

## **Summary Notes for Plenary Session Held on 11 Dec 2007**

As a conclusion to the Teaching and Learning Symposium, a 50-minute audience participatory panel session on supporting and sustaining teaching innovation was convened. The panel members were the keynote speaker, Prof Karl Smith; Prof T K Ng, Associate Dean (Undergraduate) of the School of Science and Visiting Asst Prof Thomas Hu from the School of Engineering. The session was chaired by Dr David Mole, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs.

The session was structured around two key questions:

1. To further enhance teaching innovation at HKUST, what learning areas (e.g. critical thinking) and/or curriculum sites (e.g. freshmen courses) for innovation do you see as potentially providing the biggest impact on student learning? In short, where should we all be focusing to obtain the biggest impact for the funding?
2. In addition to teaching development project funding, what other ways could teaching innovation be further enhanced and supported at HKUST?

**BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE KEY POINTS MENTIONED BY PANEL MEMBERS AND THE AUDIENCE DURING THE CLOSING PLENARY SESSION.**

### **HKUST's Changing Teaching and Learning Context**

Education at all levels in Hong Kong is now working towards the 3-3-4 education reform and this has brought about considerable changes to secondary school teaching and learning, which are impacting on higher education entrants now and will continue to do so even more into the future. Students are now required to pursue more broad-based knowledge for longer rather than specializing so early in the educational life. Alongside this, students' ways of learning, and their interests and passions, are also changing. As the designers of learning experiences and programs, we have to be innovative to ensure that the new 4-year curricula integrate and develop well both along the 4-years and across the whole curriculum; core, co- and extra-.

### **Site / Areas for teaching innovation**

The focus of teaching innovation should be put on stimulating students' curiosity and passion. Teachers have to decide at the program level what can get carried through in different knowledge areas as well as put effort into changing students' conventional expectations and mindset about tertiary studies.

Today's students are more likely to 'question' teachers' knowledge authority; and thus lecturing has become a privileged event. Consequently, teachers have to be more innovative in their teaching. Teaching approaches that foster the development of higher order thinking skills and also cater to various learning styles, paces and needs, such as case-based learning, need to be extended further. Classroom settings and learning task design may have to be modified to encourage these forms of deeper engagement. Technology-supported teaching methods, like simulations, can also be used to develop students' higher order thinking skills. As a result, interactivity among students will be greatly enhanced.

## **Sustaining teaching innovation**

The outcome-based education advocated by UGC provides impetus for curriculum teams and teachers to be innovative in the teaching and learning approaches they adopt. It is also helping to create consensus at the University, School and Departmental program levels as to what we are trying to achieve and recognition of the need to change methods. It is felt that more support, in the form of consultations, experience sharing and building up communities of innovators for sharing and recognition, are needed to enhance these developments. Cross-disciplinary collaboration should be encouraged. Students also will need to be supported through frameworks and tools in their engagement of new ways of learning. Last but not least, teachers and students alike will need to possess an attitude of experimentation, be curious and open-minded with respect to both teaching and learning.