Principles, Policies and Practices for Quality Education

Previous Version:	*Section 1, Quality Assurance Framework: Principles, Policies and Practices for Quality Education*, CCCU Quality Assurance Handbook, 2006
Date Approved:	September 2006
Effective Date:	September 2006

Purpose

1. To provide a framework for quality assurance of academic programmes, teaching, learning, and assessing students, and for benchmarking against international standards.

Scope

2. All Associate Degree (AD) courses and programmes offered by CCCU.

Principles for Quality Education

3. Community College of City University (CCCU) is committed to the provision of a high-quality education and learning experience for all its students.

4. CCCU believes that education quality and quality assurance are an institutional and collective responsibility. This responsibility is implemented through the system of governance of City University and CCCU, and through maintaining a culture of quality among staff and students.

5. CCCU is committed to the continual development, recognition and rewarding of quality in all aspects of staff activity in the provision of high-quality education at CCCU.

6. City University ensures that the awards granted by the University Senate and the Academic Board of CCCU are equivalent in standard to similar awards granted by other internationally recognised universities and institutions.

7. The University and CCCU recognise an obligation to be accountable to stakeholders.

Policies for Quality Education

Roles and Responsibilities

Delegation of Responsibility from the University Senate

8. Under the City University of Hong Kong Ordinance, the Senate of the University is required to "plan, develop, and maintain the academic programmes offered by the University", "direct and regulate the teaching … at the University", and "decide on the award of degrees and other academic awards of the University".

9. With regard to Associate Degree programmes leading to Senate awards that are under the management of the Community College of City University (CCCU), Senate has delegated to the Academic Board of the CCCU (the Academic Board) the responsibility to maintain the academic standards and educational quality of these programmes, and on behalf of Senate to:

   a) Approve academic plans, student intakes and enrolment, and discontinuation of programmes;

   b) Approve entrance requirements and maintain an appropriate academic standard at entry;

   c) Approve the curriculum of new programmes;

   d) Approve changes to programmes;

   e) Approve academic regulations for student progress through programmes of study, assessment of students, and requirements for graduation;

   f) Establish principles and policies for the assurance of the academic standards and quality of programmes of study; and

   g) Decide, on behalf of Senate, awards of Associate Degree for students successfully completing their programmes.

10. In making this delegation of responsibility to the Academic Board, Senate requires that the Academic Board report annually to Senate, through the Quality Assurance Committee, on programmes of study leading to Senate awards of Associate Degree. The report should, for the reporting period, include an account of:

   a) The development of the curriculum of Associate Degree programmes, including the addition of new programmes, the discontinuation of programmes, and major changes to programmes;

   b) Efforts made to assure the quality and academic standards of programmes through monitoring and review of the curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment;

   c) Changes, if any, to the Academic Regulations or arrangements for maintaining and improving the quality of programmes; and

d) Summary information on intake, enrolment, graduation of students, and on the resources available for students' academic programmes and learning experience.

11. Notwithstanding this delegation of authority, Senate remains the final authority for the academic management of all programmes leading to Senate awards.

A Quality Culture

12. CCCU expects all staff and students to participate in, and have ownership of, policies and processes for the assurance of quality and academic standards.

13. CCCU supports a self-critical and reflective approach to its work, and welcomes and responds appropriately to criticism and feedback from students and other stakeholders.

14. CCCU's framework of governance provides academic staff with a wide range of opportunities to participate in the academic management of the College. Moreover, in their areas of expertise, the College expects academic staff to exercise professional autonomy to further educational goals.

15. Students are encouraged to make an active contribution to the improvement of education quality in CCCU.

Arrangements for Quality Assurance and Maintaining Academic Standards

16. Arrangements and activities to maintain and improve education quality and academic standards should be characterised by:

a) A forward-looking outlook, oriented to the task of improving education quality;

b) Coverage of all aspects of students' educational experience;

c) Clear definition of policies and procedures;

d) Regular monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning quality within formal systems capable of operating independently of particular individuals;

e) Recognition of the importance of feedback from 'stakeholders' (e.g., students, employers, professional bodies);

f) Recognition of the importance of external benchmarks in establishing the quality of teaching and learning and of academic standards;

g) Establishment of mechanisms to identify and disseminate examples of good professional practice;

h) Provision of the facilities and resources necessary to support activities to enhance and improve the quality of teaching and learning.

17. Arrangements to maintain and enhance education quality should be subject to regular review and periodic audit to ensure their continued effectiveness.

Process for Curriculum Development and Changes to Curricula

18. Detailed arrangements for curriculum design, development and approval are matters for CCCU to decide. However, in exercising the delegated authority of Senate, the Academic Board should establish arrangements for curriculum development that have the following features:

   a) Where changes or new developments under consideration go beyond the authority of the individual academic staff delivering courses, proposals should be subject to scrutiny by colleagues, and students should be consulted.

   b) Where changes may have a significant impact on learning outcomes or academic standards, these changes should be subject to review by members of CCCU not directly involved with the academic programme. The views of external experts, professional bodies, former students, and employers should be actively sought and taken into account.

   c) Proposals for changes, and approved changes, should be documented clearly, so that stakeholders are informed of proposals that affect them, and CCCU's catalogue of courses and programmes can be maintained accurately.

19. In approving changes to curricula, the Academic Board should ensure that:

   a) The structure of, and changes to, programmes are consistent with the academic regulations.

   b) The assignment of credit units to student work is consistent with standards appropriate to the level of the award.

   c) The academic standard of the award is comparable with the academic standard of similar programmes elsewhere.

   d) The curriculum of courses and programmes is consistent with CCCU's overall objectives for students' education.

   e) Teaching, learning and assessment strategies have been given appropriate attention, and are aligned to the intended learning outcomes of courses and programmes.

   f) Resources to deliver programmes and courses are adequate.

   g) Where necessary, arrangements for the transition of students to new curriculum requirements have been made.

Assuring and Improving the Quality of Education

20. In discharging its responsibility to the Senate for the education quality of academic programmes, the Academic Board relies on Divisions to maintain and improve the quality of the educational provision for which they are responsible. General guidelines to facilitate Divisions to assure and improve the quality of education are documented in *paragraphs 37 - 40*.

21. Divisions should ensure that new, full-time academic staff, have received adequate orientation to their teaching role at CCCU.

22. Divisions should pay particular attention to the work of part-time lecturers to ensure that the quality of teaching delivered by part-time staff is comparable to that of full-time staff. A Code of Good Practice for part-time teaching is provided in *paragraph 41*.

23. Divisions are required to report annually to the Academic Board on the courses and programmes for which they are responsible.

The Evaluation of Teaching

24. CCCU evaluates the teaching of staff on an individual basis. The primary purpose of teaching evaluation is to improve teaching. The evaluation scheme clearly indicates who should initiate evaluations, who receives the results, how often evaluations occur, how they are administered, and what follow-up procedures will result from the evaluation outcomes.

25. The scheme is designed to provide the most valid (accurate), reliable (consistent), comprehensive, and credible information on the quality of an individual's teaching performance consistent with the intended objectives, taking into consideration the time and effort of both students and lecturers.

26. Where evaluation of teaching is undertaken as part of a summative assessment of performance, in addition to student feedback, evidence is included from other appropriate sources such as peer review, individual reflection, and expert observation. Guidelines for the evaluation of teaching are in *paragraphs 43 - 56*.

Student Assessment and Academic Standards

Purpose of Student Assessment

27. Assessment is the crucial link between effective teaching, student learning, and educational standards. It is important to ensure that assessment tasks are aligned to the intended learning outcomes identified for courses and programmes.

28. While respecting the professional discretion of lecturers to decide precisely when and how assessments should be conducted, the principles, policies, and procedures stipulated in the documents *Principles and Policies on Assessment* and *Assessment and Examination Procedures for Associate Degree Programmes* (refer to **Section III**) should be observed.

Course Examiners

29. Heads of Divisions should appoint a Course Examiner for each course to be assessed. The Course Examiner is responsible for coordinating the assessment of course outcomes, recommending course grades to the relevant Assessment Panel for the course, and ensuring that the Assessment Panel has the necessary information about the assessment criteria of the course.

Assessment Panels

30. Heads of Divisions should establish an Assessment Panel for courses offered by the Divisions. Chaired by the relevant Head of Division, Assessment Panels must include the Course Examiners for courses being considered, and may include members of the Division associated with the course. No course may be considered by more than one Assessment Panel. The duties of Assessment Panels are:

    a) To maintain the academic standard of assessment in courses for which the Panel is responsible;

    b) To determine the final grades for students in courses;

    c) To consider requests from students that illness, or other circumstances, be taken into account in setting students' grades.

Grading and Grade Distributions

31. Course grades should be assigned on the basis of the 'grade descriptions' provided in the Academic Regulations.

32. Course Examiners and Assessment Panels should take into account the guidelines adopted by the Academic Board when assigning student grades.

Benchmarking against International Standards

33. In exercising their duty to maintain academic standards in courses for which they are responsible, Assessment Panels should make reference to international norms for similar courses at other internationally-recognised institutions. The arrangements adopted by Divisions to assure CCCU that the relevant standard is being maintained should conform to the following principles:

    d) Assessment instruments and students' assessed work should be reviewed across a sufficiently wide range of courses, and with sufficient regularity, to provide a credible assurance that academic standards are being maintained by the Division.

    e) Review of assessment should cover the academic level of the course syllabus, the full range of assessment activities in the course, and the extent to which assessment in a course is adequately aligned to the learning outcomes identified for the course.

f) Review of assessment instruments and students' assessed work should benefit from the input of qualified peers, with the necessary experience of similar work in other institutions with an international reputation.

g) Arrangements for the review of assessment in a course in a Division should be clearly documented, and approved by the Academic Board.

Examination Board and the Classification of Awards

34. University awards for which CCCU has been delegated responsibility are classified by the CCCU Examination Board. The Academic Board shall appoint the Examination Board and determine its constitution. The terms of reference and constitution of the CCCU Examination Board is given in the Appendix.

35. A quorum for the CCCU Examination Board is fifty percent of its members.

36. The CCCU Examination Board should make reference to the guidelines presented in *paragraphs 57 - 59*.

Good Practices and Guidelines for Quality Education

Criteria for Academic Planning

37. CCCU considers proposals for academic development and student numbers in the light of the following criteria:

a) **Community Needs** - As expressed or reflected by government, employers, and/or professional associations, and through the CCCU's own contacts with the wider community.

b) **Strategic Considerations** - As set out in academic development plans which may be adopted by the Academic Board.

c) **Competitive Edge of CCCU** – The competitiveness of CCCU in offering the new programme vis-à-vis other providers.

d) **Student Demand** - Demand by new applicants, the quality of applicants and intakes, and internal demand for courses, where students are able to exercise choice.

e) **Academic Merit** - Consistency with the academic direction of CCCU, professional priorities and expertise of staff and contribution to the CCCU's ability to enter emerging academic areas.

f) **Quality of Teaching and Learning** - Ability of units concerned to facilitate sound learning outcomes and to encourage the whole person development of students.

g) **Articulation and Career Opportunities** – The availability of articulation and career opportunities for the programme's graduates.

h) **Adjustment Issues** - Contribution to maintaining minimum effective size of the existing staff establishment.

Activities to Assure and Improve the Quality of Education

38. Divisions are asked to assure and improve the quality of education across the following areas of responsibility:

a) Design and implementation of the academic curriculum for discipline areas and professional mechanisms under the management of the division, including the approach to teaching and learning, assessment of students, and maintenance of academic standards.

b) Design and implementation of an out-of-class educational experience for the Division's students, including: orientation; mentoring; developmental and skill-building activities; and placement.

39. Divisions are asked to establish for these areas of responsibility a mechanism for maintaining and assuring quality that has the following features:

a) Forums for academic staff to engage in discussion about the design and implementation of educational programmes in the Division, encouraging a sense of collective responsibility for quality, innovation and 'out-of-the-box' thinking, and the use of the Division's own professional resources to support the development of staff in their teaching role.

b) Peer review of the design and implementation of academic programmes by academics and practitioners, to assist in the assessment of learning outcomes and setting of academic standards against international norms, the transmission of good practice, and benchmarking.

c) Feedback from stakeholders, including students, employers, alumni and professional bodies.

d) Assessment of learning outcomes as a means to evaluate and improve the Division's performance.

e) An orientation to improvement by the development of concrete action plans, with a well-identified assignment of responsibility and timelines, and a commitment to the evaluation of the impact of actions taken.

40. Divisions should report annually to the Academic Board on the courses and programmes under their responsibility, and on their implementation of systems to assure and improve quality and academic standards.

Code of Good Practice for Part-time Teaching

41. To ensure that the quality of instruction delivered by part-time staff is comparable to that of full-time staff, the following Code of Good Practice for Part-time Teaching has been adopted by the Academic Board to provide a standard for reference, and a basis for action to enhance the performance and quality of part-time teaching:

    a) The recruitment standards in terms of qualifications and experience required for a part-time teaching position should as far as possible be identical to those required for a full-time position.

    b) The employment of part-time lecturers should be confirmed as soon as possible after a decision to hire a person has been made to enable that person to use CCCU facilities for the preparation of materials before commencement of teaching activities. Furthermore, honoraria payable for part-time teaching must be handled expeditiously.

    c) A senior staff member should be appointed by each Division to oversee all part-time teaching matters and to ensure that part-time teaching is of a high quality. Formal recognition for this job should be reflected in the workload of the staff member.

    d) Handbooks or other material containing practical information at both the CCCU and Divisional levels should be made available by Divisions to part-time lecturers.

    e) Briefing(s) should be conducted for part-time lecturers about their role and duties, course aims and learning outcomes, assessment policy and guidelines, teaching evaluation, background of students, etc.

    f) Part-time lecturers should be invited as far as possible to curriculum development activities, Programme Committee meetings, and in social functions of the Division and CCCU, etc., to enhance their sense of belonging and commitment to part-time teaching.

    g) Part-time lecturers should be invited to participate in staff development workshops organised by CCCU, whenever necessary. These workshops should be held at a convenient time for part-time lecturers who should be paid an additional honorarium for their attendance.

    h) Adequate space (working space and lockers) and other facilities including clerical support, stationery, photocopy service, etc., should be provided for part-time lecturers.

    i) Teaching evaluation should be conducted for part-time lecturers in accordance with the Academic Board policy, as for full-time lecturers, through student evaluation of teaching, peer review or other means.

42. Divisional reports to the Academic Board should contain a section reporting specifically on part-time teaching and on any deviations from this Code of Good Practice.

Guidelines for the Evaluation of Teaching

General

43. Teaching evaluation schemes should include student feedback as a substantial, primary element in the process.

44. An individual's teaching should be judged in context – the type and purpose of the teaching, the background of the students, the resources available, the nature of the course, etc.

45. Teaching evaluation data should cover a representative sample of an individual's teaching activities, for example to include a variety of student groups and types of activity – lecture, tutorial, project supervision, the range of courses taught / diversity of knowledge area, etc.

46. Evaluation schemes should clearly separate questions relating to an individual's performance from questions relating to the contributions of others involved in the course. For example, the teacher to be evaluated might not be responsible for the syllabus, the assessment design, etc.

Evaluation Instruments

47. Evaluation instruments should be based on recognised good practice, teaching-learning theory and accepted research findings.

48. Evaluation by students for the purpose of judging and assessing teaching must include a customised version of the Teaching and Learning Questionnaire.

49. Each evaluation instrument should be designed for a specific audience and should only include items for which this audience is capable of giving informed responses.

50. Evaluation instruments should include sufficient data to allow the teaching context to be readily identified e.g., FT/PT students or core/service courses.

Summative Evaluation and Personnel Decisions

51. Where the results of teaching evaluations are to be incorporated into decision-making activities related to career progression, the differences between information collected from formative and summative evaluations must be taken into account, since information obtained for the sole purpose of improving teaching, and often collected before teaching is completed, may be inappropriate to consider when making judgments.

52. Those entrusted with using the information from teaching evaluations for decision-making activities related to career progression should be skilled in interpreting and drawing together the different sources of information.

Administration

53. The administration of teaching evaluation should follow adequate, standardised procedures in order to protect the validity of the information obtained.

54. Evaluation schemes should include clear guidelines as to who may initiate an evaluation and for what purposes. In all cases, the staff member being evaluated must be fully consulted.

55. Evaluation schemes must include clear rules governing the confidentiality of evaluation information and reports. This is particularly the case where the emphasis is on development and improvement.

56. Divisions must provide feedback on the outcomes of evaluations to those involved in providing evaluation data.

Decisions on Academic Awards

57. The CCCU Examination Board is required to classify awards with regard to, but not necessarily in conformity with, students' CGPA.

58. It is the responsibility of the CCCU Examination Board to ensure that academic awards reflect students' achievement of the intended learning outcomes. If, however, the CCCU Examination Board finds any anomaly or inconsistency in the award classification decisions, it should make an appropriate recommendation for consideration by the Academic Board.

59. Decisions on classification of Associate Degree awards should comply with the *Academic Regulations for the Award of Associate Degree*. Award classifications are as follows:

Award	Classification
Associate Degree	Distinction
	Credit
	Pass