



To: Clerk to the Panel on Education
(attention: Ms Sandy Hau)

Panel on Education special meeting Saturday 7 February 2015
Submission of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

While HKUST does not offer self-funded, post-secondary programs, in support of Hong Kong-wide developments in higher education, the University welcomes the admission of graduates of local sub-degree programs – about 160-200 of these students join the University each year.

The quality of the intake has been high and these students adapt well and succeed in their studies.

HKUST supports efforts to develop appropriate quality assurance (QA) arrangements for the self-funded postsecondary sector. In this effort, HKUST believes that a shared understanding of basic standards for institutional governance and quality assurance can be helpful. In particular, agreement on standards can reduce ambiguity in the demands of QA agencies, encourage greater consistency in the work of audit panels conducting reviews, and provide institutions with clearer direction in setting up their own QA arrangements.

While the consultant's report of July 2014 provides a good starting point for further discussion, it will be important to recognize that Hong Kong's post-secondary education has unique local characteristics. An important feature of local postsecondary education is the range and variety of institutions in terms of mission, programs, organization and legal basis.

The proposed draft code provided by the consultant has been strongly influenced by national codes of practice prepared for established, comprehensive post-secondary institutions, in many cases for the university sector. While international good practice is of value in developing any code, care will need to be taken to ensure that local conditions are taken into account.

Since any quality assurance regime entails costs as well as benefits, and these costs chiefly fall on students, care must be taken to ensure that any set-up for quality assurance is proportionate the interests of students and the public. Given this, the suggested approach would need to be substantially modified for small, specialized providers of post-secondary programs.

In taking the discussion forward, it will be necessary to clarify the intended *ownership* of any code of practice. To the extent that such codes of practice are to cover local institutions with statutory authority to accredit their own programs and qualifications, broad agreement on any code and its application would be necessary.

This approach would be in line with international experience, which has confirmed that the impact of quality assurance regimes is greater where the institutions themselves have negotiated and adopted standards of good practice, and where arrangements are in place for the review and adjustment of standards over time.

Any follow up relating to this Submission may be directed to:

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