

THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

Briefing Note

Summary of matters considered on 25 October 2011 by the Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning

A proposal on the Retaking of Failed Courses and Encouraging Students to Take Challenging Courses

Retaking of Failed Courses

1. Currently a student is only allowed to retake a course only if s/he has failed that course, unless otherwise specified by the Major programme concerned. While there is no limit on the number of attempts to retake courses except as specified by a Major programme, all courses taken by a student will be included in GPA calculation, and results of all courses attempted are recorded on transcripts.
2. The Committee considered the possible options proposed for students to retake poorly-performed courses and the pros and cons of allowing students to retake courses. In view of the diversified views on the proposal of retaking courses, the Committee agreed to put this issue on hold and to revisit it in a few years' time.

Encouraging Students to Take Challenging Courses

3. The Committee considered the proposal to allow students to declare certain courses that they had taken as Pass/Fail (P/F) option so as to encourage students to take more challenging courses. This would allow students to choose fine-letter grades or P/F option within the same course, which would be very complicated in implementation. The Committee agreed that the issue might be further explored and brought up in a few years' time as deemed necessary after the University has settled in the implementation of the new four-year curriculum.

A Proposal on the Addition of "A+" Grade and the Distribution of Grades

Introduction of "A+" Grade

4. The Committee noted a summary of the current grading and GPA practices adopted by local sister institutions and some overseas top universities. Most local universities awarded "A+" grade with a corresponding GPA of 4.3, and there was no dominating uniform practice among top North American universities.

Grade Distribution Percentages

5. While there were slight variations in the grade distribution across faculties, the current grade distribution, though a bit high on the recommended range, generally followed the University guidelines. After deliberations, the Committee agreed that the issue of grade distribution percentages should be reviewed further and that the introduction of "A+" grade could be considered in a wider context after the grade distribution issue was settled.

Verbal Report on e-CTE

6. The Deans of Faculties had discussed the use of e-CTE, and the general concern was that the response rate might be very low. The consensus was that the University would provide support to teachers who wanted to do e-CTE, but it would not be made a University policy.

CUHK Teaching and Learning Action Plan

7. Nearly all items in the updated CUHK Teaching and Learning Action Plan had been completed. The proposal to adopt Blackboard as the single University-wide supported e-Learning platform had been approved by the Resource Allocation Committee for implementation in September 2012. A broad range of data, including CTE scores, attrition rate and exchange rate etc. is compiled every year and reported to all faculties.

Implementation Plan of the Academic Advisory System

8. A two-tiered advisory system was proposed, in which every undergraduate student would be assigned a Level I advisor for general supervision while students with academic problems or on academic probation/extended probation/with GPA below a certain threshold (between 1.5 and 2.0) would be assigned Level II advisors. A similar academic advising system would also be adopted for postgraduate students.

9. A Faculty Committee on Academic Advising comprising all Level II advisors and other existing advisors as assigned by programmes would be formed at each faculty. Departments would have the flexibility to decide on the details of the appointment of Level I and II advisors. The general guidelines for academic advising would be uploaded on the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) website. Counselling and briefing sessions would also be organized by OSA.