

Legislative Council Panel on Education

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INCREASE IN POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

This paper provides supplementary information on the issues set out in Clerk to Subcommittee's letter dated 1 June 2001.

Associate Degree Programme [Items (a), (c) and (d)]

2. In consultation with the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) and the Federation of Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (the "Federation"), we have agreed on a set of common descriptors for "associate degree" ("AD") and equivalent qualifications. The details are contained in the Executive Summary attached to the paper CB(2)/1525/00-01(01) and summarised below:

- (a) ***Programme objectives and learning outcome:*** Generally, AD should provide an enriched education at post-secondary level that prepares the students for work, leisure, further study and active citizenship. Specifically, AD should equip students with generic skills as well as specialised knowledge/skills that will enable them to perform effectively at associate professional level, to further their studies in universities or to pursue professional development.
- (b) ***Entry requirements:*** AD programmes should adopt the principle of "lenient entry, stringent exit". As a norm, the proposed minimum entry requirements are: (1) satisfactory completion of Secondary 6, plus 5 passes in HKCEE (including English and Chinese); (2) satisfactory completion of a pre-AD programme; or (3) aged 21 or above. However, as members of the Federation mentioned at the subcommittee meeting on 1 June 2001, institutions may also consider conducting interviews to select candidates so that students may be admitted based on their non-academic performance. As with universities, individual institutions have autonomy over student admission for their courses.
- (c) ***Quality assurance:*** For self-accrediting universities, AD programmes must undergo their own internal validation mechanism. For non-self-accrediting institutions, their AD programmes should be validated by a recognised quality assurance agency such as the HKCAA. As an independent statutory body established in 1990,

HKCAA has ample experience in the quality assurance of higher education institutions and programmes. HKCAA has recently been involved in the accreditation of sub-degree programmes offered by Caritas Francis Hsu College and the degree programmes of Hong Kong Shue Yan College. As mentioned in HKCAA's submission to the Subcommittee vide paper CB(2)1664/00-01(01), the Council has put in place rigorous process and criteria for the validation and monitoring of AD programmes. Non-self-accrediting institutions aspiring to offer AD programmes should first undergo an academic review at the institutional level. This will be followed by accreditation of the proposed AD programmes. For programmes offered by both self-accrediting and non-self-accrediting institutions, the validation process also extends to the monitoring of the student exit standards.

- (d) **Recognition:** AD is designed as a programme with multiple-entry and multiple-exit. Like Higher Diploma, AD is a valuable exit qualification for employment at the associate professional level. Both the Federation and HKCAA have recommended that the level of AD should be considered as equivalent to that of the Higher Diploma for employment purpose in both the public and private sectors. The Education and Manpower Bureau is supportive of the recommendation. As far as civil service appointment is concerned, the Education and Manpower Bureau and the Civil Service Bureau are working on the arrangement for accepting AD qualifications for appointment to civil service grades which have general entry requirements at Higher Diploma level.
- (e) **Articulation:** AD graduates may further their studies or pursue professional development on a full-time or part-time basis. All the current AD programme providers have credit transfer, articulation and direct admission arrangements with many universities. Locally, the Open University of Hong Kong is ready to expand its capacity to admit associate degree graduates. In addition, many non-local institutions are offering part-time, top-up degree and professional programmes that target at sub-degree qualification holders. As regards the UGC sector, the articulation arrangements between sub-degree and degree programmes will be examined in greater detail in the context of the wider implementation of a credit accumulation and transfer system (CATS) in Hong Kong. In the meantime, UGC-funded institutions may make full use of their wastage, which accounts for 590 undergraduate places (or 1.3%) in 1999/2000, to admit AD graduates to their second year degree studies. Institutions also have discretion to over-enrol by a certain

margin without detriment to quality. They are also encouraged to offer more self-financing top-up degree programmes to meet rising demand by AD graduates.

Support Measures for Providers [Item (b)]

3. To facilitate the launch of new programmes, we propose to offer the following two types of start-up financial assistance for providers to meet their front-end investments:

- (a) start-up loans for accommodation and equipment; and
- (b) matching assistance for accreditation of programmes.

4. The above support measures will be provided to non-profit-making providers offering full-time, accredited programmes, leading to a qualification at or above the levels of higher diploma, associate degree and/or professional diploma.

Start-up Loans

5. We propose that the loan should be interest-free and the maximum repayment period should be ten years. As the new post-secondary places will be self-financing and market-driven, we propose a two-staged approach in offering loan assistance for providers. This will allow some time for providers to test the market, particularly those without a solid academic status. For such institutions, the initial loan will be calculated with reference to the rental cost of the initial period, plus renovation and equipment expenses. We also propose to allow a higher loan amount for laboratory-based science and technology disciplines as they are likely to involve more capital investment. After the providers have built up a solid track record in running sub-degree programmes, we will consider a more substantial loan for building or buying college premises as a longer-term measure. For the more established or self-accrediting institutions, we will consider providing a more substantial loan in the first instance.

Accreditation Expenses

6. To facilitate non-self-accrediting institutions in launching new programmes, we are considering providing matching grant for these institutions upon successful accreditation by recognised quality assurance agencies.

Land Resources

7. As mentioned in our paper CB(2)/1664/00-01(02), we are pursuing the following initiatives to maximise the availability of land resources for post-secondary education -

- (a) we are facilitating providers in their efforts to maximise the use of their existing physical resources to provide the additional student places;
- (b) we encourage operators to consider purchasing conveniently located buildings as college premises. Specifically, we will facilitate changes in the landuse of some buildings from Industrial/Office into educational use at nominal premium;
- (c) we are actively identifying possible sites for purpose-built college premises. We propose that these sites should be granted to non-profit-making post-secondary education providers at nominal premium;
- (d) we are considering joint site use (for example, post-secondary colleges with senior secondary schools); and
- (e) we are identifying vacant premises in the holdings of Government departments and Non-government Organisations, and are exploring possible redevelopment options.

Projected Increase [Item (e)]

8. Based on our planning target of enabling 60% of secondary school leavers to have access to post-secondary education in ten years' time, and having regard to the latest population projections of the 17-20 age cohort, we estimate the first-year student intake to increase by around 30 600 by 2010/11. Assuming that a course takes two to three years to complete, the total additional student enrolment will reach about 82 400.

9. We wish to emphasize that, as the new places will not be publicly-funded, we do not have any planned intake or interim targets during the 10-year period. The pace of development will depend on actual demand and supply of places, acting on market forces. Based on the latest information available, the projected intake to full-time, self-financing sub-degree programmes in 2001/02 will be 6 570. Assuming that the number of student places will increase progressively on a straight-line basis, the projected increase of post-secondary places in the next ten years will be:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Projected Additional First-year Intakes</i>
2001	6 570
2002	8 900
2003	11 300
2004	14 400
2005	17 500
2006	20 600
2007	23 100
2008	25 600
2009	28 100
2010	30 600

Education and Manpower Bureau
June 2001