

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1764/04-05
(These minutes have been
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Minutes of special meeting
held on Monday, 3 January 2005 at 4:30 pm
in the Chamber of the Legislative Council Building**

- Members present** : Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman)
Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-ye, GBS, JP
Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, JP
Hon MA Lik, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
- Member absent** : Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
- Public Officers attending** : Item I
Professor Arthur KC LI, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Dr S K KWAN
Principal Education Officer (New Senior Secondary)

Dr Francis CHEUNG
Deputy Secretary-General of Hong Kong Examinations
and Assessment Authority

Mr Michael STONE, JP
Secretary-General, University Grants Committee

Resource Persons

City University of Hong Kong

Mrs Mary Rose CHU
Head of Academic Regulations and Records Office

Mr Gabriel CHAN
Director of Finance

Hong Kong Baptist University

Dr Robert LAM
Academic Registrar

Mr Alex SHUEN
Director of Finance

Lingnan University

Mr MUI Lok-wood
Registrar

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Mr LEE Shu-wing
Deputy Registrar

Mr Terence CHAN
Bursar

The Hong Kong Institute of Education

Mr Norman NGAI
Vice President (Resources & Administrative Services)

Dr SO Kwok-sang
Registrar

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Mrs Ada CHAN
Senior Assistant Academic Secretary, Academic Secretariat

Mr Chris C MONG
Associate Vice President and Director of Finance

The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

Professor Peter DOBSON
Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs

Mr Philip WONG
Director of Finance

The University of Hong Kong

Mr Henry W K WAI
Registrar

Mr Philip B L LAM
Director of Finance

Item II

Professor Arthur K C LI, GBS, JP
Secretary for Education and Manpower

Ms Irene YOUNG
Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and
Manpower (Higher Education)

Mr Michael STONE, JP
Secretary-General, University Grants Committee

**Attendance by
invitation** : Item I

The Federation of the Hong Kong Higher Education
Staff Associations

Mr CHAN Chi-wai
Vice-Chairman

Academic Staff Association, The University of Hong Kong

Mr A T YEUNG
Executive Committee Member

University of Hong Kong Employees Union

Mr CHU Kee-tung
Chairman

The Chinese University of Hong Kong Employees
General Union

Miss NG Hiu-chun
President

The Teachers' Association of The Chinese University of
Hong Kong

Professor WONG Chi-sum
Professor

City University of Hong Kong Staff Association

Mr FUNG Wai-wah
Treasurer

Hong Kong Federation of Students

Mr LO Wai-ming
Member

Hong Kong Youth & Tertiary Students Association

Miss Joe LO Hin-kwan
Vice-President

Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Mr Eddie SHEE Shing-chung
Director of Rights & Complaints Department

Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers

Miss WONG Lap-yan
Secretary

Hong Kong Special Schools Council

Dr Simon LEUNG
Chairman

Grant Schools Council

Mr George TAM Siu-ping
Chairman

Hong Kong Private Schools Association

Dr LEUNG Ping-wa
Executive Member

Hong Kong Society for Education In Art

Ms WONG So-lan
Research and Development

The Alliance for Small-class Learning and Teaching to Promote Quality Education

Mr WONG Hak-lim
Member

Shatin District Secondary School Heads Association

Mr LAI Nai-pang
Chairman

Kowloon City District School Principals' Liaison Committee

Ms CHAN Yuen-sheung
Vice-Chairman

The Joint Council of Parent-Teacher Associations of the Shatin District

Ms WONG Lai-ching
Chairman

Federation of Parent – Teacher Associations of the Central & Western District

Mrs Annie FUNG KI Mui-kuen
President

Parents' Alliance on Special Education System

Mrs LEUNG KONG Wai-ying
Secretary

Federation of Parent-Teacher Association, Tai Po District

Mr LAM Wai-hong
Vice-President

Wong Tai Sin District Secondary School Heads Association

Mrs LI MAK Lai-ying
Chairperson

Non-Academic Staff Association, The University of
Hong Kong

Mr Stephen CHAN Chit-kwai
President

**Clerk in
attendance** : Miss Flora TAI
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

**Staff in
attendance** : Mr Stanley MA
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

Miss Sherman WOO
Legislative Assistant (2)2

Action

I. Reforming the academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education

[Consultation document on “Reforming the academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education – Actions for investing in the future”]

The Chairman welcomed representatives of the Administration and deputations to the meeting.

Teaching Liberal Studies as a core subject in senior secondary curriculum

2. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that the community at large supported the implementation of a three-year junior and a three-year senior secondary education, linking to a four-year university education (the “3+3+4” structure). He pointed out that many teachers and parents had expressed reservations about the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a core subject in the senior secondary curriculum from the 2008-09 school year. In particular, the

Action

school sector had expressed concern about the design of the curriculum, the pedagogies and assessment for teaching Liberal Studies at senior secondary levels. He asked whether the Administration would consider adjusting the timing for incorporating Liberal Studies as a core subject of the new senior secondary curriculum.

3. Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) responded that the consultation on the proposed academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education would end on 19 January 2005. The Administration had received diverse views from the stakeholders and members of the public on the proposals in the consultation document entitled “Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Actions for Investing in the Future” (the consultation document). The Administration considered that the community as a whole supported the “3+3+4” structure and the introduction of Liberal Studies at senior secondary levels. He acknowledged that there were views opposing the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a core subject at the initial stage of implementing the “3+3+4” structure. He also pointed out that there were dissenting views on the design of the curriculum, the percentage of time allocation and assessment mechanism for Liberal Studies. The Administration would thoroughly consider the views and suggestions collected during the consultation.

4. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that many deputations attending the meeting on 20 December 2004 had expressed reservations about the implementation of Liberal Studies as a core subject from the 2008-09 school year. They had also expressed concern about the provision of sufficient support measures and professional development for teachers to teach Liberal Studies in senior secondary classes, and the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for performance assessment. He asked how the Administration would respond to the strong views of the community on the appropriate timing for including Liberal Studies as a core subject in the new senior secondary curriculum as well as the curriculum design, time allocation and assessment for teaching Liberal Studies in senior secondary classes.

5. SEM responded that the Administration remained open on the timing, curriculum, time allocation and assessment for teaching Liberal Studies as a core subject at senior secondary levels, but pointed out that the new curriculum and assessment mechanisms should be in place when the “3+3+4” structure was implemented. The Administration had consulted school councils and teacher associations before publishing the consultation document, and would continue to consult the education sector on the appropriate timing for implementation of the new academic structure, including the timing for including Liberal Studies as a core subject in the new senior secondary curriculum.

Action

Liberal Studies as a compulsory subject for university entrance

6. Referring to some media reports, the Chairman invited resource persons from UGC-funded institutions to clarify whether institutions had decided to incorporate Liberal Studies as a mandatory subject for enrolment in university programmes under the “3+3+4” structure.

7. Secretary-General, University Grants Committee (SG(UGC)) responded that the Heads of University Committee (HUCOM) had expressed support and its intention to incorporate the proposed new core subjects, including Liberal Studies as general admission criteria for university entrance. He stressed that he was not speaking on behalf of UGC-funded institutions on the matter as institutions had autonomy in setting the admission criteria for their programmes. He added that he had the impression that UGC-funded institutions considered Liberal Studies an important programme of study for enhancing whole-person development at the university level, and would welcome the inclusion of the subject as a core subject in the new senior secondary curriculum.

8. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that there was no need for UGC-funded institutions to announce the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a mandatory subject for enrolment during the consultation period. He said that some heads of institutions considered it necessary to exercise flexibility on the matter. He invited resources persons of UGC-funded institutions to express their views on the timing and method for incorporating Liberal Studies as a mandatory subject for university entrance.

9. Mr Henry WAI of the University of Hong Kong (HKU), Dr Robert LAM of the Baptist University of Hong Kong (BUHK), Mr LEE Shu-wing of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Mr MUI Lok-wood of the Lingnan University, Dr SO Kwok-sang of the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), Mrs Ada CHAN of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (HKPolyU), Professor Peter DOBSON of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Mrs Mary Rose CHU of the City University of Hong Kong responded that institutions in general supported the “3+3+4” structure and the incorporation of Liberal Studies in the new senior secondary curriculum. Members noted that institutions were at different stages of consultation and deliberations about the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a mandatory subject for university entrance. Ms Audrey EU suggested that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) should consult the views of UGC-funded institutions on the matter during the next stage of consultation.

10. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed reservations about the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a core subject in the new senior secondary curriculum. He considered that the curriculum of Liberal Studies for senior secondary education should link to the curriculum of Liberal Studies for higher education. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung expressed a similar concern and asked whether

Action

UGC-funded institutions would consult parents and schools on the general admission criteria for university entrance, in particular whether Liberal Studies would be a mandatory subject for university entrance.

11. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested UGC-funded institutions to take the lead to exchange views with schools and parents openly on the criteria for university entrance under the new academic structure. He pointed out that schools and parents were most concerned about the admission criteria for university entrance, and in particular whether Liberal Studies would be a mandatory subject for enrolment in the new four-year undergraduate programmes.

12. Dr SO Kwok-sang of HKIEd said that HKIEd had established an advisory committee consisting of school heads and teachers to collect views on the general criteria for admission to its four-year undergraduate programmes. HKIEd aimed to finalise the general admission criteria for approval by the HKIEd Council in mid-2005.

13. Mr LEE Shu-wing of CUHK said that CUHK was examining the criteria for admission to individual programmes under the new higher education system, and in particular the inclusion of Liberal Studies as a mandatory requirement for enrolment. He pointed out that CUHK would consider the curriculum design of Liberal Studies at senior secondary levels in deciding whether the subject should be a mandatory requirement for enrolment.

14. Mr Henry WAI of HKU said that HKU was consulting relevant councils and professional bodies on the design of its general admission criteria. He highlighted that HKU would aim to streamline the admission criteria for different programmes and include students' non-academic performance in consideration of their applications for enrolment.

15. Dr Robert LAM of HKBU and Mrs Ada CHAN of HKPolyU said that their institutions were also consulting relevant professional bodies and the stakeholders in the school sector on student enrolment matters under the new academic structure for higher education. The institutions aimed to finalise their general admission criteria in mid-2005.

16. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Mrs Selina CHOW asked how UGC-funded institutions would consult the stakeholders in the school sector on the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a core subject in the senior secondary curriculum and as a compulsory subject for admission to university programmes under the new academic structure. Mr LEUNG pointed out that teachers and parents considered that the incorporation of Liberal Studies as a core subject in the new senior secondary curriculum should be implemented when appropriate support measures were in place.

Action

17. Mr LEE Shu-wing of CUHK responded that institutions would consider the views of the stakeholders in the school sector in setting their general admission criteria for university entrance. He added that institutions providing teacher education programmes would collaborate with the school sector in the design of the curriculum and professional development of teachers for teaching Liberal Studies at senior secondary levels.

18. SG(UGC) supplemented that HUCOM had issued two press releases early in the consultation process on its intention to incorporate the proposed new core subjects, including Liberal Studies, as general admission criteria for university entrance under the “3+3+4” structure. He considered that the response of the resources persons of UGC-funded institutions at the meeting had reflected such intention.

19. Responding to the Chairman, SEM said that the Administration had set up a working group to discuss with the UGC sector on the general admission criteria for university entrance. He envisaged that UGC-funded institutions would be able to announce their admission criteria in mid-2005.

Consultation and implementation

20. Ms Audrey EU said that parents with children currently at primary five (P5) and primary six (P6) were particularly concerned about the impact of the “3+3+4” structure on education. However, the consultation document did not provide sufficient details such as the criteria for university admission and the choice of subjects offered by secondary schools under the new academic structure. She considered it difficult for parents to comment on the broad proposals in the consultation document. She asked whether the Administration would solicit the views of parents on the new academic structure by way of publishing the detailed proposals for further consultation at a later stage.

21. SEM responded that the current round of consultation aimed to establish community consensus on the implementation of the “3+3+4” structure and the major proposals in the consultation document, and had set out the design blueprint, the timetable and financial implications for the implementation of the new academic structure. Subject to the support of the community as a whole, the Administration would set out the detailed proposals on curriculum and assessment framework for further consultation.

22. The Chairman advised that given the support of the community to implement the “3+3+4” structure, the Administration should set out the objectives of the reform in academic structure and the strategies for implementing the reform proposals to achieve the expected outcomes. He pointed out that HKIED was concerned about the development of sufficient qualified teachers to teach Liberal Studies at senior secondary levels, and the UGC-funded institutions had not finalised their admission requirements for

Action

student enrolment.

23. SEM responded that there were diverse views on the implementation of the proposals in the consultation document. He pointed out that some Heads of UGC-funded institutions considered it appropriate to implement the “3+3+4” structure before the 2008-09 school year, while some school principals and teachers preferred more time for preparation. Teachers of Liberal Studies held a strong view that Liberal Studies should be taught as a core subject and students’ learning outcome on the subject should be assessed the same as other subjects in the curriculum. The Administration would have to consider the different views of the stakeholders and make appropriate decisions for implementation of the new academic structure.

24. Ms Audrey EU and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung requested EMB to set out the detailed plans and arrangements for implementing the major proposals in the document for further consultation such as the curriculum and support for teaching Liberal Studies, the design of the assessment mechanism, and the provision of special education under the “3+3+4” structure. Dr Fernando CHEUNG added that the document for the next round of consultation should set out the principles on the provision of special education under the “3+3+4” structure.

25. SEM responded that EMB would solicit the views of the special education sector on provision of special education under the “3+3+4” structure. He highlighted that in principle, children with special educational needs should enjoy a six-year secondary education as their counterparts in ordinary schools. EMB would exchange views with the special education sector on provision of special education and integrated education for children with different types of educational needs or disabilities in the document for further consultation.

26. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked how EMB would conduct the consultation and decide the adoption of the proposals in the consultation document in the face of the diverse views of stakeholders. He considered that EMB should provide a detailed reform blueprint and timetable for implementing the “3+3+4” structure so that secondary schools and teachers could prepare their school-based curriculum and plan the professional development for their teachers.

27. SEM responded that the consultation document had presented a blueprint for implementation of the “3+3+4” structure, and all members of the public could give their views on the proposals in the consultation document by way of sending electronic mails or written submissions to EMB. SEM said that he and staff of EMB had proactively solicited the views of the stakeholders since the start of the consultation exercise. He added that the Administration would set out the support measures and the arrangements for implementing the “3+3+4” structure in the report.

Action

28. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked how the Administration would improve the transparency and acceptability of its decisions on controversial issues in the consultation document. SEM responded that the Administration would state the different views of the stakeholders in the report.

29. Mr LEUNG Kwan-yuen considered that the community in general supported the “3+3+4” structure. He pointed out that some stakeholders were concerned about the provision of adequate support for implementation. He asked how the Administration would collaborate with the stakeholders with different views and concerns to speed up the implementation of new academic structure. SEM responded that the Administration would continue to listen to the views of the community on the “3+3+4” structure and start the preparation work for implementation as soon as the community had reached a consensus.

30. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong considered that comprehensive planning was essential for successful implementation of the “3+3+4” structure. He considered that the Administration should reflect on the experience gained from implementing education reforms, and plan the necessary support and measures to facilitate implementation. He advised the Administration to make effective use of the second round of consultation to collect more views and suggestions on the implementation of the new academic structure.

31. Ms Audrey EU asked when the Administration would publish the document for the next round of consultation, which should incorporate the detailed proposals on the curriculum framework and interfaces between the different stages of education including the general admission criteria for university entrance and the provision of special education for children with special educational needs.

32. SEM responded that the Administration would take a few months to analyse the views and suggestions collected in the consultation, and work out the new curriculum framework and assessment mechanisms for further consultation. He envisaged that the document for the next round of consultation would be available in mid-2005. He added that the Administration would start the necessary planning and preparation works for implementing the new academic structure, including the submission of related financial proposals to the Finance Committee for funding approval whilst the second round of consultation on curriculum and assessment framework was in progress.

Pathways to university education

33. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked about the proportion of secondary school graduates who would have access to university education under the new academic structure. He pointed out that at present, there were some 20 000 self-financing sub-degree places in the market, but only 800 subvented second-year undergraduate programme places for enrolment of sub-degree

Action

holders. He considered that the new academic structure should provide different pathways for sub-degree programme graduates to access university education.

34. SEM explained that the current senior secondary curriculum was designed to prepare students for enrolment in university programmes, but the fact was that only 18% of the secondary school graduates would have access to university education. SEM pointed out that not all students had an interest and the academic abilities to undertake an undergraduate study, and that many brilliant and successful people in the community were not university graduates.

35. SEM further said that the incorporation of career-oriented studies in the new curriculum framework would enable students who were less academically inclined to develop their potentials in the light of their needs, aptitudes and interests. He added that under the new senior secondary curriculum, students would be expected to take four core subjects and two to three elective subjects which could include one or more career-oriented studies. In addition, students would be arranged to participate in structured learning activities organised by schools within and outside the classrooms in order to achieve the non-academic goals of the curriculum for whole-person development.

36. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that under the new senior secondary curriculum, different pathways should be made available for students who were less successful in academic studies at junior secondary levels to access university education. He pointed out that parents expected their children to receive university education, and the new academic structure should provide students of different aspirations, interests, aptitudes and abilities with such access.

37. SEM agreed that parents expected their children to receive university education, but pointed out that students who were less academically inclined might not enjoy learning under a four-year university programme. Responding to the Chairman, SEM said that the current policy was to enable 18% of the population within the 17 to 20 age cohort to enrol in first-year-first-degree programmes in UGC-funded tertiary institutions and 60% of secondary school leavers to have access to post-secondary education. Dr Fernando CHEUNG remarked that compared with other advanced cities, the policy of providing 18% of the student population with access to university education was unsatisfactory.

Implications of the proposed revision of teacher-to-class ratios

38. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the secondary school sector was concerned about whether implementation of the proposed revision of teacher-to-class ratios for implementation of the “3+3+4” system would bring about surplus teachers in secondary schools. He pointed out that according to the survey conducted by the Subsidised Secondary School Council [LC Paper No. CB(2)481/04-05(06)] and the Grant Schools Council, some 170 aided

Action

secondary schools and 22 grant schools would have surplus teachers after implementation of the new academic structure. Mr CHEUNG said that he shared the view of the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers [LC Paper No. CB(2)422/04-05(03)] that the Administration should assure schools that implementation of the “3+3+4” structure would not bring about a reduction in teaching posts in each secondary school.

39. SEM responded that implementation of the “3+3+4” structure would not bring about surplus teachers in secondary schools, and around 1 200 additional teachers would be required during the “double-cohort” year. The Administration estimated that some 80% secondary schools would need additional teachers and only about 20% secondary schools would have surplus staff in the “double cohort” year. The Administration was well aware of the need to provide transitional arrangements for schools to move smoothly to the “3+3+4” system, and had proposed to allow schools to operate with a higher teacher establishment than its entitlement for a transition period of five years to phase out the surplus teachers by natural wastage.

40. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong pointed out that the number of surplus teachers in individual schools was reckoned by experienced teachers on the basis of the proposed revised teacher-to-class ratios and should reflect the staffing situation in secondary schools after the implementation of the “3+3+4” structure. Mr CHEUNG requested the Administration to liaise with the secondary school sector on the necessary arrangements to resolve the problem.

41. At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr George TAM of the Grant Schools Council said that after the “double-cohort” year, most secondary schools, in particular schools adopting English as the medium of instruction, would have surplus teachers under the new academic structure. He added that EMB had agreed to discuss with the Grant Schools Council on the arrangements to resolve the problem shortly. He expressed confidence that EMB would propose appropriate arrangements to ensure that no teachers would be made redundant after the implementation of the new academic structure.

42. SEM responded that after the “double cohort” year, the Administration would review the manpower situation in the school sector during the five-year transition period.

43. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested the Administration to estimate the number of surplus teachers arising from full implementation of the new academic structure and propose appropriate remedies. He considered that implementation of small class teaching in secondary schools would be an effective policy to reduce surplus teachers in secondary schools. He suggested that the Administration should keep the teaching workforce informed of the situation in order to maintain a motivated teaching workforce for implementing the new academic structure.

Action

Career-oriented studies

44. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the provision of career-oriented studies under the new senior secondary curriculum would affect the long-term operation of Project Yi Jin (PYJ). He also asked whether PYJ graduates were qualified for enrolment in sub-degree programmes and subsequently have access to university education.

45. SEM replied that PYJ was launched in October 2000 as a bridging programme to provide an alternative route and to expand the continuing education opportunities for secondary school leavers and adult learners. It aimed to upgrade students' knowledge through combining academic and practical skills training with emphasis on biliteracy, trilingualism and information technology application. Graduates of PYI would be awarded a full certificate which was equivalent to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and could further their studies in the member institutions of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institution. After a review of PYJ in the last quarter of 2004 which showed that PYJ had performed an effective role of providing an alternative education pathway for low achievers in HKCEE, the Administration would seek fund to continue the operation of PYJ for three more academic years.

46. Mrs Selina CHOW considered that the long term future of PYJ would have to be reviewed in the light of the proposed reform of the academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education which incorporated the provision of career-oriented studies in the senior secondary curriculum. She pointed out that there would be a wide range of career-related programmes operated by different providers at different locations. She asked whether and how students would be provided with sufficient places in career-oriented studies under the new senior secondary structure.

47. SEM responded that the Administration would plan the provision of career-oriented studies under the "3+3+4" structure in a co-ordinated manner. He pointed out that starting from the 2003-04 school year, a total of 12 career-oriented studies relating to different trades had been operating in senior secondary schools to offer choices and diversities in the curriculum. Students might select career-oriented studies as alternatives to the elective subjects in the light of their particular needs, aptitudes and interests. As regards the locations of classes, students might join the programmes offered by the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) or Caritas. Alternatively, schools could invite tutors from IVE or Caritas to run the programmes in the school, and assist in training the qualified teachers in the schools to teach career-oriented studies. SEM added that the supply of places in career-oriented studies would be adjusted in the light of students' demand, and schools in the same district might collaborate to provide career-oriented studies for their students.

Action

Funding

48. Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered that the proposed increase in tuition fees for senior secondary education and higher education would add substantial financial burden to low-income families and students. He pointed out that the average family income of current undergraduates in HKPolyU was around \$16,000. Dr CHEUNG considered that low-income families could hardly afford the \$200,000 tuition fees for a four-year undergraduate programme.

49. SEM agreed that the proposed increase in university tuition fees would add financial burden to students and their parents, but pointed out that the Administration considered it reasonable for financially capable parents and students to share part of the costs incurred for the provision of higher education. The Administration would explore the feasible ways to improve the student financial assistance schemes and ensure that no students would be deprived of their right to education through lack of means.

50. Ms Audrey EU asked whether the policy commitment to provide the capital and non-recurrent costs of about \$6.7 billion and the recurrent costs of \$1.1 billion for implementation of the “3+3+4” structure would affect the resources allocation for basic education. SEM responded that the additional funding were new commitment and would not affect the resources allocation for basic education. Ms Audrey EU remarked that she anticipated that the savings arising from the declining student population in basic education would be used to implement small class teaching and upgrade teachers’ professionalism in the sector.

Provision of 12-year free education and adult education

51. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that under the policy on the provision of nine year free basic education, many secondary three students were forced to leave schools at the age of 16 but could not find an employment due to a lack of working experience. He considered that in the face of an increasingly knowledge-based economy, the Administration should provide 12-year free education to all children under the “3+3+4” structure.

52. SEM responded that the Administration had no plan to extend the provision of free education from nine to 12 years at this stage. He pointed out that there were sufficient secondary four (S4) places for junior secondary graduates to continue their secondary studies and at present, about 98.6% of S3 students continue their studies in S4 classes. The remaining 1.4% S3 graduates had decided to discontinue their secondary school studies after completing basic education.

53. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung requested the

Action

Administration to incorporate the provision of adult education under the new academic structure. The Administration noted their request.

II. Recurrent funding for University Grants Committee-funded institutions in the 2005/06 to 2007/08 triennium

[File Ref : EMB (MPE) CR 8/2041/03, LC Paper Nos. CB(2)517/04-05(01), CB(2)528/04-05(01) and CB(2)554/04-05(01)]

54. At the invitation of the Chairman, SEM briefed members on the main proposals in the Legislative Council Brief on recurrent funding for University Grants Committee(UGC)-funded institutions in the 2005-06 to 2007-08 triennium [File Ref : EMB (MPE) CR 8/2041/03].

55. The Chairman informed the meeting that the Administration intended to submit its proposal on recurrent funding for UGC-funded institutions in the 2005-08 triennium to the Finance Committee for consideration at its meeting on 14 January 2005. In this connection, the Panel would receive deputations from the higher education sector on the proposed recurrent funding at the special meeting scheduled for 11 January 2005 at 8:30 am. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that the Administration should consider postponing the discussion of the funding proposal by the Finance Committee to a later date, in order to allow sufficient time for the Panel to consult UGC-funded institutions, their staff associations and students unions, and concern organisations.

Recurrent funding for UGC-funded institutions in the 2005-08 triennium

56. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested for a breakdown of the allocations to UGC-funded institutions in respect of the following specific recurrent funding recommendations in the 2005-08 triennium as shown in Annex B of the Legislative Council Brief –

- (a) Earmarked Research Grants;
- (b) Grants for restructuring and collaboration activities;
- (c) Grants for research development activities; and
- (d) Central allocation vote.

57. Secretary General, University Grants Committee (SG(UGC)) explained that around \$505 million was earmarked for allocation of research grants to UGC-funded institutions in each academic year. The Research Grants Council (RGC), working in close partnership with the UGC, would advise and report to the Government through the UGC on the needs of UGC-funded institutions in the field of academic research, including the identification of priority areas.

Action

RGC would recommend the allocations of the research grants and monitor the implementation of such grants. RGC was assisted by four specialist subject panels comprising of both local and overseas academics in assessing applications for research grants on the basis of peer review. A portion of the earmarked research grants (around 14%) was directly allocated to institutions on the basis of their staff size and other factors relevant to research. The major portion (around 80%) was allocated in response to competing bids for specific project grants from individuals or groups of staff of institutions. Another portion was centrally allocated in response to bids from institutions for major research facilities/equipment or library collections to support collaborative research involving two or more institutions, or group research activities that operated across disciplines and/or normal institutional boundaries.

58. SG(UGC) further explained the Administration's agreement that the savings arising from the withdrawal of subvention from those taught postgraduate programmes which were previously publicly-funded could be retained by UGC to support institutional restructuring and collaborations as advocated in the UGC document entitled "To make a difference, To move with the times". Since research and teaching performance were equally important to the long-term development of higher education, UGC would also provide a total of 450 additional research postgraduate places in the 2005-08 triennium to strengthen research development in Hong Kong. Institutions would be allocated some of the 450 places on a pro-rata basis, and others on the basis of their research performance and the merits of their research proposals. As regards the central allocation vote, a total of 210 million was set aside for needs which might emerge during the triennium.

59. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong asked why the teaching development and language enhancement grants for UGC-funded institutions in the 2001-04 triennium were not shown in the funding proposal for the 2005-08 triennium.

60. SG(UGC) explained that the teaching development and language enhancement grants were included under the block grant for individual institutions but would be specified in UGC's letter to individual institutions confirming the allocation of recurrent funding for the 2005-08 triennium. He added that the proposed allocations for teaching development and language enhancement in the 2005-08 triennium remained at the levels for the 2001-04 triennium, i.e. an annual allocation of about \$77 million for teaching development and \$33 million for language enhancement and that UGC attached great importance to these activities.

Funding cut for Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd)

61. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that if the proposed recurrent funding was approved by the Finance Committee, HKIEd would suffer from a reduction of funding from about \$790 million in the 2003-04 to about \$420 million in the

Action

2007-08 academic year, i.e. a funding cut of about 47% in five years. He doubted how HKIED could possibly survive and continue operation under such a substantial reduction of funding. He asked how the Administration would expect HKIED to operate and develop in the future, or whether the Administration was aimed at achieving a merger of HKIED with other institutions by way of imposing a 47% funding cut in five years.

62. SG(UGC) responded that the reduction in recurrent funding to HKIED for the 2005-08 triennium was mainly the result of a reduction in the number of publicly-funded student places, phasing out of front-end loading within the triennium, and replacement of exemption from 10% unit cost reduction in the 1998-2001 triennium by a monotechnic premium. He added that the delivery of 5% efficiency saving in the 2007-08 academic year as well as the residual effect of the 3% civil service pay adjustment effective on 1 January 2005 were common to all UGC-funded institutions.

63. SG(UGC) explained that the provision of teacher education places in the UGC sector was subject to the specific manpower planning requirements of the Administration, which would take into account the current situation of surplus teachers, projected demand for teachers in the light of projected decline in school student population, demands for teachers in specific key learning areas, and anticipated needs in upgrading existing teachers in the coming years. The fact that HKIED was a monotechnic institution focusing on the delivery of teacher education programmes had restrained its flexibility to switch its programme operation to “compensate” for the reduced demand in teacher education places.

64. SG(UGC) further explained that front-end loading was only given to institutions at their early stage of development or upgrading, normally within a period of nine years. He pointed out that HKIED had received front-end loading since 1998-99 and had already become a well-developed institution and obtained self-accreditation status in 2004. UGC considered it appropriate to gradually reduce its front-end loading during the triennium and eventually remove it in the 2007-08 academic year. SG(UGC) added that HKIED was well aware of the need to remove its front-end loading as one of the consequences of becoming a self-accrediting institution, and the reduction and removal of front-end loading for HKIED was consistent with what UGC had done for other institutions in the past.

65. SG(UGC) also explained that HKIED was exempted from the 10% unit cost reduction for UGC-funded institutions in the 1998-2001 triennium, in view of the fact that it was then at a very early stage of its development. The anomaly was no longer appropriate since HKIED was now a mature institution. However, UGC recognised its monotechnic nature in programme planning and therefore had made extra-formulaic(upwards) adjustment of about 6% to its total grant for the 2005-08 triennium.

Action

66. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that he had no objection to the 3% civil service pay adjustment and the proposed “0-0-X” model, i.e. recurrent saving up to 5% to be achieved from the 2007-08 academic year. He, however, considered it unfair and unrealistic to require HKIED to continue operation under a 47% reduction of funding in five years. Mr CHEUNG further said that while there might be justifications for various funding cuts, the Administration should consider from a practical and operational perspective whether these cuts should be imposed on HKIED at the same time. He suggested that the Administration should propose a fair and reasonable reduction in funding for HKIED having regard to its special circumstances, and consider extending the timing for removing its front-end loading for the sake of the education sector. Mr CHEUNG also asked whether the Administration had proposed to reduce funding on in-service training programmes offered by HKIED.

67. SEM responded that it would be unfair to Lingnan University and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology if front-end loading were provided to HKIED for more than nine years. He did not agree that HKIED could not survive the proposed reduction in funding for the 2005-08 triennium. He pointed out that apart from UGC grants, there were huge amount of resources for the provision of professional development programmes for in-service school teachers to cope with the needs of education reform and curriculum reform including training on teaching Liberal Studies under the proposed new senior secondary curriculum. He considered that HKIED should aim at obtaining new resources to provide appropriate development and upgrading programmes for serving teachers in support of the education reform and curriculum reform.

68. The Chairman asked whether HKIED would be funded to provide professional development programmes for in-service teachers in support of the proposed reform in senior secondary education. SEM responded that HKIED would have to propose appropriate and competitive professional programmes for in-service teachers in the light of the needs of the education reform and curriculum reform. SEM considered it fair that HKIED should compete with other institutions for allocation of education resources.

69. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong was of the view that the Administration should consider the different circumstances of individual institutions in proposing reduction of funding for the UGC sector. He requested the Administration to extend the timing for removing front-end loading for HKIED having regard to its history of development. He pointed out that HKIED had no strong views against reduction of funding for pre-service teacher training as a result of the decline in student population, but considered it unreasonable to reduce funding on programmes for in-service teachers. He suggested that the Administration should discuss with HKIED to resolve the problem.

70. SEM responded that reduction in funding were also made for in-service teacher programmes in other UGC-funded institutions, and removal of front-end

Action

loading for other UGC-funded institutions including Lingnan University which was smaller than HKIEd in student enrolment had all been made in eight or nine years.

71. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong remarked that no institution had suffered from and could survive a 47% reduction of funding in five years. SEM responded that under the proposed reform in academic structure for junior and senior secondary education, there would be substantial demands for additional teachers in various teaching areas and professional development programmes for in-service teachers in the next few years. HKIEd should work out competitive programmes in the light of the current needs of the education sector and bid for additional allocations. SEM believed that the HKIEd management was well aware of the changing circumstances in education and should be able to propose suitable programmes to meet the needs of the teaching force.

72. Ms Audrey EU shared the view of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and said that a 47% reduction in funding in five years was too harsh for HKIEd to bear. She asked whether HKIEd should be recognised for having achieved self-accreditation status in 2004 by way of the earmarked grants for restructuring and collaboration activities.

73. SG(UGC) responded that the earmarked grants for re-structuring and collaboration activities was intended to encourage institutions to review their governance structure with the aim of improving internal efficiency, and to collaborate with each other to improve quality and cost-effectiveness in the provision of higher education. The grants were not intended for rewarding achievements in the course of normal institutional development such as becoming a self-accrediting institution. He added that in the first round of the allocation exercise for the earmarked grants for re-structuring and collaboration, funding had been provided for three re-structuring and two collaboration proposals. UGC welcomed applications from HKIEd in the second round of the allocation exercise for provision of grants amounting between \$10 million to \$25 million each.

74. Ms Audrey EU remarked that in achieving the self-accreditation status in the provision of teacher education, HKIEd had fulfilled its major role in the higher education sector stated in the UGC document entitled "To make a difference, To move with the times". She considered that in recognition of such achievement, the Administration should consider providing some special grants to HKIEd and exercise flexibility in removing the front-end loading for HKIEd.

75. Referring to the submission from the Academic Staff Association of HKIEd [LC Paper No. CB(2)517/04-05(01)], Ms Audrey EU asked whether 60% of the reduction in funding arising from an estimated decrease in student number in the 2005-08 triennium fell in the area of in-service professional upgrading. She pointed out that according to the submission, there were a

Action

reduction of full-time equivalent places for in-service school teachers from 478 in 2004-05 to 350 in 2007-08 and a reduction of upgrading programme places for teachers in early childhood education from 780 in 2004-05 to 340 in 2007-08.

76. SEM responded that the demand for in-service teacher training places was decreasing as more and more serving teachers had acquired a Bachelor of Education degree and completed the Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate in Education (PGDE or PCEd). He pointed out that at the moment, about 53% and 80% of teachers in primary and secondary schools respectively had both degree and teacher training qualifications. SEM considered that as a long-term development strategy, HKIEd should aim at operating more programmes relating to secondary education through strategic collaborations with other institutions such as collaborating with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology to provide two-year professional development programmes for their graduates in education. He added that despite the decline in student population, the overall quality of primary school teachers had improved considerably in recent years.

77. Ms Audrey EU suggested that the Administration and UGC should discuss with HKIEd the provision of upgrading programmes for in-service teachers in early childhood education before the special meeting on 11 January 2005. The Chairman added that as no UGC-funded institution had suffered from a 47% reduction of funding in five years before, the Administration should re-consider the reduction of funding for HKIEd and where appropriate, give special consideration to the circumstances of HKIEd. SEM responded that HKIEd should proactively pursue deep collaboration in its areas of strength with other institutions to enhance the higher education system in Hong Kong. The Administration would provide additional funding to HKIEd for its proposals on deep collaborations with other institutions in support of the education and curriculum reforms.

78. Dr Fernando CHEUNG expressed regret about the adoption of a self-financing policy for the provision of sub-degree and taught postgraduate programmes in UGC-funded institutions. He pointed out that the policy had adversely affected in-service teachers and working adults in pursuit of further education opportunities. Dr CHEUNG also shared the concern of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Ms Audrey EU about the adverse impact of the 47% reduction in funding on HKIEd. He considered that the substantial funding cut would force HKIEd to consider strategic restructuring in staff establishment and salary administration including reduction in staff establishment and salaries. He suggested that the Administration should collaborate with UGC to ensure that the normal operation of HKIEd would not be jeopardised by the need to reduce recurring funding for the UGC sector in the face of fiscal deficits. SEM reiterated that HKIEd should review its operation and propose new programmes for pre-service and in-service teachers in the light of the changing educational needs.

Action

79. Mr LEUNG Kwan-yuen considered that the Administration should collaborate with HKIED management to ensure HKIED's continuous operation in the future. He suggested that the HKIED management should present more information and figures in respect of the impact of the reduction in funding on the long term operation of HKIED at the special meeting on 11 January 2005.

80. Mr Norman NGAI of HKIED said that HKIED management would explain at the meeting on 11 January 2005 the financial difficulties of HKIED in the face of a 47% reduction of funding in five years. He considered that UGC should also elaborate on its calculation on the allocation of recurrent funding to HKIED for the 2005-08 triennium in detail.

81. Mr Norman NGAI of HKIED further pointed out that the front-end loading for HKIED was reduced from the 2004-05 academic year and would be removed in the 2007-08 academic year, i.e. over a period of four years instead of nine years. SG(UGC) explained that the same duration for reduction of front-end loading from the maximum entitlement to zero had been adopted for other institutions.

Increase of university fees

82. Ms Audrey EU asked whether the proposed increase in university fees in the consultation document entitled "Reforming the academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education" would increase the existing cost recovery ratio of undergraduate programmes from 18% to 26-27% in HKIED as stated in the submission of the Academic Staff Association of HKIED.

83. SG(UGC) responded that while the overall indicative tuition fees for UGC-funded programmes were set with reference to the policy to achieve a cost recovery ratio of 18%, the actual recovery ratio would vary from institution to institution as the student unit costs of individual programmes offered by institutions were not the same. Whether a policy on differential fees should be adopted for undergraduate programmes would have to be decided by the community as a whole. He understood that the Administration might consider the matter in the light of the views received from the current consultation on the proposed new academic structure for higher education.

84. Dr Fernando CHEUNG asked whether the Administration would consider the adoption of a uniform cost-recovery ratio for all UGC-funded institutions. SEM responded that a uniform cost recovery ratio for all institutions would mean the adoption of differential fees for university programmes, which would in turn increase the financial burden of students in certain disciplines such as medical and engineering studies.

Action

Follow-up

85. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong requested the Administration to work out with HKIEd some pragmatic ways to resolve the problems arising from the proposed reduction of funding before the meeting on 11 January 2005. He also urged that other institutions should consider the history of development and circumstances of HKIEd, and would not object to giving special consideration to HKIEd in the timing for removing its front-end loading.

86. The Chairman added that according to the submission of the Academic Staff Association of HKIEd, staff of HKIEd had no objection to the principle of reducing funding on the basis of a decline in student population. It only requested for a longer period for reduction of funding such as deferring the removal of the front-end loading to a later date. SEM agreed to re-consider the matter.

Admin

III Any other business

87. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 7:20 pm.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
2 June 2005