

Project Overview	
Project Title (in English): Towards a Sub-degree General Education Framework – Facilitating Credit Recognition and Transfer	Project Title (in Chinese): 建立副學位通識教育架構 – 促進學分互認和轉移
Executive Summary <i>(Please provide, within this page, an executive summary of the project.)</i>	
<p>With the implementation of the New Academic Structure, General Education (GE) in four-year degree programmes has become increasingly important. Based on the Revised Common Descriptors, 60% of an associate degree (AD) curricula is General Education. Currently, different AD providers have their own model of GE curriculum and their own set of GE intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and/or programme intended learning outcomes which presumably also cover their GE components. At the same time, on the degree level, there are also a range of GE models and GE learning outcomes across universities. As to exemption and transfer of GE units vertically from the sub-degree to the degree level, each publicly-funded degree institutions has their own individual practices to deal with credit transfer/exemption of GE units from the sub-degree sector. For purposes of facilitating sharing of good practices and achieving more effective credit transfer arrangements between the sub-degree and degree sectors, the development of some widely accepted GE frameworks deserves more researches and efforts.</p> <p>In 2011, FSTE was granted QEGS funding for a project on GE (see Part G for details) with the following objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Enhance the development and delivery of sub-degree GE courses through sharing of expertise among universities and sub-degree institutions ➤ Facilitate credit accumulation and transfer system of GE courses between sub-degree and degree programmes, through the alignment of GE curricula among sub-degree institutions and making reference to the degree counterparts <p>The previous QEGS project looked into different GE frameworks across institutions regionally and internationally with reference to the requirements of local Common Descriptors (CD) and Generic Level Descriptors (GLD) for sub-degree students. It was concluded that “the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) essential learning outcomes developed by Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) seem to provide a handy framework which covers not only most of the requirements of the CD and GLD. It also provides a number of outcomes that different institutions can consider in their ongoing reviews of their GE programmes” (GE Guidebook, p. 72). Given the diversity in GE models and structures among institutions in Hong Kong, the widely-recognized US LEAP GE Framework can serve as a good starting point for understanding GE practices of sub-degree institutions in Hong Kong and for the working towards a common GE framework for the local sub-degree sector which shall eventually help to facilitate better</p>	

articulation of sub-degree students into the degree programmes.

FSTE completed the aforesaid QEGS project in December 2013 with following major achievements:

- Fostered the cooperation among institutions in the sub-degree sector
- Initiated dialogue with the GE departments of UGC-funded institutions with regard to their GE courses and credit transfer practices with the sub-degree sector
- Published a General Education Guidebook both in hard copy and electronic forms (www.fste.edu.hk/QEGS3/)
- Organized well-received seminars and workshops for GE teachers and practitioners of both the degree and sub-degree sectors

Building on the success of the QEGS GE project, the current project aims to:

- a. Further enhance the quality of GE courses in the sub-degree sector in Hong Kong
- b. Further facilitate the communication between the sub-degree and degree sectors, as well as among the self-financing and publicly-funded institutions in Hong Kong
- c. Take sub-degree GE further towards the goal of achieving smoother credit recognition by, and articulation to, the degree sector, thereby laying the ground for the eventual establishment of a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System

To achieve the aforesaid project aims, the following major activities and outcomes are proposed:

1. Study the GE practices of local degree and sub-degree institutions and attempt to conceptualize a few widely accepted GE frameworks/ curricula for the reference for local sub-degree sector
2. Carry out research on the learning experiences of local sub-degree students regarding GE training and its effectiveness on their whole person development, actual GE exemption granted, as well as the GE transfer practices of other countries
3. Organize events such as conferences, seminars, forums and focus groups to facilitate sharing among GE practitioners and other relevant stakeholders

1. Widely accepted GE frameworks/ curricula

The prime objective of the project is to enhance the quality of GE courses in the local sub-degree sector by conceptualizing a few widely accepted frameworks/ curricula.

- Apart from the LEAP model, this project will take a step further and study the GE models/frameworks prevailing in other countries with the view to identifying a few acceptable GE frameworks/ curricula for the sub-degree sector in Hong Kong. Building on this, it is proposed that Advisory Groups involving representatives of local publicly-funded and self-financing universities will be formed to facilitate continuous consultation throughout the development process
- The Project Team will compare GE curricula and their ILOs between the local degree and

sub-degree sectors with a view to developing a few acceptable GE frameworks/ curricula for the sub-degree sector in Hong Kong. The success of this project will contribute to the future development of a credit recognition mechanism of GE courses offered by UGC-funded institutions.

2. Survey and comparative study

The second part of this project aims to capture a clearer picture of the current situation, in terms of the universities' credit recognition as well as students' learning experiences in GE courses.

- Survey of sub-degree graduates – To track the actual practice of granting GE course exemptions and transfer of credits across different UGC institutions (and across different programmes within each institution). Possible topics to be covered:
 - How much course work duplication is there?
 - How well-informed students are in terms of their additional GE requirements?
 - What are the effects of these additional GE requirements on students' study load and university experiences as a whole?
 - How students feel about the overall effectiveness of the GE requirements?
 - What is the role of GE in terms of helping students in their future studies and their career development?

The data obtained will help GE administrators and practitioners in both the degree and sub-degree sectors to review the transfer/exemption policy and GE curricula in their respective institutions.

- In-depth interviews with GE heads of local universities – A team led by the Project Director will conduct interviews with GE heads. The data of these interviews shall contribute to the conceptualization of some widely accepted GE frameworks/ curricula and the development of more transparent and systematic credit recognition.
- Comparative study of international practices – This study will examine the growing implementation of GE curricula and the transfer/exemption practices outside of Hong Kong in the Asian Pacific region as well as North America and Europe. Apart from paper and web research, GE scholars from those countries may be invited to share their experiences and good practices in seminars and forums.

Major findings of the abovementioned studies will be consolidated into a publication on GE Transfer Practice primarily for sharing with relevant stakeholders.

3. Events

The third part of the project aims to facilitate the communication between GE practitioners of sub-degree and degree levels. The events will enhance the image of GE courses at sub-degree level and allow GE practitioners especially those in UGC-funded institutions to gain a better understanding of sub-degree GE courses.

- Organize sharing forums for GE teaching staff – In the previous QEGS GE project, event

participants from different AD providers appreciated the opportunities to share their experiences with practitioners from sister institutions. This project will continue to provide such opportunities and allow GE teachers to discuss effective teaching/learning practices and assessment methods.

- GE teaching awards – Teaching awards will be given to a maximum of three outstanding GE teachers based on a range of criteria including but not limited to student feedback and teaching portfolios. To ensure the recognition of the teachers' achievement, representatives from sub-degree and UGC-funded institutions will be invited to be adjudicators. Such teaching awards will be repeated every alternate year on self-financing basis.
- Organize seminars/roundtables for sub-degree GE staff members – This project will organize seminars to promote professional development for sub-degree GE staff members. Where possible, there will be presentations by GE teaching staff. GE staff members of UGC-funded institutions will also be invited as speakers and/or participants. Suggested topics may include:
 - Actual GE recognition granted by UGC-funded institutions to AD/HD graduates in senior-year places
 - GE teaching and learning
 - GE assessment
 - GE programme review and development
 - Mainland and overseas experience in GE implementation
 - Possible means of GE recognition and the way forward
- Organize a GE Conference (mid-2017) as the “finale” of the project – In marking the conclusion of the project, reputable mainland and overseas speakers with extensive experiences in GE and government officials will be invited. The programme will include expert presentations, plenary sessions, thematic group presentations, workshops, and presentation of research findings.

FSTE will report progress and share materials of the above activities via an open resources platform, such as a designated website. In future, FSTE will introduce a joint-institution online platform provided that the other QESS application submitted by us in the current exercise, namely STEP-STONE is successful.

Upon the completion of the aforesaid activities, the project will take sub-degree GE further towards the goal of credit recognition by, and articulation to, the degree sector, with the possibility of spearheading the establishment of a Credit Accumulation and Transfer System in Hong Kong.

Possible projects in future

The success of this project will open opportunities for:

- Development and provision of online resources of blended learning on popular GE courses offered by FSTE institutions
- Development and maintenance of an IT platform for sharing of GE resources among FSTE institutions
- Development of an explicit or pre-approved credit recognition mechanism of GE courses offered by UGC-funded institutions
- Introduction of a Joint General Education Certificate, to be awarded by FSTE to students of member institutions (subject to clarification on FSTE authority to grant such a certificate)

Problems Identified

(Please provide your assessments to the problems / needs identified.)

- As self-financing sub-degree institutions manage and organize their GE provisions quite differently, there is a lack of collaboration among these institutions on acceptable GE frameworks
- Recognition of sub-degree GE credits by degree sector institutions does not follow any particular structure or pattern and is granted on a case-by-case basis
- Absence of a transparent practice for aligning sub-degree GE curricula and GE components of senior year curricula in universities
- Limited experience-sharing among practitioners and colleagues in sub-degree and degree sectors
- Lack of systematic credit recognition and articulation from sub-degree to degree programmes.

Project Objectives and Deliverables

Measurable Objectives	How it can be achieved
1. Develop widely accepted GE frameworks/ curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ In-depth interviews with GE and AR (Academic Registry) representatives of universities and sub-degree institutions ➤ Consultations with Advisory Groups ➤ GE seminars and conference
2. Survey on the transferability of sub-degree GE courses and its effectiveness in helping students in their senior years .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Survey of sub-degree graduates on the exemption and transfer of GE units granted as well as the effectiveness of GE courses on their university experiences
3. Carry out comparative study of local and international practice in design, delivery and transfer of GE courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Research ➤ GE seminars/workshops ➤ GE conference

4. Promote sharing among GE teachers of sub-degree sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Sharing forums ➤ GE teaching awards ➤ GE seminars/workshops ➤ GE conference
5. Enhance dialogue between sub-degree and degree sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Research ➤ Widely accepted GE frameworks/ curricula ➤ GE teaching awards ➤ GE seminars/workshops ➤ GE conference

Project Deliverables

(Please list out all the deliverables to be achieved and how they can be shared with, if possible, other institutions.)

Deliverables	Sharing mechanism
1. Widely accepted GE frameworks/ curricula	Upload to FSTE GE webpage and disseminate into a publication on GE Transfer Practice to relevant stakeholders
2. Survey results – GE recognition and exemption; learning experiences and value of GE for further studies and career development	Upload result summary to FSTE GE webpage
3. International GE practice	Upload summary to FSTE GE webpage
4. Sharing forums for teachers	Upload materials, where appropriate, to FSTE GE webpage to encourage further sharing
5. Roundtables/seminars	Upload materials, where appropriate, to FSTE GE webpage
6. GE teaching awards	Award presentation ceremony; Upload clips of good teaching practices to FSTE GE webpage for sharing
7. GE conference	Upload materials, where appropriate, to FSTE GE webpage for sharing

(Please indicate the information that can be uploaded onto relevant EDB websites during and after the project period.)

- Photos of events
- News on GE teaching awards
- Summary of survey results
- Synopsis of good teaching practices

- Conference proceedings
- Publication on GE Transfer Practice
- Other items – link to FSTE website

Beneficiaries

Expected type and number of beneficiaries of the project

(Please provide justification to support the above estimation and explain how they can be benefited from the project.)

Staff involving in developing, assessing and delivering GE courses are potential beneficiaries. It is expected that the project will benefit the following stakeholders:

- Sub-degree graduates – GE recognition by and articulation to degree sector institutions
- Sub-degree GE teachers – Share experience with practitioners and colleagues in sub-degree and degree sectors
- Sub-degree sector – Encourage cooperative efforts in producing quality GE courses; share data on learning experiences of sub-degree graduates, enhance the value of GE courses for further study and career development; share international practice in GE courses
- Degree sector (UGC-funded and self-financing institutions) – Increase consistency, efficiency and transparency in assessing sub-degree graduates. Currently, recognition of sub-degree GE credits does not follow any particular structure or pattern and is granted on a case-by-case basis

Number of GE teachers: 900 (estimated number of teachers engaging in GE teaching for sub-degree programmes in 2014/15 to 2016/17: 300 x 3)

Projected number of beneficiaries: 93,000 (estimated number of students eligible for sub-degree programmes in 2014/15 to 2016/17: 31,000 x 3)

The project will also benefit future staff, graduates, and students of sub-degree sector institutions, as well as the Hong Kong education system as a whole by enhancing GE credit recognition by and articulation to the degree sector.

Implementation Schedule

(Please list out the implementation schedule and key milestones to be achieved on a half-yearly basis.)

Estimated start date of the project (month/year)		October 2014
Estimated end date of the project (month/year)		September 2017
Project duration (months)		36 months
Month	Key milestones	
	In terms of project activities and deliverables	In terms of monitoring and evaluation

<p>1-6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Recruitment of project team ➤ Survey – draft questionnaire ➤ GE practice – determine direction and carry out research ➤ GE seminar (to launch project) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working Group meetings ➤ Evaluation results – GE seminar
<p>7-12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Survey and focus group on 2014 sub-degree graduates ➤ International GE practice – prepare preliminary report ➤ GE frameworks/ curricula– conceptualize possible parameters ➤ Sharing forum for GE teachers ➤ Roundtable discussion/seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working Group meetings ➤ Advisory Group(s) meeting ➤ Survey results and focus group findings of 2014 graduates ➤ Evaluation results – GE sharing forum and roundtable discussion
<p>13-18</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GE frameworks/ curricula– draft and consult ➤ Interview with GE heads of degree sector ➤ Survey report of 2014 graduates ➤ International GE practice – revised report ➤ GE seminar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working Group meetings ➤ Advisory Group(s) meeting ➤ Report on consultation with GE representatives on acceptable GE frameworks/ curricula ➤ Evaluation results – GE seminar
<p>19-24</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Revise GE frameworks/ curricula ➤ Interview with GE heads of degree sector ➤ Survey and focus group on 2015 sub-degree graduates ➤ Tracking survey of 2014 graduates ➤ International GE practice – final report ➤ GE teaching awards ➤ Sharing forum for GE teachers ➤ Roundtable discussion/seminar ➤ Prepare for the GE Transfer Practice publication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ FSTE Working Group meetings ➤ Advisory Group(s) meeting ➤ Report on consultation with GE representatives on widely accepted GE frameworks/ curricula ➤ Award presentation ceremony ➤ Evaluation results – GE sharing forum ➤ Survey results and focus group findings of 2015 graduates
<p>25-30</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review and revise GE frameworks/ curricula according to comments and advice received from degree sector ➤ GE seminar ➤ Survey report of 2015 graduates ➤ Tracking survey report of 2014 graduates ➤ Editing and production of the GE Transfer Practice publication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working Group meetings ➤ Advisory Group(s) meeting ➤ Evaluation results – GE seminar

31-36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Prepare the finalized GE frameworks/ curricula ➤ GE Conference ➤ Conference proceedings ➤ Launch of the publication on GE Transfer Practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working Group meetings ➤ Evaluation results – GE Conference and book launch ➤ Overall project report
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Publicity Plan

(Please describe all the publicity activities to be organised and materials to be produced to acknowledge the support of Quality Enhancement Support Scheme. Please suitably reflect the publicity activities as key milestones in the implementation schedule above.)

Acknowledgment of QESS support will be included in promotion flyers, leaflets, workshop/seminar programme rundown, conference proceeding, reports and publication on GE Transfer Practice produced in this project as well as on FSTE website and its designated site which links to GE webpage of member institutions.

Cash Flow and Budget

Project Expenditure

	Amount in HK\$			
Period	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Manpower	498,450	813,450	513,450	1,825,350
Equipment / Facilities	72,000			72,000
Services		286,000	324,000	610,000
General Expenses	90,000	140,000	226,000	456,000
Others (e.g. auditor's fee)	43,100	73,025	93,210	209,335
Total	703,550	1,312,475	1,156,660	3,172,685

Project Income (if any, e.g. fees received)

	Amount in HK\$			
Period	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
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Total	--	--	--	--

Grant Sought under the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme	HK\$3,172,685
Funding from the Applicant	--
Funding from Other Sources	--
Total Project Value	HK\$3,172,685

(Please specify the amount to be funded by each funding source (e.g. donations, contributions from applicant / its parent organisation) and whether the funding has been secured. If not, please provide the plan to obtain the funding.)

NA	
<i>(Please provide the duty lists of manpower to be funded by this project.)</i>	
Post	Duties
Project Manager	To plan and oversee project activities. To conduct research in international practice, analyze research data and compile reports and conceptualize acceptable GE curricula
Project Assistant	To provide logistic support to project activities including conferences, seminars, sharing forums and focus groups and provide administrative support to research work
Project Sustainability <i>(Please estimate the amount of recurrent expenditure and describe how you will commit the resources to ensure sustainability of the project. Please put supplementary information (e.g. proof of financial support) at appendix.)</i>	