

For information

**Legislative Council  
Panel on Manpower**

**Development of the Apprenticeship Unit of  
the Vocational Training Council**

**Purpose**

This paper reports on the development of the Apprenticeship Unit (AU) of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the deployment of Inspectors of Apprentices (IAs) in recent years.

**Background**

2. The Apprenticeship Ordinance was enacted in 1976 with a view to promoting and regulating the employment of apprentices. The legislation governs the employment and training of registered apprentices. Registration is compulsory for people under 19 years of age working in designated trades. Voluntary registration is open to apprentices in designated trades who are aged 19 or above, or apprentices in non-designated trades.

3. The Apprenticeship Unit (AU) of VTC, which is staffed by IAs, is responsible for the administration of the statutory scheme and other traineeship services. Currently some 3 300 apprentices are supervised by AU.

**Consultancy Review and Redeployment Plan**

4. In 1999, VTC presented to the Legislative Council (LegCo) Panel on Manpower an information paper on a review of the statutory Apprenticeship Scheme and the planned redeployment of IAs. VTC had commissioned a consultancy to review the statutory scheme having regard to the economic restructuring in Hong Kong and related factors. In the light of the consultant's recommendation, and given the changes in the

employment and training needs in Hong Kong, VTC decided to streamline the operation of the scheme to better serve the market requirements and rationalise the establishment of AU.

5. The plan at that time was to undertake a two-phase redeployment for AU. Under the first phase in 2000, the number of IAs was to be reduced from 71 to 35. Thereafter, and subject to a review of the result of the first phase and rationalisation of AU's work (such as undertaking risk-based inspection visits and enhancing the involvement of the industry), further reduction in the number of IA posts to eight in the second phase was to be considered. The above plans and the concerns of members and VTC staff unions were discussed at the meetings of the LegCo Panel on Manpower on 28 October and 4 November 1999.

### **Implementation and Development since 2000**

6. Subsequently, taking into account the feedback from staff and the industries as well as the prevailing training and industry needs, VTC revisited the situation and considered that it would be appropriate to maintain the level of staffing in AU after the first phase redeployment in October 2000 to support the operation of the scheme. The proposed second phase redeployment plan was not pursued. The IAs affected in the redeployment plan were retrained and redeployed to various other operating units in VTC.

7. VTC has since continued to streamline the operations of AU in order to, for example, facilitate better support to and communication with the apprentices. The number of AU's branch offices has been reduced and co-location was arranged with the Training Centre Complexes where apprentices pursue their studies. VTC has also launched new services to better support youth training, including a Modern Apprenticeship Scheme for non-engaged youths as from 2004, to which six IA posts have been deployed to support its development and implementation.

### **Business process re-engineering Review in 2009**

8. VTC undertook a business process re-engineering study on AU in 2009/10 with a view to further streamlining and rationalising its operation

and work procedures in order to meet the needs of the industries and align with the overall development of youth training services. As a result of this study, VTC has decided to re-align the work focus of AU by strengthening mentoring and support services to ensure apprentices' successful completion of training. Strategic measures and improvement actions are being implemented to enhance AU's operation efficiency by computerising work processes, re-engineering the work processes of the inspectorate, and introducing more effective promotional activities for raising public awareness and improving the perception of apprenticeship schemes. Consequential adjustments to the establishment of AU will also be made.

9. Taking into account the savings in staff resources from rationalised office operation which is partly offset by staffing requirements for enhanced services, the establishment of IAs will be reduced to 33 in 2011. VTC will continue to keep under review the manpower requirements of IAs in the light of training demand.

## **Conclusion**

10. Members are invited to note the development of AU and the deployment of IAs reported above.

Vocational Training Council  
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