Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education

Consultation Document on
Code of Good Practices on Governance and Quality Assurance

Overview

The self-financing sector is an integral part of the post-secondary education in Hong Kong. It plays an important role in broadening the opportunities and choices for further education, thereby providing quality, diversified and flexible pathways with multiple entry and multiple exit points for school leavers. The sector also helps diversify our higher education sector and is conducive to Hong Kong's further development as a regional education hub. By responding quickly to changing society needs, the self-financing sector plays a pivotal role in upgrading the quality of the human resources in Hong Kong by offering a wide array of continuing and professional education and lifelong learning opportunities for our workforce and the community at large.

2. While self-financing post-secondary institutions are diverse in size, character and mission, good governance and quality assurance (QA) are of pivotal importance to the healthy and sustainable development of the self-financing sector. In order to further promote the enhancement of governance and QA for the sector, the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education (CSPE)[1] has engaged an external consultant to conduct a Consultancy Study on *"Local and International Good Practices in the Governance and Quality Assurance of the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Sector"*, with a view to developing a code of good practices to be adopted on a voluntary basis for further advancing the development of the sector.

Consultancy Study and Code of Good Practices

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[1] Established in April 2012 in response to the recommendation of University Grants Committee's Report on Higher Education Review 2010, CSPE serves as a useful platform for discussing macro and strategic issues of common interest to the self-financing post-secondary sector, as well as promoting quality and good practices.

3.		The Report of the Consultancy Study was published in August 2014. The full report and the executive summary can be downloaded from CSPE's website *Concourse[2]*(*www.cspe.edu.hk*). Overall speaking, the Report covers comprehensive information and analysis on issues concerning governance and QA with reference to the experience and practices in Hong Kong and abroad; observations and recommended approach; a framework of the proposed code of good practices on governance and QA; as well as the promulgation and implementation strategy. A session was organised in November 2014 with the self-financing post-secondary institutions and QA bodies to share with them the findings and recommendations in the Report and to listen to their views and suggestions.

4.		Based on the findings of the Report, CSPE has compiled a draft Code of Good Practices on Governance and QA for the self-financing post-secondary sector at **Annex**. The framework of the draft Code comprises key aspects including institutional governance; programme design and delivery; and staff, other resources and student support. It is envisaged that implementation of the Code can promote the enhancement of quality, transparency and sustainable development of the self-financing post-secondary sector. We would like to gauge comments from stakeholders and the general public on the draft Code, with a view to promulgating it by June 2015.

Consultation

5.		Any views/comments on the draft Code can be sent to the Education Bureau by mail, electronic mail or facsimile:

Address:	Further Education Division
	Education Bureau
	7/F, East Wing, Central Government Offices
	Tamar, Hong Kong
E-mail address:	cspe@edb.gov.hk
Fax No.:	(852) 3579 5097

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[2]	Launched in December 2013 by CSPE, the website *Concourse* provides comprehensive information and statistics of the sector, which helps enhance transparency and accountability. The information provided includes related Government policy, the regulatory framework, Government support measures, QA matters, graduates' progression pathways and information on the self-financing post-secondary education institutions.

6.   The closing date of consultation is **16 March 2015 (Monday)**.

Education Bureau
February 2015

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Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education

Code of Good Practices on Governance and Quality Assurance

1 Institutional governance

1.1 *Mission and vision*

1.1.1 Institutions should draw up and publish mission and vision statements which will underpin the institutions' design and delivery of learning programmes and Quality Assurance (QA) and resource allocation policies.

1.2 *Strategic and operational plans*

1.2.1 Institutions should develop strategic and operational plans which are aligned with their missions and visions and based on a detailed analysis of the institution's own strengths and weaknesses and of the risks, opportunities and challenges present in the external environment.

1.2.2 Abstracts of the strategic and operational plans which contain high level expected goals and performance outcomes should be published.

1.3 *Annual and financial reports*

1.3.1 Institutions should compile and publish annual reports containing, among others, a review of activities undertaken during the year and the performance of the institutions against their strategic and operational plans.

1.3.2 Institutions should make available financial information in a way that is transparent and accessible to current students and the general public. It is important that the information should be presented at an appropriate level of details to meet the needs of different stakeholders.

1.4　　　　*Governing structures and processes*

1.4.1　　　The governing body of an institution should have an appropriate mix of stakeholders and expertise which may vary in accordance with different circumstances of institutions.

1.4.2　　　An institution should formulate clear lines of responsibility, delegation of authority and terms of reference for its governing body and key committees like the academic board, finance committee and QA committee.

1.4.3　　　An institution should have in place a system of appointment of members to its governing body and key committees and a procedure for periodical review of the performance of the committees and their members.

1.4.4　　　An institution should ensure that members of its governing body and key committees are aware of their roles and responsibilities by providing, for example, programmes of induction and professional development.

1.4.5　　　An institution should have in place a written code of conduct for members of its governing board, management and other key committees as well as staff, spelling out their rights and duties and setting out clear procedures and guidelines for declaration of interests.

1.4.6　　　An institution should have in place a system of periodical audits of its institutional processes on governance to ensure that procedures and guidelines are complied with.

1.4.7　　　An institution should publish the composition, membership and terms of reference of its governing body and key committees.

1.5　　　　*Fee-setting*

1.5.1　　　In setting the fees including the tuition fees and other charges, institutions should take into consideration the principles of affordability (careful attention should be made to ensure students with greater financial need are not systematically excluded); accessibility (the fee proposal should include information on financial resources available to students, including financial assistance, bursaries and scholarships, etc.); enabling quality (any

proposed increase of tuition fees and charges should be limited to the amount necessary to provide a quality education); and predictability (students and parents should have as much information as possible to consider the overall costs in completing the programmes).

2   **Programme design and delivery**

2.1   *Quality assurance mechanism and procedures*

2.1.1   Institutions should set out their framework for managing academic standards and quality and develop QA mechanism and procedures that are clear and transparent to all their stakeholders including staff, existing and prospective students, employers and relevant professional bodies as well as members of the public.

2.1.2   Institutions should have in place formalised procedures for programme design and approval, ensuring that the agreed learning outcomes of the students have been fully taken into consideration and enabling stakeholders including staff, students, employers and the profession to contribute to or participate in the academic decision-making process.

2.1.3   To ensure transparency, the formalised procedures for programme design and approval should be documented and, if required, be made available for information to staff, existing and prospective students, and the general public.

2.1.4   To facilitate existing and prospective students in making informed decision on their choice of institutions and programmes, institutions should provide as much information as possible on details of their programmes including programme contents, admission criteria, intended learning outcomes and articulation pathways for further education.

2.2   *Programme monitoring and reviews*

2.2.1   Institutions should put in place a formalised system of conducting regular monitoring and reviews in an objective manner to assess programme effectiveness, validity and relevance. Stakeholders including staff, students and employers should be kept informed suitably, and the formalised system should have incorporated

feedback from stakeholders such as academic staff, students, graduates and employers as appropriate.

2.2.2 Institutions should publish outcomes of their QA and programme reviews in a manner that is clear and readily accessible to stakeholders such as staff, students and employers.

3 Staff, other resources and student support

3.1 *Staffing and staff development*

3.1.1 Institutions should have a fair and transparent human resources system which includes policies such as appointment, appraisal, complaint / grievances, promotion and termination, as well as policies and measures to facilitate staff development and to encourage and recognise good performance.

3.2 *Learning and teaching resources*

3.2.1 Institutions should ensure that there are adequate staff and learning and teaching facilities to support their programmes of study at a level of quality acceptable to the relevant QA bodies on a continuing basis.

3.2.2 Institutions should publish information on staffing and learning and teaching facilities available to support programme delivery and student admission targets.

3.3 *Student support*

3.3.1 Institutions should ensure that adequate support is given to students through induction and orientation, provision of diverse learning experience to meet different learning needs of students, pastoral care and counselling, to facilitate the development of generic skills and whole-person development.

3.3.2 For institutions admitting students with different needs (e.g. non-Chinese speaking students and students with special educational needs), measures should be in place to help them adapt to learning and teaching at the institutions, and to facilitate their integration with other students in programme and other student activities.

3.3.3   Institutions should provide clear information to prospective students on the process for application and admission to their programmes, tuition fees, admission requirements, programme contents, medium of instruction, intended learning outcomes, professional recognition and internship if applicable, articulation pathways and employment prospects to help them in selecting institutions and programmes.

3.3.4   Institutions should keep existing students fully informed of the policies and regulations governing students' rights and responsibilities, course assessment and appeal mechanism.

Secretariat, Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education
February 2015