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Panel on Education

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council
Secretariat for the meeting on 13 February 2012**

Provision of hostels for tertiary students

Purpose

This paper summarizes the deliberations of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on the provision of hostels for tertiary students.

Existing policy

2. Under the existing student hostel policy promulgated in 1996, the criteria for calculating the provision of publicly-funded student hostel places for University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded institutions are as follows:

- (a) all undergraduate students should be given the opportunity to stay in student hostels for at least one year of their courses; and
- (b) all research postgraduate students, non-local students as well as undergraduate students whose daily travelling time exceed four hours should be provided with student hostel places.

3. The above criteria are applicable to all UGC-funded institutions, except for the Lingnan University and the Hong Kong Institute of Education ("HKIED"). Provisions of hostel places in these two institutions are higher than others, i.e. 50% of their full-time degree student population, having regard to the former's mission to develop a residential liberal arts university, and the potential merits that hostel life brings in enhancing pre-service teacher education for the latter.

4. In addition to the standard provision, the Administration decided in February 2006 to provide an additional 1 840 publicly-funded student hostel places to the UGC-funded sector to support the institutions' increasing student exchange activities. The Government will fund up to 75% of the capital cost of the approved level of publicly-funded student hostel provision, with the remainder to be met by the respective institutions using their own sources of private funding.

5. According to the information provided by the Administration in the examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2011-2012 in March 2011, there were some 28 200 publicly-funded hostel places in UGC-funded institutions. This included the six hostel projects under construction, which would provide 6 600 publicly-funded places (**Appendix I**). A breakdown on the supply and projected shortfall of publicly-funded hostel places in the 2010-2011 academic year is in **Appendix II**.

Members' concerns

6. The Panel discussed issues relating to the provision of hostels for tertiary students at a number of meetings. The major areas 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 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.

8. The Administration advised that to cater for the additional demand, it had encouraged the UGC-funded institutions to submit proposals on hostel developments to UGC for consideration. The Administration had also been encouraging the 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, The Chinese University of Hong Kong ("CUHK") and The Polytechnic University of Hong Kong ("PolyU") had entered into collaboration arrangements with 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. Some institutions were considering other short-term relief measures, such as temporary conversion of some existing hostel units and renting premises in the private market.

Joint hostels

9. Members noted that apart from developing hostels on campus, the Administration had been exploring with institutions the development of off-campus joint hostels for their shared use. According to the information provided by the Administration in the examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2011-2012, there were currently two joint student hostel projects under detailed planning, i.e. the Tseung Kwan O joint student hostel led by The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("HKUST") (in collaboration with Hong Kong Baptist University ("HKBU")), and the joint student hostel at Whitehead Ma On Shan led by The City University of Hong Kong ("CityU") (in collaboration with HKUST). These projects were expected to provide a total of some 2 600 publicly-funded hostel places.

10. Noting that more and more hostels were located outside the campuses and far away from the institutions, some members expressed concern whether the value of hostel life could still be maintained. The Chairman of UGC advised that owing to the scarcity of suitable land within or near the institutions (particularly in urban areas) for hostel development, it was inevitable that some hostels were located outside the campuses of the institutions. Joint hostels would facilitate exchanges among students from different universities and were popular in other jurisdictions.

Criteria for allocating hostel places

11. Members noted that many institutions had accorded priority to non-local students and students enrolled in self-financing programmes in the allocation of hostel places in order to increase the appeal of their courses to these students. Members were concerned that many local students including those living in remote areas were not provided with hostel places. They sought information on the criteria for allocating hostel places.

12. The Administration explained that the existing policy on the provision of publicly-funded student hostels at the UGC-funded institutions was promulgated in 1996, based on the recommendations of a working group formed under UGC. According to the existing criteria for calculating the

overall provision of publicly-funded student hostel places at the UGC-funded institutions, all non-local students attending full-time, publicly-funded sub-degree, degree and taught postgraduate programmes offered by the UGC-funded institutions would be provided with hostel places throughout their studies in Hong Kong, and local undergraduate students would be given the opportunity to stay in student hostels for one year of their courses.

13. The Administration also pointed out that allocation of student hostel places was a matter within institutional autonomy, and each UGC-funded institution had devised its own set of admission and allocation criteria. For example, The University of Hong Kong ("HKU") had adopted a marking scheme under which students living in remote areas or overcrowded environment would have a greater chance to get a hostel place.

14. Members considered that hostel life was an integral part of university education and conducive to students' learning and personal development, and the current criteria for allocation of hostels were discriminatory against local students. They called on the Administration to review the existing criteria for calculating the provision of student hostels at the UGC-funded institutions with a view to increasing the opportunity for local students staying in hostels. Some members requested that non-local students should be provided with hostel places for a limited period, say one to two years. Others suggested that both local and non-local students should be provided with hostel places in the first two years of their studies. There was also a view that the existing policy and criteria for calculating the standard hostel provision should not be regarded as discriminatory against local students, and it was reasonable to provide hostel places for overseas students to facilitate their familiarization with the local environment in particular during their initial years of study.

15. Members noted that some UGC-funded institutions had reviewed their policies on the provision of hostels for non-local students. For instance, HKBU and CityU had revised their policies to provide hostels to non-local students in the first two years of their studies. HKU had allocated some 30% of its publicly-funded hostel places to non-local students, with the remaining to local students.

16. At its meeting on 8 May 2008, the Panel passed a motion urging the Administration to revise the existing policy on the allocation of hostel places so that local students attending publicly-funded programmes in the UGC-funded institutions would be given the opportunity to stay in student hostels for at least one year, and non-local students should be guaranteed the provision of hostel places only in the first two years of their studies. In response to the motion, the Administration advised that should the policy be revised as proposed in the motion, an additional 1 350 hostel places would be

required in the 2007-2008 academic year. Given the existing shortage and the additional requirement arising from the implementation of the four-year undergraduate programmes and the increase of non-local student intake in the coming years, the Administration considered it more appropriate to address the current shortage problem under the existing student hostel policy first, before reviewing the need to revise the policy. The Administration further pointed out that admission of non-local students to tertiary institutions could bring educational, cultural and social benefits to Hong Kong, and would facilitate the development of Hong Kong as a regional education hub. Therefore, the Administration did not consider it appropriate to shorten the duration of hostel stay of non-local students at the policy level at the present stage.

Vacant school premises

17. To resolve the shortfall in hostel places, members suggested that consideration should be given to redeveloping vacant factory buildings or converting some vacant Government quarters and school premises returned to the Education Bureau under the consolidation policy 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.

18. 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. As for vacant Government quarters, the Administration advised that most of them already had planned use, while others were considered not suitable for student hostel development.

Noise nuisance to residents in the vicinity

19. At the meeting on 11 May 2009 when the Panel was briefed on the project of student hostel, phase 3 of PolyU, members raised concern about complaints from local residents about noise nuisance caused by PolyU hostel students. Members sought information on the design of the proposed student hostel to reduce noise nuisance and whether a penalty system would be adopted to discourage students from causing noise and other nuisances to nearby residents.

20. PolyU informed members that the communal areas of the new student hostel would be positioned at the central part of the site which would be

farther away from nearby buildings. Sound-proof materials for meeting rooms would also be used. PolyU would continue to educate students to avoid causing disruption to local residents and adopt measures to reduce noise levels in student hostels, including the consideration of a point system to discourage misbehaviour.

21. When the Panel was briefed by HKU on the construction of student hostels at Lung Wah Street, Kennedy Town at its meeting on 10 December 2007, HKU informed members that it had adopted appropriate features to the design of the buildings to minimize the noise impact on nearby residents. For example, facility rooms and activity centres would be placed beneath the podium and the hostel blocks would be situated close to the hill. Since senior years of students of undergraduate programmes, research postgraduates and non-local students held extra-curricular activities relatively less at night, the places of the proposed student hostels would be allocated to them. Under HKU's policy, students would be penalized if they behaved in such a way as to affect seriously the serenity of the nearby environment. There had been cases where students were vacated from hostels for having caused excessive nuisance to other persons. Some members, however, considered it inappropriate to vacate students who had been found causing nuisance to others. They considered that such measures would undermine the educational value of hostel life, and urged HKU to enhance communication with local residents and explain to them the benefits of hostel life to students. The Chairman of UGC advised members that UGC noted that some district councils did not welcome the construction of hostels in their districts. The UGC had been assisting the institutions to convince the district councils. To enhance the acceptance of the construction of student hostels by district councils, it was suggested that the facilities in the hostels could be made available for use by local residents.

Extension of the ambit of the Start-up Loan Scheme to cover student hostels

22. At the meeting on 12 December 2011, the Administration briefed the Panel on a package of proposals concerning the Start-up Loan Scheme ("SLS"). One of such proposals was to extend the ambit of SLS to support the development of student hostels for the self-financing degree sector. The Administration would support the development of student hostels on sites granted through the Land Grant Scheme or other land grant arrangements, or acquired from the market, by non-profit-making institutions offering full-time self-financing accredited undergraduate and research postgraduate programmes, through the granting of 10-year interest-free loans to cover the construction cost of student hostels.

Latest developments

23. The Administration will brief the Panel at the meeting on 13 February 2012 on the proposed construction of a student hostel block in Tseung Kwan O for joint use by HKUST and HKBU.

Relevant papers

24. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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Six publicly-funded hostel projects under construction

Project Code	Project Title	Institution¹	Number of Hostel Places Under Construction	Approved Project Estimated (\$ million)
8053EF	1 500-place student hostel	CUHK	1 500	466.4
8053EG	1800-place student residences at Lung Wah Street, Kennedy Town	HKU	1 800	643.6
8023EJ	Student hostel, phase 4	CityU	700	182.0
8028EK	Student hostel, phase 3	PolyU	1 650	522.1
8013EL	701-place student residences	HKUST	701	201.3
8005EU	New Academic Block and Student Hostel ²	LU	600	88.1
Total			6 951*	2,103.5

* Including about 380 privately-funded places.

Notes:

- ¹ CityU - City University of Hong Kong
 LU - Lingnan University
 CUHK - The Chinese University of Hong Kong
 PolyU - The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
 HKUS - The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
 HKU - The University of Hong Kong

- ² LU's new academic block and student hostel projects were combined in January 2008. The approved project estimate for the project is \$216 million, which includes \$127.9 million for the academic block and \$88.1 million for the student hostel (300 publicly-funded hostel places).

Source: Education Bureau, March 2011

**Supply and projected shortfall of publicly-funded hostel places in
the UGC-funded institutions in the 2010-11 academic year**

Institutions	Number of publicly-funded hostel places available/under construction	Shortfall under 10% non-local student quota	Shortfall under 20% non-local student quota
Chinese University of Hong Kong	3 486	1 188	2 102
Hong Kong Baptist University	1 711	559	997
Lingnan University*	1 300	-	-
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	5 655	554	1 575
The Hong Kong Institute of Education*	2 000	-	-
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	4 654	413	1 592
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	3 707	172	738
The University of Hong Kong	5 692	239	1 225
Total	28 205	3 125	8 229

* Government's policy is to provide Lingnan University with publicly-funded hostel places for 50% of its full-time degree student population having regard to its remote location in Tuen Mun and its aspirations to develop itself into a relatively small, fully residential liberal arts institution. The Hong Kong Institute of Education is provided with hostel places for 50% of its full-time degree student population projected at the time of the establishment of the Institute. The increase of non-local student quota from 10% to 20% of the approved student number targets does not affect the provision of hostel places to these two institutions.

Source: The University Grants Committee, March 2011

**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)

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Finance Committee	20.3.2007	Administration's replies to Members' initial written questions (Reply Serial Nos. EMB072, EMB210, EMB211, EMB227 and EMB228)
Panel on Education	9.7.2007	Minutes
Panel on Education	18.10.2007	Minutes Agenda
Legislative Council	21.11.2007	Hansard (English) (page 58 - 62)
Panel on Education	10.12.2007	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	1.2.2008	FCR(2007-08)51
Finance Committee	2.4.2008	Administration's replies to Members' initial written questions (Reply Serial Nos. EDB191, EDB196 and EDB210)
Panel on Education	8.5.2008 (Item V)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	10.11.2008 (Item VI)	Agenda CB(2)207/08-09(01) CB(2)207/08-09(02)
Legislative Council	17.12.2008	[Question : 20] Asked by : Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong Student hostel places at University Grants Committee-funded institutions Reply
Panel on Education	12.1.2009 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	11.5.2009 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	23.3.2011	Administration's replies to Members' initial written questions (Reply Serial Nos. EDB051 and EDB367)
Panel on Education	12.12.2011 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda

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