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Panel on Education

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 22 March 2007**

Retitling of The Hong Kong Institute of Education as a university

Purpose

This paper sets out the existing policy on the award of a university title, and provides information on questions raised by Members in the Legislative Council (LegCo) meetings concerning the retitling of The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) as a university.

Existing policy

2. Under the existing policy, in processing an application for university title, the Administration considers the merits of each case and takes into account various relevant factors. These include the objective of establishing the university; the quality and standard of the institution's academic and research programmes; the effectiveness of its teaching and learning; the institution's internal governance structure; the quality of leadership of its management; the financial position of the institution and its sustainability; and the public interests. Consideration is also given to the prevailing international trend for the development of comprehensive universities which offer a range of degree programmes in various disciplines. The Administration will take into account the views of the University Grants Committee (UGC) or the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) and then submit its recommendation to the Chief Executive (CE) in Council for consideration. Where the change of an institution's title involves legislative amendments to its governing ordinance, such legislative amendments will be subject to the approval of LegCo.

Retitling of HKIEd as a university

3. Two questions had been raised in LegCo in the current term concerning the retitling of HKIEd as a university. Apart from seeking information on the existing policy on the grant of a university title, Members were concerned about the relationship between self-accreditation and university title.

4. According to the Administration, to be granted self-accrediting status, a higher education institution must have an enduring commitment to quality, and the capability to do so with sound internal quality assurance mechanisms and improvement processes to ensure the quality and standards of its programmes and graduates. When considering whether an institution could be granted self-accrediting status, UGC or HKCAA would conduct an institutional review to assess the institution's readiness to take responsibility for the quality and standards of its own programmes. Taking into account the result of the institutional review, the Administration would submit its recommendation to CE in Council for consideration.

5. The Administration pointed out that self-accreditation and university title were two separate issues. An institution awarded self-accrediting status would not automatically be granted the title of a university. HKIEd obtained self-accrediting status in respect of its teacher education programmes in 2004. While the Administration had no preconceived view on whether HKIEd should acquire a university title, according to Encyclopaedia Britannica, a university was an "institution of higher education, usually comprising a liberal arts and sciences college and graduate and professional schools that confer degrees in various fields", which meant that universities, by nature and design, should not be monoteknic. As at February 2007, the Administration had not received HKIEd's application for a university title.

6. As to whether the lack of a university title had affected the public image of HKIEd and its ability to compete for intake of students with good academic results, the Administration responded that HKIEd was established in 1994 as a post-secondary institution for providing professional training to teachers. Its role had been well understood and appreciated by the community. There was no evidence to support that the development of HKIEd had been adversely affected by the lack of a university title. The Administration considered that the granting of a university title did not necessarily help improve the quality of student intake. Quite a number of outstanding higher education institutions overseas, such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and California Institute of Technology in the United States, did not carry a university title.

Latest development

7. An announcement was made by HKIED on 7 February 2007 that the Council of HKIED had decided to proceed with the preparation of a development blueprint, with a view to submitting a formal application together with the blueprint for a university title to the Administration by mid 2007.

Relevant papers

8. A list of the relevant papers on the LegCo website is in the **Appendix**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
20 March 2007

**Relevant papers on
retitling of The Hong Kong Institute of Education as a university**

| Meeting | Date of meeting | Paper |
|---------------------|------------------------|---|
| Legislative Council | 7.12.2005 | Official Record of Proceedings Pages 57 - 60 (Question) |
| Legislative Council | 7.2.2007 | Official Record of Proceedings (Question) |

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