

For Discussion
on 20 April 2012

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Yi Jin Diploma under the New Academic Structure

Introduction

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Education on 9 January 2012, Members were informed vide LC Paper No. CB(2)704/11-12(03) of the Administration's plan to develop a new Yi Jin Diploma programme, modelled on the existing Project Yi Jin (PYJ), under the New Academic Structure. As announced in the 2012-13 Budget Speech, we have earmarked \$1 billion to implement the Yi Jin Diploma programme in the 2012/13 academic year. This paper seeks Members' views on the Administration's detailed proposal.

Objectives of the new Yi Jin Diploma

2. Building on the success of the existing PYJ programme, the Administration proposes to implement the new Yi Jin Diploma with the following objectives –
 - (a) to provide an alternative pathway for secondary 6 school leavers under the New Academic Structure as well as adult learners to obtain a formal qualification for the purposes of employment and further study;
 - (b) to equip students with an array of generic skills and general knowledge including basic language skills, information technology skills, mathematical reasoning skills and interpersonal skills, thereby enabling students to build a firm foundation of knowledge and skills; and
 - (c) to strengthen students' motivation to study and allow students to develop self-learning skills and pursue further studies independently.

Structure of the Programme

3. Similar to the existing PYJ programme, the new Yi Jin Diploma programme will have a total of 600 contact hours, including 420 contact hours for core modules and 180 contact hours for elective modules. The core modules have been revamped to take into account the new senior secondary curriculum. Core modules comprise Chinese, English, Mathematics, Liberal Studies and Communication Skills. The curricula for these core courses are centrally developed and common among course

providers. A wide array of elective modules, which are primarily of practical nature, are offered to cater for students with different interests and aptitudes. The curricula for the elective courses are developed by the respective provider institutions. The programme may be studied on a full-time basis for one year or part-time basis for two years.

Recognition of Qualification

4. The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) has been commissioned to conduct a benchmarking study on the new Yi Jin Diploma to ascertain the exit standard of the programme and the adequacy of the quality assurance mechanism. The HKCAAVQ has completed the study and concluded that –

- (a) the exit standard of the new Yi Jin Diploma programme is deemed comparable to the attainment of **Level 2 standard in five subjects including Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination** in terms of the skills, values and attitude of students;
- (b) satisfactory completion of the **Maths Plus** elective module together with the Mathematics core module of the programme sufficiently contributes to the exit standard of the Yi Jin Diploma being comparable to the attainment of **Level 2 standard in five subjects including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in the HKDSE Examination**; and
- (c) the quality assurance mechanism of the new programme is appropriate, adequate and consistent with good practices.

5. The Yi Jin Diploma will be accepted by member institutions of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE)¹ as meeting the admission criteria of their Associate Degree and Higher Diploma or equivalent programmes. For those students who have completed the Maths Plus elective course, the Yi Jin Diploma qualification obtained will be accepted by the FCE member institutions as meeting the admission criteria of programmes requiring the attainment of Level 2 standard in 5 subjects including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in the HKDSE Examination. Similar to the existing PYJ full certificate, the qualification of the new Yi Jin Diploma will be accepted by the Government as meeting the academic entry requirement of over 30 grades in the civil service which require Level 2 in five subjects including Chinese Language and English Language in the HKDSE Examination. For those students who have completed the Maths Plus elective course, the Yi Jin Diploma qualification obtained will also be accepted by the Government as meeting the entry qualification of civil service grades requiring Level 2

¹ The FCE was established in 1994 to promote lifelong learning in Hong Kong. Its current membership consists of the continuing and professional education (CPE) units of the eight University Grants Committee-funded institutions and other major providers of CPE programmes in Hong Kong.

in five subjects including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in the HKDSE Examination.

Programme Delivery

6. The PYJ programme has been run by member institutions of the FCE on a self-financing basis. Having regard to the expertise, experience and commitment of the FCE and its track record in ensuring the standards and relevance of the programme, FCE institutions will be invited to deliver the new Yi Jin Diploma programme. In the 2012/13 academic year, seven FCE member institutions will run the new programme, namely, the continuing and professional education arms of the Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University and Open University of Hong Kong, Caritas Community and Higher Education Service, Hong Kong College of Technology, Hong Kong Institute of Technology and Vocational Training Council.

Financial Assistance Arrangement

7. Under the existing PYJ programme, two levels of reimbursement are available to students subject to their having achieved 80% attendance or above and passed the assessment for the module –

- (a) all students are eligible for a non means-tested reimbursement of 30% of the tuition fees paid for each satisfactorily completed module. This is to provide incentive for students to complete the PYJ programme; and
- (b) needy students who pass the means test administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) are eligible for 100% reimbursement of the tuition fees paid for each satisfactorily completed module. The threshold standard is similar to that for full grant under the Textbook Assistance Scheme for primary and secondary school students.

Feedback from students and PYJ provider institutions shows that the reimbursement arrangement has served well not only as financial support to students, but also as an incentive to encourage attendance and satisfactory completion of study.

8. For the new Yi Jin Diploma programme, there have been suggestions for additional financial assistance for needy students from low income families. At the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Education on 9 January 2012, Members also raised similar suggestions. We share these concerns and see the scope for enhancing the financial assistance for students of the new Yi Jin Diploma programme. We propose that, on top of the existing two tiers of financial support (i.e. 30% non-means-tested fee reimbursement and 100% means-tested fee reimbursement for needy students), an additional tier of **50% means-tested fee reimbursement** be introduced for students passing the standard means test certifying their eligibility for half assistance by SFAA. For the 2012/13 academic year, students from a 4-member

family with total monthly family income ranging from \$14,574 to \$25,301 will be eligible for a 50% reimbursement of tuition fees upon satisfactory completion of the relevant modules. Assuming that the mix of students from low income family remains similar as the current PYJ, the additional 50% reimbursement level will benefit around 8 000 to 12 000 students (which constitute about 11 to 13% of the annual student population) over five years.

Financial Implication

9. The exact amount of funding required for the new Yi Jin Diploma will depend on a number of factors, including the actual size of student intake, the percentage of students eligible for the different levels of assistance and the rate of students satisfactorily completing the modules. Assuming that the pattern of student enrolment and the socio-economic profile of students are similar to those of the existing programme, the estimated expenditure for implementing the new Yi Jin Diploma for the first five cohorts of students will be around \$1 billion. The funding is mainly for reimbursement of tuition fees to eligible students. The remaining funding will be used for providing various support services for Yi Jin Diploma students and teachers such as strengthening student activities, teacher development, advisory services for students on career/articulation planning, sharing of good practices, as well as meeting other expenses such as promotion, studies and surveys.

10. The new Yi Jin Diploma programme will have an enriched and diversified curriculum with enhanced support to teachers and students, and the tuition fee levels will be set at \$30,000 and \$32,000 for the 2012/13 academic year. The projected cashflow² for the programme will be as follows –

	Cashflow (\$ million)						
Financial Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	Total
Tuition fee reimbursement	-	180	180	180	180	180	900
Enhanced support and other expenses	20	20	20	20	20		100
Total	20	200	200	200	200	180	1,000

Background

11. Launched in 2000, PYJ provides an alternative avenue and expands the

² The breakdown of projected cashflow represents an anticipated allocation of expenses in broad terms for implementing the YJD programme. The exact distribution of spending among financial years and between the broad categories will vary slightly depending on the actual requirements.

continuing education opportunities for Secondary 5 leavers and adult learners. The qualification of a full PYJ certificate has been assessed by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (the predecessor of HKCAAVQ) as comparable to five passes in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) for continuing education and employment purposes. The qualification is also accepted by the Government for appointment to over 30 grades in the civil service with academic entry requirement set at five passes in the HKCEE including Chinese Language and English Language.

12. PYJ has been well received with its enrolment increasing substantially from around 2 000 to 3 000 in the first few years to 15 000 and 16 000 in 2009 and 2010, benefitting over 88 000 students over the years. A total of 49 900 PYJ full certificates have been issued up to the 2010/11 academic year. According to the findings of an annual tracking survey conducted by the FCE, around 50% of the graduates were engaged in work and almost 40% pursued further studies in the past three years. As for those who have continued their studies, some have completed their post-secondary education including the attainment of bachelor or higher degrees. The programme has proven a viable choice for secondary school leavers and adult learners to gain the necessary qualification to pursue continuing education and to take up employment. With the abolition of the HKCEE and the implementation of the New Academic Structure, the current PYJ programme will be offered up to the 2011/12 academic year. In the light of the success of the PYJ, the Education Bureau has engaged the FCE to develop the new Yi Jin Diploma programme based on the PYJ model for implementation from the 2012/13 school year under the New Academic Structure.

Advice Sought

13. Subject to Members' views on the proposal, we will seek the funding approval of the Finance Committee in May 2012 for the creation of a new financial commitment of \$1 billion for the implementation of the Yi Jin Diploma with effect from the 2012/13 academic year.

Education Bureau
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