

**立法會**  
**Legislative Council**

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**LegCo Panel on Education**

**Minutes of special meeting  
held on Friday, 1 March 2002 at 4:30 pm  
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

**Members Present** : Hon YEUNG Yiu-chung, BBS (Chairman)  
Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Deputy Chairman)  
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP  
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan  
Hon Eric LI Ka-cheung, JP  
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong  
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, JP  
Hon LAU Kong-wah  
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP  
Hon SZETO Wah  
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, JP  
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP  
Hon Michael MAK Kwok-fung  
Dr Hon LO Wing-lok  
Hon WONG Sing-chi  
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP  
Hon MA Fung-kwok

**Member Absent** : Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung

**Public Officers Attending** : Item I  
Mrs Fanny LAW, JP  
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Mrs Cherry TSE, JP  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Mr Matthew CHEUNG, JP  
Director of Education

Mr LEE Hing-fai, JP  
Deputy Director of Education

Mr SHUM Man-to, JP  
Director of Accounting Services

Quality Education Fund Steering Committee

Mr Irving KOO, SBS, JP  
Chairman

Mr FUNG Man-ching  
Member

Mr IP Cho-yin  
Member

Ms Maggie KOONG  
Member

Miss Elizabeth LEE  
Secretary

Item II

Mr Peter CHEUNG, JP  
Secretary General  
University Grants Committee

Mrs Cherry TSE, JP  
Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2)

Mr Clement LEUNG  
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower

**Attendance by Invitation** : Subsidized Primary School Council

Mr FUNG Ka-ching  
Vice-Chairman

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr TSUI Hon-kwong  
Director, Education and Research Department

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Miss WONG Fung-yee  
Sub-committee of General Affairs

Hong Kong Special Schools Council

Ms KWAN Wai-fong  
Vice-Chairman

Ms Amy TSO  
Vice-Chairman

Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education and Services

Ms Sansan CHING Teh-chi  
Director

Miss Cynthia NG  
Assistant Project Manager

Union of Heads of Aided Primary Schools of Hong Kong

Mr LAM Sheung-wan  
Right Protection Officer

Mr TANG Siu-hung  
Policy Officer

**Clerk in Attendance** : Miss Flora TAI  
Chief Assistant Secretary (2)2

**Staff in Attendance** : Mr Stanley MA  
Senior Assistant Secretary (2)6

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**I. Objectives and assessment criteria for applications of the Quality Education Fund**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) and Chairman of QEF, Mr Irving KOO, briefed members on the objectives, scope and achievements of QEF and the work of the QEF Steering Committee (the Steering Committee) as detailed in the Administration's paper on "Administration of the Quality Education Fund" [LC Paper No. CB(2)1195/01-02(03)].

2. With reference to the queries about Education Department (ED)'s applications on behalf of some schools for grants from QEF, SEM stressed that (a) in approving the creation of QEF, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (LegCo) had recognised that ED could be one of the possible applicants for QEF funds; (b) the Steering Committee had made decisions on all applications in a fair and impartial manner because the Steering Committee had a well-established policy to avoid possible conflict of interest and it only comprised two ex-officio members representing the Education Department (ED) and the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), and the rest were nine non-official members; and (c) as there was no upper limit on the number of successful applications and on the amount of grants for the last four calls, the allocation of funds for ED projects had not at all affected the success rate of other applications.

Meeting with deputations

3. At the invitation of the Chairman, deputations briefed members on their views and suggestions as summarised in paragraphs 4 to 9.

*Subsidised Primary School Council (SPSC)  
[LC Paper No. CB(2)1195/01-02(01) ]*

4. Mr FUNG Ka-ching, Vice-Chairman of the SPSC, introduced the submission of SPSC. He highlighted that SPSC held a strong view that QEF should not set a maximum ceiling in its future spending and limit the number of applications in its future calls for applications. In case the level of QEF was low, Government should inject additional funds to ensure continuous operation of QEF. SPSC considered that projects aiming to raise the quality of school education

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should be given priority and that standard projects which could reduce schools' burden in preparing application proposals should continue to be considered. SPSC also suggested that in reviewing the assessment criteria and the funding mechanism, QEF should aim to reduce the unnecessary paperwork for making applications.

*Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union (the Union)*  
*[LC Paper Nos. CB(2)1195/01-02(02) and CB(2)1235/01-02(02)]*

5. Mr TSUI Hon-kwong, Director of the Education and Research Department of the Union, briefed members on the submissions of the Union. The Union considered that the Steering Committee should exercise flexibility in considering applications for QEF. He suggested that QEF applications should not be restricted to schools and that QEF grants should not be limited to one-off projects. The Union also suggested that an appeal mechanism should be established for unsuccessful applicants. Mr TSUI cited the Union's application and said that QEF did not encourage inter-school competitions for enhancing quality of education and consider giving awards to teachers who had contributed to improve teaching and learning in the schools concerned.

*Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers Limited (the Federation)*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)1235/01-02(01)]*

6. Miss WONG Fung-ye of the Federation briefed members on the main concerns and suggestions of the Federation. In brief, the Federation supported the establishment of QEF, but considered that QEF grants had not been approved in accordance with its main objectives. She pointed out that substantial amounts of funds had been granted to standard projects and large-scale researches conducted by tertiary institutions. The Federation considered that educational establishments other than schools should not be excluded from QEF applications without consultation. It supported that QEF should develop a more effective strategy for project evaluation and promotion in the long run. Miss WONG then cited a few examples to suggest that the Steering Committee should specify more clearly its assessment criteria and increase the transparency of its assessment process.

*Hong Kong Special Schools Council (HKSSC)*

7. Ms KWAN Wai-fong, Vice-Chairman of HKSSC, said that HKSSC supported the establishment of QEF to fund new initiatives in special education. HKSSC suggested that educational establishments should be allowed to apply for QEF and that an open and transparent appeal mechanism should be set up. It considered that QEF allocations should cover the necessary staff training and equipment costs to facilitate smooth implementation of approved projects. In determining the level of funding for individual projects, the Steering Committee should take into consideration the circumstances in different special schools. She

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pointed out that while some approved projects might not be completed satisfactorily, the experience gained would benefit the planning and implementation of projects of a similar nature in the future. Ms Amy TSO, Vice-Chairman of HKSSC, supplemented that the Steering Committee should consult front-line educators in its review of the operation and strategy of QEF after each assessment cycle to set the direction of QEF in the following year.

*Hong Kong Council of Early Childhood Education and Services (CECES)*  
*[LC Paper No. CB(2)1228/01-02(01)]*

8. Ms Sansan CHING The-chi, Director of CECES, briefed members on the submission of CECES which set out various criticisms about the vetting and management procedures of QEF, criteria for vetting and the general method of communications between the applicants and vetting committees. She also explained the recommendations to improve the operation of QEF. Ms CHING stressed that the Steering Committee should ensure fair and transparent vetting process of applications and establish a mechanism to provide for meaningful dialogue between vetting committees and applicants.

*Union of Heads of Aided Primary Schools of Hong Kong (UHAPS)*

9. Mr LAM Sheung-wan representing UHAPS said that UHAPS acknowledged that QEF had provided timely support to school education. However, UHAPS suggested that QEF should simplify the application procedures and reduce the number of progress reports required for approved projects. UHAPS also considered that QEF should provide funding support for the Information Technology Coordinators (ITCs) projects and projects with a longer time-frame such as studies relating to the emotion and behaviours of students. He said that UHAPS supported limiting the number of applications by schools in future calls for applications but opposed setting themes for applications.

Discussion with the Administration and representatives of QEF

10. At Ms Emily LAU's request, Chairman of QEF gave an overall response to the representations made by the deputations as follows -

- (a) the Steering Committee would simplify the application and report procedures with a view to striking a balance between efficiency and accountability;
- (b) the Outstanding Schools Award Scheme had been implemented and implementation of the Outstanding Teachers Award Scheme was temporarily suspended on specific advice of the Education Commission to avoid overloading the school sector with two major schemes at the same time. The criteria for selection of outstanding

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schools and teachers under the Schemes were set out after comprehensive consultation with the education sector and the public;

- (c) QEF did not approve the Union's application referred to in paragraph 5 above because it was a 10-year project at a budget of \$40 million, with some \$30 million reserved as monetary award to all the teachers in the winning schools (despite the fact that only English and Chinese teachers would participate in the inter-school competition, and the competition criteria were to be decided by the schools themselves). Nonetheless, QEF had proposed to the Union that a trial scheme of one year could be implemented but the proposal was declined;
- (d) standard projects were introduced after the second call for applications with the intention to reduce schools' burden in the preparation of project proposals. The allocations of QEF in support of the implementation of the multi-media learning centre project, and the provision of air-conditioners to schools had contributed to enhancing quality of education in schools;
- (e) the Steering Committee had been prudent in approving applications and determining the level of grants in the past, and would review the level of allocations for the necessary manpower costs for smooth implementation of approved projects;
- (f) there were no problems in implementation of the approved projects so far. Brief reasons were given to unsuccessful applicants who were encouraged to reapply in the ensuing call. They were also advised to approach the QEF Secretariat for assistance and make reference to the successful projects which were available in QEF Resource Centre and on its web site;
- (g) the Steering Committee would consider inviting frontline educators to participate in the review of the operation and strategy of QEF after each assessment cycle; and
- (h) it might not be appropriate to have a multi-tiered appeal mechanism on the grounds of cost-effectiveness and operational efficiency. It should be noted that members of the Assessment Subcommittee which was tasked for detailed examination of all applications were mainly frontline educators and academics.

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*QEF as a supplementary fund-provider for ED*

11. Mr TSANG Yok-sing expressed reservations about funding projects in respect of which ED was the applicant. He asked whether the Administration had set out the principles and criteria for provision of non-recurrent funding to schools to implement innovative projects. He considered that recurrent funding should be provided for schools to implement projects which had been confirmed as worthy of dissemination to other schools. He pointed out that such recurrent funding would save substantial administrative and staff costs incurred for schools to lodge similar QEF applications which might be considered by the Steering Committee as no longer innovative.

12. SEM said that one of the key functions of the QEF was to enable pilot projects to be launched in order to test an initiative before its full application territory-wide. In addition, QEF could also help identify and disseminate the best practices of successful projects so that a broader school community could benefit through drawing reference from such practices and adapting them for application in their own schools. However, due to resources constraints, implementation of these successful projects in all schools would have to compete for priority with other bids in Government's annual resource allocation exercise.

13. Mr TSANG Yok-sing remarked that it appeared conflicting with the purpose of QEF when successful projects could not be disseminated to schools due to resources constraints, and that schools could not continue to implement their successful projects due to the one-off nature of QEF funding. SEM responded that QEF had funded a total of 4 341 projects since its establishment in January 1998, many of which were quality and successful projects. The Administration simply did not have sufficient resources to implement all these innovative initiatives in school education. Nevertheless, SEM pointed out that the Administration had allocated resources for implementation of the Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme and the English and Chinese Extensive Reading Schemes in primary schools after successful pilot project supported by QEF.

14. Mr TSANG Yok-sing noted that as indicated in Annex VII of the Administration's paper, a total of four research projects conducted by the ED had been funded by QEF. He asked about the criteria for applying QEF support, instead of using department budget, to fund researches conducted by ED.

15. Director of Education (D of E) explained that the four action-researches funded by QEF were educational researches of a practical nature. They were conducted for future development of school education and were closely monitored by the Promotion and Monitoring Sub-committee which was set up to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of QEF projects, and where necessary, with the assistance of expert reviewers. He pointed out that ED did not have a large budget for conducting research studies.

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16. Dr YEUNG Sum pointed out that providing funding to schools for installing air-conditioning facilities and provision of IT facilities did not seem to match the objective of QEF to fund innovative projects. He considered that the funding for basic facilities should have come from the Government's annual budgetary process.

17. SEM responded that it was not the Government's policy to provide air-conditioners as a standard provision for schools. SEM explained that the ITC application was submitted in response to the request of HKSSC to reduce schools' burden in the preparation of project proposals. In view of the growing prevalence of IT in education in other countries, both ED and QEF considered it crucial and time-critical to extend the pilot IT projects initiated by the Government to more schools and students in order to maintain Hong Kong's competitiveness in the face of international competition.

18. With reference to Appendix VII of Paper No CB(2)1195/01-02(03), Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong noted with grave concern that a total of 12 ED projects had been approved in the past four years and some of which involved an approved grant of over \$10 million. He added that the grant approved for one of these projects was as much as \$161 million. Mr CHEUNG pointed out that it was the existing system that a government expenditure item of more than \$10 million would need the approval of the Finance Committee. Using QEF as a supplementary fund-provider for ED was tantamount to circumventing the normal financial control of LegCo over public expenditure.

19. SEM stressed that ITC project was a school-based project which would raise the quality of school education and could therefore be funded by QEF as a one-off allocation. She pointed out that the review on the use of IT in education had confirmed the need for extending the provision of ITC in schools for another two years. The Administration had set aside sufficient funding for that purpose. Mr FUNG Man-ching of the Steering Committee added that the initiative to apply QEF funding to support implementation of the ITC project in the schools was proposed by the Hong Kong Subsidised Secondary Schools Council (HKSSSC) after collecting the views of its member schools. ED had kindly agreed to submit a batch application on behalf of the beneficiaries. SEM pointed out that the Administration had no objection to the suggestion of the Public Accounts Committee of reporting QEF grants exceeding \$10 million to the LegCo Panel on Education.

20. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the crux of the matter was not whether ED should or should not address the aspiration of schools to make a bulk application on their behalf. He was concerned that despite the good intention, proper funding procedures had not been adhered to. Mr CHEUNG was of the view that ED should have applied for supplementary funding from the Finance

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Committee and he believed that LegCo Members would support the application if it was justified. Mr CHEUNG said that he did not consider mere reporting of QEF grants exceeding \$10 million to the LegCo Panel on Education adequate.

21. SEM responded that there was a limit on the Government's annual budget and funding proposal put forward by ED would need to compete for funding priority before it could have its turn for submission to the Finance Committee. SEM urged members to consider the fact that the Finance Committee had approved the establishment of QEF with the aim of encouraging bottom-up initiatives from the education sector to raise the quality of school education through a flexible funding arrangement. She added that the need to seek approval from Finance Committee might entail unintended operational implications, including the possibility that this might prompt some to restrict the grant below \$10 million. Chairman of QEF said that he was also concerned that the principle of a flexible funding arrangement would be undermined if any QEF grants exceeding \$10 million would require approval of the Finance Committee.

*Assessment, promotion, monitoring and evaluation*

22. Ms Emily LAU expressed disappointment about the management of QEF in the light of deputations' comments. She asked how the Steering Committee would follow up the matter and improve the fairness and transparency of its assessment mechanism. Dr YEUNG Sum added that any amendments to existing criteria should be proposed after thorough consultation with the stakeholders.

23. Chairman of QEF responded that the Steering Committee agreed that improvements to the existing practices for assessment, monitoring and dissemination of QEF projects were needed and had decided to review critically the funding mechanism and priority in the light of current economic climate and competing demands for funds. In fact, the Steering Committee had decided that the focus of work for the coming call should be on the development of a more effective strategy for project evaluation and promotion. A dedicated working group had been set up to consider and recommend to the Steering Committee on improvement measures. In addition, the Steering Committee had invited the Management Services Agency (MSA) to conduct a management and process review, with a view to re-engineering to streamline the operation of the Fund and to strike a reasonable balance between efficiency on the one hand and accountability and fairness on the other. Furthermore, a survey covering both successful and unsuccessful applicants would be conducted to obtain feedback and suggestions. The Steering Committee would consolidate views and announce its review outcome around June 2002.

24. Mr IP Cho-yin of the Steering Committee supplemented that although the fifth call was limited to school applicants, tertiary institutions and organizations could participate in projects proposed by schools as partners. He highlighted that

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due to limited resources, a large proportion of applications would inevitably be rejected. He added that there were always different interpretations of the assessment criteria.

25. Mr SZETO Wah enquired about the work procedures of the Assessment Sub-committee and the Promotion and Monitoring Sub-committee. He also asked about the number of projects which would be disseminated to other schools. He suggested that QEF should disclose the results of evaluation on approved projects to increase transparency and public accountability.

26. Chairman of QEF responded that QEF applications were initially vetted by the QEF Secretariat and then submitted to the Assessment Sub-committee comprising mainly of frontline principals and teachers for detailed examination. The Steering Committee would consider the recommendation of the Assessment Sub-committee and seek external expert advice as appropriate. The Steering Committee would submit its recommendations to the Trustee of QEF (the Director of Education Incorporated) for award of grants. Successful applicant would be required to sign an agreement for the provision of funds for the implementation of approved proposals and to submit self-evaluation reports to QEF as one of the undertakings under the agreement. Most importantly, the application and assessment procedures applied to all applications and the evaluation process incorporated extensive involvement and participation of the education sector and in some cases, external experts. Similarly, project implementation and evaluation were monitored by the Promotion and Monitoring Sub-committee comprising volunteers mainly from the education sector. The actual monitoring process would depend on the nature and scale of individual projects. To facilitate public monitoring on the quality of QEF projects, details of all approved projects were made available on the Internet and dissemination activities including QEF project expositions, seminars, Saturday talks, roving exhibitions and experience-sharing sessions were organised.

27. Mr SZETO Wah remarked that self-evaluation should not be the only monitoring mechanism. He considered that in line with the purpose of QEF, the Steering Committee should monitor the quality of QEF projects and ensure dissemination of successful experiences to other schools as soon as practicable. He pointed out that different strategies and expertise would be required for evaluating projects with varying degree of complexities.

28. Ms Maggie KOONG of the Steering Committee responded that apart from self-evaluation report, the Steering Committee had recruited expert reviewers from education professionals from the tertiary institutions and external reviewers from local schools to assist in monitoring the QEF projects. The reviewers assumed the role of a facilitator and would pay visits to the grantees or project leaders, to take part in major events of the project, to monitor its progress and to examine the progress reports and the final reports submitted by the grantees. Most importantly,

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they were tasked to evaluate the outcome of the projects and advise the Promotion and Monitoring Sub-committee on projects which were worthy of dissemination. Mr FUNG Man-ching of the Steering Committee supplemented that the Sub-committee had already selected some 100 projects for dissemination to other schools. Subject to available resources, appropriate promotion and dissemination strategies would be adopted.

29. SEM shared the view of Mr SZETO Wah, saying that QEF should serve as a vehicle to enhance the overall quality of school education. She considered that conceptualization of the good practices and experiences gained from successful QEF projects into educational theories would facilitate dissemination. The Steering Committee was taking steps to develop its long-term strategies for disseminating the best practices and experience gained from project implementation. Given the scarce available resources, the Steering Committee was considering to set themes and provide funding support to key proposals in its future calls.

*Appeal mechanism*

30. Dr YEUNG Sum held a strong view that the establishment of an appeal mechanism was feasible. He suggested that the Administration should establish an independent mechanism to handle appeal cases if it was decided to inject further capital funds to QEF. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong added that the existence of an appeal mechanism would enhance long-term operation of QEF, particularly when there were upper limits for allocations to different types of projects.

31. SEM responded that the Administration would consider the suggestion, but pointed out that a large number of appeals might have to be handled. To her knowledge, there was an "informal" appeal mechanism by which unsuccessful applicants could seek re-consideration of their applications. Chairman of QEF explained that currently unsuccessful applicants might approach the Steering Committee or SEM for a review of their applications. In fact, the Steering Committee had reconsidered some unsuccessful applications and decided to approve them subsequently. He added that it would be difficult for the Steering Committee to overrule a previous decision if the appeal was against the professional competence of individual members of the Assessment Sub-committee.

32. Dr YEUNG Sum reiterated that a formal appeal mechanism should be made available to all unsuccessful applicants in order to enhance the openness and credibility of the Steering Committee.

*Future strategy*

33. Dr YEUNG Sum noted that QEF grants to ED amounted to about \$270 million which was about 5% of the \$5 billion capital of QEF. He suggested that to

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benefit more applicants, the Steering Committee should consider setting an upper limit for each grant. Dr YEUNG also asked whether a school could apply for extension of an approved project after its completion, and whether there was a ceiling on the duration of an approved project.

34. Chairman of QEF responded that there was no upper limit on the number of successful applications and on the amount of grants for the last four calls. However, in view of the latest financial status of QEF, the Steering Committee had decided to set a limit on the themes and number of applications in the fifth call. In addition, schools with an approved QEF project in progress would not be allowed to submit applications. Chairman of QEF added that in the light of the recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee, the Steering Committee would develop an overarching strategic plan for future allocation of funds, which might impose limits on allocation of funds to different types of projects.

35. Mr IP Cho-yin of the Steering Committee supplemented that the duration of an approved project would be determined by the nature and merits of the proposals concerned. The Steering Committee had not set a limit for the duration of QEF projects.

Way forward

36. Ms Emily LAU, Dr YEUNG Sum and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that a QEF grant exceeding \$10 million should be submitted to the Finance Committee for consideration. The Chairman suggested that the Panel should revisit the issue when QEF had completed its overall review. Responding to the Chairman's enquiry, Chairman of QEF said that the Steering Committee would be pleased to brief the Panel on the outcome of the review which was expected to be completed around June 2002. The Clerk would liaise with the Administration on a date for further discussion of the subject.

**II. Supporting the Student Exchange Programmes and Scholarship Scheme for Mainland students of University Grants Committee-funded institutions**

[LC Paper No. CB(2)1195/01-02(04)]

37. The Chairman informed the meeting that the proposal on "Supporting the Student Exchange Programmes (SEPs) and Scholarship Scheme for Mainland students of University Grants Committee(UGC)-funded institutions" would incur an expenditure of \$210 million. The Administration would submit the proposal to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 8 March 2002.

38. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong, Dr YEUNG Sum and Ms Emily LAU expressed support for the proposal. Mr CHEUNG considered that the

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Administration should encourage UGC-funded institutions to exercise flexibility in the use of the proposed allocation in order to maximise the number of students who could benefit from the Programmes. He suggested that students who were financially capable should share half of the costs of SEPs so that more students could be benefited through SEP. Mr SZETO WAH shared his view. Dr YEUNG echoed that SEPs could help broaden students' horizon and foster their global outlook and ability for cross-culture management. He suggested that to secure long-term community support, the Administration should evaluate the results of SEPs and its effects on participating students. Ms LAU suggested that to maximise the benefits of SEPs, the Administration should encourage participating students to communicate more with local students and get involved more in local communities. She considered that participating students should aim to broaden their horizon as well as to improve their English conversance.

39. Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (2) (DS(EM)2) responded that by a budget based on 1 000 full-year-equivalent university undergraduate students, the proposal would benefit more than a thousand participants since some SEPs would only span a semester or half a year. Secretary General, UGC (SG/UGC) supplemented that the duration of a SEP was agreed on a reciprocal basis and might vary between one semester and one full academic year.

40. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was of the view that to attract commercial and individual donations, the Administration should adopt a flexible strategy in the solicitation of private sponsorship for SEPs. He suggested that private donations should be invited in terms of the average unit costs of SEPs or their multiples. He pointed out that some organisations and individuals under the prevailing economic circumstances might find it difficult to take up a financial commitment for recurrent SEP projects. DS(EM)2 said that the Secretary for Education and Manpower had already written to a number of organisations and individuals setting out a list of the initiatives on which the Administration would appreciate donations. She nevertheless agreed on the need to do more to solicit private donations. SG/UGC supplemented that apart from the Administration, UGC and UGC-funded tertiary institutions would also take the initiative to solicit private donations to fund SEPs on a continuous basis. However, the response had not been favourable so far.

41. Mr SZETO Wah considered that SEPs should preferably span over a full academic year in order to achieve the intended results. He pointed out that it was unlikely that a half-year SEP could significantly help enhance a participating student's adaptability, communication skills, independence and appreciation of a different culture. Dr YEUNG Sum said that evaluation should be conducted and additional funding should be provided if the results were found to be favourable.

42. SG/UGC responded that the proposed allocations would be allocated to institutions as earmarked grants and institutions needed to report on the results of

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the allocation used. He also explained that SEPs would have to be organised in collaboration with quality non-local higher education institutions on a reciprocal basis, the duration of which would be determined on a bilateral basis. SG/UGC added that the level of sponsorship to student participants would depend on the level of private subsidy secured for a particular SEP. To benefit more students, it was proposed that Government subsidy should be limited to around half of the costs incurred for the outgoing arrangements. Currently, all SEPs were privately-funded, i.e., operating on a self-paying basis by students and supported by some private sponsorship or donations secured by the UGC-funded institutions.

43. DS(EM)2 and SG/UGC undertook to consider members' views and suggestions and relay them to UGC-funded institutions for consideration.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
10 May 2002