



**Written Submission for Meeting of the Panel on Education held on 11 July 2011**

**By Prof. Rick Wong, Vice-President (Research and Development) of  
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Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU) welcomes the UGC's proposals for greater competition in allocating research funding and undergraduate student places to the UGC-funded institutions. I would like to focus on just a few points of concern.

**Allocation of Research Funding**

1. HKBU holds that fair and healthy competition among institutions is a driving force for improving performance, with the caveat that fair competition must be based on a level playing field.
2. Notwithstanding the UGC's adjustment in the pace and operation of transferring funding from the research portion of the Block Grant to the RGC for allocation on a more competitive basis, we wish to reiterate our concern that the magnitude of the transfer (50%) of research infrastructural funding could seriously undermine the research capability and competitive edge of a few institutions. Such an approach could also lead to a significant shift of research funding to science, technology, and medicine at the expense of arts, humanities, and social sciences, much to the detriment of the Hong Kong's higher education sector and to our society at large. We appreciate that the UGC has considered the concerns and has decided to introduce new initiatives to address the HSS imbalance in the RGC Earmarked Research Grants, yet it might be insufficient to safeguard the research funding for the arts, humanities, and social sciences in the long run.
3. For the threshold of the competitive funding schemes, we understand the very high standard set for the schemes of focused and high-impact research, including the Collaborative Research Fund (CRF), Areas of Excellence (AoE), and Theme-based Research Scheme (TBRS), and we trust that those Schemes will play an important role in fostering world class research in the years to come. At the same time, we believe that research initiatives and participation should come from across a broad front. For this reason, we suggest that the RGC General Research Fund (GRF) Scheme be designed to encourage more diverse participation and to reward more academics. Otherwise, many research

initiatives will be killed off which would not be constructive to the long-term research capability of the UGC-funded sector and Hong Kong as a whole. Statistically the overall success rate of the institutions in bidding for the GRF has indicated a downward trend in the past six years from 42.5% in 2006-07 to 31% in 2011-12 (in terms of the number of funded projects).

### **Allocation of Undergraduate Student Places**

1. In considering the Academic Development Proposal (ADP) exercise, HKBU shares the UGC's concern to ensure that programmes meet the needs of students and of the Hong Kong community, and we accept that an element of competition may be helpful in achieving that goal. However, we have reservations about the ADP exercise, and in particular the competitive allocation of FYFD (first-year-first-degree) places.
2. The competitive bidding process involved institutions identifying 6% reduction in FYFD places and then bidding to win numbers back through the ADP. We have reservations about the process used to evaluate the institutions' ADPs, in particular about the lack of transparency in the assessment. In our view, the UGC needs to review the process for the next exercise.
3. Some of the larger institutions accommodated the top slicing by an across-the-board cut for all programmes. In a medium-sized university such as HKBU this is not viable, and top slicing means that the entire programmes must be eliminated. The negative impact of this on staff and student morale should not be underestimated.
4. We would be concerned if future ADP exercises involve an even higher percentage of top slicing. This would be even more disruptive to the institutions and would place the viability of programmes, and student and staff morale at even greater risk.

In closing, HKBU wishes to express our thanks to the UGC for their thoughts and good work on how to further enhance the quality of research in Hong Kong and to encourage institutions to pursue further excellence. Thank you.