

**LINGNAN UNIVERSITY**  
**Quality Assurance Council (QAC) Audit 2010**  
**Progress Report**

We are pleased to see that the QAC Report confirms that Lingnan is providing high quality liberal arts education well-aligned with the University's mission, and is adopting a positive and energetic approach to quality improvement which is pervasive throughout the institution. As the only liberal arts university in Hong Kong, 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. We are extremely pleased with the commendations that leadership and staff commitment have led to improved processes to support quality assurance in all programmes (undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degrees), and that the clarity of the University's educational objectives are consistent with a well-integrated and implemented residential liberal arts education.

The University has been putting tremendous efforts into providing distinctive liberal arts education, and is pleased to see the endorsement of the suite of programmes, whole-person philosophy – a cornerstone of liberal arts education, the mandating of civic engagement/service-learning for the new four-year curriculum, and the effective peer mentoring programme. The University is also gratified by the acknowledgment of the efforts made to develop the language skills of its undergraduates and to enrich student life. Such efforts include the development of close relationships between staff and students, facilitated by small classes and appropriate pedagogies as well as student involvement in university committees to foster leadership skills.

Lingnan has implemented a quality process to ensure that all programmes respond appropriately to external review panels and advisors. We recognise that quality improvement is an ongoing commitment that refines and develops university programmes holistically, and will strive to enhance our pursuit of excellence. The progress report of taking on board the recommendations of the Audit Panel is summarised below.

**Affirmations**

Affirmation 1

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

- 1.1 In the years leading to 2012, core curriculum courses have been initially trialed and then evaluated to provide useful information for further refinement. To maximise the benefits of the trial process, the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) has worked closely with departments/programmes responsible for Core Curriculum courses, especially the common core courses, to provide expertise, support and advice to facilitate refinement of the syllabi and delivery of the courses. Associated staff development activities, such as workshops, have been organised on a regular basis to ensure sharing of good practices, further enhancement of the curriculum design, and thorough discussion of issues related to assessment, delivery of the courses and evaluation data from trialed courses.

- 1.2 A multi-layered evaluation [by means of Course Teaching and Learning Evaluation (CTLE) reports, student focus groups/forums/internet forums, instructor review reports, and interviews with teaching staff] was adopted for generating data, suggestions and views for the refinement of the courses. The TLC designed and conducted an exit survey for all trialed Core Curriculum courses, with a focus on evaluating the level of student achievement of the stated learning outcomes, particularly those related to Lingnan University Graduate Attributes. The evaluation consisted of three parts: the standard CTLE evaluations given to all courses, a survey instrument that focused specially on the achievement of graduate attributes, and interviews with teaching staff and focus groups of students. In addition, all instructors of the trial courses are required to complete a self-reflective report for submission to the Core Curriculum and General Education Committee for consideration with a view to collecting views and suggestions for refinements of the courses. As part of our quality assurance process, an interim review of the Core Curriculum will be conducted in 2012-13, with a full review to be conducted in 2014-15.

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.

- 2.1 To develop an online Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment (DELTA) that will support student learning from 2012, test item writers have been contracted by the Centre for English and Additional Languages (CEAL) to write English test items. A new area of responsibility has also been created to support this development, namely a DELTA coordinator. Regular review meetings have been conducted by the CEAL and its institutional partners at CityU and PolyU. The English test bank will be expanded on an ongoing basis through to, and possibly beyond, 2012. The language centres at the three institutions will determine the type of results and the format that will be of most use to students. At the moment all three language centres are writing test items and holding regular meetings to review the test items. The inter-institutional diagnostic team drew up the specifications for the online version of the test, and put it out to tender. All institutions will use the same platform to administer the diagnostic test. The software was piloted in September 2011 with a small group of students. In 2011-12, the supporting administrative system is being developed to facilitate automated booking of students to take the DELTA, and we undertook a pilot of DELTA with nearly 700 Lingnan students in December 2011.
- 2.2 To benchmark our students' Chinese language proficiency before graduation, the Chinese Language Education and Assessment Centre (CLEAC) administers Exit Tests once a year. The Oral Exit Test benchmarks students' Putonghua competence using the nationally standardised Putonghua Proficiency Test (Putonghua Shuiping Ceshi or PSC), and the Written Chinese Exit Test benchmarks students' written Chinese competence and general knowledge in Chinese using the Written Chinese Proficiency Test for the Hong Kong Region (WCPTHK). The WCPTHK is one of the research products from an on-going collaboration over the past 11 years between CLEAC and the State's Language Commission of the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China.
- 2.3 A new initiative as part of on-going efforts in OBA quality assurance is the "Pilot Chinese Entrance/Year-end Tests Project". This project aims to track students'

learning outcomes by administering tests both before and after they complete the 6 credits of compulsory Practical Chinese courses in Lingnan. The CLEAC developed and administered a set of pilot Chinese Entrance Tests (in both oral and written forms) in September 2010, followed by a set of year-end Learning Outcome Evaluation Tests in May 2011, with difficulty levels comparable to the Entrance Tests – as has been certified by three independent individual Hong Kong-based Test Experts. Six nationally certified PSC examiners and 93 randomly-selected students were engaged in this research project, funded by a Teaching Development Grant (TDG). The statistical report demonstrated solid evidence of significant and substantial improvement in both oral and written Chinese proficiency levels after completion of their one year of Chinese language study.

Affirmation 3

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

- 3.1 Wong Hoo Chuen Hall and Wu Jieh Yee Hall, each of 375 hostel places, will be ready for occupancy in January 2012. The two new hostels, together with the existing six hostels, will enable the University to provide hostel residence for 85% of student population in the 2012-13 academic year. The Jockey Club New Hall comprising two blocks each of 250 hostel places, will be ready for occupancy in August 2013. By then, the University will be able to provide full residence for all students.
- 3.2 In order to ensure that every new student will have sufficient exposure to this unique residential experience of Lingnan's liberal arts education, the University has approved the following policies on hostel residence with effect from 2012-13 for the 4-year university system:
  - a) All UGC-funded students who will study in the University for four years will be required to reside in student hostels for at least two years.
  - b) Students of all UGC-funded senior year places who will study in the University for two years will be required to reside in student hostels for at least one year.
  - c) The existing policy that all first year students should reside in hostels will remain unchanged.
- 3.3 There will be no maximum limit to the duration of residency for students throughout their course of study. The University is also soliciting donations to set up bursaries for students with financial difficulties to reside in hostels. Policies on hostel residence will be reviewed with reference to the hostel occupancy in 2013-14 and the financial position of the University.

Affirmation 4

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

- 4.1 As part of the on-going review process, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) in 2009-10 set up a task force to review the title, roles and duties of External Examiners (EEs). The recommendations as endorsed by the AQAC were considered and subsequently approved by the Senate in April 2010 for implementation from

2010-11. The EEs should focus on benchmarking of academic standards with their roles on examination matters becoming advisory. They are expected to provide an external and impartial check that internal standards are being fairly and consistently applied, and that Lingnan's standards are comparable with those of similar degree programmes at tertiary level in Hong Kong and outside Hong Kong. To clearly reflect the re-defined roles and duties, the EEs have been retitled to External Academic Advisors (EAAs). The list of EAAs/EEs in 2011-12 and their roles and duties are set out in Appendices A and B.

- 4.2 It has become an explicit requirement that a copy of the annual reports from EEs/EAAs in the past 4 years shall be appended to the 5-year programme review documents. This is to ensure that feedback from EEs/EAAs have been responded to and taken into account for programme improvement.
- 4.3 It was observed that EE reports had varied substance and lengths as some EEs might not consider all topics listed in the guidance to EEs/EAAs on writing their annual reports. To enable the EEs/EAAs to have a better understanding of the University's expectation, a template of an annual report has been provided to them. The template sets out the areas listed in the University policy document which EEs/EAAs are expected to cover.

#### 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.

- 5.1 The University seeks to develop a student culture that encompasses academic integrity and honesty, and the Audit Panel's affirmation of progress made to address academic honesty is thus welcomed. Our academic regulations provide clear descriptions of what constitutes academic dishonesty. The University has already taken some measures to address the matter, e.g., students are required to sign a form which acknowledges their understanding of dishonest practice in coursework; orientation programmes from the Library and the Student Services Centre (SSC) include briefings on academic dishonesty; a note is added in all course outlines to draw their attention to the issue; a section on plagiarism is included in "A Guide to Campus Life" distributed to all new admittees; and the TLC organises workshops for postgraduate tutors, scholarship and non-local students to inform them about this issue. Also, the anti-plagiarism software "Turnitin" is routinely used both to help check against plagiarism, and as a self-learning tool for students. In addition, reminders are given by academic staff in classes about the importance of academic honesty, and about possible disciplinary actions that may be taken for non-compliance.

#### 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.

- 6.1 The affirmation of current efforts to make fuller use of the data provided by the current CTLE is appreciated. In a TDG project entitled "Analysing the Performance Indicators for Outcome-based Learning in the Social Science Programme", time series

data on Course and Teaching Evaluation (CTE, the instrument used before the adoption of CTLE) or CTLE for BSocSc Programme were used to analyse the improvement of teaching over time, and factors affecting CTLE/CTE scores, apart from other performance indicators. From the findings of the project, key factors which contribute to student learning outcomes have been identified, e.g. course organisation and teacher quality and effort. In addition, some myths regarding course difficulty and pace were also debunked - some factors which were believed to have a great impact on student satisfaction and learning outcomes were found to be insignificant. Instructors find these findings useful in their course and teaching development.

- 6.2 Another TDG project conducted by the TLC entitled “A Longitudinal Study on the Course and Teaching Evaluations” involved analysis of the CTE and CTLE data between 2003 and 2009. Overall, data from the new CTLE questionnaire, introduced in 2008-09 academic year, demonstrated excellent internal consistency within each of its three parts (course satisfaction, teacher satisfaction, learning outcomes). In the new CTLE questionnaire, 3 items about the course (usefulness, helpfulness of the feedback, and course cohesion) and 5 items about learning outcomes, including their clarity, relationship to learning activities, and relationship to assessment tasks, were strong predictors of overall course satisfaction. In the new CTLE questionnaire, 2 items about the learning outcomes (achievement thereof and contribution to overall learning experience), and 5 items about the teacher were strong predictors of overall student satisfaction with teaching. The teacher items indicated that students tend to focus on the instructors’ teaching styles and presentation skills in rating their overall teacher satisfaction, and were less concerned about active in-class interaction and critical thinking. These results were consistent with findings from the old CTE questionnaire. They strongly supported the importance of curriculum alignment at the course level, but the data also indicated that more work needs to be done at the institutional level to impress upon students the value and importance of developing skills of critical thinking through active engagement in learning and assessment tasks, both inside and outside the classroom. The significant findings of the study are shared with Programme Directors, Departmental Heads and Academic Deans, SSC Counsellors, student advisory teachers and all academic staff new to Lingnan.

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.

- 7.1 Following the appointment of its Director in 2009, the TLC has been actively engaged in efforts contributing to the enhancement of teaching quality. Activities include: organising seminars in OBA, conducting related surveys such as core curriculum survey, graduate survey questionnaire. Efforts have been made by the TLC to strengthen the collection and analysis of data to evaluate the outcomes of the education provided by Lingnan. One major initiative involves developing a standardised graduate exit survey for all undergraduate programmes. The graduate exit survey has a standardised section on common University and programme issues and an additional section for each individual programme. Through standardised and programme-specific surveys, we can better understand how well our graduates have achieved desired learning outcomes. The graduate exit survey was initially implemented for the 2010 cohort of graduates. The data collected are analysed to provide timely and appropriate information and evidence. Furthermore, to provide evidence of achievement of one of

the Lingnan's graduate attributes that our graduates possess essential generic research-related skills including knowledge of IT, a pilot study was undertaken in 2009-11. The project aimed to equip our students with necessary IT skills for their studies and future career development, and to demonstrate their IT competency as an ideal attribute. The University has approved the proposal that all undergraduate students are required to pass the IT Fluency Test during their studies at Lingnan. The significant findings of these studies are shared with Programme Directors, Departmental Heads and Academic Deans, SSC Councilors, student advisory teachers and all academic staff new to Lingnan.

- 7.2 From December 2009 to November 2011, the TLC has provided 48 seminars and workshops for staff, which have been attended by a total of 615 staff members (in head counts). Besides staff induction, there has been an emphasis on topics relating to OBA, assessment, and the effective use of education technologies. Mean evaluation scores (on a 5-point scale) for these events have ranged from 4.03 (good) to 4.75 (very good). Development workshops have also been provided for postgraduate and undergraduate students. These have generally been well-attended and highly rated by students.

## **Recommendations**

### Recommendation 1

The QAC recommends that LU revisit its Strategic Plan 2009-16 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.

- 1.1 As set out in the Strategic Plan (SP) approved for adoption in March 2009, regular reviews of the SP will be conducted in order to monitor the progress and to identify areas which may require revision or updating in response to changing environmental conditions. Taking forward the QAC recommendation, the SP was updated and refined by the relevant Sub-groups and relevant units in early 2011, particularly to enhance its specificity and include clear accountabilities, specific targets for measurable indicators which would facilitate the University to monitor the progress.
- 1.2 The consolidated Action Plan updates respectively in the six key strategic areas (Academic Development – including undergraduate programmes, research/taught postgraduate programmes and faculty development; Research; Student Development; Institutional Advancement; Academic Support Services as well as Sub-degrees and Continuing Education) were carefully deliberated by the Task Force on SP before adoption by the Senate in May and noting by the Council in June 2011. The Action Plan Updates are shown in Appendix C.
- 1.3 As part of the continuous monitoring process, regular reviews will be conducted every other year by the respective sub-groups and responsible units. The SP will be re-visited in early 2013.

### 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.

- 2.1 The University is appreciative of this recommendation regarding benchmarking institutions. We have identified three liberal arts institutions in the US (Whittier College, Carroll University and Alverno College) and two in Asia (Tunghai University of Taiwan and International Christian University of Japan) in the initial phase of benchmarking. These institutions, as our student exchange partners, have maintained a good and long-standing relationship and are ready to share information, experience and expertise with Lingnan.
- 2.2 In our recent benchmarking visits, we have explored mechanisms and processes to facilitate the implementation of OBA. These include ways to motivate faculty to embrace OBA; measurement of the effectiveness and value-addedness of a liberal arts education; processes to ensure equity and comparability in assessment across different programmes; and the introduction of criterion-based assessment. Other means for discussion have included how teaching evaluation results are related to personnel actions (e.g. promotion and substantiation). Besides, we have exchanged experiences with our partners on ways to enhance students' first year experience and early alert programmes in preparation for the admission of a younger cohort under the 4-year system.
- 2.3 Inspired by the early alert programme of an overseas university, the University has begun to work on introducing a similar system which aims to track students' academic progress and give them early feedback, warnings and advice.
- 2.4 In addition, the University has resolved that external benchmarking at the programme level shall be conducted in the context of five-year programme reviews, with particular reference to admission strategy, programme structure, course content, teaching and learning activities, and assessment standards.
- 2.5 In April 2011, a party of 3 staff from TLC, 1 OBA Project Officer, and 11 academics from across the University visited Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, for external benchmarking. They were impressed by the integrated, dedicated, sophisticated and systematic approach to OBA at Alverno. Takeaways included methods for aligning assessment tasks with intended learning outcomes at stream level in the BBA (Hons), and a deep appreciation of the power of assessment. A faculty member from Alverno College will be visiting LU for the entire term 2 of 2011-12 for additional follow up of our initiatives. In addition, since 2009, LU has hosted 7 seminars and workshops for staff that have been facilitated by outside speakers, including 4 by Fulbright visiting scholars. In the run-up to AACSB accreditation, received in April 2011, the Business Faculty hosted 3 OBA consultants from the USA, who ran workshop and seminars, and advised constructively during curriculum committee meetings. The Faculty of Social Sciences and the Faculty of Arts have also developed a programme of workshops and seminars run by outside speakers and consultants on OBA for 2011-12 academic year. The information and experiences (documents, exemplars, videos) from the Alverno trip have been shared with all staff via a newly developed website on the intranet.

### 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.

- 3.1 The University considers it essential to develop an overarching evaluation framework to help focus and define appropriate education indicators and to ensure the flow of empirical information to support data-driven decision-making at the institutional and departmental/unit levels, in particular with the implementation of the 4-year curriculum. A Task Force on Evaluation Framework was formed in late September 2010 to come up with proposals on developing the overarching evaluation framework within which data are collected to evaluate and monitor key operations of the University. Building on the various data kept for different purposes, the Task Force deemed it necessary to set up an overarching evaluation framework to pull data together for a panoramic view. As a start, five university-wide indicators of good education experiences, viz. internationalisation, small class, experiential learning, inter-disciplinary courses and residential experiences, for evaluation under the framework have been identified.
- 3.2 The University has acquired a business analytics solution that could help pull data collected from different academic departments and functional units into a single system for reporting and analysis. This will further enhance the cohesiveness and conclusiveness on the use of data. Benchmarking with both local and overseas institutions on the best practices on the implementation of BI, including management, structure, workflow, IT systems and the formulation of baseline model and key performance indicators (KPIs), had been conducted before the University acquired a Business Intelligence (BI) software in June 2011.
- 3.3 To support data-driven decision-making at the institutional level, a high-level Steering Group chaired by the AVP (Academic Quality Assurance), comprising senior members such as the AVP (Academic Affairs) & Registrar, Academic Deans from Faculties, the IT Director and other Heads and/or their senior staff from academic, servicing or administrative units, has been formed to develop plans and recommendations for the BI solution and to set directions on the implementation of the BI system for use in data analysis for management decisions. The execution of the project is undertaken by a Working Group chaired by the AVP (Academic Affairs) & Registrar with members from various support units such as Registry, IT Services Centre, Student Services Centre, Office of Mainland and International Programmes, Office of Service-Learning and delegates from different academic faculties. The Working Group reports to the Steering Group to lead the BI project, define and propose data models, coordinate with different stakeholders and the BI service provider for the implementation of the BI system and receive training.
- 3.4 The Registry has taken the functional leading role to guide various administrative units to build their baseline models in the BI system as well as to conduct data cleaning and validation on the database to facilitate the decision-making of senior management whilst the IT Services Centre has assumed the technical role of BI Systems Administrator to perform system customisation and provide in-house technical training to other users.
- 3.5 Internationalisation was identified as the first KPI to work on in the first phase of implementation of the BI system. Data trees were constructed to illustrate the metrics that need to be considered and the tables/reports that have to be created in the BI system. To store data collected from different sources and/or means in a single database to facilitate data flow among the University, both direct and indirect (i.e. data

collected from survey forms and/or questionnaires) data are now kept in a data warehouse. Data have been cleaned, validated and transformed so that they are ready and comparable for use at both institutional and departmental/unit levels. A data dictionary is being maintained and will be updated regularly for records and easy retrieval of data definitions by different functional users.

- 3.6 The first phase of the implementation of the BI system, focusing on internationalisation as one of our key performance indicators, was launched in October 2011. With concerted efforts from different departments/units, we are pleased to report that we have been making good progress in this regard. We have come up with some initial findings on internationalisation along with a plan to carry forward the initiative, as given in Appendix D.
- 3.7 The University is now focusing on experiential learning as the second KPI to work on. It is expected that through different activities such as Integrated Learning Programme (ILP), internship programmes, Service-Learning (S-L) Programme, civic engagement and community service projects, students would be engaged in a multi-faceted, enriching and multi-cultural campus experience. The remaining 3 KPIs would be implemented in the BI system afterwards.
- 3.8 As an on-going exercise and to promote the flow of empirical information, multiple in-house training sessions would be provided to all stakeholders to ensure that they get familiar with the use of the BI system to generate useful tables/reports for decision-making by senior management. We recognise the importance of consolidating the development of an interactive culture, so as to motivate staff members to pick up the necessary skills to interpret their own data. It is expected that the system can help provide evidence for both internal and external benchmarking. Through the process of compiling quantitative reports in the BI system for strategic analysis, the value added to the students by Lingnan's good education experiences could be evaluated.

#### 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.

- 4.1 As set out in the University guidelines, the annual programme report should, in the top priority areas, reflect on the development and achievement during the previous year and areas for improvement; contain common elements in listed broad areas; in teaching, learning and assessment give a brief account about the development efforts made in outcome-based education during the reporting year; include an overall evaluation and action plan with indicative time frame; and provide an analysis of time-series data, as appropriate.
- 4.2 In addition, in September 2010, the Senate approved the recommendation that annual programme reports for undergraduate programmes should include the progress or development related to the 334 academic reform, with a view to enhancing quality assurance. Such issues include curriculum development, course planning, issues or problems anticipated/encountered especially during the double cohort years, and how they were addressed/solved or handled. The Annual Programme Report provides a mechanism for on-going review and improvement of academic programmes, and

academic units should make good use of the opportunity to truly reflect and identify some areas for improvement. In this regard, Academic Deans of the three Faculties have been entrusted to emphasise this important message to heads of departments and programme directors so as to ensure that the reports are open, reflective and analytical, and include issues or problems anticipated/encountered and how they were addressed/solved or will be handled. The University is pleased to confirm that for the 2009-10 annual programme reports, all the nine undergraduate degree programmes have prepared self-reflective and analytical reports. For instance, as in the sample report set out in [Appendix E](#), the BA(Hons) Visual Studies programme has done detailed analyses and reported on actions taken in various areas, e.g. quality control of its Directed Research Project benchmarking against McGill University in Canada, reflections on CTLE scores to yield insights and proposals for development in teaching and learning.

- 4.3 Apart from annual programme reports, the University considered it necessary to ensure that the five-year programme review documents submitted by academic units are also open, reflective and analytical. Attention of the academic units has been drawn to this. (Thorough programme reviews will be changed from a 4-year to a 5-year cycle so that a programme will be subject to a rigorous review every 5 years from 2012-13 after implementation for 4 years in order to have a complete picture of a student cohort. After the first round of the 5-year cycle, the matter will be reviewed for the appropriateness of introducing a 6-year review cycle.)
- 4.4 The guidelines for five-year programme reviews have incorporated additional provision about the responsibilities of reviewers and the coverage of the review report. Furthermore, to stress the importance of the connection between annual programme reports and five-year programme review, the University guidelines explicitly state that there shall be a separate section in the review document to evaluate the efforts made in and the progress on following up recommendations given by the last four- or five-year programme review panel, and evaluate developments in recent years as implementation of action plans set out in the annual programme reports.

#### 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.

- 5.1 The University launched the First Year Student Experience Programme in 2009. This is the key programme to help new students understand the academic culture of the University, acquire study skills, develop positive attitudes and improve social skills. From 2010, core elements of the First Year Experience Programme have been strengthened to enhance newly-admitted students' university life. The programme now comprises a series of well-structured training workshops about goal-setting, life-planning, self-understanding, learning styles, skills for reading, writing and presentation, learning opportunities at the university, and career education. Alumni with well-established careers have frequently been invited to offer invaluable tips and suggestions on how to get the most from university life, significance of academic excellence, learning outcomes of exchange programmes and internship, and career development.

5.2 The University regards student hostels as a learning environment for enhancing students' whole-person development. The University has taken the following actions to extend student residents' learning opportunities and enhance their intellectual and personal growth in a social context.

### 5.2.1 Reviewing the Educational Roles of Student Hostels and the Definition of Hostel Education

- a) Hostel experience prepares a better transition for young adults to emerge from their more sheltered lives as teenagers. Students can learn independence, acquire interpersonal skills, and develop a sense of community and responsibility through living with roommate(s), floor mates and participating in community life within hostels. Hostels are places where students find unity, friendship and generosity. Everyone in the hostel community can contribute to the common good, and can learn to take responsibility and to console and support one another when facing difficulties;
- b) We aspire to enhance the intellectual development and horizons of students through a co-curriculum of hostel education, comprising structured hostel education programmes provided by Warden's Offices, and through close interactions with fellow hostel residents from diverse study disciplines;
- c) In the hostels, senior year students who act as peer mentors can guide and inspire their first year student mentees, who live in the same hostel, to learn the importance of core values in university studying, intellectual pursuit, study skills, goal setting, and Lingnanian spirit and culture;
- d) Students' language skills, appreciation of different cultures and global perspectives can be enhanced through social interactions with non-local students in their hostels and through participation in cultural programmes offered by the International House (please also see 5.2.2); and
- e) Students can learn leadership and self-governance through participation in floor committees and through Student Hostel Associations, which will also serve as practical training for the student residents to become future leaders – one of the ultimate goals of Lingnan's liberal arts education.

Wardens have organised hostel education programmes in support of the above educational roles of student hostels.

### 5.2.2 Establishing the Living Learning Communities (LLCs), International House (I-House) and Global Lounge

- a) From 2012-13, the six existing hostels, plus Wong Hoo Chuen Hall and Wu Jieh Yee Hall, will become LLCs by advocating educational themes related to the educational roles of student hostels. In 2011-12, as a trial run of LLCs, the Warden's Offices have proposed different educational themes such as "Healthy Living", "Unity and Fraternity" and "Engaging our Community". A series of programmes in support of the relevant themes of LLCs such as field trips, visits, talks and sharing sessions have been and will continue to be offered.

- b) The Jockey Club New Hall will be designated as an I-House which is a LLC with the theme of nurturing cross-cultural learning. I-House will be the hub for promoting internationalisation of the University. I-House is meant to provide a platform for local, overseas and Chinese Mainland students to get together, join hands with the Wardens' Office to organise a rich array of programmes about cultural appreciation, language learning and global perspectives for their residents and for the university community.
- c) The University is also planning to establish a Global Lounge in the I-House. The Lounge, open to all students, will serve as an international social centre for students, a resources centre for students interested in overseas exposure and a focal point for nurturing global perspectives and awareness. In the Lounge, there will be TVs featuring world news and TV stations from various countries; information kiosks about exchange programmes, internships, overseas studies and travel; computer facility, newspaper and magazine corner; a self-serviced coffee corner; and a language learning zone. CEAL, CLEAC, the Office of Mainland and International Programmes, SSC, the Office of Service-Learning, Wardens' Offices, and the Student Hostel Association of I-House will be invited to provide services and organise programmes in the Lounge.

### 5.2.3 Adding Hostel Education as the Sixth Domain under the Integrated Learning Programme (ILP)

As approved by the Senate, hostel education will become the sixth domain under the ILP with effect from 2012-13 for 4-year system students. Students will be required to complete five units of ILP in hostel education by attending the education programmes offered by Warden's Offices.

### 5.2.4 Trial Run of Hostel Education Programmes bearing ILP Units

Warden's Offices have been offering hostel education programmes bearing ILP units for their residents and LLCs on a trial basis since 2010-11. In 2010-11, the six Warden's Offices have offered 31 hostel educational activities for 369 hostel residents. Activities including joint-hostel movie nights and sharing, visits and field trips, talks on time management, further studies and cross cultural experiences were organised. These trial-run activities have received positive feedback from participants.

#### 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.

- 6.1 As a liberal arts institution, the University has adopted the strategic objective of achieving excellence in teaching and learning, and has continued to improve the quality of education through the implementation of OBA in curriculum development, learning and assessment, at programme and course levels. We have been making good progress through many major initiatives in outcome-based approaches to teaching and learning (OBATL).

- 6.2 Apart from revising guidelines in order to place greater emphasis on the outcome-based elements in the quality assurance process, we have conducted critical reviews at both the University and Programme/Departmental levels for important elements of OBATL, such as aims and objectives, learning outcomes, coverage of subjects, learning processes, assessment and measurement of outcomes, effectiveness of programme design and quality of teaching, and faculty training and development. Consequentially, the University refined its graduate attributes, re/designed course/programme learning outcomes, and aligned course learning outcomes with the programme outcomes as well as Lingnan's graduate attributes.
- 6.3 The TLC has also drafted a set of guidelines on assessment which is undergoing broad-based consultation within the academic community at the University. A Working Group on Assessment has been formed under the Sub-Committee on Teaching and Learning of the Academic Quality Assurance Committee to discuss related issues. To ensure that there is more direct dialogue and wider consultation on the main document, an Open Forum was arranged in May 2011. After incorporating views/concerns/suggestions at the Open Forum, the further revised version was circulated to the academic units for another round of consultation in each Faculty Forum held in September 2011. The latest draft document is set out in [Appendix F](#).

#### 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.

- 7.1 In a process that has involved reflection on the Lingnan mission and experience, examination of best practice elsewhere and consultation with Lingnan staff, a draft Teaching and Learning statement (T&LS) was developed in order to guide the University's avowed commitment to enhancing student learning, teaching, and teaching excellence ([Appendix G](#)). The T&LS articulates the distinctive characteristics of the Lingnan undergraduate student experience, particularly small classes and close staff-student interactions, the commitment to innovative teaching and learning supported by a range of appropriate technologies, the design of learning spaces that foster innovative practice, and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- 7.2 Increasingly, the boundaries between the physical and the virtual campus are becoming blurred. The T&LS articulates the pivotal role and opportunities offered by eLearning for enhancing and supporting the student learning experience. To this end, the University supports a raft of technologies in order to improve student access to content, enhance communication so that it is more effective, both in and out of the classroom, and develop innovative teaching, learning and assessment practices. For example, an additional requirement has been placed on projects funded by Teaching Development Grants (many of which involve technology) requiring more comprehensive evaluation of the impact on student learning, information that is later shared amongst staff at specially convened events.

The University is committed to continuously developing, upgrading, supporting and evaluating innovative eLearning practices that have the potential to enrich student learning. For example, the University has implemented an ePortfolio system for all first-year undergraduates that helps students more easily and effectively provide

evidence of language proficiency (not just skills), a virtual learning environment that supports and extends opportunities for communication and collaboration, a podcasting service to allow students to learn any time, any place, and the use of free web-based research tools (Zotero) to support scholarly research and writing.

- 7.3 The University also undertook to provide evidence about the impact of the unique learning environment on student learning outcomes, with a particular focus on the new core curriculum courses and the impact of the Lingnan experience on the development of Lingnan University Graduate Attributes (LUGAs). Two new major survey instruments were developed, trialed and validated. The instruments provide compelling evidence that the teaching and learning (T&L) environment has a positive and significant impact on the development of the ideal Lingnan student graduate attributes. The two surveys, the Graduate Exit Survey (GES) and the Core Curriculum Survey (CCS), demonstrate that the development of LUGAs amongst students is highly correlated with the academic experiences of the students, particularly in the realm of development of critical thinking skills, interpersonal skills, self-managed learning, and problem-solving skills. There is also substantive evidence that the unique nature of the Lingnan student experience – small class sizes and close teacher-student relationships – discussed in the T&LS is well supported by students, who list this relationship as the most important and defining feature of their academic experiences. The findings from these two surveys are shared with all Programme Directors, Departmental Heads and Academic Deans in order to assist academic staff to review programmes, reflect on teaching and learning strategies and identify areas for further development and enhancement (for example, new courses, and modes of assessment). With this and other information, Programme Directors/Department Heads are better able to make informed decisions to enhance the student academic experience. In addition, the key elements of these surveys are also shared in sessions involving SSC Counsellors, advisory teachers and new academic staff (as part of their orientation programme).

The CCS, student focus groups and staff interviews provide evidence that informs the University about the impact on the development of student learning outcomes in key areas such as critical thinking, and problem solving. This evidence informs the development of the Core Curriculum and is disseminated via the Core Curriculum and General Education Committee for development of new courses for 2012 and beyond.

The data and recommendations from the two instruments are also shared with the wider academic community as part of the introduction to Teaching and Learning at Lingnan for new academic staff, and providing information to better equip and inform academic advisors who advise students on course selection and other academic matters.

- 7.4 The T&LS also affirms the importance of the impact on student learning of teaching spaces and support for eLearning. In the recent expansion the University has focused on providing teaching spaces that support a sectional approach and small classes. For example, the New Academic Building and the new Business Faculty Building (Simon and Eleanor Kwok Building) have teaching spaces that support small classes and facilitate group work, and are equipped with facilities for blended learning using technology. In addition the University has committed resources to upgrading and updating the infrastructure to support eLearning across the campus, particularly in the hostels.

#### 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.

- 8.1 Having considered the criteria for good teaching adopted by other institutions in Hong Kong and overseas, a list of good practices and indicators of quality teaching is being developed, which will serve as the basis for both feedback and support to staff, and for assessment. Sources and methods of evaluation will include consideration of course syllabi, course materials and other information related to a faculty member's courses; peer and student evaluations; faculty member's own statements of teaching philosophy and goals; and a greater role for supervisors in assessing and developing all the above with individual staff members. In order to support this enhanced participation by supervisors, an assessment template has been devised to facilitate and systematise the assessors' work thereon.

#### 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.

- 9.1 The University expects academic staff members to devote equal attention to teaching and research. When evaluating their performance in the processes of staff appraisal, substantiation and promotion, the University explicitly applies a system of equal potential numerical ranges and equal weights in "measuring" achievements in teaching and research. The system, aimed at maximising fairness towards the staff member as much as fairness across staff members, works generally rather well on the basis of the information available. However, in actual practice it is recognised that research tends to have a greater influence in the recognition staff members usually get in assessment or in career progression, not because research is given greater weight than teaching, which it does not, but because there is a wider and better array of methods to measure dedication to and success in research than there are in teaching. The result of this is that the measured scores assigned to teaching tend to be less differentiated amongst staff, more clustered towards the middle. In order to have better appreciation of staff members' teaching performance, aimed at producing more pointed and effective feedback as much as for assessment, the University is conducting a comprehensive review on the methods of evaluation of teaching, which include consideration of syllabi, course materials and other information related to a faculty member's courses; peer and student evaluations; the academic staff member's own statements of teaching goals, methods and philosophy; and greater cooperation with supervisors in assessing and developing all the above with the individual staff member.
- 9.2 While the above description of the equal weights that teaching and research receive in staff assessment and other personnel actions is correct, it should be noted that service too is an important responsibility of all faculty members. In regular staff assessment, while service is not given an additional numerical weight alongside the 50% each that is accorded to teaching and research, service is monitored in each case to ensure that its delivery by the staff member has been satisfactory, and in exceptional cases (particularly burdensome assignments and/or outstanding delivery) the assessment results from teaching and research are boosted by specified limited amounts for particular members in attention to service (and more exceptionally the opposite adjustment can be applied.) In turn, for consideration of substantiation and promotion,

faculty members' record must demonstrate an ongoing pattern of service reflecting substantial contributions to the University, the discipline or profession, and/or society.

**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.

10.1 A liberal arts institution requires, acknowledges and rewards good teaching and teaching performance is a major criterion in the staff appraisal exercise. The Outstanding Teaching Award for Early Career Faculty was newly introduced and awarded in 2009-10 to acknowledge the outstanding teaching of academics in their early career. This is in addition to the current awards for teaching excellence and merit certificates to acknowledge staff who have provided compelling evidence to demonstrate their teaching excellence. These University awards, together with the Early Career Scheme of the UGC, all serve to give due recognition of teaching excellence.

**Concluding remarks**

The progress reported above signifies Lingnan's on-going commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. We strive to provide an environment conducive to continuous improvements to quality and effectiveness in teaching and learning. Updates on the Action Plan in the QAC submission are shown in Appendix H which gives a brief account of our continuous improvements to teaching and learning.

## **Appendices**

- A: List of External Academic Advisers/External Examiners in 2011-12
- B: Roles and Duties of an External Academic Adviser/External Examiner
- C: Strategic Plan 2009-2016 Action Plan Updates
- D: BI Project – Initial Findings on Internationalisation and the Way Forward
- E: Annual Programme Report – BA (Hons) Visual Studies (2009-10)
- F: Assessment Guidelines for Lingnan University (latest draft)
- G: Teaching and Learning Statement (latest draft)
- H: Updates on the Action Plan on Continuous Improvements to Teaching and Learning