

# ***Framework Governing the Teaching of Introductory Accounting: A Survey of Acceptability at Hong Kong Universities***

Theodore T. Y. Chen  
*Hong Kong Shue Yan University*

*The importance of introductory accounting to the success of accounting majors has led numerous accounting academics to focus on the assessment, curriculum and instructional aspects. Teaching of the course also presents a great challenge as many universities combine accounting and non-accounting students into the same class.*

*The purpose of this article is: (a) to develop a framework that can be applied to the teaching of introductory accounting, through an extensive review of existing literature pertaining to four English-speaking countries; and (b) to conduct a survey of all Hong Kong degree-granting institutions to determine the acceptability of such a framework in that locality. The results indicate that Hong Kong academics are not different from the major English-speaking countries.*

*The framework is to (a) use seven of the eight AECC initiatives for first-year accounting courses for pedagogical considerations, (b) use an appropriate blend of the preparer's and user's approaches in teaching the*

*course to accounting majors, (c) use the user's approach in teaching the course to a separate class of non-accounting majors, (d) use the theoretical and conceptual approach over the strict procedural approach in teaching the course, and (e) use deep and elaborative processing as learning strategies for conclusion-oriented results.*

*Keywords: introductory accounting; Accounting Education Change Commission; user's or preparer's approach*

## **Introduction**

Introductory accounting is considered one of the most important accounting courses because it could either arouse students' interest in accounting or cause students to dislike accounting to the point of dropping accounting. Numerous studies pertaining to introductory accounting have been conducted within the past decade in the areas of assessment, curriculum and instruction. A list of thirteen examples is provided in Appendix B.

While the aforementioned examples are classroom-tested approaches used or environment provided in the successful delivery of the introductory accounting course, they do not provide a framework that instructors could act on. The purposes of this article are two-fold. First, it aims to conceptualize a framework for the effective teaching of introductory accounting, through an extensive review of existing literature pertaining to a number of English-speaking countries (i.e., the United States [U.S.], the United Kingdom [U.K.], and Australia/New Zealand) to ensure consistency of acceptability in English-speaking countries. Concepts contributing to this framework are scattered through a large volume of accounting education literature. Faculty members teaching introductory accounting may not have the time or interest in reviewing this volume of literature to come up with their own framework. Second, it is to determine through a survey questionnaire and follow-up interviews with all nine degree-granting institutions with accounting degree programs in Hong Kong whether the said guidelines

are equally acceptable in Hong Kong, a jurisdiction in the eastern hemisphere, as Hong Kong is largely populated by Chinese with a different culture and possible differences in their views toward accounting curriculum and pedagogical issues. Overseas accounting programs operating in Hong Kong are excluded as they do not purely represent views from Hong Kong. If acceptable, it signifies a further step toward universal acceptability in the teaching of introductory accounting. Universal acceptability can be inferred if similar surveys showing acceptability are conducted in a few additional countries or localities in the Pacific Rim as a future research project. Specific delivery practice can then be developed from this framework and tested for effectiveness in the classroom.

### **The Initiatives of the Accounting Education Change Commission (AECC) as a Basis for Teaching Accounting**

The AECC initiatives are widely accepted and promoted by accounting academics in several English-speaking countries with respect to curriculum and pedagogical considerations in the teaching of accounting courses, including introductory accounting. With the exception of Australia/New Zealand which are located in the Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. and the U.K. are both in the western hemisphere. The following from literature reviews describe the wide acceptance of AECC initiatives in these English-speaking countries.

#### ***The United States***

AECC was formed in the U.S. in 1989 through the American Accounting Association (AAA) representing the academics and the then big-8 accounting firms. Its initiatives led to the implementation of the 150-semester hour requirement by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA). In addition, a large volume of articles from a number of English-speaking countries cited the use of AECC initiatives and quoting U.S. authors such as Albrecht and Sack (2001).

While these initiatives are applicable to the teaching of all accounting courses, they should particularly be considered at the introductory level to orient students to the proper way of learning from the very start.

Problems with accounting education in the U.S. did not happen just recently. Nelson (1995) reported that the origins of calls for broader and more liberal accounting education in the U.S. could be traced to the turn of the 20th century. Leaders of the early accounting profession, represented largely by the major accounting firms, believed that accountants should be trained to think analytically and critically. However, accounting programs through the years have primarily focused on technical training and CPA (Certified Public Accountants) examination preparation, ignoring the broad, liberal education that was promoted by the founding practitioners who sponsored the first university schools of business. The following historical account of calls for change in accounting education leads to the formation of the AECC and its initiatives, the latter being the key component of the framework proposed in this article.

D. Z. Williams (1993) reported that U.S. colleges and universities were not preparing students adequately for a career in accounting. The problem became particularly acute as a result of globalization and technological advancement that the profession faced. D. Z. Williams indicated that the practice of accounting became a complex matter in all segments of business with the scope of accounting broadening in all types of organizations and standards in accounting proliferating. Greater accountability became necessary as a result of the failures of a number of major organizations. The need for changes in accounting education became imminent. AECC was created to remedy the perceived deficiencies in accounting education. Numerous authors had written on AECC and its activities, for example, Larkin and Sherman (1992) on AECC attempt to narrow the gap between what was taught in the classroom and what newly graduated accountants needed to know for practicing; Poe and Bushong (1991) on AECC attempt to forge a consensus on the problem with accounting education then and how their suggested educational process could meet the future needs of the

profession; Drews-Bryan and Davis (1994) on AECC's leading the way in developing goals and objectives for professional accounting; Hanno and Turner (1996) on AECC's innovations. Nevertheless, none had provided a detailed summary of the initiatives the way that D. Z. Williams had presented.

D. Z. Williams (1993) reported the key features of AECC initiatives as follows:

1. Emphasizing a broad-based, general education rather than technical knowledge — AECC believed that general education courses were better suited than technical ones in the nurturing of generic skills that were lacking among accounting graduates.
2. Integrating all aspects of the accounting discipline throughout the curriculum to more accurately reflect practice — Real-world accounting problems are multi-disciplinary rather than dealing with one single accounting sub-discipline at a time.
3. Avoiding the one-right-answer syndrome by reflecting real-world problem solving — There is more than one answer to most real-world accounting problems.
4. Focusing on learning how to learn — This focuses on the identification of problems and alternative courses of action and selecting an optimal solution. It also steers students away from rote memory and help them concentrate on the “whys” rather than “hows.”
5. De-emphasizing the uniform CPA examination in shaping accounting courses — Education is for acquiring knowledge and skills and not solely for the purpose of writing examinations.
6. Developing students' communication and interpersonal skills — These skills are important for accountants in cross-selling the services of other departments but in many cases are lacking among accounting graduates.
7. Ensuring that students are active participants in the learning process — Active participation in learning through case discussions and so on will help to nurture many of the required generic skills,

(e.g., communication, interpersonal, team-building, leadership, language, problem-solving, etc.).

8. Integrating the latest technology in the curriculum — Although accountants are not expected to possess highly technical skills of computing, they need to have an understanding of the latest technology and its application in order to interact effectively with systems and programming people.

J. R. Williams (2000) and French and Coppage (2000) all described curriculum-related and teaching approach-related challenges covered in AECC initiatives while Burnett (2003) identified four top-rated professional skills essential for accounting graduates, also suggested by AECC.

### ***The United Kingdom***

As in the U.S., only a minority of qualified accountants holds relevant degrees (related to accounting or finance). Gray and Collison (2002) indicated that the only way that accounting could remain a profession, serve the public interest and respond to the exigencies of sustainability was through a major revision of accounting degrees and a relevant graduate-only profession. This latter view of a relevant degree requirement was not supported by a majority of individuals, particularly those in England and Wales as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) had only 17% of total student entry having relevant degrees (Dewing & Russell, 1998). However, in most European countries, the idea of accountants not possessing an accounting degree was almost unthinkable. Gray and Collison felt that a profession with no real education as opposed to training in the subject matter of its profession *was unsuitable for a professional*. As in the case of the U.S., recruiters in the U.K. viewed social skills far more important than accounting skills, favored critical thinking and broad education. Quoting Zeff (1989), Gray and Collison indicated that too much emphasis has been placed on rote and shallow learning. In

addition, there were some pedagogical concerns in terms of emphasis on what was taught and over how long rather than the manner in which it was taught.

Compliance work not only in the U.K., but in the U.S. and Australia as well, will form a diminished portion of accounting firms' revenues with the main growth area being business advisory services (Howieson, 2003). Accountants assume the role of knowledge workers, requiring the generic skills as mentioned by AECC (skills in analysis, innovative problem solving, communication, and client relations). Accounting practices need to be more interdisciplinary and analytical in their orientation. Howieson (2003) endorsed the six problems with the current accounting education cited by Albrecht and Sack (2000) in the U.S. These problems are related to (a) course content and curricula, (b) pedagogy, (c) skill development, (d) technology, (e) faculty development and reward system, and (f) strategic direction. With the exception of (e), the remaining five problems can all be remedied by adopting the AECC initiatives described in the previous section under "The United States." He also acknowledged the types of barriers to change in accounting education similar to those cited by Nelson (1995) in the U.S.

Dewing and Russell (1998) reported on what Zeff (1989) identified as three disturbing U.K. developments signaling that the U.K. might follow the same accounting education and research path existing in the U.S. The first two concerns are in contrast with the first AECC initiative of emphasizing a broad-based, general education. These concerns are:

- Burgeoning professional announcements becoming exercises in indoctrination *without the academic component*, leading to a narrowing of accounting education.
- Increasing degree of rigor with which professional accreditation standards are enforced, placing greater emphasis on the hard core of recommended practice, with less focus on the broader issues that can make accounting a field of liberal learning.

- Increasing use of formal empiricism and mathematical model-building combined with the increase in doctoral programs, leading to method-driven rather than problem-driven accounting research.

As these developments were similar to what the U.S. experienced, AECC initiatives would be the direction to take for successful accounting education change. This view can be echoed by several U.K. academics (e.g., Hill & Milner, 2005), citing various U.S. inadequacies in accounting education where AECC initiatives were viewed as remedies. Such inadequacies may also be the case in the U.K. For example, Hill and Milner (2005) indicated the following:

- Quoting Albrecht and Sack (2000), Hill and Milner endorsed the emphasizing of generic skills development and a broader, less structured, rather than the subject-specific and technical contents of the accounting curriculum, placing more weight on pedagogical priorities and focusing on skills development rather than content. Lack of generic skills in accountants was also common in the U.K.
- Quoting Nelson (1995) that the U.S. CPA examination failed to test critical thinking, analysis, synthesis and professional judgment, Hill and Milner felt that a parallel situation in the U.K. could be seen over the past two decades and that AECC in the U.S. was charged with the key objective to provide leadership in changing accounting education. AECC initiatives could be adopted similarly in the U.K. to address this need.

Although the question type of the current AICPA examination differs from that of fifteen years ago, it is still predominantly multiple-choice in nature, with some short-answer narrative questions. The multiple-choice questions now require more thinking and analysis than they used to be, but do not test the candidates' writing skills, with the possibility of earning marks through guesswork.



### ***Australia/New Zealand***

The Task Force for Accounting Education in Australia was commissioned by the two major Australian accounting bodies and issued its report in 1988 with two relevant recommendations as follows:

- Higher education institutions should progressively alter the required content of their undergraduate degrees to permit greater flexibility and facilitate later specialization.
- The duration of basic accounting studies should be the equivalent of four years' study, comprising three years of full-time undergraduate study with the fourth year as a post-graduate program, probably on a part-time basis (Tippett, 1992).

*The Report of the Review of the Accounting Discipline in Higher Education* (R. L. Mathews, 1990), commissioned by the Australian government, had 30 conclusions of which four are relevant to accounting education:

- The existing accounting undergraduate program failed in its attempt to achieve three educational objectives within a three-year degree — to provide a broad-based general education, to provide a specialized professional education to meet membership requirements of the accounting profession, and to prepare students for a career in business management.
- Courses in accounting need to become more conceptual and less procedural, while theoretical and empirical studies need to be better integrated and related to practical experience. Computing needs to become an integral part of accounting courses and communication skills need to be highly developed.
- There is scope for considerable improvement in the teaching of accounting by making courses less routinely predictable and boring to the very able students, by adopting innovatory teaching methods, and by using the classroom more effectively to stimulate ideas and discussion.

- Except for a few individuals in a small number of institutions who have achieved high international standing, the research performance of the accounting discipline is weak.

The aforementioned pointed to both the profession and the government leaning toward AECC initiatives in shaping university accounting programs. Furthermore, the stretch from a three-year to a four-year program of study paralleled the increase from 120 to 150 semester hours of college education required by the AICPA for the year 2000.

Cable, Dale, and Day (2007) attempted to bridge the gap between academic study in accounting and a career in professional practice, and concluded the gap being graduates' lack of communication and professional skills. Citing Bath et al. (2004) and de la Harpe et al. (2000), the authors recommended the integration of skill development with the discipline content, not by adding on but by embedding generic skills in the program content. Wolnizer (2004) claimed that practitioners in Australia/New Zealand were looking for graduates who knew the broader political, social and economic contexts within which business took place, and recognized that communications, analytical and problem-solving skills were best developed through a broad-based education. They further indicated that the professional body of CPA (Australia) wanted to attract double-degree and double-major students who may have reduced choice within the business component, allowing these students to defer studies in tax and auditing to the postgraduate professional education CPA program, and thus increasing the options for them in their undergraduate degree.

M. R. Mathews concurred with the aforementioned on several aspects. Firstly, M. R. Mathews (2001a, 2001b) felt that in English-speaking countries including Australia/New Zealand, there was a lack of emphasis placed on accounting theory, values and ethical education, and broadening studies. Secondly, in a separate publication, M. R. Mathews (1994) noted that the effects of AECC had already been noted in Australia and New Zealand. In the former, the views of AECC

supported local opinion which suggested that accounting education had become too technically focused with insufficient opportunities for elective studies. Proposals to include additional non-accounting, non-business studies were likely to lead to an extension of the overall academic experience by one year, to a total of four years. In the latter, the New Zealand Society of Accountants was changing from requiring an emphasis on accounting and business, which reduced the elective component, to a four-year program with heavy emphasis on elective study in the first two years. On the other hand, AECC would be less influential where there is a tradition of recruiting graduates from other disciplines and giving them post-graduate professional training as in the U.K. The message that AECC would give under these circumstances would be the importance of teaching and the need to produce independent learners with good communication and interpersonal skills. Thirdly, Carr and Mathews (2004) strongly felt the pressure for accounting education change from the work of Albrecht and Sack (2000). The latter contended that a narrow but deep education was obsolete and a broad-based one should be implemented. AECC felt that this broad-based education should not be selected at random, but structured yet not overly restrictive. These concerns were identified in several British Commonwealth countries. In Australia, Chambers (1992) embraced the issue of having more breadth in accounting education programs (cited in Carr & Mathews, 2004). More students took the MBA degree rather than the MAcc degree; this showed that the broad-based education was preferred (M. R. Mathews, 2001a, 2001b). The absence of courses in accounting theory and the exclusion of non-financial data led to the results of narrow thinking.

Lastly, in yet another publication and under the same influence of Albrecht and Sack (2000), M. R. Mathews (2001a, 2001b) indicated that taxation and attestation aspects of accounting would become less important and that information systems and finance would be more important in the future.

Changes that took place or proposed in Australia/New Zealand included the following:

- ASA (now CPA Australia) adopted degree-level entry in 1965 followed by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Australia (ICAA) some years later, signaling the end of part-time technical training. Links with universities were gradually developed in Australia (Marsh & Henning, 1987). This change took place more than two decades before AECC initiatives were developed and represented an important turning point toward academic training in accounting from technical on-the-job training.
- In 1992, a new structure requiring a four-year program and a significant liberal studies component was introduced (Carr & Mathews, 2004).
- Massey University's (in New Zealand) new four-year accounting program emphasized the ability to think creatively and laterally, to integrate ideas from multiple disciplines, and to have an accounting program sufficiently flexible to adapt to changes in business, academic and accounting environments (Carr & Mathews, 2004).

The above demonstrated the importance of having degree-level entry, as only this would enable accountants to have a broad-based general education suitable for the nurturing of the required generic competencies.

Henderson (2001) highly recommended the U.S. approach: (a) a four-year undergraduate pre-accounting degree; (b) the first year devoting to humanities, social sciences or physical sciences; (c) the remaining three years devoting to general business studies and broad-based accounting; (d) skill-based accounting covered in detail in the professional examinations. However, no university should change alone. He felt that another approach would be to move all accounting studies into a graduate school after a general liberal arts degree. This coincided with M. R. Mathews (2001a, 2001b) who promoted the graduate-entry conversion program in Australia/New Zealand, whereby non-accounting graduates, after three years of undergraduate studies, can take a program that would enable them to undertake the professional accounting studies normally entered after three years of undergraduate

studies by the accounting graduate, thus having greater maturity and experience, bringing a broader knowledge and worldview to the profession. However, conversion courses are seldom offered in this locality. He suggested a program mix of accounting 30–40%, business non-accounting 30–40% and liberal studies 20–30% to be set by professional bodies regardless of path.

From the aforementioned, it is abundantly apparent that the locality of Australia/New Zealand follows the U.S. footsteps and in particular, the AECC initiatives.

One can readily see that up to this point, a lengthy literature review focusing on AECC initiatives has been provided. As pointed out earlier under the “Introduction” section, concepts contributing to a framework for teaching accounting are scattered through a large volume of accounting literature and that faculty members teaching introductory accounting may not have the time or interest in reviewing this volume of literature to come up with their own framework. It was also pointed out that with the exception of the first AECC initiative about having a broad-based education being curriculum-related, the other seven are all pedagogically related. In the next section, an analysis will be provided about the suitability of each of these seven initiatives for inclusion in the framework. Other factors relevant to the teaching of introductory accounting aside from the AECC initiatives will also be included in this framework.

It appears that a high volume of literature on AECC in the 1990s was cited, along with those relating to the new millennium. Citing historical information before the new millennium on these initiatives merely reinforces the importance of these initiatives as components of the framework. Furthermore, the volume of literature available on U.S. accounting education reform in the new millennium is relatively small in comparison with those that were available from the date the AECC initiatives were proposed through the 1990s as the 150-semester hour requirement was implemented by the majority of the states in 2000. However, it would be informative to briefly summarize a few of these.

Notably, much of the accounting education literature in the new millennium comes in the form of repeating the spirit of AECC requirements. For example, Albrecht and Sack (2001) reported on the severity of the problems facing accounting education as a result of changes in business from globalization, technology and investor power in the capital markets; and the findings of a study sponsored by the AAA, the AICPA, the Institute of Management Accountants (IMA) and the then big-5. J. R. Williams (2000) and French and Coppage (2000) described the challenges facing accounting education and the profession, most of which were curriculum-related and teaching approach-related and were covered in AECC initiatives. Burnett (2003) identified four top-rated professional skills essential for accounting graduates, being analytical/critical thinking, written communication, oral communication, and decision-making. Again, these were suggested by AECC. Myers (2005) described practitioners' complaint about university accounting curricula that drilled students in rote technical memorization at the expense of the broader business, communication and analytical skills they needed in a real world. These were exactly why AECC was formed. Even in the new millennium, such criticisms were still easy to find. However, some academics and practitioners noticed that the situation has improved, possibly as a result of the 150-semester hour requirement. Mohamed and Lashine (2003) found the same problems of globalization and technology mentioned by Albrecht and Sack (2001) and suggested that the competency levels of accountants should be improved.

### **Teaching of Introductory Accounting**

As indicated earlier, AECC initiatives are applicable to the first year's introductory accounting. With the exception of the first initiative of emphasizing a broad-based, general education which is curriculum-related, the remaining ones are all related to pedagogical considerations. Since introductory accounting is the only accounting course offered in the first year, courses in languages, information technology, humanities and social sciences can be offered either as required or elective courses

in the first year to achieve a broad-based education. While integration with other accounting sub-disciplines would not be feasible in the first year, integration with non-accounting courses gives students even a broader perspective (see Appendix C for the program structure of accounting of Hong Kong Shue Yan University; this program is typical for any accounting program in Hong Kong). For example, in the discussion of accelerated methods of depreciation, time value of money from the quantitative methods course and utility value from the economics course can be brought into the picture. Extensive use of end-of-chapter mini-cases in small-group discussions and the use of group project presentations followed by questions from other small groups in the first year will not only avoid the one-right-answer syndrome by reflecting real-world problem-solving, but also ensure that students are active participants in the learning process, thus enhancing their communication, team-building and leadership skills. The integrated case studies would also steer students away from rote memory — the lowest form of learning, and help them to learn how to learn in identifying real-world problems and coming up with alternative solutions. A canned accounting package can also be introduced into the introductory accounting course once the students have grasped the procedural aspects of the accounting cycle.

Lee and Bisman (2006) in Australia provided an example of how introductory accounting should be taught under AECC and how it was taught from a survey of universities. They found that for introductory accounting, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies across new and old universities, regional and metropolitan universities were generally comparable. They felt that introductory accounting should be taught on a user basis, emphasizing decision-making. However, for accounting majors, a balance with technical aspects should be adopted. It was also found that among the universities surveyed, few subject outlines of introductory accounting made specific mention of developing students' generic skills. There had been a misalignment between learning objectives and assessment which needed to be redressed. Although the survey showed that introductory accounting generally had

a balanced perspective between technical and user aspects, a preparer's focus was more prevalent. Teaching methods were largely conventional, although application of e-learning and online resources was apparent in introductory accounting. Development of teamwork and leadership skills in introductory accounting subjects appeared to be meager.

The teaching of introductory accounting presents a great challenge because a mix of instructional approaches must be used to balance the non-technical skills needed by successful professional accountants with the basic technical accounting skills required, and in serving both non-accounting majors (non-technical, user's approach) and accounting majors (an appropriate blend of both).

Courteau and Rennie (1997) were of the opinion that the primary objective of the first course in accounting was to "learn about accounting as an information development and communication function that supports economic decision-making" in accordance with AECC *Position Statement Number Two* (AAA, 1992). Thus, both the relevance of accounting information to decision-making as well as its preparation must be focused. Quoting Scott and Tiessen (1994), Courteau and Rennie felt that the first accounting course should offer a combination of a structured accounting course as involving sequential introduction of more and more difficult topics with the building of procedural and automatic skills and an unstructured accounting course in developing students' meta-cognitive skills by encouraging different points of view and group discussion. While no optimal mix of structured and unstructured aspects has ever been determined, they found that introductory accounting courses were mostly highly structured and procedural and not in accordance with AECC spirit.

Quoting Friedlan (1995), Courteau and Rennie (1997) found that students who took a less structured and less technical introductory accounting course were more realistic of the skills and abilities required by accounting professionals. Quoting Sundem (1994), they suggested that the first accounting course should not teach students the mechanics of accounting, but to provide an introduction to what accounting was all



about, bearing in mind that the practice of accounting required a certain level of technical accounting knowledge.

Another issue was that accounting educators must serve the needs of both accounting majors and non-accounting majors with different objectives of learning. In the view of Courteau and Rennie (1997), Gibbons (1995) presented a balanced and an integrated view of financial accounting, aiming at both accounting majors and non-majors.

Earlier, Smigla (1995) reported that many colleges and universities in the U.S. adopted the user's approach in teaching introductory accounting by either: (a) ignoring the procedural aspects of accounting and focusing solely on accounting terminology and the analysis and interpretation of accounting data, or (b) placing less emphasis on detailed preparation functions, thus allowing more time to analyze and interpret accounting information. Many employers and educators felt that the traditional approach did not provide students with the necessary skills. Although students preferred the user's approach as opposed to the traditional approach, the higher levels of learning under the user's approach caused their grades to be slightly lower. With weaker technical skills, the approach would also necessitate students entering intermediate accounting to take makeup classes (Courteau & Rennie, 1997).

From the aforementioned, it becomes apparent that a framework can be drawn up in the teaching of introductory accounting at this stage. The eleven components comprising the framework are analyzed below. Seven of these are AECC initiatives that are pedagogically related.

### ***AECC Initiatives That Are Pedagogically Related***

1. Integrating all aspects of the accounting sub-disciplines — This will take place in the form of integrating with related courses such as quantitative methods as the two semester courses in introductory accounting are the only accounting course in the first year (see Appendix C as a typical example). However, students at this level

need to grasp the integration concept and understand that real-world accounting problems are multi-disciplinary in nature.

2. Avoiding the one-right-answer syndrome — This component is in line with component 1 above in that there is often more than one right answer to a real-world accounting problem. Accounting instructors in the first year often use multiple-choice questions from test banks for examination purpose. Instead, more cases should be adapted for examinations to suit the purposes of components 1 and 2.
3. Focusing on learning how to learn — This steers students away from rote memory to concentrate on the “whys” rather than “hows”. Students in the first year often drill on certain exercises to the point of memorizing the procedural aspects without understanding the logic behind what they are doing. When the format of the same question changes, they could get completely lost. Hence, instructors should ask for reasoning during class, such as which of the following two methods is better and why: (a) percentage of net credit sales or aging method for uncollectible accounts, or (b) straight-line or effective interest method for amortizing bond discounts and premiums.
4. De-emphasizing the uniform CPA examination in shaping accounting courses — Although some accounting bodies may have doubts as to whether this should be adopted, education is for acquiring knowledge and not solely for writing examinations. The latter, although giving an adequate coverage of the course syllabus, is still very narrow in scope and does not give learners the broad perspectives that are required. Course outlines of first-year accounting courses should include not only the main textbook, but also supplementary readings and relevant journal articles.
5. Developing students’ communication and interpersonal skills — These skills are a must for accounting firms nowadays in cross-selling the services of other departments but in many cases are lacking among accounting graduates. The skills are best nurtured when young through the influence of parental upbringing

and peer group interactions as well as through the school system. However, universities have the responsibility to provide remedies upon student entry by using case discussions in small groups, group projects and group presentation, thus giving students the opportunity to further nurture these skills.

6. Ensuring that students are active participants in the learning process — Instructors often use one-way communication approach in lecturing to first-year accounting students as it is simpler to give such lectures than to engage students in academic and conceptual discussions and debate. However, this would not nurture students' communication, interpersonal, team-building and leadership skills.
7. Integrating the latest technology in the curriculum — As technology is often used in the delivery of accounting courses, first-year accounting students should have that exposure from the very beginning. This is opportune, as once they grasp the technical aspects of the accounting cycle (i.e., from the preparation of journal entries to the financial statements), a Simply Accounting general ledger package can be made available to them as an introduction to computerized accounting. This paves the way for more exposure to sophisticated systems in more advanced-level accounting courses.

### ***Other Teaching Approaches Relevant to First-year Accounting***

1. Using deep and elaborative processing strategies — The link between student learning styles, teaching and assessment strategies and desired learning outcomes are of vital importance. Meaningful learning and generic skills development are associated with deep and elaborative processing strategies rather than pre-existing level of ability (Schmeck, 1983). This will lead to conclusion-oriented outcomes instead of description-oriented outcomes. Hence, Boyce, Williams, Kelly, and Yee (2001) suggested that accounting educators must inculcate deep learning approaches and conclusion-oriented outcomes in their students by using unstructured and ambiguous case studies, thus encouraging active

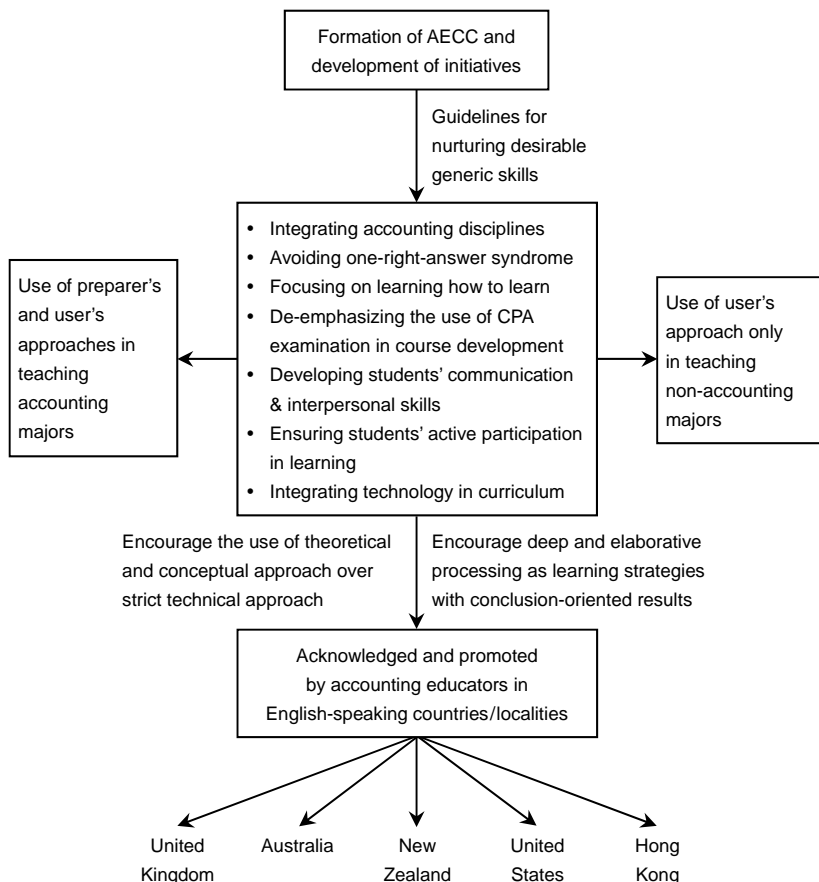
participation, moving from procedures and practice to concepts and issues and more student-directed learning activities. The Schmeck (1983) concept thus supports the AECC initiatives and forms part of the framework.

2. Using theoretical and conceptual approach over the strict technical approach — Courteau and Rennie (1997), quoting Scott and Tiessen (1994), felt that the first accounting course should offer a combination of a structured accounting course and an unstructured one in developing students' meta-cognitive skills by encouraging different views and group discussion. Quoting Friedlan (1995), Courteau and Rennie found that students who took a less structured and less technical introductory accounting course were more realistic of the skills and abilities required by accounting professionals. However, Courteau and Rennie bore in mind that the practice of accounting requires a certain level of technical aspects. This approach also supports AECC initiatives and would appeal to bright students who would turn away from the strictly procedural approach.

### ***Teaching Approaches Geared to Students From Different Programs***

1. Using an appropriate blend of preparer's and user's approach in teaching the course to accounting majors — As pointed out earlier, Lee and Bisman (2006) advocated the use of a balanced approach (i.e., using both the user's approach and the preparer's approach in teaching introductory accounting). The user's approach is encouraged for all students, but for accounting graduates, technical knowledge needs to be included as well.
2. Use of user's approach to teach introductory accounting to a separate class of non-accounting majors — Lee and Bisman (2006) suggested the use of the user's approach for non-accounting students in a separate class. The idea is to focus on the interpretation of financial statements for decision-making. At this

**Figure 1: Framework for Teaching Introductory Accounting**



moment, only one university in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Shue Yan University) separates accounting majors from non-accounting ones.

Figure 1 presents the framework for the teaching of introductory accounting and the inter-relationship among components.

### **Importance of Hong Kong in Representing the Eastern Hemisphere**

Hong Kong is situated in another part of the world (i.e., in the

Asia-Pacific region) and is populated by both Asians and Caucasians alike. As it is one of the world's major financial centers with a large securities exchange, great emphasis is placed on accounting standards, financial reporting, corporate governance, and hence the importance of accounting education.

Since January 2005, Hong Kong and China's accounting and auditing standards have converged with international accounting and auditing standards. Thus the reporting standards are consistent with all developed countries in the West that chose to converge. With only a very few exceptions, accounting faculty among degree-granting universities in Hong Kong all hold doctorates from North American universities.

This, however, does not affect the validity of the survey, as values and culture of different localities have little impact on accounting academics' acceptance of the framework. This is because even in the U.S., there is a minority that questioned whether AECC initiatives should be adopted. While there is worldwide support for the AECC initiatives, M. R. Mathews (1994) examined the work of AECC from 1989 to 1992 and found that a very small number of academics (e.g., Barefield, 1991, cited in M. R. Mathews, 1994; Poe & Bushong, 1991) had negative views toward AECC initiatives. They alleged that AECC only served the needs of public practitioners, neglecting other branches of accounting, and that AECC did not relate to all of the academic community. Similar questions were raised by Davis and Sherman (1996). On the other hand, M. R. Mathews (1993), in surveying the chairpersons of Schools or Departments of Accounting, found a very high support for the work of AECC. This support extended to all of the positions adopted in AECC. Since AECC was formed in 1989 and the results of its work were taken into consideration in the implementation of the 150-semester hour requirement by AICPA in 2000, academics in general in the later years would not find it useful to repeatedly probe into its merit.

Most Hong Kong universities work with universities in the Chinese mainland in providing accounting and business education to mainland

students. These types of education are of very high demand in China as a result of globalization and its entry into the World Trade Organization. All universities are vying for a share of the market by having some form of collaboration with mainland universities. An example would be the United International College in Zhuhai, China, a joint venture of the Hong Kong Baptist University and Beijing Normal University.

The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants (HKICPA) is an internationally known professional accounting body. It sets the related accounting, auditing and ethical standards in Hong Kong and statutorily regulates the profession. HKICPA is responsible for licensing practicing accountants and has a Qualification Programme (QP) whereby candidates completing the QP and passing a Final Professional Examination are eligible for membership in HKICPA upon completion of a prescribed Practical Experience Framework. The accounting bachelor degrees of all nine universities in Hong Kong and Chu Hai College of Higher Education have been accredited by HKICPA and accounting degree graduates of these institutions are eligible for direct entry into the QP.

HKICPA has made various arrangements with top professional accounting bodies worldwide. These include: (a) Membership and Co-operation Agreement (MCA) with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales, where members of either bodies can apply for membership directly; (b) Reciprocal Membership Agreement (RMA) with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of seven countries (Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Zimbabwe), where members of these seven institutes will have to pass aptitude tests in Hong Kong law and tax to obtain membership; (c) Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) with the Certified Practicing Accountants of Australia; (d) Mutual Examination Paper Exemption (MEPE) with the China Institute of Certified Public Accountants (CICPA) and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants of the U.K., and (e) Agreement for Recognition Arrangement (ARA) with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants of the U.K. In addition, HKICPA set up a representative's office in Beijing in early 2007 and

one of its mandates is to recruit interested CICPA members in completing the QP for HKICPA membership.

Hong Kong is chosen for these cooperation arrangements because of:

- its prominence in accounting education and its impact on accounting education in China;
- its international trade and its reputation as an international financial center;
- having a large securities exchange and putting emphasis on financial reporting and accounting standards;
- having an internationally reputable professional accounting body;
- having major accounting employers such as the big-4 accounting firms operating in the locality.

### **Institutional Participants in the Survey**

There are ten degree-granting institutions in Hong Kong, nine of which were surveyed. The nine institutions are: The University of Hong Kong (HKU), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University, The Open University of Hong Kong, and Chu Hai College of Higher Education. The responses from each of the nine institutions were coordinated by the Head of the Department of Accounting. Non-degree granting institutions were not chosen as recipients of the questionnaire, as both the HKICPA and AICPA require their membership to be university graduates in accounting. The author's home university was excluded from this survey for two distinctive reasons:

- The author published an article entitled "Accounting Education Reforms in the United States: A Case of Hong Kong Implementation" in the summer of 2006 in the *Educational Research Journal*. The implementation case cited was the author's



home university. Prior to the completion of the said article, accounting faculty members' views were solicited, indicating unanimous support for such a reform. In fact, this university's accounting degree program completely conforms with AECC initiatives as evidenced in the said article.

- It is conceivable that any formal survey conducted by the author at his home university could be biased toward the assumptions in this article as the author is a full professor and head of the department of accounting at his home university. To avoid possible subjective elements, it is excluded from this survey.

## **Research Method**

There is practically no literature available on the acknowledgment and adoption of AECC initiatives in Hong Kong aside from the two articles by Chau and Chan (2001) and by Chen (2006). Chau and Chan (2001) identified two dominant factors that will likely influence accounting education in Hong Kong beyond the 1997 handover. These are: (a) the progress of accounting reforms in China, and (b) Hong Kong's continual ability to lend its experience to China in terms of developing a modern accounting framework. As members of the accounting faculty at PolyU reported that their institution recognized the importance of AECC initiatives, PolyU's emphasis was on preparing graduates for a life-long career in accounting in which critical thinking skills and understanding of business are necessary and essential. Their program emphasized the China factor, international knowledge of business, management and communication skills, awareness of ethical issues, and a basic knowledge of information technology and its application to the accounting discipline. Chen (2006) provided evidence on how the first private university in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, successfully implemented all eight AECC initiatives in their 4-year honors degree program in accounting. None of these publications touches on how AECC initiatives can be applied to the teaching of introductory accounting or the acceptance of an AECC-driven

framework for teaching the course. Hence, the survey conducted is important.

### *Survey Method*

This survey involved the equivalent participation of all full-time accounting faculty members (228 in total) in the nine degree-granting institutions in Hong Kong. The average number of full-time accounting faculty member was 25 at each institution with 13 in the case of Lingnan University and 52 in the case of PolyU (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of Full-time Faculty Members in Accounting at Each Institution (2009)**

Institution	Number
The University of Hong Kong	21
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	29
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	18
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	52
City University of Hong Kong	36
Hong Kong Baptist University	17
Lingnan University	13
The Open University of Hong Kong	20
Chu Hai College of Higher Education	22
Total	228
Average	25

Source: From respondents and the Website of each institution.

The Head of the Department of Accounting coordinated the input from his or her department by holding a meeting with departmental colleagues to discuss the ratings of each item. In-depth interviews were conducted with each of the heads representing their respective departments, explaining the philosophy behind the ratings. To ensure that sufficient time was devoted to the completion of the questionnaire, only ten questions were included. These questions focused on AECC initiatives and pedagogical considerations for teaching introductory accounting and were relevant to the framework developed from the

literature reviews of English-speaking countries. A separate sub-section of this article explained the development of the ten questions.

With only nine responses representing the collective views of all full-time accounting faculty members in Hong Kong, the nature of this study was a qualitative one and not a quantitative one. The essence was that with only nine institutions in the population, the sample size was too small to apply any meaningful statistics such as mean score and so on. Instead, the distribution of each item was observed and follow-up interviews were conducted with each respondent to learn why they agreed or disagreed with each item. The survey questionnaire served as an incentive for follow-up interviews. Hence, the results of this study would be expressed in words rather than in numbers, thus operating within Krathwohl's (1993, p. 740) definition of qualitative research.

### **Argument for this survey method**

There is a reason for involving the department head to coordinate all input. Although curriculum changes and pedagogical approaches are faculty-driven, it has to be endorsed successively by the program committee, the department head, the quality assurance committee and academic board prior to implementation. The department head at each institution is, in most cases, one of the most senior faculty members within the academic department in terms of academic rank. Being in an administrative role, the department head not only understands what is administratively feasible for implementation, but also has the authority to endorse any required curriculum or pedagogical changes via his or her influence with the program committee in recommending such changes to the academic board or senate for approval. Hence, their ratings not only show their preferences, but also exhibit the implementation viability at each institution. The latter is the key for sending questionnaires to the department head rather than all individual accounting academics. In addition, with this method, the author can make sure that he will receive equal representation from all institutions; otherwise, some institutions may have only a few people responding or

not responding at all. Consensus is also assured at each institution, as only one set of response will be forwarded to the researcher from each institution. A consolidated completed questionnaire showing the distribution of ratings for the nine respondents is shown in Appendix A.

### ***Data Collection***

A 5-point Likert scale (from strongly disagree to strongly agree) was used. The distribution of ratings of each item was reviewed individually and on a consolidated basis. Follow-up interviews with department heads were conducted to clarify the logic behind the ratings, particularly if they disagreed or were neutral on certain items. Respondents agreed (rating of “4” or “5”) to questions 1(i), 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. For the remaining questions, the majority (5 respondents or above) agreed with very few indicating disagreement or neutrality. The reasons are discussed in the section “Findings and Analysis.”

### **Argument for using this data collection method**

The Likert scale is chosen for the survey questionnaire as it is relatively easy to use and facilitates the comparison of individual score with a distribution of scores from a well-defined sample group. In addition to collecting the perceived correct answer of respondents, their degrees of preference are also shown.

The reliability of a measure refers to its ability to produce similar results under repeated trials and the validity refers to whether what is measured is what the researcher intends to find. As this survey involves the equivalent of the entire accounting faculty population in Hong Kong (all nine institutions) along with follow-up interviews with department heads clarifying the logic behind each rating, there should be no problems with validity. Accounting education preferences cannot be easily observed and respondents do involve reactions of others when giving the rating. However, as all respondents are prominent academics in Hong Kong, it is strongly believed that their ratings for each item will reflect what they truly believe in and that where in doubt, a rating of “3”

will be given, indicating neither agreeing nor disagreeing. Furthermore, the content of the questions do not carry any political flavor.

### ***Interview Techniques***

Interviews were conducted by phone in a relaxed atmosphere when the respondents had time. Open questions were asked. Respondents giving a rating of “4” or “5” to an item were asked why they agreed. The focus was on items with a rating of “1”, “2” or “3” (signifying disagreement or neutrality) and the reasons behind the rating.

The respondents from the institutions did not request for confidentiality. As such, the professional perceptions shared by the respondents during follow-up in-depth interviews were genuine and contributed immensely to the validity of this qualitative research. In addition, the researcher was cautious of not initiating any leading questions or allowing his preconceptions to influence the responses. Accounting academics at different institutions may rate certain items differently, depending on what their respective institutions focus on. The interviews should reveal whether each institution’s emphasis reflects the individual respondent’s view.

### ***Questionnaire Development***

All ten questions in the questionnaire (Appendix A) relate to the components of the framework as shown in Figure 1. Eight of the ten questions (questions 2 to 9) relate to the eight AECC initiatives as the focus has been on using these initiatives as a basis for teaching introductory accounting. Although question 2 is not pedagogically related and deals with a broad-based general education, its inclusion is to find out whether respondents in Hong Kong are supportive of the entire spectrum of AECC initiatives.

Question 1 concerns how introductory accounting should be taught. The literature support was described in previous sections. Those favoring 1(i) and 1(ii) would likely use the user’s approach in teaching

the course while those favoring 1(iii) would favor the preparer's approach. Most respondents favored all as they had to use a blend approach with a mixture of accounting and non-accounting students in their classes. Also cited in earlier sections was the use of conceptual and theoretical approach over procedural approach. This is reflected in question 10.

What was not included in the questionnaire but included in the framework was Schmeck's (1983) concept of using deep and elaborative processing as learning strategies for conclusion-oriented results. As all respondents are accounting professors, it is highly unlikely that they would be versed in a purely educational concept that is applicable across all disciplines.

## **Findings and Analysis**

The completed survey and subsequent interviews indicate that accounting academics in Hong Kong acknowledge the merit of AECC initiatives and support its application in the teaching of introductory accounting. The only minor exceptions come from CUHK where they were unable to support the integration of all aspects of the accounting sub-disciplines due to the difficulty in finding faculty capable of doing this. CUHK also did not support the de-emphasizing of public CPA examinations in shaping accounting courses as they were referring to the HKICPA examinations rather than the AICPA examinations — the former being case-related and application-based whereas the latter being primarily objective and in multiple-choice format. The institutions that were neutral to questions 3 and 4 acknowledged the principles behind the two initiatives, but were unsure of what others were thinking.

From the follow-up interviews and the rating distributions of question 1(i), 1(ii) and 1(iii), most universities in Hong Kong felt that the user's approach was the right way to go, but preferred to use the preparer's approach rather than the user's approach in teaching introductory accounting because of having a mixture of accounting and non-accounting students in the same class. For example, the HKU

representative said “we have a lot of science background students in our accounting classes.” This would be similar to the situation in the U.S. (Courteau & Rennie, 1997; Steadman & Green, 1995) and in Australia/New Zealand (Lee & Bisman, 2006) where the user’s approach is encouraged in the teaching of introductory accounting in general, but the preparer’s approach may be resorted to when having a mixture of accounting and non-accounting students in the same class. It was felt that the user’s approach would be more applicable to non-accounting students, while accounting students need to have a better understanding of the technical aspects of accounting. This thought was supported by many accounting academics such as Lee and Bisman (2006). Hence, the aforementioned leads to the conclusion that non-accounting students should be separated from accounting students and not be placed in the same class. The course in introductory accounting can be the same, but taught in different ways. For example, there should be less emphasis on preparing journal entries, ledger accounts and financial statements for non-accounting students, but more emphasis on how the statements can be used. Accounting students should have a balance of both. Although not specifically surveyed, the HKICPA endorses the preparer’s approach as well, but based on a different reason. “We received feedback from practitioners that accounting graduates entering the Qualification Programme are weak with journal entries, etc., signifying the fact that they lack an understanding of the business transactions,” said the HKICPA representative.

In the teaching of introductory accounting and accounting courses in general (question 10), accounting academics in the U.S. promoted the use of “theoretical and conceptual” approach while in practice, most faculty members resorted to using the “procedural” orientation as it is much easier to teach the technical aspects of accounting than to engage students in a conceptual debate (Nelson, 1995; Subotnik, 1987; Zeff, 1989). In Hong Kong, the majority of universities used the procedural approach for the same reason. However, CUHK provided a contrast. “I don’t know what other universities are using, but we prefer the theoretical approach and we only appoint people with PhDs in

accounting from North America at the assistant professor's rank, or above. PhDs from other jurisdictions and local PhDs are excluded. Even accounting PhDs from HKUST (a local university run in an American way) will not be considered," said the CUHK representative (an accounting PhD from the University of British Columbia).

## **Conclusion and Discussion**

In conclusion, AECC initiatives should and can be adopted in Hong Kong in the teaching of introductory accounting, and that introductory accounting classes should best be split between accounting and non-accounting students, thus employing an appropriate blend of the preparer's approach and the user's approach for the former and the user's approach for the latter. The framework described in the section "Teaching of Introductory Accounting" can thus be adopted at Hong Kong universities.

Agreement on AECC initiatives provides evidence that Hong Kong, as an English-speaking locality, is not different from the English-speaking countries discussed earlier. Emphasis is placed on university accounting programs providing a broad-based general education with innovative teaching strategies that nurture the generic skills required of professional accountants. Such acknowledgment in supporting AECC initiatives provides some assurance of the general direction in which university accounting students will be trained. However, as some universities pointed out, faculty members may still resort to lecturing on technical content instead of employing innovative teaching strategies as they are not rewarded for teaching and curriculum development despite their indication of acceptance of AECC initiatives. Until such time when institutions mandate equal emphasis on teaching and research, full implementation of AECC initiatives and the use of theoretical and conceptual approach in teaching introductory accounting can only be left with the individual faculty member's discretion.



## Future Research

With a framework developed for the teaching of introductory accounting, future research could focus on the various teaching approaches that can be used in the nurturing of the specific generic skill that AECC alluded to (e.g., critical thinking skills), and could have these approaches classroom-tested for worldwide adoption. For example, during class, an instructor could: (a) ask students for comparisons and evaluations by comparing various accounting policy choices, commenting on their relative merits, and determining the circumstances under which each method can best be applied; (b) ask students on inferences and applications by giving practical examples of the many concepts learned from the conceptual framework or from generally accepted accounting principles, and creating specific cases in working with deductions and inductions; (c) ask for strategic solutions whereby students must determine how to fend off a takeover after covering the chapter on share capital.

For these guidelines to gain universal acceptance, similar surveys can be conducted in a few additional Pacific Rim countries or localities (e.g., Taiwan, Japan, Singapore). Universal acceptance can be inferred if these places reveal similar acceptance.

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## Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Name of your institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Please tick in the boxes beside each question in accordance with the following ratings: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neither disagree nor agree, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree.

1	2	3	4	5
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1. In the teaching of the introductory accounting course, the emphasis should be:
  - (i) the role of accounting in society and in organizations,
  - (ii) using information for decision-making,
  - (iii) the preparation of journal entries, postings and financial statements.

			4	5
		2	3	4
1	2		3	3

**To what extent do you agree with the following eight AECC (Accounting Education Change Commission) initiatives shown in questions 2 through 9?**

2. Accounting education curriculum should emphasize a conceptual, broad-based, general education.
3. All aspects of the accounting discipline should be integrated throughout the curriculum to more accurately reflect practice.
4. Public CPA examinations should be de-emphasized in shaping accounting courses.
5. It is important to develop accounting students' communication and interpersonal skills.
6. Latest information technology should be integrated throughout the accounting curriculum.
7. Accounting educators must ensure that accounting students are active participants in the learning process.
8. Accounting educators should avoid the one-right-answer syndrome.
9. Accounting students should focus on learning how to learn.
10. Hong Kong accounting educators prefer procedural orientation to theoretical approach in teaching accounting.

			4	5
1		1	3	4
	1	2	4	2
			2	7
			4	5
			2	7
			3	6
			2	7
1		3	3	2

## **Appendix B: List of Examples of Research Done Primarily in North America on Introductory Accounting**

- Cornick, Bhamornsiri, and Malmgren (2003) described two classroom assessment techniques that provided accounting faculty with information to evaluate the effectiveness of accounting principles courses and to make continuous improvements in the content and delivery of material.
- Aisbitt and Sangster (2005) suggested an Internet-based assessment of student performance in introductory accounting, which was implemented in a one-year case study for the purpose of reinforcing basic principles.
- Hartnett, Römcke, and Yap (2003) investigated the relationship between instruction style and student performance among 360 first-year accounting students and found that the presence and approachability of an instructor are both positively associated with a students' task performance.
- Turetsky and Weinstein (2003) studied the impact of student performance in two prerequisite introductory accounting courses (financial and managerial) on subsequent performance in an upper-level financial management course and found that a strong, positive correlation between the grades in the prerequisites and the grades in the financial management course, suggesting that these prerequisites were relevant.
- Dillard-Eggers and Wooten (2003) described the evaluation of a peer-tutoring program for introductory accounting and found that there existed a significant positive relationship between peer tutor usage and course grade.
- Halabi, Tuovinen, and Farley (2005) compared the worked examples and problem-solving exercises approaches to learning a highly structured introductory accounting topic using computer-based learning materials and found that the worked examples were more efficient than problem-solving exercises for students who had no prior knowledge of accounting while the two methods were equally efficient for those with prior accounting knowledge.
- Edmonds, Edmonds, and Mulig (2003) explained the use of problem-based learning in accounting courses and asserted that the benefits far outweighed the initial complaints from students who preferred the lecture method. Milne and McConnell (2001) also described use of problem-based learning and related research and concluded that this increased motivation, developed clinical



reasoning skills, and served as a bridge between higher education and professional life (cited in Edmonds et al., 2003).

- David, Maccracken, and Reckers (2003) described an introductory financial accounting course that integrated business processes with enterprise-wide technology.
- Hall, Ramsay, and Raven (2004) used a group-learning environment in an introductory accounting course in an attempt to change students' learning approaches and concluded that the learning environment changed the students' motives in that they were less likely to be studying for surface reasons, but the environment was not successful in changing students' interest in the course.
- Murdoch and Guy (2002) hypothesized that students in small sections of introductory accounting will perform better than students in a large section of the same course when group activities make up a substantial portion of course time. They found that class size was significant as smaller classes led to higher scores, as were age, grade point average and homework completion.
- In investigating the differences in problem-solving and conceptual recall between three groups of introductory accounting students (lecture only, lecture plus instructor-manipulated conceptual model, and lecture plus student-manipulated model) whose exposure to inventory cost allocation was experimentally manipulated, Kern (2002) found that the learning scenario was a significant factor in the score on the problem-solving questions, but not on the conceptual questions.
- Etter, Burmeister, and Elder (2001) used supplemental instruction on introductory accounting classes and found that attrition rates declined, suggesting that it might be a good approach for institutions seeking to reduce attrition rates in introductory accounting courses. Jones and Fields (2001) also investigated whether supplemental instruction enhanced student performance in the first accounting course and performance increased in step fashion with increased levels of participation in supplemental instruction (cited in Etter et al., 2001).
- Boyd, Boyd, and Boyd (2000) offered suggestions pertaining to time, content and process for effective delivery of introductory accounting and promoted the use of visual aids and the concepts approach.

## Appendix C: Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Department of Accounting, Bachelor of Commerce (Hons) in Accounting

### FIRST YEAR (total number of credits required: 37–40)

#### *University requirements*

- |    |             |                             |                        |
|----|-------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | ENG 111–112 | English Usage I & II        | 2 semesters; 6 credits |
| 2. | CHI 101–102 | First Year Chinese I & II   | 2 semesters; 8 credits |
| 3. | CHI 131–132 | Elementary Putonghua I & II | 2 semesters; 2 credits |

#### *Faculty requirements*

- |    |              |                         |                        |
|----|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | BUS 111–112  | Quantitative Methods    | 2 semesters; 6 credits |
| 2. | ECON 101–102 | Principles of Economics | 2 semesters; 6 credits |

#### *Departmental requirements*

- |    |              |                         |                        |
|----|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. | ACCT 101–102 | Introductory Accounting | 2 semesters; 6 credits |
|----|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------|

#### *Electives*

- |            |                                      |                        |
|------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| PHIL 103   | Introduction to Philosophy           | 1 semester; 2 credits  |
| LAW 100    | Introduction to Law                  | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| SOC 150    | Critical Thinking                    | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| JOUR 120   | Introduction to the Study of the PRC | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| PE 101–102 | Physical Education                   | 2 semesters; 4 credits |

#### ***Total number of credits for First Year courses:***

- |    |                           |            |
|----|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. | University requirements   | 16         |
| 2. | Faculty requirements      | 12         |
| 3. | Departmental requirements | 6          |
| 4. | <u>Electives</u>          | <u>3–6</u> |
|    | Total                     | 37–40      |

**SECOND YEAR (total number of credits required: 33–36)**

*University requirements*

- |    |             |                 |                        |
|----|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. | ENG 211–212 | English Writing | 2 semesters; 6 credits |
|----|-------------|-----------------|------------------------|

*Faculty requirements*

- |    |         |                                    |                       |
|----|---------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | BUS 101 | Introduction to Business           | 1 semester; 3 credits |
| 2. | BUS 200 | Business Organization & Management | 1 semester; 3 credits |

*Departmental requirements*

- |    |              |  |                        |
|----|--------------|--|------------------------|
| 1. | ACCT 201–202 | Intermediate Financial Accounting I & II | 2 semesters; 6 credits |
| 2. | ACCT 210     | Cost and Management Accounting           | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 3. | COMP 101     | Introduction to Computing                | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 4. | COMP 211     | Computer Applications in Accounting      | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 5. | LAW 250      | Business Law                             | 1 semester; 3 credits  |

*Electives*

- |  |             |                                    |                        |
|--|-------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
|  | BUS 233     | Principles of Marketing            | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
|  | CHI 251–252 | Intermediate Putonghua I & II      | 2 semesters; 2 credits |
|  | COMP 210    | Advances in Information Technology | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
|  | PHIL 113    | Logic                              | 1 semester; 2 credits  |
|  | PSY 100     | Introductory Psychology            | 1 semester; 3 credits  |

***Total number of credits for Second Year courses:***

- |    |                           |            |
|----|---------------------------|------------|
| 1. | University requirements   | 6          |
| 2. | Faculty requirements      | 6          |
| 3. | Departmental requirements | 18         |
| 4. | <u>Electives</u>          | <u>3–6</u> |
|    | Total                     | 33–36      |

**THIRD YEAR (total number of credits required: 30–33)***University requirements*

—

*Faculty requirements*

- |            |                        |                       |
|------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. BUS 303 | Business Communication | 1 semester; 3 credits |
|------------|------------------------|-----------------------|

*Departmental requirements*

- |                |                                |                        |
|----------------|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. ACCT 300    | Advanced Financial Accounting  | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 2. ACCT 310    | Auditing                       | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 3. ACCT 320    | Advanced Management Accounting | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 4. ACCT 330    | Accounting Information Systems | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 5. ACCT 340    | Financial Management           | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 6. ACCT 350    | Accounting Theory              | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| 7. LAW 331–332 | Company Law                    | 2 semesters; 6 credits |

*Electives*

- |              |   |                        |
|--------------|---|------------------------|
| ACCT 360     | Systems Analysis & Design                     | 1 semester, 3 credits  |
| BUS 410      | Investment Analysis & Management              | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| ECON 308     | The Economy of Contemporary China             | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| ECON 310     | Financial Institutions in Hong Kong           | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| ECON 320     | International Trade                           | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| COMP 220     | Introduction to the Internet & Website Design | 1 semester; 3 credits  |
| HIST 311–312 | History of Modern & Contemporary World        | 2 semesters; 6 credits |
| SOC 360      | Chinese Culture & Society                     | 2 semesters; 6 credits |

*Total number of credits for Third Year courses:*

- |                              |              |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. University requirements   | —            |
| 2. Faculty requirements      | 3            |
| 3. Departmental requirements | 24           |
| 4. Electives                 | 3–6          |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>30–33</b> |

**FOURTH YEAR (total number of credits required: 23–29)***University requirements*

—

*Faculty requirements*

—

*Departmental requirements*

1.	ACCT 410	Advanced Auditing	1 semester; 3 credits
2.	ACCT 421–422	Taxation I & II	2 semesters; 6 credits
3.	ACCT 440	Accounting for Management Control & Decision-making	1 semester; 3 credits
4.	ACCT 450	Professional Ethics	1 semester; 2 credits
5.	ACCT 460	Research Methodologies in Accounting	1 semester; 3 credits
6.	BUS 460	Strategic Management	1 semester; 3 credits

*Electives (ONE course must be chosen from the four accounting courses)*

ACCT 470	Research Project	1 semester; 3 credits
ACCT 480	International Accounting	1 semester; 3 credits
ACCT 490	Accounting System in China	1 semester; 3 credits
ACCT 495	China Taxation	1 semester; 3 credits
BUS 250	Organizational Behaviour	1 semester; 3 credits
BUS 430	Human Resources Management	1 semester; 3 credits
BUS 440	Industrial Relations	1 semester; 3 credits
BUS 409	Practice of China Investment	1 semester; 3 credits
PSY 405	Industrial and Organizational Psychology	1 semester; 3 credits

***Total number of credits for Fourth Year courses:***

1.	University requirements	—
2.	Faculty requirements	—
3.	Departmental requirements	20
4.	Electives	3–9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>23–29</b>

***Total number of credits required for the BCom (Hons) in Accounting program:***

1.	University requirements	22
2.	Faculty requirements	21
3.	Departmental requirements	68
4.	Electives	12–27
	<b>Total</b>	<b>123–138</b>

Minimum credits requirement for graduation: 123 credits