

For discussion
on 13 July 2007

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

**Proposed Upgrading of the Film/Television Studio and the
Video Production/Post-Production Facilities
at the School of Film and Television,
the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts**

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on our proposal to upgrade the existing film/television studio and video production/post-production facilities at the School of Film and Television of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) at \$26.882 million over two years from 2007-08 to 2008-09. The main purpose of the upgrade is to replace the existing analogue equipment with high definition (HD) digital equipment.

Background

2. Established in 1984, the HKAPA is a government-subsidized education institution providing training and education in performing arts and related technical arts. A new School of Film and Television (branched out from the School of Technical Arts) was established in 1996 with a current student population of about 100. The School of Film and Television (the School) has been offering a one-year programme on Diploma in Film and Television and a three-year degree programme on Bachelor of Fine Arts in Film and Television. Since the 2006-07 academic year, the School has revised and re-named its diploma programme to be the one-year Diploma in Digital Film-making with an intake of 30 students every year. Starting from the 2007-08 academic year, second year students in the Bachelor of Fine Arts Programme will be able to take 'Television Production' or 'Film Production' as their major. The first year student intake for the degree programme is 28 and the estimated split of students majoring in film versus those majoring in television is 18 to 10. Most of the graduates from the diploma and degree

programmes are employed by the television and film industry as film producer, camera operator, editor, film director, designer, production assistant, screenwriter, production manager and programme director etc. The HKAPA anticipates that there will be a continued demand for these graduates in the coming years to support the film industry, satellite, terrestrial and cable/broadband television, internet television and videos on hand-held devices.

Justifications

Need to upgrade the existing film/television studio and the video production/post-production facilities

3. The School is housed around a film/television studio with video production/post-production facilities at the HKAPA Wanchai campus. The studio at the Wanchai campus was built in 1984 and its equipment infrastructure has a history of over 20 years. In September 2007, with the removal of the School to the Bethanie, HKAPA's second campus in Pokfulam, the existing video production and post-production facilities will be relocated to the Bethanie. However, the film/television studio will stay in the Wanchai campus since studio-based courses of the School will still be conducted in Wanchai.

4. During the past 22 years, there were only a few upgrades to the studio equipment, namely –

- upgrading of the studio cameras in 1992 at about \$2.921 million;
- replacement of the vision switching console in 1993 at about \$0.621 million; and
- repair of the studio lighting system in 2000 at \$1.212 million.

5. With the rapid digitalisation of production and post-production procedures by all pay TV operators in Hong Kong as well as in the film and video production industry in the past few years, training on the operational procedures and on the functions of the analogue equipment in the School's studio has become outdated. Although the two free-to-air TV broadcasters have yet to use digital broadcasting technology until later this year, they are

already using digital production technologies, systems protocols and operation procedures. Therefore, it is necessary for the HKAPA to upgrade the technological and operational standards to be compatible with the present day requirements.

6. It is also anticipated that maintenance service for the analogue equipment at the School's studio will soon be unavailable when the suppliers terminate their support service to these equipment due to low market demand.

Anticipated benefits of the proposed upgrading

7. The range of visual manipulations and creative possibilities presented by digital technologies are far greater than those presented by analogue technologies. It is incumbent upon the HKAPA to expose their students to the aesthetic capabilities of digital studio production and to train them in exploiting the creative potential of digital technologies which are not available under the existing analogue system.

8. The proposed upgrading will not only benefit the full-time students of the School but will also facilitate collaborative initiatives between the School and other departments in the HKAPA as well as outside institutions, thus benefiting more stakeholders. Apart from all the students from the two existing diploma and degree programmes offered by the School who will make extensive use of the equipment, the HKAPA has plans to offer a self-financed Master of Fine Arts Programme in the 2009-10 academic year with a prospective intake of ten students who will also make use of the equipment. Further, the HKAPA is in discussion with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Multimedia Innovation Centre to run collaborative workshops for the students concerned to create and record multi-camera productions by using advanced digital virtual set technology inside the film/television studio.

9. After the proposed upgrading, the film/television studio will continue to be open for hire by outside users. At the same time, the School will continue to offer short courses through EXCEL^{note}, the self-financing arm of the HKAPA. It is envisaged that more EXCEL courses will be developed

^{note} "EXCEL", Extension and continuing Education for Life Ltd, is a subsidiary company of the HKAPA which offers a wide range of self-financing courses in the performing arts, related theatre and entertainment arts, film and television.

to make use of the new film/television studio and the new video recording and post-production equipment and facilities. When the studio is used by EXCEL, full costs will be charged in line with the spirit of no cross subsidy between the subvented activities of the HKAPA and the self-financed activities of EXCEL.

10. In planning this upgrading exercise, the HKAPA has discussed with the industry practitioners and consulted counterparts in other degree-granting institutions offering training in television and media arts, and confirm that they are comparable to what is available at these other institutions.

Non-recurrent Expenditure

11. We estimate that the proposed equipment upgrade will require a total non-recurrent expenditure of \$26.882 million over a period of two years from 2007-08 to 2008-09, broken down as follows –

| Type of Equipment | Proposed items | Estimated cost | | Purpose of Use |
|------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| | | 2007-08 (\$ million) | 2008-09 (\$ million) | |
| Film/TV Studio Upgrade | Studio cameras (three sets) of HD capability | 8.807 | – | Multi-camera production in TV studio floor |
| | Mixing console (one set) | 2.397 | – | Video signal processing |
| | HD video monitors | 0.710 | – | Viewing HD video pictures |
| | Virtual set system | – | 4.376 | 3D digital graphics virtual studio |
| | Digital sound mixing console | – | 1.297 | For use in the Audio Control Room connected to TV Studio for studio sound production |
| Location Production | HD tape-less, mid-professional level grade camcorders (two sets) | 1.213 | – | For location shootings, class teaching and exercises at intermediate level |
| | Prosumer grade camcorders | 0.999 | – | For production shootings, class teaching and exercises at introductory level |
| | Professional HDCAM package (two sets) | – | 3.249 | For location shooting, teaching and exercises at advanced level |
| | Digital ready portable audio equipment including sound mixer and microphone kits | 0.224 | – | For location sound pick up and recording at all levels |
| | Lighting gears: fresnels and accessories | 0.581 | – | For use in both location shooting, studio production and teaching |

| Type of Equipment | Proposed items | Estimated cost | | Purpose of Use |
|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| | | 2007-08 (\$ million) | 2008-09 (\$ million) | |
| Post-production Upgrade: Editing | Professional Avid non-linear editing systems (two sets) | 0.778 | – | Post-production hardware and software applications for HD editing. |
| | Upgrade the existing three sets of Avid adrenaline from standard definition to HD capability | – | 0.553 | Post-production hardware and software applications for HD editing |
| | HDV compatible post-production systems | 0.762 | – | Computer hardware and software applications for HDV editing for Diploma and Degree Year 1 level student |
| | Post-production storage server system | 0.936 | – | Central storage server connected to all post-production computers for both audio, video editing and computer graphics |
| | | 17.407 | 9.475 | |

12. The estimated cashflow is as follows –

| Year | \$ million |
|--------------|---------------|
| 2007-08 | 17.407 |
| 2008-09 | 9.475 |
| Total | 26.882 |

Recurrent Expenditure

13. The HKAPA will take out the necessary maintenance contracts with the vendors and acquire the annual software licence covers, estimated at about 2% of the capital cost of the equipment, or at \$536,000 per year from 2009-10 onwards. Part of this recurrent expenditure will be offset by savings from the termination of maintenance contracts for the obsolete analogue equipment. The HKAPA will absorb the additional recurrent expenditure from within its existing annual subvention.

Implementation Plan

14. To minimise disturbance to the students, the equipment will only be installed and tested during the summer breaks. The HKAPA plans to implement the proposed equipment upgrading exercise according to the following timetable –

| Activity | Target Completion Date |
|---|-------------------------------|
| Tender invitation for the first batch of equipment | December 2007 |
| Award of contract for the first batch of equipment | March 2008 |
| Delivery for the first batch of equipment | June 2008 |
| Installation and communications for the first batch of equipment | July 2008 |
| Tender invitation for the second batch of equipment | January 2009 |
| Award of contract for the second batch of equipment | March 2009 |
| Delivery for the second batch of equipment | June 2009 |
| Installation and communications for the second batch of equipment | July 2009 |

Advice Sought

15. Members are invited to comment on the proposed upgrading of the film/television studio and video production/post-production facilities at the HKAPA School of Film and Television. Subject to Members' views, we shall seek the approval of the Finance Committee when the Legislative Council resumes after its summer recess.

Home Affairs Bureau
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