THE FEDERATION FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures of Member Institutions
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THE FEDERATION

Chapter 1: About the Federation

The Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions was established in 1994 to further promote the cause of lifelong learning in Hong Kong. Being a self-funded and not-for-profit organisation, the Federation strives to nurture a learning society for Hong Kong through a variety of channels and activities. Its scope includes promoting lifelong learning opportunities; developing continuing and professional education (CPE) interest in the community; enhancing and upgrading skills and professionalism; creating a platform for communication with the government, industries, professional bodies and other stakeholders; responding to the government's policy initiatives towards provision of lifelong education; and last but not least, coordinating and representing the general interest of member institutions in relation to the provision of CPE in Hong Kong.

1.1 Mission Statement

The Federation endeavours to:

1. Advance the cause of lifelong learning and continuing and professional education in Hong Kong.
2. Promote lifelong learning interest in the community to the effect of furthering the community’s pursuit of quality of life.
3. Raise the professional quality and standards of continuing and professional education in tertiary institutions in Hong Kong.
4. Enhance communication with government, industries, professional bodies and other stakeholders in areas of human resources development through continuing and professional education.
5. Provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and the sharing of information and professional experience among members and within the CPE sector, thus leading to the continual improvement of the quality and standard in the practice of continuing and professional education in Hong Kong.
6. Encourage, support and conduct research in the field of continuing and professional education and related areas.
7. Contribute to the shaping of Hong Kong into a regional centre of excellence in continuing and professional education.
1.2 Membership

The six founding members of the Federation are:
  Caritas Adult & Higher Education Service (Caritas),
  City University of Hong Kong (CityU),
  The Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU),
  Lingnan University (LU),
  The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK), and
  The University of Hong Kong (HKU).

Other current members include:
  The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) (year of joining: 1996),
  The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) (year of joining: 1996),
  The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) (year of joining: 1996),
  Vocational Training Council (VTC) (year of joining: 1997) and
  The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) (year of joining: 2001).

1.3 Chairpersons

1994 – 1996  Prof. Lee Ngok, HKU  
1996 – 1998  Dr. C. C. Wan, CUHK  
1998 – 2000  Mr. Simon Wong, HKBU  
2000 – 2002  Mr. Charles Wong, CityU  
2002 – 2004  Prof. Enoch Young, HKU

1.4 Current Board of Directors (2002-2004)

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<th>Position</th>
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<td>Chairperson</td>
<td>Prof. Enoch Young, HKU</td>
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<td>Vice-Chairperson</td>
<td>Dr. Andrew Ma, Caritas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honorary Secretary</td>
<td>Dr. Anthony Tam, PolyU</td>
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<tr>
<td>Honorary Treasurer</td>
<td>Mrs. Carrie Willis, VTC</td>
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<td>Membership Director</td>
<td>Mr. Simon Wong, HKBU</td>
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<td>Programme and Research</td>
<td>Dr. Victor Lee, CUHK</td>
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<td>Directors</td>
<td>Mr. Charles Wong, CityU</td>
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<td>Dr. Edwin Wong, HKIEd</td>
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<td>Dr. Keith Lam, LU</td>
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<td>Prof. Y. H. Lui, OUHK</td>
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<td>Prof. T. C. Pong, HKUST</td>
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The Board of Directors normally meets four times a year and as necessary. It appoints sub-committees and working groups to carry out duties regarding specific functions and issues. All sub-committees and working groups report to the Board of Directors. The Executive Secretary of the Federation provides secretarial support to the Board and its sub-committees.

1.5 Committees

Executive Committee
Chairperson : Prof. Enoch Young, HKU
Vice-Chairperson : Dr. Andrew Ma, Caritas
Honorary Secretary : Dr. Anthony Tam, PolyU
Honorary Treasurer : Mrs. Carrie Willis, VTC

The Executive Committee meets to discuss major issues relevant to the CPE sector and reports to the Board of Directors. Its agenda often relates to issues of government policies, public interest, media, or other organisations that may have an impact on the CPE profession.

Research Committee
Dr. Keith Lam, LU (Convenor)
Prof. Enoch Young, HKU
Prof. Y. H. Lui, OUHK
Mr. Charles Wong, CityU

The Research Committee will study topical issues pertaining to continuing education in Hong Kong and carry out research projects initiated by the Federation.

Programme Committee
Dr. Victor Lee, CUHK (Convenor)
Prof. T. C. Pong, HKUST
Dr. Andrew Ma, Caritas
Mrs. Carrie Willis, VTC
Dr. Edwin Wong, HKIEd

The Programme Committee develops and organises events, conferences and academic activities pertaining to continuing education in Hong Kong; and organises forums and
discussion groups that raise awareness of and encourage debates on Government's policy development pertaining to continuing education.

**Sub-degree Programme Coordination Committee**
Ms. Currie Tsang, HKU (Convenor)
Representatives from Member Institutions

The Sub-degree Programme Coordination Committee serves to promote the exchange of information amongst member institutions, to collate relevant information for the government and to conduct occasional joint promotional campaigns for the Associate Degree programmes. Each member institution has a representative in the Committee.

**Project Yi Jin**
Programme Management Committee
Dr. Edwin Wong, HKIEd (Chairman)

Quality Assurance Committee
Dr. Anthony Tam, PolyU (Chairman)

The Project Yi Jin Programme Management Committee oversees the operation of Project Yi Jin. Each member institution has one representative in the Committee. The Project Yi Jin Quality Assurance Committee oversees Project Yi Jin’s overall quality assurance system and its implementation. For purpose of enrichment, the committee members are invited not only from member institutions but also from the industries and professions.

**Working Groups**
The Board of Directors from time to time appoints members to form ad hoc working groups to carry out specific tasks or respond to issues of concern to the Federation.

### 1.6 Major Activities

Since its establishment in 1994, the Federation has taken an active role in the CPE sector. As its membership grew, the Federation has effectively served as a platform for communication of ideas and exchange of experience among its members.

In many respects, the work of the Federation has enhanced the Government’s recent measures to promote lifelong education. These measures included funding and
recognition of the Project Yi Jin and Associate Degrees (in terms of student financial assistance, institutional loans, land grants, and land usage); provision of the Continuing Education Fund; and the impending establishment of the Qualifications Framework (QF). The Federation has also actively participated in various Government activities including the Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review and the Review of Higher Education.

**Associate Degree**

In response to the public policy of widening access to tertiary education, Federation members have pioneered to offer Associate Degree programmes as an additional study opportunity for secondary school leavers starting from 2000. This has been a major activity of the Federation in accord with the Government target of providing tertiary education for 60% of the relevant age group. As at September 2003, 10 member institutions of the Federation offered 131 self-financed full-time sub degree programmes with an annual intake of around 10,000 students. Today, Associate Degrees are widely recognized qualifications and, together with Higher Diploma programmes also offered by Federation member institutions, have become an integral segment in the current tertiary education system.

In January 2001, the Federation has been commissioned by the Education and Manpower Bureau, HKSAR Government, to undertake a consultancy study on Associate Degree programmes in Hong Kong, including the philosophy and pedagogy of current programmes in Hong Kong and the development of a common descriptor of Associate Degree programmes (http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?langno=1&nodeid=1211). Members also assisted EMB to initiated a number support measures for institutions and students of self financed programmes (http://www.emb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=225&langno=1) In this respect, the Federation makes substantial contribution to the establishment of standards for Associate Degree programmes in Hong Kong.

**Project Yi Jin**

Project Yi Jin was launched in 2000 by collaborative efforts between the HKSAR Government and the Federation members. The Project provides an alternative study route for Secondary Five school leavers. Study programmes are offered under Yi Jin by member institutions for a wide range of vocational subjects as well as languages and other generic skills subjects. The aim is to provide a sound foundation for the Yi Jin students for further vocational studies or for employment. Reimbursement of a proportion of tuition fees through Government funding is available to students upon successful completion of the programmes. (http://www.emb.org.hk/emb/chi/
Continuing Education Fund

The HKSAR Government introduced the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) in June 2002. The CEF provides financial support to adult students of continuing education programmes in stipulated industry sectors. The purpose is to raise Hong Kong’s competitiveness in various industry sectors and professions through upgrading its human capital. The Federation played a significant role in representing the community's interest in the establishment of the CEF through active involvement in the discussion, development, promotion and implementation of the CEF. The Federation advised on the competency requirements set for the specific sectors supported by the CEF. It also recommended a regular review of the CEF regulations in line with the rapidly changing economy. In March 2003, some 80% of applications for claiming financial subsidy from the CEF came from students of Federation member institutions.

About 1,300 courses approved by CEF are offered by Federation Members, involving 28,400 CEF claim applications.

Higher Education Review

The Higher Education Review commissioned by the Secretary for Education and Manpower has culminated in the Report published in March 2002. The Report contained a series of recommendations for the future development of higher education in Hong Kong. The Federation has conducted a close study of the recommendations made in the Report and has reviewed in particular the key issues relating to CPE. A response paper of the Federation was presented to the Government in July 2002, containing views on the landscape of higher education in Hong Kong including the CPE sector, the establishment of a Further Education Council, the funding of Associate Degree programmes, the provision of degree second year quotas for Associate Degree graduates, and the establishment of a Credit Transfer System.

Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review

The Teaching and Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR) was initiated in 1995 by the University Grants Committee for tertiary institutions under its remit. The purpose is to ensure quality and value in teaching and learning. Based on the effectiveness of the First Round of the TLQPR, the Second Round commenced in 2001 and has for the first time included in its concern self-financed CPE units of the tertiary institutions. The entire process for all institutions concerned is expected to conclude by the end of 2003. Report on the Reviews and the institutions’ responses
Quality Assurance Policies and Procedures of Member Institutions

are being released for public information.

**Qualifications Framework**
The Federation has proactively taken part in the consultation process of the proposed Qualifications Framework (QF) put forth by the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) in the last quarter of 2002. Noting the significant implications the QF would have on the development of the higher and continuing education in Hong Kong, the Federation presents its views and advice on the proposals in the QF and related quality assurance measures. The Chairman of the Federation is appointed to the Manpower Development Committee, the core partner with the EMB and the UGC, which is charged with the task of developing and monitoring the QF for the sub-degree and the vocational education sectors. The Federation is closely collaborating with the EMB in refining and taking the QF proposals further ahead.

**Conferences and Seminars**
To foster local, regional and international exchange, the Federation has the prerogative to organise conferences and forums on lifelong education. In this connection, the Federation hosted an international conference on lifelong learning in 1999. Federation members are also active in hosting and participation in other conferences on CPE themes. A number of seminars on CPE-relevant issues were also organised throughout the years to promote the professionalism of CPE providers and the interest in lifelong learning at large.

**1.7 Current and Forthcoming Agenda**
The Federation plays a vital role in Hong Kong’s education and human capital development. Most importantly, the Federation has been active in raising community awareness of the need for lifelong learning, and in reflecting how this need can be met through the joint efforts of the Government, the profession and the community. The Federation will continue to advise and support the Government’s moves in meeting the lifelong learning needs of the Hong Kong community.

At present, the Federation maintains its support in the implementation of the CEF, offering of Yi Jin programmes, designing new Associate Degree and Higher Diploma programmes, and developing relevant study progression routes at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Further development of these various categories of programmes will see an increase of alternative study opportunities.

It is vital that the Federation takes the lead in new directions and further development
in lifelong education. As Hong Kong endeavours to reform its education system, particularly the higher education sector, the Federation takes an active role in the reform process to help achieve quality provision of learning programmes as well as widening access to higher education. In this connection, the Federation will continue to participate in and to advise on the development of the proposed QF involving a well-defined order of qualifications, especially with regard to the quality assurance mechanisms.

With member institutions having rich experience in CPE courses and the majority of member institutions having self-accrediting status, the Federation continues to exercise its expertise in CPE and in quality assurance. The Federation is confident in its leading position in the future development of the CPE sector.
THE FEDERATION QUALITY ASSURANCE MATTERS

Chapter 2: Introduction

To exemplify its commitment to enhancing the professionalism and development of CPE, the Federation has compiled this document with an aim of sharing its members’ good practices in quality assurance. The Federation hopes that this document will serve as a useful reference for a better understanding of its quality assurance functions.

2.1 Overview

Quality is a top priority issue for higher and continuing education. Federation members place significant emphasis on their academic and professional programmes and services quality, and recognise the maintenance and enhancement of standards as their primary function and major responsibility. This commitment to quality assurance and improvement is exemplified in the principles and policies adopted by the institutions. The arrangements of some institutions were designed to allow for a shift from a centralized validation of programmes by the University to a framework that emphasised self “ownership” of quality assurance (QA). Study programmes and related education services are delivered in line with these policies. Implementation of quality assurance policies is made through mechanisms and procedures including programme approval, monitoring and review, provision for teaching and learning support services and quality process review/audit.

As one of the means of evaluating the standard of study programmes and related education services, complaints from students and the public at large are taken by the institutions in a positive manner. Constructive feedback provides valuable information through which inadequacies can be appropriately addressed for improvement. To achieve this effectively, procedures are formalised to facilitate the complaints handling process.

To ensure that the ownership of QA remained consistent with credible guarantees to stakeholders and the quality is being maintained and improved, the principles,
policies and procedures for assuring academic quality have been well-defined by the Federation members in manuals and handbooks. The procedures for handling complaints are also clearly stipulated. The following chapters present an overview of the quality assurance systems and complaints handling process of CE units of member institutions.
Chapter 3: Quality Assurance Systems

All Federation members are established tertiary institutions and have in place quality assurance systems. Some CE units have adopted the same quality assurance systems as used by the institutions for all other programmes within the institution. Some CE units have made appropriate modifications according to the difference in the background and needs of adult learners, compared to those of school leavers. Members have recognized that their stakeholders, especially evening programmes directed at working professionals, have their own needs and expectations. The QA arrangements have accommodated these special needs, while ensuring a common standard of quality. There are appropriate modifications to mechanisms and procedures relating to the scale of operation, management and needs of CE programmes of different institutions.

When comparing with public-funded mainstream education, the operation of continuing education programmes are unique, in particular in handling resources like a large number of part-time teachers invited from the professions and industries. Furthermore, as adult learners normally adopt a part-time study mode, their learning support needs may be different from those of full-time students. Considering the operation and student needs from that of mainstream education, the quality assurance systems of Federation members have much evolved to effectively cater for these fundamental differences.

Various means are employed by the CE units in implementation of their quality assurance systems. They are aimed at maintaining and enhancing the academic and professional standards of programmes and services. They include:

- Programme approval, regular monitoring and review by an academic and management organisational structure;
- Staff selection, appraisal and development;
- Learner support services; and
- Quality process review.

A management hierarchy by means of committees is adopted by some Federation members to guide, oversee or take part in the implementation of the quality assurance mechanisms. Committees and boards of various scales and responsibilities are established. Memberships for these groups are usually drawn from academics and professionals internal and external to the institutions. These groups have designated tasks and foci according to the remits for which they are established, but are all pertinent to the purpose of quality assurance.
3.1 Aims and Objectives

The UGC (University Grants Committee) defines quality assurance as “the maintenance of the highest possible standards, both in teaching and learning, and in research and, commensurate with an institution’s agreed role and mission”. The primary responsibility of quality assurance clearly rests with the institutions themselves. With this in mind, all the Federation members share the same view about the aims of establishing a system of quality assurance mechanisms. The guiding principle is to ensure that academic and education services are fit for their purposes. Common aims and objectives of the quality assurance systems of the Federation members are:

- To support the mission of the institutions by ensuring the high quality of the programmes and services;
- To assure and improve the quality of education (programmes and services);
- To ensure consistency and effectiveness in quality assurance activities;
- To establish the role for all parties concerned in quality assurance activities and to maintain its standards;
- To cultivate and promote a QA culture among stakeholders.

3.2 Stakeholders

Quality assurance includes the development of a culture of continuous pursuit of improvement. It is expected that all staff and students to participate in and feel ownership of policies, and processes for the assurance of quality and standards. It is a collective responsibility whereby all staff and students in an institution play a role in different aspects of the education process. Thus, all students, teachers, subject leaders, administrators, senior management, support staff, external examiners and advisors all contribute to, as well as participate in the quality assurance process. QA is a self critical and reflective approach, members of CE units welcome and respond appropriately to criticism from students and other stakeholders.
Chapter 4: Programme Approval, Monitoring and Review

Quality assurance is a continuous process aiming to secure the quality and the standard of study programmes, in particular regarding four major aspects:

- Careful evaluation of all programme/course proposals at the planning stage;
- Set up relevant principles, policies and guidelines;
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of programme/course delivery and outcome standards;
- Constant review of all provisions.

4.1 Programme Approval

Programme validation is the basic building block for the overall quality assurance mechanism. Its main objective is to establish the capability of the unit to offer a new programme in relation to stated design requirements (internal and external) and threshold quality standards, and confirm performance objectives for future development. Consideration would be given to all aspects of programme development, especially in the setting of objectives, design of contents, mode of delivery as well as the learning assessment, criteria for recruiting lecturers, system of teaching evaluation and student feedback, and system for overall programme management and accountability.

Approval must be sought before programme development can commence. In the case of short courses, the authority for giving approval is sometimes delegated to the subject committee. For professional programmes, a proposal would normally be submitted to an institution’s executive board or committee for recommendation to the management or in some cases, a governing committee like the University Senate.

For each new course, a programme planning team is established with responsibility for all issues related to planning and development including preparation of the programme document with plans on pedagogy, curriculum philosophy and design, resources planning and budget. For the introduction of award-bearing programmes, a programme proposal has to undergo the following procedures:

- Consultation with related Departments/Faculties/Units of the parent institution;
- Seeking endorsement from the relevant committee such as an academic planning committee or a continuing education committee;
• In some institutions, seeking approval from the Senate; and
• To enter in the register of exempted courses under the Non-Local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance for Overseas Awards.

To further ensure the quality of programme implementation, a programme management committee and an examination board will usually be set up. Members usually include the programme/subject leader(s), an internal examiner, and an external examiner. The programme advisory committee is to keep in view the development of the programme, assess the suitability and relevance of all modules; receive recommendations for admission of students, and receive reports on the progress of students. The examination board is to supervise the preparation of and to moderate on the assessment components, assess students’ performance in the assessment components including assignments, tests, project reports and final examination, and recommend the lists of graduates for approval by the institution.

There are also formalised guidelines on approving programme partnerships with overseas universities and other businesses, professional bodies and agencies. For partnerships with businesses, professional bodies and agencies, the following criteria are often used by member institutions for approval of a partnership:

- The reputation and standing of the proposed partner organisation;
- The partner is willing and able to enter into appropriate legal and financial arrangements with the member institution;
- The partnership will be based on comprehensive documentation;
- The term of the partnership agreement will normally be set for a number of years, e.g. five years, at which point the partnership will be reviewed.

Further to the approval of partnership, the CE unit governing Board will consider and approve the programme(s) proposed. A number of important factors to assure in the programme approval process are:

- The programme is consistent with the academic goals and mission of the parent institution and the CE unit.
- There is sufficient student demand for the programme and that the programme will meet community needs.
- The education and award to be offered through the programme will be of high academic and/or professional quality.
- The quality management for the programme has been fully thought through, with the clear assignment of responsibility to the CE unit and staff associated with the programme.
Considering the self-financed nature of the programme, the programme is viable and will provide an adequate return on the resources deployed. The documents complied with the Non-Local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance for Overseas Awards.

4.2 Programme Monitoring

Once a programme is approved and is being offered, staff of the CE unit are required to undertake systematic monitoring of the quality of delivery and of the outcomes achieved by students. This entails a continuous process of reflection and review, taking account of feedback from students, teachers, programme administrators, external examiners, course moderators/advisors, and relevant committees. The aim is to build on the strengths, address the weaknesses, update the academic content and upgrade support for learners. Problems are identified and remedial actions are taken as soon as possible. This keeps a close eye on the quality of the programme, so as to maintain high standards of delivery and of learning outcomes, and to deal with any problems swiftly and effectively.

In general, the programme management and monitoring process aims to:

- Maintain the quality of the programme in order to ensure the attainment of its aims and objectives;
- Make decisions on participants’ assessment and award and ensure the maintenance of academic standards;
- Develop policies in relation to the assessment, teaching and learning methods;
- Review the operation of the programme each year and to prepare reports with particular reference to:
  - course curriculum
  - appointment of instructors
  - examination standards and assessment methods
  - assessment and examination regulations
  - relevance of the programme to the needs of the community
  - student feedback
  - performance of instructors
  - instructor feedback
  - external examiner feedback
  - student demand
  - any other matters of academic concern
Usually a programme or annual report and an evaluation covering all aspects of the operation of the programme will be produced. Such a report will also include statistics of student performance along with a comparison with previous student cohorts. After the approval by the programme management committee, the report will normally be submitted to the various management and governing committees for endorsement.

### 4.3 Programme Review

Quality assurance procedures are designed to secure the quality of student learning and the academic standards achieved, through the careful evaluation of programme delivery and of outcome standards, and through the periodic review of all provision. For some CE units, the programme review is overviewed by a quality assurance committee. The quality assurance committee may delegate the direct scrutiny of monitoring reports on programmes to the respective academic or programme committees. On the other hand, the quality assurance committee will maintain its overview of the monitoring process by receiving reports from the academic or programme committees, quality assurance teams and from officers-in-charge on the monitoring process, and on any significant issues and actions.

In most institutions, the review of a programme takes the form of a re-validation process. This is similar to the new programme approval process, with the additional information of the experience of delivering the programme. The purpose is to ensure the sustainable quality of a programme.

In re-validation process, it is normally the case that a programme is reviewed after having been launched for a period, such as five years, as determined by the approving board. While a full-scale programme review will be carried out near the end of the previous approval period, it may happen that certain parts of the programme require immediate change.

Samples of programme change include:
- Change of programme title;
- Change of programme objectives;
- Change of mode of study and duration;
- Change of entry requirements;
- Revision of programme structure;
Updating of syllabus;
Change of assessment methods.

In some cases, there may be substantial modifications to several aspects of the programme. If the changes will result in substantial differences in the programme, the programme is to be handled as a new programme proposal, instead of as programme modification. The purpose is to ensure the qualities of programme coherence.

The criteria used for considering modification proposals include:
- Academic validity;
- Feasibility of timing of implementation;
- Effects on the current students;
- Effects on the academic staff;
- Effects on cognate programmes offered; and
- Implications on resources.

The normal guiding principle is that the current students are not put in a disadvantageous position as a result of programme modification.
Chapter 5: Teaching and Learning Support Services

5.1 Teaching Quality

For high quality programmes/ courses and good classroom practices, member institutions have placed great emphasis on setting up a supportive learning environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning. Various means and mechanisms are devised for the purpose of drawing the awareness of programme teams to the importance of teaching quality, which is their prime responsibility. They include:

- Staff selection;
- Induction and briefing;
- Class observations and class review discussions;
- Student feedback and evaluation;
- Self-reflection;
- Staff appraisal and development; and
- Peers meeting and communication.

For instance, the following initiatives in facilitating the learning and teaching processes are adopted by the institutions.

- The code of good practices for lecturers and guidelines for the evaluation of teaching are being set up;
- The establishment of a learning and teaching committee to serve as a change agent and oversee the cultivation of a quality culture in learning and teaching;
- Subject lecturers will be encouraged to provide evidence of good teaching in design of teaching materials, organization and presentation, student feedback and learning outcomes;
- A progress and feedback report will be made by every subject lecturer after the completion of each subject. The report will incorporate comments on the operations, contents and depth of the syllabus and will suggest ways to improve the overall quality of the subject;
- Relevant trainings are offered for the subject lecturers; and
- Innovative teaching technologies like web-based teaching and multimedia resources are encouraged.
5.2 Learning Support

Provision of appropriate support facilities for teaching and learning complements the academic quality of programmes and is conducive to effective teaching and learning. For member institutions, the following key learning support facilities and services are provided:

**Learning Centres**
The majority of programmes are conducted by face-to-face lectures, supplemented by tutorials and workshops. These academic activities are held in the institutions’ learning centres. Learning centres are chosen with regard to ease of access and suitable environment for supporting learning of adult students.

**Classroom Facilities**
All learning centres are equipped with audio-visual equipment to support teaching and learning activities. Purpose built facilities including computer laboratories, art and design studios, and music rooms are provided to support programmes of specific subject areas.

**Online Learning**
Online learning through a web-based learning platform is offered for some programmes. A flexible learning environment is created and communication between teachers and students, among teachers as well as among students themselves is enhanced. Efficient dissemination of information, such as programme schedules, lecture handouts and submission of coursework assignments, is facilitated by this online learning platform.

**Library Access**
In some institutions, students of CE programmes leading to an academic award are provided with readers tickets or borrowers tickets of the parent institutions’ libraries.

**Information Seminars/Induction Sessions**
Information seminars and induction meetings are usually conducted at the commencement of programmes to provide students with relevant information. Guidance is also provided with regard to study skills, academic writing and examination skills. As for teachers, some institutions organise teachers forums, induction and meetings to strengthen communication and to enhance teaching effectiveness.
Student Programme Handbooks
Student programme handbooks are provided for students on individual programmes. The handbooks give general information on student discipline, conduct in examinations, channels of communication with the School, as well as reference details about specific programmes such as programme structure, aims, syllabus, assessment methods, and recommended readings.

Guidebook for Teachers
A guidebook for teachers is provided by some institutions giving more information on the institution as a whole, including the institution’s mission, management structure, quality assurance policies, staffing and financial policies, communication channels, and teaching and learning facilities available. Some institutions have also published guidelines or handbooks on effective teaching to assist teachers and to facilitate the application of good teaching practice.

Communication and Feedback
Institutions in general place great importance in effective communication with students and in gauging student feedback by various channels for formal and informal communication. The purpose is to ensure that students, the overwhelming majority of whom are studying in the part-time mode, will be able to get adequate support to solve academic and related problems in their studies. Furthermore, feedback from students contributes significantly to maintaining and improving the quality of programmes and services. Communication is often facilitated by the learning experience survey, contacts with teachers and by electronic communication.

A teaching experience survey is used to seek comments from teachers about the programme and related services. Students and teachers are also represented in committees for individual programmes. The committees concern themselves with the quality of both the programmes’ academic standard and teaching and learning processes. In addition, students may convey complaints and dissatisfaction by writing to the relevant programme staff and officer-in-charge. Where appropriate, the complaints are presented to the relevant committees for consideration. Issues that lead to policy reviews are referred to the appropriate policy making committees.
Chapter 6: Quality Process Review/Audit

As quality assurance is an active, evolving and responsive process, quality process review is an essential component of a mature QA system. Some member institutions with a longer history of operation have in place a quality process review as an auditing process to continuously review and revise the existing QA mechanisms and procedures. At the same time, the audit ensures that quality management and continuous improvement are a priority for the whole organization and the implementation has been effective.

The basic objective of quality process review is to provide for an independent assessment of whether the quality assurance arrangements set up for programmes are adequate and functioning to assure and improve the quality of educational delivery. It is established to foster the implementation of quality assurance policy and process in all areas of work and to ensure that such activities are congruent with the institutional mission and direction of development.

The review is designed as a peer review whereby experiences and ideas can be exchanged for the betterment and development of quality assurance activities in the CE unit. It is meant to be a collegial process conducted as a shared responsibility of all colleagues in an institution.

Institutions undertake the quality process review for programmes offered jointly with overseas universities, alongside the review for the institution’s own CE award courses and short courses of general interest. To ensure independence of the review, the quality assurance committee maintains oversight of the appointment of the review panel and receives reports from the panel. In conducting the review, the institution’s governing board will:

- Receive the audit panel’s report via a quality assurance committee.
- Take follow-up action.
- Refine current systems and arrangements for quality assurance.
- Codify good practice in an accessible way.
- Disseminate good practice.

Below are some issues that will be considered in the quality process review:
Programme Approval
Has the programme planning process taken into consideration appropriate programme approval procedures? Have any problems been identified in the programme approval process? How have these problems been resolved? What benefits have the programmes gained from the programme approval exercise?

Programme Monitoring
Have programme monitoring procedures been observed during the delivery of the programmes? Have any problems been identified in the programme monitoring process? How have these problems been resolved? What benefits have the programmes gained from the programme monitoring exercise?

Programme Change
Have programme change procedures been observed when changes are made? Have any problems been identified in the programme change process? How have these problems been resolved? In what ways has the quality of the programmes been enhanced as a result of these procedures?

Programme Review and Evaluation
Have the programmes been reviewed and evaluated at appropriate stages? Have any problems been identified in the programme review and evaluation process? How have these problems been resolved? In what ways has the quality of the programmes been enhanced as a result of these procedures?

Teaching Quality
Have the programmes taken into consideration appropriate mechanisms of ensuring enhanced teaching quality? Have any problems been identified in the implementation of teaching quality mechanisms? How have these problems been resolved? In what ways has the quality of the programmes been enhanced as a result of these mechanisms?

Student Feedbacks
Have the results of evaluation from students met the standard as required? Are there any good practices that can be shared out? What are the core issues for students not being addressed by the programme? Etc…
Chapter 7: Complaint Handling Process

Federation members have formalized detailed guidelines on the complaint handling procedures. These procedures form part of the QA system in some institutions. Here follows is a summary of commonly adopted principles and practices in dealing with complaints.

7.1 General Principles in Handling Complaints

Complaints handling procedures are in general simple and easy to understand so that they can be operated by all levels of staff. Courtesy, patience, politeness and timeliness are stressed in receiving and handling complaints. Federation members pledge to respond speedily, carry out full and fair investigation and offer appropriate redress if necessary.

7.2 Channels

There is a wide range of communication and feedback channels, including dedicated email address, fax number, interactive voice response system, suggestion box, posting address, enquiry hotline, contact person and service counter. Normally media coverage and anonymous complaints will be investigated.

7.3 Personnel

There are in various institutions specific programme personnel, dedicated communication officer, external relations, service co-ordinator and quality assurance officer. These staff members will acknowledge complaints, follow up internal investigation, facilitate response and redress, involving relevant parties like programme staff, registry staff or various units in the institutions as appropriate.

7.4 Procedures

Federation members mostly have set up comprehensive, co-ordinated and multi-tiered complaint handling procedures. Essential stages in the procedures include acknowledgement of complaint, complaint categorisation, investigation and
substantiation, meeting with complainant, internal reporting, documentation, official response, redress, and/or improvement action or policy review.

Issues irresolvable on one occasion or at one level will be referred for further investigation at a higher level. Committees are in place to oversee handling of complaints or to guide resolution of issues. There are complaints committees, course committees and so on. Staff at the senior level including the chief executive officer of the continuing education units will also take up the reviewing role in cases of serious concern.
Chapter 8: Further Details

The chapters here present a general summary of QA systems of member institutions in the Federation. Owing to the different scales of operation, management structures and policies, the implementation procedures may differ among institutions. The following web links are provided for access to further details of the respective QA systems and related information in individual institutions.

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<th>Member Institutions</th>
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<td>Please contact respective institution for information.</td>
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<td>Visit <a href="http://www.cityu.edu.hk/ce/qa">www.cityu.edu.hk/ce/qa</a> or please contact respective institution for information.</td>
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<td>The Chinese University of Hong Kong</td>
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<td>The University of Hong Kong</td>
<td>Visit <a href="http://www.hku.hk/space/about_us/qa.html">www.hku.hk/space/about_us/qa.html</a> or please contact respective institution for information.</td>
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