



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

ACCREDITATION REPORT

SAINT FRANCIS UNIVERSITY

**PERIODIC INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW FOR
(I) GENERAL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
(II) INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGY
(III) SOCIAL WORK**

AND

**PROGRAMME AREA ACCREDITATION IN
NURSING AND HEALTH CARE STUDIES**

APRIL 2025

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1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 Based on the Service Agreement (No.: AA1021), 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 (AAVQO) (Cap. 592), was commissioned by Saint Francis University (the Operator) to conduct a combined Periodic Institutional Review and Programme Area Accreditation exercise with the following Terms of Reference:

- (a) To conduct an accreditation test as provided for in the AAVQO to determine whether the Operator can be approved to maintain the Programme Area Accreditation status for the Programme Areas (with specifications under paragraph 1.2) for a specified validity period;
- (b) To conduct an accreditation test as provided for in the AAVQO to determine whether the Operator can be granted the Programme Area Accreditation status for the Programme Area (with specifications under paragraph 1.3) for a specified validity period; and
- (c) To issue to the Operator an accreditation report setting out the results of the determination in relation to (a) and (b) by HKCAAVQ.

1.2 Specifications of the Programme Areas undergoing Periodic Institutional Review

Area of Study and Training	Programme Area	QF Level
Business and Management	General Business Administration	5
Computer Science and Information Technology	Information and Communication Technology	5
Social Sciences	Social Work	5

1.3 Specifications of the Programme Area undergoing Programme Area Accreditation

Area of Study and Training	Programme Area	QF Level
Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences	Nursing and Health Care Studies	5

2. HKCAAVQ'S DETERMINATION

2.1 Periodic Institutional Review

- 2.1.1 HKCAAVQ has determined that the Operator can be approved to maintain the Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status for the programme area of Social Work at QF Level 5 under the Area of Study and Training "Social Sciences" with a validity period of five years.
- 2.1.2 HKCAAVQ has determined that, subject to the fulfilment of the condition set out below, the Operator can be approved to maintain the PAA status for the programme areas of General Business Administration and Information and Communication Technology at QF Level 5 under the Areas of Study and Training "Business and Management" and "Computer Science and Information Technology" respectively with a validity period of five years.
- 2.1.3 The Operator approved to maintain the PAA status is considered as meeting the HKCAAVQ accreditation standards of the Periodic Institutional Review. The Operator's policies are in line with the strategic plans and are consistent with the overall mission, aims and objectives of its operation. The Operator continues to have appropriate mechanisms and management procedures to ensure effective academic development, quality assurance, staffing and staff development. Its resources allocation supports the development and management of the programme areas. The Operator also has robust internal processes in place that ensure its learning programmes meet the stated objectives and QF standards.

2.2 Programme Area Accreditation

2.2.1 HKCAAVQ has determined that the Operator can be granted the PAA status for the programme area of Nursing and Health Care Studies at QF Level 5 under the Area of Study and Training “Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences” with a validity period of five years.

2.2.2 The Operator granted the PAA status is considered as meeting the HKCAAVQ accreditation standards of Institutional Domains and Programme Area Domains of the PAA. The Operator has the institutional competencies to develop programmes meeting its strategic objectives. The Operator has robust and internal processes to ensure the development and operation of learning programmes under the approved programme areas are aligned and managed in accordance with its institutional development plan, and that its learning programmes meet the stated objectives and QF standards.

2.3 Validity Period

2.3.1 The validity period will commence on the date specified below. The commencement of the validity period for the programme areas of General Business Administration and Information and Communication Technology is subject to the Operator’s fulfilment of the pre-condition set out in paragraph 2.6.1. Operators may apply to HKCAAVQ to vary the commencement date of the validity period. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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

Name of Operator	Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學
Address of Operator	2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories 新界將軍澳翠嶺里 2 號
Name of Award Granting Body	Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學

Areas of Study and Training	(1) Business and Management (2) Computer Science and Information Technology (3) Social Sciences
Sub-areas	<u>Business and Management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> General Business Management <u>Computer Science and Information Technology</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Computer Science and Information Technology <u>Social Sciences</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Services
Programme Areas and Scope of Programme Areas	<u>General Business Administration</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study and training in the general administrative aspects of organisations, with concentrations in selected business areas <u>Information and Communication Technology</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study and training in computer and information sciences underpinned by computational and design thinking, and how they can be used in various/relevant fields <u>Social Work</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study and training in the provision of social work 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 July 2025
End Date of Validity Period	30 June 2030
Address of Teaching / Training Venue(s)	2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories 新界將軍澳翠嶺里 2 號

2.5 The determinations on the PAA status are specified as follows:

Name of Operator	Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學
Address of Operator	2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories 新界將軍澳翠嶺里 2 號
Name of Award Granting Body	Saint Francis University 聖方濟各大學
Area of Study and Training	Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences
Sub-area	Health Care / Nursing
Programme Area and Scope of Programme Area	<u>Nursing and Health Care Studies</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The study and training in the maintenance and promotion of general nursing and health care services, as well as the caring for the sick and the disabled as individuals, or in families, groups, institutions, home settings and the community
QF Level	Level 5
Start Date of Validity Period	1 July 2025
End Date of Validity Period	30 June 2030
Address of Teaching / Teaching Venue(s)	2 Chui Ling Lane, Tseung Kwan O, New Territories 新界將軍澳翠嶺里 2 號

2.6 **Condition**

Periodic Institutional Review

Pre-condition

General Business Administration and Information and Communication Technology

2.6.1 The University is to systematise the arrangements on staffing and physical resources for the Senior Secondary Curriculum Embedded Diploma (SSCED) programmes to ensure that the existing quality

assurance arrangements of the approved programme areas remain effective.

For the fulfilment of the above pre-condition in relation to the operation of the SSCED programmes, the University is to submit evidence on the following to HKCAAVQ **on or before 30 June 2025**:

- (a) Formal arrangements between the University and individual teaching staff of the SSCED programmes specifying the relevant staffing arrangements including but not limited to (i) their teaching duties for the SSCED programmes as assigned by the University and (ii) mechanism and/or measures to ensure that the performance monitoring and quality assurance of the teaching staff concerned can be effectively implemented in a manner comparable to that for teaching staff of the University; and
- (b) Formal arrangements between the University and the secondary schools delivering the SSCED programmes, including specifying the use of premises and facilities of those secondary schools in the delivery of the SSCED programmes operated by the University. (paragraph 4.2.5)

2.7 Recommendations

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

Periodic Institutional Review

- 2.7.1 The University should enhance the promotion of its identity and positioning with a view to strengthening public awareness of its differentiating features at both the institutional and programme levels. (paragraph 4.1.7)
- 2.7.2 The University should consider establishing a formalised mechanism to evaluate the research performance of academic staff, and review the effectiveness of the mechanism regularly to ensure fitness for purpose. (paragraph 4.2.6)
- 2.7.3 The University should continue to keep under regular review the curricula of its programmes to ensure that they remain current and relevant to industry trends and needs on an on-going basis. (paragraph 4.3.3(a))

- 2.7.4 The University should review the resource implications of retaining programmes with low enrolment, and consider setting minimum viable student numbers for programmes to facilitate the overall planning of educational provisions and resource allocation. (paragraph 4.3.3(c))
- 2.7.5 The University should keep under regular review its computational resources, especially those on artificial intelligence (AI), so that they remain up-to-date, accessible and adequate in supporting the learning, teaching and research needs of the University. (paragraph 4.4.6(b))

Programme Area Accreditation

- 2.7.6 The University should continue to keep under regular review the alignment among the title, objectives and PILOs, as well as curriculum and content of programmes under the programme area so that they are consistent in reflecting the intended positioning of the programmes. (paragraph 4.6.9)
- 2.8 HKCAAVQ will subsequently satisfy itself on 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 the fulfilment of any condition and compliance with any restriction stipulated in this Accreditation Report.** During the validity period, HKCAAVQ may request the Operator to provide evidence, such as admission related information, to demonstrate that the Operator and the Programmes continue to comply with the determinations and meet the relevant accreditation standards.

3. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 Saint Francis University (the University) acquired the private university title in January 2024. Its predecessor, Caritas Institute of Higher Education (CIHE), which was renamed from Caritas Francis Hsu College (CFHC) in May 2011, was established in 1985. CFHC was registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) in 2001 to operate sub-degree programmes. CIHE acquired

accreditation status for offering degree-level programmes in October 2010 and obtained PAA status at HKQF Level 5 in three programme areas, namely General Business Administration, Information and Communication Technology and Social Work in 2019, 2020 and 2022 respectively.

- 3.2 As of February 2025, the University offered a total of 26 accredited programmes, comprising one Diploma programme, three Associate Degree programmes, four Higher Diploma programmes, 14 Bachelor degree programmes, two Master degree programmes, one Postgraduate Certificate programme and one Postgraduate Diploma programme.
- 3.3 The University commissioned HKCAAVQ to conduct a combined exercise involving a Periodic Institutional Review (PIR) for the three programme areas and a Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) for the programme area of Nursing and Health Care Studies. HKCAAVQ formed an expert panel (the Panel) for this exercise (Panel Membership at **Appendix**) and engaged a Financial Expert for this exercise. The Panel conducted a site visit on 20-23 January 2025. 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 the Panel in conducting this exercise.
- 3.4 The University was not required to provide information relative to the institutional domains for the PAA component of this exercise, since institutional aspects of the University had been reviewed as part of the PIR component.

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 Operator.

Periodic Institutional Review

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 organizational effectiveness and implementation of strategically planned initiatives.

- 4.1.1 The University has a Board of Governors (BoG) and a Council to perform governance functions. The BoG is constituted as the supreme governing body of the University for making final decisions on all matters within its remit. The Council serves as the executive body of the governance structure, overseeing management implementation. Various committees have been established under the Council to oversee different aspects of the University's operations and activities, namely the Finance Committee, Institutional Advancement Committee, University Academic Development Committee, Staffing Committee, Honorary Awards Committee, Campus Development and Management Committee, and Staff Appeals Committee.
- 4.1.2 The University provided to the Panel the Committee Handbook, which details the committee system and structure, as well as the terms of reference and composition of key committees of the University. The Panel noted that the BoG and Council are composed of external stakeholders drawn from different sectors, including higher education, community and industry. BoG members, with the exception of the President of the University who serves as an ex-officio member, are external stakeholders, including those with relevant experience in the higher education sector. Membership of the Council includes two ex-officio members from the University namely the President and President of the Students' Union, three members of full-time staff, at least two but not more than three members of the BoG, and external stakeholders including those with relevant experience in local and/or non-local higher education in and/or commerce or industry in Hong Kong. The Panel also noted that the composition of the BoG and Council has considered the need for checks and balances between governance and management. For example, University staff members are not to be BoG members with the exception of the President, who serve in the BoG as an ex-officio member to ensure that the University's policies come under the purview of the BoG.
- 4.1.3 The Academic Board (AB) and School Boards (SBs) are responsible for academic governance at the University. The AB, chaired by the President, oversees all academic matters including research and scholarly activities subject to the direction and financial control of the BoG and Council. The AB is supported by standing and non-standing committees. The SB, which reports to the AB, is chaired by the School Dean or Associate Dean. It reviews policy proposals for input

to the AB and submits proposals to the AB for approval. The SB is assisted by the Programme Team, Programme Committee, Examiners Committee and Advisory Committee.

4.1.4 The President meets with the Provost and Vice-Presidents as the Senior Management Group (SMG), and with Heads of Units as the Management Team (MT). To encourage participatory management in the relevant affairs of the University, the SMG / MT is assisted by six committees, namely the Budget and Resources Committee, the Promotion and Public Affairs Committee, the President's Advisory Committee on Establishment, the Quality Assurance Committee (Administration), the Student Recruitment Committee, and the Staff Discipline Committee.

4.1.5 To drive the achievement of the University's vision and mission, a strategic planning mechanism is in place involving the formulation, implementation and review of strategic plans on a regular basis at the institutional and school levels. The Panel made the following observations relative to the University's strategic planning processes:

- (a) The University's current Strategic Plan covering 2024 to 2029 contains an environmental scan and a SWOT analysis of the University, and sets out directions on its academic programme development, quality learning and teaching, research and scholarship, finance and sustainability, and staffing. Five strategic objectives have been identified, each accompanied by a list of strategic priorities and actions. In addition, key performance indicators (KPIs) on academic development, student engagement and success, and research and scholarly outcomes have been specified in the Strategic Plan to facilitate evidence-based and on-going performance review and improvement. The Panel reviewed extracts of BoG minutes on deliberation on the formulation of the Strategic Plan 2024-2029;
- (b) The progress of achievement of the Strategic Plan is subject to an evidence-based monitoring and annual review mechanism. The Panel was provided with the Mid-Term Progress Report for the Strategic Plan 2019-2024, records of BoG discussion on review of the Strategic Plan 2019-2024, and the 2023 Addendum to the Strategic Plan 2019-2024 containing an external environmental scan, along with updates to the KPIs, programme portfolio, student projections and financial planning; and

- (c) At the school / unit level, strategic planning and review involves the preparation of annual Operational Plan and Risk Register by each academic and non-academic unit for approval by the SMG. An annual review mechanism is in place to facilitate the identification of issues and continuous improvement in future planning cycles. For academic units, the review takes the form of annual programme reviews and results in Annual Programme Reports, which are endorsed by the Quality Assurance Committee (Academic) (QAC-Academic) and approved by the AB. For non-academic units, findings of the annual review are presented in Annual Review Reports, which are endorsed by the Quality Assurance Committee (Administration) (QAC-Admin) and approved by the SMG. The University provided to the Panel samples of Operation Plan, Annual Programme Report, Annual Review Report, as well as the Risk Management Manual and the central Risk Registers.

Based on the above, the Panel formed the view that the mechanism in place for strategic planning and review at the institutional and school / unit levels are evidence-based and effective in driving the achievement of the University's vision and mission.

- 4.1.6 Academic development of the University is guided by the strategic objectives set forth in the Strategic Plan. Each school develops its own Strategic Plan to outline its directions for development in alignment with the institutional strategic objectives. The Panel's observations on strategic planning at the programme area level are detailed in section 4.3.
- 4.1.7 The University attained the status of University of Applied Sciences (UAS) in November 2024. The Panel noted that the development of the University as a UAS aligns well with its vision, mission and strategic positioning. The University advised that there have been on-going initiatives to develop more applied degree programmes, to be underpinned by new and enhanced mechanisms to strengthen the academic environment for new programme development, especially that for applied degree programmes. The Panel opined that strengthening public awareness of the University's identity and positioning in terms of not only its offering of programmes with an applied focus but also other differentiating features such as the emphasis on Catholic ethos would be conducive to the University's achievement of its educational/training objectives, and put forward the following recommendation:

Recommendation

The University should enhance the promotion of its identity and positioning with a view to strengthening public awareness of its differentiating features at both the institutional and programme levels.

- 4.1.8 In consideration of the above information and the discussion with various stakeholders, the Panel formed the view that the University has demonstrated the achievement of its educational objectives continuously. The achievement of educational/training objectives has also aligned with the University's vision and mission, and informed by comprehensive reviews of organisational effectiveness and implementation of strategically planned initiatives.

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 Organisational leadership of the University, at the institutional level, is provided by a senior management team comprising the University President, Provost, and four Vice-Presidents. At the school level, leadership is provided by the Dean, who chairs the School Management Team (SMT) and assumes overall responsibility for the planning, development and operation of the school in line with the strategic objectives of the University. The Dean is supported by the Associate Dean(s), other senior academic staff, and various committees including the Advisory Committee set up under each school comprising external academics and practitioners from the relevant business, commercial and professional sectors to advise on programme development, course contents and practicum, and exchange ideas and explore collaboration in support of the school's strategic development and accomplishment of missions and goals.
- 4.2.2 Leadership and management at programme level is led by the Programme Leader, who, assisted by the Deputy Programme Leader where applicable and Course Coordinators, is responsible for programme development and delivery. The Programme Leader chairs the Programme Team with all current full-time academic staff of the programme, and the Programme Committee with additional

members including a full-time/part-time student representative from each year of study.

- 4.2.3 During the site visit, the Panel met with representatives of institutional, school and programme management to discuss their roles and responsibilities in the planning, development, oversight and review of programme(s) under their purview. Through the discussion, the Panel formed the view that the internal quality assurance system of the University has been effective in enabling staff with leadership and management roles at various levels to make evidence-based judgements regarding educational provisions under their purview, and to formulate and implement improvement actions in a timely manner.
- 4.2.4 On the effectiveness of staff planning, the University provided institution-wide planned and actual staff figures for AY2019/20 to AY2023/24. Each of hosting school for the three programme areas, namely the Rita Tong Liu School of Business and Hospitality Management (SBHM), Yam Pak Charitable Foundation School of Computing and Information Sciences (SCIS) and Felizberta Lo Padilla Tong School of Social Sciences (SSS), also provided the latest staff profile and staffing projection for their respective schools covering AY2024/25 to AY2028/29. The Panel made the following observations:
- (a) The current and projected staffing are generally commensurate with the existing and planned educational provisions and research development needs of the programme areas;
 - (b) There is an appropriate mix of experienced and junior academic staff within the hosting schools, accompanied by mechanisms for succession planning to prepare aspiring academic staff to take up high-level positions at the programme level;
 - (c) Staff turnover rates fluctuated over the validity period. Staff turnover and the reasons for exit are periodically deliberated at the Staffing Committee. For example, the University advised that the deliberation and review have resulted in the establishment of the research support staff structure and the Professors of Practice track, as well as a clear career ladder for administrative staff, with a view to enhancing staff retention, development and succession planning. While difficulty in the recruitment and retention of expertise is cited as a challenge for the three hosting schools, the Panel was of the view that the

mechanisms in place for staff recruitment and retention have been appropriate and effectively implemented in line with both programme area development and the overall education/training objectives of the University; and

- (d) The University has in place an Academic Workload Allocation Policy to provide an institutional framework for managing workload at the school level. A structured support system is in place for academic staff undertaking administrative duties. During the site visit, the Panel discussed workload-related issues with representatives from the University, and formed the view that the implementation of the mechanisms for workload allocation and management has been largely effective.

4.2.5 The University currently operates a Secondary Curriculum Embedded Diploma (SSCED) programme, namely the Diploma in Practical Information and Communication Technology (DPICT) under the Information and Communication Technology programme area. The Panel noted that the University plans to:

- (a) develop a Diploma in Practical Accounting and Business Management (DPABM) under the General Business Administration programme area for launching in AY2025/26 with the same operation model as the DPICT programme; and
- (b) expand the offering of SSCED programmes from secondary schools under the Caritas Vocational Training and Education Service (VTES) to non-VTES secondary schools under the Catholic Diocese Hong Kong.

The University has designated a programme leader to ensure effective management and coordination of each SSCED programme. Each participating secondary school is required to submit relevant information of instructors for SSCED programmes to the University for approval on an annual basis. However, the Panel noted that these instructors are secondary school teachers and are not formally appointed and managed by the University. The Panel also made observations on the physical resources for the SSCED programmes in section 4.4. The Panel saw the need for the University to have in place formal arrangements regarding staffing and use of secondary school premises and facilities for delivery of the SSCED programmes to ensure adequate oversight of the University over programme staffing the physical resources, and stipulated the following pre-condition:

Pre-condition

The University is to systematise the arrangements on staffing and physical resources for the SSCED programmes to ensure that the existing quality assurance arrangements of the approved programme areas remain effective.

For the fulfilment of the above pre-condition in relation to the operation of the SSCED programmes, the University is to submit evidence on the following to HKCAAVQ **on or before 30 June 2025**:

- (a) Formal arrangements between the University and individual teaching staff of the SSCED programmes specifying the relevant staffing arrangements including but not limited to (i) their teaching duties for the SSCED programmes as assigned by the University and (ii) mechanism and/or measures to ensure that the performance monitoring and quality assurance of the teaching staff concerned can be effectively implemented in a manner comparable to that for teaching staff of the University; and
- (b) Formal arrangements between the University and the secondary schools delivering the SSCED programmes, including specifying the use of premises and facilities of those secondary schools in the delivery of the SSCED programmes operated by the University.

4.2.6 Having attained the UAS title, the University considers it a priority to enhance research capability and scholarship. A series of strategic actions have been laid out in the latest Strategic Plan of the University for the engagement and capacity building of researchers, provision of research support, enhancement of research environment, collaboration and partnership, and the securing of new sources of external research funding. The Panel reviewed a compendium of information relating to the internal and external funding supporting research at the University, support available to staff in undertaking research, as well as the mechanisms in place to encourage and facilitate staff engagement in research. However, the Panel observed that there is no formal mechanism to evaluate research performance of staff. As the University aspires to strengthen its research capacity in line with institutional strategic priorities, the Panel considered it beneficial for the University to have in place a formalised mechanism to evaluate the research performance of academic staff. The Panel put forward the following recommendation:

Recommendation

The University should consider establishing a formalised mechanism to evaluate the research performance of academic staff, and review the effectiveness of the mechanism regularly to ensure fitness for purpose.

- 4.2.7 The Panel reviewed the Staff Handbook, which contains general information on staff recruitment and appointment, personnel matters, performance review, staff grievance and staff discipline. The Panel considered the relevant information accessible, comprehensive, and are generally fit for purpose in facilitating the University's effective management and appraisal of its staff. Notwithstanding the recommendation in paragraph 4.2.6, the Panel considered that the policy, guidelines and practices on staff appraisal are generally effective in facilitating the University's management and appraisal of its staff.
- 4.2.8 The staff development framework of the University, including plans, policies and resource support, are overseen by the Staff Development Committee. In-house staff development activities are organised by the Centre for Excellence, Research Office, Institute Secretariat and individual schools/units. The Panel reviewed information in the Staff Handbook on the staff development policy for academic and non-academic staff including the available support for engagement in staff development activities. The University also provided information on the staff development activities organised by the University in the past three academic years. The Panel noted that the staff development activities covered a range of topics such as learning and teaching, assessment and feedback, and research capability building, and subject matter-related seminars, and considered that the staff development framework is generally effective in supporting the development of the programme areas.

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 Under the programme areas of General Business Administration, Information and Communication Technology and Social Work, the University operates programmes ranging from QF Levels 3 to 5. The programmes operating during the validity period under the programme areas are as follows:

Programme Area	Programmes	QF Level
General Business Administration	• Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) (BBA)	5
	• Bachelor of Entrepreneurial Management (Honours) in Design Business (BEMDB)	5
	• Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) in Applied Hotel and Tourism Management (BBA-AHTM)	5
Information and Communication Technology	• Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Digital Entertainment Technology (BScDET)	5
	• Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Artificial Intelligence (BScAI)	5
	• Higher Diploma in Artificial Intelligence and Information and Communication Technology (HDAI-ICT)	4
	• Diploma in Practical Information and Communication Technology (DP ICT)	3
Social Work	• Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) - Social Work (BSocSc-SW)	5
	• Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) (BSW)	5
	• Higher Diploma in Social Work (HDSW)	4

- 4.3.2 The Panel was provided with the following information on the three programme areas and individual programmes under the programme areas:

- (a) Strategic Plans covering AY2024/25 to AY2028/29 of the three schools hosting each programme area, which include the latest Academic Plan for each of the three schools;

- (b) Special Programme Review Reports for the BBA and BEMDB programmes;
- (c) Statistics on application, enrolment, progression, attrition and graduation;
- (d) Meeting minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC);
- (e) Policies and practices in relation to internship and fieldwork for individual programmes under the programme areas;
- (f) Annual Programme Reports;
- (g) External Examiner Reports;
- (h) Course and Teaching Evaluation (CTE) Reports;
- (i) Outcomes of Programme Evaluation;
- (j) The University's response to the Panel's recommendations in the previous PAA exercises involving the programme areas; and
- (k) Major changes to the programmes and programme areas since obtaining each PAA status for the three programme areas.

4.3.3 Having reviewed the above information and met with representatives of the University during the site visit, the Panel made the following observations:

- (a) There have been established and generally effective mechanisms in place governing programme development, approval and review as specified in the Quality Assurance Handbook of the University. The Panel noted evidence of programme enhancement based on data collected from actual implementation. For example, the University initiated Special Programme Reviews for the BBA and BEMDB programmes. Critical examination of the academic and/or non-academic aspects of the two programmes have led to the implementation of measures intended to enhance the sustainability of the programmes. The Panel also noted that industry needs and trends could evolve rapidly over time, and exchanged views with representatives of the University on possible enhancements to programme curricula to cater for the latest

developments in the relevant industries, including possible provision of non-local learning experiences for students. For continuous improvement purposes, the Panel put forward the following recommendation:

Recommendation

The University should continue to keep under regular review the curricula of its programmes to ensure that they remain current and relevant to industry trends and needs on an on-going basis.

- (b) The Panel noted the following planned developments of the three programme areas in terms of the development and/or revamp of programmes:

Programme Area	Planned Development
General Business Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To revamp the BBA and BEMDB programmes to become applied degree programmes• To develop the DPABM as an SSCED programme targeting Secondary 4-6 students
Information and Communication Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To launch the Bachelor of Crime and Security Science and Higher Diploma in Crime and Security Science
Social Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop the Social Care stream of the Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) programme into a standalone applied degree programme.

The above programmes are at different stages of development or revamp under the established mechanisms and procedures of the University. Having reviewed the progress of the programme development and revamp initiatives, the Panel considered that the relevant programme approval mechanisms and procedures have been effectively implemented to meet the education/training objectives within the respective programme areas and the University as a whole.

- (c) The University has in place a mechanism for sunseting programmes with enrolments substantially lower than the target for multiple academic years. The Panel noted that while

there have been such programmes, no programme has ceased operation as a result of this mechanism. The Panel was also given to understand that the University does not specify minimum viable student numbers for programmes. During the site visit, the University shared that an important consideration in whether to operate a programme is to maintain the diversified portfolio of the University's programmes with a view to opening opportunities for students. While appreciating the intention of the University, the Panel put forward the following recommendation to facilitate future enhancement of the University in terms of overall academic planning and resource allocation:

Recommendation

The University should review the resource implications of retaining programmes with low enrolment, and consider setting minimum viable student numbers for programmes to facilitate the overall planning of educational provisions and resource allocation.

- (d) The Panel noted clear institutional regulations for the award of degrees based on the grade-point average, and the consistent use of rubrics across the programme areas. Grading systems involving different mark-to-grade conversion scales are adopted across the schools. The University advised that the variations in the grading systems for individual schools are to cater for the requirements of relevant professional bodies that have accredited particular programmes of the school and to suit the needs of individual subject areas. During the site visit, the Panel exchanged views with the University on how achievement of learning outcomes is assessed on a consistent basis across the University through, for example, the use of rubrics. In the spirit of encouraging continuous review and enhancement, the Panel put forward the following advice:

Advice

The University is advised to keep under regular review the assessment grading systems and the use of rubrics to ensure that they remain effective in providing a consistent basis for assessing the achievement of learning outcomes across the University.

- 4.3.4 In consideration of the above, the Panel was of the view that the University has demonstrated the processes for programme approval, development and review remained effective, and that the strategic planning at organisational and programme area levels are linked and continue to contribute towards the realization of its educational/training 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 Resource planning of the University is underpinned by the alignment of its strategic planning, operational planning as well as budgeting and resource allocation. The longer-term parameters set out in the five-year Strategic Plan, Academic Plan and Financial Plan of the University informs the annual budget planning process, which starts with the preparation of budget and resource proposals by individual schools and units in alignment with their respective annual academic plans and operational plans. The proposals are consolidated into the University's annual budget and capital project proposals to be vetted by the Finance and Estates Office (FEO) and deliberated by the Budget and Resources Committee (BRC) and SMG at the institutional level, before approval is sought from the Finance Committee (FC), Council and BoG. The Panel noted that the University prioritised resources in line with its strategic priorities including quality teaching and learning, whole person formation, interdisciplinary and applied research/scholarly activities, and clear public identity, stakeholder support and student recruitment. The Panel was provided with information on the resources allocated to these strategic priorities, and opined that the resources allocated to these areas are conducive to the University's meeting of its education/training objectives.
- 4.4.2 With the growing student population, the current University campus has reached its designed maximum capacity. With a view to providing sufficient learning and teaching space in alignment with the future needs set out in the latest Strategic Plan, the University has been planning to secure a site in Shatin for the development of an additional campus. To this end, a Steering Committee has been set up to coordinate the effort. The University has also conducted rounds

of consultation with internal stakeholders to facilitate the planning process. Subject to approval from the relevant government bureaux, the Shatin campus is anticipated to be completed in phases between AY2027/28 and AY2030/31. From the accreditation documents and through discussion with University representatives during the site visit, the Panel was advised that interim measures such as conversion/alteration of physical space, the sourcing of available premises and timetabling arrangements have been in place to cater for the short- to medium-term need for learning and teaching facilities before the Shatin campus is available.

4.4.3 On financial management, the Panel was provided with the Financial Management Framework and the Budget Management Policies and Procedures. The University advised annual budgeting is adopted as a means for budget management. The process starts with internal consultations with individual schools and units by the BRC, the outcome of which is consolidated into the annual budget for endorsement by the FC and Council, and approval by the BoG. A mechanism is in place for the FC and Council to regularly review the annual budget, with updated forecasts prepared to ensure the deployment of financial resources is in line with the annual Academic Plan and Operational Plan of individual schools and units. Having reviewed the information, the Panel formed the view that the mechanism in place for financial management is evidence-based and effective in ensuring educational provisions under the programme areas are aligned with the education/training objectives of the University.

4.4.4 The University also provided the following information for review by the Financial Expert:

- (a) Institutional surplus achieved from AY2014/15 to AY2023/24;
- (b) Income and expenditure of the University for AY2019/20 to AY2023/24;
- (c) Latest forecast for AY2023/24; and
- (d) Financial Plan for AY2024/25 to AY2028/29.

4.4.5 The Panel noted the following comments of the Financial Expert:

- (a) The Five-year Financial Plan outlines the projections for income, expenditure, and operating surplus under the prudent and realistic scenario. The Financial Plan aligns with the

strategic and academic plans, providing guidance for long-term decisions of the University;

- (b) The mechanism and implementation of resource planning has been comprehensive and effective in ensuring the availability of human, financial, physical, and information resources necessary for the quality operation of programmes under the programme areas; and
- (c) The consistent annual surpluses of the University achieved over the past ten financial years demonstrates the effectiveness of financial management.

4.4.6 On physical resources and learner support services, the Panel toured the campus and visited major facilities such as the library, lecture theatres, simulation facilities and laboratories. The Panel also met with representatives from the University on the provision of learning, teaching and enabling resources and services. The Panel reviewed the mechanisms in place for the management and deployment of such resources and services and evidence of actual implementation in supporting the development of the programmes under the programme areas, and made the following observations:

- (a) With the growing student population, the University has explored and implemented a range of interim measures to cater for the short- to medium-term need for physical space before the opening of the planned new campus in Shatin (paragraph 4.4.2);
- (b) From the discussion with representatives of the University, the Panel was given to understand that more up-to-date computational resources, in particular resources related to AI, would be conducive to not only learning and teaching but also research. The Panel opined that enhanced provision of such resources would be beneficial to learning, teaching and research development in the programme area of Information and Communication Technology and beyond, and put forward the following recommendation:

Recommendation

The University should keep under regular review its computational resources, especially those on AI, so that they remain up-to-date, accessible and adequate in supporting the learning, teaching and research needs of the University.

- (c) The Panel noted that SSCED programmes are delivered at the participating secondary schools (paragraph 4.2.5). However, there was no formal arrangements governing the University's use of the premises and facilities of these secondary schools in the delivery of the SSCED programmes. With a view to ensuring adequate oversight of the University over the physical resources for the SSCED programmes, the Panel stipulated a pre-condition in paragraph 4.2.5.
- (d) The Panel also observed the following relative to the provision of learner support resources and services:
 - (i) During the site visit, some representatives from the University remarked that enhanced provision of sports and social learning facilities would be conducive to the socio-cultural experience and whole person development of students. Also, some students, in particular those who study part-time, expressed difficulties accessing the library, IT support services and the canteen in evening hours when they attend classes; and
 - (ii) The current Academic Advisory System (AAS), which has been effectively implemented, comprises two levels. Level I Advisors provide general support to students in their first year of study. Level II Advisors provide specific support to five designated groups of students covering those with special educational needs, students considered academically at-risk, non-local students and those who are non-Chinese-speaking or from ethnic minorities. The Panel opined that it would be in the students' interest to expand the scope of the AAS to cover students not within the two-level advisory system who desire academic advisory services.

The Panel noted that the University has implemented measures to enhance the availability of learner support resources and service. For example, the University has been utilising external sports facilities for sports training. The canteen opening hours have also been extended to cater for the needs of students attending evening classes. In the spirit of facilitating future planning and enhancement of learner support resources and services especially in light of the

planned development of the Shatin campus, the Panel put forward the following advice:

Advice

The University is advised to consider enhancing the provision of and broadening students' access to its physical resources and support services with a view to further enhancing students' learning experiences and whole person development.

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 The University has in place an internal quality assurance system (QAS) underpinned by the fitness for purpose and transformation of students with an emphasis on the effectiveness and outcomes of learning. The QAS framework and relevant processes at the institutional, school and programme levels are documented in the Quality Assurance Handbook. The Panel was provided with the latest version of the Quality Assurance Handbook, and noted that a committee system has been in place involving institutional and school/unit level boards and committees to handle matters pertaining to quality assurance.
- 4.5.2 The terms of reference, composition, and membership of the boards and committees are specified in the Committee Handbook. The Committee Handbook also contains the rules of procedures for the conduct of meetings for the various boards and committees of the University.
- 4.5.3 The Panel noted that the University has solicited and acted upon external input as part of its established QA processes. For example, External Examiners with academic or professional standing and experience in teaching and assessment are appointed to ensure assessment and academic standards of programmes are commensurate with those of similar programmes operated by other institutions. External Advisors are drawn from academics and representatives from relevant industries and professions and engaged as school-level Advisory Committees members to offer

insights on various aspects of a school's educational provisions. Students' feedback is collected through a number of means such as the CTE, Programme Evaluation, student forums, and Graduate Destination Survey (GDS). Employers' input is solicited by means of employer surveys.

4.5.4 To demonstrate the effective implementation of the University's quality assurance system and policies/procedures relative to the programme areas, the University provided the following information:

- (a) Meeting minutes of the BoG, Council, AB, SMG, MT, QAC-Academic, QAC-Admin, and LTC;
- (b) Meeting minutes of School Board, Programme Committee, Examiners Committee and Advisory Committee;
- (c) Annual Programme Reports;
- (d) Special Programme Review Reports for the BBA and BEMDB programmes;
- (e) External Examiner Reports;
- (f) CTE Reports; and
- (g) GDS Reports.

Having reviewed the above documents and discussed with representatives of the University, the Panel noted evidence of the effectiveness of the quality assurance system that has led to improvements through, for example, acting on feedback from students and External Examiners, benchmarking programmes against similar programmes operated by other institutions as part of the programme development and review processes, and reviewing programme positioning and curriculum based on actual implementation.

4.5.5 Noting the actions taken to maintain its quality assurance system, the Panel considered that the University has maintained an effective quality assurance system for ensuring the quality and standards of its programmes under the programme areas.

Programme Area Accreditation

Programme Area Domains

4.6 Programme Area Development and Management

The Operator must substantiate the proposed programme area by its track record of operation of HKQF-recognised learning programmes in relevant discipline or industry areas, in alignment with organisational objectives and planned resources.

- 4.6.1 The proposed programme area “Nursing and Health Care Studies” is hosted by the S.K. Yee School of Health Sciences (SHS), which currently operates the accredited programmes under the programme area including the Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) (BN), Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) (BHS) and Higher Diploma in Enrolled Nursing (General) (HDEN). The three programmes were first accredited in 2014, 2017 and 2021 respectively.

- 4.6.2 The University proposed the following scope statement for the programme area:

The study and training in the maintenance and promotion of general nursing and health care services, as well as the caring for the sick and the disabled as individuals, or in families, groups, institutions, home settings and the community

The Panel considered that the proposed scope statement is commensurate with the programmes under the programme area.

- 4.6.3 The Panel reviewed the statistics of the programmes under the programme area, including the number of applications, enrolment numbers, and graduation numbers. The Panel made the following observations:

- (a) There has been steady growth in the number of students enrolled in the programmes;
- (b) The growth in enrolment figures for the BN programme includes the offering of applied degree places from AY2022/23 onwards;
- (c) Graduate survey results indicated high employment rates, and most graduates took up job positions in the areas of medical and health care services.

4.6.4 On the planning and development of the programme area, the Panel noted that the SHS has conducted a school-level SWOT analysis which covers the programme area. The Panel also reviewed the Academic Plan of the SHS for AY2024/25 to AY2028/29. The Panel was given to understand that the University plans to maintain the three existing programmes, and introduce three new programmes including the Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Community Health and Practice (BScCHP), Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Biomedical Laboratory Sciences (BScBLS) and Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Pharmaceutical Dispensing (BScPD). The Panel noted that the development of these new programmes was at the stage of planning for input collection and benchmarking exercises.

4.6.5 In the *Response to Panel's Initial Comments*, the Panel sought input from the University regarding the rationale for including the BScBLS and BScPD in the programme area. The Panel further exchanged views with the University on the considerations for having the two programmes in the programme area given the programme area scope, along with other relevant issues such as the planned curricula and anticipated resource implications for the two programmes. The Panel made the following observations:

- (a) Biomedical laboratory sciences and pharmaceutical dispensing are highly specialised subject matters that could not be adequately covered by the scope of the programme area;
- (b) The Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) of the two programmes do not have a focus on the areas covered by the programme area; and
- (c) Although there are nursing- and healthcare-related courses in the two proposed programmes, those courses were primarily foundation courses to prepare students for more advanced courses in the specialised subject matters of the respective programmes.

Based on the above, the Panel considered that the BScBLS and BScPD programmes should not be covered in the programme area. The University was advised to seek separate Learning Programme Accreditation from HKCAAVQ for the two programmes in due course.

4.6.6 For the proposed BScCHP, the University shared that the top-up programme targets students with training in the healthcare discipline

who wish to pursue higher education and acquire skills to work in the community to provide health services. The programme aims at nurturing students with knowledge and practical skills in community health. Students of the programme will possess hands-on skills to work on clients' health as an individual and health promotion skills to promote health to the public. Graduates will also be equipped with the knowledge and skills for career advancement to supervisory and management roles in the healthcare sector. Having considered the available information, the Panel formed the view that the planning and development of the BScCHP are appropriate and in alignment with the University's objectives.

- 4.6.7 Based on paragraphs 4.6.4-4.6.6, the existing and planned programmes under the programme area are as follows:

Programme	QF Level	Existing	Planned
Bachelor of Nursing (Honours) (BN)	5	✓	
Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours) (BHS)	5	✓	
Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Community Health and Practice (BScCHP)	5		✓
Higher Diploma in Enrolled Nursing (General) (HDEN)	4	✓	

- 4.6.8 Regarding the development of new programmes under the programme area, the University has confirmed the understanding that while an Operator with PAA status may develop and operate learning programmes within the approved scope of the programme area at the specified QF level or below within the validity period without undertaking HKCAAVQ's Learning Programme (Re-)Accreditation, such programme should have been specified in the academic plan with details when the Operator underwent the PAA process. Prior approval from HKCAAVQ should be sought before implementing the corresponding substantial change(s) to an approved programme area, including changes to the academic plan.
- 4.6.9 On review and continuous improvement of provisions under the programme area, the Panel noted that the University has in place mechanisms to solicit input from various stakeholders such as students, External Examiners and External Advisors from the SHS Advisory Committee. Benchmarking exercises with programmes of a similar nature offered by other local institutions are also conducted.

For example, the Panel was given to understand that the curriculum of the BHS programme was revamped in 2021 following input from stakeholders. The programme was re-positioned to incorporate supervisory and practical management skills, as well as knowledge and skills on community service management. With the revamped curriculum highlighting management in the healthcare context, the Panel observed that the programme title, which has remained unchanged, continues to indicate health sciences as the key subject matter of the programme. During the site visit, the Panel exchanged views with the University on the balance between health sciences and management elements given the programme title. Noting that the University has well-established mechanisms in place on programme review and continuous improvement, the Panel made the following recommendation for continuous enhancement of the programme area:

Recommendation

The University should continue to keep under regular review the alignment among the title, objectives and PILOs, as well as curriculum and content of programmes under the programme area so that they remain consistent in reflecting the intended positioning of the programmes.

- 4.6.10 The Panel noted that the SHS Advisory Committee is formed through the engagement of experts and practitioners from the academia, industry, commerce, government and community sectors to provide input and advice on the planning and review of various aspects of the work of SHS at the school and programme levels. Having reviewed the composition and sample meeting minutes of the SHS Advisory Committee, the Panel was of the view that the mentioned advisory mechanism has been largely effective in facilitating the development of the programme area in alignment of organisational objectives and planned resources.
- 4.6.11 In consideration of the above, and having taken into account the vision and mission of the University and the planned resources, the Panel formed the view that the University had a track record of operation in the programme area of Nursing and Health Care Studies at QF Level 5, which is in alignment with its organisational objectives and planned resources.

4.7 Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The Operator must have developed and implemented effective policies for the development of learner-centred strategies for achievement of learning outcomes through alignment of educational/training objectives, learning experiences, assessment, and learning support.

4.7.1 On learning, teaching and assessment, the Panel reviewed the mechanism and evidence of implementation of the following:

- (a) Policies and mechanisms on learning, teaching, assessment and feedback;
- (b) Mechanisms and processes for monitoring, evaluating and enhancing learning and teaching effectiveness; and
- (c) Collection and analysis of learner data and statistics.

4.7.2 At the institutional level, the University outlines the principles informing learning and teaching in the Learning and Teaching Policy, which is underpinned by outcome-based learning and teaching. The Panel reviewed samples of mapping of courses and graduate attributes against the PILOs. At the course level, the University provided sample syllabi for courses of programmes under the programme area. The Panel noted that the syllabus document for each course include information on the course description, Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs), teaching and learning activities (TLAs), assessment tasks/activities (ATs), mapping of CILOs, TLAs and ATs, indicative course contents, and relevant reading materials.

4.7.3 The Panel noted that the learning and teaching strategies for programmes under the programme area typically include lectures, tutorials, laboratory sessions, workshops and clinical practice. The University also shared that it has in place the E-learning Policy to encourage the adoption of innovative learning and teaching strategies. For example, part of the BHS programme, which is a part-time top-up programme targeting those working in health-related sectors, is delivered online. The Panel noted from the sample learning, teaching and assessment materials, students' feedback as well as regular programme and course evaluation that the online delivery arrangement has been largely effective in delivering the intended learning outcomes. Additionally, the University shared that the SHS is exploring and developing the use of virtual reality to

enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching, though such strategies have yet to be formally implemented.

- 4.7.4 In terms of assessment, the Panel was given to understand that a range of assessment strategies were adopted for the programmes under the programme area. Guided by the University's Assessment and Feedback Policy, assessments for taught courses involves a mixture of continuous and summative assessments which reflect the nature and objectives of individual courses and cater to students' needs. Continuous assessment tasks typically take the forms of assignments, laboratory reports, quizzes and tests. Summative assessment tasks, on the other hand, are usually in the forms of written and/or practical examinations, nursing care plans, or written projects such as term papers and project proposals. In response to the increasing prominence of AI, the Panel noted that the University has in place a Generative AI Policy to provide guidance on the use of generative AI tools in learning, teaching and assessment.
- 4.7.5 The Panel noted that the University has mechanisms in place to collect and analyse student data at various stages of their student life and after graduation to track their achievement and satisfaction. The tools include the CTE, Programme Evaluation and GDS. The CTE and Programme Evaluation are conducted on a semester and yearly basis respectively to collect feedback from students on, among other things, the quality of teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support, and learning resources. The GDS collects information on graduates' employment and articulation pathways. Further, student voices are represented in platforms such as Programme Committee meetings and forums with Deans and Associate Deans. The Panel observed that the mechanisms in place are generally effective in evaluating the quality of learning, teaching and assessment for continuous improvement purposes.

Based on the above, the Panel considered that the programme area has effective policies in place for the assessment of learning outcomes.

4.8 **Staffing and Staff Development**

The Operator must have a suitably qualified and competent workforce which is capable to develop and deliver learning programmes in the proposed programme area, and can ensure sustainable development of the proposed programme area.

4.8.1 On staffing, the Panel was provided with the following information:

- (a) Procedures and criteria in staff recruitment and appointment;
- (b) Institutional mechanisms and processes governing staff workload,
- (c) Profile of current programme area teaching staff;
- (d) Projected programme area staffing for AY2024/25 to AY2029/30; and
- (e) Staff appraisal system

4.8.2 Having reviewed the above information and discussed with representatives of the University during the site visit, the Panel made the following observations:

- (a) Based on the academic and/or professional background and scholarly activities of the current teaching staff reviewed, the Panel considered that the expertise of the staff could adequately cover the scope of the programme area;
- (b) The projected programme area staffing is commensurate with the development of the programme area;
- (c) Mechanisms and processes relative to staff recruitment, appointment, management and performance review are specified in the Staff Handbook, which the Panel reviewed; and
- (d) The University has in place an Academic Workload Allocation Policy, which sets out the principles of workload management. The Panel noted that the operation of the workload allocation model is monitored annually to ensure fitness for purpose, and the policy is reviewed at least every three years.

4.8.3 Regarding staff development, the Panel reviewed the teaching and learning, clinical training, mentoring training, research development and team building activities organised by the SHS from AY2020/21 to AY2022/23, as well as research seminars organised by the SHS from AY2022/23 to AY2023/24. The Panel formed the view that the programme area staff has engaged in development activities covering pedagogy-related activities, scholarly activities and

research that are generally adequate to support the development of the programme area.

4.8.4 The Panel noted that enhancing applied and interdisciplinary research capability has been a priority at both the institutional and school level. The University has established research centres to make data analytics and research platforms available to all schools. Institutional research grants were also in place to encourage the development of research proposals. At the school level, the SHS has set up a Research Committee to facilitate the development of young and early career academics and to serve as a platform for exchange of research experience. The University also shared that research in the SHS has been driven by ten Research Theme Groups with a view to cultivating teamwork in research. Through discussion with representatives from the University at the site visit, the Panel was given to understand that academic staff engaging in research, whether at professorial or lecturer grades, are given teaching load relief. In relation to the evaluation of research performance, the Panel noted from the *Response to Panel's Initial Comments* that information on the performance of each Research Theme Group was collected on a semester basis by the research convenors for reporting to the Associate Dean (Research), who shares the information with all the research convenors and members. However, the Panel observed that staff research performance was not formally evaluated. As the SHS aspires to strengthen its research capacity in line with institutional strategic priorities, the Panel considered it beneficial for the School, and the University as a whole, to have in place a formalised mechanism to evaluate the research performance of academic staff. In this regard, the Panel put forward a recommendation in paragraph 4.2.6.

4.8.5 In consideration of the above, the Panel formed the view that the University has a suitably qualified and competent workforce capable of developing and delivering learning programmes in the programme area and can ensure its sustainable development.

4.9 **Programme Area Resources and Services**

The Operator must have implemented a well-managed approach to its provision of learning, teaching and enabling resources which aligns with the current and planned development of the proposed programme area.

- 4.9.1 The Panel's observations on the mechanism and processes in place for resource planning at the institutional level are discussed in section 4.4. At the programme area level, the Panel noted that the SHS has in place a set of Standard Operating Procedures of Financial Management detailing the policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities relative to budget management and expenses handling. Programme area resource planning are first discussed at the corresponding Programme Team Meeting and Programme Committee at the programme level, before further deliberation at the Health Sciences Management Team at the school level. The School then consolidates its resource proposal as part of the institutional annual budget planning process.
- 4.9.2 The Financial Expert reviewed the financial position of the University from AY2018/19 to AY2023/24, latest institutional financial forecast for AY2023/24, and Five-year Financial Plan of the University and the SHS covering AY2024/25 to AY2028/29. The Panel noted the comments from the Financial Expert that the data demonstrated strong financial viability underpinned by an effective approach in financial management. The Financial Expert's observations on the financial position of the University and the mechanisms for financial management are discussed in section 4.4.
- 4.9.3 On programme area-specific resources, the Panel reviewed the library resources as well as laboratory and simulation facilities relevant to the programme area. During the site visit, the Panel had a tour of the specialised facilities for the programme area, and noted how these facilities have been utilised in the learning and teaching within the programme area. The Panel considered that the programme area has adequate facilities to support its academic planning.
- 4.9.4 On student services, the Panel reviewed relevant information in the accreditation documents and met with representatives of various responsible units including the Registry, Library, Finance and Estates Office, Student Affairs Office (SAO) and the Information Technology Services Centre, who shared how their units ensure the quality and relevancy of their services. For example, the SAO serves as the focal point of student support initiatives, services and activities through planning, implementing and managing a variety of student services including, among others, personal development programmes, extracurricular learning programmes, and health and well-being promotion initiatives. The Panel considered that there are appropriate policies and mechanisms to ensure the quality of student services.

- 4.9.5 In consideration of the above, the Panel concluded that the Operator has a well-managed approach to its provision of learning, teaching and enabling resources to support the programme area.

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 (<https://www.elegislation.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 <https://www.hkgf.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.

Ref: 49/34/01

16 April 2025

JoH/CQ/KnL/jof

Saint Francis University

**Periodic Institutional Review for 3 Programme Areas and
Programme Area Accreditation in Nursing and Health Care Studies**

20-23 January 2025

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