

LC Paper No. CB(2)576/06-07(01)

(Translation)

By Fax 2509 0775

Our ref.: HWF/H/LEG/55/06

Tel. No.: 2973 8203

Fax No.: 2840 0467

5 December 2006

Miss Mary SO
Legislative Council Secretariat
3/F, Citibank Tower
3 Garden Road
Hong Kong

Dear Miss So,

At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Health Services on 13 November 2006, students of a degree course in Chinese medicine jointly run by the Open University of Hong Kong and the University of Xiamen distributed a letter to Members. Our reply to the letter is set out below:

The Chinese Medicine Council ("the Council") is a statutory body established under the Chinese Medicine Ordinance. It comprises two Boards, namely, the Chinese Medicine Practitioners Board ("the Practitioners Board") and the Chinese Medicines Board, and is responsible for ensuring adequate standards of professional practice of Chinese medicine practitioners (CMP) as well as the standard of practice and conduct of Chinese medicine traders, and regulating the safe use of Chinese herbal medicines and proprietary Chinese medicines.

The CMP Licensing Examination and Assessment of Chinese Medicine Degree Courses

The registration system for CMPs is established to ensure the standard of CMPs for the protection of public health. In accordance with section 61(1)(a) of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance, a person shall be eligible to undertake the Licensing Examination if he satisfies the Practitioners Board that he has satisfactorily completed such undergraduate degree course of training in Chinese medicine practice approved by the Practitioners Board. In June 2001, the Council established the Committee on Assessment of Chinese Medicine Degree Courses under the Practitioners Board to assess the standard of degree courses in Chinese medicine and advise the Practitioners Board on the approval of courses. The Committee mainly comprises academics from schools of Chinese medicine of local universities, CMPs and a lay person.

Since the practice of CMPs has a direct impact on the health and well-being of patients, the Practitioners Board believes that to satisfactorily complete an undergraduate degree course in Chinese medicine, students should receive comprehensive and basic university education and engage in full-time study. They should also be given sufficient opportunity for continuous practical work in order to complete all the relevant studies and experimentation as well as the prolonged clinical internship and practice. A campus learning environment on a full-time basis is an important part of ensuring the quality of teaching and learning. To maintain the professional standard of CMPs, and having regard to the corresponding requirements for registration of other medical professions (such as medical practitioners and dentists), the Practitioners Board believes that the full-time educational model should be adopted for approved courses of the CMP Licensing Examination.

In December 2002, the Practitioners Board set down the basic requirements of an approved course in the "Candidates' Handbook for the 2003 Chinese Medicine Practitioners Licensing Examination". An approved course should be a full-time on-campus undergraduate degree course with duration of not less than 5 years, including a clinical internship of not less than 30 weeks and 10 compulsory subjects specified by the Practitioners Board. The course should not be conducted in any

part by means of distance learning and the institutes running the course should fulfil the basic requirements for university and clinical teaching.

To date, the Practitioners Board has approved the full-time undergraduate degree courses in Chinese medicine of five years' duration offered by 31 institutes, which do not include the courses run by the Open University of Hong Kong and the University of Xiamen.

Degree course in Chinese medicine jointly run by the Open University of Hong Kong and the University of Xiamen

In their letter, students of the degree course in Chinese medicine jointly run by the Open University of Hong Kong and the University of Xiamen held that before offering the course, the two universities had written to CMC to enquire about the qualifications required for sitting the Licensing Examination and the reply they got was that a bachelor degree in Chinese medicine would be all that was required for qualifying to undertake the examination.

According to information provided by the Council Secretariat, it had provided a written response to the Open University on 16 August 2000 and 30 August 2002 respectively. Its letters pointed out that the Practitioners Board would announce the requirements of an approved course at a later stage or in due course but did not state that any graduate with a bachelor degree in Chinese Medicine is eligible to sit the Licensing Examination.

Subsequently, in the "Candidates' Handbook for the 2003 Chinese Medicine Practitioners Licensing Examination" published in December 2002, the Practitioners Board announced for the first time the requirements of an approved course for the CMP Licensing Examination. One year later, on 10 December 2003, the Open University of Hong Kong wrote to the Council again to apply for recognition of its 5-year undergraduate degree course offered jointly with the University of Xiamen and appended further information on the course. Upon careful consideration of the course material provided by the Open University, the Practitioners Board was of the view that in terms of the duration of study, the mode of teaching, etc., the course fell significantly short of what was

required by the Practitioners Board. Moreover, it was not a full-time undergraduate course in Chinese medicine. On that basis, it was considered that the course did not fulfil the basic requirements of an approved course. On 23 December 2003, the Council Secretariat conveyed the decision of the Practitioners Board in writing to the Open University.

It was not until 27 October 2006 that the Council received further enquiries on approved courses from the Open University. The Council will carefully consider and discuss the matter before providing a reply.

Yours sincerely,

(Miss Pamela LAM)
for Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food

c:\health-1\ask\2006\hgw\pamel\111 registration of emp\follow-up\11205_open u_eng.doc