

Written Submission for Meeting of the Panel on Education held on 14 March 2011
By Prof Franklin Luk, Vice-President (Academic) of Hong Kong Baptist University

The Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) welcomes the UGC report. I would like to focus on just a few major issues.

Regarding the Associate Degree, we agree with the UGC that the AD programmes serve as “stepping stones to full degrees”. There is a great demand in the sector for articulation. The recent decision of the Government to double the provision of publicly funded senior year places is timely, and the UGC is correct to bring up the issue of the Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme (CATS). HKBU recognizes the benefits and needs for a more comprehensive and “vertical” CATS to facilitate the articulation of students from the AD programmes.

We understand that the UGC wants to establish a unified quality assurance body for the entire post-secondary sector. We have reservations about the feasibility of a single quality assurance body to handle the different types and levels of programmes offered by a variety of institutions.

We welcome the UGC’s “emphasis on the assessment of competence in teaching”. The recent establishment of a sector-wide teaching award is a valuable initiative to provide recognition for excellence in teaching. We also welcome the UGC’s recommendation to establish communities of practice for promoting sector-wide collaboration on teaching and learning.

HKBU wishes to reiterate our disagreement and concern regarding the UGC transfer of funding from the research portion of the Block Grant to the RGC as indirect costs. Even though the UGC has proposed to slow down the transfer rate, the magnitude of the transfer (50%) of research infrastructure funding could seriously undermine the research capability of a few UGC universities.

We concur fully with the UGC that there should be no cross-subsidy using public funds for self-financing educational activities. But we have strong reservation with recommendation 34 – that the community colleges should be “completely separated” from their parent universities within three years. Also, the meaning of “completely separated” requires further explanation. HKBU supports the UGC’s emphasis on internationalization. However, the limited number of university hostel spaces poses a major barrier to developing internationalization on a large scale. The accomplishments of the Hong Kong higher education sector over the past decades are built upon innovation and diversity. We therefore agree that the development of private universities will further add to the strengths of the sector.

In closing, HKBU wishes to express our thanks to the UGC Review Group for its good work. Thank you.