



香港學術及職業資歷評審局
Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of
Academic & Vocational Qualifications

CONFIDENTIAL

ACCREDITATION REPORT

HONG KONG SHUE YAN UNIVERSITY

PERIODIC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

FOR

**ACCOUNTING, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT
ECONOMICS**

**GENERAL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
HISTORY**

LANGUAGES AND RELATED STUDIES

**MASS MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS, JOURNALISM
AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

**SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES
SOCIAL SERVICES**

AUGUST 2021

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1. TERMS OF REFERENCE	1
2. HKCAAVQ'S DETERMINATION	2
3. INTRODUCTION	6
4. PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS.....	7
4.1 <i>Organisational Effectiveness and Planning</i>	7
4.2 <i>Organisational Leadership and Staffing</i>	11
4.3 <i>Programme Area Development and Management</i>	15
4.4 <i>Management of Resources and Services</i>	20
4.5 <i>Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement</i>	23
5. IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THIS ACCREDITATION REPORT	27

Appendix HKCAAVQ Panel Membership

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 Based on the Service Agreement (No.: AA696), the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), in the capacity of the Accreditation Authority as provided for under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (Cap. 592), was commissioned by Hong Kong Shue Yan University to conduct a Periodic Institutional Review exercise with the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To conduct an accreditation test as provided for in the AAVQO to determine whether Hong Kong Shue Yan University (the Operator) can be approved to maintain the Programme Area Accreditation status for the Programme Areas (as listed under the Specifications of the Programme Areas undergoing Periodic Institutional Review) for a specified validity period; and
- (b) To issue to the Operator an accreditation report setting out the results of the determination in relation to (a) by HKCAAVQ.

1.2 Specifications of the Programme Areas undergoing Periodic Institutional Review

Area of Study and Training	Sub-area	Programme Area	Claimed QF level
Business and Management	Accounting, Finance and Investment	Accounting, Finance and Investment	5
	Economics	Economics	5
	General Business Management	General Business Management	5
Humanities	Humanities	History	5
Languages and Related Studies	Languages and Related Studies	Languages and Related Studies	5
Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations	Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations	Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations	5
Social Sciences	Social and Behavioural Sciences	Social and Behavioural Sciences	5
	Social Services	Social Services	5

2. HKCAAVQ'S DETERMINATION

2.1 HKCAAVQ has determined that, subject to the fulfilment of the conditions set out below, Hong Kong Shue Yan University (the Operator) can be approved to maintain the Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status for the programme areas specified in the table under paragraph 1.2 at QF Level 5 with a validity period of five years.

2.2 With the approval to maintain the PAA statuses, the Operator is considered as meeting the HKCAAVQ accreditation standards of the Periodic Institutional Review. The Operator continues to effectively achieve its vision and mission by systematically enhancing the quality of its operation by formulating and implementing actions based on evidence.

2.3 Validity Period

2.3.1 The validity period will commence on the date specified below. Operators may apply to HKCAAVQ to vary the commencement date of the validity period. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

2.3.2 The maintenance of the accreditation status within the specified validity period is subject to the fulfilment of all requirements set out in paragraph 2.5.1 by the specified deadline.

2.4 The determinations on the maintenance of the PAA status are specified as follows:

Name of Operator	Hong Kong Shue Yan University 香港樹仁大學
Address of Operator	10 Wai Tsui Crescent, Braemar Hill Road, North Point, Hong Kong
Name of Award Granting Body	Hong Kong Shue Yan University 香港樹仁大學
Area of Study and Training	1. Business and Management 2. Humanities 3. Languages and Related Studies

	4. Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations 5. Social Sciences
Sub-area	Business and Management • General Business Management • Accounting, Finance & Investment • Economics Humanities • History Languages and Related Studies • Languages and Related Studies Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations • Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations Social Sciences • Social and Behavioural Sciences • Social Services
Programme Area and Scope of Programme Area	General Business Management • Study and training in various aspects of organisations and their operations in relation to internal and external environments in which they operate for the purpose of effective management of the business and operation to achieve institutional goals. This covers marketing, management, human resource management and other aspects of organisational management and operations. Accounting, Finance & Investment • Study and training in the measurement, processing and communication of financial information and services about economic entities. Economics • Study and training in the allocation, distribution and utilisation of resources; the skills for the measurement and management of risk; and the analysis of factors that influence income, wealth and well-being on a personal, organisational, national or international basis.

	History - Study and training in Chinese history from ancient to contemporary times, supplemented by World history and the study of select countries/areas for reference. Languages and Related Studies (a) Study and training in language forms, language meaning, and language in context for human communication by speaking, writing, listening and reading or any other symbols relevant to the group(s) in particular region(s); (b) Study and training in the science of languages; (c) Study and training in the analysis of the artistic expression of language in various forms, such as prose, verse, scripts, etc.; and / or the methods, forms, systems and expression for communication from one language to another (or more languages) taking into account socio, cultural and historical factors and / or; (d) any other related studies and training. Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations - Study and training in the various systems, means, media and processes for sending and passing information and messages to the target audience to achieve intended purposes. Social and Behavioural Sciences - Study and training about society and the way people live. Social Services - Study and training in the provision of services that seek to pursue social justice and/or improve the quality of life of people who are disadvantaged or need support in their lives.
QF Level	Level 5
Start Date of Validity Period	1 September 2021
End Date of Validity Period	31 August 2026
Other Specific Condition(s) of Approval	Three requirements to be fulfilled on or before 20 December 2021
Address of Teaching / Training Venue(s)	10 Wai Tsui Crescent, Braemar Hill Road, North Point, Hong Kong

2.5 Conditions

2.5.1 Requirements

- 2.5.1.1 The University is to devise respective grievance and complaints handling policy and procedures for staff and students to ensure that grievance and complaints are handled in a fair and objective manner.

The University is to submit a report to HKCAAVQ showing the grievance and complaints handling policy and procedures and their approval records by **20 December 2021**. (paragraph 4.1.9)

- 2.5.1.2 The University is to revise its academic staff appointment procedures and the terms of reference of relevant governing bodies so that the revised procedures ensure transparency and fairness with proper and adequate documentation in all circumstances, and reflect the requirements of the regulations stipulated in the prevailing ordinance under which the University is registered.

The University is to submit a report to HKCAAVQ for the fulfilment of the requirement, demonstrating how the issues concerning academic staff appointment have been addressed by **20 December 2021**. (paragraph 4.2.8)

- 2.5.1.3 The University is to strengthen its QA process through appropriate measures to ensure that HKCAAVQ's QA procedures are observed.

The University is to submit a report to HKCAAVQ showing how its QA process is strengthened and relevant approval records to ensure meeting HKCAAVQ's procedural requirements by **20 December 2021**. (paragraph 4.5.4)

2.6 Recommendations

HKCAAVQ also offers the following recommendations for continuous improvement of the Operator.

- 2.6.1 The University is to improve further the operations of the institutional level boards and committees so that they all serve effectively as a forum for discussion and debate with due consideration of the views of all members including staff and student representatives. (paragraph 4.1.8)

2.6.2 The University should compile a QA Handbook as planned that serves as a unified and easily accessible source of information for all QA policies and procedures. (paragraph 4.5.2(iii))

2.7 HKCAAVQ will subsequently satisfy itself whether the Operator remains competent to achieve the relevant objectives as claimed by the Operator by reference to, amongst other things, the Operator's fulfilment of any conditions and compliance with any restrictions stipulated in this Accreditation Report. **For the avoidance of doubt, maintenance of accreditation status is subject to fulfilment of any condition and compliance with any restriction stipulated in this Accreditation Report.**

3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 Hong Kong Shue Yan University (the University) was granted the university status in December 2006, and was the first private university in Hong Kong. It was founded in 1971 as Hong Kong Shue Yan College, has been registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) since 1976, and became a recognised private degree-awarding institution in 2001.

3.2 The University currently has 16 bachelor degree programmes at QF Level 5 and 18 taught and research postgraduate degree programmes up to QF Level 7.

3.3 The University was granted PAA status for 14 programme areas at QF Level 5 in 2006, and underwent Periodic Review exercises (PR) in 2011 and 2016. Arising from a change to the classification of Areas of Study and Training in the Qualifications Register (QR), the 14 programme areas were consolidated into 8 in the 2016 PR. The University was also granted PAA status at QF Level 6 in 2018 for the two programme areas Psychology and Counselling.

3.4 The University commissioned HKCAAVQ to conduct a Periodic Institutional Review (PIR) to cover the 8 programme areas at QF Level 5. HKCAAVQ formed an expert panel (the Panel) (Panel Membership at Appendix) and engaged a Financial Expert for this exercise. HKCAAVQ's *Manual for the Four-stage Quality Assurance Process under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (Version 1.2, November 2020)* was the guiding document for the University

and Panel in conducting this exercise. The Panel conducted a site visit on 24 – 28 May 2021. In view of the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), it was conducted via video-conference to reduce social contact.

4. PANEL'S DELIBERATIONS

The following presents the Panel's deliberations on a range of issues pertinent to its major findings. For aspects of the accreditation standards where no observations are made they are considered to be appropriately addressed by the University.

4.1 Organisational Effectiveness and Planning

The Operator must demonstrate that it is meeting its educational/training objectives, aligned with its vision and mission, and informed by comprehensive review of organisational effectiveness and implementation of strategically planned initiatives.

- 4.1.1 The Board of Governors (BoG) is the supreme governing body of the University. The University Council (UC) functions as the Executive Committee of the BoG and is the point of focus for planning and monitoring activities within the University. The Academic Board (AB) regulates academic affairs of the University subject to the financial control of the UC. During the validity period of the last PR, ten new members were appointed to the BoG, fulfilling a requirement made in the 2016 IR to strengthen the BoG's membership and broaden the representation.
- 4.1.2 The senior management of the University currently comprises the President, Provost, Deputy President, Academic Vice President, four Associate Academic Vice Presidents, two Associate Vice Presidents, and the Director of the Graduate School; among them, three were new posts created during the validity period. The University also created a number of new offices during the validity period, such as the Hall Management Unit, International Unit, Industrial Attachment Office, General Education Office, and University Admissions Office.
- 4.1.3 The academic units of the University include eleven academic Departments that already existed before the commencement of the validity period, plus units newly established during the validity period, namely a General Education Office, a Graduate School, and the Department of Applied Data Science. The Panel noted from the

meeting minutes of the AB that this new Department is expected to play an instrumental role in bringing the curricula of existing and proposed academic programmes into the Age of Information. There is a plan that the Department would launch the new programme Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Applied Data Science, which is subject to HKCAAVQ's accreditation and the approval of the Chief Executive in Council, and the Department would provide service courses to academic programmes wishing to incorporate applied data science into their respective curricular. The Panel commented that the establishment of this new Department is in line with the new vision of the University that focuses on “reinventing liberal arts education for the Digital Era”, but the Panel had a concern on the process undertaken for its establishment (see paragraph 4.5.4).

4.1.4 Regarding the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 and monitoring the performance of the University during the validity period, the Panel reviewed the following documents:

- (i) Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020;
- (ii) AB papers for discussion of Key Performance Indicators (KPI);
- (iii) Status Reports of the University;
- (iv) President Reports;
- (v) Progress Report on Strategic Plan 2016–2020;
- (vi) Status Report on Strategic Plan 2016–2020; and
- (vii) Meeting minutes of the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), AB, UC and BoG.

4.1.5 The Panel's major observations from the above documents are as follows:

- (i) The KPIs, which cover five major aspects, namely admission, attrition, student performance, graduate employment, student feedback, and staffing, are used to reflect the academic health and vitality of the University. As evidenced from the meeting minutes and discussion papers of the QAC, AB, UC and BoG, the QAC presented its observations on the KPIs for discussion in the October meeting of the AB each year during the validity. The University's analysis of KPI is presented in the University Status Report to the UC, and in the President Report to BoG in their respective meetings in November/December for discussion.
- (ii) The Senior Management presents a Progress Report on the Strategic Plan to the UC and BoG in the May/June meeting each year. The Progress Report provides an update on

achieving the strategic goals of the Strategic Plan through highlights of achievements on each of the 27 priority action items grouped under 4 strategic goals. Evidence of related deliberations, comments and advice were noted from the meeting minutes of the UC and BoG.

- (iii) The Status Report on the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 summarizes the key achievements against the strategic goals in the last four years. It indicates that all but 2 of the 27 priority action items have been completed. One item that has not been fully achieved is the development and launch of taught postgraduate programmes which has been hindered by lack of student demand. The other is to cap the overall undergraduate student population at around 5,000. The figures given in the Status Report show that the student population decreased from 4,510 in 2016/17 to 3,960 in 2019/2020. The Panel noted that the University has taken several measures in response to the decline in student population, including increasing the number of non-local students, significantly increasing the number of Associate Degree/Higher Diploma (AD/HD) graduates to Year 2 of the undergraduate programmes starting from 2017/18, and starting in 2020 to admit AD/HD graduates to Year 3.

4.1.6 Towards the end of the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, the University started to develop the Strategic Plan 2021-2025. Having reviewed relevant documents, including minutes and papers of the BoG, UG, and AB, the Panel had the following major observations:

- (i) The University management has devised and sought approval from the UC of the process and timeline to guide the development of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025.
- (ii) The development process involved reviewing the achievements of the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020, conducting a SWOT analysis in November 2019, and reassessing the operating environment in December 2020 to identify the challenges the University would face in the next plan period.
- (iii) Inputs from Departments, the AB, UC and BoG have been solicited, and refinements made to the draft version before the final version was approved in a joint meeting of the UC and BoG in March 2021.

- (iv) Steps have been taken to align the Five-year Development Plans of Departments with the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 (see paragraph 4.3.4)
- (v) The Strategic Plan 2021-2025 sets out a new vision of the University “to reinvent liberal arts education for the Digital Era”, and identifies 16 key priorities under five strategic goals.

4.1.7 In consideration of the above, the Panel formed the view that the University has a system in place for strategic planning and monitoring the performance of the University.

4.1.8 The Panel noted evidence from minutes and papers of meetings of the governing bodies and committees at the institutional level that shows the governing bodies and senior management have been exercising their respective functions, such as the reporting of the work of the senior management to the governing bodies, and the reporting of the Departments’ work to the senior management. While reporting is an important function of such meetings, the Panel considered that the operations of these meetings could be improved in terms of their effectiveness as forums for discussion and debate, noting that the minutes do not provide much evidence of discussion during the meetings. The staff and student representatives of these bodies or committees the Panel met also expressed that they seldom had the opportunity to present their views and participate in discussion during the meetings. The Panel also opined that it was important to have a formalised process to ensure that student representatives undergo training to enable effective discharge of their roles. The Panel made the following recommendation.

Recommendation

The University is to improve further the operations of the institutional level boards and committees so that they all serve effectively as a forum for discussion and debate with due consideration of the views of all members including staff and student representatives.

4.1.9 The Panel considered that grievance and complaint handling is an important function of university management, and discussed the matter with representatives of the University. For staff complaints, the University expressed that staff were encouraged to bring a legitimate complaint to the attention of the Head of Department, and explained the circumstances when complaints should be made directly to or be referred to the senior management or the Chair of the BoG. The University also provided a sample list of staff complaint

cases during the validity period showing the nature of the complaints and the resolutions. For documentation on relevant policies and procedures, the University referred the Panel to the Academic Staff Handbook, Student Handbook, Residents' Handbook (Undergraduate Residence), and a pamphlet from the website of the Office of Student Affairs that shows its Student Complaints Procedures. The Panel reviewed the documents and noted that a formalised general complaint handling mechanism is lacking. The policies or procedures given in these documents are restricted to specific types of complaints, such as sexual harassment, discrimination, and complaints specific to the Office of Student Affairs. The Panel considered that having formalised policies and procedures is important to ensure proper handling of grievances and complaints. The Panel put forth the following Requirement.

Requirement

The University is to devise respective grievance and complaints handling policy and procedures for staff and students to ensure that grievance and complaints are handled in a fair and objective manner.

The University is to submit a report to HKCAAVQ showing the grievance and complaints handling policy and procedures and their approval records by **20 December 2021**.

4.2 Organisational Leadership and Staffing

The Operator must demonstrate that it continues to have a sufficient number of qualified and competent programme leaders, teaching and support staff, as a result of effective staff planning and development, and that these arrangements align with the development of the programme area(s).

- 4.2.1 During the validity period, the number of full-time academic staff decreased from 151 in 2016 to 141 in 2020. The number of part-time teaching staff (excluding part-time fieldwork supervisors in Social Work and Counselling and Psychology) has decreased from 82.5 to 80. During the same period, the undergraduate student number has decreased from 4486 to 3845, and the postgraduate full-time equivalent student number varied between 91 and 115. The Panel noted that the Student-Teacher Ratio (STR) has changed from 23.8 to 21.0, the average teaching load for full-time academic staff has slightly decreased from 13.3 to 12.7, which is below the required teaching load of 15 to 18 hours per week. The average teaching load

for part-time academic staff has increased from 4.8 to 5.3 hours per week. The Panel understood that besides teaching, research and administration also contributed to the overall workload of academic staff. Having discussed with representative of the academic staff regarding their workload, the Panel was of the view that their overall workload should be kept under review, especially in light of the increasing emphasis on research (see paragraph 4.2.12).

- 4.2.2 The Panel reviewed a detailed breakdown of academic staff numbers by Department during the validity period that shows the number in each rank, the number with a doctoral degree and the number of doctoral degree candidates. In response to the Panel's observation that there were significant variations in the number of Professors among the Departments, the University explained that the variations had been due to varying tempos different programme areas had developed. The University stated that it recognised that the current situation in some Departments was far from ideal, and would address the issue by having the Senior Management Team provide more direct support to younger Departmental leaders in scholarship and administrative development. The University expressed that it had a preference for grooming academic leadership not only through recruiting senior academics from outside but also by carving career pathways for younger academics. It cited the Counselling and Psychology as an example which had grown from one Associate Professor in 2004 to one Professor and six Associate Professors in 2021, with five of the six current Associate Professors are "home-grown".
- 4.2.3 The Panel also reviewed the STR by Department during the validity period. It noted that there had been significant variations of STR both across the programmes and within some programmes during the validity period. The University provided analyses on the variations, highlighting factors contributing to the variations, such as the decline in student numbers in some programmes and increases in others, as well as support to General Education courses and offering additional courses to AD/HD entrants by some Departments.
- 4.2.4 The Panel noted that one of the priorities in the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 was to "develop succession plans for senior academic and administrative staff to ensure the future operational stability of the University", and the planned succession of Heads of Department was completed in 2020 with 10 of the 11 Departments had a new Head during the validity period. Among the new Heads, 5 were appointed in 2020, with 2 and 3 appointments made by external recruitment and

internal promotion, respectively. These new appointments have been reported to the UC and BoG.

- 4.2.5 The Panel noted that the University in December 2016 established guidelines for the appointment of Professor/Associate Professor of Practice to enrich the pool of senior academics in professionally-oriented Departments by recognising professional standing and achievements as being on a par with achievements in academic research, aligning with one the goals of the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 to enrich students' learning experience and employability. During the validity period, four Associate Professors of Practice and one Professor of Practice were appointed among the Department of Journalism and Communication, Department of Counselling and Psychology, and the Department of Social Work. Two of the appointments were by promotion, and three were through external recruitment.
- 4.2.6 The Panel noted that the University has launched four new programmes under its PAA statuses during the validity period. The University provided the Panel with a list showing the new courses of these new programmes, the new staff appointed or new headcount planned, and existing staff with relevant expertise to develop and deliver the new courses.
- 4.2.7 The Panel noted that procedures and guidelines that aim to ensure transparency and fairness in the appointment of academic staff are stipulated in the Academic Staff Handbook. The statistics provided by the University indicated that, with few exceptions, appointments made during the validity period generally followed the prescribed procedures and guidelines. The University also explained the circumstances of two recent exceptional cases and the procedures these cases have followed. The Panel considered that if and when the exceptional circumstances in a particular case may dictate departure from certain aspects of the prescribed academic staff appointment process, the appointment committee must document (i) the reasons for the departure, and (ii) that, as determined by the committee, the actual procedures followed have achieved substantially the same level of transparency and fairness as the prescribed procedures.
- 4.2.8 The Panel noted that the University is registered under Cap. 320 which has specific requirements on the functions and responsibilities the governing bodies have to exercise in the appointment of academic staff, but the prescribed procedures and the terms of reference of the governing bodies, as well as their meeting minutes,

did not fully reflect the requirements of the ordinance. Therefore, the Panel put forth the following Requirement.

Requirement

The University is to revise its academic staff appointment procedures and the terms of reference of relevant governing bodies so that the revised procedures ensure transparency and fairness with proper and adequate documentation in all circumstances, and reflect the requirements of the regulations stipulated in the prevailing ordinance under which the University is registered.

The University is to submit a report to HKCAAVQ for the fulfilment of the requirement demonstrating how the issues concerning academic staff appointment have been addressed by **20 December 2021**.

- 4.2.9 The Panel noted that for the annual performance appraisal for academic staff, the University has established procedures that involve individual academic staff, Department Heads, and the Academic Staff Appraisal Committee which is chaired by the Academic Vice President.
- 4.2.10 For academic staff promotion, there are established procedures that involve the Department concerned, the University Senior Promotion Committee (USPC), the Provost, as well as mandatory external assessment for promotion to full Professor, with the assessment conducted by external assessors nominated by the Department Head and selected by the USPC. The Panel reviewed the respective criteria for promotion to Associate Professor and full Professor. It noted that applicants are required to provide evidence on their achievements in teaching and learning, research, scholarship, and contributions to service for assessment on their performance at the current rank. The Panel commented that the promotion criteria, which emphasised satisfactory performance at the current rank, should be extended by asking the applicant to provide a forward-looking statement of expected future contributions upon promotion to the next rank. The University accepted the Panel's comment and would require applicants to provide such a statement for assessment in future promotion rounds. The Panel noted that during the validity period, there have been 12 and 2 promotions to Associate Professor and Professor from 15 and 4 applications respectively, and one promotion each for Associate Professor of Practice and Professor of Practice.

- 4.2.11 On teaching development, all academic staff are required to participate in at least one activity per semester organised by the Advancement of Teaching and Learning Committee (ATLC), and to reflect on how the activities have impacted their classroom performance in the annual performance appraisal exercise.
- 4.2.12 On research, academic staff have been supported through a number of measures, such as appointing a Grant Proposal Advisor to provide advice and support to staff on developing their research proposals, organising seminars on grant applications by the Research Office, providing internal funding for research, and providing teaching relief for research-active staff. The Panel noted that one of the missions stated in the Strategic Plan 2012-25 is to “conduct research in the in the Humanities and Social Sciences for the advancement of knowledge and the betterment of society”. In light of the new mission of pursuing research which will raise the expectation on staff’s effort to conduct research, the Panel **advised** the University to keep under review the mechanism for monitoring workload and providing support to academic staff.

4.3 Programme Area Development and Management

The Operator must demonstrate that the processes for programme approval, development, review, as well as the formulation of strategic plans at both the organisational and programme area levels, are linked and continue to remain effective to meet its educational/training objectives within the approved programme area(s).

- 4.3.1 The University currently operates the following programmes under the approved programme areas of its PAA status:

Approved Programme Area	Programme
Accounting, Finance & Investment	Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) in Accounting
Economics	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Economics and Finance
	Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) in Financial Technology

General Business Management	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons)
	Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) in Law and Business
	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Corporate Governance and Risk Management
	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Digital Marketing
	Bachelor of Business Administration (Hons) in Human Resources Management – Applied Psychology
Humanities	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in History
Languages and Related Studies	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Chinese Language and Literature
	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in English
Mass Media & Communications, Journalism & Public Relations	Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Journalism and Mass Communication
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Media Design and Immersive Technology
Social Behavioural Sciences	Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Psychology
	Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Sociology
Social Services	Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Counselling and Psychology
	Bachelor of Social Work (Hons)

- 4.3.2 To demonstrate that the University continues to have the capacity and capability to operate and assure the quality of its learning programmes in the approved programme areas, the University provided detailed information on three sample programmes for a comprehensive review in the PIR. The sample programmes are the Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) in Accounting, Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Chinese Language and Literature, and Bachelor of Social Sciences (Hons) in Sociology. Information on the sample programmes and their host Departments provided for review included the following:

On sample programmes

- (i) Statistics on application, enrolment, progression, attrition and graduation;
- (ii) Summary results of the Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ);
- (iii) Samples of assessment materials;
- (iv) Distributions of Grade Point Average (GPA) and honours classifications;
- (v) Annual Programme Review Reports;
- (vi) External Examiners' reports and responses from Departments;
- (vii) Reports of Graduate Surveys;
- (viii) Minutes of Programme Committee Meetings in 2015/16 to 2019/20;
- (ix) Report of the Programme Validation and Review Committee (PVRC);

On host Departments

- (x) Departmental Contributions to Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 of the University;
- (xi) Minutes of Departmental Meetings in 2016 – 2020; and
- (xii) Five-Year Development Plan: 2021/22 to 2025/26.

4.3.3 Having reviewed the above information, the Panel noted evidence that the programme areas have systems in place to assure the quality of the programmes.

4.3.4 On the alignment between the Five-Year Development Plan of the Departments and the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 of the University, the Panel noted that an early version of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 was sent to all Departments in December 2020 and the Senior Management met with the Department Heads to discuss alignment. After endorsement of the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 by the AB in January 2021, Department Heads reviewed their respective Development Plans to ensure alignment with the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and submit specific action items that Departments could contribute to the implementation of the Strategic Plan Priorities with proposed milestones, resource implications and KPIs. The senior management reviewed the inputs from Departments and revised the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 with action items for approval by AB, UC and BoG. The Panel noted evidence of the alignment process from meeting minutes/notes of the AB, Senior Management Meetings, and Academic Planning Group Meeting.

4.3.5 The Panel noted the following major developments across all programme areas during the validity period and reviewed relevant documents and information:

- (i) The general education (GE) of the University has been reformed to establish a structure and coherent GE programme with Shue Yan characteristics. Effective from the 2017/18 entry cohort, all students admitted into Year 1 of undergraduate programmes were required to accumulate 12 credits from the GE Programme by completing one course from each of the four course categories, namely Chinese Culture in the 21st Century, Communication and Literacy, Global Citizenship, and Interdisciplinary Perspective. The Panel noted from meeting minutes and papers of the AB and QAC the process of deliberations and approval on the development and implementation of the GE Programme, which involved proposing courses by individual Departments, selection of courses by a Task Force appointed by the Academic Vice President, and reviewing by the QAC and approval of courses by the AB. The number of GE courses has increased from 13 to 54 during the validity period.
- (ii) In 2018, the University was awarded a HK\$5.6 million grant from the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme (QESS) of the HKSAR Government for the establishment of the Industrial Attachment Office (IAO) to oversee the provision of discipline-specific, credit-bearing industrial attachment courses. By the end of the QESS project in August 2020, all Departments offered at least one credit-bearing industrial attachment course. The Panel noted from meeting minutes and papers of the AB and QAC the process of deliberations and approval on the development and implementation of the courses and the measures taken to ensure that the credit weighting properly reflects the volume of learning in these courses. The Panel reviewed the 2018/19 and 2019/20 annual reports of the IAO to AB, the Student Feedback survey report, and the focus group summary report; the Panel noted that around 700 students enrolled in these courses each year and all average scores of the surveying questions are higher than 4.00 (on a 5-point scale) indicating students' satisfaction with the courses. The results of the Student Feedback survey report also revealed that students' presentation skills and communication skills could be strengthened. This view was also expressed by the industrial partners the Panel met. The Panel **advised** the University to provide more opportunities to enhance students'

presentation, interpersonal and communication skills, such as arranging more group work, presentation, and discussion in teaching and learning activities.

- (iii) Following a strategic priority of the Strategic Plan 2016 – 2020 to conduct a feasibility study of the implementation of Minor programmes, in 2016 the AB approved regulations on Minor programmes which require interested students to express interest to pursue a Minor in Year 1 and to complete 15 credits from a prescribed list of courses starting from Year 2 of their study. In 2016/17, 127 students in Year 1 had expressed interest but by Year 3 only 20 students had progressed in the Minor option and 16 students graduated with a minor in 2020. The Panel noted that the University has taken actions to revise the Minor programmes to make them more attractive to students, such as shifting away from theoretical courses to covering practical skills commonly used in the industries, and adjusting the level of difficulty of the Minor programme taking into account the background of the students whose major studies are in disciplines different from that of the Minor programme. The Panel noted from meeting minutes and papers of the AB, QAC and Departmental Meetings the process of deliberations and approval in the development, implementation and revision of the Minor programmes.
- (iv) In 2017, upon the recommendation of the Examination Results Committee (ERC), the AB established a Working Group to review honours classification by comparing the different methods of determining honours classifications at the eight local universities funded through the University Grants Council (UGC), the minimum threshold GPA required for each honours classification, and the distribution of honours classification. Based on the review findings, the AB approved in 2018 that with effect from the intake of 2019/20, the method of determining honours classification would be changed to include the GPA of all credit-bearing courses in all four years of study, and the indicative percentage for each honours classification would be replaced by an indicative range to allow more flexibility and provide a benchmark for ERC to consider and compare programme performances. The review also confirmed that the minimum thresholds adopted by the University were in line with those of the UGC institutions. The Panel noted the details of the review from the report of the ERC presented to the AB and the deliberations and decisions from meeting minutes and papers of the AB.

- 4.3.6 With the aim to promote excellence in teaching and learning, the University established in 2016 the Teaching and Learning Development Office, and under this office established the ATLC which offers a programme of staff development activities each year. In response to the social movement in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic which have interrupted face-to-face teaching, the University has subscribed to online teaching platforms and provided training workshops to the teaching staff so that they are able to switch to online teaching. Starting from the academic year 2020/21, the ATLC has been offering workshops on how to make better use of online teaching platforms and tools. Having reviewed the annual report of the ATLC to AB, the meeting minutes of the ATLC, and discussed with members of the ATLC, the Panel considered that the University has a system in place to promote quality teaching and learning, and **advised** the University to consider devising a comprehensive Teaching and Learning Plan to coordinate efforts in realising its strategic priority of pursuing technology-enabled learning.
- 4.3.7 In consideration of the above, the Panel was of the view that the approved programme areas continue to be effective in meeting the University's educational objectives.

4.4 **Management of Resources and Services**

The Operator must demonstrate that, within the approved programme area(s), the mechanisms for management and deployment of resources and services continue to be effective to meet the educational/training objectives, as a result of implementing organisational resource allocation policies and financial budgets.

- 4.4.1 The University campus currently consists of the Main Academic Building, Library Complex, Residential and Amenities Complex, and Research Complex. The Panel noted the following major developments of the campus during the validity period:
- (i) A new campus building, the Research Complex, was established in 2017 which has significantly increased the total floor area of the campus by about 73% to 82,281 square meters. As of December 2020, the Research Complex was already operating almost at its maximum capacity with an overall occupancy of 97%, and only a few individual office spaces remain unoccupied. The general teaching facilities in the Research Complex include 15 regular classrooms and 2 lecture theatres, and specialist teaching facilities consist of 1

SEN room, 5 media production rooms and 1 language centre. Upon the full operation of the Research Complex, the Wan Chai Campus was no longer required for teaching and was closed in 2018/19.

- (ii) The total number of research centres and laboratories has increased by 10 to 27. Most of them are grouped into strategic research clusters in the Research Complex to facilitate regular academic exchanges and research collaboration. Among them is the iFREE GROUP Innovation and Research Centre established in 2020 through a donation from the iFREE GROUP to support the University's strategic development in the area of digital humanities.
- (iii) The Main Academic Building, which has been in operation since 1985, has undergone staged renovation during the summer months from 2017/18 to 2019/20 with the aims to upgrade existing teaching and learning facilities, create more space for common areas and amenities for students and staff, and to optimise their allocation and operation for appropriate use. By September 2020, the renovation of 26 classrooms, 2 computer rooms, 4 lobbies and 1 sports hall, the 35th Anniversary Plaza and the auditorium in Lady Lily Shaw Hall was completed. Additional teaching and learning facilities that have been made available are three specialist rooms, namely a studio for media production training, a specialist room for social work training, and a counselling room for psychological and counselling training.
- (iv) With additional resident units provided in the Research Complex, residential units for undergraduate students have almost doubled to a total of 1,087. The increase has ensured that all non-local students can be guaranteed on-campus accommodation for two years to support their study. Most local students can opt for an on-campus resident for at least one semester during their four-year study.

4.4.2 Information on the deployment and management of major services together with the Panel's observations and comments are summarised as follows:

- (i) The Library Management and Development Committee (LMDC) is responsible for advising on all matters pertaining to the management and development of the Library. It consists of representatives of academic Departments, the Library, and

representatives of undergraduate and postgraduate students. It holds meetings twice a year and provides an annual report to the AB. From 2015/16 to 2019/20, the total library budget and the expenditure on electronic resources have increased by about 45% and 60%, respectively. In 2019/20, the Library conducted an internal review of its services and facilities, and the Library Survey 2020 was conducted following the review to solicit feedback from staff and students. Having reviewed the meeting minutes of the LMDC, its annual reports to the AB, the Library Evaluation Report (May 2020), and the Report of the Library Survey 2020, and discussed with representatives of the LMDC, including student representatives, the Panel considered that there is a system in place to assure the quality of the library services.

- (ii) The University spent \$19.45 million on ICT hardware and software between 2016/17 and 2020/21. As of October 2020, the campus has 12 networked computer laboratories with 429 computers and an additional 94 computers dedicated for student self-access in the Library. A list was provided to the Panel showing the provision of new ICT facilities between 2016/17 and 2020/21, and figures on staff numbers showing that the IT support staff numbers have more than doubled since 2015/16. During meetings with the Panel, representatives from the senior management and ICT staff have shared the actions and plans on the development of ICT facilities that support the University's new strategic vision to "reinvent liberal arts education for the Digital Era".
- (iii) The Office of Student Affairs (OSA) provides a range of support services to students. Among the major developments of the OSA during the validity period, the Panel noted that the organisational structure of OSA was revised in 2018/2019 in response to increasing demand, with the Counselling Service divided into two separate sections, the Career Service and Counselling Service. In February 2019, the Counselling Service moved into a specially equipped new office with three counselling rooms, a waiting area and a staff working area, enhancing privacy and providing a cozy sharing environment for students. For the Career Service, the Graduate Employment Survey conducted annually reflected a 30% increase in the usage of career services, and nearly all respondents found the career services were useful to them. In response to doubling the number of student residence places following the opening of the new student accommodation at the

Research Complex, a separate Hall Management Unit (HMU) was established. Representatives of the University have shared with the Panel how hall life experience facilitates whole-person development of the students.

- 4.4.3 On financial resources, the University provided the audit reports of the past five years (2015/16 to 2019/20) and the overall budgeted income and expenditure for the coming three years for review. The financial expert engaged in this PIR advised the Panel that the financial position of the University has been strong throughout the past five years, and the funds and reserves have been increasing. In respect of the income and expenditure account, the income has been steadily increasing, and the University continued to have a surplus over the past five years. The financial expert also pointed out that the Senior Management Resource Allocation Group, which is responsible for advising the BoG on all financial matters, meets bi-monthly to discuss major items pertaining to operating costs and capital expenditure. The University has continuously managed the allocation of its resources, and in particular, has allocated additional budgets related to the establishment of the Research Complex.
- 4.4.4 The University has also provided the resource plans that support the Five-Year Development Plans of the Departments that host three programmes sampled in this PIR exercise, and explained the review and approval process of the annual budget exercise at University level, Department level and research centres.
- 4.4.5 In consideration of the above, the Panel formed the view that the mechanisms for management and deployment of resources and services are effective to meet the educational objectives of the University.

4.5 **Organisational Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

The Operator must demonstrate its on-going maintenance of an effective quality assurance system for ensuring the quality and standards of its learning programmes at the stated HKQF level(s) in the approved programme area(s), aligning with its educational/training objectives.

- 4.5.1 To assure the quality of its programmes, the University has a committee structure that includes the AB, QAC, ERC and PVRC at the institutional level, and the Departmental Committee,

Departmental Board of Examiners, and Programme Committee at the departmental and programme levels.

4.5.2 The Panel noted the following developments during the validity period that are examples of on-going maintenance of the quality assurance system of the University:

- (i) The relationship between the AB and QAC has been further refined and developed. A table listing the roles of the AB and QAC in quality assurance indicates that, among others, QAC has shared responsibility in the Annual Programme Annual Programme Review (APR) exercise and delegated power to approve the appointment of External Examiner and External Programme Assessors, minor changes to programmes, and new course outlines. The Panel was provided with summaries of issues considered respectively by the AB and QAC since 2015/16.
- (ii) The AB has established a Task Force to review the operation of the QAC in response to feedback from some Departments on the QAC approval process for course outlines and programme changes. The Task Force has researched the quality assurance (QA) practices of other local institutions, reviewed the existing QA mechanisms at the University and their practical operation, and presented a report with recommendations that covered QA procedures between the QAC and Departments, QA at the University level, and QA for contingency. The Panel noted from the minutes of the AB meeting in October 2020 that a working group would be formed to discuss the findings and recommendations of the Task Force and propose follow-up actions for further deliberation by the AB.
- (iii) The Panel noted that different aspects of the QA mechanisms are specified in different documents, such as the OBTL Handbook, the Guidelines and Procedures for Annual Programme Review, a document on the PVRC Benchmark Standards for Validation of undergraduate programmes, and a document on Academic Policy and Procedures. The Panel echoed the view of the Task Force that there is a need to compile a QA Handbook to enhance staff's knowledge of the University's QA procedures and standards, and the University has informed the Panel that there is a plan to do so. In view of the important improvement the QA Handbook would bring, the Panel made the following recommendation:

Recommendation

The University should compile a QA Handbook as planned that serves as a unified and easily accessible source of information for all QA policies and procedures.

- (iv) The PVRC is established to conduct independent external reviews for the validation of new programmes and five-year revalidation of existing programmes covered by the University's PAA status. It is subject to review by the AB every five years. Following the review in 2016, and in response to feedback from Departments that PVRC's recommendations were not sufficiently informed by subject-specific expertise, membership of PVRC was expanded to include an independent External Subject Expert in addition to the External Programme Assessor for the programme under consideration. The Panel discussed with the University the rationale behind the composition and size of the PVRC and considered that the expansion is appropriate.
- (v) The University considers that student feedback is an essential part of the quality assurance of programme delivery and requires all students to provide formal feedback on each course in each semester through the SLEQ. The average response rate of the SLEQ for undergraduate programmes during the validity period was 89.3%, with the lowest rate of 85.6% in the first semester of 2017. The University considered this to be low, which triggered a review of the SLEQ system. The QAC formed a working group to conduct the review, which included collecting comments from Departments and reviewing the questionnaires used in other local institutions. After much deliberations, as noted from the meeting minutes of the AB and QAC, a revised SLEQ was introduced in 2018/19 with the number of questions reduced from 34 to 19 to shorten the time required to complete the questionnaire. The original 4-point scale was replaced by a 6-point scale to encourage students to respond thoughtfully on their learning experience in the course. In the first semester of 2020, three questions were added to the SLEQ to allow students to reflect on their online learning experience. Since introducing the revised SLEQ, the average response rate over the past five semesters has improved to 90.9%. The Panel noted that during the validity period, the average SLEQ scores were 3.28 in the 4-point scale in the first four semesters and 4.64 in the 6-point scale in the

following five semesters, indicating that students were generally satisfied with their learning experience.

- 4.5.3 Besides collecting student feedback through the SLEQ, the University considered that student participation in key committees of the University is an integral part of the University's QA system which helps establish formal communication channels between students and the University. During the site visit, the Panel met student representatives who serve in various committees. Student representatives at departmental level committees had positive comments on their experience in the committees and shared examples of how the University followed up their feedback. Some of the student representatives at institutional level committees voiced their strong discontent on specific issues, which the Panel considered to be beyond the Terms of Reference of this PIR exercise (see paragraph 1.1) to handle. The Panel formed the view that the University needs to have a proper mechanism to handle students' grievance and complaints (see paragraph 4.1.9), and the specific issues raised by the students should have been dealt with if one exists.
- 4.5.4 The University established the new Department of Applied Data Science in 2020. The Panel reviewed the meeting minutes of the AB concerning its establishment. It noted that there is a plan for this new Department to launch a bachelor degree programme and provide service courses to other programmes (see paragraph 4.1.3). The Panel also noted that according to the HKCAAVQ's *Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status*, establishing a new Department to deliver learning programmes is a substantial change to an accredited operator. The Panel was of the view that the University should have submitted a substantial change application to comply with HKCAAVQ's requirements on substantial changes. The Panel considered that the University should ensure that HKCAAVQ's QA procedures are observed by devising measures to strengthen its internal QA processes, and opined that one such measure might be the compilation of a QA Handbook with clear stipulations on how the University's internal QA processes are interfaced with HKCAAVQ's procedures. The Panel put forth the following Requirement:

Requirement

The University is to strengthen its QA process through appropriate measures to ensure that HKCAAVQ's QA procedures are observed.

The University is to submit a report to HKCAAVQ showing how its QA process is strengthened and relevant approval records to ensure meeting HKCAAVQ's requirements by **20 December 2021**.

5. IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING THIS ACCREDITATION REPORT

5.1 Variation and withdrawal of this Accreditation Report

- 5.1.1 This Accreditation Report is issued pursuant to section 5 of the AAVQO, and contains HKCAAVQ's substantive determination regarding the accreditation, including the validity period as well as any conditions and restrictions subject to which the determination is to have effect.
- 5.1.2 HKCAAVQ may subsequently decide to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report if it is satisfied that any of the grounds set out in section 5 (2) of the AAVQO apply. This includes where HKCAAVQ is satisfied that the Operator is no longer competent to achieve the relevant objectives and/or the Programme no longer meets the standard to achieve the relevant objectives as claimed by the Operator (whether by reference to the Operator's failure to fulfil any conditions and/or comply with any restrictions stipulated in this Accreditation Report or otherwise) or where at any time during the validity period there has/have been substantial change(s) introduced by the Operator after HKCAAVQ has issued the accreditation report(s) to the Operator and which has/have not been approved by HKCAAVQ. Please refer to the '*Guidance Notes on Substantial Change to Accreditation Status*' in seeking approval for proposed changes. These Guidance Notes can be downloaded from the HKCAAVQ website.
- 5.1.3 If HKCAAVQ decides to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report, it will give the Operator notice of such variation or withdrawal pursuant to section 5(4) of the AAVQO.
- 5.1.4 The maintenance of the PAA status will lapse immediately upon the expiry of the validity period or upon the issuance of a notice of withdrawal of this Accreditation Report.

5.2 Appeals

- 5.2.1 If the Operator is aggrieved by the determination made in this Accreditation Report, then pursuant to Part 3 of the AAVQO the Operator has a right of appeal to the Appeal Board. Any appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the receipt of this Accreditation Report.
- 5.2.2 If the Operator is aggrieved by a decision to vary or withdraw this Accreditation Report, then pursuant to Part 3 of the AAVQO the Operator has a right of appeal to the Appeal Board. Any appeal must be lodged within 30 days of the receipt of the Notice of Withdrawal.
- 5.2.3 The Operator should be aware that a notice of variation or withdrawal of this Accreditation Report is not itself an accreditation report and the right to appeal against HKCAAVQ's substantive determination regarding accreditation arises only from this Accreditation Report.
- 5.2.4 Please refer to Cap. 592A (<http://www.legislation.gov.hk>) for the appeal rules. Details of the appeal procedure are contained in section 13 of the AAVQO and can be accessed from the QF website at <http://www.hkqf.gov.hk>.

5.3 Qualifications Register

- 5.3.1 The PAA status as defined by the approved programme area(s) will enable the Operator, upon the completion of the Periodic Institutional Review exercise, can continue to offer programmes up to the QF level specified for the approved programme area(s) without prior learning programme accreditation. The programmes offered by the Operator up to the QF level specified for the approved programme area(s) are eligible for entry into the Qualifications Register (QR). All other programmes offered by the named Operator falling outside the approved programme area(s) and which have not obtained accreditation status will not be considered as accredited programmes.
- 5.3.2 Upon completion of relevant procedures by Operators as determined by the Qualifications Register Authority, Operators may enter the qualifications covered within the scope of the PAA status into the QR at <https://www.hkqr.gov.hk> for recognition under the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF).

- 5.3.3 Only learners who commence the study of a qualification covered within the scope of the PAA status during the validity period and who have graduated with the qualification listed in the QR will be considered to have acquired a qualification recognised under the QF.

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Hong Kong Shue Yan University

Periodic Institutional Review for 8 programme areas

25 – 28 May 2021

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