

Corporate Governance



As Hong Kong's central banking institution, the HKMA is committed to high standards of corporate governance, as good governance is crucial in maintaining and safeguarding the trust and confidence of the public in the HKMA to fulfil its statutory mandate.

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To achieve its commitment to good corporate governance, the HKMA:

- ◆ puts in place a well-defined governance structure with a high degree of accountability;
- ◆ exercises robust controls to manage risks and ensure that staff behaviours at all levels and its day-to-day operations are consistent with specified standards; and
- ◆ pursues a policy of high transparency and accessibility, and keeps close contacts with stakeholders.

THE HKMA AND THE HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION GOVERNMENT

The HKMA is an integral part of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government, but is able to employ staff on terms different from those of the civil service in order to attract personnel of the right experience and expertise. The Chief Executive of the HKMA and his staff are public officers. In its day-to-day work the HKMA operates with a high degree of autonomy within the relevant statutory powers conferred upon, or delegated to, the Monetary Authority.

The Financial Secretary is responsible for determining the monetary policy objective and the structure of the monetary system of Hong Kong: a letter from the Financial Secretary to the Monetary Authority dated 25 June 2003 specifies that these should be currency stability defined as a stable exchange value at around HK\$7.80 to one US dollar maintained by Currency Board arrangements. The Monetary Authority is on his own responsible for achieving the monetary policy objective, including determining the strategy, instruments and operational means for doing so. He is also responsible for maintaining the stability and integrity of the monetary system of Hong Kong.

The Financial Secretary, assisted by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, has responsibility for policies for maintaining the stability and integrity of Hong Kong's financial system and the status of Hong Kong as an international financial centre. In support of these policies, the Monetary Authority's responsibilities include:

- ◆ promoting the general stability and effective working of the banking system;
- ◆ promoting the development of the debt market, in co-operation with other relevant bodies;
- ◆ matters relating to the issuance and circulation of legal tender notes and coins;
- ◆ promoting the safety and efficiency of the financial infrastructure through the development of payment, clearing and settlement systems and, where appropriate, the operation of these systems; and
- ◆ seeking to promote, in co-operation with other relevant bodies, confidence in Hong Kong's monetary and financial systems, and market development initiatives to help strengthen the international competitiveness of Hong Kong's financial services.

The Exchange Fund is under the control of the Financial Secretary. The Monetary Authority, under delegation from the Financial Secretary, is responsible to the Financial Secretary for the use of the Exchange Fund, and for the investment management of the Fund.

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ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

The autonomy given to the HKMA in its day-to-day operations, and in the methods it uses to pursue policy objectives determined by the Government, is complemented by a high degree of accountability and transparency.

The HKMA serves Hong Kong by promoting monetary and banking stability, by managing the official reserves effectively, and by developing and overseeing a robust and diverse financial infrastructure. These processes help to strengthen Hong Kong's role as an international financial centre and to foster Hong Kong's economic well-being.

The HKMA must have the confidence of the community if it is to perform its duties well. The HKMA therefore takes seriously the duty of explaining its policies and work to the general public and makes every effort to address any concerns within the community relevant to the HKMA's responsibilities. In particular, the HKMA makes timely clarifications on misinformation and rumours about the HKMA's policies via traditional and social media.

The HKMA is accountable to the people of Hong Kong through the Financial Secretary, who appoints the Monetary Authority, and through the laws passed by the Legislative Council that set out the Monetary Authority's powers and responsibilities. The HKMA also recognises a broader responsibility to promote a better understanding of its roles and objectives and to keep itself informed of community concerns. In its day-to-day operations and in its wider contacts with the community, the HKMA pursues a policy of transparency and accessibility. This policy has two main objectives:

- ◆ to keep the financial industry and the public as fully informed about the work of the HKMA as possible, subject to considerations of market sensitivity, commercial confidentiality and statutory restrictions on disclosure of confidential information; and
- ◆ to ensure that the HKMA is in touch with, and responsive to, the community it serves.

The HKMA seeks to follow international best practices in its transparency arrangements. It maintains extensive relations with the mass media and produces a range of regular and special publications in both English and Chinese. The HKMA's bilingual website (www.hkma.gov.hk) carries a large number of HKMA publications, press releases, speeches and presentations, in addition to dedicated sections on research, statistics, regulatory resources, consumer information and other topics. Social media platforms are also used to communicate with the public more efficiently in the digital era. The HKMA maintains an Information Centre at its offices, consisting of a library and an exhibition area, which is open to the public six days a week. Further information on the HKMA's work on public communications and engagement is contained in the *Corporate Functions* chapter.

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Over the years the HKMA has progressively increased the detail and frequency of its disclosure of information on the Exchange Fund and Currency Board Accounts. Since 1999 the HKMA has participated in the International Monetary Fund's Special Data Dissemination Standard project for central banks. The HKMA publishes records of meetings of the Currency Board Sub-Committee of the Exchange Fund Advisory Committee and the reports on Currency Board operations. The supervisory policies and guidelines on banking have been published on the website since 1996.

The relations between the HKMA and the Legislative Council play an important part in promoting accountability and transparency. There is a formal commitment from the Chief Executive of the HKMA to appear before the Panel on Financial Affairs of the Legislative Council three times a year to brief Members and to answer questions on the HKMA's work. Representatives from the HKMA attend Legislative Council panel and committee meetings from time to time to explain and discuss particular issues and to assist Members in their scrutiny of draft legislation.

CONTROLS

The HKMA adopts robust internal and external control mechanisms to ensure that it upholds a high standard of staff conduct, prudent risk management as well as appropriate checks and balances. Internal and external audit functions provide independent assessment on the adequacy and effectiveness of the control mechanisms.

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct, which provides guidance to staff on their ethical and legal responsibilities, is put in place to ensure that staff behaviours are consistent with specified standards at all levels.

Internal controls

Operational controls

All departments and divisions have ownership and responsibility to assess risks of their operational processes and put in place appropriate controls for ensuring proper day-to-day operations of the HKMA. This serves as the first line of defence for risk management.

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Organisational risk management

Risk management is also undertaken at the corporate level, with the Risk Committee, chaired by the Chief Executive of the HKMA, being one of the cornerstones of the organisational risk management framework.

Potential and emerging risks identified by the functional units, and the adequacy of the control measures and mitigating strategies they devise, are reported to and discussed at the Risk Committee, which decides on appropriate follow-up actions.

Internal audit

The Internal Audit Division of the HKMA independently assesses the adequacy and effectiveness of control, risk management and governance processes of different functional units, and advises on areas for improvement.

External Audit

In accordance with section 7 of the Exchange Fund Ordinance, the Audit Commission of the HKSAR Government audits the financial statements of the Exchange Fund. The Commission does not charge for this service. The audited financial statements of the Exchange Fund are included in the *HKMA Annual Report*.