

The Hong Kong Institute of Education's Submission on "Allocation of research funding" to the Panel on Education of the Legislative Council

11 July 2011

The Institute agrees that while a virtuous competition will in general benefit the overall development of the higher education sector, it is important to recognize the unique roles and missions of individual higher education institutions, and take such factors into consideration in the assessment of research performance and the allocation of research funding. Such considerations will help achieve a more balanced growth in knowledge creation and intellectual pursuits for various areas.

In our previous submission to the Panel on Education in March 2011, the Institute had raised our concern over the proposed phased transfer of 50 per cent of the research portion of the Block Grant to the Research Grants Council (RGC) for competitive applications by individual academics. Given that the tertiary institutions in Hong Kong are not competing on an equal footing, transferring out the research portion could have adverse impacts on the overall strategic growth of "developing" institutions, in particular those which are non-science focused.

The recent announcement from the University Grants Committee of additional measures, including a new premium for research in Humanities and Social Sciences, and additional funding to Humanities and Social Sciences academics, have come some way in responding to the concerns raised by our Institute, and in addressing the trends in RGC grants allocation more favouring science subject areas. We also welcome the decision for a review of the new proposed funding measures to be conducted before the end of the first triennium, i.e. 2015, whereby the effectiveness and impact of the scheme will be assessed, and adjustments be made where necessary.

On the basis of such refinements, the Institute has consented to the roll-out of the research funding allocation model for a trial. We support the general principle for enhancement in research quality and culture, with a reasonable level of research funding made available to research and development in the Humanities and Social Sciences and to "developing" institutions, and will work closely with the University Grants Committee and Research Grants Council in these endeavours.