

QUALITY ASSURANCE MANUAL

for Full-time Sub-degree Programmes
全日制副學位課程 學術質素保證綱要

(Abridged Version)



Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this document is correct at the time of printing. HKU SPACE may make changes in its guidelines and procedures.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG
SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION

Quality Assurance Manual for Full-time Sub-degree Programmes

(Note: This online version is an abridged version of the QA Manual for Full-time Sub-degree Programmes.)

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Foreword

Both HKU SPACE Community College and HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College aim at providing high quality education, which helps students develop their potential, find their direction and achieve their academic and career goals. Both Colleges offer high quality programmes designed to align with the university curriculum with the chief aim of providing students with additional pathways to enter university degree studies as well as to prepare them for specific professions. Graduates of our Associate Degree and Higher Diploma programmes have won deserved recognition from employers and universities for their quality and performance.

We take great pride in our students who have achieved the ultimate goal we aspire to — the nurturing of well-rounded individuals with good intellect, physical and mental resilience and the right sense of morality and social conscience. The QA System of the School has undergone regular external reviews and has proven to be effective in safeguarding and enhancing the quality of the programmes. We wish to thank most sincerely all those who have contributed to our success so far. We reaffirm our commitment to offering quality education to society and to those young people who aspire to a brighter future.

This Quality Assurance Manual should be read by all relevant staff as it sets out the key principles and elements of the Quality Assurance (QA) System governing new and ongoing development and monitoring of our full-time sub-degree programmes. The QA System forms the backbone for continuous improvement of our quality delivery.

Professor LS Chan
College Principal

June 2016

I. Background

The HKU SPACE Quality Assurance (QA) System was formalised in 1999/2000. The System aims to support the mission of HKU SPACE by ensuring high quality of programmes and services. With the wide range of programmes from short general interest courses to award-bearing programmes at various levels, as well as a diversity of subject disciplines and modes of delivery, implementation of the QA System has taken a fit-for-purpose and realistic approach.

Established in 2000, the HKU SPACE Community College (CC) offers full-time Diploma in Foundation Studies (DFS) (formerly named Pre-Associate Degree (PAD)) and Associate Degree (AD) programmes. Starting from 2001, the CC also offers full-time Higher Diploma (HD) programmes.

The HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College (HPSHCC) started to offer full-time sub-degree programmes of HKU SPACE since 2006. The programmes delivered at HPSHCC are accredited and governed in accordance with the HKU SPACE QA System. Successful completion of the academic programmes delivered at CC and at HPSHCC leads to awards conferred through HKU SPACE within the HKU system.

The HKU SPACE QA Manual is used as the basic reference for assuring the quality of all programmes offered by the School. The QA Manual presents the principles and objectives of the HKU SPACE QA System and the processes of planning, approving, modifying, monitoring and reviewing study programmes. Appropriate adaptation of the QA procedures has been made for the Community Colleges, in consideration of the needs of students in full-time programmes, as compared to those of adult learners in part-time programmes. Moreover, the management and staffing structure of the Community Colleges (CC and HPSHCC) are different from those for other Colleges of the School.

The QA mechanisms for the Community Colleges highlighted in the following sections are to be implemented with reference to the current QA System of the School. Reference should also be made to the other relevant policies and regulations of the School.

II. External Reviews and Government Regulations

In addition to the internal QA System, the School abides by government regulatory requirements and is subject to external reviews from time to time.

Common Descriptors

The Common Descriptors took effect from the 2009/10 academic year onwards and are aimed to enhance the quality and transparency of the self-financing post-secondary education sector and provide clear delineation between AD and HD. The Common Descriptors set out the minimum entrance requirements of the AD and HD programmes. The School is required to submit annual returns on quality-related matters, including admission data, to the concerned QA body (i.e. HKCAAVQ). Reference to the Common Descriptors is made by the Community Colleges in programme development, monitoring and review. Details of the Common Descriptors can be viewed via the EDB website at <http://www.ipass.gov.hk>.

Award Titles Scheme and Use of Credit under the HK Qualifications Framework

In October 2012, the Education Bureau introduced the Award Titles Scheme and the Use of Credit under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (HKQF). The School has adopted the HKQF levels and hierarchy of titles.

III. Academic Management

The Community Colleges are expected to be responsible for the quality of the programmes they offer. The Colleges are led by the respective Senior Management Teams. The Colleges monitor the academic standards through the Academic Board (AB), Steering Committee on College Curriculum (SCCC), Boards of Examiners, Discontinuation Review Panel, Admissions Committee and other Committees at programme level.

1. Academic Board

The AB oversees the academic affairs of the Community Colleges and reports to the HKU Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning (HKU Board for CPE&LL), as appropriate, via the School Academic and Management (SAM) Board and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) of the School.

2. Steering Committee on College Curriculum (SCCC)

The SCCC serves to establish the overall framework for curricular development and to approve-in-principle programmes to be offered. It also advises the College Principal on decisions pertaining to curricular revisions presented by Academic Committee (AC). For new programme development and some major modifications, it makes recommendations to the SAM Board and the HKU Board for CPE&LL for approval.

3. Board of Examiners

For overall consideration of examination matters, the Colleges have set up one Board of Examiners for DFS, one for AD programmes, and another one for HD programmes. The Board of Examiners receives comments and recommendations from the Board of Examiners Sub-Groups for consideration and final approval.

4. Discontinuation Review Panel

A Discontinuation Review Panel is formed to consider students who are required by examination regulations to discontinue their studies in the Colleges. The students shall be invited to meet with the Panel to explain the non-academic reasons which they consider relevant to the issue of their discontinuation. The Panel will make recommendations to the AB on whether these students be terminated or allowed to continue their studies. If discontinued students wish to appeal against the decision of the Panel, they may lodge an appeal to the School Disciplinary and Appeals Committee.

5. Admissions Committee

An Admissions Committee is formed for all DFS, AD and HD programmes. The Committee oversees student recruitment matters including entrance standards and selection procedures.

IV. Highlights of QA Mechanisms for Full-time Sub-degree Programmes

The QA mechanisms for the Community Colleges highlighted below are to be implemented with reference to the current QA System of the School. Reference should also be made to the other relevant policies and regulations of the School.

In line with the School's QA System, different QA procedures are applied to suit the programmes in the Community Colleges at different HKQF Levels, the majority of which are at HKQF Level 4.

A. QA Procedures for Programmes at HKQF Level 4

1. Programme Development and Approval

HKU SPACE places significant emphasis on ensuring and enhancing the academic and professional standards of all programmes and services. Before a new programme is offered, it must undergo a formal and rigorous approval process of programme development and academic approval (often referred to as "validation"). The School programme validation and approval process is applicable to all new programmes delivered at the Community Colleges.

The process involves:

- Programme Development Team (PDT) presents the preliminary programme proposal and the budget proposal to the SCCC for approval-in-principle
- SAM Board's approval for development
- Programme Validation Panel (PVP) scrutinizes the detailed programme proposal
- HKU Board for CPE&LL's final approval

1.1 Qualifications Framework and Credit Vetting

The whole set of the QF1 Form should be vetted by the Working Group on Qualifications Framework after SAM Board's consideration and before the PVP. This is to ensure that the proposed programme and its courses are designed and pitched at the appropriate HKQF level to be commensurate with the Generic Level Descriptors of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework.

1.2 Communication at the University Level

For the purpose of ensuring good communication between the School and faculties in HKU, a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) is formed by the HKU Senate. Following the approval for development from the SAM Board, the preliminary programme proposal should be taken to the JCC for information exchange.

The validation process will also apply to a new programme which is developed from an “existing” programme at HKQF Level 4, where over 25% of the programme content of the new programme differs from its “parent”.

2. Programme Monitoring

QA procedures at the School aim to assure and enhance the quality of education experience of students through careful evaluation of all programme proposals, through the regular monitoring of programme and course delivery and of outcome standards, and through the periodic review of all provisions. This entails a continuous process of reflection and review, taking account of feedback from students, teachers and ACs with a view to building on strengths, addressing weaknesses, updating academic contents and enhancing academic support such that the programme will continue to improve in future.

Students’ comments are important to the QA process. Other than informal interactions between teaching staff and students, and the Online Feedback Form, the College has set up many communication channels to solicit student comments. These include the Learner Portal, SOUL Platform and websites of the Community Colleges. Student representatives also play an important role in the AB, AC and Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) (Reference is made to the paragraphs on AB, AC and SSCC).

In addition to the AB and other College-level Committees (as mentioned in Section III), there are a series of measures and committees or boards in the Community Colleges involved in programme monitoring:

- 2.1 Academic Committees
- 2.2 Programme Curriculum Groups
- 2.3 Board of Examiners Sub-Groups
- 2.4 Student-Staff Consultative Committees
- 2.5 Learning Experience Survey
- 2.6 Class Visits
- 2.7 Handling of Complaints
- 2.8 Annual Monitoring Reports
- 2.9 External Examiners and Academic Assessors

2.1 Academic Committees (AC)

An AC is set up for each programme or a group of programmes under the same division or general education/generic/language courses to manage and monitor matters pertaining to curricular structure and development of programme(s) or courses. The AC is charged with the duties to vet the Annual Monitoring Report(s), attends to students’ and teachers’ feedback on programme/course quality, makes recommendation on teaching resources and facilities and receives

reports from External Examiners or Academic Assessors.

2.2 Programme Curriculum Groups (PCG)¹

A PCG is established for each programme which involves in monitoring and evaluating courses, developing the programme, advising and facilitating students' learning, as well as making recommendations to AC.

2.3 Board of Examiners Sub-Groups

A Board of Examiners Sub-Group is formed for all general education, generic and language courses and one for each programme to consider the examination issues in detail with a focus on individual courses or programmes, if applicable. The comments and recommendations of the Sub-Groups are reported to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration and final approval.

For Board of Examiners Sub-Groups, the College Principal or his delegates would be the Chairman. Programme Co-ordinators would not be the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Board of Examiners Sub-Groups for their own programmes.

2.4 Student-Staff Consultative Committees

A Student-Staff Consultative Committee is set up for each programme or programmes in cognate areas. The Committee provides one of the essential channels for communication between students and staff.

2.5 Learning Experience Survey

Questionnaires are distributed to students near the end of each semester to gauge students' views and feedback on the quality of courses, teaching as well as support services. The findings are conveyed to the teachers, the Student-Staff Consultative Committees, the College Principal and other senior staff, and where appropriate are discussed in PCG and AC meetings. Feedback is given to both teachers and students on the action taken.

2.6 Class Visits

Visits to classrooms are conducted by management staff of the Colleges (e.g. Division Heads or Programme Co-ordinators) to observe the performance and classroom management of teachers. Other academic staff may be invited to join the class visits or to carry out peer class visits. Feedback is given to individual

¹ For programmes offered at CC only. For programmes offered at HPSHCC, the Programme Team will perform a similar role as the PCG.

teachers concerned and where appropriate issues are discussed in College staff meetings. Guidelines are issued to teachers to ensure transparency and collegiality regarding the visits and items are suggested for class visits. There is a form for recording each class visit.

2.7 Handling of Complaints

Feedback from students and staff is useful information for reviewing and improving the quality of programmes and services. The School-wide procedures for handling complaints are adopted for use in the Community Colleges, with necessary modifications. The procedures are supplemented with the setting up of the Student Grievances Committee to assist the College Principal in providing more support to full-time students. For complaints which cannot be resolved by the Student Grievances Committee or the College Principal, the College Principal would consult the Deputy Director (Academic Services), the latter would decide whether the cases should be put forward to the Complaints Committee. The Community College Complaints Co-ordinator would keep records of the complaints and provide the QA Team with the statistics every 6 months for annual reporting to the QAC.

2.8 Annual Monitoring Reports

An AMR by programme is compiled for DFS, AD and HD programmes for recording programme monitoring activities in the past academic year and identifying action plans for enhancing programme quality in the year to come. The report focuses on the following aspects:

- a. Student Enrolment
- b. Teachers and Teaching Quality
- c. Programme Structure and Curriculum
- d. Programme Management
- e. Student Assessment and Performance
- f. Learning Centers and Support Services
- g. Action Taken
- h. Action Planned
- i. Good Practices

The AB receives the Overview Reports for discussion on issues requiring its attention and decides on which major issues to be reported to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). The major issues, good practices together with the comments of the AB will be submitted via the QA Team to the QAC.

2.9 External Examiners and Academic Assessors

The Colleges have in place External Examiners to assist in maintaining the

standards of programmes and general education courses. They give advice on all academic aspects of the programmes and courses including the curriculum and assessment matters. Academic Assessors are also appointed for generic and language courses.

3. Programme Modification

In the course of programme delivery, programme modifications may be needed. Modifications may consist of revisions, additions, deletion or changes to any element of a programme. In all cases of programme modification, the changes must not affect the academic quality of a programme. Modifications are categorised into major and minor changes.

Major Changes	Minor Changes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Programme or award title; ▪ HKQF level of programme; ▪ Programme objectives; ▪ Programme intended learning outcomes; ▪ Mode of study; ▪ Duration; ▪ Number of credits of programme; ▪ Minimum entry requirements; ▪ Syllabus (10% - 25% of total number of the existing programme credits); ▪ Programme theme; ▪ Graduation requirements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course titles; ▪ Syllabus (less than 10% of the total number of the existing programme credits); ▪ Assessment methods and weightings; ▪ HKQF level and/or credits of courses; ▪ Objectives and intended learning outcomes of courses.

All major and minor changes described above will be first proposed by PCGs or Programme Teams and considered at AC meetings. The proposed modifications will then be submitted to the SCCC for approval and consideration on policy and resources. Reporting to SAM Board is not needed if the changes do not have any policy or resources implication.

For changes in programme or award title, introducing a new award, or changes in the HKQF level of a programme, after obtaining approval by the SCCC, the relevant PCG or Programme Team shall submit a paper to the SAM Board for approval. The proposed modifications will then be taken to the JCC for information exchange. Upon approval of the SAM Board and the communication with JCC, the PCG or Programme Team will submit a paper to the HKU Board for CPE&LL for final academic approval.

If modifications to syllabus involve more than 25% of the total number of existing programme credits, the programme will be considered as a “new” programme. It will undergo either a validation process or a programme review process.

4. Programme Review

Programme review is used in conjunction with programme monitoring measures. It provides an opportunity for consolidation of issues and changes about a programme, the effectiveness of programme monitoring, and full-scale evaluation of a programme for further development and quality improvement.

Programmes follow a 6-year cycle of reviews, unless an approval period has been stipulated for a programme during validation. This complements the annual monitoring and review functions of the AC of the programme. For a new programme developed by modification from an existing programme with less than 25% change of the total number of credits or of the existing programme curriculum, its first review should follow the approval period of the existing programme, and thereafter at a 6-year interval for subsequent reviews. The new programme will be reviewed when the existing programme is due for next review, even if the new programme does not yet have a graduated cohort.

The process for programme review should begin one year before the end of the 6-year cycle or the end date of the approval period, whichever is earlier. A Programme Review Panel which includes external specialists and at least one External Examiner will be set up for conducting the review for each programme. A Programme Review Document will be prepared, and the Panel will meet with the Programme Team, teachers and students of the programme. The Programme Review Report together with the Programme Team's response will be sent to the Panel for confirmation, prior to submission to the HKU Board for CPE&LL (via SCCC) for final approval. The submission to the HKU Board for CPE&LL should be made at least 6 months before the end of the review cycle.

B. QA Procedures for Programmes at HKQF Level 3

There are a few programmes in the Community Colleges at HKQF Level 3. In line with the School's QA System, programmes at HKQF Level 3 are subject to different QA procedures from the programmes at HKQF Level 4.

1. Programme Development and Approval

The School programme approval process is applicable to all new programmes at HKQF Level 3 delivered at the Community Colleges.

The process involves:

- The Programme Development Team (PDT) submits the preliminary programme proposal, the Course Budget Proforma and the QF1 Form (Parts 1-3) to the SCCC for approval
- Reports the approved programme to the next nearest AB and SAM Board

meetings

2. Programme Monitoring

The monitoring of programmes at HKQF Level 3 is more or less the same as the programmes at HKQF Level 4. The only exception is that External Examiners are not needed for programmes at HKQF Level 3.

3. Programme Modification

All major and minor changes will be first proposed by the PCG or Programme Team and discussed at the AC meetings. The AC will consider them and recommend to SCCC for approval and consideration on policy and resources. All SCCC decisions will be reported to the AB. Major changes related to programme/award retitling, change of HKQF Level of the programme and introducing a new award will be reported to the SAM Board for information.

If modifications to syllabus involve more than 25% of the total number of existing programme credits, the programme will be considered as a “new” programme. The modifications should be approved by the SCCC and reported to the AB and SAM Board for information.

4. Programme Review

Programme review can be conducted via the annual monitoring process. A report in the form of the AMR template to facilitate the review process will be prepared by PCG or Programme Team and will be submitted to the AC for consideration and the AB for approval. The programme review process should complete within 6 months after completion of each year of study. Programme Reviews will be listed for information of the QAC and HKU Board for CPE&LL at the end of an academic year.

V. Recognition of Teaching Excellence

The Outstanding Teacher Award is set up to recognise College lecturers or above with outstanding contribution in teaching, including but not limited to course delivery, teaching and learning pedagogies, curriculum design and assessment design. The Nomination and Selection Panels will be set up to shortlist, evaluate and select award winners. Every year, up to about 5% of the full-time College lecturers or above will receive this award. Formal announcement of the award will normally be made in August. Award winners will be eligible for nomination again after 5 years.