

明愛白英奇專業學校
Caritas Bianchi College of Careers



明愛專上學院
Caritas Institute of Higher Education

Quality Assurance Handbook (Simplified Version)

July 2020

Quality Assurance System

1. Introduction

The establishment of a rigorous and effective Quality Assurance System (QAS) is an important strategy employed by Caritas Institute of Higher Education (CIHE)/Caritas Bianchi College of Careers (CBCC) on the one hand to ensure the upkeep of the quality of its teaching and learning and the standards of its study programmes, and on the other hand to exploit the opportunities and face the challenges along the road of its future development. In this regard, the Institute/College gradually developed the initial QAS from around 2000, and has been conducting reviews of the system periodically with the aim to consolidate, enrich, and integrate its mechanisms and procedures in order to establish a more rigorous approach to quality assurance (QA). Over the last 19 years, the evolution of the QAS has reflected changes in the internal management structure at the Institute/College, better insight of the staff members responsible for QA, greater self-criticism and self-confidence within the Institute/College, as well as responses to the demands of external audit, moderation and accreditation, and the local and global trends in QA practices. With regard to QA approaches, the QAS has gradually extended its focus from the encouragement of quality compliance to the encouragement of quality enhancement. With regard to its scope, the QAS has recently extended its requirement for formal reporting and systematic follow-up from mainly concerning the relevant academic functions to also encompassing the relevant non-academic functions. While there is always still room for improvement, the Institute/College is confident that it has laid a solid foundation for establishing a system that promotes awareness of quality, acts upon results, and disseminates good practices of teaching, learning, and assessment as well as learning support and administration of institutional affairs.

The QAS of the Insrtitute/College is established based on two major principles: *fitness for purpose* which relates processes to objectives, and *students' transformation* which emphasises the effectiveness and outcomes of student learning. Internally, the promotion of a quality culture within the Institute/College is a strong driving force for the development of the QAS; in this regard, we seek to adopt an approach which is cost-effective and demonstrable, emphasises staff commitment and ownership, and strikes a good balance between accountability-led and improvement-led considerations.

The major thrust of the evolution of the QAS can be summarised as having the following attributes:

- ◆ A more pronounced concern for quality from the institute/college management, staff members, and students;

- ◆ A greater emphasis on a cycle of regular monitoring, review, and self-improvement;
- ◆ A devolution of responsibility for quality assurance (QA) to staff members and students whilst retaining central oversight; and
- ◆ A suitable mix of both *formative* (i.e., developmental) and *summative* (i.e., judgemental) measures.

2. Principles of Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The following principles underlie the mechanisms and procedures established by CIHE/CBCC for its QAS:

- ◆ The Institute/College is accountable to its sponsoring body, i.e. Caritas – Hong Kong, Caritas Education Services, and Caritas Community and Higher Education Service, the community, employers of graduates, as well as students and their families for the quality of the educational experience it provides;
- ◆ The concept of quality is related to the ideas of:
 - *Fitness for purpose* which relates processes to objectives; and
 - *Students' transformation*, which emphasises the effectiveness and outcomes of student learning;
- ◆ Quality is better assured if:
 - The ethos of the Institute/College is conducive to aspiration to *excellence of teaching* and pursuit of a broadly defined form of *scholarship*;
 - There is a *quality culture* in the Institute/College which emphasises self-evaluation, self-criticism, and self-improvement;
 - Staff members directly responsible for the delivery of educational experience have a sense of *ownership* of the QA processes;
 - Sufficient *resources* are devoted to the QA processes;
 - There is a *commitment* among staff members to acting upon results; and

- There is a *sharing* among staff members of good practices;
- ◆ *Opinions from stakeholders*, in terms of student, graduate, staff and employer feedback, is an integral component of QA;
- ◆ *Advice from external parties*, in terms of suggestions from academics and professionals (both local and overseas), is an integral component of QA;
- ◆ The QA processes must be *explicit, demonstrable, and well-documented*; and
- ◆ The QA processes must be *cost-effective*.

3. Committee System for Quality Assurance and Enhancement

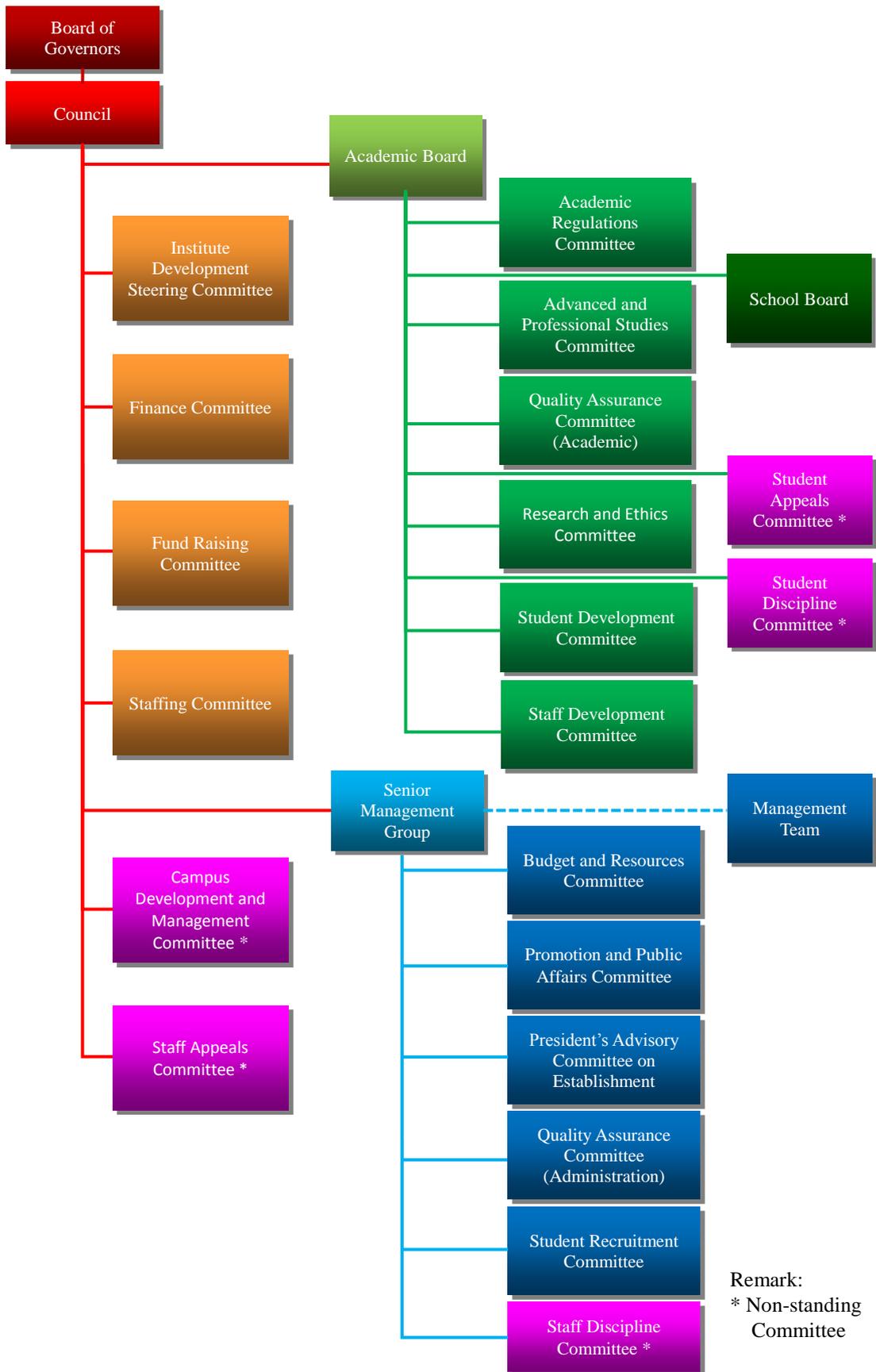
At the institutional level the overall committee system of CIHE/CBCC for governance and management of the Institute/College is depicted in Figure 1 (for CIHE) and Figure 2 (for CBCC), while the organisation chart is depicted in Figure 3 (for CIHE) and Figure 4 (for CBCC). The involvement of the committee system in various QA processes of the Institute/College resembles similar practices in other higher education institutions (HEIs), with emphasis on *simplicity* and *participative management*. For the relevant academic affairs, such as the discussion of reports/proposals for an extant programme submitted by a programme committee (PC) or a programme team (PT), or for a new programme submitted by a programme planning committee (PPC), the reports/ proposals concerned will be endorsed and approved by the Quality Assurance Committee (Academic) [QAC-Academic] and the Academic Board (AB), respectively. In the academic year of 2018-19, the Institute/College started a similar practice for the relevant non-academic affairs, such as the discussion of review reports/operational plans submitted by the administrative and learning support units, under which the reports/plans concerned will be endorsed by the Quality Assurance Committee (Administration) [QAC-Admin] and the Senior Management Group (SMG) and, if needed, the Management Team (MT). If a proposal or plan has strong resource implication, approval from the Council and/or the Board of Governors (BoG) will be sought before its implementation. These practices aim at ensuring that the staff members at different levels (and, in some cases, also the student representatives) are appropriately involved in the Institute/College's important decisions on its operation and future development, and in the associated QA processes, thus providing a check-and-balance mechanism in the suggestion, endorsement and approval of the proposals/plans concerned.

The following boards and committees in the committee system of CIHE/CBCC are mainly involved in the relevant matters for QA purposes:

- ◆ Academic Board (AB);
- ◆ Quality Assurance Committee (Academic) [QAC-Academic]; and
- ◆ Programme Committee (PC) / Programme Team (PT) / Programme Planning Committee (PPC)

The AB is the supreme academic policy making body in the Institute/College. In matters of academic development and quality, it is advised by the QAC-Academic at the policy and institutional level. While the PPC, the PT and the PC are formal platforms for the discussion of programme proposals and other QA-related matters at the programme level, during the initiation of a new programme, the revision of an extant programme, and for the continual management of a programme respectively, the QAC-Academic provides other sources of opinions in regard to programme development and assumes a check-and-balance role on related matters at the institute/college level.

Besides the QAC-Academic, the AB also executes its functions through other standing committees which meet regularly to discuss agenda items of importance to the Institute/College's overall academic development and QA – whether they relate to student affairs (via the Student Development Committee [Student DC]), development of staff (via the Staff Development Committee [Staff DC]), promotion of research activities (via the Research and Ethics Committee (REC)), student admissions and examinations (via the Academic and Regulations Committee [ARC]) and articulation opportunities for students' academic advancement (via the Advanced and Professional Studies Committee [APSC]). More details on the terms of reference and memberships of these committees can be found in the *Committee Handbook*.



Remark:
* Non-standing Committee

Figure 1 Governance Structure and Committee Organisation for CIHE

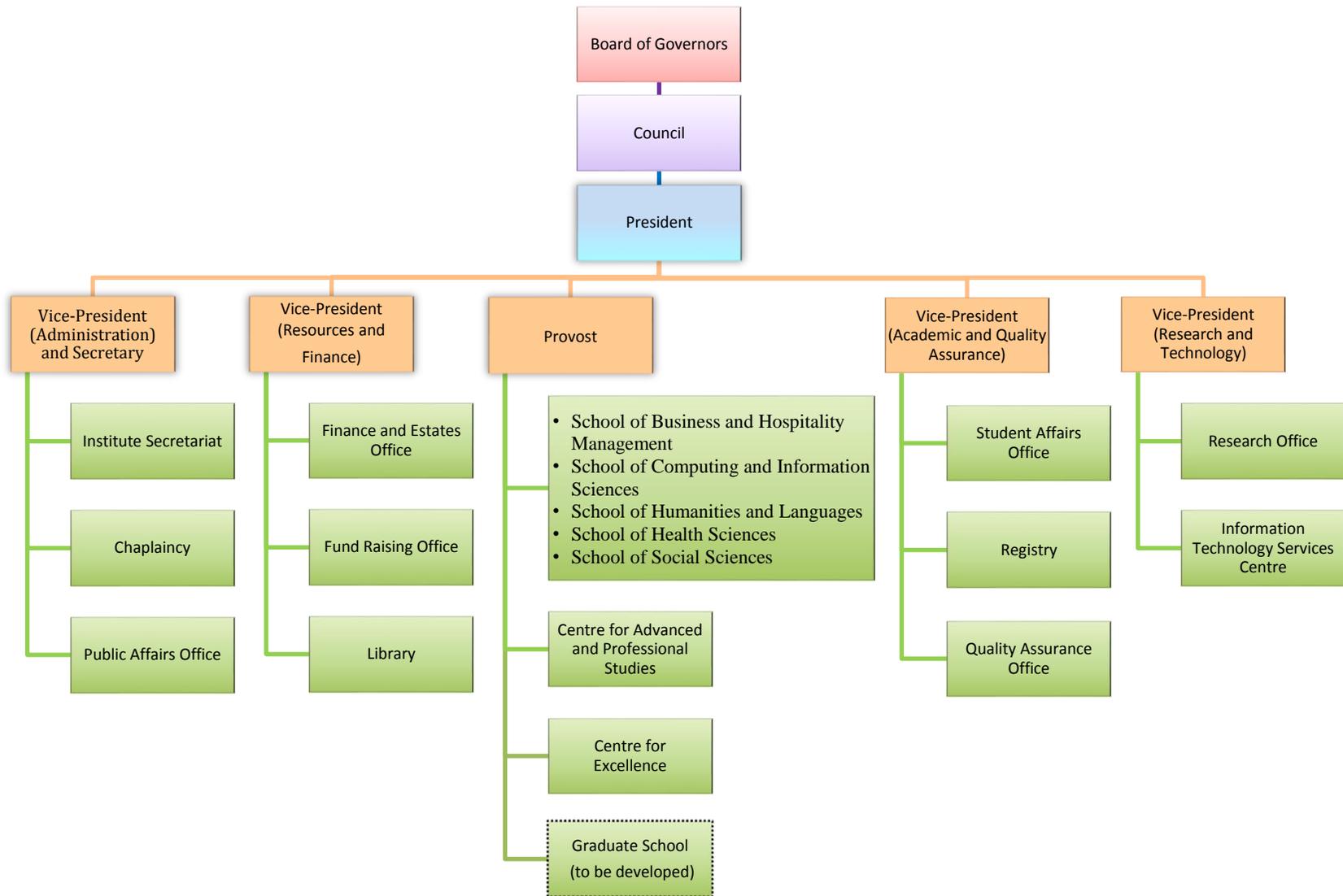


Figure 3 Organisation Chart of CIHE

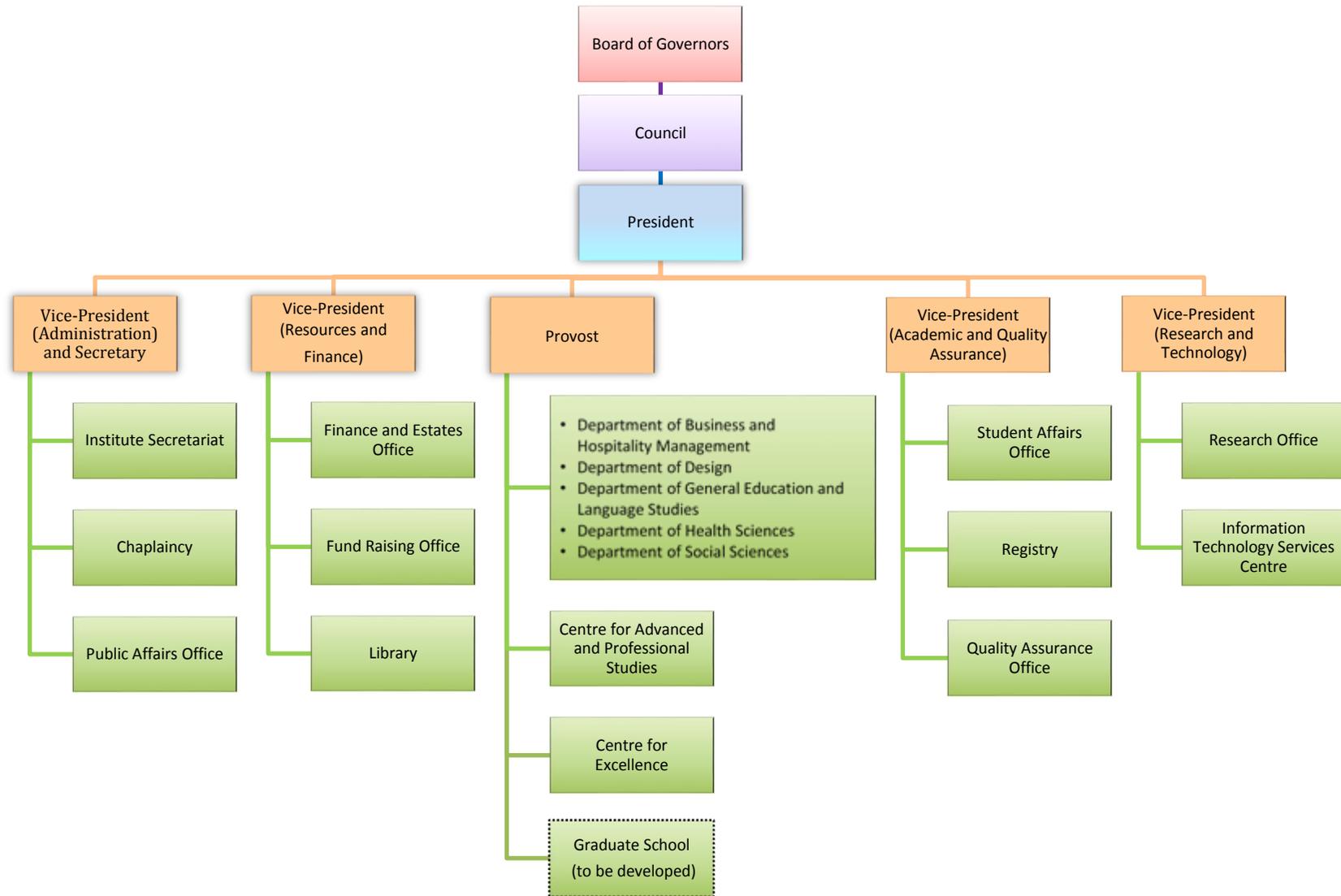


Figure 4 Organisation Chart of CBCC

4. General Framework of Quality Assurance System

In particular, the QAS of CIHE/CBCC focuses upon the quality assurance and enhancement of its relevant academic functions, with emphasis being placed on the following four major areas:

- ◆ The quality in the design, approval, monitoring, and evaluation of programmes and courses;
- ◆ The quality of teaching, learning, and assessment;
- ◆ The quality in appointment, development, and performance of staff contributing to teaching and learning; and
- ◆ The quality in obtaining and responding to feedback from various stakeholders, such as students, staff members, advisers, external examiners, professional bodies, employers, and others.

The relevant aspects of the current QAS pertaining to the continuous development and management of the Institute/College's study programmes are highlighted in Sections 5 to 9 below. Other mechanisms for QA are highlighted in Section 10.

The Institute/College also plans to gradually develop a similar general framework for the quality assurance and enhancement of its relevant non-academic functions, with the QAC-Admin serving as the major platform for discussion of the issues raised in this development process, and for sharing of good practices and ideas among the administrative and learning support units. In the piloting academic year of 2018-19, the current development in this part of the QAS focuses on the review of mechanisms for collection of feedback from different users of the administrative and learning support functions, and the formal reporting of follow-up actions in response to the collected feedback via the annual review reports and operational plans of the respective non-academic units.

5. Programme Quality Assurance Cycle

At CIHE/CBCC, a study programme is the major platform for the application of quality assurance and enhancement processes, and these processes can be depicted as a cyclic model shown in Figure 5. The model is based on the principle of continuous improvement and consists of four components.

The first component comprises procedures to assure the quality of curriculum planning, design and modification. These include (a) involvement of teaching staff from relevant schools/departments, (b) collection of evidence through surveys and benchmarking exercises, (c) referencing the good practice models and (d) alignment with the Institute/College Mission and the School/Department Mission.

The second component encompasses procedures to assure effective programme management. These include (a) the check-and-balance mechanism built into the

programme management process, (b) active participation of teaching and supporting staff and (c) effective use of formal and informal communication means.

The third component is made up of procedures to assure the quality of programme delivery. These include (a) encouragement and promotion of staff development, (b) dissemination of good teaching and assessment practices, and (c) continuous improvement of teaching and learning support.

The fourth component embraces procedures for measuring and evaluating the programme, and for using the evaluative results as a means to improve the programme. These include (a) annual review of the programme and its teaching and learning support, (b) development of indicators that measure input, process, and learning outcomes, and (c) actions as induced by the indicators.

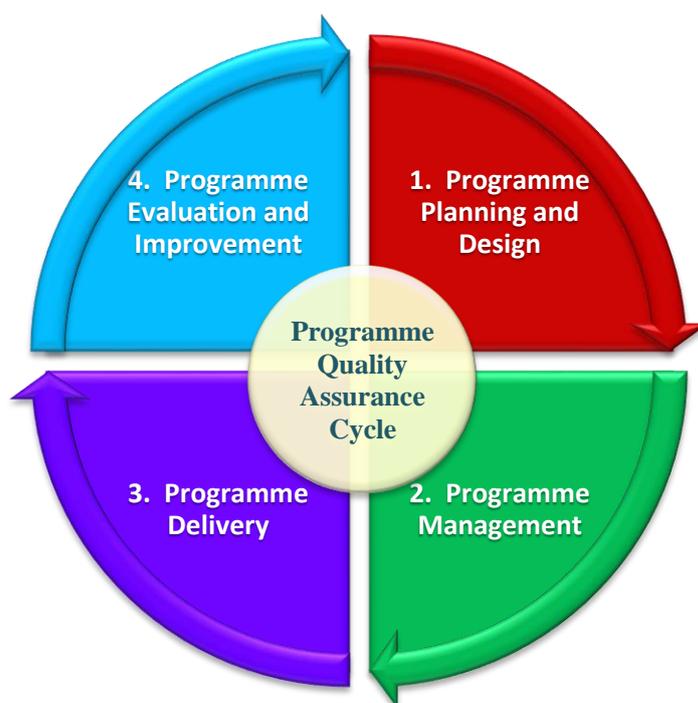


Figure 5 Programme Quality Assurance Cycle

6. Programme Development and Management Framework

The framework for programme development and management constitutes an important part of the Institute's/College's QAS, and it mainly comprises the following processes:

- ◆ Proposing new programmes;
- ◆ Proposing modifications to programmes; and
- ◆ Conducting annual programme reviews.

As shown in Figure 6 below, in a typical programme development and management process, suggestions are made by the PPC / PT / PC based on findings collected from

various sources, and are forwarded via the QAC-Academic to the AB for approval. For a major event (e.g. proposal for a new programme), the AB decides on the approval of the proposal with reference to the endorsement of the QAC-Academic, and the Council / BoG is informed and when appropriate, is consulted for the final decision. For a minor event (e.g. minor changes to a programme), the process stops at the QAC-Academic, which is authorised to make the final decision.

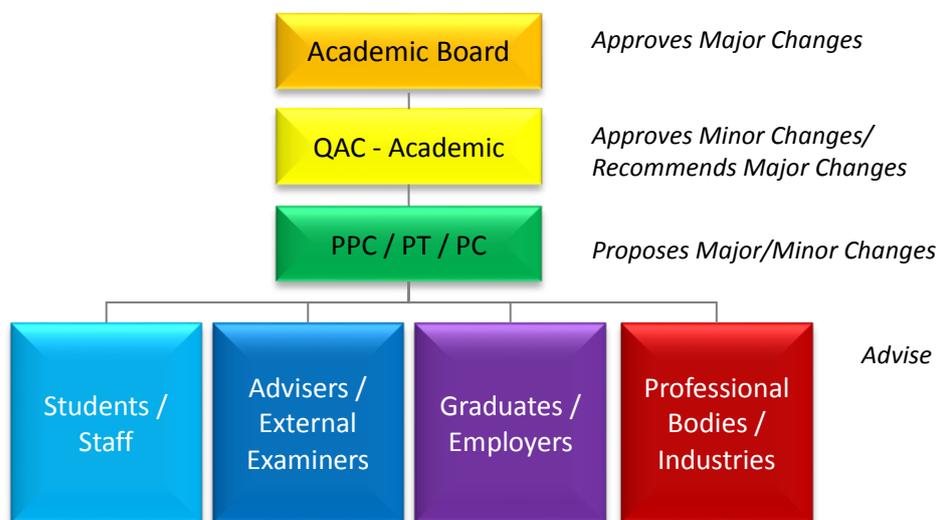


Figure 6 Programme Management and Development

7. Feedback from Stakeholders

The collection and follow-up of feedback collected from various stakeholders constitute another important part of the QAS. For this part, the quality assurance and enhancement processes as applied to a study programme can be broadly divided into the major external inputs and the major measures of programme quality.

7.1 Major External Input

For quality assurance and enhancement of study programmes at CIHE/CBCC, at present there are two major forms of external input: *Advisory Committees (ACs)* and *External Examiners (EEs)*.

An AC is set up for each school/department and is composed of external advisers, including academics and representatives from the industries and professional sectors. It is responsible for advising the school/department on the design, structure, coverage, and mode of delivery of its programmes or courses, and on providing an invaluable opportunity to ensure that the Institute/College is aware of the developments in both the academia, and the business and commercial sectors. Comments and recommendations of the AC are discussed by the respective schools/departments, and acted on appropriately.

With regard to assessment quality, at least one EE is appointed for each programme or group of related programmes / courses to provide an external and impartial check on their academic standards and enable the programmes / courses to benefit from the EE's expertise and experience in the profession and academic discipline. Typically, the

external examination process involves the conduct of a general overview by the EE of the assessment arrangements which entail carefully scrutinising and critically commenting on the examination question papers, marking schemes and samples of answer scripts as well as moderating the work of the internal examiners. Comments from the EE are discussed by the Examiners Committee (EC) which, in turn, suggests appropriate amendments to the examination papers and marking schemes.

7.2 Major Measures of Programme Quality

For quality assurance and enhancement of study programmes at CIHE/CBCC, at present there are two major measures of programme quality: *Course and Teaching Evaluation* (CTE) and *Graduate Destination Survey* (GDS).

The CTE is conducted normally in the last two teaching weeks of each semester, and provides valuable information concerning the quality of teaching and the courses offered. Analysis of the CTE results, in the form of detailed and summary reports, serve to provide academic staff with students' feedback for monitoring and improving their teaching, programme administrators with useful information for reviewing and improving individual programmes concerned, and the institute/college management with valid evidence in support of staff appraisal judgements and decisions.

The GDS is conducted by the Student Affairs Office (SAO) on an annual basis, and is carried out about 3 to 4 months after the graduation of the most recent cohort of graduates. The survey aims to collect information on graduates' employment situations and academic advancement, with particular reference to the time taken in acquiring the first job, salary range, job nature, usefulness of study programme to work, usefulness of study programme to further studies, details of further studies, progress achieved in professional examinations and other relevant matters.

8. Academic Management

Although not depicted in Figures 1 to 4, the academic schools/departments play a key role in the processes of planning, coordinating, monitoring and improving teaching and scholarly activities. Each school/department regularly conducts formal meetings to review all academic proposals and policies formulated in the school/department. They also review the Institute's/College's policy, and budgetary or space allocation proposals to collect and elucidate views for the AB and the SMG.

At the institutional level, the School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads are ex-officio members of key policy committees. This participation recognises their leadership responsibility in general policy formulation and ensures that no significant policy decisions are made without allowing for their input. In addition, the School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads are responsible for making recommendations on applications for promotion, and contract renewal from all academic staff of the respective academic schools/departments.

As chairpersons of the school boards/department teams, the School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads ensure that academic and other policy proposals

are reviewed by the schools/departments before being discussed in the relevant boards / committees, such as the QAC-Academic and the AB. A crucial part of this responsibility is to achieve as great an area of consensus within the academic schools/departments as possible. Following peer reviews and discussions in the respective schools/departments and their committees and working groups, the School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads present policies and proposals to the AB, and submit the requests of the schools/departments for staff, physical resources, and space to the BRC.

The School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads are also responsible for academic coordination, quality control, and administration. In exercising this duty, they provide academic leadership by promoting and participating in teaching, research and other scholarly activities, planning and implementing staff development programmes, and ensuring, together with the Programme Leaders where applicable, that the courses conducted are of the highest appropriate standard. In addition, School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads are responsible for the management and administration of their schools/departments in terms of assigning teaching and administrative duties, operating the staff appraisal system, participating in the recruitment of academic staff, identifying and proposing new initiatives, cultivating collegiality and high morale in the schools/departments, collaborating with other academic units of CIHE and CBCC in interdisciplinary and other relevant development, and liaising with advisory bodies and outside organisations.

Each school board/department team holds regular meetings, the minutes of which are tabled at the AB meetings for reference. At this level, matters related to courses, examinations, QA and other business are discussed, with votes taken on important issues, if appropriate. As far as is practicable, the School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads devolve internal responsibilities to colleagues through the assignment of committee and other coordination work. This not only facilitates efficient administration, but also ensures that colleagues are involved.

At the programme level, the School Deans (and/or Associate Deans)/Department Heads are assisted by Programme Leaders, who chair the respective PCs and are responsible for planning the programme development, and assuring the quality of delivery.

At the course level, if more than one academic staff teach a course in an academic year, one of them is assigned as the coordinator of the course for that academic year. If only one academic staff teaches a course, that staff is automatically the coordinator of the course. A Course Coordinator is responsible for coordinating with the other teachers of the course so that students from different classes of the same course can have a largely common teaching, learning, and assessment experience.

9. Other Mechanisms for Quality Assurance and Enhancement

At CIHE/CBCC, a key mechanism for quality assurance and enhancement is the encouragement of staff development through the *Scholarly Activity Scheme* and the other development programmes organised by the schools/departments and the Institute/College. The implementation of the *Staff Appraisal System* is also pivotal in

this regard, as it facilitates staff to identify their self-development needs and to discuss their development plans with the respective superiors.

Examples of other formal and informal mechanisms for quality assurance and enhancement include:

- ◆ Other schemes of the QAS for promoting the quality of teaching, such as *Peer Review*;
- ◆ Collection of users' views on learning support services through discussion in working groups, open forums, and other means;
- ◆ Close liaison among academic and support staff across the Institute/College, for the purpose of providing students with more efficient support services;
- ◆ Informal contacts with relevant parties from the Hong Kong community at large, including employers and graduates, to elicit useful ideas and suggestions;
- ◆ Informal working groups and meetings in which staff members can participate in discussions on policy formulation, pedagogical issues, curricular design, and other relevant matters; and
- ◆ Regular review, assessment, validation and accreditation by quality authorities and professional bodies such as the HKCAAVQ, the Nursing Council of Hong Kong (NCHK) and the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB).

More details on the relevant QA schemes can be found in the *Quality Assurance Handbook*.

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