

**LETTERHEAD OF HONG KONG
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**

23 March 2001

FAX 2877-8024

Mrs. Sharon Tong
Clerk to Panel on Manpower
Legislative Council
Hong Kong SAR
8 Jackson Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mrs. Tong:

Re: LegCo Panel on Manpower: Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme

Thank you for your letter of 16 March 2001 with the Paper for the LegCo Panel on Security/Manpower. I am responding on behalf of President Woo Chia-Wei, as he is on a business trip and unable to respond by 26 March.

We are very pleased and supportive of the plans for the admission of Mainland professionals, both by increasing the numbers and by facilitating the admitting process.

The LC paper eloquently lays out the background, current policy, issues, rationale for a change in policy, and the proposed implementation framework. With this said, we would like to offer a few comments on specific aspects of the paper.

Para 6 We note that only 452 had applied for the Talents Scheme as of February 2001. The 26% success rate is perhaps not very encouraging. It would be of interest to know, in general terms, why 211 were denied entry.

Para 8 This is a very persuasive finding. It should be emphasized when addressing concerns of those who fear that the Scheme will result in job losses for HK-trained professionals.

Para 9 The government might give consideration to a Professionals database whereby interested and qualified personnel from the Mainland could register on-line. Hong Kong firms seeking such personnel could then search for candidates on-line. The Labour Department's Interactive Employment Service website appears to be unidirectional.

Para 11 The distinction between Talents and Professionals is interesting. We note that while Hong Kong is in need of professionals for immediate operational needs of companies, it also needs to take a longer term perspective and seek talents who will help to innovate and be more active in R&D. We are pleased to note that the Admission of Talents Scheme will be continued and more actively promoted.

Paras 12&13 These number make a compelling case for prompt implementation of the Scheme.

Para 21 It is highly desirable to remove the need for the candidate to go through an intermediate Mainland recruitment agency. This must have been a significant inhibitor during the Pilot Scheme.

In order to make this Scheme consistent with that for foreign professionals, perhaps it would be appropriate to provide successful applicants with an initial two-year work permit, renewable for further periods of two and three years, respectively, prior to being eligible for right of abode after seven years of residence. This will address one of the concerns that has been raised in the media.

Para 23 May we suggest that the Mainland authorities be urged to allow (and HK accept) the legal spouse and minor children to accompany the Mainland professionals. A person separated from immediate family cannot be a happy and committed worker in Hong Kong.

Para 24 We agree entirely, and we urge that the Scheme be launched promptly; it addresses a need and will create benefits of the Hong Kong economy.

One question with regard to the Supplementary Note. The table provides a breakdown of new employment visas issued to foreign professionals over the past three years. It would be of interest to know how many professionals left Hong Kong over the same period, i.e. if Hong Kong has experienced a net increase or decrease in foreign professionals over recent years.

One additional point we wish to raise concerns with Mainland students who have graduated or soon to be graduating in Hong Kong, and, post doctoral research staff from the Mainland. These groups of talents have the additional desirability for Hong Kong as they are already familiar with the environment here and can readily make contribution to Hong Kong. We feel they should be given preferential status for admission under this Scheme.

One final comment. The media, and through it the public, is clearly concerned about aspects of the Scheme. They are apprehensive that the Scheme may take jobs away from local graduates and depress salaries of local professionals due to increased supply. The analysis of the multiplier effect from both foreign and Mainland professionals is persuasive and should be part of a promotional package to convince Hong Kong people that this Scheme provides a competitive advantage for Hong Kong over other regional centers; it is a matter of survival for Hong Kong as a knowledge-based value-added economy - and not a matter of offering favours to our Mainland compatriots.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Otto C. C. Lin
Vice President for Research & Development