

**For discussion on
11 December 2006**

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
Articulation and Employment Opportunities of
Sub-degree Holders**

INTRODUCTION

The prime objective of our manpower development policy is to enhance the quality and competitiveness of our human resources so as to bridge the manpower gap faced by Hong Kong and to meet the challenges brought by a knowledge-based economy. The policy of expanding our post-secondary education sector, in particular the sub-degree sector, serves to achieve this goal. The sub-degree qualifications, including primarily the Associate Degree (AD) and Higher Diploma (HD), are intended to prepare graduates both for work and for further studies.

2. As the sub-degree sector expands and matures, there is increasing expectation for better recognition of the sub-degree (especially AD) qualifications for employment purpose, as well as a growing demand for articulation opportunities for the sub-degree graduates. This paper outlines the efforts made by the Government in promoting the employment and articulation opportunities of sub-degree graduates.

Recognition of Sub-degree Qualifications for Employment Purpose

Employment in the Public Sector

3. As compared with the HD qualification which has over 35 years of history in Hong Kong, the AD qualification, which was introduced into Hong Kong in 2000, has a relatively short history and hence is less familiar to some employers. To enhance the recognition of this new qualification, the Government has taken the lead in accepting local AD qualifications for civil service appointment purposes. As a matter of policy, the HD and AD qualifications are treated on par. Currently, there

are 22 civil service grades accepting sub-degree qualifications as entry qualifications (details at Annex). In 2005, the Government has recruited 1 206 sub-degree holders out of some 4 800 persons with qualifications at sub-degree or above levels.

Employment in the Private Sector

4. For employment in the private sector, the Government's role is to promote the sub-degree qualifications among employers and the business community. In this regard, we have stepped up efforts in promoting a better understanding of the AD qualification by organizing a "Business for Education Luncheon" hosted by the Secretary for Education and Manpower in June this year, and launching a pilot job-matching scheme for sub-degree graduates as a follow-up. We have subsequently received job offers from some 50 companies, and with the assistance of the course providers, arranged more than 170 sub-degree graduates for job interviews.

Surveys on Sub-degree Graduates

5. To gauge the opinions of employers on the performance of sub-degree graduates, and to examine the progression pathways of sub-degree graduates, the Government will conduct employer surveys and tracking surveys on sub-degree graduates. These surveys will provide valuable insights into the performance of the sub-degree graduates in the workplace, as well as the expectations and needs of the business sector. The survey results will be published for reference by the Government, the institutions, the business sector, and the community at large.

Collaboration between Institutions and the Business Community

6. To improve the employability of sub-degree graduates, it is imperative to encourage a broader and deeper dialogue between the post-secondary institutions and the business sector/professional bodies. We strongly believe that the post-secondary institutions should engage the business community and professional bodies in the early stage of curriculum development and in arranging internship opportunities, so that

there will be continuous and constructive interaction between the two sides to ensure that the post-secondary programmes meet the changing needs of prospective employers on the one hand, and provide pre-employment job experience to sub-degree students on the other. To foster industry-academia partnership, EMB organized a “Seminar on Sub-degree Qualifications” in October 2006 to provide a platform for direct communication between the sub-degree course providers and the business sector. Over 120 participants from the post-secondary institutions and the business community attended the seminar. Indeed, many employers and professionals have expressed interest in engaging in more in-depth discussions with the institutions on issues of common interest.

Articulation Opportunities for Sub-degree Graduates

7. We recognize that in a knowledge-based society, there is strong demand for higher education opportunities. In line with the spirit of lifelong learning, the Government is supportive of the development of multiple progression pathways so that students can further their studies according to their interests, abilities and career plans.

Articulation in Publicly-funded Institutions

8. Recognising the aspirations of sub-degree graduates for further studies, the Government has already created a total of 1 680 publicly-funded senior year places in the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions from the 2005/06 academic year onwards. On top of this commitment, the Government has further announced the plan to create an additional 2 000 plus senior year undergraduate places in phases from the 2006/07 academic year to the 2010/11 academic year. The creation of these some 3 700 Year 2 and Year 3 undergraduate places would provide more articulation opportunities for sub-degree holders to further their studies in the UGC-funded institutions.

Articulation in Self-financing Institutions

9. There is however a limit to which the Government can expand the number of articulation places for sub-degree graduates in the

publicly-funded institutions and within a short period of time. In this regard, we consider that the self-financing sector can play a pivotal role in meeting the aspirations of sub-degree graduates.

10. There are at present three local self-financed institutions with degree-awarding status¹. Together they are providing more than 2 300 undergraduate places at intake level in the 2006/07 academic year. By way of advance standing or credit transfer, sub-degree graduates may articulate to the senior years of such degree programmes. For example, the Open University of Hong Kong has admitted some 600 students to its senior year full-time degree places in the 2006/07 academic year. These are valuable articulation opportunities for the sub-degree graduates.

11. Sub-degree graduates may also pursue non-local degree courses in Hong Kong operated jointly by overseas universities and local post-secondary institutions, as well as those operated by overseas universities independently through a local operator in Hong Kong. As at November 2006, there are about 351 non-local degree courses being offered in Hong Kong. There are also 150 non-local institutions in 10 countries and regions that recognize our AD qualifications for admission to their degree courses or for credit transfer. These articulation routes are complementary to the provision of publicly-funded places at the UGC-funded institutions, and are providing increasingly popular and viable alternatives for sub-degree graduates.

Way Forward

12. Earlier this year, EMB has completed Phase 1 of the Review of the Post-secondary Education Sector. Members were consulted on the Review Report on 27 March 2006. Taking into account the comments received during the public consultation exercise on the Phase 1 Review Report, EMB has embarked on Phase 2 of the Review, which will examine further the relevant issues pertaining to the development of the post-secondary education sector, including employment and articulation issues, and consider appropriate measures to promote the employment prospects and enhance the articulation opportunities of sub-degree

¹ The Open University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Shue Yan College and Chu Hai College of Higher Education.

graduates. The Phase 2 Review will be completed before mid-2007.

**Education and Manpower Bureau
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Annex

Civil Service Grades Recognizing Sub-degree Qualifications

	Bureau / Department	Rank
1	Census and Statistics Department	Statistical Officer II
2	Civil Aviation Department	Operations Officer
3	Civil Service Bureau	Official Languages Officer II
4	Correctional Services Department	Industrial Officer (Correctional Services)
5	Correctional Services Department	Officer
6	Customs and Excise Department	Inspector of Customs and Excise
7	Department of Health	Occupational Therapist I*
8	Department of Health	Optometrist*
9	Department of Health	Physiotherapist I*
10	Department of Health	Radiographer II*
11	Fire Services Department	Ambulance Officer
12	Fire Services Department	Station Officer (Operational)
13	Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	Health Inspector II
14	Hong Kong Police Force	Inspector of Police
15	Hong Kong Police Force	Police Translator II
16	Immigration Department	Immigration Officer
17	Judiciary	Court Interpreter II
18	Labour Department	Occupational Safety Officer II
19	Leisure and Cultural Services Department	Assistant Leisure Services Manager II
20	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer	Analyst / Programmer II
21	Social Welfare Department	Occupational Therapist I*
22	Social Welfare Department	Physiotherapist I*

* At present, no relevant Associate Degree programmes are being offered in Hong Kong for the six grades with an asterisk.