

Integrated Framework for Curriculum Development and Review:

II. Taught Postgraduate Programmes

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1. Preamble

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen (CUHK(SZ)) regards teaching and learning (T&L) as a core function; the University places great importance on the culture embedded in The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), and also on explicit systems and procedures to assure and enhance the quality of the educational experience for students. This document constitutes quality-assurance framework for T&L as it applies to taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes. The CUHK(SZ) is committed to benchmark its standards in T&L activities at the level achieved by CUHK.

1.2 Overall Principles

1.2.1 Among others, the following principles were used to guide the formulation of the integrated framework:

- The importance of developing a framework which is effective in improving the quality of T&L, while minimizing bureaucracy and paperwork.
- The importance of reflection upon the process of student learning experience for the achievement of desired learning outcomes, which will also serve as a stimulus to curriculum refinement.
- The value of periodic peer review as a spur to self-reflection and the provision of wider insights.
- The importance of diagnostic feedback in providing evidence to inform the process of reflection.
- The appropriateness of taking an outcomes-based approach (OBA) to T&L by focusing on student learning outcomes.
- The importance of achieving alignment between desired learning outcomes and the curriculum.
- The value of deriving principles of excellent teaching at CUHK(SZ) from the principles and practices of those judged to be the best teachers at the University. These principles are consistent with the extensive international literature in the area of excellent university teaching.
- These principles have been incorporated into a curriculum development model, shown in Figure 1. The model commences with student learning needs which are utilized to formulate desired learning outcomes. These lead to five elements of the curriculum which are incorporated into the integrated curriculum framework: desired learning outcomes, content, learning activities,

assessment and feedback for evaluation. These five elements are incorporated into procedures for programme development, programme review, course development and course review. Feedback for evaluation is central to the model as it informs reflection upon practice.

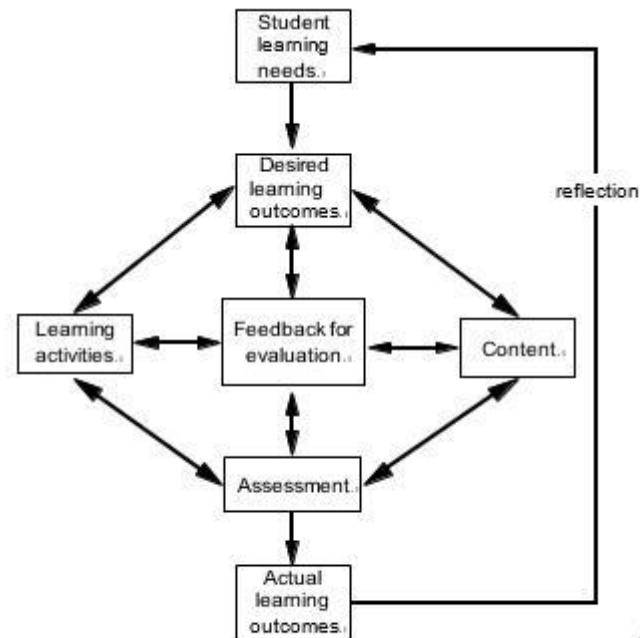


Figure 1. A model of an aligned curriculum

1.3 Principles specific to TPg programmes

1.3.1 Among others, the following principles specific to TPg programmes were used to guide the formulation of this section of the integrated framework so as to make it suitable for the nature of TPg programmes and their students:

- The students enrolling in TPg programmes are more mature and so teaching should be consistent with the principles of adult learning.
- The students are likely to be active in the field or profession and possess relevant experience and knowledge. Students' experience should be utilised in the programme.
- The expected learning outcomes are likely to be quite specific and often professional in nature.
- Student choice imposes an implicit quality-assurance mechanism.
- Many TPg programmes are offered to meet demands resulting from technological developments or societal changes. They therefore need to be launched with a short lead-time and phased out as demands are satisfied.
- The framework for TPg programmes, therefore, needs to be flexible. Embedded quality-assurance procedures need to be formulated so as to ensure a high standard of T&L while not imposing a bureaucracy which discourages enterprise.

1.4 Objective

1.4.1 The main objective of the present framework is to ensure that teachers and programmes engage in *reflection* about T&L, that such reflection is rooted in

evidence and leads to *action* for improvement, and that *incentives* are provided for such efforts.

1.5 Nomenclature

1.5.1 All guides and associated documents are to be used flexibly and adapted to suit practices and terminology within schools/programmes.

1.6 Coverage

1.6.1 The *Integrated Framework* applies on a mandatory basis to all taught programmes.

1.6.2 Research postgraduate (RPg) programmes are fundamentally different, and are subject to other systems managed by the GS.

2. Course and Programme Planning

2.1 Frequency

2.1.1 A course/ programme planning document should be prepared whenever a new course/ programme is launched, or when there are major changes.

2.2 Programme planning

2.2.1 Graduate Panels and other Unit(s) planning new TPg programmes are requested to use the template *Proposal for Introduction of New Taught Postgraduate Programme* for the formal submission document for programme proposals and budgets. This document is available from the GS Office.

2.2.2 Proposals need to be approved by the (Provisional) Board of Graduate Studies and (Provisional) Academic Board (PAB).

2.3 Course planning

2.3.1 Course planning should include a specification of (a) expected learning outcomes, (b) subject content, (c) intended distribution of learning activities, (d) the assessment scheme, and (e) intended channels to collect feedback for evaluation.

2.4 Dissemination

2.4.1 Relevant sections of the course-planning document, with minor modifications, could become the course outline to be provided to students at the beginning of each course offering. It is recommended that course outlines be posted on the departmental website, so as to be available to prospective students.

3. Course Reviews

3.1 Frequency

- 3.1.1 Each of the courses should be regularly, but at least yearly, reviewed by a committee set up by the Chair(s) of the relevant Graduate Panel(s). Each course will also have an External Reviewer who is a senior faculty member of CUHK.

3.2 Format and content

- 3.2.1 The course review, performed against the course-planning document as the reference, should cover (a) learning outcomes, (b) subject content, (c) learning activities, (d) the assessment scheme, and (e) an action plan in the light of the reflection on (a)–(d), which in each case should be supported by relevant sources of feedback evidence. In cases where the action calls for major changes, this initiates a new cycle of course planning.

3.3 Dissemination

- 3.3.1 The course review is internal to the programme.

4. Programme Review

Each Programme should have an External Examiner (EE) to conduct timely reviews both on T&L activities of the Programme. The EE should be a senior academic with considerable experience in higher education and have not been on the staff of either CUHK or CUHK(SZ) for at least three years prior to the appointment.

5. School Review/Visiting Committee

5.1 Nature and Frequency

- 5.1.1 School reviews are conducted on a 4 year cycle and include a visit from the Visiting Committee.

5.2 Content and action plan

- 5.2.1 The self-evaluation should refer to relevant sections from the School-planning document, and should cover (a) aims and desired learning outcomes, (b) subject content, (c) learning activities, (d) the assessment scheme, (e) the effectiveness of procedures for programme management and quality assurance, (f) procedures for ensuring the quality of teaching and providing professional development for all teaching staff, (g) the training and evaluation of teaching assistants and/or part-time teachers, if applicable, and (h) a summary of changes and improvements previously decided and/or implemented since the last review.
- 5.2.2 The School Review Panel should be set up with members nominated by the relevant school dean. It should contain three to five members.
- 5.2.3 Following a self-review, the School Review Panel prepares its findings and sends the report to the Visiting Committee, with copies sent to the Dean concerned and the

Graduate School.

6. Flexibility in Implementation

- 6.1 The details of the School self-review mechanism mentioned in sections 2 to 5 above are broad outline suggestions. Each school is encouraged to reflect and decide on such adaptations as may be appropriate for its particular circumstances. There should also be flexibility with respect to the nature of individual programmes, the background of the students and the level of enrolment. However, significant differences from the direction of this framework should be reported to and endorsed by Dean of the Graduate School.

7. Professional Development

- 7.1 A programme of professional development for all new teaching staff at the level of Assistant Professor or below, including Teaching Assistants is mandatory in most cases. Evidence of satisfactory completion is required for consideration of contract renewal, substantiation and promotion. New teachers in other ranks are also encouraged to take the course. Schools are also expected to have a plan to ensure the quality of teaching by part-time staff.
- 7.2 These measures should be reported in the School's self- review document.

8. Incentives

8.1 Incentives

- 8.1.1 Incentives, at both the individual and the School level, are incorporated into University policies and procedures to promote attention to the matters contained in this *Integrated Framework*. Schools are expected to ensure that there are high levels of commitment.

8.2 Programme level

- 8.2.1 The Dean of a School is responsible for ensuring that programme committees take appropriate action in respect of the action plans they formulated in response to recommendations of review panels. The performance of programmes will be available to the PAB. In extreme cases the School Dean and/or the PAB may recommend to the Graduate School that new enrolments may be suspended if specified steps in the action plan are not implemented.

8.3 Individual level

- 8.3.1 The Course and Teaching Evaluation is used to ensure the quality of teaching of individual teachers.