

ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

HEAD 40 - EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Subhead 700 General other non-recurrent

New Item “Supporting uniform group activities for students”

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$50 million to support and promote uniform group activities for students.

PROBLEM

Existing opportunities for our primary and secondary school students to participate in uniform group (UG) activities are inadequate to foster their all-round development.

PROPOSAL

2. With the support of the Secretary for Education and Manpower, the Director of Education (D of E) proposes to create a new commitment of \$50 million to support and promote UG activities for primary and secondary school students by -

- (a) facilitating the establishment and expansion of UG units;
- (b) grooming leaders required for running UGs;
- (c) providing support to the organisation of UG activities; and
- (d) promoting UGs among parents and students.

/JUSTIFICATION

JUSTIFICATION

3. One of our education reform proposals is to offer more life-wide learning opportunities for our students in order to foster their all-round development. UGs provide students with opportunities to learn through participation in a wide range of activities, for example, expedition and orienteering. They also offer participants the unique experience of discipline and team-building. Participation in UGs is widely recognised by the education sector as one of the most effective ways to foster students' all-round development.

Encl. 1 4. There are at present 11 UGs catering to the needs of students in Hong Kong (a list is at Enclosure 1). They collaborate with schools to run school-based units, or with non-profit making organisations to run district-based units with students as target members. At present, only about 108 000 students ^(Note), or 11% of the 950 000 primary and secondary students, have joined UG units. There are various factors hindering the growth of UGs. Firstly, some schools and non-profit making organisations do not have extra funds to sponsor the setting up of new UG units or the expansion of existing units. Secondly, there are not enough leaders to lead UG units. Thirdly, some students and the public at large do not fully understand the nature of UG activities. Fourthly, many parents are not enthusiastic in encouraging their children to take part in UG activities because they do not fully realise how these activities could contribute to youth development.

5. We propose to provide financial support with a view to add impetus to the development of and students' participation in UG activities, through the proposals in paragraphs 6 to 17 below.

Facilitating the establishment and expansion of UG units

6. To encourage and facilitate the setting up of additional UG units, we propose to provide schools and non-profit making organisations with a one-off grant, on an application basis, to meet the start-up cost involved. This start-up cost covers, for example, the cost of purchasing basic equipment and training materials (such as unit flag, flag stand, handbooks, training manuals and first aid box). Based on the average cost of setting up a UG unit, we expect the level of grant to be around \$12,000 per successful application. We will give priority to schools which have few or no UG units, and to non-profit making organisations that propose to establish UG units in districts with few or no district-based units.

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^(Note) The figure represents student enrolment in UG units. The actual number of students involved may be smaller as there could be students joining more than one UG.

7. Similarly, we propose to invite schools and non-profit making organisations to apply for a one-off grant for the expansion of existing UG units. Based on feedback from the UGs, we expect that the average amount of grant will be around \$2,450 for expansion of one UG unit to benefit ten more students. We will give priority to schools and districts which have a smaller number of UG units.

8. We will only consider applications to establish or expand district-based units when at least 80% of participants in these proposed units are students.

9. We estimate that the proposal will enable the establishment of some 500 new UG units and the expansion of about 900 existing UG units in the next three school years, benefiting about 24 000 additional students.

Providing support to the organisation of UG activities

10. To familiarise students with UG activities, it will be useful for schools/non-profit making organisations/UGs to organise activities, for example, camping and orienteering, to enable students to have a better understanding of what UGs are all about. We therefore propose to provide one-off grants to these bodies for organising such activities on an application basis. This not only allows students to have a taste of UG activities before deciding whether to join a UG, but also adds to the variety of extra-curricular activities.

11. We also propose to provide grants for the organisation of large-scale UG activities for UG members. These activities will not only bring direct benefit to UG members but will also help to arouse public interest in UG activities and raise the profile of UGs. The ultimate objective is to create impact on the student population.

Grooming of leaders

12. At present, a UG unit (with an average of 30 members) normally needs four leaders and assistant leaders. Leaders are responsible for devising programme plans and for conducting training for members. Assistant leaders mainly help leaders work out the detailed arrangements and provide other support. These leaders and assistant leaders are trained by UGs and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

13. We propose to provide UGs and NGOs with a subsidy, on an application basis, to expand their training programmes to train an additional 3 400 leaders and assistant leaders over the next three school years. To maximise the cost-effectiveness of these training programmes, we have secured agreement among the UGs that the programmes offered by individual UGs and NGOs for assistant leaders will be recognised by all UGs. In other words, trainees could choose to assist in leading any UG unit upon completion of training. In assessing proposals from UGs and NGOs for organising training, we will take into account their past records on organising such training, the cost effectiveness of their proposals and the qualifications of trainers.

14. At present, UG units are mostly led by teachers and other volunteers with experience in UG activities. We propose to expand the pool of candidates to be groomed for the leader and assistant leader role to include parents, pre-service teacher trainees, university students and persons who are interested but do not have previous experience in UGs. Apart from increasing the number of potential leaders and assistant leaders, a wider pool of candidates will also provide relief for serving teacher leaders/assistant leaders from time to time. The participation of parents is also an effective means to foster a better understanding of UGs among parents.

15. Many UGs now organise overseas training programmes to equip their leaders as leader trainers. In line with our proposal to groom more individuals for leading UG units, we propose to sponsor some UG leaders/assistant leaders to attend overseas training as well. On completion of training, they are expected to make further contributions to UGs by training future UG leaders/assistant leaders. Nominations will be invited from UGs. For planning purpose, we expect that out of every ten UG units, a leader/assistant leader will be sponsored to attend these programmes.

Publicity campaigns

16. The effect of the current proposals will to a large extent depend on the response of parents. Many Hong Kong parents consider academic performance as the only important aspect of their children's development, and some take the view that participation in extra-curricular activities, including UG activities, may adversely affect their children's academic performance. We need to solicit parents' support and cultivate in parents a positive attitude towards UG activities. In this regard, we propose to launch publicity campaigns through different channels such as TV/radio broadcast, advertisements on public transportation, as well as leaflets and posters in schools and public places. Promotional talks, with experience sharing sessions by UG participants, will also be organised.

17. In order to attract more people to take up the role of leader/assistant leader, we will also launch publicity campaigns targeting the widened pool of candidates.

Implementation plan

Encl. 2 18. The implementation plan is at Enclosure 2.

19. We will conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the proposed initiatives by the end of the 2003/04 school year. We hope that by then there will be a wider recognition of the benefits of UG activities among parents, students and the community at large and that the continuous development of such activities will gain momentum.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Non-recurrent cost

20. We propose to phase the non-recurrent expenditure of \$50 million over four years from 2001-02 to 2004-05. Details of the expenditure and the estimated cashflow are as follows -

	2001-02 \$'000	2002-03 \$'000	2003-04 \$'000	2004-05 \$'000	Total \$'000
(a) Support for establishment and expansion of UG units	1,640	2,940	2,940	680	8,200
(b) Support for organising UG activities	5,640	8,000	6,600	1,800	22,040
(c) Support for grooming of leaders	2,520	4,540	4,330	1,810	13,200
(d) Publicity campaigns	1,500	900	900	520	3,820
(e) Administrative cost	540	770	770	660	2,740
Total	11,840	17,150	15,540	5,470	50,000

21. As regards paragraph 20(a), the expenditure is for the provision of grants to meet the start-up cost of a total of some 500 UG units, and the cost of expanding about 900 UG units.

22. As regards paragraph 20(b), the expenditure is for the provision of grants to schools, non-profit making organisations and UGs for organising UG activities.

23. As regards paragraph 20(c), the expenditure is for the recruitment of leaders, provision of about 4 100 training places for leaders/assistant leaders and sponsoring about 410 UG leaders/assistant leaders to attend overseas training.

24. As regards paragraph 20(d), the expenditure is for the launching of publicity campaigns to promote UG activities.

25. As regards paragraph 20(e), the expenditure is for the staff cost of one project officer, one executive assistant and one clerical staff employed on non-civil service contract terms to assist in processing funding applications, launching publicity campaigns, and liaison with schools, non-profit making organisations, UGs and NGOs.

26. If Members approve the proposal, we shall offset the supplementary provision required in 2001-02 by deleting an equivalent amount under Head 106 Miscellaneous Services Subhead 789 Additional Commitments.

Recurrent cost

27. As a result of the establishment of new units and expansion of the existing units, the relevant UGs may have to incur additional recurrent expenditure. Based on our estimate of such recurrent expenditure, we plan to increase our subvention to UGs by \$5 million in a full year to provide them with additional assistance on a need basis. We will provide the supplementary provision required, if any, in 2001-02 under delegated authority and include the necessary provision in the draft Estimates of subsequent years.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

28. At present, UGs receive recurrent subvention from the Government for their operating expenses, recruitment of leaders and members, and the provision of training.

29. In the Policy Objective Booklet on Quality Education published in October 2000, the Administration undertook to set aside \$50 million to support UGs in recruiting more students and expanding UG activities to widen the learning experience of students. A Steering Committee on UG Enhancement Scheme was set up in December 2000 to consider how the earmarked funding could best be used. The Steering Committee is chaired by D of E and comprises representatives from relevant departments including the Home Affairs Bureau and Social Welfare Department, NGOs as well as key stakeholders including representatives from schools and tertiary institutions, parents and community members. The proposals in this submission are based on the recommendations of the Steering Committee which are supported by the Government.

30. We consulted the Board of Education on 9 April 2001 and the Board supported the proposal. We also consulted the Education Panel of the Legislative Council on 23 April 2001. The Panel had no objection to the proposal.

Education and Manpower Bureau
June 2001

Enclosure 1 to FCR(2001-02)18

Uniform Groups in Hong Kong

	Units		Student Members
	School-based	District-based	
Civil Aid Service Cadet	0	64	3 232
Hong Kong Adventure Corps	2	4	575
Hong Kong Air Cadet Corps	14	1	1 859
Hong Kong Girl Guides Association	695	291	33 328
Hong Kong Red Cross Youth Unit	205	25	10 092
Hong Kong Sea Cadet Corps	5	8	880
Hong Kong St John's Ambulance	49	0	1 896
Road Safety Patrol	339	9	10 081
Scout Association of Hong Kong	1 006	852	43 487
The Boys' Brigade, Hong Kong	26	23	1 630
The Girls' Brigade (Hong Kong)	11	21	630
Total	2 352	1 298	107 690

Enclosure 2 to FCR(2001-02)18

Implementation Plan

	Invitation of application	Approving authority	Commencement date
(a) Establishment of new units and expansion of existing units	October 2001 (applications can be submitted anytime thereafter; grants to be approved quarterly)	ED (at the level of assistant director)	New units to be established and units to be expanded starting from the 2001/02 school year
(b) Organisation of UG activities	July 2001 (applications can be submitted anytime thereafter; grants to be approved quarterly)	Steering Committee	Activities to be launched starting from September 2001
(c) Publicity campaigns to recruit leaders/assistant leaders	Not applicable (ED will launch publicity campaigns)	Not applicable	First round of recruitment drive to be launched in September 2001; publicity campaigns to be launched twice a year

	Invitation of application	Approving authority	Commencement date
(d) Training of leaders	August 2001	Steering Committee	First batch of training programmes to be launched in October 2001 and the first batch of leaders/assistant leaders to be ready to lead UG units in December 2001
(e) Sponsorship for overseas training	August 2001 (applications to be invited twice a year)	Steering Committee	First batch of leaders/assistant leaders to attend overseas training in mid-2002
(f) Launching of publicity campaigns	Not applicable (publicity campaigns to be launched by ED)	Not applicable	First round of publicity campaigns to be launched in September 2001; publicity campaigns to be launched twice a year

