

Issues related to the Local and International Good Practices in the Governance and Quality Assurance of the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Sector. Submission by the Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSJU) to the Panel on Education, Legislative Council on 7 February 2015

1. The HKSJU has been a strong supporter of the Government in providing quality undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in Hong Kong. We consider that it is a high time to introduce a code of good practices for the governance and quality assurance of the self-financing post-secondary education sector in Hong Kong. The Code is an essential vehicle to foster transparency and accountability to the stakeholders and the public.
2. As Hong Kong's first and only private university, we are happy to lead by example to endorse and embrace the code. Indeed, HKSJU has put in place a comprehensive quality assurance system which has been regulated under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (CAP 320) by the Education Bureau and externally monitored by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) since 1976 and 2000 respectively. The good practices promulgated by the Government have largely been observed by HKSJU for years. A quality culture is well embedded in our operation. A notable example of the sophistication and maturity of our quality assurance system is the composition of key Committees, which extend membership to students elected through annual election organised by the Office of Student Affairs and individual academic departments.
3. The HKSJU considers that direct participation of student representatives in the academic decision making process is an integral part of its quality assurance system. Student representatives are elected by fellow students (and not nominated by the University) to the Academic Board, Quality Assurance Committee, Library Management and Development Committee, Student Discipline Committee, Student Affairs Committee, Student Finance Committee, University Panel Against Sexual Harassment, and each of the 11 Academic Departmental Committees. Some of the Committees have up to three student representatives taking part in regular meetings. This wide student participation in key committees of the University has gone beyond access to information and establishes active communication channels between students and the University.
4. From a public interest perspective, it is crucial to have input and student representation in the academic decision making process. There should be an internal audit mechanism which guarantees that there is a continuous maintenance of quality assurance of the programmes being offered. We consider that all self-financing post-secondary colleges and institutions should have student representation in their key committees, particularly the bodies responsible for academic decision making, such as Academic Board, Quality Assurance Committee and Departmental Committees. This is the only effective way to ensure real quality assurance.

5. We would strongly recommend that the Panel should require elected student representation on key committees of accredited post-secondary colleges/institutions as a vehicle to ensure effective quality assurance. The Education Bureau should recognise that the best way to achieve lasting quality assurance is for the accredited institutions to work in tandem with the key stakeholders. Continuous monitoring through direct input and involvement of students helps to develop best practice methods for teaching and learning, which in turn leads to a better education for students.
6. We support the government's plan to enhance the transparency and quality of the self-financing post-secondary sector. It is our view that the introduction of a code of good practice must be accompanied by an effective internal audit mechanism. This includes the direct inputs and involvement of students in the academic decision making process. HKSJU stands ready to contribute to this meaningful effort and share our experience with others.

20 January 2015

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