

立法會

Legislative Council

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Panel on Education

Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 11 December 2006

Provision of hostels for tertiary students

Purpose

This paper sets out the existing policy on the provision of hostels for tertiary students and summarises the areas of concern raised by Members.

Existing policy

2. Before 1982, the Government's primary objective was to provide adequate facilities for tuition and study, and student hostels and facilities would only be provided at public expense to the extent that their absence or inadequacy would frustrate the primary objective and only if the cost could not be met by private funds. In 1982, the Government reviewed the provision of student hostels at the tertiary institutions in the context of the review of post-secondary and technical education. The Government agreed that hostel places at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and University of Hong Kong (HKU) should be provided for up to 50% and 25% of their student population respectively. The provision was subject to the availability of suitable sites and necessary funds, and on condition that 75% of the cost would be met by the Government if the remaining 25% could be raised privately. The provision of hostel places for CUHK was pitched at a higher level in view of the longer travelling time then experienced by the students. In 1987, the Government advised the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) that student hostels should be provided for up to 30% of its student population.

3. As part of the overall review of the development of higher education in Hong Kong, the University Grants Committee (UGC) established a working group in September 1993 to review the space and accommodation provided to the UGC-funded institutions. In March 1996, UGC submitted to the Government its

recommendations based on the working group's initial findings and with the request that the Government should review its current policy on the provision of publicly-funded student hostels at the UGC-funded institutions.

4. In December 1996, the Government announced its revised policy on the provision of publicly-funded student hostels applicable to the UGC-funded institutions, including the City University of Hong Kong (CityU), the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Polytechnic University of Hong Kong (PolyU) which hitherto were not provided with student hostels. The criteria used for calculating the level of provision of student hostels at UGC-funded institutions were as follows -

- (a) all undergraduate students should be given the opportunity to stay in student hostels for at least one year of their courses;
- (b) all research postgraduate students and non-local students should be granted student hostel places; and
- (c) undergraduates whose daily travelling time exceeded four hours should be provided with student hostel places.

5. The above criteria did not apply to the Lingnan College because the Government had approved a hostel project for the College in 1993 to provide accommodation for 50% of its student population, having regard to its remote location in Tuen Mun and its aspirations to develop itself into a fully residential liberal arts tertiary institution as a means to fulfil its role and mission in the higher education sector.

Members' concern

6. The Panel on Education has not discussed the provision of student hostels at the UGC-funded institutions per se. However, questions on the subject had been raised in the context of discussing the new education initiative in the 2005 Policy Address, at Council meetings and during the scrutiny of the 2006-2007 Estimates of Expenditure of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR). Issues of concern raised by Members are summarised in the ensuing paragraphs.

Adequacy of hostel places

7. At the policy briefing by the Secretary for Education and Manpower (SEM) on the 2005 Policy Address on 20 January 2005, members noted the proposal of the Administration to relax the immigration control to allow more non-local students, in particular those from the Mainland, to come to Hong Kong for studying different programmes in different institutions. Members had expressed concern about the adequacy of hostel places for local and non-local students.

8. SEM advised that the Administration noted members' concern about the increasing demand for student hostel places in university campus. The UGC-funded institutions would review their space requirements and draw up their campus development plans accordingly.

9. Members reiterated their concern at the policy briefing on the 2005-2006 Policy Address on 20 October 2005. Members suggested that consideration should be made to redeveloping vacant factory buildings into hostels for both local and non-local students. SEM responded that the Administration was collaborating with the UGC-funded institutions on a review of the provision of hostel places under the new academic structure for higher education and was considering their proposals in this regard.

10. In response to a question raised at the Council meeting on 22 November 2006 regarding the supply and demand of student hostels at various universities, the Administration replied that in accordance with the existing criteria for calculating the level of publicly-funded student hostel provision, the UGC sector, as a whole, should be provided with about 27 700 publicly-funded hostel places by the 2007-2008 academic year. As there were currently about 21 400 publicly-funded student hostel places, the UGC sector would have a shortfall of about 6 300 publicly-funded hostel places by the 2007-2008 academic year.

11. The Administration also pointed out that in view of the lead time required for planning and executing hostel projects, it had been encouraging the institutions to make the best use of their existing stock of student hostels and to explore imaginatively other possible options to meet students' (including non-local students') demand for hostels. For example, CUHK and PolyU had entered into collaboration arrangements with the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) whereby students of CUHK and PolyU would be able to take up HKIEd's student hostels and be provided with shuttle services transporting them to and from campuses. Some institutions were also considering other short-term relief measures, such as temporary conversion of some existing hostel units so as to accommodate more students.

12. The Administration further informed Members that it had provided the UGC sector with an additional 1 840 publicly-funded student hostel places to cater for the accommodation needs of non-local and exchange students. The UGC had already allocated these places to the institutions, and the institutions were in the process of drawing up their student hostel projects. Moreover, funding had been earmarked for three hostel projects undertaken respectively by HKU, CUHK and CityU. Both PolyU and HKUST had submitted their hostel project proposals to the UGC for consideration. Upon completion of these projects, a total of about 27 800 public-funded hostel places would be made available to meet the existing shortfall.

Criteria for allocating hostel places among UGC-funded institutions

13. Noting the provision of some 1 800 additional hostel places for tertiary students in the 2006-2007 Budget Estimates, Members had sought information on the criteria for allocation of these hostel places among institutions and the funding in this regard.

14. According to the Administration, the UGC-funded institutions would plan and submit their student hostel proposals to the UGC for consideration under the established resource allocation mechanism. In general, the institutions' present level of student exchange activity, their future development, student accommodation needs, etc. would be taken into account. No public funding had been earmarked for the 1 800 places in 2006-2007. Similar to other capital works projects of the UGC-funded institutions, these student hostel projects would continue to be subject to the usual scrutiny by the UGC and various Government bureaux/departments, before submission to the Finance Committee for funding approval.

Occupancy rates

15. During the scrutiny of the 2006-2007 Estimates of Expenditure of the Government of the HKSAR, Members had sought information about the occupancy rates of student hostel places at the UGC-funded institutions.

16. The Administration advised that based on the information provided by different institutions, a total of over 15 000 local undergraduate students were occupying student hostels at the UGC-funded institutions as at October 2005. In addition, about 8 000 research postgraduates, non-local students, exchange students, etc. were also staying in student hostels. The current average occupancy of student hostels in the UGC-funded institutions exceeded 98%, except for HKIEd which was experiencing a relatively low occupancy of about 70% because of a reduction in the number of full-time students.

Relevant papers

17. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in the **Appendix**.

Panel on Education

Relevant papers on provision of hostels for tertiary students

Meeting	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper/Questions
-	-	Legislative Council Brief entitled "Review of the Provision of Student Hostels in the UGC-Funded Institutions" [File Ref: EMB17/2041/95II T/C 13/96]
Legislative Council	3.12.2003	Written question on "Vacancy Rates of Students Hostel Places at UGC-Funded Institutions" raised by Ir Dr Hon HO Chung-tai Official Record of Proceedings Pages 68 - 69
Panel on Education	20.1.2005	Administration's Paper entitled "Policy Initiatives of the Education and Manpower Bureau" [LC Paper No. CB(2)660/04-05(01)] Minutes of meeting [LC Paper No. CB(2)1630/04-05]
Panel on Education	20.10.2005	Administration's paper entitled "Policy Initiatives on Education in the Policy Agenda for the 2005-2006 Policy Address" [LC Paper No. CB(2)48/05-06(01)] Minutes of meeting [LC Paper No. CB(2)429/05-06]
Finance Committee	2006-2007	Question raised by Hon LEUNG LAU Yau-fun, Sophie, Reply Serial No. EMB102
		Questions raised by Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong, Reply Serial Nos. EMB154, EMB155 and EMB156
		Question raised by Hon LAU Chin-shek Reply Serial No. EMB175
Legislative Council	21.6.2006	Motion on "Developing Hong Kong into a regional education hub" moved by Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing

Meeting	Date of meeting	Minutes/Paper/Questions
Legislative Council	22.11.2006	Oral question on "Supply and demand of student hostel places at various universities" raised by Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing
-	-	Legislative Council Brief entitled "Provision of Boarding Facilities for Non-local Students in the School Sector" [File Ref: EMB(I)P/EHUB/1/1]

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