

**THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**

**Submission to LegCo Panel on Education on the UGC report:  
*Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong***

1. The UGC, and in particular its Higher Education Review Group, should be congratulated for this report which provides a critical analysis of all major issues impacting not only the UGC sector but the entire post-secondary education system in Hong Kong, as well as significant recommendations for the future development of the sector. CUHK is pleased to welcome the report.

*Post-secondary Education System*

2. We strongly support the concept of role differentiation and its policy implications to ensure diversity of education provisions in the post-secondary sector, and the treatment of all post-secondary provisions as a single interlocking system for strategic and planning purposes. It also makes sense for the non-publicly funded part of the system to be looked after by a single oversight body, in the same way that the UGC oversees the strategic development and allocates funding for the publicly funded institutions which are also engaged in self-financing activities.

*Internationalization*

3. CUHK has developed and implemented internationalization strategies as an integral part of our strategic planning process. We agree that it is important for the Government to adopt a strategy for internationalization, including the goals of internationalization in more concrete terms for the short, medium and long term future. In Singapore, for instance, the Government provides financial and logistic support to recruit overseas students as part of its manpower planning.
4. An additional funding stream for internationalization initiatives will definitely help institutions. In particular, it is important for the Government to provide more sustained (i.e. not one-off) funding support, in the form of earmarked scholarships, for non-local students studying for a full degree programme in Hong Kong, as well as for student exchanges (both our students going out and other students coming in) so that no student would be denied an exchange opportunity on financial grounds.
5. The recruitment of international students requires a dedicated support system. Taking other countries' experience as a starting point, agencies such as the British Council, Australia Education International, Edu-France, etc., have the responsibility of promoting their country's higher education system and institutions, including image building, branding, marketing, advertising, promotion events, education fairs, visa services, dedicated websites, research on target countries. We suggest that the Government should seriously consider the establishment of such an agency, perhaps initially setting up offices in a number of targeted countries in South Asia.

6. One important factor that has to be borne in mind in the recruitment of international students is the high living cost in Hong Kong. Unlike other developed countries, Hong Kong institutions have to ensure that hostel places are available to non-local students virtually for the entire duration of their study. In this connection, we are in total agreement that the Government should work with institutions and increase hostel provisions as a matter of urgency.

#### *Relationship with Mainland China*

7. We agree that there is a need for all institutions to establish a clear strategy for developing different types of relationships with the Mainland. The Government can also help enhance collaboration with the Mainland by providing matching grants to support high level collaborative research initiatives, such as the establishment of joint centres between Hong Kong institutions and universities, academies, and national research agencies on the Mainland. An enhanced policy to provide funding support from the Government will also encourage tripartite collaborations involving Hong Kong universities, Mainland institutions and international universities.

#### *Teaching and Learning*

8. We are pleased to see in the report a reaffirmation of the importance for institutions to focus on T&L, and the proposals to provide funding support to enhance T&L. The establishment of communities of practice to promote sector-wide collaboration on T&L issues is commendable, and could perhaps be led by the UGC in establishing something akin to the Higher Education Academy in the UK.

#### *Research Funding Methodology and, Self-financing Operations*

9. We agree in principle that research funding and resources should be allocated increasingly on a competitive basis and in accordance with the concept of role differentiation, and that the UGC should transition to a funding regime that is both output- and outcomes-based thereby reducing the regulatory burden. We have no objection to moving away from the current dual funding model for research by re-balancing the quantum in the research portion of the block grant with grants awarded for peer assessed research projects under the RGC.
10. We fully appreciate the sentiments about the RAE as expressed in the report, and can see why in the UK the proposal to move to a more metrics-based methodology has not gone down well with stakeholders. A peer-assessed exercise seems almost inevitable for the next RAE, but the thorough review to be undertaken before then should take into account the wide variety of research output for different disciplines, how each type of output should be assessed, and how the assessment should be a continuous process to evaluate performances over time rather than a one-off event.
11. The report reaffirms the principle of no cross-subsidy for self-financing activities, and we will continue to assure compliance. Recommendation 34 mentions only that the community college operations are required to completely separate from

the parent institution, without discussing the continuing education arm of the UGC-funded institutions. At CUHK, our School of Continuing and Professional Education (SCS) provides, in addition to Higher Diploma (but no Associate Degree) programmes, continuing and professional development courses not leading to any qualifications. We would welcome clarification on whether R34 applies to our SCS.

12. Clarifications are also required on what is meant by complete separation from the parent institutions. Presumably a *sine qua non* is to put the operations under a separate legal entity so that the activities can continue to be a going concern and financially independent from the parent institution. More generally, however, it is not clear whether such entities can operate under the brand name of the parent institution. Specifically, some community college operations are academically accredited by the parent institutions, e.g. sub-degree programmes offered by the community college and continuing education arm of CUHK are formally approved by our academic Senate in accordance with the relevant statutory provisions. It would be helpful to have clarifications on whether a complete separation means that such academic approval must cease, thereby requiring all these programmes to be accredited by the HKCAAVQ.

*Concluding note*

13. The report represents a significant contribution to the future development of the higher education system in Hong Kong. Indeed, we would congratulate the Higher Education Review Group again for the review it has undertaken, and look forward to working with the UGC in implementing those recommendations that are accepted by the Government.

25 February 2011