



**ASIIN Institutional Accreditation
report for**

**HKU School of Professional and
Continuing Education (HKU SPACE)**

Version: 22/09/2022

Status: final

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A. About the Institutional Accreditation Process

Certification Subject	HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE)	
Experts	<p>Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić (former Head of Higher Education, UNESCO, Senior Advisor to CHEA, Chair, Croatia)</p> <p>Peter P. T. Cheung (former Secretary General, University Grants Committee, Hong Kong, and former Executive Director of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ))</p> <p>Grahame T. Bilbow (former Director of Centre for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and Acting Director of E-learning Pedagogical Support Unit, The University of Hong Kong)</p> <p>Peter van der Hijden (former head of Higher Education Section, European Commission, Independent Higher Education Policy Advisor, Netherlands)</p> <p>Shah Meet Rajesh, (President of the Student Union of HKU SPACE's International College, Hong Kong)</p> <p>Martin Holzwarth, (Consultant Quality Management/TQM)</p>	
Representative/s of ASIIN Headquarter	Iring Wasser, Managing Director ASIIN	
Timeline	Date	Milestone
	11 th – 15 th October 2021	Conduct of virtual evaluation visit
	14 th December 2021	Finalization of the Institutional Evaluation Report
	17 th March 2022	Decision of the ASIIN accreditation commission ASIIN to initiate a top up accreditation procedure on request of HKU SPACE

	8 th April 2022	Conclusion of Accreditation Contract with HKU SPACE
	15 th of June	Submission of an interim “Follow Up” Action plan by HKU SPACE in response to the International Evaluation Report of December 2021
	5 th July 2022	Virtual Accreditation Review by ASIIN expert group
	18 th July 2022	Provision of additional material/answers to questions by HKU SPACE on request of the ASIIN accreditation team
	22 nd of September 2022	Decision by the ASIIN Accreditation Commission
Relevant criteria and sources	Criteria for the ASIIN System Seal / Institutional Accreditation / Institutional Assessment: Requirements for Good Teaching and Successful Learning (20/06/2016) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015)	

Description and depiction of ASIIN's institutional accreditation approach

ASIIN considers institutional accreditation as an instrument for organizational development triggered by a two-staged process of an internal evaluation followed by an audit of external experts. In the first stage, members of the evaluated organization will conduct an internal self-reflection process regarding the functionality and effectiveness of its internal quality assurance system. In the course of this exercise, all relevant stakeholders participate. Subsequently, a self-evaluation report (SER) is edited on the part of the reviewed institution containing a shared internal understanding on strengths and weaknesses of the evaluated subject. After receipt of the SER, ASIIN then assembles an independent team of experts representing the required different stakeholder groups (representatives of academia, professional practice, students) and disposing of suitable expertise concerning the evaluated subject. This team reviews the SER and conducts a site visit at the institution, where the SER is validated in discussions with the relevant stakeholders. The findings are compiled in an institutional accreditation report analysing strengths and weaknesses of the internal QA from an external point of view and summarizing recommendations towards its enhancement.

The structure of the SER as well as the accreditation report are based on the *Criteria for the ASIIN System Seal / Institutional Accreditation / Institutional Assessment*.¹ This set of criteria is designed for quality development in teaching and learning. It refers to (I) the definition of quality and its management, (II) their application on the educational provisions the Higher Education Institution (HEI) is offering, (III) the management of its resources and (IV) quality related transparency and documentation. Each aspect is considered in an *institutional, procedural* and *cultural* perspective or dimension. The approach is furthermore based on a system of so-called maturity levels. This makes for a comprehensive description of the development stage at which the quality management system of the institution presently is. A simplified version of the maturity levels is presented as follows:

- 0 = non-existent
- 1 = defined
- 2 = implemented
- 3 = established and controlled
- 4 = predictive and proactive

¹ Criteria for the ASIIN System Seal / Institutional Accreditation / Institutional Assessment: Requirements for Good Teaching and Successful Learning (20/06/2016). These criteria are in line with the European Standards and Guidelines 2015.

Further information regarding this classification can be found in the above mentioned ASIIN Criteria. The ensuing ASIIN institutional accreditation report is structured as follows:

Four chapters are presented for each of the four evaluation criteria. At the beginning of each chapter, the guiding questions are listed, followed by an analysis and findings of the peers as well as the respective maturity level of the organization's structures, processes and their interaction with cultural characteristics observed by the peers regarding single criteria. Every chapter concludes with requirements and recommendations for further enhancement of quality and organizational maturity.

Special Framework condition of HKU SPACE’s pilot “top up” procedure

This accreditation procedure for HKU SPACE has been designed differently from the usual routine of an ASIIN institutional accreditation procedure. It builds in fact on the findings of a prior evaluation procedure, which HKU SPACE had commissioned to ASIIN in the final months of 2021. An international expert team at the time had looked at a broad range of topics including the question how HKU SPACE can further mature into a World Class Centre of Excellence in continuing education, life-long learning as well as transnational education using international benchmarking as an analytical tool and device for sustained development in the process. Furthermore, the Panel was asked for comments on how HKU SPACE’s aspirations may best be benchmarked in the international context and how to best foster its potential of Lifelong Learning as well its scholarly approach to teaching and learning,

It is important to note in this context, that one of the core components of the review also dealt explicitly with the review of HKU SPACE’s Internal Quality Assurance System against part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines. As the criteria of the ESG Part 1 are fully reflected in ASIIN’s institutional accreditation criteria, the ASIIN accreditation commission in its meeting on March 17th 2022 positively responded to a subsequent request of HKU SPACE for implementing a “top up” institutional accreditation procedure, applying the criteria of the ASIIN “maturity model” in the process. The commission called on the same international expert team responsible for the prior evaluation with Dr Holzwarth serving as an additional ASIIN expert to the team. The follow up review was carried through on July 5th 2022 in the form of a virtual audit of the expert group. On request of the team, HKU SPACE submitted additional material and answered to follow up questions on July 18th 2022. This report summarizes the findings of the ASIIN team.

B. Characteristics of the HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE)

HKU SPACE is an important player in the Hong Kong education landscape and offers a vast array of different part-time and (since the year 2000) also full-time study programmes on practically all levels of the HK Qualifications Framework for multiple purposes and different groups of students in Hong Kong and Mainland China. Altogether, more than 1,000 programmes are currently on offer, with around 350 of them belonging to the category of formal award bearing courses. The portfolio of educational offerings includes a broad range of professional programmes, articulation programmes as well as programmes and courses for the purpose of personal development.

The nature of the institution's massive intake of students (reportedly in the range of over 20,000 full-time equivalents each year) is equally a sign of its deep anchoring in, and relevance to, Hong Kong. Students of all age groups and educational/professional backgrounds, ranging from high school graduates to high calibre business corporates and executives from Hong Kong and Mainland China, enrol at altogether 10 learning centres in Hong Kong and 5 additional ones in Mainland China.

HKU SPACE has been the longest established and most important provider of part time courses in Hong Kong. Its Community College (CC), established in the year 2000, is considered a strong force in fulfilling government's requests to increase the participation rates of HK secondary school graduates in advanced studies. HKU SPACE offers a substantial number of two-year sub-degree programmes, namely vocational Higher Diplomas and well as academic Associate Degrees. The latter, while standalone academic awards, serve as articulation pathways to local and international universities and degrees on upper levels of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework. In addition, the School also offers a one-year Diploma in Foundation Studies, designed to assist high school graduates who do not manage to pass the entry requirements of these Associate Degrees and Higher Diplomas.

HKU SPACE has also managed remarkably well to counteract the impact of a steep decline in the school-leaving cohort witnessed after 2013, continuously contributing its share to increase educational opportunities for the young generation in Hong Kong in line with government aspirations.

HKU SPACE's (virtual) International College for its part adds further societal value by providing cherished opportunities for its Community College graduates to obtain international academic degrees based mainly on Strategic International Partnerships with a small number of respected universities mainly in the United Kingdom but increasingly also in Australia. The extent of Transnational Education (TNE) has considerably increased over the past thirty years. Currently there are more than 4,300 students enrolled in TNE programmes at HKU SPACE, including 500 full-time students progressing from sub-degree programmes, with the remainder being part-time students.

The educational and societal relevance of HKU SPACE extends beyond Hong Kong, as students in the Greater Bay Area and other parts of Mainland China equally benefit from the broad range of educational services on offer. The establishment of the Institute for China Business and the Senior Executive Academy in 2010 and 2019 respectively offering executive programmes as well as postgraduate diplomas to students in Mainland China and to corporates of HK and Mainland companies in promising business areas attests to this.

One of the assets of HKU SPACE is the existence of an extensive Alumni network with more than 300,000 entries at this stage. This strong alumni database serves multiple purposes beneficial to the further development of HKU SPACE: with the delivery of a lifelong learner

card connected to the formal membership as alumni the School increases the marketability of its course portfolio. In addition, it promotes donations further increasing its financial viability. There certainly is also a strong connection to the recruiting of suitable human resources on all levels.

C. Analysis and Findings of Peers

I. Definition of quality

Criterion I.1: Objectives

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which quality objectives of the institution have an influence on the quality of teaching and learning? Which of these quality objectives have a high priority, which have a lower priority? Which of the quality objectives reflect existing strengths of the institution? Which of the quality objectives are oriented towards institutional development and are future-oriented? What are the biggest challenges to maintain the achievement of the quality objectives?

Procedural dimension: Which of the objectives related to the quality of teaching and learning have last been *amended*? What were the reasons for amendment? What are the processes to define, to implement, and to review these objectives on a regular basis?

Cultural dimension: Which values and behavioural patterns have the biggest influence on the quality objectives of the institution? Which objectives are of particular importance for the internal stakeholders? Which groups within the institution particularly relate to which of the objectives? Which objectives are rejected by some stakeholders within the institution? Which possibilities exist to discuss among the internal stakeholders different opinions about the quality objectives of the institution?

Analysis and Findings of experts

HKU SPACE presents a well articulated and compelling “Vision, Mission and Values Statement” (VMV). The institution “aspires to be a world class centre of excellence for the provision of professional and continuing education in Hong Kong, Mainland China and the region”. This VMV statement is based on HKU SPACE’s core values in the pursuit of “innovation, creativity as well as Lifelong Learning for a better future”.

Around three-quarters of HKU SPACE part-time students reportedly holds at least a Bachelor's degree or above. Simultaneously more than 10% of its enrolment is among the senior age group of 60 years and above and continues to grow supported by the establishment of HKU SPACES's "Smart Age Series". The expert groups sees this as testimony to HKU SPACE's holistic view on education and its aspiration to offer life-long learning for everybody.

The vision and mission statement clearly defines and outlines what HKU SPACE aspires to be. During the interviews conducted in the course of the prior evaluation, the Panel repeatedly inquired among different stakeholder groups what HKU SPACE meant to them, what the institution stood for and received a broad range of perceptions of the institution's role and mission. Some respondents referred to HKU SPACE being a "supermarket with the possibility to choose from multiple offers, being sold by friendly shopkeepers in a competitive market". Other interviewees characterized it as an "institution providing valuable pathways to students who otherwise would not articulate to higher education degrees" or they emphasized its role as a "provider of professional higher degrees much in need for the development of Hong Kong society". The expert panel noted however, that HKU SPACE's central strategic quality aspiration to be a world class centre of excellence for professional and continuing education were less prominently presented in the discussions. In their view, this central aspect needs to be communicated more clearly to internal and external stakeholders and the Higher Education community.

From a cultural point of view, the expert group attests a common understanding of quality assurance measures and the existence of a participatory quality assurance culture among HKU stakeholders in pursuit of the further development of the institution. A common understanding of vital elements of HKU SPACE's quality assurance culture among internal and external stakeholder groups is noted, on a procedural level quality assurance measure and policies are concisely developed, implemented, monitored and revised, feedback loops are closed. The experts positively note that all staff are required to sign an annual compliance declaration that they are familiar with the Compliance Manual, which is a compilation of the School's various handbooks, guidelines and policies.

In response to the ASIIN evaluation report of December 2021, HKU SPACE has submitted an interim action plan, listing a series of measures that in the meantime have been implemented or are going to be implemented in the near future. HKU SPACE in this document accordingly reports the release of a press statement in January 2022 providing awareness of the results of the International Quality Review and promoting the School's aspiration of achieving quality excellence in professional and continuing education. HKU

SPACE also disclosed the development of a Q-mark and tagline in March 2021 to build brand awareness and international recognition in quality standards.²

The IQR Q-mark reportedly is applied extensively in various school channels to communicate with both internal and external stakeholders and the Higher Education community. The School channels include various social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, YouTube & LinkedIn), School website, School and college publications (e.g. Prospectus, Newsletter, programme leaflets), banners and posters in Learning Centres.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan, the experts find that the institutional, procedural and cultural dimensions of quality assurance at HKU SPACE are of an advanced state.

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts acknowledge the existence of an excellent, well crafted Vision, Mission and Values Statement guiding the actions of HKU SPACE. The definition of quality has been developed together with the institution's stakeholder and in close cooperation with HKU SPACE's mother body, Hong Kong University proper. The experts also positively note the actions described in the interim action planned, described above. They nevertheless believe that one of the central quality aspirations of HKU SPACE, its aspiration to be a World Class Center of Excellence, needs to be further developed, prioritized and underpinned by appropriated actions. They see the development of a Q-mark as a step in the right direction in this regard.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts agree that high-calibre procedures and QA systems are in place at HKU SPACE for a very varied and diverse institution. They take note of the fact that many facets of its IQA system have been developed in close cooperation with Hong Kong University, both using the same procedures. HKU SPACE disposes of a strong and consistent centralized management that maintains and promotes the associated quality aspirations. These permeate through the different layers and institutions of HKU SPACE, spread across different locations. There remains room for improvement: among HKU SPACE's

² The Hong Kong Q-Mark Product Scheme is a product certification scheme in which companies with production plants in Hong Kong, the mainland China or Macau can join. The scheme aims to endorse those companies with an effective quality management system capable of producing consistent quality products. The Hong Kong Q-Mark Council will test the applicant's product(s) based on international or national standards and at the same time assess the applicant's quality management system.

stakeholders, as there are groups, which are not as closely attached to the central quality aspirations as it could be. This is especially the case of the group of part-time teachers, who are at times dissociated from the institutional level. In the absence of a central campus, it remains a challenge to foster a joint quality culture across the various training centres spread through the city. In addition, there are certainly differences between the various colleges with the virtual International College deserving heightened attention regarding the implementation of a homogenous quality culture throughout the institution.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts observe a high degree of understanding of quality assurance measures among HKU SPACE's stakeholders with some lag between central and local implementation. They are impressed by the fact that that all staff are required to sign an annual compliance declaration that they are familiar with the Compliance Manual, which is a compilation of the School's various handbooks, guidelines and policies. They consider this to be an example of best practice. The experts witness many examples of strong leadership, frequent communication up and down, albeit not always consistently on the course level. In some instances, e.g. in the International College, communication between students and staff take place with program heads showing inadequate direct communication with the part-time teachers.

Criterion I.2: (Quality-) Management System/Governance

Questions

Institutional dimension: What works well with regard to the organisational settings (responsibilities), structures, physical and human resources of the quality-management of the institution? Who is involved, who is responsible, and who is informed? Which changes are planned for the near future with regard to the set-up, structure and resources for quality management – and why? How is the collaboration between the different organizational units (teaching, research, administration) assessed by the different departments, faculties, etc., and by the central management? Which facets of the collaboration are considered useful, which are considered obstructive?

Procedural dimension: Which procedures (processes) for the implementation of the quality-related policy work well? Which processes for the implementation of quality policies need to be improved by the responsible actors? Are further changes in the processes planned? If yes, why?

Cultural dimension: Which typical values and behavioural patterns of the internal stakeholders have a positive effect on the quality management for teaching and learning?

Which stakeholder groups particularly support the quality management for teaching and learning? Which groups are less involved? What are the reasons for higher or lower levels of involvement? What are typical situations leading to changes in the structures and procedures of the quality management system? Who is involved in such changes?

Analysis and Findings of experts

HKU SPACE disposes of a well-functioning, comprehensive, long-standing centralized QA system formally institutionalized back in the year 2000. Relevant policies, procedures, criteria and the assignment of responsibilities are clearly defined. They have been published in various documents such as the Quality Assurance Manual, the Quality Assurance Booklet as well as the QA Manual for Full-time Sub-degree programmes. The experts also note that HKU SPACE has a comprehensive information and QA management system in place generating and providing sufficient data on the macro-level. This data is instrumental in effectively managing the institution, positioning the School in a competitive local and international education market, informing strategic decision making and feeding into corresponding SWOT analysis or measuring the achievement of Key Performance Indicators as part of its Risk Register.

At the same time, the information system generates important data for the further development of the institution's courses and programmes, for organising its learning resources and student support, for monitoring the performance and satisfaction of teacher and students alike and for monitoring the educational and career paths of its graduates. The challenge at hand is the same for any Higher Education Institution: given the abundance of data generated by multiple devices, how can an Internal QA system best process this data? In response to this challenge, the expert team takes note of the fact that HKU SPACE in July 2021 has responded to this challenge by establishing a Quality Analytics Team as part of its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Unit.

As regards the strategic set up and governance structure of HKU SPACE, the review team commends the School on its clear-sighted, forward-looking management. The experts acknowledge that strategic planning is high on the agenda of HKU SPACE leadership and underpinned by suitable quality assurance instruments. Vital tools for positioning HKU SPACE as a self-financing institution in a competitive market are in place and well implemented. Evidence to this effect can be found in the existence and continuous update of a comprehensive Strategic Plan (currently for the period 2017-2025) underpinned by so-called "Annual Operating Plans" (AOPs), which give a detailed forecast for the next academic year and an outline forecast for the following two years. The AOPs are discussed in meetings of HKU SPACE's senior management team at the beginning of each year and their implementation is closely monitored. Equally important is the existence of a Compliance Manual as well as an extensive Risk Register in which all areas (currently 10

areas and another 57 subcategories) of concern for the healthy development of the institution are flagged and suitable counter measures identified.

One of the most compelling signs that HKU SPACE is a well-managed institution can be derived from the fact that it managed to come out of the challenging period of the Pandemic almost unscathed. The institution disposes of impressive financial reserves permitting it to survive even during potentially longer periods of adverse conditions while being in a position to provide necessary investments whenever needed. In terms of satisfaction ratings, HKU SPACE consistently can be found among the top providers, stakeholders attribute high scores to its reputation, the quality of its human resource potential and course portfolio.

In the discussion with representatives at all management levels, the expert team witnessed multiple examples of advanced reflection, anticipatory planning and a healthy interactive working relationship within the institution. The various responsibilities within the institution are clearly defined in its Governance Manual. HKU SPACE is thus well prepared to find appropriate answers to the manifold rampant changes in global education markets. Among the most challenging trends figure the continuing diversification of higher education, the heightened competition with new/alternative educational providers, the individualization of educational pathways in combination with the emerging system of micro-credentials, the trend to offer short courses at an advanced level of the local qualifications framework etc.

The expert group is especially impressed with how the planning in connection with the imminent issue of Cap 320 legislation has taken place. Given the potentially far-reaching consequences of the reorganization of the private, self-financing higher education sector in Hong Kong, the leadership and management of HKU SPACE is meticulously preparing itself for all exigencies. In order to define the way forward, the School has been convening important internal and external stakeholders to discuss necessary adaptations to its strategic set up and to find answers on how to best prepare for the epochal changes to come. A joint Taskforce on Cap 320 was proposed at the recent HKU SPACE Board / Management Retreat by a University Director.

While the experts, generally speaking, see HKU SPACE well prepared for the future, it equally identifies a number of areas, where further actions and reforms are warranted:

One area of improvement relates to the nature and set-up of communication channels between HKU SPACE and its mother body, “HKU proper” in view of the upcoming Cap 320 legal changes. In spite of the fact that the timeline for their initiation is not completely clear (in the discussions it is predicted that they might materialize as early as late 2022 with a three year transition period), the expert team was surprised to learn that, thus far, no structured discussion between the two entities have taken place. Instead, both parties are

currently preparing separately for all eventualities (the so-called “Plans A” and “B”) without being fully aware of the intentions of the other side/partner. In the expert team’s view, there is a broad range of topics which deserve advance planning and communication. Examples in case are the development of suitable governance structures under Cap 320 auspices, a potential need for the review of HKU SPACE’s Memorandum and Articles of Association, its future portfolio as a potentially degree awarding entity or the distribution of market shares in the Greater Bay Area. Other areas for joint deliberation regard the aspects of reputation and branding, areas of intensified cooperation, selection of international partners and financial arrangements and whether this would represent an opportunity to overcome some of the current difficulties HKU SPACE faces because of it not being regarded by the Government as fully self-standing under certain subsidy schemes.

The experts suggest therefore the establishment of appropriate, direct, high-level communication channels, which exceed the formats in place. The current quarterly meetings of the HKU SPACE Board of Directors Meeting, the interactions in HKU Senate or the more technical cooperation in the Quality Assurance Committee, in the Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning (CPE&LL) or in the Joint Consultative Committee are no substitute for targeted consultations and in-depth discussion in view of the manifold challenges described above.

A more pronounced acknowledgment of the remarkable accomplishments of HKU SPACE management in the expert team’s opinion will also contribute to an even more fruitful cooperation between the two partners.

The issue of (international) benchmarking at various levels also deserves heightened attention on the part of HKU SPACE in its strategic quest to become a world class continuing and professional education institution. The experts take note of the comment in the report of the Hong Kong University Grants Committee (UGC)’s Quality Assurance Council, which recognized progress made to date in respect of external benchmarking. In spite of the fact that the Panel came across manifold examples of benchmarking initiatives during the review, it equally finds that a comprehensive, integrated benchmarking strategy is currently not fully in place. In order to implement such a strategy, it recommends further clarifying the different notions and dimensions of benchmarking as a means to boost and sustain HKU SPACE’s quest to become a world-class centre of excellence.

After the team’s evaluation visit in December of 2021, HKU SPACE handed in an interim action plan listing actions taken and/or planned this the review. The institution points out, that a member of HKU’s Management Team will assume the Chairmanship of the Board starting April of 2022, which it considers to be of great value in strengthening direct communication channels with its mother body, HKU proper.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan, the experts find that HKU SPACE disposes of a strong centralised management and a well-functioning, comprehensive and long-standing centralized QA system with many excellent and proactive subsystems.

Institutional level of maturity observed: 4

The experts see multiple evidence of a very strong leadership and a management culture that is proactive and geared to the further development of the institution. They are particularly impressed by the manifold, well-functioning quality management system in place, which are constantly and consistently monitoring the success of HKU SPACE's operations on most levels. Among the most important of these tools figure a Strategic Plan underpinned by Annual Plans operationalizing manifold Key Performance Indicators and guiding the way forward. The experts equally appreciate that HKU SPACE entertains a comprehensive Risk Register in which it flags potential threats to the Institution's operations. The management also continuously monitors HKU SPACES financial status, making sure that economic success is secured even under difficult framework conditions. The processes for the design and the validation of programs as well as outcome assessment are equally strong points (see below).

The experts see room for improvement as regards the quality management of HKU SPACE's International College, which faces the challenges of providing an international learning environment and enough stimuli for its students. There also remains a challenge in providing an active learning environment of HKU SPACES' students and its efforts to implement a student-centred teaching and learning philosophy transforming students into active rather than passive participants in the learning process. These points are however dealt with in more detail in subsequent chapters of this report

Procedural level of maturity observed: 4

The experts note that comprehensive procedures and systems are in place to monitor the success of HKU SPACE as an institutions as well as the individual success of its staff, students and graduates. In this process a huge quantity of important data for the further development of the institution's courses and programmes, management of its learning resources and student is generated.

Where the experts commend HKU SPACE on its efforts to collect extensive data on the success of the institution and its students/graduates, they see room still for improvement in using this data to the best of its abilities. They positively see the established of a Quality Analytics Team as part of HKU SPACE's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Unit and encourage the HKU SPACE to proceed along these lines.

While the experts witness a very collegial teaching environment, the use of teaching survey could be further improved as it currently is more designed as a punitive system; here a more collaborative model is advisable.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts laud HKU SPACE for its participatory approach regarding quality assurance matter. They commend the institutions for the fact that it is open minded to external quality assurance, accreditation as well as benchmarking as a tool for further improvement. Here more can be done, but the experts see that HKU SPACE is actively following this line of action in its quest to become a world class educational centre.

II. Educational Programmes / Courses / Trainings

Criterion II.1: Creation and development of programmes / courses / trainings

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which aspects in terms of organisational settings (responsibilities), structures, physical and human resources have an impact on the effectiveness of creation or further developing programmes? Who normally initiates the further development of programmes? What challenges exist with regard to the further development of the full portfolio of programmes? Which educational offers are considered fit for the future and why?

Procedural dimension: Are the processes to create and further develop educational offers considered effective and efficient? What works well and what should be improved? Where does the incorporation of external requirements (legal, social, professional) work well; where could it be improved? What are the reasons? Which processes exist in order to systematically collect stimuli for the further development of programmes?

Cultural dimension: What is expected from the stakeholder groups involved in the design and further development of educational offers? Who is expected to participate? Does the involvement take place as expected? What happens if conflicts between involved stakeholders occur? To which extent are the relevant stakeholders willing to participate and what is their level of information?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The ASIIN expert group recognizes the advanced level of HKU SPACE's Internal Quality Assurance System, which has matured over time and displays evidence of a quality assurance culture focusing on quality enhancement. An impressive example is the

programme validation process related to the initiation of all new award-bearing programmes at HKU SPACE, in which internal and external stakeholders are involved on a regular basis as a matter of policy for input to curriculum design. The same applies to the organisation of the cyclical 6-year reviews to modernize running programmes. The institution undertakes on a regular basis comprehensive annual planning processes, market analyses and on frequent occasions consult with various stakeholder groups, seeking input for the design and modernization of educational offerings. In its discussion with stakeholders during the preceding evaluation visit, the experts have learned that some of HKU SPACE's programmes are also submitted to professional bodies for external recognition in areas like accountancy, law, nursing and medical laboratory sciences on a case-by-case basis.

The experts are aware of the fact that the quality of HKU SPACE programmes is following the same quality assurance design as its mother body, HKU proper. HKU staff and educational/QA committees play a significant role in establishing and monitoring the quality of HKU SPACE programme's design, approval, delivery and their periodic review. Subject groups on a routine basis prepare outline submission for new programme proposals; in a typical year, around 80 new programmes at HKQF Level 4 and above are launched. Before their initiation, they are first discussed in the respective college/institute boards, before passing to HKU SPACE's School Academic and Management Board, followed by a discussion in the Joint Consultative Committee of HKU and HKU SPACE for award-bearing programmes. Proposals then go to the CPE&LL Board for final approval. The Panel concurs that the symbiotic relationship between HKU and HKU SPACE exerts a substantial, positive influence on quality assurance in HKU SPACE.

The experts have taken note during the preceding evaluation of repeated concerns voiced especially by senior management representatives of HKU SPACE during the interviews that there is a perceived bias to focus exclusively on programmes and courses with a high return of investment, while side-lining other educational offerings that may be equally valuable but generate less income. On occasions, the incubation and nourishment of educational offerings that might be of value to the HK community yet whose short-term return of investment is considered not lucrative enough and may therefore not materialize. Supplementary material provided to the Panel explained that some 40% of programmes are loss making and subsidised by surplus generating programmes while Recognition of Prior Learning activities are also reported to be loss making. The experts nevertheless encourages HKU SPACE leadership to continuously examine how the tension between market needs, the drive for excellence and service to the community can best be resolved and managed.

In its response to the evaluation report of December 2021, HKU SPACE has handed in its interim action plan, containing the following elements:

HKU SPACE therein declares its intention to conduct regular reviews of the market situations, and collecting students' and teachers' feedback on this issue. HKU SPACE also considers adding an item in the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) to review market needs. On the programme level, the AMR is being discussed at the Academic Committee of the programme annually. At College level, this review is part of the AOP exercise and is normally completed in January of each year.

Being sensitive to market needs, individual programme teams within HKU SPACE are also said to be aware of engaging students in community services to enhance their understanding and commitment to social needs at large. Among the examples provided figure multiple design programmes at different qualification levels run by the College of Humanities and Law (CHL) which have built-in small scale community projects related to sustainability, climate change, and digital inclusivity, etc., in the form of capstone projects, individual papers or group presentations as part of the assessment. Furthermore, the Oriental Studies subject group reportedly is currently commissioned by the Education Bureau to operate three projects serving the ethnic minority communities, including a project for the provision of school-based professional support services on enhancing the learning and teaching of Chinese for non-Chinese speaking students in 17 kindergartens. Another project provides services for the running of Chinese language learning support centres for over 800 students, and another project to deliver 18 parent education talks for parents of non-Chinese speaking students in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools is in process. In addition, the subject group also receives a grant from the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) to operate vocational Chinese courses for non-Chinese speaking school leavers.

As regards the College of Life Sciences and Technology, the HKU SPACE Research Team has been producing a "Policy & Market Watch Report" quarterly that enables programme leaders in colleges to update themselves regularly the market needs. The College minutes that "quality of our programmes or our service to the community is always our top priority that will not be sacrificed to meet the market needs."

As regards the Community College: Student intakes and society needs are monitored regularly through collecting information from different stakeholders, e.g. secondary school principals, College Advisors and professionals from industries. Information is also collected through documents, like policy address, manpower report to ensure the Community College in fulfilling its vision of providing multiple educational opportunities to secondary school leavers and to become the leading education institution in the region.

As regards the Institute for China Business as well as the HKU SPACE Senior Executive Academy, they reportedly organise free seminars regularly on hot topics both online and offline. Continuous effort in finding seasoned practitioners to join the teaching teams.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 4

The experts find, the HKU SPACE has an excellent system for programme validation for all award-bearing programmes in place, where internal and external stakeholders are fully involved and cyclical 6-year reviews to modernize existing programmes are in place. In its institutional approach HKU SPACE is following the same design as its mother body, HKU proper. On frequent occasions, the input of professional bodies is sought to integrate the expectations of the specific discipline in question.

In their prior evaluation, the experts had witnessed some grassroots lack of understanding of central management, e.g. the perceived bias to focus exclusively on programmes and courses with a high return of investment while side-lining other educational offerings that may be equally valuable but generate less income. The experts appreciate the additional information of the interim action plan and consider HKU SPACE to be on the right track.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 4

The experts commend HKU SPACE on its manifold and comprehensive planning processes, described above and geared to the further improvement of its study programmes. The institution undertakes on a regular basis comprehensive annual planning processes and corresponding market analyses. Before the initiation of each new programme, its requirements and perspectives are extensively and comprehensively discussed on all levels of the institution.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts witness manifold examples of a strong quality assurance culture focusing on initiating new high quality study programmes. On frequent occasions, programme initiators are reaching out to various internal as well as external stakeholder groups actively seeking their input for the design and modernization of its educational offerings. Its representatives equally convene on a regular basis with professional bodies in many study fields. The experts nevertheless encourage HKU SPACE leadership to continuously examine how the tension between market needs, the drive for excellence and service to the community can best be resolved and managed. The interim report provided by HKU SPACE points to the right direction in their opinion.

Criterion II.2: Implementation of programmes / courses / trainings

Questions

Institutional dimension: What are the strengths with regard to structures as well as to physical and human resources in the *implementation* of educational offers? What are the weaknesses with regard to the structures (e.g. organisational set-up, decision-making paths) and to the resources in the day-to-day work?

Procedural dimension: Which procedures in the implementation of programmes (i.e. the delivery of programmes, i.e. the teaching processes) work well? Which can be considered good practice? Which processes need the particular attention of those responsible? What are the reasons? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: How does the collaboration between the different units work in the day-to-day implementation of teaching? Do typical areas of conflict exist and how are they dealt with? Do all stakeholder groups involved in the implementation of teaching provide the expected input? What are the reasons if expectations are not met?

Analysis and Findings of experts

HKU SPACE as an education provider offers multiple educational offerings for a broad range of clients. Students in the interviews have been generally satisfied with their educational experiences; the same conclusion can be derived from all pertinent survey results provided as part of the Self-Assessment Report.

The expert group confirms that two key pedagogical approaches are part of HKU SPACES teaching philosophy. It observes that an Outcome-based Approach to Student Learning (OBASL) and Criterion-Referenced Assessment (CRA) are both well established and implemented at HKU SPACE. They equally note that the related concepts are understood and operationalised at many levels from Senior Management through teachers to students themselves.

Regarding OBASL, the experts in the course in its discussions with relevant stakeholders during the evaluation visit have come across encouraging examples how this concept is implemented. Teaching staff at HKU SPACE accordingly have been introduced to the theoretical underpinnings of this approach (e.g. Bloom's taxonomy). There is some evidence of an active, student-centred learning philosophy encouraging critical thinking in HKU SPACE's classes. The expert team salutes and encourages these efforts. It recognizes however, that delivering high quality teaching and learning experiences is a work in progress and welcomes reinforced efforts to further stimulate active learning.

It also finds that the experience of being required to teach online during the Covid-19 pandemic has helped many staff to find ways to make their teaching more engaging, served as a catalyst for staff members to become more innovative in their teaching styles, exploiting the many features of the new modes of teaching and learning. The Panel acknowledges that, during this period, considerable support has been provided by HKU SPACE to boost interaction and dialogue between teachers and students. Staff have been instructed in how to use different “activating functions” (e.g. using the polling function on Zoom, letting other students “draw over” the screen to show their understanding, asking them to keep on their cameras).

The experts recognize the positive impact of the Maisy Ho Centre for Teaching and Learning in supporting these developments. The experts nevertheless suggest that HKU SPACE reinforces its support for all activities ensuring that interactive, student-centred learning and teaching become the norm for all educational offerings.

The experts also commend HKU SPACE for being an inclusive educational institution with fair and transparent admission criteria, striving to provide multiple qualification channels to students from various educational backgrounds. The expert team equally commends the institution on its efforts to coordinate the learning outcomes of associate degree and higher diploma programmes in order to smoothen the articulation of its graduates to Bachelor degrees in collaborating universities, thereby facilitating the recognition of prior learning and the access to higher semesters of partner universities. Regarding student progression, drop-out rates and the deviation from standard periods of study, student success within HKU SPACE reportedly is closely monitored. The School has put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression. Student cohorts are generally progressing and graduating in time.

As regards the learning experiences of students in HKU SPACE’s International College, the experts understand, that during the past two years of the epidemic, everybody had to meet online. They are happy to hear, the partner universities prospectively have agreed to resume sending teachers to Hong Kong once the quarantine requirement is no longer in place. The expert team however suggests that their educational experience can be improved. In its opinion, there is a clear need to provide a real international learning environment for its students, who comment that they do not have sufficient interaction with their counterparts at collaborating foreign universities, instead mainly interacting among themselves.

In its response to the expert’s finding HKU SPACE has provided additional information and presents its plans to create a more international learning environment in its (virtual) International College, in which students from other HKU Colleges can enrol:

HKU SPACE announces that in the future it will arrange after-school activities for teachers from overseas universities coming to Hong Kong and their students to enhance communication, if the Pandemic permits.

It also will actively support local and foreign students to form student societies so that students can learn about cultural diversity through various activities. This will take place routinely in the future at the inauguration of the Student Union, in April of every year.

Regarding individual partnerships, HKU SPACE in pursuit of further internationalization will reinforce collaboration with the University of Plymouth, so that Hong Kong students in Hospitality Management and Tourism Management can apply to study in the UK for four months. There is no quota of this scheme. In addition to funding from the International College, the College of Business and Finance will also assist students to apply for government scholarships.

For the College of Life Sciences and Technology and its top-up degree programmes at the School's International College, HKU SPACES university partners in the past would fly their academic staff to Hong Kong annually to teach some modules and conduct guest lectures. HKU SPACE regrets that these arrangements have been suspended during the pandemic time. In addition, its Aviation programme (in collaboration with the Swinburne University of Technology, Australia) reportedly used to have regular study trips for students to visit other countries to understand their aviation industry operation as well as to attend some Aviation conference and exhibition events.

As regards the College of Humanities and Law, HKU SPACE claims that it has always been a priority to provide students at the International College a truly international learning exposure. The College has a number of scholarships in place for students to study abroad at the partner institutions for a whole semester or during the summer. Unfortunately, the pandemic has put a halt to all such overseas learning opportunities since 2020 but hopefully the situation will be improved by the end of 2022 and students can join these activities again. Meanwhile, selected programmes have made possible the exchange between local students and students at the partner institutions by conducting online seminars and workshops in real time to strengthen the identity of the local students as a member of the partner institutions.

The experts appreciate this additional information and encourage the institution to further improve the learning experience of its students in the International College.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that students and graduates are generally satisfied with the quality of study programmes they are enrolled in or have graduated from. They commend HKU SPACE for its strong centralised management and its desire to create an inclusive educational institution with fair and transparent admission criteria, striving to provide multiple qualifications channels to students from various educational backgrounds. As an institution, HKU SPACE has been dealing rather well with the difficult boundary conditions during the Pandemic in implementing its programmes and providing a conducive learning environment. In its International College, more however can be done to create an international learning atmosphere.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that within HKU SPACE two key pedagogical approaches are integral part of HKU Spaces teaching philosophy. They observe that an Outcome-based Approach to Student Learning (OBASL) and Criterion-Referenced Assessment (CRA) are both established and implemented at HKU SPACE to a considerable degree. They confirm that the related concepts are understood and operationalised at many levels from Senior Management through teachers to students themselves.

The experts also acknowledge that HKU SPACE has put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression for its various educational offerings. Student progression, dropout rates and the deviation from standard periods of study as well as student success within HKU SPACE are closely monitored. The experts positively note that student cohorts are generally progressing and graduating in time.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

In spite of the fact that the expert team has encountered evidence that an active, student-centred learning philosophy is becoming established in HKU SPACES' classes, the experts nevertheless suggest that HKU SPACE reinforces its support for a modern teaching philosophy ensuring that interactive, student-centred learning and teaching become the norm for all educational offerings.

While acknowledging the difficult boundary conditions during the time of the Pandemic, the experts nevertheless challenge HKU SPACE for providing a better international learning environment for its students. New ways to establish and increase interaction of HKU spaces students at the International College with their counterparts in collaborating foreign universities need to be designed. The experts appreciate that HKU SPACE has recognized the need for improvement and take note of the action plan provided in the interim, the effects of which will be seen in the future.

Criterion II.3: Cooperations

Questions

Institutional dimension: How is the cooperation with other institutions and between different internal units organized with regard to the implementation of programs (structures and regulations)? What works well in the case of internal or external collaborations, what could be improved? How do such collaborations for programs usually come into being within the institution?

Procedural dimension: Which factors are critical for the smooth organization and implementation of collaborations? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: What principles does the institution have in place for internal and external cooperation for educational offers? Are the existing rules and standards accepted by those affected by them? How are conflicts dealt with? What are the challenges with regard to collaborations?

Analysis and Findings of experts

HKU SPACE's is well vested in its vast networks and intensive community links. An important institutional outcome of this symbiosis is HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College (HPSHCC), the joint venture with a prominent charitable, education and social welfare body. HPSHCC is providing important educational opportunities to Hong Kong society.

The most direct expression of the School's relationship with the community is its Honorary Fellowship Scheme, which annually provides a small number of honorary fellowship awards in recognition of individuals who have contributed to the community, to the School or life-long learning.

The Cooperation with HKU functions well in many areas. In the expert's eyes, the full potential of cooperation in the crucial area of research however has not been materializing as of now. Collaboration between HKU and HKU SPACE in this area has proven to be difficult. Similarly, it is lamentable that the professional development centre of HKU proper is not open for HKU SPACE lecturers.

The experts note extensive collaboration of HKU SPACE's subject groups with various community stakeholder organizations providing much needed work placement opportunities completes the picture. In addition, the School is also a member of a number of Chambers of Commerce, such as the Hong Kong General Chamber as well as the British, Australian, Canadian and US Chambers.

As regards the area of transnational education, the cooperation with foreign universities also can be improved and expanded on. A special exchange program for teaching staff with international partners has been a recommendation in the prior evaluation.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts commend HKU SPACE on its successful implementation of its extensive networks in Hong Kong and the region. One of the most prominent and successful endeavours in that regard is the HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College (HPSCC).

HKU SPACE can also be proud on its alumni network with currently more than 300,000 members. These alumni in manifold ways are a crucial asset to HKU SPACE's quest to be the most sought after provider of professional and continuing education in the state and region.

The experts are equally of the opinion that more can be achieved in the future in boosting the institutional arrangements and partnerships for transnational education.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The expert teams find that HKU SPACE disposes of well-established and impactful systems of cooperation. They in particular commend the School for administering the Honorary Fellowship Scheme, providing a small number of honorary fellowships awards in recognition of individuals who have contributed to the community. As regards the cooperation with HKU proper, the experts recommend to explore proper procedural and institutional arrangements to increase cooperation also in the area of research. The same applies to the execution of its transnational cooperation agreements that can be further upgraded.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

On the cultural level, the experts identify some lag between the central and local understanding of academic collaboration. They are in favour of increasing the opportunities for decentralized staff to feel that they are part of the community, e.g. by introducing academic exchange on a broader scale. Exposing itself more to international cooperation and increasing the possibilities for transnational education exchange will be conducive to HKU SPACE's strategic goals. The experts also recommend finding fruitful modus operandi in the area of research cooperation with HKU SPACE and other actors.

Criterion II.4: Examination systems and organisation of exams

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which rules and structural provisions have an effect on the design of exams in the programs? What works well, what should be improved?

Procedural dimension: Which procedures for the exam methodology and exam organization (including assessment criteria) work well? Which procedures do those responsible have to take particular care of? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which principles do those responsible have to take into account when designing and organizing exams? Are these principles accepted by all involved stakeholders? What role does the institutional tradition have in the design of exams? Are new assessment methodologies taken into account? Which values and behavioural patterns have the highest influence on the exam system and organization? How do these influence the achievement of the objectives for exams? Do typical conflicts exist among those involved with regard to exam methodology and exam organization? How are such conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The expert team finds conclusive evidence that the assessment system at HKU SPACE rests on a broad range of different types of assessment. The experts find that the rules and regulations of examinations are clearly defined and staff members are aware of these rules and apply them. In the discussions with students during the evaluation visit, no particular issues of concern in this area have been raised. The methods and forms of assessment as well as performance-related expectations are clearly defined and communicated transparently and timely. Students before this background have enough preparation time. The results are available without great delay and do not stand in the way of student progression.

Outcome based assessment is a definite strength of HKU SPACE. The fact that assessment rubrics are in place on a systematic level attests to the finding that the achievement of course learning outcomes is taken seriously and that the assessment system is of an advanced nature.

Work in progress is still the overall assessment of achieved learning outcomes (LO) at the programme level. The School has introduced Programme Outcomes Assessment (POA) to inform how effectively assessment measures are contributing to the achievement of learning outcomes. While suitable instruments have been implemented monitoring the

achievement of learning outcomes at the level of individual courses and modules, a complementary mechanism at programme level has only commenced in a systematic manner in the last year.

The School also conducts the Programme Learning Outcomes Survey (PLOS) so that all students are asked to record their views on the achievement of their learning outcomes. This feedback is also reported via the Academic Committee annually and assists in the continuous improvement process. There are also Graduate Outcome Surveys, particularly in the Community College, to measure student progress into the workforce.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

The Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that the rules and regulations of examinations are clearly defined and that all concerned stakeholders are aware of these rules and apply them. The methods and forms of assessment as well as performance-related expectations are also clearly defined, communicated transparently and in time. The experts commend HKU SPACE on its efforts to introduce an outcome-based assessment on the institutional level. The School has been successful in using its examination system to monitor achievement of Learning Outcomes on the course level; the transfer of this system to monitoring achievement of Learning Outcomes on the programme level is however still work in progress.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that HKU SPACE has sound, transparent and fair examination procedures in place. Students are being informed about the details in time and can adequately prepare. The results are available without great delay and do not stand in the way of student progression. HKU SPACE is also making good use of external examiners to check the validity of its grading system. Assessment rubrics are in place on a systematic level to ensure that the achievements of course learning outcomes is taken seriously. The peers conclude that the students are assessed on the basis of transparent and internally checked criteria.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

By and large, the expert team finds that a strong culture exists in terms of examinations. HKU SPACE disposes of a strong centralised management of educational reforms, e.g. the introduction of outcome-based assessment in recent years.

Criterion II.5: Recognition of achievements

Questions

Institutional dimension: Do the rules, structures and responsibilities for the recognition of achievements obtained from other institutions or in a non-academic setting work as expected?

Procedural dimension: Do the procedures for the recognition of achievements obtained from other institutions or in a non-academic setting work as expected? Are there typical difficulties which regularly occur in the procedures? Which changes are planned for which reasons?

Cultural dimension: What are the guiding principles for the recognition of external achievements? Have the relevant members of the institution and interested students and teaching staff been informed of them and do they accept them? How are conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The experts learn about the strong commitment of HKU SPACE regarding multiple learning pathways for students from different backgrounds. HKU SPACE has e.g. a long-standing record of contributing to Hong Kong's policies of increasing the participation rates of HK secondary school graduates in advanced studies. HKU SPACE to that regard offers a substantial number of two-year vocational Higher Diplomas and well as academic Associate Degrees programs. The latter, while standalone academic awards, serve as articulation pathways to local and international universities and degrees on upper levels of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework. In addition, the School also offers a one-year Diploma in Foundation Studies, designed to assist high school graduates who do not manage to pass the entry requirements of these Associate Degrees and Higher Diplomas. HKU SPACE's International College also assists its Community College graduates to obtain international academic degrees based on strategic international partnerships with a number of universities based mainly in the United Kingdom but increasingly also in Australia. The experts in addition learn that HKU SPACE's Community College has become a member of the American Association of Community Colleges. Under this umbrella, various articulation agreements have been granted, resulting in credit exemptions or credit transfer.

In its response to further inquiries by the expert team, HKU SPACE puts on record that it is generally open to the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and virtually all programmes indicate in their entrance requirements that alternative credentials can be considered. This information is set out in the corresponding programme prospectus and on its website. Given the very wide spread of disciplines offered the School also minutes that there is no general policy of Recognition of Prior Learning but rather case by case consideration at the

programme level. In this process, it is helpful that HKU SPACE is widely engaged in the mapping of learning outcomes, which is an essential part of course design and approval and the basis for recognition decisions. The same is valid for embedding industry competencies into the curriculum.

The experts also note that HKU SPACE acts as a RPL Assessment Agency for a number of sectors (Logistics, Import and Export, Security Services, ICT (Operations and Support)) as a service to government. As a measure to recognise work experiences and competencies acquired by practitioners at the workplace, the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) mechanism under the Hong Kong qualification framework provides an alternative route for practitioners to obtain QF-recognised qualifications without undergoing a training programme and facilitates their subsequent progression in learning, and probably in careers. Assessments under the RPL mechanism in each industry are thus conducted by HKU SPACE. The School in executing this process is authorized by the Secretary for Education (SED) in accordance with the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance (AAVQO) (Cap.592) on industry basis.

Finally, HKU SPACE also announces the launch of a Micro-credentials scheme to offer convenient and topical short courses for credit, which can then be stackable to provide more opportunities and convenience for learners.

In terms of outgoing recognition, the Community College has formed agreements with a number of overseas universities while its curricula are also tailored to maximise the opportunity for students to progress to senior years in HK universities. For part-time programmes, there is a conscious effort to provide ladders of opportunity for student progression to overseas degrees (especially those offered in Hong Kong). The School Prospectus provides examples of these.

As regards the existence and use of Diploma Supplements, the experts learn, that they are currently not in use, but that HKU SPACE is providing its students and graduates with transcripts of their results at the end of a course and with a course student handbook at the beginning of their studies which, inter alia, contains the learning outcomes. Students may request a detailed reference from the Programme Team after completion of their studies. The experts are delighted to learn, that Diploma Supplements are on HKU SPACE's agenda for future development as this is a binding requirement for obtaining the ASIIN quality seal.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

In its response to additional expert's queries, HKU SPACE has put on record that all its programmes indicate in their entrance requirements that alternative credentials can be considered. This information is set out in the corresponding programme prospectus and on its website. Given the very wide spread of disciplines offered the School also minutes that there is no general policy of Recognition of Prior Learning but rather case by case consideration at the programme level. In this process, it is helpful that HKU SPACE is widely engaged in mapping of learning outcomes, which is an essential part of course design and approval. The experts nevertheless see value in establishing more formal recognition procedures (see below).

Procedural level of maturity observed: 2

The experts find that there are fair and transparent admission criteria are in place to provide multiple qualification channels to students from various educational backgrounds. It equally commends the institution on its efforts to coordinate the learning outcomes of associate degree and higher diploma programmes in order to smoothen the articulation of its graduates to Bachelor degrees in collaborating universities, thereby facilitating the recognition of prior learning and the access to higher semesters of partner universities

Adequate procedures and systems are in place, e.g. the institution coordinates the learning outcomes of associated degrees and higher diploma programmes in order to smoothen the articulation of its graduate to Bachelor degrees in collaborating universities, thereby facilitating the recognition of prior learning and the access to higher semesters of partner universities.

In Europe, the so-called Lisbon Convention regulates the rules for the automatic recognition of credentials obtained in other educational institutions. Credentials under this Convention have to be accepted by the receiving institutions, unless it proves in writing that these qualifications are not substantially equivalent. Before the background of HKU SPACE's internationalization strategy, the expert teams recommend that the institution is developing a general policy of recognition of prior learning/credits obtained at other institutions.

As this is a requirement of ASIIN, HKU SPACE within a period of one year needs to present a system, how it will deliver a Diploma Supplement to its future graduates.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The expert team in general finds, that HKU SPACE has cultural dispositions of acting as an inclusive educational institution with fair and transparent admission and recognition

criteria, striving to provide multiple qualification channels to students from various educational backgrounds.

Criterion II.6: Assistance and support

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which elements of the assistance and support services offered for students are successful? Which changes are required? What are typical challenges to be overcome? Are the physical and human resources adequate and sufficient to implement the expected assistance and support services? How is this verified?

Procedural dimension: How do the processes to provide assistance and support work? Which processes are considered to work well, which need to be improved? Do the members of the institution who are involved in the assistance and support have sufficient information and resources? Are the target groups for assistance and support reached as intended? How is this verified? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Are the offers of assistance and support available used by the intended target groups? If not, why not? How satisfied are the individual target groups with the assistance and support on offer?

Analysis and Findings of experts

HKU SPACE has established a broad range of systems to support students during their studies and their stay at the institution. The expert team positively notes that students are satisfied with the quality of their teaching staff, the mentoring and tutoring system as well as with the administrative support offered by the School. As part of its quality assurance system, HKU SPACE has instruments in place to monitor and measure student satisfaction with their academic environment and to take appropriate action where needed.

One important mechanism for (anonymized) student feedback on academic provision at HKU SPACE is the so-called Learning Experience Survey (LES), which includes feedback on tutoring and mentoring as well as formal lecture content. In the past, this survey was paper based and enjoyed a high response rate. Currently the School is moving to an online system and is taking steps to ensure that a high response rate can be maintained. The LES results are shared with the programme leader of the course concerned as well as with the individual teacher. HKU SPACE explains that it makes use of individual teacher performance thresholds below which corrective action is taken to seek improvements. The aggregate data is reported at least annually to the Academic Committee for the programmes concerned, in which students, staff, employers and external examiners are represented.

Service Provision at HKU SPACE is monitored by the Service Quality Improvement Working Group via the Support Services Survey (SSS) which is administered twice per year to all part-time students. The anonymized results are shared with College Boards and the School Academic and Management Board and action is taken, where needed. In addition, the School participates in the Student Barometer (i-graduate) which benchmarks against Hong Kong, Asian and Global students, particularly in relation to support services.

In terms of technical support, the expert team notes that the implementation of SOUL (SPACE Online Universal Learning) 2.0 as a moodle-based platform for scheduling of courses, dialogue between teacher and student, uploading and downloading teaching and learning materials used during lectures, has been instrumental in maintaining and upgrading the quality of teaching and learning. This has been important especially in the difficult times of the ongoing Pandemic. In the past and during parts of the pandemic, this system witnessed a number of problems and students needed to be familiarized with it. During its interviews at the end of December 2021, the expert team learned that the user interface of SOUL needs to be further updated. It appears that lack of regular updates is causing the app to suffer from easily solvable bugs and the consequential issues faced by students and teachers alike include the app crashing unexpectedly and lagging.

The current version of the app is reportedly a huge improvement on what it was. The expert team positively notes that induction days are organized on a regular basis to familiarize students with using the app. The Panel learns that the SOUL 2.0 system is currently been moved to a cloud based support basis in early 2022 and this is also expected to lead to improved service quality in the realm of computing capabilities, system server time, network storage and response time to queries. The experts also appreciate that both full-time and part-time teachers are provided with adequate support as well as bilingual training so that they become well versed with the apps and have a strong understanding of the relevant platforms.

As regards the financial support for the tuition/enrolment of staff in for Bachelor, Master and Ph.D degrees, HKU in its interim report puts on record that colleagues continue to be able to apply for financial support to pursue their advanced study. As a return of investment, the School invites colleagues who finish their Master or Ph.D degrees and who receive financial support from the School to share their research findings in research seminars.

The expert team also commends the School for its massive investments in response to the Pandemic and the drive to switch to virtual forms of teaching. More than 20 Million HK Dollars are reported as investment during the past two years alone. The experts are pleased to hear that every full-time HK student Students generally benefitted from grants of 2,000 HKD of financial support to for the provision of modern IT and to aid the additional costs

required for switching to online formats of teaching and learning in accordance with the School's Strategy for E-Learning and Technology.

HKU SPACE also uses donations, specific funds and grants from various parties to provide financial assistance to students and serve the community. In its forecast, the School will spend about \$18M on scholarships, bursaries, learning funds, research grants and so on in the next year.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that HKU SPACE as an institution is offering a broad array of different student services on all levels. These include financial assistance to students in various ways (see above), assistance in the learning process and during the transition to the labour market, assistance in technical matters etc. Students in the interviews seemed to be generally happy with the provision of these services with few exceptions.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts conclude that HKU SPACE has adequate processes in place to provide assistance and support students in their studies. They commend the institution for continuously monitoring student satisfaction with the personal, academic and administrative assistance provided via a number of online surveys and in direct discussions with student representatives. In this context, the establishment of new Quality Analytics Teams within HKU SPACE's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Unit has to be commended.

As regards the provision of a moodle-based platform for organizing the learning process (scheduling of courses, dialogue between teacher and student, uploading and downloading teaching and learning materials used during lectures (including student induction in the system), there is still room for improvement, but further investments in the system and corresponding training will have a positive impact.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts observe a general culture of cooperation, assistance, and helpfulness within HKU SPACE. Students generally are happy with the services provided. The same is true for the teaching staff, who are benefitting from a broad range of support services by their Alma Mater.

III. Management of resources

Criterion III.1: Material and human resources
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Questions

Institutional dimension: Which elements particularly support the achievement of the quality objectives in this area as defined by the institution? What are typical difficulties and how are they dealt with?

Procedural dimension: Do the processes for the allocation and administration of physical and personnel resources, specifically for teaching and learning, within the institution work according to the expectations of the different groups and units? How does the institution integrate external (legal and economic) requirements? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli? Which changes are planned or will become necessary based on such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: How can the members of the institution, e.g. teaching staff and students, participate in managing physical and human resources for teaching and learning? Do all members of the institution feel adequately informed about the management of physical and financial resources? Which values and methods are supported or expected of the people involved in terms of the use of resources? What are the guiding principles at the institution to avoid misuse or waste of resources? Are the set rules and guidelines accepted by those affected by them? How are conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

As regards the quality of its **human resource potential**, the expert team takes note of the current composition and boundary conditions of staff recruitment of HKU SPACE's Staff. Compared to the staff composition of HKU proper, which disposes of a more pronounced international background, HKU SPACE academic staff are mainly recruited locally from Hong Kong and Mainland China. A further characteristic is linked to the fact that HKU SPACE employs a high proportion of part-time staff, mainly from industry, which is a strength and a challenge at the same time.

Regarding **the viability of Human Resources**, the School disposes of a large network of qualified, committed and predominantly part-time staff. It has managed to deal effectively with the challenges of the ongoing pandemic. HKU SPACE relies currently on around 2,000 part-time teachers, close to 300 of whom have advanced to the position of Adjunct Lecturer after proving their teaching competence over a period of time. Part-time lecturers are appointed by the Colleges and Institutes, the appointment process being centrally monitored.

The recruitment of more full-time teachers as a strategic priority will be a necessary step in the future to fulfil its promise to be one of the premier academic institutions in Hong Kong and the region. This will even more be necessary in case that HKU SPACE under Cap 320 potentially develops into a fully-fledged private university offering degree-awarding programmes also on higher levels of the HK Qualifications Framework on a regular basis.

Normally, at least a Master's degree or professional qualifications in the subjects of the programs are required. No teaching qualification is needed as a prerequisite to assume a teaching position at HKU SPACE (in common with most other providers). Coming from industry per se counts as an important professional qualification. Against this background, the expert teams endorses the institution's plans to employ more full-time teachers, the recruitment of full-time teachers being flagged as one the institution's strategic priorities.

As regards the quality of the **physical infrastructure**, HKU SPACE's courses and programmes are offered in 10 Hong Kong downtown learning centres usually located near central metro stations, 70% of which are owned and 30% on a leasing arrangement. They dispose of teaching rooms of different sizes as well as specialist facilities such as computer labs. The HKU University Campus provides to some extent also larger theatres for lectures and events such as graduation. HKU SPACE staff and students also can use the library and some research facilities of HKU against payment of a fee. HKU SPACE has 8 major support units providing services to the academic programmes, namely units for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, Registry Affairs, Accommodation and Facilities, Research and e-Learning, Institutional Advancement (Media, Alumni, Branding, Promotion), Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology Services. The quality of these services is regularly monitored by surveys among stakeholders.

Significant progress has been made in upgrading the physical infrastructure with the Pandemic serving as a catalyst. The equipment within classrooms and laboratories in the School's learning centres has been modernized in order to facilitate the surge in online connectivity, as well as the associated training costs. With the pandemic, classes were successfully shifted to online video conferencing platforms, including Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Adobe Connect.

While substantial physical resources are in place, HKU SPACE does not dispose of a proper home campus next to the above-mentioned learning centres. The experts question why the HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College (HPSHCC) cannot serve as a campus for the future. They are informed that this is not really an option, as HPSHCC is a separate legal entity. The campus is on PLK land and in fact only has a capacity to sustain about 2,500 full-time students. Under the joint venture agreement, HKU SPACE can however use of the campus in the evenings and weekends. The School has in the past invested heavily in the establishment of different types of laboratories and special rooms

for its educational offerings in sport and exercise, biomedical, nursing skill, aviation, architecture, wine and so on.

In terms of **financial viability**, HKU SPACE disposes of substantial financial resources and considerable reserves. Of considerable importance in terms of income is the Continuing Education Fund (CEF), whereby the government reimburses up to 20,000 HKD per student on approved courses. HKU SPACE with some 2,000 courses and modules in this category has an impressive market share of 28.5%. On the downside, currently students of the School are not eligible for grants for self-financed top up degrees as well as for the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP). On balance however, HKU SPACE is clearly operating under very healthy economic conditions with considerable financial internal and external monitoring systems in place. There is bi-weekly scrutiny by the School Academic and Management Board constantly checking income versus forecasts; external auditing was provided by Price Waterhouse Coopers.

The experts take note of HKU SPACE's long-standing record of generating surpluses while providing the necessary investments for upgrading the quality of educational experience within the institution. They commend the School for its massive investments in response to the Pandemic and the drive to switch to virtual forms of teaching. More than 20 Million HK Dollars are reported as investment during the past two years alone. It also commends HKU SPACE for providing grants of 2,000 HKD of financial support to every full-time HK student for the provision of modern IT and to aid the additional costs required for switching to online formats of teaching and learning in accordance with the School's Strategy for E-Learning and Technology.

HKU SPACE's Finance Unit has implemented a robust mechanism to enable the School to fulfil its strategic development as well as maintaining its financial viability. The Unit supports course budgets, forecasts and 3-Year Financial Plan and surplus programme review for the Colleges to examine and calibrate the financial results of their programmes and to manage their diversified portfolios including both deficit and surplus generating programmes. More than 40% of the programmes/courses delivered by Part-time Colleges is in different level of deficits; however, the deficit is subsidised by other programmes with a surplus margin (especially Community College programmes). With a balanced portfolio of programmes in surplus and in deficit, the School has managed to sustain its financial viability in order to fulfil its aim of serving our community in providing education opportunities. The Unit also assists the School in allocating resources effectively and efficiently into investments in teaching and learning, development projects, eLearning initiatives and collaborations.

In response to the expert's findings, HKU SPACE is submitting an extensive interim action plan addressing various measure for upgrading the staff/HR situation of various colleges and subdivision under its umbrella:

For the College of Business and Finances, it reports that it is currently and actively looking for full-time staff with the right skills and experience to join.

For the College of Humanities and Law, HKU SPACE has transmitted the information, that the creation of a clear manpower structure is under way to review the ratio of full-time staff (programme staff / support staff etc. based on clear criteria, e.g. number / level of award-bearing programmes, suite of short courses, etc.). The manpower review is part of the AOP exercise and is normally conducted in January annually.

The College of Life Sciences and Technology (CLST) is mainly providing professional programmes and trainings. The argument placed before the experts is that students prefer their teachers to be outstanding practitioners/pioneers in their industry areas. Moreover, CLST is said to have links to many professional bodies/organisations partners in order to develop programmes that help students to develop their professionalism. According to HKU SPACE, there is therefore no plan for CLST to hire a greater proportion of full-time staff members. Furthermore, a certain percentage of classes will be taught by part-time lecturers in order to maintain flexibility as student recruitment is uncertain every year, in particular in the face of declining demographics and keen competition. The College reviews and manages the teaching resources annually and takes measures to maintain a reasonable full-time to part-time teacher ratio. The College targets to maintain a part-time teacher % between 25 and 30.

As regards future Capital Expenditure: The School in its response to the evaluation report announces to spend about \$431M to set up the Kowloon West campus and enhance teaching and learning facilities at other learning centres from 2021/22 to 2024/25.

HKU SPACE also has approved a number of development fund projects to support the strategic development of the School. Nine projects with a total seed money of \$52M are in progress. These include measures to support accreditation, the development of virtual reality in teaching and learning, centre for teaching and learning enhancement, development of award-bearing technology-based learning programmes, student assistance scheme, CAVE and virtual reality setup in ISP campus, hybrid classrooms and distance learning rooms, enhancement of SOUL 2.0 with cloud computing platform and e-assessment features and micro-credentials development.

Final assessment of the experts/levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

Regarding the viability of its human resources, the experts find that HKU SPACE can rely on a large network of qualified and committed staff, many of whom are part timers, which in many aspects posts special challenges to the operation of the teaching and learning process. They see the recruitment of more full-time teachers (ideally also with a more international background) as a strategic priority in order that HKU SPACE can rank among the premier academic institutions in Hong Kong and the region.

In terms of finances and its material base, HKU SPACE must be considered a wealthy and well-managed institution with a sound material base. The lack of a central campus is not ideal but has been compensated by the development of a network of different learning centres throughout the city.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find, the HKU SPACE has appropriate processes in place for the allocation and administration of its physical, financial and Human Resources. It has an excellent recruitment record and manages to recruit many qualified practitioners for its various study disciplines on offer. The experts concur that engaging the right candidates is deemed difficult with the current employment market conditions in Hong Kong. Given the operational nature of part-time Colleges, they see value in recruiting active practitioners/professionals in the fields to conduct teaching. The high proportion of part-time teachers nevertheless places a strain on the system.

Regarding the viability of its financial resources and its material base, the experts commend HKU SPACE for its sound financial and forward looking management, which has contributed to accumulate substantial reserves ready to be invested in the further development of the School. Even during the difficult times in the Pandemic, HKU has managed to create a surplus and invest considerable sums in upgrading its material base.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

The high proportion of part-time teacher has a significant impact on the culture of the institution, and the panel strongly recommends an increase in the proportion of full-time teaching staff where appropriate.

Criterion III.2: Human resources development**Questions**

Institutional dimension: Which challenges have to be mastered with regard to staff development? Do the existing concepts take these challenges adequately into account?

Procedural dimension: How does the implementation of the staff development concept work? What are typical difficulties? How are they dealt with? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which of the concepts and offers for staff development – specifically those with a focus on subject-relevant and didactic development – are particularly well received by teaching staff? Which are not? Why?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The experts acknowledge that HKU SPACE provides multiple offers and incentive systems for the professional development of its staff. It has accordingly implemented a staff discount scheme for courses offered by its Colleges and financial support is given for approved internal and external development programmes. Further subsidies for upgrading their academic awards are granted, though in discussion, some of the interviewees expressed their wish that a greater proportion than the current amount of up to HKD 30,000 per staff per year for Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. degrees be taken on by HKU SPACE.

Manifold offers for professional development are provided by the Maisy Ho Centre for Teaching and Learning that plays an important role in upgrading the qualification profile of the staff.

The expert team furthermore notes the existence of the Training and Staff Development Committee, which plays a crucial role in the institutions quest to upgrade the qualification level of its teaching staff.

An important tool in this regard is the compulsory Continuing Personal and Professional Development (CPD) scheme, which requires a minimum of 15 hours of approved activity in a two-year cycle for academic staff. All academic and administrative staff who complete 30 hours, and for support staff 20 hours of CPD, are entitled to receive a CPD award. While staff training is obligatory for full-time staff, it is voluntary for part-time staff who however are arguably in greater need of pedagogic and other support.

The expert team also commends the School for institutionalizing other incentive schemes such as the "Outstanding Teacher Awards" (5 for each part-time College/Institute, 10 for the Community College). It also notes that there are additional internal QA assurance mechanisms in place related to upholding and upgrading the quality of teaching at HKU SPACE. One important instrument consists of scheduled visits to teaching lessons on the part of senior staff as an internal control mechanism. If the record of staff in pertinent performance reviews is satisfactory, the monitoring visit can be skipped.

The expert team recommends a change of perspective in this regard. Peer mentorship should be regarded as a development tool rather than primarily a monitoring device. The continuous professional improvement of less experienced colleagues is a key to institutional enhancement. It suggests that more robust peer mentorship be provided (including a measure of peer observation) along with regular showcasing of good practice. The Panel believes that these measures will be instrumental in further developing teachers' competences, especially in the case of part-time teachers with little experience of teaching.

The experts recognise the efforts of HKU SPACE in closely monitoring and evaluating teachers' performance by means of "Learning Experience Surveys" (LES). The collective performance is also an integral part of so-called Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), around 350 of which are compiled on an annual basis by the responsible Academic Committees.

In the discussion with stakeholders during the audit, the experts received mixed signals regarding whether these LES are formative or purely judgmental in nature. Against this background, it suggests that this instrument could be complemented by qualitative supplementary measures such as regular and structured dialogues with students, peers and managers, triangulating comments and findings from the LES as a contribution to the enhancement of teaching quality in the process.

The expert team furthermore recommends looking more closely into the issue of exchange programmes for teaching staff with international partnering providers, e.g. on the level of transnational education. It considers such a strategy to be a good investment in view of the institutions quest to become a world-class education centre of continuing education on upper levels of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework.

The experts are happy to note that as a response to its evaluation visit back in December 2022, HKU SPACE has implemented further support measures for its staff:

In the interim, a Teaching Development Grant Scheme (TDGS) has been introduced to support initiatives that help enhance the quality of teaching and learning and benefit students directly by inviting teachers to undertake projects to enrich students' learning experience. In the course of 2022-2023, the School will organise a series of research-related seminars along the themes of research activities that can facilitate teaching pedagogy and innovation, foster programme development, deepen its understanding of the market situation of various subjects, and advance our academic knowledge in various disciplines. Colleagues are going to be invited to share their research findings in seminars. If the research seminars are a success, the School will explore in the second stage (2023-2024) the possibility of expanding our current TDGS teaching grants of awarding HK\$50,000 to each recipient to cover research grants that can and will strengthen the research capability of colleagues (2024-2025).

Concerning the further development of the “Learning Experience Surveys” instruments to be complemented by additional qualitative supplementary measure, HKU SPACE declares its intentions to discuss the results of the LES with students and industry in the upcoming meeting of the Academic Committee meetings. Recommendations will also be presented at College Board Meetings and shared with other groups. In addition, the School Quality Assurance Committee discusses LES related content on a quarterly basis. Moreover, HKU SPACE in its response announces additional measures in its different colleges. As to examples in case: in the College for Business and Finance, e.g. the Academic Committee will invited students to exchange and share ideas at least one a year. A mandatory part of these sessions will be on student feedback and related improvement measure. In the College of Humanities and Law, the current practice of conducting informal phone interviews with students and teachers to ensure timely improvement and remedial measure will be further elaborated.

As regards the proposition of the experts to look into the issue of exchange programmes with international partners, HKU SPACE announces that it will conduct further discussions with international partners in the next two years.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that HKU SPACE has a strong centralized support for human resource development through the Training and Staff Development Committee, and excellent incentive systems for professional development. They commend HKU SPACE for institutionalizing the “Outstanding Teacher Awards” as recognition of good teaching.

The expert team recommends looking more closely into the issue of exchange programmes for teaching staff with international partnering providers, e.g. on the level of transnational education. It considers such a strategy to be a good investment in view of the institutions quest to become a world-class education centre of continuing education on upper levels of the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

HKU SPACE disposes of sound procedures and systems for HR development. The experts note the exemplary work of the Maisy Ho Centre in this regard. One important process in this regard is the mentoring of new teaching staff by senior colleagues. While they appreciate the existence of this important process, the experts nevertheless are in favour

of a change of perspective in this regard. They recommend to regard peer mentorship as a development tool rather than primarily a monitoring device and suggest that more robust peer mentorship be provided (including a measure of peer observation) along with regular showcasing of good practice. The expert team believes that these measures will be instrumental in further developing teachers' competences, especially in the case of part-time teachers with little experience of teaching.

The experts by the same token recognise the efforts of HKU SPACE in closely monitoring and evaluating teachers' performance by means of "Learning Experience Surveys" (LES). As the experts have received mixed signals regarding whether these LES are formative or purely judgmental in nature, they recommend that this instrument could be complemented by additional qualitative measures such as regular and structured dialogues with students, peers and managers, triangulating comments and findings from the LES as a contribution to the enhancement of teaching quality in the process.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

They experts appreciate HKU SPACE for its compulsory Continuing Personal and Professional Development (CPD) scheme, which requires a minimum of 15 hours of approved activity in a two-year cycle for academic staff. While staff training is obligatory for full-time staff, it is voluntary for part-time staff. As this group is however arguably in greater need of pedagogic and other support, the experts recommend making this CPD scheme mandatory also for part-timers.

There observe an "over-reliance" on the "Learning Experience Survey" (LES) to evaluate teaching quality and recommend using alternative methods (see above).

Criterion III.3: Interaction with research

Questions

Institutional dimension: Are there any challenges at the points of interaction between teaching and research? Do the existing concepts take these challenges adequately into account? What are the strengths of the existing concepts and arrangements?

Procedural dimension: How are the processes to link teaching and research designed? Who is involved, who is responsible, and who is informed? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which values and modes of behaviour are expected from the members of the institution when it comes to combining teaching and research? How is the expected

mode of behaviour supported? To which extent do the different members of the institution share and accept the expected values and behaviour?

Analysis and Findings of experts

In their discussions with staff, the expert team learns that there is a pronounced wish on their part to profit from more challenging research opportunities and schemes. Examples in case are the desire to function as co-investigators on research projects, and to have greater access to funding opportunities from the Research Grants Council. The experts support this, especially in relation to pedagogical research and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

HKU SPACE in the interim has submitted a progress report and announced, that a Teaching Development Grant Scheme (TDGS) has been introduced to support initiatives that help enhance the quality of teaching and learning and benefit students directly by inviting teachers to undertake projects to enrich students' learning experience. In the course of 2022-2023, HKU SPACE will organise a series of research-related seminars along the themes of research activities that can facilitate teaching pedagogy and innovation, foster programme development, deepen its understanding of the market situation of various subjects, and advance academic knowledge in various disciplines.

HKU SPACE furthermore announces that that they will invite its teaching staff to share their research findings in seminars. If the research seminars are a success, it will explore in a second stage (2023-2024) the possibility of expanding its current TDGS teaching grants of awarding HK\$50,000 to each recipient to cover research grants that in its opinion can and will strengthen the research capability of colleagues (2024-2025).

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

After discussion and after taking note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE, the Experts come to the following conclusions and levels of maturity:

Institutional level of maturity observed: 2

The experts observe a lack of clarity over the role of research and meagre resourcing to support staff engaging in research that would be of benefit to HKU SPACE. They recommend that this area should be a strategic priority in the further development of the institution.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 2

The experts observe inadequate procedures and systems in relation to fostering pedagogical research and the scholarship in teaching and learning. The panel notes the desire among staff to function as co-investigators on research projects and have greater

access to funding opportunities from the Research Grants Council. They take note of the interim action plan provided by HKU SPACE and consider it a step in the right direction.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

As teaching in advanced higher education institutions is regularly informed by good research, there needs to be a renewed focus on this important nexus. On the individual level, the experts have witnessed frustration among staff with regard to its research aspirations. While the experts acknowledge the announced action plan of HKU SPACE, in their eyes there needs to be a strengthened and continued effort to become better in this area.

Criterion III.4: Interaction with administration

Questions

Institutional dimension: What are the guiding principles and rules for the role and function of the administration linked to teaching and learning? Which elements of support for teaching and learning by the administrative units of the institution work well? What areas can be improved? What are typical challenges for the administration in order to effectively support the quality objectives for teaching and learning? How are these challenges dealt with?

Procedural dimension: How are the administrative units involved into the design, (further) development and implementation of educational offers and their quality assurance work? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Which values and methodologies are characteristic for the role of the administration in the processes of introducing, (further) developing and implementing educational offers as well as in their quality assurance? Which attitudes and behaviour are expected? How are they promoted? Are the set rules and guidelines accepted by those affected by them? How are conflicts dealt with?

Analysis and Findings of experts

The experts witness manifold elements of support for teaching and learning by HKU SPACE's administration. Regarding student progression, drop-out rates and the deviation from standard periods of study, the experts observe that student success within HKU SPACE is closely monitored. Students in the interviews have been generally satisfied with their educational experiences and corresponding support services.

The experts also have already noted that HKU SPACE has a comprehensive information and QA management system in place which helps to effectively manage HKU SPACE in a

competitive local and international education market, informing strategic decision making and feeding into corresponding SWOT analysis or measuring the achievement of Key Performance Indicators as part of its Risk Register. The administrative support systems generate the necessary data for the further development of the institution's courses and programmes, for organising its learning resources and student support, for monitoring the performance and satisfaction of teacher and students alike and for monitoring the educational and career paths of its graduates.

The expert team takes has taken note of the fact that HKU SPACE in July 2021 has proceeded in establishing Quality Analytics Team as part of its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Unit to provide even better services to the programs.

The administration of survey results pertinent to the further development of HKU SPACE teaching and learning performance has already been noted positively. While the overall impression of the use of this instrument is rated favourably, the experts nevertheless stress the new and heightened possibilities of QA measures in the virtual world. Quality Assurance can now take place almost on a daily level (checking e.g. the quality of teachers as well as gathering student feedback) instead of waiting until the end of a semester to monitor and act. In its Interim report, HKU SPACE announce, that in the framework of its e-learning strategy it will follow up on this recommendation.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

Institutional level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that the guiding principles and rules for the roles and functions of the administration are well established. On the institutional level, there are homogeneous and functioning planning elements in place by which the quality objectives for teaching and learning are closely monitored. Some areas of improvement related to the creation of a more international learning environment, the recruitment of full time staff, and further support in the implementation of the SOUL system e.g. have already been flagged in other parts of this report.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts commend HKU SPACE on its comprehensive information system and QA procedures in place, which help to effectively manage HKU SPACE in a competitive local and international education market. The administrative support systems generate the necessary data for the further development of the institution's courses and programmes, for organising its learning resources and student support, for monitoring the performance and satisfaction of teacher and students alike and for monitoring the educational and career

paths of its graduates. The establishment of new entities to further interpret and best use the abundance of data is very important, its benefits will materialize in the future.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 2

Given the rapid feedback that now be collected online, there are now opportunities to be explored to engage in closer contact with students on a more regular basis.

IV. Transparency and documentation

Criterion IV.1: Rules and regulations for programs / courses / trainings

Questions

Institutional dimension: Which rules and regulations for educational offers have been defined? Whom do they address? Which units of the organisational setting are responsible? What works well?

Procedural dimension: How are the documents that define the rules for studying at the institution developed? How are they published and updated? How does the institution integrate external (e.g. legal) requirements into the processes? What are typical challenges with regard to the draft, update and dissemination of rules? How are they dealt with? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Do the members of the institution – specifically students and teaching staff – feel adequately informed about the rules and regulations for programmes that affect them? Are the rules accepted by the respective members of the institution affected by them? Are the rules transparent and understandable for all stakeholders?

Analysis and Findings of peers

The experts learn that the documentation available provides transparent and comprehensive information concerning the rules and regulations for educational programmes on offer at HKU SPACE. These include information on admission rules to HKU SPACES' programs, the type of programmes on offer, the programme learning objectives, as well as the intended learning outcomes of the individual courses/modules together with other important pieces of information. Regarding its more than 1,000 programmes offered annually, the website and particularly the biannual Spring and Autumn Prospectus gives a clear overview with all relevant information including the qualifications HKU SPACE awards, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information. The

experts understand that graduation documents are issued by HKU SPACE. The need to also institutionalize a "Diploma Supplement" has already pointed out.

HKU SPACE disposes of a transparent and thorough set of rules and regulations pertaining to the establishment, implementation and modernization of programmes that have been analysed in prior parts of this report. All internal normative documentation is approved by designated bodies in a cooperative and transparent fashion and monitored by the relevant departments. The peers also comprehend that in the regular administrative meetings administrative teaching staff members and students are involved in the development of relevant rules and regulations.

Extensive internal and external quality assurance mechanisms are applied to establish, implement and update educational programmes at HKU Space.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

Institutional level of maturity observed: 4

The experts find a strong centralised management in relation to rules and regulations pertaining to programmes. Regarding its manifold, diverse educational offering, the website and detailed programme prospectus contain all relevant information. This includes the selection criteria and learning outcomes/competence profiles for the programmes they offer, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures they use, the pass rates and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 4

The expert equally attest the existence of systematized, institutionalized procedures in relation to programme design, delivery and evaluation to be in place at HKU SPACE. The internal (e.g. Annual Performance Reviews, Learning Experience and student surveys) as well as external reviews (e.g. accreditation procedures by professional bodies) serve as continuous input to upgrading the viability of programmes. These high calibre procedures and systems related to running the manifold educational offerings at HKU SPACE have been established in an inclusive, stakeholder-driven process.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts confirm that all members of the institution – specifically students and teaching staff – feel adequately informed about the rules and regulations for programmes in which they enrol/are enrolled and teach.

Criterion IV.2: Documentation

Questions

Institutional dimension: How does the system for the documentation, document management and filing of information work? What are typical difficulties and how are they dealt with?

Procedural dimension: Do the processes with regard to the documentation and filing of information about teaching and learning / about programmes work as expected? What are typical challenges and how are they dealt with? How are the external requirements for transparency and documentation which are relevant to the institution (e.g. disclosure obligations and voluntary publication) embedded into internal processes? Where do stimuli for changes or for improvement come from? How can they be fed into the system and what are the processes to deal with such stimuli?

Cultural dimension: Do the members of the institution – specifically students and teaching staff – feel adequately informed about the educational offers and their general conditions? Which attitudes and behaviour are expected from the members of the institution with regard to internal and external information policies, also in terms of achieved quality objectives and need for improvement? Are these expectations accepted by the different stakeholder groups within the institution?

Analysis and Findings of experts

In their interviews, the expert group have found multiple examples of a common understanding of vital elements of HKU SPACE's quality assurance culture among internal and external stakeholder groups. On a procedural level quality assurance measures and policies are concisely developed, implemented, monitored and revised, feedback loops are closed and all relevant documentation is published and updated in HKU SPACE's Quality Assurance Manual.

The experts positively note that all staff are required to sign an annual compliance declaration that they are familiar with the Compliance Manual, which is a compilation of the School's various handbooks, guidelines and policies.

The Quality Assurance procedures depicted in the QA manual also generates information that helps to develop the documentation system and the documents further. The experts confirm that the teaching staff and students are well informed about existing documents containing the rules concerning them and any changes to such documents.

High calibre centralized procedures and systems relating to selection criteria and learning outcomes/competence profiles for programmes, qualifications, teaching, learning and

assessment procedures, pass rates and learning opportunities as well as graduate employment information are in place.

The peers can see that HKU SPACE has a documentation system in place which manages all central documents and supports the processes of planning and implementing degree programs. Particularly the data collected by the quality management system provides HKU SPACE's management with the information they need to adopt measures. The documentation and filing systems work in line with the respective legal and functional requirements.

Final assessment of the experts/ Levels of maturity observed

Institutional level of maturity observed: 4

The experts identify a strong centralized emphasis on documentation at HKU SPACE. Meetings and decisions are regularly documented. External legal requirements relevant for documentation and transparency are continuously taken into consideration in the respective processes. The documentation and filing systems work in line with the respective legal and functional requirements. The quality assurance and documentation system of HKU SPACE provides target-group specific information about the programs and maintains information about the learning process of each student for the entire life cycle.

Procedural level of maturity observed: 4

The experts confirm that high calibre centralized procedures and systems relating to selection criteria and learning outcomes/competence profiles for programmes, qualifications, teaching, learning and assessment procedures, pass rates and learning opportunities as well as graduate employment information are adequately documented used for their further improvement.

Cultural level of maturity observed: 3

The experts find that there is a well-established documentary culture at HKU SPACE in place, although understanding of that documentation may be sometimes patchy across the institution. They confirm that relevant stakeholders like administration, teaching staff and students have access to relevant documents, which are consistently updated. They also note that the members of the institution are aware of the minimum requirements as to the form and quality of documentation in their area of activity. The staff members as well as the students have confirmed that the channels of communication work satisfactorily.

D. Comment of the Higher Education Institution

Not applicable due to the specific nature of this top up procedure.

E. Summary: Peer Recommendations (29.08.2022)

Areas to review		Maturity Level
I.1 Objectives	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3
I.2 (Quality-) management systems/ governance	a) institutional	4
	b) procedural	4
	c) cultural	3
II.1 Creation and development of programmes / courses / training	a) institutional	4
	b) procedural	4
	c) cultural	3
II.2 Implementation of programmes / courses / training	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	2
II.3 Cooperation	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	2
II.4 Examination systems and organisation of exams	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3
II.5 Recognition of achievements	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	2
	c) cultural	3
II.6 Assistance and support	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3
III.1 Material and human resources	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	2

III.2 Human resources development	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	3
III.3 Interaction with research	a) institutional	2
	b) procedural	2
	c) cultural	2
III.4 Interaction with administration	a) institutional	3
	b) procedural	3
	c) cultural	2

IV.1 Rules and regulations for programmes / courses / training	a) institutional	4
	b) procedural	4
	c) cultural	3
IV.2 Documentation	a) institutional	4
	b) procedural	4
	c) cultural	3

Overall comments

HKU SPACE scores high across the entire range of four sets of criteria. The average is a very good score of 3.0, equating to 'established and controlled'.

The strongest categories across the board are quality management Systems/governance, the process for the creation and development of study programs as well as “rules and regulations” and “transparency and documentation”, which all score a 3.67, signalling a predictive and proactive quality management (3.5). HKU SPACE's institutional leadership is particularly strong, and the institution is procedurally rigorous; however, there is sometimes a disconnect between those who manage the institution and those who teach.

Areas which deserve further attention are related to the criterion on “Interaction with research”, the research arrangements within HKU SPACE and between HKU SPACE and its mother body, Hong Kong University, scoring a 2 (implemented) and to the criteria on “recognition of achievements” as well as in within the “resource category” the human resources (scoring an average of 2.66). The point, which deserves further attention relates to the fact that many of its staff are currently part timers and that their attachment to HKU SPACE can be further strengthened. In general, scores are higher at the institutional and procedural levels than at the cultural level.

Based on the institutional accreditation report the experts recommend awarding the ASIIN Institutional Quality Seal to HKU SPACE with one requirement for one year until 30

September 2023. The extension of the certification until 30 September 2027 is subject to the fulfilment of the below requirement. An additional onsite visit is not required.

Requirement

- 1) HKU SPACE is required to implement the institutionalization of a system of Diploma Supplement, in which the learning outcomes and competence of its graduates are clearly documented.

Recommendations:

While the experts have gathered evidence and concludes that HKU SPACE has a strong base to build on and promising potential of further developing into a World Class Centre of Excellence in Continuing Education, Life Long Learning and Transnational Education, it has compiled the following list of recommendations to assist the School in this endeavour.

The experts recommend:

- 1) that HKU SPACE's central aspiration to be a world-class centre of excellence for professional and continuing education be communicated more clearly to internal and external stakeholders and the Higher Education community.
- 2) that suitable, direct, high-level communication channels between HKU SPACE and HKU proper exceeding the format in place to deal with the upcoming challenges mentioned in this report be established.
- 3) that HKU SPACE leadership continuously examines and calibrates how the tension between market needs, the drive for excellence and service to the community can best be resolved and managed.
- 4) that support and training to establish proactive training for distance learning, teaching in a hybrid mode and how to engage students to become active learners and critical thinkers, be reinforced.
- 5) that the learning experience of students in HKU SPACE's International College be improved by providing a real international learning environment for its students.
- 6) that a greater proportion of full-time staff members be hired.
- 7) that research opportunities for HKU SPACE staff be provided along the lines described in this report.

- 8) that an increase in the financial support for the tuition/enrolment costs for Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. degrees of its employees be considered.
- 9) that a more robust peer mentorship and regular showcasing of good practice for the further development of teachers' competences be established.
- 10) that systematic attention be devoted to modern pedagogical research and informed pedagogical training
- 11) that the "Learning Experience Surveys" instrument be complemented by qualitative supplementary measures such as regular and structured dialogues with students, peers and managers, triangulating comments and findings from these LES as a contribution to the enhancement of teaching quality.
- 12) that the issue of exchange programmes for teaching staff with international partners be looked into.
- 13) that renewed attention be devoted to the smooth operationalization of the SOUL 2.0 system, which is currently moving onto a cloud based support basis.
- 14) that the new and heightened possibilities of real time QA measure in the virtual world be better used.
- 15) that a comprehensive, long-term benchmarking strategy be further developed.

F. Decision of the Accreditation Committee (22.09.2022)

The ASIIN Accreditation Commission discusses the procedure. For the Commission the quality of the teaching staff is one of the most important aspects for the successful conduct of study programmes. Especially with regard to the sustainability of the offered study programmes it has to be ensured that enough adequate qualified fulltime teaching staff is involved in the programme of the institution. Before this background, the Commission changes the corresponding recommendation into a requirement.

Additionally, the Commission discusses the recommendation about the increase of the financial support for tuitions. This support should not be limited to students employed at

the university but the university should support all students. Therefore, the Commission reformulates the corresponding recommendation.

The Accreditation Commission decides to award the ASIIN seal for institutions to HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education under requirements for one year. After fulfilment of the requirements, the accreditation will be extended until 30 September 2028.

Requirements

- 1) HKU SPACE is required to implement the institutionalization of a system of Diploma Supplement, in which the learning outcomes and competence of its graduates are clearly documented.
- 2) HKU SPACE is required to provide a concept how to increase the percentage of full time staff members across all colleges.

Recommendations

While the experts have gathered evidence and concludes that HKU SPACE has a strong base to build on and promising potential of further developing into a World Class Centre of Excellence in Continuing Education, Life Long Learning and Transnational Education, it has compiled the following list of recommendations to assist the School in this endeavour.

The commission recommends:

- 1) that HKU SPACE's central aspiration to be a world-class centre of excellence for professional and continuing education be communicated more clearly to internal and external stakeholders and the Higher Education community.
- 2) that suitable, direct, high-level communication channels between HKU SPACE and HKU proper exceeding the format in place to deal with the upcoming challenges mentioned in this report be established.
- 3) that HKU SPACE leadership continuously examines and calibrates how the tension between market needs, the drive for excellence and service to the community can best be resolved and managed.
- 4) that support and training to establish proactive training for distance learning, teaching in a hybrid mode and how to engage students to become active learners and critical thinkers, be reinforced.
- 5) that the learning experience of students in HKU SPACE's International College be improved by providing a real international learning environment for its students.

- 6) that research opportunities for HKU SPACE staff be provided along the lines described in this report.
- 7) that an increase in the financial support for the tuition/enrolment costs for Master and Ph.D. degrees will be considered.
- 8) that a more robust peer mentorship and regular showcasing of good practice for the further development of teachers' competences be established.
- 9) that systematic attention be devoted to modern pedagogical research and informed pedagogical training
- 10) that the "Learning Experience Surveys" instrument be complemented by qualitative supplementary measures such as regular and structured dialogues with students, peers and managers, triangulating comments and findings from these LES as a contribution to the enhancement of teaching quality.
- 11) that the issue of exchange programmes for teaching staff with international partners be looked into.
- 12) that renewed attention be devoted to the smooth operationalization of the SOUL 2.0 system, which is currently moving onto a cloud based support basis.
- 13) that the new and heightened possibilities of real time QA measure in the virtual world be better used.
- 14) that a comprehensive, long-term benchmarking strategy be further developed.

G. Appendix: List of Abbreviations

AD	Associate Degree
CBF	College of Business and Finance
CC	HKU SPACE Community College
CE	Continuing Education
CHL	College of Humanities and Law

CLST	College of Life Sciences and Technology
CPE&LL	Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning
CRA	Criterion-Referenced Assessment
EQA	External Quality Assurance
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
HD	Higher Diploma
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
HKU SPACE	HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education
HPSHCC	HKU SPACE Po Leung Kuk Stanley Ho Community College
HR	Human Resources
ICB	Institute for China Business
IQA	Internal Quality Assurance
IT	Information Technology
JCC	Joint Consultative Committee
JQRC	Joint Quality Review Committee
LES	Learning Experience Surveys
LLL	Life Long Learning
LO	Learning Outcome
OBASL	Outcome-based Approaches to Student Learning
QA	Quality Assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	Quality Assurance Committee
QF	Qualifications Framework
QM	Quality Management
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TNE	Transnational Education
UGC	University Grants Committee