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HKUST to Seek Government Clarifications on Key Issues Relating to Possible Merger

The Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) today (8 December 2002) endorsed the report of the University Task Force, which expresses the strong desire of HKUST to assist in creating in Hong Kong institutions capable of competing at the highest level internationally, and to help achieve the aims of higher education in the Special Administrative Region.

The 18-member Task Force, composed of representatives of major stakeholder groups of the University, was appointed in October to conduct an initial analysis of a possible merger with the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). Its report was discussed at a meeting of the HKUST Council today, with University Court Members in attendance.

The report says that in the current economic climate, the possibility of creating an institution that would be the focus of public and private support through the merger of two of Hong Kong's best universities suggests a way forward that deserves serious consideration.

The Task Force has explored the benefits that a merger could potentially provide, such as resource provision, complementary strengths in creating critical mass, more flexible and efficient use of resources, as well as enhancement of community and Government support. Concerns examined in the report include the different missions of HKUST and CUHK, the need to retain HKUST's research culture, the possible effect on faculty recruitment and retention, staff concerns for job security, and the hidden costs of merger.

The report identifies four critical issues that need to be addressed as principles for a successful outcome from a merger, namely the objectives of the merger, resource implications, institutional standard for research and organizational culture.

The report concludes that, before the critical issues and concerns are addressed, it would not be timely at this stage for HKUST to enter into discussions with other tertiary institutions regarding the idea of a merger. It recommends that HKUST should approach the Government for clarifications on these critical issues and concerns. On receipt of the clarifications, the University can then consider the matter.

"The Council agrees with the Task Force that key issues can only be resolved by the Government. We therefore support the recommendation that the University should approach the Government for clarifications regarding, in particular, the objectives of a merger and the funding implications if one of those objectives is to create institutions capable of competing at the highest international levels. After the Government clarifies these critical issues, we may then consider the matter," said Dr John C C Chan, Chairman of the HKUST Council.

The report also confirms that HKUST will continue to explore ways to cooperate with other institutions in the interests of



[Hi-res image](#) Dr John C C Chan (right) speaks to the press after the Council meeting

the community, including expanding existing successful collaborations and exploring other opportunities.

Task Force Report