

Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme

Progress Report

Project No. :
13/QEGS/A-08-09

Reporting Period: From April 2009 to September 2009

Part A

Project Title: The Development and Implementation of Outcome-based Learning & Teaching in Full-time Face-to-face Degree Programmes

Name of Grantee: The Open University of Hong Kong

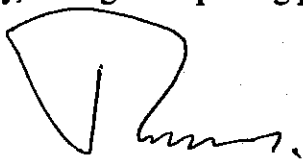
Project Period: From April 2009 to July 2011

Part B

Please use separate A4-size sheets to report the progress with regard to the following aspects:

1. Types and brief descriptions of Project activities held/completed during the reporting period (*the information may be presented in the form of a table*).
2. The dates, time, venues and number of participants / beneficiaries of Project activities held, and resources (e.g. equipment, manpower) used for the implementation of Project activities.
3. Project milestone(s) and deliverables attained at the end of the reporting period and evidence showing the attainment of milestones and deliverables.
4. The percentage, in terms of key tasks, of the Project completed at the end of each reporting period.
5. Project variation*, if any, during the reporting period, together with details and justifications

Signature: _____



Organization Chop: _____



Name of Authorized Person: John LEONG Chi Yan

Name of Grantee The Open University of Hong

Organization: Kong

Position of Authorized

Person: President

Date: 27 October 2009

* A separate written application should be submitted to the Grant for prior written approval.

*Progress Report of Project should be signed by the head of the Grantee organization, the person-in-charge of the Project or the person who signed the Quality Enhancement Grant Scheme Agreement for acceptance of the Grant on behalf of the Grantee organization.



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**The development and implementation of outcome-based learning and
teaching in full-time face-to-face degree programmes**

Progress Report 1 to the Education Bureau

**The Project Team
Open University of Hong Kong**

October 2009

Contents

Introduction	1
Setting up the Project Team	1
Appointing the Project Director	1
Appointing the Senior Research Fellow	1
Members of the Project Team	2
A mechanism for assigning programmes to the Qualifications Framework	2
Programme approval	3
Programme revalidation	4
The measures taken	4
Institutional outcomes	5
Course-based learning outcomes	6
Knowledge and intellectual skills	7
Processes	8
Application, autonomy and accountability	9
Communication, IT and numeracy	10
Staff development workshops/seminars and meetings	11
Workshops/seminars	11
Working with Programme Teams	11
Other support for academics	13
Conclusion	13
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Advertisement for posts, 7 and 14 March 2009	14
Appendix 2: Memos related to the appointment of Professor Carr	18
Appendix 3: Advertisement for post, 8 May 2009	21
Appendix 4: PowerPoints for workshop on developing institutional outcomes	23
Appendix 5: Evaluation of the workshop on developing institutional outcomes	27
Appendix 6: PowerPoints for workshop on developing learning outcomes	29
Appendix 7: Evaluation of the workshop on developing learning outcomes	35
Appendix 8: PowerPoints for the workshop on aligning assessment with learning outcomes	37
Appendix 9: Evaluation of the workshop on aligning assessment with learning outcomes	42
Appendix 10: Evaluation of the seminar on developing learning outcomes	44
Appendix 11: Evaluation of the seminar on aligning assessment with learning outcomes	46

Introduction

This first report on the project on outcome-based education, for which the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) was awarded a grant of HK \$1,997,000 by the Education Bureau, covers the work carried out to the end of September 2009.

As specified in Schedule II of the agreement, the specific tasks to be undertaken during the first phase (1 April to 30 September 2009) were:

- the development of a mechanism for assigning programmes to the Qualifications Framework;
- the development of generic programme-based and course-based learning outcomes;
- running workshops for academics in each of the four Schools to assist them to redevelop one existing programme document to meet the needs of outcome-based learning.

All the planned tasks within this period were completed, as outlined in this report.

Setting up the Project Team

The two main posts proposed – an Associate Professor (fractional appointment), who was to be the Project Director, and a full-time Senior Research Fellow – were advertised on 7 and 14 March 2009 (see Appendix 1). However, none of the applicants were considered to be qualified for shortlisting for the post of Associate Professor, though five met the minimum qualifications for Senior Research Fellow/Research Fellow.

Appointing the Project Director

Given the need to appoint a Project Director as soon as possible because of the tight schedule, the Vice-President (Academic) approached Professor Ronnie Carr – who was the Dean of the School of Education and Languages from 1994 to 2005 – to be an Academic Consultant for the project. Professor Carr has extensive experience in staff and curriculum development and administration in higher education, and is very familiar with outcome-based education. This nomination was endorsed by the Head of the Human Resources Unit and approved by the President (see Appendix 2 for memos related to the appointment of Professor Carr).

Professor Carr was then appointed as a Consultant, and designated as Project Director, for the period 11 May 2009 to 31 December 2010, with a total fee of HK\$972,000, payable in six equal instalments.

Appointing the Senior Research Fellow

Before he was formally appointed as Project Director, Professor Carr, together with Professor Fung, the current Dean of the School of Education and Languages, interviewed five candidates who had responded to the March advertisements for the position of Senior Research Fellow. The interviews were held on 28 April 2009 but, unfortunately, no appointment could be made as none of these applicants had sufficient knowledge of outcome-based education and their experience in staff and curriculum development was limited.

As the project should have started in April 2009, Dr Thomas Tang, an Associate Professor in the School of Education and Languages, was assigned to work with the Dean on the project from mid-May 2009, having been relieved of a small part of his normal workload for this

purpose. Dr Tang's involvement was intended to be short-term until a Senior Research Fellow was appointed.

There was another advertisement on 8 May 2009 (see Appendix 3), this time for a Senior Research Fellow/ Research Fellow/ Research Associate. The additional categories of Research Fellow and Research Associate were included to attract applicants who might have sufficient knowledge of outcome-based education but did not have the academic qualifications and experience required for a Senior Research Fellow. Four candidates were short-listed and interviews were conducted on 3 and 4 June 2009. No suitable candidate could be identified for Senior Research Fellow, Research Fellow or Research Associate, but one interviewee, Ms Tonia Cheng, was considered suitable for the position of Project Coordinator (at Research Assistant I level).

After discussion with the Vice-President (Academic) about the staffing situation, it was decided that Dr Thomas Tang should continue to work with the Project Director on this project. Dr Tang is knowledgeable about outcome-based education and is also experienced in staff and curriculum development. To reduce his workload, some of his duties are/will be taken over by part-time lecturers, course coordinators and course developers, though he will still need to supervise these part-time staff. Dr Tang will continue to work until 31 December 2010 when the final evaluation and financial reports are to be submitted to the EDB. From July 2009, an average of about 50% of Dr Tang's workload will be related to the project.

In addition, Ms Tonia Cheng was appointed as Project Coordinator for one year, starting on 1 July 2009. Her responsibilities include: assisting Professor Carr and Dr Tang in liaison work with academics, organizing workshops and meetings and planning the evaluation of OBE implementation; carrying out a literature review; and helping to develop evaluation instruments and collect, compile and analyse data. The monthly salary of the Project Coordinator is HK\$19835.

Members of the Project Team

The Project Team now consists of:

Prof. Ronnie Carr: Project Director, appointed as Consultant;

Dr Thomas Tang: Associate Professor, School of Education and Languages (who has been released from some of his other duties);

Ms Tonia Cheng (Project Coordinator, a full-time appointment).

The Dean, Professor Yvonne Fung, is also heavily involved in advising and overseeing the project.

This staffing structure differs from what was originally intended but is within the financial limits for the project, and the two key personnel are well qualified for the tasks involved. Also, although there was some delay in staff appointments, the scheduled activities for stage 1 have been carried out successfully due to the extra time and effort spent on them by the Project Team.

A mechanism for assigning programmes to the Qualifications Framework

Since its inception, the OUHK has had a rigorous quality assurance system for evaluating and monitoring the planning and development of programmes, and for their revalidation. However, with the release of the final version of the Education Bureau's Qualifications Framework in May 2008, it was considered necessary to incorporate a formal mechanism for assigning programmes to the framework.

The current procedures for programme review and revalidation are described briefly below, followed by an outline of the measures taken to ensure that programmes are placed at the appropriate level in the Qualifications Framework.

Programme approval

The existing process for reviewing proposed new programmes is illustrated in Figure 1.

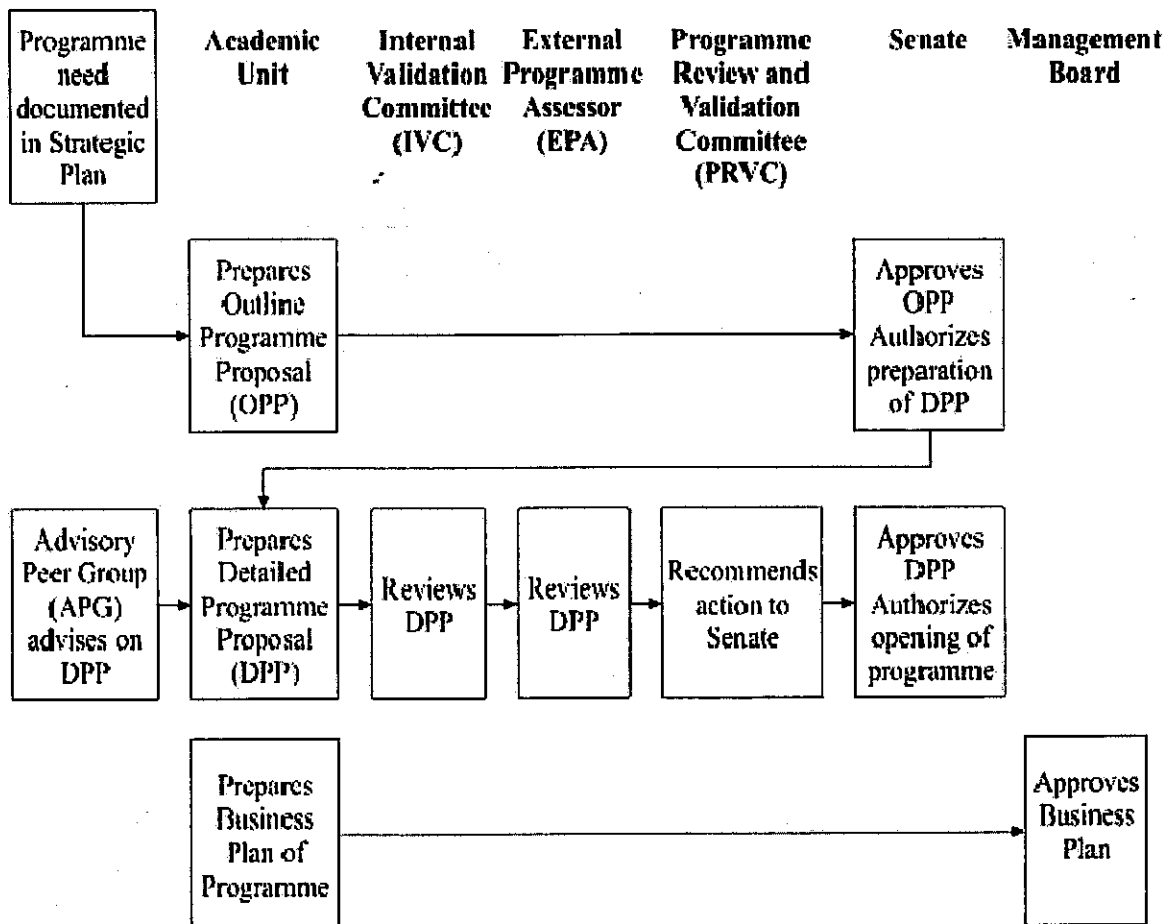


Figure 1 OUHK programme review process

As can be seen in the figure, the procedures involve the development by the academic unit concerned of two documents – an Outline Programme Proposal and a Detailed Programme Proposal, as follows:

- An *Outline Programme Proposal* contains, for example, the aims, learning outcomes and structure of the programme; its language medium; and the intended presentation date. This is submitted to the Senate for approval for further development into a Detailed Programme Proposal.
- A *Detailed Programme Proposal* is a much fuller document which includes also syllabuses for all the courses, the assessment methods to be employed and the staffing requirements. In preparing this document, an academic unit is expected to consult the related Advisory Peer Group, which comprises local academics/professionals, for advice on the programme's development and implementation.

This Detailed Programme Proposal is then reviewed by:

- the *Internal Validation Committee*, consisting mainly of heads of academic units, which gives feedback from an academic perspective; and then
- the *External Programme Assessor*, who informs the *Programme Review and Validation Committee* of the appropriateness of the programme structure, academic standard, local relevance, etc.

After endorsement by the Programme Review and Validation Committee, the Detailed Programme Proposal needs to be approved by the Senate for its presentation.

Programme revalidation

The revalidation of programmes follows a similar but separate set of procedures. Existing programmes are revalidated on a set timetable – six years for 160-credit honours degree programmes and other qualifications which articulate with them; and five years for programmes which require less than 160 credits. The process involves Programme Teams/Schools in reviewing the implementation of programmes in depth and, in the light of feedback, proposing any modifications needed for the period up to the next revalidation.

Revalidation submissions are reviewed in terms of academic standards and quality by the Advisory Peer Group, the Internal Validation Committee, the External Programme Assessor, the Programme Review and Validation Committee and, finally, the Senate.

The measures taken

The present programme approval and revalidation processes will continue to be followed, except that at several stages the committees and the relevant External Programme Assessor will examine whether an intended programme meets the requirements of the stated level in the Qualifications Framework.

The process involves the following requirements:

- For all new programmes to be approved for presentation and programmes which are going through the revalidation process, the Programme Teams will have to give a full justification for assigning the programmes to particular levels by indicating how the stated learning outcomes match the generic level descriptors in the Qualifications Framework.
- This justification should be included from the early stages of programme development and therefore should appear in both the Outline Programme Proposal and Detailed Programme Proposals; and similar explanations should be provided in the revalidation documents.
- Where appropriate, the views of the Advisory Peer Group may be sought on the level of the programme.
- Next, the levels assigned for new programmes or programmes being revalidated will have to be examined and endorsed by:
 - the Internal Validation Committee;
 - the External Programme Assessor;
 - the Programme Review and Validation Committee; and

- the Senate.

This new mechanism for the approval of programme levels has been endorsed by the University Senate.

Institutional outcomes

The second task for the project in this first phase was to develop a common set of learning outcomes for the University which would act as guiding principles for Programme Teams when developing the outcomes for specific programmes. In working on this activity with academic staff, it was decided that it would be clearer to refer to the qualities and achievements we expect of our graduates as 'institutional outcomes' rather than 'generic programme-based outcomes', the term used in the project proposal.

A bottom-up approach was adopted in developing the institutional outcomes. On 16 June 2009, 51 academic staff [including the Vice-President (Academic) and two Deans] from all Schools participated in a workshop aimed at discussing and formulating the qualities expected of OUHK graduates. After an initial explanation of the importance of setting institutional outcomes in outcome-based education, participants examined the graduate attributes expected in other local universities, and then worked in groups to define the qualities we should aim to develop in our graduates (see Appendix 4 for the PowerPoints used in this workshop). Following a plenary discussion, agreement was reached on the key words to be included in OUHK institutional outcomes. The participants considered the workshop to be useful (see the evaluation in Appendix 5.)

Based on the above discussion, the Project Team compiled a composite list of institutional outcomes for consideration in School Board meetings. After reviewing the comments received from the Schools, a revised set of OUHK institutional outcomes was submitted to the Senate which, after further discussion, approved the following list.

OUHK institutional outcomes

The Open University of Hong Kong expects its graduates to be able to:

- demonstrate competence academically and in related professional contexts;
- show a commitment to lifelong learning;
- think critically, analytically and creatively;
- communicate effectively;
- contribute constructively in teamwork and play a leadership role;
- act as responsible citizens, ready to contribute to society;
- adopt a global outlook and appreciate cultural diversity.

Course-based learning outcomes

This project also includes the development of generic course-based outcomes which provide reference points for the expected achievement of students at each level. Such course-based outcomes should help:

- academics to identify the course learning outcomes which are appropriate for the level of their courses; and
- programme leaders/teams to align course learning outcomes with programme learning outcomes and the generic-level descriptors in the Qualifications Framework.

The Project Team has attempted to identify indicators for courses at the following levels: Foundation, Middle, Higher and Postgraduate; and these have been classified into the four categories adopted in the EDB's Qualifications Framework, viz.

- Knowledge and intellectual skills
- Processes
- Application, autonomy and accountability
- Communication, IT and numeracy.

In using these course-based outcomes, academics should replace the generic terms (e.g. basic terms and concepts) with those specific to their courses.

The generic course-based outcomes for courses at different levels, which have been approved by the University Senate, are presented in Tables 1 to 4.

Table 1

Indicator	Foundation level	Middle level	Higher level	Postgraduate level
<p>Knowledge and intellectual skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and explain the basic terms, concepts and principles in the subject. • Describe, analyse and interpret basic aspects of the subject using relevant terms, concepts and principles. • Know about and begin to address issues and problems in the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define and explain more complex terms, concepts and principles in a variety of areas in the subject. • Apply knowledge and understanding accurately to a range of issues, questions and problems related to the subject. • Analyse and reformat a wide range of information independently to generate responses to issues and problems in the subject. • Use established techniques to evaluate and interpret the subject in various contexts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically analyse, evaluate and synthesize ideas, concepts and principles central to the subject. • Apply knowledge and understanding in the subject area to plan, develop and use investigative strategies, and to make judgements. • Identify and analyse academic and, where relevant, professional problems and issues, and formulate evidence-based responses. • Recognize the limits of knowledge in the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically review and evaluate literature in the subject area. • Synthesize new understanding/ knowledge based on a range of data/information sources. • Apply specialized knowledge of the subject area and cognitive skills to analyse/solve complex issues and problems. • Identify the areas in the subject where knowledge is potentially uncertain and limited.

Table 2

Indicator	Foundation level	Middle level	Higher level	Postgraduate level
Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use learning and technical skills in a variety of mainly standard contexts. • Select and present information in the subject area appropriately. • Generalize and predict in familiar settings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a variety of learning and technical skills in a range of familiar and unfamiliar contexts. • Exercise appropriate judgement in planning selecting and presenting information, methods or resources in the subject area. • Carry out enquiry into issues and problems in the subject area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize diagnostic and creative skills for various academic and professional functions, as appropriate. • Critically evaluate the products of one's work. • Carry out enquiry into complex issues and problems in the subject area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically review and select research approaches, with justifications. • Conduct research on academic and/or professional issues, using appropriate research methodologies.

Table 3

	Foundation level	Middle level	Higher level	Postgraduate level
Application, autonomy and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform basic tasks, using practical and professional skills relevant to the subject. • Take responsibility for the standard of one's work. • Engage in some self-directed learning. • Show awareness of relevant ethical issues in the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform skilled tasks in the subject which require some discretion and judgement. • Take responsibility for the standard of one's work and consider ways of improving it. • Undertake an increasing amount of self-directed learning. • Show increasing awareness of the importance of relevant ethical issues in the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform tasks involving planning, design and technical skills in the subject area. • Be accountable for achieving personal and group outcomes. • Monitor and evaluate one's learning and initiate ways of improving performance. • Analyse ethical issues relevant to the subject. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform highly demanding tasks in a wide range of academic and, where relevant, professional activities. • Accept full responsibility for decision-making in academic/ professional activities. • Undertake independent learning of the subject in depth, with only limited guidance. • Critically analyse complex ethical issues in the subject.

Table 4

	Foundation level	Middle level	Higher level	Postgraduate level
Communication, IT and numeracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate information accurately in the subject area. • Find and use appropriate information or data to support study. • Use IT skills and numerical skills, as appropriate, to support study and/or present information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate information, arguments and viewpoints accurately and coherently. • Find and use relevant information accurately and choose appropriate methods and data to justify results and choices in a range of settings. • Use a range of IT applications, as relevant, to enhance learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate complex information, arguments and viewpoints using appropriate styles and language. • Find, critically evaluate and use information or data accurately in complex contexts. • Where appropriate, select and use a wider range of IT applications to improve learning and professional activities related to the subject. • Interpret, use and evaluate numerical and graphical data, as appropriate, to achieve goals/targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate complex information, arguments and viewpoints very effectively. • Design techniques to collect information and data for academic study and related professional activities. • Appraise and critically evaluate the use and presentation of data/information by academics/professionals. • Make extensive use of relevant software applications to enhance academic work.

Staff development workshops/seminars and meetings

In addition to the workshop held on 16 June described earlier, four other sessions were held to familiarize academic staff with the development of learning outcomes and the alignment of assessment with learning outcomes. Also, separate meetings were held with members of each School to brief them on the project.

Workshops/seminars

The following workshops, which were held on 23 June and 9 July respectively, focused on the fundamental concepts in outcome-based education which are essential for redeveloping programme documents in line with outcome-based education.

- *Workshop on developing learning outcomes*

This workshop considered the general features of learning outcomes, the ways in which they should be expressed, and the development of programme and course learning outcomes. After input from two members of the Project Team (Professor Carr and Professor Fung), the participants discussed, in groups, selected examples of programme and course aims/outcomes from their Schools/Institute. This was followed by consideration of the optimum strategies for ensuring that teaching and learning align with learning outcomes (see Appendix 6 for the PowerPoints). Forty-four academics participated in this workshop and evaluated it positively (see Appendix 7).

- *Workshop on aligning assessment with learning outcomes*

In this workshop, in which Professor Ronnie Carr and Dr Thomas Tang acted as facilitators, various assessment methods were discussed and considerable emphasis was placed on the need for clear grading criteria. The participants examined the extent to which a sample of assessment items from their Schools/Institute matched the learning outcomes (see Appendix 8 for the PowerPoints). Thirty-three academics attended this workshop and again the evaluation was satisfactory (see Appendix 9).

Seminars on the themes of the two workshops described above were run on 18 and 20 July 2009 for staff members who were unable to attend the workshops. While the numbers involved were rather small (15 and nine respectively), these sessions helped to familiarize more staff with the principles and practice of outcome-based education (see Appendices 10 and 11).

Working with Programme Teams

After running the series of workshops, separate meetings were held with each Programme Team in late July and early August, as follows:

- School of Education and Languages: 30 July 2009
- School of Science and Technology: 5 August 2009
- School of Arts and Social Sciences: 11 August 2009
- Lee Shau Kee School of Business and Administration: 11 August 2009.

Each School nominated a full-time programme for the project, viz.

<i>School</i>	<i>Programme</i>
School of Arts and Social Sciences	Bachelor of Social Sciences with Honours
Lee Shau Kee School of Business and Administration	Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing
School of Education and Languages	Bachelor of Education with Honours (English Strand) and Bachelor of Language Studies (English) with Honours (double degree)
School of Science and Technology	Bachelor of Computing with Honours in Internet Technology

At all these meetings, which were interactive, the process and activities involved in the project were highlighted, viz.

- the examination of the objectives of the selected programme and their redevelopment into learning outcomes;
- a curriculum mapping to indicate how each course in the programme is related to the programme learning outcomes;
- consideration of the most appropriate teaching/learning methods and assessment for achieving the outcomes;
- the redevelopment of the programme document;
- the production of a sample of *Course Documents*¹ for courses in the programme in line with the programme outcomes and an outcome-based approach.

At the end of each meeting, a course for piloting the implementation of outcome-based learning and teaching in each programme in the January 2010 semester was also identified, viz.

<i>School</i>	<i>Course code/title</i>
School of Arts and Social Sciences	POLS A122F <i>Foundation of Social Sciences: Political Science</i>
Lee Shau Kee School of Business and Administration	MKTB362F <i>Marketing Research</i>
School of Education and Languages	EDUE100F <i>Learning and Teaching in a School Context</i>
School of Science and Technology	TS103F <i>Introduction to Information and Communications Technology II</i>

At present, the Project Team is working with the School of Education and Languages on the redevelopment of a Programme Document and a Course Document for the selected course, EDUE100F, which can then be used as templates in the coming meetings with teaching staff from other Schools.

¹ In the original proposal to the EDB, it was suggested that *Course Guides* would be produced but, after thorough discussion, the Project Team considered that the term *Course Documents* would be more appropriate.

Other support for academics

A website was created for the project on the OUHK's Open Learning Environment, which includes a Discussion Board, and all the PowerPoints and related handouts and websites for the above workshops have been uploaded there. This also provides a platform for communication and interaction among academics on the implementation of outcome-based education, with the Project Director and Dr Thomas Tang providing feedback on any questions raised by staff members.

Conclusion

Despite the difficulties in setting up the project team, all the activities required in phase1 have been carried out.

Given the attendance at the project workshops/seminars, which were in general rated positively by the participants, the creation of a project website which includes the related material, and the work with Programme Team members, it is felt that there has been a significant increase in staff knowledge and understanding of outcome-based education.