

立法會 *Legislative Council*

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Panel on Education

Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat for the meeting on 10 December 2007

Provision of hostels for tertiary students

Purpose

This paper sets out the existing policy on the provision of hostels for tertiary students and summarizes 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 the 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. Based on the working group's initial findings, UGC submitted in March 1996 its recommendations to the Government, among others, for a review of the 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 all 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 the 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 (retitled as the Lingnan University in 1999) because the Government had approved a hostel project for the College in 1993 to provide accommodation for 50% of its full-time undergraduate 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' concerns

6. The Panel on Education had discussed the subject of the provision of hostels for tertiary students over the past two years. Questions relating to the subject had also been raised at Council meetings and during the scrutiny of the Estimates of Expenditure of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (HKSAR). The issues of concern raised by Members are summarized below.

Adequacy of hostel places

7. Members had all along been concerned about the adequacy of hostel places for local and non-local students. Members first raised their concern when the Administration proposed in January 2005 to relax the immigration control to allow more non-local students, including those from the Mainland, Taiwan and Macau, to come to Hong Kong for studying publicly-funded programmes at post-secondary level in local institutions from the 2005-2006 academic year onwards. The quota then was set at 10% of the approved student number targets for these programmes. In October 2007, the Administration further proposed to increase in phases the quota to 20% in order to develop Hong Kong into a regional education hub. Members noted that unlike local undergraduates who were normally provided with a hostel place for one year of their courses under the existing policy, non-local students would require hostel places throughout their studies in Hong Kong. Members were concerned that the demand for hostel places would be further increased with the implementation of

four-year degree programmes under the new academic structure in the 2012-2013 academic year, which would result in an increase of undergraduate students by around one-third.

8. To resolve the shortfall in hostel places, members suggested that consideration be given to redeveloping vacant factory buildings or converting vacant school premises into student hostels for the UGC-funded institutions. Members also urged the Administration to assist proactively the UGC-funded institutions in finding ways to meet the anticipated demand.

9. According to the Administration, there were currently about 21 400 student hostel places in the UGC-funded sector, with a shortfall of about 9 100 to meet the agreed policy provision. The increase in non-local student quota to 20% of the approved student number targets for publicly-funded programmes would increase the shortfall by another 6 500 hostel places. An additional 2 100 hostel places would be needed to cater for the anticipated increase in demand arising from the implementation of four-year degree programmes from the 2012-2013 academic year. With some 6 600 hostel places under active planning/implementation, there would be a shortfall of some 11 100 places.

10. The Administration advised that it had encouraged the UGC-funded institutions to submit proposals on hostel developments to cater for the additional demand. Funding had been earmarked for three new hostel projects undertaken respectively by CUHK, CityU and HKU. The project at Lung Wah Street, Kennedy Town of HKU would provide an additional 1 800 hostel places, and the CUHK's project within campus would provide an additional 1 500 places. Both PolyU and HKUST had submitted their hostel project proposals to UGC for consideration. The Administration had been encouraging the UGC-funded institutions to make the best use of their existing stock of student hostels, and to explore imaginatively other possible options to meet 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 were able to take up HKIEd's student hostels and provided with shuttle services transporting them to and from campuses.

11. The Administration further pointed out that some institutions were considering other short-term relief measures, such as temporary conversion of some existing hostel units so as to accommodate more students. The Administration was also considering giving the UGC-funded institutions an additional option of applying for a one-off grant to build, rent or purchase premises to meet with the agreed provision. Another option under consideration was to construct "joint hostels" for shared use by institutions.

12. Regarding the suggestion to convert vacant school premises into student hostels, the Administration's view was that most of the vacant school premises were relatively small in size and located in remote areas in the New Territories, and were not suitable for conversion into student hostels. Nevertheless, the Administration would consider using suitable vacant school premises for the purpose as and when appropriate.

Criteria for allocating hostel places among UGC-funded institutions

13. Members noted that to encourage student exchange activities, the Administration decided in 2005 to provide the UGC-funded sector with an additional 1 840 hostel places for non-local students. 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 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 by UGC. 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 UGC and the relevant 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 HKSAR Government, 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% owing to 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**.

**Relevant papers on
provision of hostels for tertiary students**

| Meeting | Date of meeting | Paper |
|---------------------|------------------------|---|
| -- | -- | 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 | Official Record of Proceedings Pages 68 - 69 (Question) |
| Panel on Education | 20.1.2005 (Item I) | Minutes Agenda |
| Panel on Education | 20.10.2005 (Item I) | Minutes Agenda |
| Finance Committee | 14.3.2006 | Administration's replies to Members' initial written questions (Reply Serial Nos. EMB102, EMB154-156 and EMB175) |
| Legislative Council | 21.6.2006 | Official Record of Proceedings Pages 121 - 180 (Motion) |
| Legislative Council | 22.11.2006 | Official Record of Proceedings Pages 7 - 15 (Question) |
| -- | -- | Legislative Council Brief entitled "Provision of Boarding Facilities for Non-local Students in the School Sector" [File Ref: EMB(I)P/EHUB/1/1] |
| Panel on Education | 11.12.2006 (Item V) | Minutes Agenda CB(2)993/06-07(01) |
| Finance Committee | 20.3.2007 | Administration's replies to Members' initial written questions (Reply Serial Nos. EMB072, EMB210, EMB211, EMB227, EMB228) |

| Meeting | Date of meeting | Paper |
|---------------------|------------------------|---|
| Panel on Education | 9.7.2007 | Minutes |
| Panel on Education | 18.10.2007 | Minutes Agenda |
| Legislative Council | 21.11.2007 | Official Record of Proceedings (Question 11) |

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