
Strategic Plan 2013–22

Multi-mode education • Infinite potential

多元教育 • 機會無限

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香港公開大學

THE OPEN UNIVERSITY
OF HONG KONG

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Preamble

As a self-financing institution, it is essential for the Open University of Hong Kong to define its strategic directions and allocate resources accordingly so that it fulfils its vision, mission and key values, and promotes the graduate attributes it espouses (see Appendices 1 and 2).

In 2008, the University formulated its Strategic Plan for 2008–17 which highlighted the actions it intended to take over that period. However, given its experience in a frequently changing context, it is necessary to review the plan on a rolling basis, and so this plan covers the years 2013–22.

This document first reviews what had been achieved by 2013 and then examines the environment the University will be facing, followed by a list of intended strategic initiatives and our targets for student enrolment and finance.

A rolling update of the OUHK Strategic Plan 2008–17: Status in 2013

In the Strategic Plan for 2008–17, the University stated that it aimed to create an innovative and flexible learning model that blended the essence of distance learning, face-to-face teaching and e-learning as a long-term strategic goal. To achieve this objective, the University outlined the following initiatives:

- Cementing **distance learning** as the driving force towards creating the new learning model
- Expanding the offering of full **e-learning** courses
- Consolidating **face-to-face teaching** by offering more cross-disciplinary programmes and articulated programmes, and developing a student hostel
- Expanding the **mainland** market by recruiting more full-time students from there to study on the OUHK campus and developing new partnership programmes in major mainland cities
- Opening up the **international** distance learning market
- Joining the **University Grants Committee**.

Since 2008, the University has been making solid progress on these initiatives, though largely at a slower pace than anticipated.

In 2013, **distance learning** is still the leading mode of study at the OUHK in terms of student headcount, number of programmes, discipline areas and courses offered. Although the enrolment figures for these programmes have declined slowly, they have stabilized at around 12,000 students over the last two years. Twenty-seven new programmes have been offered since 2008, bringing the total number to 159 in 2013.

For **e-learning**, the University has offered three sets of postgraduate and certificate-level programmes since 2008 through the Centre for eLearning (EL), of which the Master of Laws in Chinese Business Law is currently the most active.

The total number of students studying such programmes, however, has been low, at around 300.

In contrast, the University has made significant advances on **full-time, face-to-face programmes**. The number of full-time programmes, including honours degree, ordinary degree and sub-degree programmes, has increased from 31 in 2007–08 to 45 in 2013–14. Around 2,800 new students were recruited in 2013–14, and the total number now exceeds 6,700. The University joined JUPAS in 2007–08 and, in the 2013–14 academic year, 19 honours degree programmes admitted students through JUPAS. The OUHK has also coped with the change to the 3-3-4 system in 2012–13, and is now offering four-year degree programmes with similar entry requirements as the market in general. Besides offering programmes which mirror the distance learning programmes, the University has also started to offer programmes in new subject areas which have no distance learning counterparts, such as Creative Writing and Film Arts. However, because of restrictions on land use, it has been difficult for the University to secure land grants from the Government for developing a student hostel.

In December 2010, the Government granted the OUHK a site in Chung Hau Street, near the current campus, to build a new college — named Jubilee College of the Open University of Hong Kong — which is a 12-storey structure with a total gross floor area of 21,500 square metres. The site of the College is referred to as ‘the Jockey Club Campus,’ in honour of the HK Jockey Club Charities Trust which contributed a substantial amount of funding for its construction. The College was completed in 23 months, within budget. Jubilee College offers degree programmes in the areas of Creative Arts, Nursing and Health Studies, and Testing and Certification to develop professionals for three of the six crucial industries promoted by the Hong Kong Government. The enrolment for programmes housed in the College has reached the planned target. Four of the programmes have been identified by the Education Bureau for support under the Government’s Theme-based Subsidy Scheme (TBSS).

It features innovative facilities such as specialized laboratories, Active Learning Classrooms and Learning Commons.

These new premises enable the University to provide more facilities and a better learning environment for students and inject new elements of guided self-learning and active learning into teaching. For example, the Active Learning Classrooms

and Learning Commons can be used by students on their own or under the guidance of instructors.

For the **mainland initiatives**, the University has continued to recruit about 20–30 new students into its full-time face-to-face programmes every year since 2008, with the total number now almost 120. Without a hostel for these students, it was impractical to increase this figure significantly. Other activities in the mainland have had to slow down due to continual Government restriction and resource limitations.

As regards the **international market**, the University has successfully forged collaborative ventures in new countries and regions such as Myanmar and Macau, offering joint distance programmes at sub-degree and postgraduate levels. However, it has proved to be difficult to develop more international collaborative ventures because of differences in, for instance, the state of economic development, language barriers and acceptance of e-learning.

To augment the **part-time programme offerings**, the University has launched 18 more part-time face-to-face programmes since 2008, including master's programmes in Legal Translation, Engineering, Global and Public Governance, and Testing and Certification. Twenty-eight of these programmes are currently being offered, with a total enrolment of about 300 students.

The University has been expanding its distance learning, e-learning and full-time face-to-face programmes with a long-term aim of building a new 'blended learning' model. Indeed, on a pilot basis, the University has launched a blended learning programme — Bachelor of Professional Accounting with Honours — and developed 12 blended learning courses since 2008 and the total will reach 20 in the near future. The students' performance on, and level of satisfaction with, this programme and its courses has been mixed. To further support the development of this new learning model, from 2008 to 2011, the University implemented the Centre for Innovation (CFI) project, which produced several major deliverables. For example, it developed a web-based service delivery platform called INFOWAY; improved the University's network infrastructure and data centre architecture; set up a document-sharing and collaboration platform; and provided staff and students with upgraded PCs and IT applications. Also, 22 innovative learning and teaching tools under two platforms — a Smart Learning Space and a Smart Teaching Space — were produced to help the University to build this

learning model. In addition, a prototype of an Intelligent Student Counselling System that aimed to provide academic counselling to potential and current students was developed. Several innovative academic projects, such as the Nursing Multimedia Pack and Mobile Assessment Tools were also completed. The total budget for the CFI project was \$80.8 million, funded by a \$62.8 million Government grant and internal funding of \$18 million.

Overall, the University has been making steady progress in all major aspects of its operation. While the progress may have been slower than expected in certain areas, the University will continue to review and adjust its targets according to the changing environment.

Finally, we have always believed that there could be real benefits for the University and Hong Kong if we could become a member of the University Grants Committee (UGC). In aiming to join the UGC, we were not attempting to seek Government funding, but to be included in the planning process for the provision of higher education for Hong Kong. Unfortunately, after continual efforts to present our case, we failed to get a positive response from either the Education Bureau or the UGC, and so we have decided not to pursue this issue further for the time being.

The changing environment

The higher education environment of Hong Kong has experienced substantial changes since 2008, some of which have significant implications for the operations of the University. These developments include, for example:

- the full implementation of the 3-3-4 academic system;
- the increased Government support for self-financing tertiary education, such as the provision of funds for teaching and learning quality enhancement, scholarships for students, and research for academic staff;
- the increase in the number of self-financing degree-granting institutions;
- the projected decrease in the number of students eligible for the higher education sector; and
- the increased attractiveness of Hong Kong to non-local students, particularly from the mainland, for pursuing higher education.

Under the 3-3-4 academic system, secondary school students take their final examination at the end of Form 6, with their performance in this examination determining their eligibility for admission to a post-secondary programme of study. In the past, the OUHK admitted students who had completed Forms 6 or 7, while the UGC universities admitted only those who had completed Form 7. The current system allows only one entry point for post-secondary education, which puts the OUHK in direct competition with UGC-funded institutions (and, of course, other self-financing institutions).

In order to increase the provision of post-secondary places for holders of the new Diploma of Secondary Education, the Government has encouraged private providers to set up accredited institutions to offer degree-level programmes. Although it will not provide recurrent funding for the operations of these institutions, it has set aside funds which can be granted on the basis of competitive bidding to cover quality enhancement projects, scholarships and academic research.

In the academic year 2013–14, there are seven self-financing institutions, including the OUHK, which admit a total of 7,200 first-year students. The number of such institutions is still increasing; and it is projected that their first-year intake will reach 8,000 in 2016–17. With the addition of 15,200 students normally admitted by the UGC-funded institutions, the total intake will amount to 23,200 students.

On the other hand, because of the slow-down in Hong Kong's birth rate, the number of secondary school graduates who are eligible for first-degree studies is on the decline, going down to 21,000 students by the 2016–17 academic year. In Hong Kong, therefore, for the first time the availability of first-degree places will exceed the demand; and this situation is expected to continue to at least 2022, the end of this Strategic Plan. (For further details, see Appendix 3.)

The possible funding from the Government, although not on a recurrent basis, will give the University a good opportunity to develop further its strength in providing quality teaching and research. At the same time, however, we will face severe competition in the recruitment of full-time students.

Strategic initiatives

To uphold our vision, mission and key values, we need to remain competitive, and we will make every effort to take advantage of the favourable opportunities and overcome the unfavourable threats.

As the first self-financing university in Hong Kong, we believe that we are among the top choices for students who wish to pursue a degree from the self-financing/private sector — a position we obviously want to maintain. We will continue to provide high-quality academic programmes in areas of demand through flexible delivery modes; ensure that our students' learning experience, including extracurricular activities, is of a high standard; and enhance our student support by devoting more resources to it.

We have formulated the following seven main strategic initiatives to attain our goals.

1 Enhancing student support as an integral part of teaching and learning

While we believe that the support we provide for our students at present is satisfactory, we wish to improve it further.

The recent changes in the organizational structure of the University (see Appendix 4) were prompted in part by this goal. For example, the appointment of the new Associate Vice President should enhance academic support. Also, the establishment of a Student Affairs Office should lead to improvements in the support for both full-time *and* distance learning students, for instance in relation to student societies and exchange programmes. Finally, it is hoped that the inclusion of a Facilities Management Unit will enhance the management of our extended campus facilities. (In this respect, a bid has been made to the EDB for an additional site in Sheung Shing Street in Ho Man Tin.)

2 Establishing an integrated multi-modal university

It is possible at present for full-time students to take some of their courses through studying the distance learning equivalents, but this is confined to cases where they have failed a course and there is a timetable clash between the failed course and a required course in the following year.

Although this will not be a straightforward task, we aim to try to establish a genuine multi-modal system in which students are free to choose a mixture of face-to-face and distance learning delivery modes to complete their graduation requirements. Also, the development of blended learning courses will be explored further.

3 Offering more ‘alternative’ programmes

In general, we will continue to offer more programmes to meet student needs. However, in particular, we wish to increase the number of programmes which are not commonly offered in other local institutions, such as those in animation and graphic design, photography and visual arts, testing and certification, and nursing studies. Such niche programmes are also currently presented by LiPACE, such as the Capacity Building Mileage Programme and the Professional Diploma in Occupational Safety.

This approach is aimed at extending student choice at a time of increased competition and a likely drop in eligible post-secondary student numbers within a few years.

4 Building up our research capacity

The University will continue to be essentially a teaching institution, but increased encouragement and support — for example, through the University Research Centre and the Deans — will be given to staff to engage in research as an integral part of their academic work.

The OUHK research grant system already allows the employment of temporary or part-time Teaching Assistants to give academic staff more time for research, but this has seldom been used. More emphasis will be given to the availability of this mechanism in an effort to increase our research output.

The University also aims to take advantage of the funding which has been made available to self-financing tertiary institutions for research purposes.

5 Presenting more postgraduate programmes

Currently, there are only three programmes at the doctoral level: the Doctor of Education, the Doctor of Business Administration and the Doctor of Engineering. However, there are proposals for new doctoral degrees — to be offered by the School of Science and Technology (S&T) and the School of Arts and Social Sciences (A&SS) — which will strengthen our academic reputation.

The University currently offers a Master in Philosophy (MPhil) degree and is now considering named MPhil degrees, such as an MPhil in Humanities from the School of A&SS.

Also, various other courses have been proposed as additions to our already extensive list of master's courses and postgraduate diplomas/certificates.

6 Extending our global activity

As indicated in the last strategic plan, we have had some success in establishing collaborative arrangements with overseas institutions — most recently in, for example, Myanmar and the UK. However, we aim to expand our global activity, which will raise our international standing.

Again, it was partly with this intention that the University added the new post of Associate Vice President, whose responsibilities include external links, both local and overseas.

7 Consolidating our financial position

We will continue to adopt the same rigorous approach to controlling our finances in the years to come, with the aim of using any surpluses to support improvements in student support and further extension of the campus. In this process, we will continue to follow the strategy of charging tuition fees based on cost; and, in addition to charging fees by level for distance learning courses, we may vary the fee level for programmes.

Targets

For a self-financing institution, two critical parameters are the number of students and the financial situation.

As regards the former, our target is to:

- maintain the number of distance learning students at close to 11,200; and
- stabilize the enrolments of full-time face-to-face students on campus, including the new Jubilee College, at around 8,300.

While a small increase is anticipated on e-learning and part-time face-to-face courses, the only significant addition to the enrolments is in Jubilee College where the student number is expected to grow to around 2,400 by 2016–17 and to remain at that level in subsequent years.

In terms of finance, our targets for the period all show a positive outcome which should enable the University to improve further the quality of its operations and the student learning experience.

Concluding comment

This document has given a broad outline of the situation of the University in 2013 and has specified the key changes in the Hong Kong educational environment which have implications for its operations. In this context, we have stipulated seven strategic initiatives which we trust will enhance the role we play in higher education both in and beyond Hong Kong.

The successful implementation of this *Strategic Plan* will be heavily dependent on our student enrolment and financial situation in the coming years but, given our past record, we are confident that we will continue to be a leading self-financing institution which offers high-quality programmes/courses and student services.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Vision, mission and key values

Vision

The Open University of Hong Kong strives to be a leader among universities providing learning opportunities by open and flexible education, and to excel as a provider of higher education in general.

Mission

The mission of The Open University of Hong Kong is to make higher education available to all, principally through open and flexible learning.

Key values

In providing higher education, the University, as a self-financing, non-profit-making organization:

- believes that higher education should be available to all those aspiring to it, regardless of previous qualification, gender, or race;
- recognizes the importance of sustainable and affordable high-quality programmes and courses across disciplines and at a variety of levels to meet the needs of life-long learners;
- commits itself to excellence in teaching, scholarship, research and public service;
- effectively uses information and communication technologies to support learning; and
- appreciates the significance of adjusting its learning processes and procedures to meet the different needs of learners.

Appendix 2 Graduate attributes

The Open University of Hong Kong expects its graduates to:

- be competent academically and in related professional contexts;
- recognize the value of lifelong learning;
- think critically, analytically and creatively;
- communicate effectively;
- contribute constructively in teamwork, including playing a leadership role;
- be responsible citizens, ready to contribute to society; and
- consider relevant issues from global and multicultural perspectives.

Appendix 3 Future post-secondary first-year student numbers in Hong Kong

(Committee on Self-financing post-secondary education, Education Bureau, January 2013)

Supply and Demand in the Coming Years

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of Eligible Graduates (Note)								
S7	27 300							
SS3(a)	47 800	~ 47 000	~ 45 000	~ 43 000	~ 39 000	~ 36 000	~ 36 000	~ 33 000
SS3(b)	26 400	~ 26 000	~ 24 000	~ 23 000	~ 21 000	~ 20 000	~ 19 000	~ 18 000
No. of Places								
<i>Undergraduate Programmes</i>								
Publicly-funded	30 300	~ 15 200	~ 15 200	~ 15 200	~ 15 200	~ 15 200	~ 15 200	~ 15 200
Self-financing	7 900	~ 6 700	~ 7 100	~ 7 500	~ 8 000	~ 8 000	~ 8 000	~ 8 000
<i>Sub-degree Programmes</i>								
Publicly-funded	10 863	~ 10 000	~ 10 000	~ 10 000	~ 10 000	~ 10 000	~ 10 000	~ 10 000
Self-financing	32 589	~ 24 700	~ 24 500	~ 24 300	~ 24 100	~ 24 100	~ 24 100	~ 24 100
Total Local Post-secondary Opportunities	81 652	~ 56 600	~ 56 800	~ 57 000	~ 57 300	~ 57 300	~ 57 300	~ 57 300

Note

1. S7 graduates attain 1 A level / 2 AS.
2. SS3(a) graduates attain 5 “Level 2” (incl. Chi & Eng) or better in HKDSE.
3. SS3(b) graduates attain core subjects at 3322 or better in HKDSE.
4. The UGC-funded undergraduate places include places for non-JUPAS applicants (around 20%).
5. There are also non-HKDSE graduates applying for articulation to post-secondary education.

Appendix 4 New organizational structure

