

# THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

## ACADEMIC BOARD

### Broad Guidelines for the Formulation of Proposals for New Academic Curricula

The Academic Board (AB) has drawn up broad guidelines to assist Faculties and departments in formulating and presenting proposals for new academic curricula, with a view to raising the degree of awareness of the established mechanism as well as achieving consistency across the University and efficiency in the process.

#### **The role of Faculty Boards**

2. Under the provisions of Statute XXVI, the Board of each Faculty “shall be responsible to the Senate for the teaching of the subjects assigned to that Faculty...”. Faculty Boards are accountable to the University for the standards and quality of academic curricula and programmes offered under their auspices, and AB looks to them for the provision of quality assurance and management.

#### **The responsibilities of Faculty Boards/departments/units**

3. It is the responsibility of the Faculty Board to ensure that adequate consultation has already taken place among the relevant teaching departments, units and committees. While the extent of consultation varies from case to case, the general understanding is that discussions should not only be confined to contributing departments/units, but also cognate groups within and, if appropriate, outside the University. In the cases of multidisciplinary curricula/programmes and collaborative ventures, such consultative processes are mandatory and are considered all the more significant.

4. For a new self-funded curriculum, approval must be sought at an early stage from the Finance and Enterprises Office (FEO), confirming the financial viability of the proposed curriculum, without which AB will not be able to deliberate on the proposal. Also, the involvement of the Strategic Planning Unit (SPU) at an early stage is highly recommended so as to put the proposal in the context of both the University’s and the Faculty’s strategic developments.

5. The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) which was established to facilitate dialogue between Faculties and HKU SPACE should be invited to comment on academic proposals initiated by either side for advice to AB and the Board for Continuing and Professional Education and Lifelong Learning.

#### **Consideration process and time schedule**

6. Statute XXIII “Powers of the Senate” stipulates in paragraph 2 that

“(1) The Senate may by regulation provide for any of the following matters or for any of the following purposes –

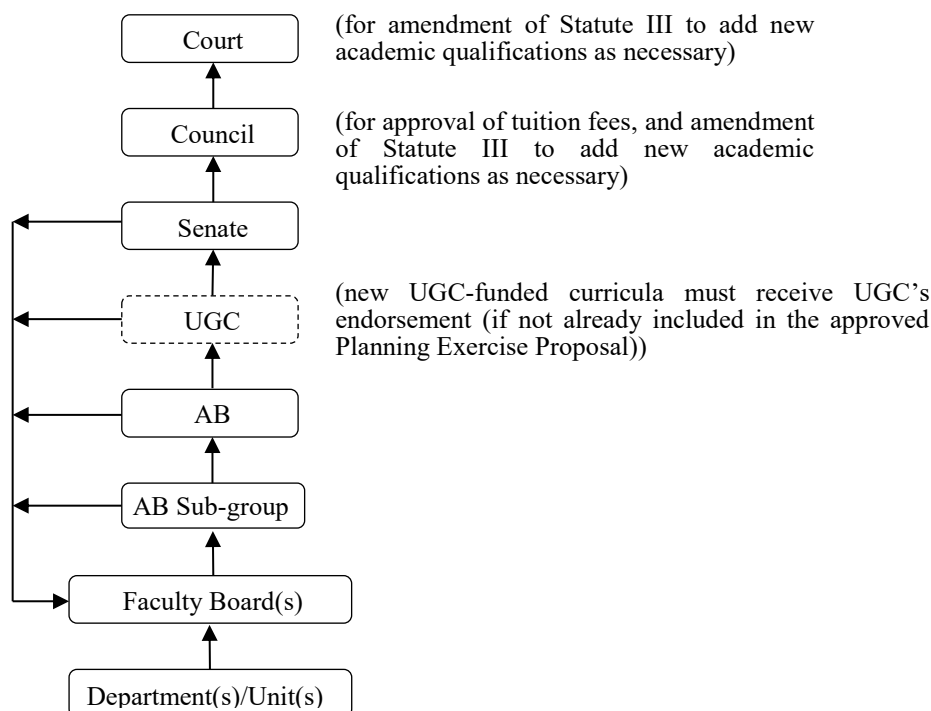
...

- (b) the conditions for award of degrees, diplomas, certificates and other marks of distinction;
  - (c) courses of study and examinations; . . .
- (2) all such regulations shall be reported to the Council and shall come into operation not earlier than 1 semester after the day on which they are made, unless otherwise provided by the Council.”

7. New curriculum and programme proposals at undergraduate and taught postgraduate levels should have received the endorsement of the full Faculty Board, preferably at a meeting or at least in circulation, before submission to the AB Sub-group, which is chaired by the Vice-President and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) (VP&PVC(T&L)) and comprises the Registrar, a member appointed by VP&PVC(T&L) and a co-opted member (if any). The function of the Sub-group is to facilitate the review process by engaging in proactive discussions with Deans and/or Faculty representatives and offering advice on all issues pertaining to the draft proposals. Following the discussions, Faculties will submit a final proposal to AB for consideration.

8. New proposals for professional doctorates should be considered by the Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (and other relevant Faculty committee(s) as necessary) prior to deliberation by the Faculty Board, the Dean of the Graduate School, AB Sub-group, AB and Senate.

9. In presenting proposals, Faculties should allow ample time for careful deliberation by central bodies, namely, AB via its Sub-group, Senate, Council and Court (the last if a new qualification has to be established under Statute III). For the purpose of illustration, the diagram below shows the key steps involved for consideration of new curriculum proposals at undergraduate and taught postgraduate levels:



10. Specifically, AB is scheduled to meet on the first Friday in October, February and June every year, subject to confirmation. Special meetings may be arranged should the need arise. Faculties should submit proposals (both hard and soft copies) to the Secretary of the AB Sub-group at least 2 months before a Board meeting to allow sufficient time for review by the AB Sub-group and subsequent revisions by Faculties as necessary. More time may be needed if the proposals involve complex issues. Final proposals (both hard and soft copies) should be submitted to the Board Secretary at least 2 weeks before a Board meeting.

### **Curriculum proposals**

11. A detailed and comprehensively formulated proposal is crucial to a smooth consideration process. Proposals must include the following details:

- (a) A one-page executive summary highlighting the academic rationale and focus of the proposed curriculum/programme, market demand and societal needs, and a brief description of the curriculum/programme (such as study mode and duration, total study load, and implementation year);
- (b) Title of curriculum/programme;
- (c) Level of study;
- (d) Mode and period of study;
- (e) Funding mode and student places;
- (f) Date of implementation (and applicable student cohort(s));
- (g) Academic rationale and focus;
- (h) Aims and objectives in the context of the University's and the Faculty's strategic development;
- (i) Market demand (with market survey results) and competitiveness;
- (j) Curriculum structure and requirements;
- (k) Curriculum governance and management;
- (l) Quality assurance and quality enhancement mechanisms;
- (m) Teaching arrangements (including brief particulars of HKU staff);
- (n) (for self-funded programmes) The proposed tuition fee and the principles adopted in determining the fee level. Factors to be taken into account should include total programme costs, the University's prestige, market demand, the proposed programme's competitiveness and financial aids (e.g. scholarships), if any, to help students in need to cover tuition fees. Faculties should benchmark proposed fees against leading comparable programmes locally, regionally (e.g. Mainland China, Singapore) and internationally. If Faculties' proposed fee levels are below the lowest fees of comparable local and regional programmes, justifications should be given;

- (o) Financial viability and sustainability, and re-deployment of resources: review of Faculty's commitments particularly for self-funded programmes. Faculties are required to provide information on how the teaching load will be assigned, and advise whether such load is part of a regular teaching load or an addition to a regular teaching load;
- (p) Input from at least 2 or 3 academic assessors to comment on aspects inclusive of, but not limited to, curriculum/programme aims, programme learning outcomes, curriculum design, structure and content, pedagogy and assessment. For professional degrees, comments from the industry, the profession and/or the Government would be helpful in addition to input from academic advisors. A duly completed "Proforma for Completion by External Assessors for Proposals on Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes" from each assessor should be attached to the proposal. The Faculty's response to the comments received should also be documented and submitted;
- (q) International, local and professional benchmarking of the proposed curriculum/programme;
- (r) Proposed curriculum regulations and syllabuses;
- (s) Proposed Programme Learning Outcomes;
- (t) Proposed Credit Unit Statement;
- (u) Completed Financial Planning Form (for a self-funded curriculum), and FEO's confirmation of the financial viability of the proposed curriculum/programme; and
- (v) Input from JCC, and the Faculty's response thereto, as applicable.

12. A template and attendant documents are available to help Faculties and Departments in preparing proposals:

- (a) "Template for Offering a New Taught Curriculum/Programme or a New Specialisation/Stream/Track of an Existing Taught Programme" and FAQs;
- (b) "Proforma for Completion by External Assessors for Proposals on Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes", and "Notes for Reference by Faculties/Departments/Programme Teams when Seeking External Assessments on Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes"; and
- (c) Financial Planning Form for Self-funded Taught Postgraduate (TPG) Programmes.

All the above documents can be downloaded from <https://cdqa.hku.hk/guidelines-and-forms.php>.

### **Dual and off-campus taught degrees offered in partnership with Mainland and overseas institutions**

13. Where the proposed curriculum is offered in partnership with Mainland or overseas institutions, the "Guidelines for Dual and Off-campus Taught Degrees" (document 142/323) should be followed (accessible at [https://inraweb.hku.hk/reserved\\_2/cdqa/doc/Dual\\_Offcampus/Dual\\_Offcampus\\_Guidelines\\_142.3\\_23.pdf](https://inraweb.hku.hk/reserved_2/cdqa/doc/Dual_Offcampus/Dual_Offcampus_Guidelines_142.3_23.pdf)), and should be read in conjunction with the current set of broad guidelines and other prevailing University policies, regulations, guidelines, as applicable. The guidelines and the

templates can be downloaded from <https://cdqa.hku.hk/guidelines-and-forms.php>.

14. The paragraphs above lay down a fundamental framework for general reference. For more specific issues and circumstances, proposing units are encouraged to seek information and advice from Faculties, SPU and AB, as appropriate. More information on curriculum development can be found in Chapter 3 of the Quality Manual, which can be viewed at <https://tl.hku.hk/quality-manual/>.

#### Academic Board

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