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Press Release

HKU Faculty of Education wins an Education “Oscar” at the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Reimagine Education Awards

The Experiential Learning (EL) team from the Faculty of Education (the Faculty) at the University of Hong Kong (HKU) has won the Gold Award 2020 in the Presence Learning and Teaching Category at the QS Reimagine Education Awards: known as the “Oscars” of Education. The EL team comprising Dr Gary Harfitt, Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching); Ms Jessie Chow, Lecturer, Academic Unit of Teacher Education and Learning Leadership; and Ms Ivy Chung, Executive Officer from the Faculty, won the award for the project “Nurturing a twenty-first century teaching force through community-based experiential education”.

This project was set up by the team in 2016-17. It aims to re-think how teacher education can adapt to a rapidly changing and unpredictable global context while bringing benefits for the teaching profession and the wider community. Through the establishment of a mandatory EL curriculum for all new teachers on its preparatory courses, this project seeks to promote a third layer of learning in teacher education, making the community outside the university an inter-space for reciprocal knowledge building and the source of multiple learning opportunities for teachers-to-be.

This compulsory, credit-bearing EL curriculum across all Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes was the first example in Hong Kong and south-east Asia. In a grade-conscious culture, the project creators choose to emphasise learning “processes” over grades so all courses are pass/fail (no grades); they want students to see the purpose of serving the community above individual grades and marks. Ongoing reflective practice is promoted using multiple modalities (written, photovoice, poster, conferences, debriefing) to connect students’ experiences. They create multiple platforms for partners to collaborate with them and one another. An annual fair is held for new pre-service teachers and alumni to meet with community partners for exchanging ideas, thereby promoting sustainability in their own fields and quality assurance.

The team was the only teacher education team to pick up an award, competing against universities, tech and start-up groups from all over the world. Award applications go through five rigorous rounds of evaluation and moderation, before being considered by a Grand Jury of 15 representatives from some of the world’s top universities, world-famous technology companies, highly-innovative online education providers, and educational think-tanks.

The QS Reimagine Education Awards are co-organised by Quacquarelli Symonds, compilers of the QS World University Rankings, and The Wharton School (University of Pennsylvania) – Learning Lab. The Awards are designed to reward institutions of higher education that have created and implemented outstanding new approaches to teaching and learning, particularly those that can demonstrate the uniqueness, innovation, and efficacy of their pedagogy.

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