

**HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY**

**Written submission to LegCo Panel on Education  
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Hong Kong Baptist University welcomes the government's policy in providing more post-secondary education opportunities for young people on a self-financing basis during the past decade. With an estimate that by the 2014-15 academic year over one-third and two-thirds of the relevant age cohort will have the opportunity to pursue, respectively, degree-level and post-secondary education, the policy has proven to be an important powerhouse to produce the needed human resources for Hong Kong's knowledge-based economy.

However, even though there have been many successful cases in past years where graduates in the sub-degree programmes entered the work-force or continued on to complete their university education through UGC-funded senior places or self-financed "top-up" programmes, the lack of common standards for regulating institutions offering the 2- and 4-year programmes and the lack of comprehensive, long-term commitments by the government to the development of this sector have raised concerns about the discrepancies in the quality of programmes and graduates among different institutions. Thus, the government is urged to consider the following views and recommendations both at the system and at the funding level to assure the quality and value of post-secondary education provided, whether government-funded or self-funded.

1. Common standards for regulating 2-year and 4-year self-financing post-secondary education institutions

To tackle the over-enrollment issue found in a small number of institutions this academic year and to set the benchmark for quality post-secondary education provisions, it is suggested that guidelines on both hardware and software standards need to be set for institutions offering sub-degree and degree programmes for whole-person development.

On the hardware side, the facility requirements may include more generally the average minimum physical space per student and staff to determine the maximum student capacity allowed. This should include facilities for general teaching/learning, library, information technology and science laboratories, sports and student activities, counseling services, administrative offices, etc. Requirements for basic teaching/learning equipment, number of library books for each programme to be accredited, etc. need to be satisfied before a programme is approved for commencement.

On the software side, requirements and standards for 2-year and 4-year programme institutions such as teacher-student ratio, academic and professional qualifications, teaching/research workload, programme duration in terms of hours of instructions/self-study need to be established and monitored.

2. Development of self-financing post-secondary education

In order to ensure that our young people can enjoy a quality and valuable post-secondary education experience, certain standards and requirements expected of any post-secondary institutions must be met. Meeting these standards and requirements would require financial support from the government if tuition fees are to be set at a reasonable and affordable level. Fundamentally, it is not equitable or desirable that post-secondary students in and outside the government-funded sector should be treated so very differently in terms of resource support. Such a great discrepancy in investment in different groups of institutions or students tends to work against the overall development of post-secondary education in Hong Kong, especially in terms of competition, accessibility and diversity. We urge the government to provide more than land grants and interest-free loans to institutions but also look at ideas like “student vouchers” with sufficient financial subsidies that would help approved or accredited post-secondary education institutions to meet the basic standards and requirements set out in paragraph 1. The government should examine the rationale of its current policy of heavily subsidizing the universities and the schools (as well as the pre-schools being proposed) sectors, while leaving the middle-layer, the sub-degree sector, with limited direct support. Overall, the issues to be addressed are the healthy growth of the self-financing post-secondary sector and the financial burden on students and institutions.

3. Prospect for graduates of self-financing post-secondary programmes

Statistics from HKBU’s self-financing post-secondary education provision show that more than 75% of Associate Degree graduates further their studies each year locally or overseas while the remaining 25% join the workforce. In the past three years, graduates from the Higher Diploma in Early Childhood Education were 100% in employment as Registered Kindergarten Teachers or Child Care Workers while they continued to study for a bachelor’s degree on a part-time basis. Territory-wide statistics also confirm the positive prospect of graduates of self-financing post-secondary programmes for further studies or work.

It is of utmost importance that when expanding the post-secondary education, emphasis must be placed on quality of programmes and graduates rather than quantity so that graduates are well-equipped for the workplace and for post-sub-degree and postgraduate studies. It is encouraging to note that the government is moving towards increasing the number of UGC-funded senior places for sub-degree graduates on a highly competitive basis. With the plan to increase the number of private tertiary institutions to provide degree and “top-up” degree places, the government is urged to closely regulate and monitor the newly established degree granting institutions to ensure that they have the required infrastructure and the quality and ability of their graduates are not too different from their UGC-funded counterparts.