

**LegCo Panel on Manpower
(Meeting to be held on 28 February 2002)**

Extension of IT Assistant Course

Purpose

This paper informs members details of our proposal to seek the Finance Committee's approval of an additional commitment of \$54 million to continue provision of 1 000 IT training places each year at the junior assistant level on the IT Assistant Course from 2002 to 2005. Members' views on the proposal are invited.

Background

2. In view of the great demand for trained manpower by companies in the IT industry, we ran a pilot IT Assistant Training programme from February to July 2000 for young school leavers and unemployed people to take up jobs as junior IT assistants. A Steering Group was set up by the Education and Manpower Bureau comprising representatives from the IT industry, trade associations as well as various government bodies to ensure that the training met the need of the industry. The training programme was designed with active input from the industry. The course comprises ten weeks training targetted specifically at the junior IT assistant level. It is jointly run by the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the Employees Retraining Board. The VTC serves as the project manager responsible for the overall co-ordination, curriculum development and review, development of teaching materials and quality assurance.

3. The pilot course was well received with an overwhelming response of over 3200 applicants competing for 300 training places. Following the success of the pilot course, we sought approval from Members in May 2000 for a commitment of \$36 million to formalise the course and to increase the training capacity to 2 000 from 2000-01 to 2001-02, taking the total number of training places available to 2 300. The commitment of \$36 million is by now exhausted.

4. As one of our 2001 Policy Objectives, we propose to continue to provide 1 000 training places in the IT Assistant Course each year for the coming three years (2002/03 to 2004/05) to meet the needs of the IT industry for trained manpower.

Justification for Extension

5. The IT Assistant Course has received a very favourable response so far. Over 16 500 applications were received for the 2 300 training places available. As at end December 2001, over 1 700 trainees have completed their training and the final batch of trainees will graduate in March 2002.

6. As at December 2001, the overall employment rate of the graduates actively seeking employment was 75%. Of those graduates who have successfully secured employment, about 80% of them have taken up various IT or IT-related positions in the industry including computer operator, graphic/web designer, IT assistant, IT teaching assistant, project assistant, Internet support technician, system support technician, technical support technician, etc. The graduates earn an average salary of \$7,080 per month.

7. The Steering Group of the IT Assistant Course has recently completed a review of the IT Assistant Course to evaluate its relevance and effectiveness. It was agreed that the Course was in general successful and met the needs of the industry and was well received by both employers and the trainees. Findings from a survey also showed that almost all trainees were satisfied with the Course while employers rated highly the competitiveness and performance of the graduates.

8. The Steering Group noted that the unfavourable economic outlook might affect the employment opportunities for IT Assistant Course graduates. However, it was agreed that there would still be a continuing demand for IT Assistant Course trainees in the market - in particular, from small and medium-sized enterprises. Also, the training offered would greatly enhance the all round employability of the target trainees. Taking into account these factors, the Steering Group endorsed continuation of the IT Assistant Course and a target of offering 1 000 training places annually during the period. We support this recommendation. We think it is prudent to continue the programme on a time-limited basis as circumstances in the employment market and the training needs of our workforce do change over time.

Course Enhancement

9. To ensure that the IT Assistant Course meets the needs of the industry and changes in technology, the Steering Group has also reviewed the curriculum in the light of experience in course delivery, feedback from trainees and their employers and the placement results. An enhanced curriculum was then devised. It consists of a foundation module and two specialised streams with separate focuses. Each trainee must complete the foundation module and one of the two specialised streams. The foundation module (12 days) focuses mainly on basic office IT skills as well as a working knowledge of E-commerce. The IT Technical Support stream (34 days) covers skills critical for entry-level IT technical/system support personnel who focuses

on supporting the IT technical infrastructure. The Web/Office IT Support stream (34 days) will equip participants with the right skills for support activities commonly required in today's digital workplace. Details of the revised curriculum is at Annex A.

10. Upon completion of the training, graduates will be equipped with the basic IT skills necessary to work in the area of IT technical support, web development, e-commerce, multimedia production, etc. In addition, graduates will have specialised skills either of IT Technical Support or Web/Office IT Support.

11. The programme was offered initially in the traditional classroom-based training manner. In October 2000, a new training option, the Web-based Training and Learning (WBT) option was introduced. This new learner-centre training options offers much greater flexibility and learner control of the training process to improve overall learning effectiveness. This mode of training will be gradually enlarged in the next phase from 2002-03 to 2004-05.

Financial Implication

12. The proposal will require an additional commitment of \$54 million non-recurrent expenditure over three years from 2002-03 to 2004-05. The expenditure is for the provision of an annual 1 000 training places in the coming three years. It also covers the cost of regular course review and refinement, procurement of hardware and software, training and support, recruitment of staff, administration and publicity. A detailed cost breakdown and cashflow projection is at Annex B.

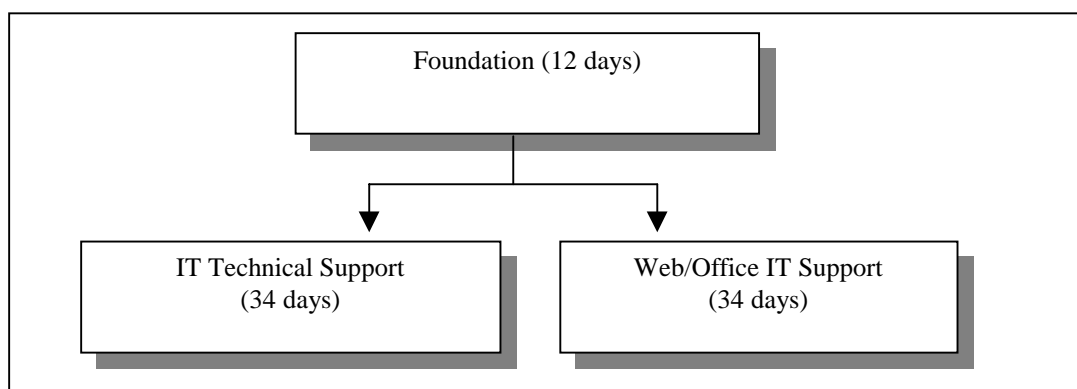
Way Forward

13. We will submit the proposal to the Finance Committee on 26 April 2002.

Advice Sought

14. Members are invited to comment on the proposal to the extension of provision of an annual 1 000 training places from 2002-03 to 2004-05 under the IT Assistant Course.

Curriculum of the ITAT Course



Foundation Module

	Subject	Approx. Days
Basic Office IT Skills		
	Introduction to Microsoft Word	1
	Introduction to Microsoft Excel	1
	Introduction to Microsoft Powerpoint	1
	Introduction to Microsoft Access	1
	Chinese Input Method	1
	Using Internet	1
E-commerce and Logistics		
	eCommerce Fundamentals	1
	Basic eCommerce Security	1
	Introduction to Logistics	1
Soft Skills		
	Basic Technical Communications	3
	Total	12

IT Technical Support Stream

	Subject	Approx. Days
Basic Web Authoring		
	Basic web authoring	3
	Basic web image processing with Photoshop	3
	Basic web animation using Flash	
	Practical Web Project	2

Hardware Support		
	Computer hardware installation, maintenance and troubleshooting	3
	Network equipment installation and maintenance	
	LAN cable installation and troubleshooting	
Windows Server Support		
	Windows desktop support and troubleshooting	1
	Windows server operations, administration and troubleshooting	5
	Internet/Web support using Windows Server	2
Router and Networking Support		
	Windows server networking support	4
	Router operation and support basics	
Linux Server Support		
	Linux desktop applications usage, installation and support	1
	Linux system installation and configuration	2
	Internet/Web support using Linux	2
Security and Virus Management		
	Computer Security and Virus Management	1
Project and Others		
	Using Internet for IT Technical Support	1
	Practical Project	4
	Total	34

Web/Office IT Support Stream

	Subject	Approx. Days
Advanced Office IT		
	Advanced Word	1
	Advanced Excel	1
	Advanced Access	2
	Outlook	1
Web Authoring and Media Production		
	Web Authoring	4
	Introduction to JavaScript	2
	Web image processing with Photoshop	3
	Web animation using Flash	2
	Practical Project	5
Hardware and network Support		
	Computer hardware installation, maintenance and troubleshooting	2

System Support		
	Basic Windows Server and network operation	3
	Windows desktop support and troubleshooting	
	Linux system installation and configuration	2
Computer security and virus management		
	Computer security and virus management	1
Application Support		
	Windows desktop applications installation and support	1
	Linux desktop applications usage, installation and support	1
Project and Others		
	Using Internet for Office IT Support	1
	Practical Project	2
	Total	34

Cashflow projection of IT Assistant Training Programme

	2002-03 (\$million)	2003-04 (\$million)	2004-05 (\$million)	Total (\$million)
(a) Courseware Development (Note 1)	2.73	0.86	0.87	4.46
(b) Multimedia software and other additional software licence and hardware (Note 2)	3.5	0.80	0.60	4.9
(c) Direct training and support (Note 3)	12.3	11.9	11.5	35.7
(d) Admissions, placement and administration (Note 4)	2.6	2.6	2.6	7.8
(e) Project Administration (Note 5)	0.35	0.35	0.35	1.05
Total	21.48	16.51	15.92	53.91 say 54

Note 1: There is a need to update and further develop the course content to keep pace with IT development over time. The percentage of course content to be updated is estimated at 75% in 2002-03, 25% in 2003-04 and 30% in 2004-05. The cost includes corresponding expenses to modify the web-based modules.

Note 2: This includes the procurement of additional software, additional hardware and hardware upgrade and the provision of network and communication facilities.

Note 3: This includes the cost for classroom classes and web-based classes. It is assumed that the number of web-based trainee places to the number of classroom trainee places is 600 to 400, 700 to 300 and 800 to 200 in the three years 2002-05.

Note 4: This includes the administration expenses on advertising, enrolment and admissions.

Note 5: A temporary staff will be hired to oversee the project. As with the existing arrangement, the VTC will be the project co-ordinator. VTC will provide a portion of the training places as well as oversee the provision of the remainder of the places by training bodies of the Employees Retraining Board.