CHAPTER 9

Teaching and Learning Support

1. Introduction

Quality teaching and learning support complements the academic quality of the programmes and is conducive to effective programme delivery. Additional support from partner institutions may also be provided for individual programmes offered in collaboration with partner institutions.

2. Service Quality Improvement Working Group

The Service Quality Improvement Working Group (SQIWG) is convened by the Deputy Director (Administration and Resources) and its membership includes representatives from academic and administrative units of the School. The SQIWG reviews the quality of services provided by the School, oversees and monitors the Survey on Support Services (SSS), collects feedback on the user satisfaction level about the services, identifies areas of improvement and proposes follow-up actions. It reports and makes recommendations to the Director on any matters concerning the quality of the School’s services. It serves to strengthen and promote School-wide service culture.

3. Key Teaching and Learning Support Facilities and Services

3.1 Learning Centres and Facilities

All learning centres are equipped with appropriate furniture and audio-visual equipment to support teaching and learning activities.

3.2 SPACE Online Universal Learning (SOUL) Platform

SOUL platform provides online support, a flexible learning environment and enhanced interactions between teachers and students. Details on the SOUL platform are available from HKU SPACE Research and E-learning Unit. Students in collaborative programmes may be provided with the partners’ e-learning platforms.

3.3 Library Access

For award-bearing and professional programme, teaching staff and students are normally provided with access to HKU Libraries and enjoy various benefits like on-site use of library resources and borrowing privileges.

Teachers and students with borrowing privileges may also access electronic forms of information via the SOUL platform as a portal to web-based electronic library
resources. Students of collaborative programmes may also access the partner institutions’ e-libraries.

4. Teaching Quality and Support

The Teacher Support Unit of the School is responsible for consolidating the services and support provided for part-time teachers. It establishes an enhanced part-time teacher database, monitoring, archiving and managing information concerning the teachers.

4.1 Teacher Recruitment

Assurance of teaching quality starts from the recruitment of teaching staff who have the appropriate academic and/ or professional qualifications and experience, and who conform with the required standard in teaching and related responsibilities. The HKU SPACE recruitment procedures cover the application, interview and appointment processes.

4.2 Teacher Induction and Development

The Programme Leader is responsible for the pre-programme induction of all teaching staff. The induction is to ensure that the teaching team is fully informed about the programme, so that it will be conducted in line with the programme objectives. The Human Resources Team also arranges inductions so that new teachers are given appropriate support and guidance.

The Programme Team and the relevant teaching staff will identify areas of strength and/ or development needs. The Training and Staff Development Committee, in collaboration with the Programme Team, regularly and systematically organises a range of workshops and seminars for professional development.

4.3 Materials for Teachers

(a) Guidebook for Part-time Teachers

It contains information on the School as a whole, including its mission, Quality Assurance (QA) policies, personnel and financial matters, communication channels, SOUL platform, information on teaching and learning facilities available, and some helpful tips for new teachers.

(b) Handbook on Effective Teaching

The Handbook provides comprehensive guidance for teaching adults. It outlines the major characteristics of adult learners, strategies for handling difficult participants, and the “Do’s” and “Don’t’s” of teaching adults. It suggests teaching techniques and the effective use of teaching equipment. It also introduces the concept of the Intended Learning Outcomes Approach.
4.4 Observation of Teaching

The Programme Leader is responsible for carrying out observations of teaching to ensure teaching quality. Feedback on the observation is provided to the teachers with a view to identifying possible actions for improvement or encouraging good teaching.

4.5 Reflection of Teaching Quality

Comments on teaching quality can be gathered from students by various useful sources:

(a) Student representation on various committees;
(b) Learning Experience Survey (LES);
(c) Informal discussions;
(d) Reports of External Examiners/ Academic Assessors; and
(e) Feedback given by the teaching staff to students on coursework.

The Programme Team takes the responsibility for discussing the findings with individual teaching staff concerned. Commendations serve to encourage further enhancement, while reviews and reflections are needed in cases where student feedback reflects below-standard teaching.

4.6 Teaching Experience and Self-Reflection

Teachers are encouraged to conduct a self-reflection of teaching quality at the end of each teaching year. The self-reflection should identify strengths and weaknesses in the teaching process in the past year, as well as plans for improvement. The teacher may discuss the self-reflection conclusions with the Programme Leader to reaffirm good teaching and to consider development needs.

At the same time, the teacher is asked to complete the Teaching Experience Survey together with the Part-time Teacher Work Report at the end of a teaching period. The Programme Leader considers the teacher’s feedback, as complementary to the feedback from students, for the purpose of quality improvement.

4.7 Teacher Portal

The Teacher Portal was set up to facilitate the building of online communication between the School and teachers, and among the teachers. The Portal also provides useful resources and references and to facilitate teaching preparation. Relevant Guidebook, Handbooks, and useful templates and forms are also available from the Portal for teachers’ reference.

5. Key Learning Support

5.1 Learner Portal

The Learner Portal provides a user-friendly "one-stop" information portal as a tool for and a window to learning; and a gateway to access on-line resources, and other e-Services provided or referred by the School.
5.2 Non-Classroom Activities

Non-Classroom activities mostly aim to supplement lectures and tutorials. The type of activities may vary according to individual programmes depending on the subject area, the academic level and the professional requirements. The activities include laboratory sessions, clinical observations, traineeships, work placements, and field visits. Some samples of more programme-specific activities include clinical practicum, fashion show, calligraphy exhibition, and music performance.

5.3 Information Seminars/Induction Sessions

Information seminars and induction meetings are normally conducted at the commencement of award-bearing and professional programmes. Guidance in regard to study skills, academic writing skills and examination conduct is also given to students. Induction meetings are normally conducted with partner institutions for collaborated programmes.

5.4 Student Handbooks

Student handbooks give general information on student discipline, examination conduct, channels of communication with the School. The handbooks also provide details about specific programmes such as programme structure, aims, learning outcomes, syllabus, class timetable, assessment regulations, plagiarism and reference book lists.

6. Communication and Feedback

HKU SPACE places great importance on effective communication with students and on gauging student feedback by various channels for formal and informal communication. The purpose is to ensure that students will be able to get adequate teaching and learning support.

6.1 Communication Channels

At the start of their studies, students of individual programmes are notified of the contact details of relevant Programme Leader, teaching staff and programme support staff. Students may convey comments, complaints and compliments by writing to the relevant Programme Leader, College Affairs Secretary or the QA Director.

Similarly, there is an arrangement for adequate and convenient contacts between Programme Leader and teaching staff. Communication channels are made known to all teaching staff at the commencement of the programme by means of the appointment letters, teacher inductions, and other circulars.

Communication channels include:

(a) the School website;
(b) Telephone enquiry hotline and service telephone hotline numbers;
(c) the SOUL platform;
(d) Teacher and Learner Portals;
(e) Learning Experience Survey;
(f) Teaching Experience Survey;
(g) Online Feedback Form;
(h) Academic Committee, Student-Staff Consultative Committee, Complaint Committee;
(i) Informal meetings and discussions;
(j) Facilities and Services Feedback Form;
(k) Class visits; and
(l) E-mail messages via webmail.

6.2 Survey on Support Services

The SSS aims at collecting focused feedback on the users’ satisfaction levels with the teaching and learning support services and facilities provided to students and teachers in the School’s learning centres. The Survey is normally conducted each year.

The questionnaire is formatted in 3 areas, namely 1) Facilities in a Learning Centre, 2) Student Enquiry Services and 3) IT Services. There is also an area for respondents to provide any other comments. The quantitative data gathered through the Survey are compiled as statistical reports for each learning centre, together with the qualitative comments. The full report is submitted for consideration by the SQIWG, the SAM, and the QAC.