reports by the external committees provided to the Panel, although EE reports are expected to be reviewed by the programme review panels. The Panel considered that the provision of EE reports for the previous four years period, similar to the samples provided to the Panel, should be considered as a required component of each programme's submission to its four-year external programme review committee.

Academic Honesty

- 11.10 LU's academic regulations stipulate expectations regarding academic honesty and students are asked, in some cases, to make declarations of compliance with these rules. Course outlines remind students about the University's position.
- 11.11 The Panel was able to substantiate the fact that LU takes plagiarism and academic dishonesty issues seriously. Students are educated and expected to respect intellectual integrity and property from their first day at the University. Information and warnings against plagiarism are set out in detail and made available to students via University Student handbooks, on University homepage and course outlines. Nonetheless some wide variation in practice in handling cases was noted particularly in the penalties for proven cases. For example, a zero mark was given in one programme for a dishonest assignment while in another programme the penalty for plagiarism was a Fail grade for the course as a whole. The Panel suggests that LU review the procedures for handling cases of suspected plagiarism to ensure consistency in the penalties
- 11.12 LU has recently implemented the Turnitin software for detection of plagiarism but this is not yet widely used by the academics. Nor is there a University policy to require coursework to be vetted by such software before submission to course instructors. The Panel believes that the University would benefit from a consideration of how best to exploit this software to assist both staff and students to avoid deliberate or unintended plagiarism.

- 11.13 International experience and research on plagiarism suggests its incidence is less on campuses that have student-run honour codes. Given the tradition of student participation at LU, the residential nature of its education, and its emphasis on whole-person education, the University may wish to evaluate the experience of peer institutions with student-run honour codes and consider the possible adoption of such a system at LU.

Affirmation 5

The QAC affirms LU's approach to preventing and addressing academic dishonesty and encourages the University to fully exploit the potential of the plagiarism detection software it has implemented.

12. TEACHING QUALITY AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- 12.1 The Panel met with many staff who clearly are committed and have a genuine interest in quality teaching. All academic staff are involved in teaching, including some senior leaders who contribute their specialist expertise in a variety of programmes such as the MSc in International Banking and Finance (MIBF). Students remarked on the quality of teaching and described it as based on a foundation of openness. The pervasiveness of the small group teaching method is supplemented by informal consultations between academic staff and students facilitated by the intimacy of a small-scale campus.
- 12.2 Active researchers or staff involved heavily in university service (for example in preparing for the introduction of OBA) may get teaching relief. LU has a relatively large number of academic staff actively engaged in research with a rise from 39% in 1999 to 76% as indicated by the most recent UGC Research Assessment Exercise in 2006.

Commendation 9

The QAC commends LU for its commitment to a pedagogy based on small groups that facilitates staff in responding to individual students inside and outside formal class hours.

Teaching and Learning Policy

- 12.3 The Panel learnt a great deal about the specifics of learning activities, including through three sampled programmes that it examined in depth. The Panel believes that to preserve its successful approach to teaching and learning there should be an articulation of the University's overall pedagogy and development of an implementation strategy. The goal of a teaching and learning statement would be to provide a reference document on which strategies such as enquiry based learning, the use of small groups, e-learning and the interplay of whole-person and classroom activities can be built. TLC does have plans to develop an e-learning strategy but as noted this instructional approach can also benefit from the pedagogical foundation of a teaching and learning statement that encapsulates the LU philosophy of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 7

The QAC recommends that LU articulate a teaching and learning strategy that sets out its distinctive approach to teaching and learning as a foundation for policy formation in areas such as the enhancement of e-learning and the design of teaching and learning facilities.

Evaluation of Teaching

- 12.4 The appointment of a new Director of TLC has re-energised the TLC and seen a recent increase in activities provided by the Centre. A major responsibility of the TLC is administering the main tool for evaluating teaching effectiveness, the Course Teaching and Learning Evaluation (CTLE) survey used for all Ug and TPg courses. There are two versions of the questionnaire, one for lectures, tutorials and seminars and a second for projects. There are also on-line versions of this instrument. Academics are also encouraged to conduct optional mid-term evaluations.
- 12.5 Full reports of the CLTE results are sent to the instructor and the instructor's supervisor. Summary reports are sent to senior management and other stakeholders. Reports at various levels of detail are also sent to Programme Directors among others. Students may also access the most recent results for a course they intend to take.
- 12.6 Departments and programmes are encouraged to analyse the data collected and address issues identified by the CTLE. The TLC has begun to provide assistance in how best to interpret the scores as well as fine-tune the instrument. Given the central role of the CTLE, the Panel was pleased to hear that the Centre has hired a statistician to analyse the CTLE instrument and the data collected to gauge the effectiveness of the tool. The Panel believes it will be important for this work of reviewing the CTLE to consider also how students will be informed from semester to semester of any actions taken as a result of their input through this instrument.

Affirmation 6

The QAC affirms the work in progress to improve the validity and reliability of the Course Teaching and Learning Evaluation instrument and to exploit the data being generated through use of that instrument.

- 12.7 The Panel noted some differences of opinion as to whether or not substantiated staff are required to use the CTLE in the same way as their peers. There were inconsistencies between some of the documents supplied and between the views of different interviewees. The Panel concluded that the policy statements notwithstanding, the current practice is that teaching staff, substantiated or not, are using the CTLE at the end of each semester. It is suggested however that the ambiguity between policy and practice needs to be clarified.
- 12.8 Given the strong commitment to effective teaching in the institutional Mission and the relatively small size of the University, the Audit Panel was puzzled by the heavy reliance on the CTLE as the primary measure of effective teaching. Such surveys

have known limitations. The Audit Panel encourages LU to experiment with other forms of teacher evaluation that might be particularly feasible and informative in a small, largely Ug, residential university. For example, CTLE surveys could be supplemented by peer observation of teaching or elements of the Teaching Excellence Award Scheme (TEAS) processes. There are also many international practices that could be considered by the University.

Recommendation 8

The QAC recommends that LU extend the range of methods it uses to measure the quality of teaching and avoid over-reliance on surveys of students as the main source of data.

Staff Development

- 12.9 The university has allotted funds for staff development activities which are frequently used to support staff participation in conferences to disseminate their research findings, although few participate in conferences on teaching and student learning.
- 12.10 Staff development programmes in recent years have included topics such as the introduction of OBA and the four-year curriculum. The Panel was pleased to hear of plans to introduce WebCT training in association with ITSC. This will lay an important foundation of skills as the University moves to develop an e-learning strategy.
- 12.11 New faculty members interviewed by the Panel praised and found helpful the Staff Induction Programme organised by TLC and featuring TEAS winners. A number of the mandatory programmes run by the Centre are currently under review including the Staff Induction Programme and the workshop for tutors provided to full-time postgraduate students.
- 12.12 The Panel was pleased to note that the University has reaffirmed its commitment to the support role of TLC and has recognised its potential for enhancing the teaching and learning activities at LU.

Affirmation 7

The QAC affirms the commitment of LU in revitalising and strengthening the role of the Teaching and Learning Centre to ensure its position as a key contributor to teaching quality.

- 12.13 In contrast to the active Peer Mentoring Programme for new students at LU, there does not appear to be a formal faculty mentoring programme to help younger members of academic staff in the early stages of their career. The University may wish to consider such a scheme although it is acknowledged that the scale of LU and close relationships make this less crucial than in a large institution.

Promotion and Annual Performance Review

- 12.14 All staff members are subject to formal annual staff appraisal. In cases when a staff member's teaching performance is significantly below departmental norms as evidenced in aggregated CTLE data, the Head of Department is expected to implement an educational development plan with the staff member concerned. This may involve a referral to TLC for assistance in improvement of teaching performance.
- 12.15 Staff members may also contact the TLC on their own initiative to get advice on improving their teaching if there are performance issues. The Panel noted that in the recent past this has not been a frequent occurrence with the tendency being for teaching performance issues to be dealt with on a peer to peer basis, for example, TEAS awardees are sometimes approached by colleagues for advice.
- 12.16 Staff reported that they sensed ambiguity around the emphasis given to research in annual performance appraisal and in promotion. The Panel heard a view that heads of departments tend to focus on teaching performance while the University tends to emphasise the improvement of its profile and funding on the basis of research achievements.
- 12.17 The guidelines regarding criteria to be applied for staff appraisal, substantiation and promotion are clear and explicit. For example, the guidelines for promotion indicate that the Academic Staff Review Committee takes both 'teaching effectiveness' and 'scholarship (research and related scholarly activities)' into account in promotion with varying degrees of emphasis on these depending on the level at which an applicant might be seeking promotion. Nonetheless, the relative emphasis on different criteria is not clear to some staff members.
- 12.18 There is a perception among some staff members that research and publication records are becoming more influential in promotion so a number are striving in that direction. Some teaching staff believe that teaching is not given the same weighting as research when it comes to promotion, though they are fully sympathetic and understanding of the desire to strengthen the LU research profile.
- 12.19 The Panel formed the view that the relative weighting of research and teaching in the staff appraisal and review, substantiation and promotion needs to be clarified further. The emphasis assigned to teaching relative to scholarship is not simply a function of statement in policy documents, but as previously noted is determined by institutional actions to tangible recognition of outstanding teachers, the care with which teaching is evaluated, as well as the guidance and support provided to academic staff in how they can best develop a convincing case for effective teaching in the promotion process. In addition, a more formal system of feedback to the individual from the Chairs of the relevant committees would help to develop understanding of relative weightings among those staff members who are unsuccessful in an application process. It was said that academics who do not succeed in the process can be unsure of why they have failed and what aspect of their performance needs development.

Recommendation 9

The QAC recommends that LU further clarify the relative weighting of achievements in research and teaching in the processes of staff appraisal, substantiation and promotion.

- 12.20 Several faculty members mentioned the preparation of a teaching 'portfolio' for promotion and substantiation decisions and these were also mentioned in the context of applications for teaching awards. The Panel was informed that there are University guidelines available on-line for maintenance of a portfolio but some staff members were unaware of this. The Panel suggests that further development of University policy on teaching portfolios could be beneficial in ensuring that all staff maintain their records on an on-going basis as a foundation for all performance-related activities.

Recognition of Good Teaching

- 12.21 As mentioned above, TEAS is an elaborate exercise with a rigorous nomination, review, and selection process. Awardees often serve as mentors for other teachers and are invited to give workshops or seminars to share or promote good teaching practices. Some 20 staff having been recipients since 1996. The Panel thought it might be possible to develop a supplementary system of teaching awards, perhaps for new or junior academic staff members that would employ a less elaborate process than the prestigious TEAS. The goal would be to increase the number of academics who may be seen as 'champions' for excellence in teaching and learning and provide a wider resource of expertise for advising peers.

Recommendation 10

The QAC recommends that LU explore the potential for further recognition of excellence in teaching over and above the successful Teaching Excellence Award Scheme.

13. STUDENT PARTICIPATION

- 13.1 Staff and students are committed to participation in the life on the campus and more widely in the broader community and the workplace.
- 13.2 Student membership categories are included on all major LU committees at University level and locally in programmes and departments so that students can play a role in the governance of LU. The Panel identified the SSCs at the programme level as a particular strength providing useful advice on the improvement of academic programmes.
- 13.3 The University offers a range of courses to prepare students for participation in the affairs of LU. There are SSC briefings as well as courses in areas such as ethics, chairing meetings and so on to prepare them for leadership roles.
- 13.4 There are also opportunities for students to enrich their skills and life-experiences through involvement in student-led bodies. The independent LU Students' Union

(LUSU) represents all full-time students at the University and has 12 programme-level organisations as well as some 25 special interest clubs attached. A large number of University sports clubs and hostel associations operate under the supervision of the Wardens' Office. There was a clear sense of ownership of many activities on campus especially those organised by hostel tutors, wardens, student societies and so on.

- 13.5 The Panel was impressed by the many mechanisms of student participation including the universal participation by students in hands-on leadership, the effectiveness of student participation in the PMP and the responsiveness of LU staff at all levels, including the leadership, to taking action in a timely manner on suggestions and issues raised by students.

Commendation 10

The QAC commends LU for facilitating high levels of student participation in University committees and activities and for the enrichment of their lives and leadership capacities this brings.

14. RESEARCH DEGREES

- 14.1 LU enrolled its first MPhil students in 1995 and launched its PhD programme in 2000. As at December 2008 there were 53 RPg students. The majority were MPhil students (39 full-time) with seven full-time and seven part-time PhD students. This gives a full-time equivalent student number of 49.5 enrolled across nine RPg programmes. The research student enrolments were fairly evenly distributed across the three discipline fields at LU but the highest number of students are enrolled in Arts. The Panel suggests that the University will need to consider the strategic issues of the relative balance in the numbers of MPhil and PhD students as well as the relative number of full and part-time students.
- 14.2 The RPSC is accountable to Senate for oversight of the progress of research students and is assisted by three panels constituted to look after matters in Arts, Social Sciences and Business areas. The quality assurance process for research students is spelled out in detail showing relationships between different individuals and committees with their responsibilities. There are also guidelines for supervision of RPg students.
- 14.3 MPhil students are assigned one supervisor with PhD students being assigned a team of two. Progress is tracked through an annual reporting and assessment process. Thesis examination is carried out by committee that includes one external and two internal examiners appointed by RPSC. The Panel was satisfied that the monitoring and examination processes at LU are satisfactory.
- 14.4 Full-time students are 'normally' granted studentships and there is financial support for conferences and field work. Most full-time students are appointed to Teaching Assistant positions. There is also a Students' Circle designed to facilitate communication between students and the University.
- 14.5 The Panel met research students including some who had completed Ug studies at LU. They reported that they felt well-integrated in their home departments and had

opportunities to participate in research methods training and other courses and to engage in academic activities at LU or other UGC institutions. Students also reported that they are encouraged to attend conferences.

- 14.6 The lack of historical depth in the Library's collections may be an issue if LU presses ahead with developing a more extensive research profile and increases the number of research degree students. The LU Library is linked to other institutions through Hong Kong Academic Library Link and is involved in projects for cooperative collection development and the establishment of a joint university archive. Collections go back to 1990 but earlier material has to be acquired from local and international sources.
- 14.7 In general, the Panel observed that the MPhil and PhD programmes have been successfully introduced with appropriate support across the University and departments. The Panel was impressed by the fact that all full-time PhD students were Teaching Assistants.
- 14.8 Even though the research degree programme at LU is small scale and relatively new, the Panel judged it to be well-implemented with appropriate monitoring of progress and standards. The quality assurance processes are strong and the close relationships which characterise LU are beneficial to the students. The research students have an opportunity to engage with the intellectual life of the academic community and feel supported in their endeavours.
- 14.9 One of the challenges facing LU is in part a product of its recent success in introducing doctoral level studies and gaining external recognition for research strength in Economics. The University has also listed nine 'Focused Research Areas' to drive an aspiration for increased research activity. This will produce pressure to build on achievements and improve the University's research profile and higher degree student numbers more generally. The danger is, however, that such a focus could dilute the emphasis on UG teaching and learning that has been a hallmark of the University. The Council and management of the University will need to find ways to ensure there is no compromise to the philosophy that has underpinned the approach to liberal arts education to date while recognising the value of the research profile in enhancing external perceptions of LU.

15. CONCLUSION

- 15.1 The Panel was satisfied that LU has a positive and energetic approach to quality improvement and, further, that this attitude is pervasive throughout the institution.
- 15.2 An Action Plan included in the documentation detailed accountabilities and dates for action ranging from 2008 to 2012. The Panel agreed, by and large, with actions listed and has incorporated its views on these in the earlier sections of this report. In addition, the Panel learnt that there were many improvements being implemented at the time of the audit visit particularly as part of the move to OBA and a four-year curriculum. From the evidence they concluded that LU has been active in developing its quality assurance arrangements.
- 15.3 LU is an unusual university in terms of its Mission and scale but this has clearly given

it an advantage in building a cohesive community of staff and students (well supported by Council). This assists the leadership of the University in getting purchase on improvements and ensuring that quality assurance processes are consistently applied which is not to lessen the credit owing to LU for having implemented a range of effective quality assurance mechanisms and procedures.

- 15.4 The Panel hopes that its judgments and advice will be helpful to LU as it further develops its quality assurance arrangements and its reputation as a unique University in Hong Kong.

APPENDIX A: LINGNAN UNIVERSITY (LU)

[Extracted from the Institutional Submission]

History

Lingnan University (LU), formerly Lingnan College, is a liberal arts university. It has a long-established tradition that can be dated back to 1888, when Lingnan University in Guangzhou, China, was founded. In 1992, the College became a degree-conferring tertiary institution fully funded by the UPGC, now the University Grants Committee (UGC). LU was granted self-accrediting status in September 1998 and university title in July 1999. LU pursues the highest standards of scholarship in its focused areas of research.

LU's liberal arts education has the following characteristics: a small student body; inter- and multi-disciplinary curricula; teaching and learning processes which feature close staff-student relationships; enriched campus life with a high residential rate; and emphases on language proficiency, student exchange, community service and extra-curricular learning experiences. As a liberal arts university, LU is fully committed to quality teaching as well as excellence in research. This is articulated in the role statement agreed with UGC in 2004, which has guided the University's broad plans.

Vision

To excel as an internationally recognised liberal arts university distinguished by outstanding teaching and the highest standards of scholarship.

Mission

LU is committed to the provision of quality education distinguished by the best liberal arts traditions. It adopts a whole-person approach to education which enables its students to think, judge, care and, ultimately, act responsibly in the changing circumstances of Hong Kong, the region and the world.

Strategy

The LU Strategic Plan articulates the vision, mission and positioning of the University and the profile of the ideal Lingnan graduate. It also describes development plans to the point at which the first cohort of students under the four-year system will graduate.

Role Statement

In accordance with the role statement agreed with UGC, LU:

- (a) offers a range of programmes leading to the award of first degrees in Arts, Business and Social Sciences;
- (b) pursues the delivery of teaching at an internationally competitive level in all the taught programmes that it offers;
- (c) offers a number of taught postgraduate programmes and research postgraduate programmes in selected fields within the subject areas of Arts, Business and Social Sciences;
- (d) provides a general education programme which seeks to offer all students a broad educational perspective, distinguished by the best liberal arts tradition from both East and West, and enables its students to act responsibly in the changing circumstances of this century;
- (e) aims at being internationally competitive in its areas of research strength, in particular in support of liberal arts programmes;
- (f) maintains strong links with the community;

- (g) pursues actively deep collaboration in its areas of strength with other higher education institutions in Hong Kong or the region or more widely so as to enhance the Hong Kong higher education system;
- (h) encourages academic staff to be engaged in public service, consultancy and collaborative work with the private sector in areas where they have special expertise, as part of the institution's general collaboration with government, business and industry; and
- (i) manages in the most effective and efficient way the public and private resources bestowed upon the institution, employing collaboration whenever it is of value.

Programmes of Study

In accordance with its role and mission, LU offers programmes in Arts, Business and Social Sciences. Business and Social Sciences each offer a single integrated Ug programme. The Arts programmes include eight separate undergraduate (Ug) programmes: Chinese, Contemporary English Studies, Contemporary English and Education, Cultural Studies, History, Philosophy, Translation and Visual Studies. In addition, all students are required to complete three courses from the General Education (GE) Programme.

At present, ten Ug major, nine research postgraduate (RPg) and seven taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes are offered, with full-time UGC-funded student enrolment of 2,382 as at 31 December 2008.

Number of Staff and Students and Teaching Commitment

The number of academic staff was 153 as at October 2009. With an Ug student number of 2,336, the staff-student ratio is 1:15.3. LU plans to maintain a student population of 2,600 for Ug programmes within the four-year university system to enhance its realisation of the LU liberal arts mission, and maintain teaching and learning quality and staff-student relationships.

With an emphasis on teaching excellence, the University spends about 54% of total expenditure on teaching, and 5-6% for student development. All academic staff are required to teach. To maintain the teaching quality of Ug programmes, a teacher is allowed to teach at most one semester-long TPg course per academic year in addition to his/her normal Ug teaching.

Organisational Structure

The academic management structure is based on a President and Vice-President supported by three Associate Vice-Presidents (AVPs (Academic Affairs; Academic Quality Assurance; Comptroller). There are three appointed Academic Deans (ADs) to head up three faculties (Arts; Business; Social Sciences) with 17 academic departments. The University also has 11 research institutes, centres and other research programmes.

The supreme governing body is the University Council which sets major strategic directions and priorities for development. The Senate is the supreme academic body of the University.

Revenue and Estate

The consolidated income for the year ended 30 June 2008 was \$576.9 million of which \$281,431,285 came from government subventions and \$220,906,088 from tuition, programmes and other fees.

The LU campus in Tuen Mun, with an area of 11 hectares, provides 1,500 hostel places for its 2,400 students.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT FINDINGS

Lingnan University (LU) welcomes the opportunity provided by the QAC audit to examine critically the practice and processes that Lingnan has enacted in order to ensure a high-quality Liberal Arts education. The Audit Report reinforces Lingnan's commitment to further enhance its internal quality processes, particularly those associated with the challenges of the new four-year curriculum and Lingnan's goals to become fully residential in the near future.

The QAC Audit Report acknowledges that Lingnan is fulfilling its mission to provide a distinctive educational environment that incorporates whole-person development in the tradition of a rich Liberal Arts education. The University is extremely pleased with the commendations that highlight the leadership and staff commitment that has led to the improved processes to support quality assurance in all programmes: undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degrees. Lingnan is very gratified to receive a commendation from the Panel for the clarity of its educational objectives consistent with a well-integrated and implemented residential liberal arts education.

Lingnan is pleased to see endorsement of its suite of programmes, whole-person philosophy, the mandating of Service-Learning for the new four-year curriculum, and effective Peer Mentoring Programme. Whole-person education is a cornerstone of Liberal Arts education and Lingnan has implemented a quality process to ensure that all programmes respond appropriately to external review panels and advisors, as acknowledged by the Panel. Lingnan is pleased by the acknowledgement of the efforts made to develop the language skills of its undergraduates, and is gratified that the Panel has seen fit to acknowledge the documented improvements in English and Putonghua skills. One of the foundations of Liberal Arts education is the development of close relationships between staff and students, facilitated by small classes and appropriate pedagogies that support high levels of teacher-student engagement. The Liberal Arts philosophy also recognises that student involvement in university committees can foster leadership skills and improve the potential for whole-person growth, and Lingnan is committed to ensuring the provision of such opportunities to our students. It is gratifying that the Panel saw fit to commend these aspects of LU student life.

Lingnan recognises that quality improvement is not an ad hoc process but, rather, is an ongoing commitment that refines and develops university programmes holistically. The University is pleased to note that the Panel affirms current and ongoing efforts to ensure that the new core courses for the four-year curriculum are adequately evaluated, that progress is being made for testing of English and Putonghua language competencies, and that preparations are being made for all students to experience a residential component in 2012. The Panel's commendation of the university for the manner in which the university responds to external advisors and review panels is welcomed and LU is also pleased about the affirmation of its ongoing processes to make more effective use of External Examiners and advisors.

Lingnan is concerned with developing a student culture that encompasses academic integrity and honesty, and the Panel's affirmation of progress made to address academic honesty is thus welcomed. A Liberal Arts institution requires, acknowledges and rewards good teaching. The Panel's affirmation of current efforts to make fuller use of the data provided by the current Course Teaching and Learning Evaluation is appreciated.

Lingnan University is committed to improving quality assurance processes in all its programmes. The Panel's recommendations assist the University to focus its attention on

developing measurable targets and indicators for the current Strategic Plan and hone current efforts to benchmark against other similar institutions outside of Hong Kong. The University is committed to developing metrics that better inform academic and management decision-making in order to provide more effective use of resources in the attainment of its desired educational objectives, especially those related to the new four-year curriculum. Lingnan is committed to enhancing the educational experience and development of students, and will take on board the suggestions of the Panel in this regard.

The University has made progress in the Outcomes-based Approach in preparation for 2012 and will continue to develop a more encompassing assessment policy across programmes, aligning learning outcomes and assessment. The commitment of the University to providing a distinctive educational experience will continue as the University enhances the scope of its teaching and learning strategies. At the same time, we are mindful of the impact of the assessment initiatives on faculty's teaching and research for a small institution like LU (with very small academic departments) and would optimise the deployment of our resources to minimise potential adverse effects.

Finally, the Lingnan community is indebted to members of the Audit Panel for the collegial approach to the audit, and the invaluable advice the Panel has provided for the development of Liberal Arts education in Hong Kong. The report provides acknowledgement of processes that are working well, as well as guidance for refining and further developing the quality processes already in place. The University welcomes the opportunity this QAC Audit Report provides to communicate with the wider community and prospective students who wish to better understand the strengths offered by a Liberal Arts-based education.

APPENDIX C: ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

AD	Academic Dean
AQAC	Academic Quality Assurance Committee
AVP	Associate Vice-President
CTLE	Course Teaching and Learning Evaluation
DB	Department Board
DRP	Directed Research Project
EE	External Examiner
GE	General Education
GPA	Grade Point Average
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
IEP	International Exchange Programme
ILP	Integrated Learning Programme
ITSC	Information Technology Services Centre
MEP	Mainland Exchange Programme
OBA	Outcome-based Approach
OMIP	Office of Mainland and International Programmes
OSL	Office of Service-Learning
PCC	Programme and Curriculum Committee
PMP	Peer Mentoring Programme
QAC	Quality Assurance Council
RPg	Research Postgraduate
RPSC	Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee
SP	Strategic Plan
SSC	Student Services Centre
SSCC	Staff-Student Consultation Committee
TEAS	Teaching Excellence Awards Scheme
TLC	Teaching and Learning Centre
TPg	Taught Postgraduate
UAPC	University Administrative and Planning Committee
Ug	Undergraduate
UEB	Undergraduate Examinations Board
UGC	University Grants Committee

APPENDIX D: LU AUDIT PANEL

Audit Panel

The LU Audit Panel comprised the following:

Professor David Dill (Panel Chair)*
Professor Emeritus of Public Policy
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Professor John Brennan
Director and Professor, the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI)
The Open University, UK

Professor John Chi Kin Lee
Dean, Faculty of Education and Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Mr Laurence Li
Barrister-at-law
Temple Chambers, Hong Kong

Professor Terry Yip
Professor, Department of English Language and Literature
Hong Kong Baptist University

*Professor Susan Bassnett (Pro-Vice Chancellor and Professor in the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Warwick) was a Panel member and Chair up to 16 December 2009 when, for personal reasons, she withdrew from the Panel.

Audit Coordinator

Emeritus Professor Mairéad Browne
Emeritus Professor
University of Technology, Sydney

