



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

本局檔號 Our Ref. : EDB(FE) 7/12/2041/00

電話 Telephone : 3509 8502

來函檔號 Your Ref. :

傳真 Fax Line : 2899 2967

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Miss Polly YEUNG
Clerk to Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss YEUNG,

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Follow-up to meeting on 14 January 2013

I refer to the motion passed at the Panel meeting on 14 January 2013. With regard to the points about significantly increasing the numbers of publicly-funded university places and articulation places for sub-degree graduates as well as setting up a statutory independent mechanism to regulate the quality and governance of self-financing post-secondary programmes, our response is as follows:

Publicly-funded University Places

The Government attaches great importance to post-secondary education and strive to promote the parallel development of publicly-funded and self-financing institutions, as well as the long-term development of the post-secondary education on the premises of equal emphasis to both quality and quantity. Through enhancing mobility between the public and self-financing sectors as well as the degree and sub-degree sectors, we facilitate the development of a flexible and diversified education system with multiple entry and exit points.

The number of first year undergraduate places funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) has been increased to 15 000 and that of the senior year undergraduate places will be doubled to 8 000 a year (i.e. around 4 000 intake places) by phases starting from the 2012/13 academic year to provide more articulation opportunities for sub-degree graduates. Together with the increased number of undergraduate students under the New Senior Secondary academic structure, it is estimated that the number of undergraduate students in publicly-funded institutions will considerably increase by nearly 40% in 2016. The annual recurrent funding of UGC-funded institutions will increase by \$3 billion in the 2014/15 academic year.

On the other hand, we support the healthy development of the self-financing post-secondary education sector and enhance the quality of teaching and learning through a basket of measures, including the Land Grant Scheme, the Start-up Loan Scheme, a \$3.5 billion Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund and various student financial assistance schemes. We have earmarked \$3 billion in the Research Endowment Fund to support the self-financing degree sector in enhancing its academic and research development. Furthermore, the self-financing post-secondary education sector can benefit from the \$2.5 billion Sixth Matching Grant to help tertiary institutions tap more funding sources, improve the quality of education and foster a philanthropic culture.

Of the 70 300 day school candidates sitting the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination and the 31 300 day school candidates sitting the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) in 2012, about 26 400 and 18 200 met the minimum entrance requirements for local undergraduate programmes¹ respectively. Apart from the 30 300 publicly-funded undergraduate places, some 7 700 places in full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes are offered in the 2012/13 academic year. According to the data provided by the institutions earlier, a total of 6 800 students have been admitted to self-financing undergraduate programmes in the 2012/13 academic year. Therefore, there are still self-financing undergraduate places available to meet the needs of eligible secondary school graduates.

According to a questionnaire survey conducted by the Education Bureau (EDB) earlier on this cohort of HKDSE graduates through their schools, about 7% of the graduates (or some 4 900 students out of a total of 70 300 day school

¹ For HKDSE Examination candidates applying for the 4-year undergraduate programmes, the minimum general entrance requirements are Level 3 or above in Chinese Language and English Language, and Level 2 or above in Mathematics (Compulsory Part) and Liberal Studies (i.e. “3322”). Apart from the four core subjects, individual institutions may also specify the entrance requirements for individual faculties/programmes as well as other admission requirements. At present, institutions generally require applicants to have attained Level 2 or 3 in one or two elective subjects. In 2012, 26 300 day school candidates attained “3322” or better in core subjects and Level 2 or above in one elective subject, and 22 300 day school candidates attained “3322” or better in core subjects and Level 3 or above in two elective subjects.

candidates sitting the HKDSE Examination) have chosen to pursue further studies outside Hong Kong. Although we have not conducted a similar survey on HKALE graduates, the findings of the Survey on Educational Status of S7 Graduates in the 2010/11 academic year showed that about 4.5% (or about 1 200) of such students chose to pursue full-time post-secondary programmes outside Hong Kong.

We expect that in two years, over one-third of the relevant age cohort will have the opportunity to pursue degree-level education. Taking sub-degree places into account, nearly 70% of young people will have access to post-secondary education.

As further increase in the number of publicly-funded places will involve a huge amount of public resources, we must take into account factors such as implications on public finance and social needs, such as medical care and social welfare, as well as the demographic changes of the relevant age groups. Given the continuous decline in secondary student population, secondary school leavers will have more opportunities to pursue further studies at university level in the future. In deliberating further increase in publicly-funded undergraduate places, we should give due consideration to the manpower requirements in the long run in order to maintain employers' confidence in the quality of our university graduates and recognition of degree qualifications. This is to avoid disappointment at university graduates and a mismatch of human resources. As mentioned in the Policy Address, apart from university programmes and conventional academic subjects, we will progressively develop an education and training system for young people that will integrate academic studies and interest, as well as professional and vocational training, under an orderly framework that features diversity, provides multiple pathways and enjoys high recognition.

Quality Assurance and Monitoring

In order to oversee the strategic development of the sector and to advise the Government, we established the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education in last April in response to the recommendation of the UGC's Report on Higher Education Review 2010. Having regard to the concern of the community to enhance transparency of the self-financing sector's financial situation and to explore means to ensure that any surpluses generated should be used for the benefit of students, the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education has been invited to discuss possible measures to promote transparency and good practices.


To further enhance quality assurance, we have accepted the recommendation of the UGC's Report on Higher Education Review to actively explore the feasibility of eventually setting up a single quality assurance body. Meanwhile, the

EDB has been implementing the following incremental steps to improve the quality assurance mechanism:

- (a) The Government has transformed the Tripartite Liaison Committee (comprising representatives of the EDB, Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and Joint Quality Review Committee) and formed the Liaison Committee on Quality Assurance by engaging the Quality Assurance Council. The goals of the Committee are to promote sharing of good practices among all the quality assurance bodies and enhance consistency and transparency for better accountability; and
- (b) As stated in its response to the UGC's Report on Higher Education Review, the Government considers that periodic external audits and reviews should be conducted on community colleges or self-financing sub-degree operations under the aegis of UGC-funded institutions so as to enhance quality assurance and ensure consistency and coherence in standards. To this end, the Government stipulated under the Sixth Matching Grant launched in last August that UGC-funded institutions would need to undertake that their sub-degree operations benefitting from the Sixth Matching Grant should be subject to periodic quality audits by the HKCAAVQ in future. UGC-funded institutions participating in the latest round of Start-up Loan Scheme for self-financing institutions launched in last October and the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme under the Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund in last November are also required to make a similar undertaking. The task force concerned is expected to start working from the first half of this year to study the implementation details.

Furthermore, we have implemented the "sunshine policy" and are making every effort to enhance the transparency of different aspects of post-secondary programmes, including publicising in the Information Portal for Accredited Post-secondary Programmes (iPASS) the estimated intake places of institutions offering full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree and undergraduate programmes in the 2013/14 academic year.

Yours sincerely,



(Ms Pecvin YONG)
for Secretary for Education