

# Report on the Mid-Term Review of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023



## Preface

The *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* is the University's first five-year strategic plan. Previous strategic plans were for 10 years, rolling forward after a few years of implementation. The fast-changing world makes it more meaningful to project the strategic direction in a shorter time-frame. Hence, a five-year plan was considered more appropriate.

At this time, around the mid-point of the current planning cycle, an interim review of the *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* allows the University to gauge the progress of the activities under the strategic focus and throws some light on the direction for the next strategic plan.

The new title, 'Hong Kong Metropolitan University' (HKMU), reflects the University's vision and mission towards excellence in the provision of quality education to meet students' learning aspirations and society's talent needs.

The University's primary functions are to provide its students with top-drawer education; to help them to find good jobs or start their own business; and to nurture them to be upstanding members of the community. The priorities for strategic development either contribute directly to the primary functions or form enabling domains in support of these functions.

Following is a summary of the progress on the implementation of the *Strategic Plan 2019-2023* in each of the five focused areas of priority.

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**Priority 1**

# Premier Quality Teaching



## Priority 1: Premier Quality Teaching

- 1 The declining number of secondary school leavers over the past decade was already factored into the University's long-term development. Proactive strategies were in place some years ago to combat the expected reduction in the student population. Surprisingly, the University saw modest growth in student enrolment despite the expected downturn. Nevertheless, the enrolment situation continues to be volatile, unpredictable, and dependent upon many unknown factors.
- 2 Under the University's 'Quality Enhancement Measures' (QEMs) are a number of initiatives launched in 2021 to strengthen academic quality and enhance the student learning experience. These include the 'Global Faculty Recruitment Campaign' to recruit quality academics from all over the world and a 'Central Faculty Fund' to provide additional funding to attract such academics. Also available is the 'Faculty Advancement Fund' for faculty members to undertake scholarly activities for a period of up to 12 months.
- 3 The University recognizes the importance of involving academic staff in formulating strategies leading to excellence in learning and teaching. Views, concerns and suggestions from faculty members are gathered through meetings, focus groups and questionnaires. The aim of 'Learning and Teaching Week 2021' was to encourage the sharing of teaching experience and effective pedagogy among staff. 'Teaching and Learning Evangelists' (TLE) are appointed to champion the enhancement of teaching and learning. 'Inspirational Teaching Awards' will be introduced for experienced faculty members, young faculty members, and part-time tutors to recognize teaching excellence.
- 4 The establishment of the Office for Advancement of Learning and Teaching (ALTO) in 2021 helped to foster synergy in pursuing excellence in educational delivery and promoting student-centred teaching and learning.
- 5 A number of initiatives have been put in place focusing on student-centred teaching and learning. Starting in 2021, Year 1 students received an iPad as a unified platform for their in- and out-of-class learning activities. Since the 2018/19 academic year, the 'Learning Enhancement Scheme' (LEES) has helped at-risk students improve their academic performance. The 'Co-curricular Extracurricular Learning Toward Innovative Comprehensive Soft-skills' (CELTICS) programme encourages students to make use of an e-portfolio system to take ownership of their learning.

- 6 Various student feedback channels were established to enhance student engagement, in addition to the traditional channels, such as email, social media, chat rooms, and questionnaires in online classes. Two newly created staff-student consultative committees, one for postgraduate students and the other for part-time and open-learning programmes, will collect input from the relevant student groups, as will similar committees for undergraduates.
- 7 HKMU emphasises the use of data to formulate university policies and initiatives. Recent developments in data collection include a redesigned course evaluation survey, a survey of new students, a student learning experience questionnaire, tracking surveys, and a revised graduate employment survey. An academic analytics project identifies at-risk students through the implementation of a data warehouse.
- 8 The University is cultivating an environment to enhance the language and communication skills of its students. Students are given an incentive to take the IELTS test. English enhancement workshops, English corner, and a daily reading and writing lab are held regularly. E-learning modules for English are being developed to complement the face-to-face English language workshops. Schools have organized Toastmasters Clubs to promote students' communication and leadership skills. Travel permitting, immersion programmes will be held in Beijing and Taiwan to provide students with exposure to the Putonghua-speaking environment and culture.
- 9 The revolutionary Academic Reform started in 2021 to remap HKMU's curriculum under the three-credit-unit denomination framework, to better align it with the local and global framework. A 'University Core' will be introduced to strengthen the capacity of graduates as professionals in their fields. While the new curriculum will be implemented in 2023, courses on the HKMU's core values were introduced in 2021 to foster students' awareness of the ingredients for responsible citizenship and national identity.
- 10 A number of new programmes in practical, applied and professional areas are scheduled to be introduced in the next few years at the undergraduate and Master's levels. Some of these programmes were designed in collaboration with industry, government and NGOs. The University has a rich portfolio of programme areas and subject disciplines under its seven Schools.

- 11 As new undergraduate programmes are introduced, the existing programmes are undergoing consolidation. The aim is to amalgamate closely related programmes targeting the same group of students. At the same time, there is a need to offer a broad spectrum of disciplines and programmes to cater for the aspirations of the diversified student population and to maintain enrolment at a reasonable level. HKMU can then concentrate on quality enhancement to provide a first-rate education experience to its students.
  
- 12 The initiative to offer more taught Master's degree programmes to attract local students, as well as students from the rest of the Greater Bay Area, will be taken further. More investigation will be conducted to identify the interests and aspirations of the target groups of students in terms of programme areas and instructional methodologies.
  
- 13 HKMU has taken advantage of the Government's initiative under the 'Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education' (ESGS) on new academic programmes with high start-up costs. Under this Scheme, a new programme, BSc (Honours) in Medical Laboratory Science, will be introduced in September 2022.

## Priority 2

# A Rewarding and Fulfilling Learning Experience



## Priority 2: A Rewarding and Fulfilling Learning Experience

- 14 The University reacted and adapted well to the disruptions caused by the social events in 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic since early 2020. The thoughtful blending of online and face-to-face instruction and pedagogy has taken the learning experience and student engagement to a different level, in new but not unfamiliar territory.
- 15 Academic advising and mentorship activities are gradually taking shape. At the same time, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are being integrated into the curricula of many programmes. Some of these activities are related to research projects in research centres and institutes.
- 16 Students took part in a wide range of activities, including service learning programmes and the 'Fountain of Knowledge' programme, which provide an eye-opening learning experience outside the classroom. The Library developed the 'HKMU Student Works Repository' to showcase individual students' work arising from their studies.
- 17 The University is planning to set up an Integrative Health/Physiotherapy Centre, as an ancillary facility to support teaching and research in physiotherapy. It is also an initiative for the University to serve the community. An area in the JCC Campus was proposed, pending approval by the Education Bureau. Meanwhile, the logistics and business models are being formulated.
- 18 The Schools and the Student Affairs Office (SAO) have been developing onshore and offshore exchange and immersion opportunities with local and overseas partners. In 2021, some of the planned activities were transformed into a different format. Some offshore immersion opportunities were replaced by online activities or conducted physically, but locally. Hopefully, when group gathering and travel restrictions are relaxed, the physical exchange and immersion programmes can be continued.
- 19 Despite the pandemic, the students participated in a variety of competitions in arts, creative arts, motion picture, business, sports, cultural, and science and technology activities. Many of them received recognition and awards for these activities. Taking part in these activities helps to build their self-confidence and provides exposure to the world beyond the University.

- 20 HKMU aims to cultivate a student community with a diversity of backgrounds, talent and personal strengths. The student admission policy is under review to offer admission channels for special and worthy cases. The admission of these students is expected to stimulate interest in arts, sports and cultural activities among the student population.
- 21 A review of the University motto was initiated, in light of the rapid changes in society and the renaming of the University.
- 22 The University is consolidating its efforts to reach out to the alumni community, to encourage the alumni to support the development of the University and participate as student mentors. The imminent establishment of a new alumni association (the Hong Kong Metropolitan University Alumni Association) will foster a unified drive to connect with the alumni.
- 23 The aim of strengthening alumni engagement is to encourage them to support the University and act as student mentors, and to track their career progress. Information on the graduates' career progression will help the Schools enhance the curriculum design and student support to enrich the student learning experience.
- 24 The Schools can tap the support of the employer community through the alumni and the employers' network, established by the academic staff and the Schools. HKMU's performance in the employers survey, conducted by the Education Bureau (UGC's Sector-wide Performance Measures PM1.4), will be enhanced as the Schools and academic staff proactively reach out to the employer community.



## Priority 3: Research Capacity Enhancement

- 25 The University identified eight Strategic Research Areas and established the Research Impact Fund under the QEM to promote these strategic research areas.
- 26 There was a surge in research proposals in the past three years, resulting in a substantial increase in the number of research grants from external sources.
- 27 HKMU's research focus is on applied research. As a result, the proportion of research proposals in applied research increased from 58% to 68% in the past two years.
- 28 The Research Infrastructure Grants under the Research Grants Council (RGC)'s Institutional Development Scheme provided support for the research infrastructure. A total of \$16M was received under the Scheme in the past two years.
- 29 There has been a steady increase in the number of joint research proposals with researchers from abroad. Joint publications with international scholars have been on the rise as well.
- 30 The Faculty Advancement Fund mentioned in paragraph 2 will help faculty members devote up to 12 months to concentrate on academic research or professional development.
- 31 The University is developing an intellectual property policy to identify the roles and rights of faculty members in relation to the intellectual property arising from their research and everyday work.
- 32 The University is reviewing its research policy and the current set-up of research institutes and research centres to strengthen its research capacity, consolidate the strategic research themes, and encourage staff to participate in research under the strategic research themes. Town hall meetings were held in May 2021 and January 2022 to gather input from academic staff.

- 33 In the longer term, the University aims to strike the right balance between research and teaching and explore how research can inform teaching. The aim is to achieve the maximum benefit for the research capability of the university, leading to the enhancement of the student learning experience.
- 34 The past two years saw rapid growth in the number of research students in the MPhil and PhD programmes. The availability of competitive postgraduate studentships helped attract and retain these students.
- 35 A plan for the gradual increase in the number of research students and the provision of support for these students is under consideration.
- 36 One of the challenges faced by the self-financing degree awarding sector is the general inability to recruit and retain research assistants to support the funded research projects of HKMU staff. A stipend for graduate students, available through the RGC's 'Faculty Development Scheme' (FDS) grants, supplemented by internal university funding, provides incentives for quality research students to attend HKMU as research students and serve as research assistants at the same time. Graduate students add to the synergy of the various research groups and contribute to the research of academic staff. This, in turn, strengthens the development of research degrees. The growth of the research student population will create harmony for themed research and a research culture among academic staff.

## Priority 4

# A Welcoming Campus for Student Learning



## Priority 4: A Welcoming Campus for Student Learning

- 37 The Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare (IOH) Campus was completed in Autumn 2020 according to schedule and within budget. It provides additional space to house state-of-the-art teaching and learning facilities, such as lecture theatres, nursing and healthcare laboratories, student activities rooms, and learning commons, and contemporary amenities for the University community.
- 38 The IOH attained BEAM Plus Platinum rating in December 2021. The University also received various environmental and sustainability awards in the past two years.
- 39 As part of the plan to create a harmonious, vibrant, safe and comfortable environment for students and staff, the basement of the Main Campus is in the process of conversion into a student amenity area. A review is under way on the options to cater for students' needs on the use of campus space outside of classroom activities for hangouts and lunch. A 'Critical Incident Management Team' (CIMT) was set up in 2021 to advise on the formulation of policies to manage and respond to critical incidents involving staff, students and visitors.
- 40 The assessment of space allocation and utilization is an ongoing activity to ensure greater effectiveness and accountability. In 2020, the Space Allocation and Utilization Policy was reviewed and enhanced to provide a comprehensive framework for space allocation and management. The Accommodation and Space Committee has regular meetings to review and approve space requests, and monitor space utilization. A Space Consolidation Plan is in progress to optimize the use of space on the various campuses. A 'Space Audit' is under consideration to evaluate and further improve the efficiency of the use of space.
- 41 While the campuses and facilities have gradually expanded and improved over the years, the University is facing a challenge regarding the shortage of space for staff, graduate students and laboratories. More space is needed even if enrolment remains at the present level. The University is leasing additional office space in commercial buildings for use by administrative units. This will release space to alleviate the shortage of learning and teaching venues on the campuses.

- 42 The University is proactively searching for possible sites for campus expansion to meet the ever-growing need for space. On the agenda are a slope site on Fat Kwong Street opposite the main campus, a site in Lo Lung Hang, and on the roof of the Ho Man Tin West Water Reservoir.
- 43 Smart technology has been adopted across the campuses, including LED panels as information displays inside buildings and for branding and promotion outside buildings. Digital directories with a way-finder function will be installed.
- 44 To ensure the safety and well-being of students, staff and visitors, entry control will require mandatory vaccination, as well as the LeaveHomeSafe app, by March 2022.
- 45 A 'University Gallery' is in the making as a venue to showcase the history and development of the University over the past 30 years. It will be housed in the foyer of the Main Campus.
- 46 The University is actively considering opportunities for collaboration with sister institutions, including offering joint-degree programmes and sharing campus space and facilities.
- 47 As a self-financing institution without the backing of a sponsoring body, HKMU is well aware of the challenges in providing residential accommodation to students. Therefore, the University is always on the look-out for opportunities to acquire premises for use as student hostels. So far, a limited number of hostel beds have been secured on a rental basis. In August 2022, a floor in Bay Bridge will be rented as a student hostel with 64 beds, in addition to an existing hostel with 90 beds in a building in Mongkok. The University is also exploring real estate investment opportunities for use as a student hostel.

## Priority 5

# Excellence in Administration and Governance



## Priority 5: Excellence in Administration and Governance

- 48 The 'Institutional Review 2020' was conducted by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) in July 2020. The *Institutional Review Report* presented six commendations in recognition of the initiatives to improve the quality of the student learning experience. The University is taking steps to address the observations and recommendations, including streamlining the quality assurance system (next paragraph), enhancing the criteria for staff appraisal and promotion (paragraph 50), more staff to keep pace with the latest developments in industry and the professions (paragraph 69), performance indicators to facilitate performance management (paragraph 65), academic staff to champion enhancement in teaching and learning (paragraph 3), and using data to identify at-risk students (paragraphs 5 and 7).
- 49 Streamlining administrative functions is a recurring exercise in the executive and academic arms of the University, prompted and reminded by the recommendations of the Institutional Reviews over the years. Against this background, academic programme approval and reapproval procedures and the involvement of external reviewers have been revamped without any loss of academic rigor. On the administrative side, procedures for contract signatories, the delegation of financial authority, revenue reconciliation and booking, Human Resources Management (HRM) and Human Resources (HR) workflows were reviewed and revised for improved efficiency and effectiveness. In 2021, a review was conducted on administrative manpower arrangements in the Registry and Schools to strike a balance between the academic and administrative activities of academic staff
- 50 The implementation of the new Pay and Reward System created a backbone for a performance culture. Associated with the implementation are enhancement initiatives introduced in 2021, including the introduction of an Annual Promotion Exercise, a Central Faculty Fund, a Global Faculty Recruitment Campaign, a Faculty Advancement Fund, and a review of the mechanism for the appointment, academic assessment and promotion of academic staff. All these measures are expected to further strengthen the academic quality and capacity of the University's faculty.
- 51 The University's financial strategy, whose aim is to deliver long-term sustainability, has resulted in healthy steady income over the years. HKMU will continue with its financial strategy, focusing on value creation and efficiency enhancement to generate the long-term cash flow needed to achieve its mission.

- 52 Against the backdrop of the economic contraction driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, the University is doing well, and its investment portfolios are managed under a prudent, risk-focused, and diversified strategy. HKMU recorded \$246.4M net interest and investment income in 2020/21 and \$252.5M in 2019/20.
- 53 Additional resources have been deployed to address the unprecedented COVID-19 challenges. These include substantial investments in online teaching and learning, increased spending on personal protective equipment, as well as cleaning and sanitizing services, financial support to students, and rental waivers or concessions to students, caterers and tenants. The extra spending and revenue forgone amounted to \$30.7M in 2020/21 and \$27.0M in 2019/20.
- 54 HKMU adopted a set of Financial Policies as a guide for executives to manage resources effectively. In 2021, an Investment Sub-committee Charter and an Investment Policy were developed to enhance investment management.
- 55 The University set aside \$410M under the QEM for 10 years to enhance academic quality. So far, 134 projects have been approved, 28 of which were completed by the end of the year under review. Total QEM spending and commitment were \$387M as at the end of December 2021.
- 56 A new staffing budget model, the most important item in the budget management system, was introduced in 2018/19. The model was reviewed in 2021 with refinements such as modifying the staffing ratios, including tutor fees, in the model, and aligning approval authority for changes in non-academic posts.
- 57 The University set up an effective and flexible mechanism to budget and manage resources to cope with its operational and development needs in the rapidly changing, highly competitive environment. The mechanism is subject to review for continuous improvement. To a certain extent, this has contributed to the University's exceptional performance in the past few years and healthy financial position.

- 58 The Audit Committee of the Council championed a number of projects to maintain and improve the administrative system and procedures. Examples are the Treasury Funds Management (Investment) Review (2021), a review of research output (2021), and a review of marketing and branding (2020). The Information Security Audit 2021 was conducted by an external auditor. The audit led to the decision that as a general principle, all administrative offices should lock the office doors at all times, while some flexibility could be allowed so that students can visit the Schools for consultations.
- 59 Over the past two years, 20 policies and procedures have been developed or revised to provide a roadmap for day-to-day operations, ensure compliance with the laws and regulations, provide guidance for decision-making, and streamline internal processes.
- 60 Council members were enthusiastic in offering advice on the strategic direction and policy matters of the University. A brainstorming session of the Council and senior executives was held in August 2021. Council members also participated in a social event with students, providing an opportunity for them to learn more about the student community, and for the students to network with professionals, executives, scholars and community leaders.
- 61 Benchmarking activities continued in many areas, ranging from financial management against UGC-funded counterparts to academic benchmarking. On the drawing board as part of the academic reforms is the engagement of overseas scholars to act as external examiners. Previously, external examiners were drawn solely from the local academic community. Another new initiative is the periodic review of academic units by an expert panel composed of international senior academics.
- 62 The University has been active in promoting its social and environmental commitments, and formulating policies on social responsibility and sustainability. The 'Social Media Strategy and Guidelines' were established under the University's social responsibility pledge. The Guidelines advise the University community of the code of conduct in the use of social media platforms, and ensure that vehicles for the dissemination of information and networking with the community are effective and fall within the related legal, ethical and social principles.

- 63 HKMU produces the largest number of nursing graduates among local institutions each year. In 2021, 275 students, alumni and staff from the School of Nursing and Health Studies (N&HS) participated in the collection of specimens at the COVID-19 testing centres of the *Universal Community Testing Programme*. In 2022, members of N&HS completed over 500 fit tests for workers at the AsiaWorld-Expo Temporary Quarantine Centre for elderly care home residents who were confirmed to have COVID-19. The School also helped establish and operate a hotline service at the HKMU Jockey Club Institute of Healthcare for the Hospital Authority. Over 300 staff, students and alumni have been involved in supporting the government's anti-pandemic work at various levels to contribute to the fight against the fifth wave of the pandemic. Our Student Affairs Office organized an Online Summer Academy for around 1,000 students from 30 primary schools in March and April 2022 in response to school closures due to the pandemic. These are examples of the University's commitment to social responsibility by lending professional support to society wherever possible, for the health and wellbeing of the community.
- 64 HKMU has a unique role as the only university in Hong Kong designated to admit learners to university education through distance learning irrespective of academic background. As a leader in the provision of distance education, in 2021, HKMU reiterated its continual commitment to open education as a core business, with the establishment of the School of Open Learning to provide enhanced support to part-time and distance learners. The advent of face-to-face learning for school leavers resulted in enhanced academic staff strength, and advances in learning pedagogy, facilities and support for distance learners.
- 65 To assess the performance of its operations, every School uses key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure its achievements against the strategic objectives. HKMU is planning to extend the use of KPIs to the administrative offices and the different levels of operations of the University.



Looking Ahead



## Looking Ahead

- 66 The five focused areas of priority converge under the theme 'Enhancing the Student Learning Experience', which was the focal point in the previous two Institutional Reviews of the University, and one of the two themes in the second quality audit cycle for UGC-funded universities. 'Enhancing the Student Learning Experience' is fundamental to the primary functions of HKMU and will continue to be a strategic goal for the foreseeable future.
- 67 In the past 33 years, the University has undergone numerous phases of developments to become a large, sustainable, self-financing, mature institution of quality higher education. The next milestone will be, through quality enhancement, to eventually become an influential player in the international education arena, contributing to the advancement of learning and teaching, supplemented by research. This will be one of the key strategic goals for the next decade.
- 68 The idea of non-residential halls to provide students with the hall experience is worth exploring. These halls provide structured university-led activities, as opposed to student-led activities by student societies, to dedicated groups of students. The activities may cover art, music, sports, culture, social support, and personal development. The challenge will be finding space to support the initiative.
- 69 The University will continue to engage with employers to stay abreast of the changing requirements in the job market. The Schools, as well as individual academics, will establish connections with employers for the benefit of the students. With such a network, employers will have opportunities to evaluate the calibre of the graduates and their areas of expertise. The students will have the opportunity to bond with potential employers, or develop a feel for the employers as role models if they wish to embark on an entrepreneurial career.
- 70 The use of data and data analytics to guide the University's decision making and strategies will continue to be a strategic direction. The innovative use of data will help the University make well-informed moves amid the fast-changing environment.

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- 71 Overall, the University has made significant progress in the five focused areas of priority for strategic development.
  
  - 72 The next two years will see HKMU concentrate on existing and new initiatives to achieve its strategic goals and objectives to become a faculty-driven institution. The strategic focus of HKMU will continue to be directed towards the primary student-centric functions of the University to achieve its vision and mission.



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