

立法會
Legislative Council

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Finance Committee of the Legislative Council

Minutes of the 33rd meeting
held at Conference Room 1 of the Legislative Council Complex
on Saturday, 12 July 2014, at 11:10 am

Members present:

Hon NG Leung-sing, SBS, JP (Chairman)
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP (Deputy Chairman)
Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
Hon LEE Cheuk-yan
Hon James TO Kun-sun
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, GBS, JP
Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
Hon Frederick FUNG Kin-kee, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-hing, BBS, MH
Prof Hon Joseph LEE Kok-long, SBS, JP, PhD, RN
Hon Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung, GBS, JP
Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, GBS, JP
Hon WONG Ting-kwong, SBS, JP
Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan, JP
Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
Hon CHAN Hak-kan, JP
Hon CHAN Kin-por, BBS, JP
Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, SBS, JP
Dr Hon LEUNG Ka-lau
Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che

Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee, GBS, JP
Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
Hon Alan LEONG Kah-kit, SC
Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung
Hon Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Hon WONG Yuk-man
Hon Michael TIEN Puk-sun, BBS, JP
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Hon Steven HO Chun-yin
Hon Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Hon WU Chi-wai, MH
Hon YIU Si-wing
Hon Gary FAN Kwok-wai
Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
Hon Charles Peter MOK, JP
Hon CHAN Chi-chuen
Hon CHAN Han-pan, JP
Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Hon KWOK Wai-keung
Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
Hon SIN Chung-kai, SBS, JP
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
Hon IP Kin-yuen
Dr Hon Elizabeth QUAT, JP
Hon Martin LIAO Cheung-kong, SBS, JP
Hon POON Siu-ping, BBS, MH
Hon TANG Ka-piu, JP
Dr Hon CHIANG Lai-wan, JP
Ir Dr Hon LO Wai-kwok, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, BBS

Members absent:

Dr Hon LAU Wong-fat, GBM, GBS, JP
Hon Vincent FANG Kang, SBS, JP
Hon Ronny TONG Ka-wah, SC
Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP
Hon WONG Kwok-kin, SBS
Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP

Hon Claudia MO
Hon CHAN Yuen-han, SBS, JP
Hon LEUNG Che-cheung, BBS, MH, JP
Hon Kenneth LEUNG
Hon Alice MAK Mei-kuen, JP
Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Hon Dennis KWOK
Hon Christopher CHEUNG Wah-fung, SBS, JP
Hon CHUNG Kwok-pan

Public officers attending:

Ms Elizabeth TSE Man-yee, JP	Permanent Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury)
Ms Esther LEUNG, JP	Deputy Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Treasury) 1
Mr Alfred ZHI Jian-hong	Principal Executive Officer (General), Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)
Mr Kevin YEUNG Yun-hung, JP	Under Secretary for Education
Mr Wallace LAU	Acting Deputy Secretary for Education (1)
Ms Pecvin YONG Pui-wan	Acting Deputy Secretary for Education (1)

Clerk in attendance:

Mr Andy LAU	Assistant Secretary General 1
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Staff in attendance:

Mr Derek LO	Chief Council Secretary (1)5
Mr Daniel SIN	Senior Council Secretary (1)7
Mr Ken WOO	Senior Council Secretary (1)5
Miss Queenie LAM	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)2
Mr Frankie WOO	Senior Legislative Assistant (1)3
Ms Christy YAU	Legislative Assistant (1)7

Item No. 10 – FCR(2014-15)17

HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : EDUCATION BUREAU

Subhead 700 General Non-recurrent

New Item "Scholarship Scheme for Studying Outside Hong Kong"

Subhead 000 Operational expenses

The meeting continued the deliberation on the item.

Strategy of the Scholarship Scheme

2. Pointing out that universities all over the world had been competing for elite students and that the retention of these students in Hong Kong could help enhance the ranking of local universities, Mr IP Kin-yuen said that supporting Hong Kong's top students to pursue their studies overseas rather than in local universities under the proposed Scholarship Scheme for Studying Outside Hong Kong ("Scholarship Scheme") might not be a right strategy. Mr IP considered that the Scholarship Scheme should target at supporting students to undertake programmes or disciplines of studies not currently being offered by local universities only.

3. Mr Abraham SHEK declared that he was a member of the Court and Council of the University of Hong Kong, as well as that of the Court of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Expressing his support for the funding proposal, Mr SHEK opined that giving priority to students from needy families during the selection process as proposed in the paper was contradictory to the merit-based principle of the Scholarship Scheme. Mr Jeffrey LAM and Dr Priscilla LEUNG expressed a similar view and considered that the Administration should set out assessment criteria more clearly. Ms Starry LEE expressed support for the funding proposal and suggested that the Administration should enhance the clarity and transparency of the criteria and mechanism for selecting and assessing candidates under the Scholarship Scheme.

4. Acting Deputy Secretary for Education (1) ("Ag. DS(ED)1") explained that the selection of candidates would be based not only on their academic achievements but also other attributes such as leadership qualities and potential, contribution and commitment to the society, etc. Prime consideration would be given to whether candidates could demonstrate their contribution and commitment to Hong Kong during the selection process. Under Secretary for Education ("USED") stressed that the Scholarship Scheme was merit-based and only when a scholarship had to be granted to one of two equally deserving candidates would the priority be given to the one from a

poor family. Even in that case and where possible, the Steering Committee would attempt to award the scholarship to both candidates by flexibly deploying the resources within the overall limits available for the Scholarship Scheme.

Selection criteria and process

5. Mr Albert HO opined that the emphasis in the proposed selection criteria on the leadership qualities of candidates and the conduciveness of their programmes to building up the long-term competitiveness of Hong Kong favoured students of business-related disciplines more than students pursuing programmes such as pure science or philosophy. In this connection, Mr HO urged the Administration to devise objective assessment criteria to ensure that programmes of various disciplines would be considered in a fair manner. USED advised that all applications would be considered on an equal basis. There would be no special priority accorded to business-related disciplines or programmes during assessment and selection.

6. Mrs Regina IP remarked that the assessment on whether a particular programme was conducive to building up the long-term competitiveness of Hong Kong should be made broadly and not solely from the economic perspective. USED concurred with Mrs IP's view.

7. Mrs Regina IP expressed her support for the funding proposal. She said that as local universities did not offer programmes or disciplines such as forestry science and veterinary medicine, the proposed Scholarship Scheme could help nurture the talents that Hong Kong needed. Mrs IP was, however, concerned about whether the Administration could objectively assess programmes according to the criterion that they should be recognized as "world renowned programmes". Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung expressed a similar concern. Ag. DS(ED)1 advised that in defining "world renowned universities or programmes", the Steering Committee of the Scholarship Scheme ("the Steering Committee") might consider a number of factors, including the academic status of the universities and disciplines/programmes by making reference to the QS World University Ranking and the Times Higher Education World University Ranking, etc. Advice of local academic and professional bodies and relevant organizations, such as the relevant consulate-generals, would be sought if necessary.

8. Dr Kenneth CHAN was concerned that anti-establishment candidates might be prejudiced against during the selection process and requested for the Administration's assurance that it would pay due respect to academic freedom

during assessment and selection, and would not impose political censorship on candidates. USED replied in the affirmative.

9. Dr Helena WONG suggested the extension of the Scholarship Scheme to cover students undertaking doctoral degree programmes as well as extending the tenable period of the scholarships for master's degree programmes or above from two years as originally proposed to four years. USED undertook to convey Dr WONG's views to the Steering Committee.

Composition of the Steering Committee

10. Mr Abraham SHEK queried the rationale for appointing the Secretary of Education as an ex-officio member in the Steering Committee as it might potentially affect the independence of the Steering Committee's decisions. Ag. DS(ED) 1 responded that the role of the ex-officio member in the Steering Committee was to give advice on matters related to policy. He said that the assessment and selection of awardees would primarily be subject to the decision of non-official members of the Steering Committee for which they were responsible. Mr Abraham SHEK and Mr IP Kin-yuen suggested that in addition to business entrepreneurs, the Administration should consider appointing to the Steering Committee secondary school principals and individuals with background in non-governmental organizations. The Administration took note of Mr IP's and Mr SHEK's views.

Other views and concerns

11. Mr IP Kin-yuen said that a better use of the resources requested for setting up the Scholarship Scheme would be subsidy for the existing self-financing local Associate Degree programmes. Commenting that the proposed Scholarship Scheme was just bonus for top students, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that the Administration should instead use the relevant resources for providing more University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded places in universities in order to benefit more secondary school students who were less outstanding academically. USED responded that the Administration appreciated that students had different abilities. The current education system, particularly vocational education, provided multiple articulation pathways and exit points for students who were less outstanding academically.

12. Mrs Regina IP asked whether awardees of the Scholarship Scheme would receive double subsidies as they might also be able to secure scholarships from the overseas universities in which they had enrolled. Ag. DS(ED)1 advised that the value of the award might be correspondingly

reduced if an awardee also received other awards to finance his/her same studies overseas.

13. Mr Alan LEONG requested the Administration to put on record all major deliberations and decisions of the Steering Committee and its interview panels, in particular the justifications for awarding and not awarding the scholarships to the concerned candidates during the selection process, for audit purpose in the future. USED replied in the affirmative.

14. Mr CHAN Chi-chuen was concerned that the Scholarship Scheme could not meet its stated objective of nurturing students with global vision as no quota was set on study destinations and if many of the awardees might choose to pursue their studies in Mainland universities. He suggested that the Administration should monitor the distribution of awardees' study destinations to ensure that there would a reasonable distribution of them amongst different overseas countries and the Mainland.

15. Mr IP Kin-yuen, Mr Abraham SHEK, Dr Priscilla LEUNG and Dr Kenneth CHAN requested the Administration to address members' concerns raised at the meeting when working out the implementation details of the Scholarship Scheme upon its approval. They considered that the Panel on Education should be consulted on the major implementation details of the Scholarship Scheme prior to its launch. USED undertook to continue to discuss with members concerned regarding the implementation details of the Scholarship Scheme upon approval of the funding proposal. He added that the Administration would submit an information paper on the implementation progress of the Scholarship Scheme to the Panel on Education at an appropriate juncture.

16. There being no other questions from members, the Chairman put the item to vote. At the request of members, the Chairman ordered a division. The Chairman said that 41 members voted for and four members voted against the proposal. One member abstained from voting. The voting results of individual members were as follows –

For:

Mr Albert HO Chun-yan
Mr CHAN Kam-lam
Mr TAM Yiu-chung
Mr Frederick FUNG Kin-kee
Mr Jeffrey LAM Kin-fung
Mr WONG Ting-kwong
Ms Starry LEE Wai-king

Mr LEE Cheuk-yan
Ms Emily LAU Wai-hing
Mr Abraham SHEK Lai-him
Mr WONG Kwok-hing
Mr Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen
Ms Cyd HO Sau-lan
Dr Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun

Dr LEUNG Ka-lau
Mr WONG Kwok-kin
Mr Alan LEONG Kah-kit
Mr James TIEN Pei-chun
Mr Frankie YICK Chi-ming
Mr YIU Si-wing
Mr Charles Peter MOK
Dr Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
Mr SIN Chung-kai
Mr IP Kin-yuen
Mr Martin LIAO Cheung-kong
Mr TANG Ka-piu
Mr Dr LO Wai-kwok
Mr Tony TSE Wai-chuen
(41 members)

Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che
Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-yee
Mr Michael TIEN Puk-sun
Mr Steven HO Chun-yin
Mr WU Chi-wai
Mr MA Fung-kwok
Mr CHAN Han-pan
Mr KWOK Wai-keung
Dr Helena WONG Pik-wan
Dr Elizabeth QUAT
Mr POON Siu-ping
Dr CHIANG Lai-wan
Mr Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun

Against:

Mr LEUNG Kwok-hung
Mr WONG Yuk-man
(4 members)

Mr Albert CHAN Wai-yip
Mr CHAN Chi-chuen

Abstained:

Mr Gary FAN Kwok-wai
(1 member)

17. The Chairman declared that the Committee approved the item.

Item No. 11 – FCR(2014-15)16

HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : EDUCATION BUREAU

Subhead 700 General Non-recurrent

New Item "Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors"

Subhead 000 Operational expenses

18. The Chairman advised that the item sought the Committee's approval for creating a new commitment of \$960,000,000 and an increase in the ceiling placed on the total notional annual mid-point salary ("NAMS") value of all non-directorate posts in the establishment of Head 156 – Government Secretariat: Education Bureau in 2014-2015 by \$621,900 for the Education Bureau ("EDB") to implement the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors ("SSSDP"). He said that EDB had consulted the Panel on Education on the proposal on 14 April 2014.

Criteria for selecting eligible programmes under SSSDP

19. Mr IP Kin-yuen welcomed the implementation of SSSDP as it could help increase the supply of local subsidized undergraduate places. Mr IP enquired about the criteria for selecting eligible programmes and measures for ensuring the quality of the relevant programmes operated by self-financing post-secondary institutions. Ag. DS(ED)1 responded that the relevant programmes must be full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes. The programmes identified were nominated by relevant bureaux/departments ("B/Ds") for the purpose of nurturing necessary talent in support of specific industries with urgent or keen demand for human resources. The actual tuition fees payable of the relevant programmes would need to be adjusted to reflect the subsidy.

20. Ms Cyd HO indicated her support for the funding proposal. However, Ms HO cast doubt on the accuracy of the Administration's manpower projection based on which the industries had been identified as having keen or urgent demand for talent under SSSDP. Ms HO was concerned that the concerned industries might not be able to absorb the 3 000 additional graduates trained up under SSSDP.

21. Ag. DS(ED)1 responded that the Administration formed an inter-departmental working group comprising EDB and other relevant B/Ds to identify the industries that were in need of manpower as well as the disciplines and self-financing post-secondary programmes relevant to these industries. Initially, the Administration had identified health care, construction industry, testing and certification, creative industry, and tourism and hospitality as the key disciplines that were in keen and urgent demand for talent. She remarked that the projections on the manpower demand of the specific industries were contributed by the relevant B/Ds based on the data of previous manpower projection exercises of the relevant industries and/or input from the trades. Ag. DS(ED)1 clarified that SSSDP only aimed at increasing the number of subsidized undergraduate places by leveraging on the existing undergraduate places provided by the self-financing institutions but not creating additional places in the relevant programmes. Hence, the implementation of SSSDP would not increase the supply of graduates in the relevant disciplines for those specific industries.

22. Dr Kenneth CHAN declared that he was a member of the teaching staff of the Hong Kong Baptist University. Given that SSSDP was intended to cater to the short-term manpower needs of selected industries and the number of subsidized places would be subject to review annually, Dr Kenneth CHAN was concerned that the participating institutions would face uncertainty

in funding and difficulty in longer-term planning, thereby affecting the continuity as well as quality of these programmes. Echoing Dr CHAN's views, Ms Cyd HO cautioned the Administration that when the three-year implementation period of SSSDP came to an end, the programmes receiving subsidies under SSSDP might have to be scaled down giving rise to staff redundancy problem.

23. Mr Abraham SHEK expressed his support for the funding proposal. Pointing out that the Administration had already secured a funding of \$144 million from the Committee on 4 July 2014 for the Vocational Training Council to implement the Pilot Training and Support Scheme to address the manpower shortage and aging problems faced by some specific industries and trades, Mr SHEK considered that SSSDP should be merit-based rather than vocation-based such that more academically outstanding students from a wide spectrum of disciplines could benefit from the scheme. Dr Helena WONG considered that the Administration should adopt a relaxed approach in determining which programmes to be supported by SSSDP and that in addition to undergraduate programmes, the Administration should consider the inclusion of Associate Degree programmes as well.

24. USED explained that SSSDP aimed at addressing the labour shortage problem in specific industries. The subsidized places of the relevant programmes would mainly be allocated through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System in order to ensure that eligible students were selected through a merit-based system. Subject to the funding approval of FC, SSSDP would be made available to three cohorts of students starting from the 2015/2016 academic year and then be subject to a review on its effectiveness. Meanwhile, the programmes and number of subsidized places would be subject to annual review in consultation with B/Ds taking into account the social and economic development in Hong Kong and the needs of the industries, as well as the operation and continuity of the relevant programmes. The Administration would consider the inclusion of other disciplines and programmes, including sub-degree programmes, under SSSDP in the forthcoming reviews in the light of prevailing market conditions and manpower needs of various industries.

25. Pointing out that the competition among local self-financing undergraduate programmes would be intense in the next couple of years and that the allocation of subsidized places under SSSDP would be crucial to the survival of some programmes, Dr Helena WONG requested the Administration to provide the Panel on Education with a list of programmes and the number of places to be subsidized under SSSDP to enable the Panel to assess whether the

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distribution of subsidized places was fair. The Administration undertook to provide the requested information to the Panel.

(Post-meeting note: The relevant supplementary information provided by the Administration was issued to members of the Panel on Education vide LC Paper No. CB(4)969/13-14(01) on 24 July 2014.)

Monitoring measures

26. On response to Mr IP Kin-yuen's enquiry about measures put in place to ensure the accountability of the participating self-financing post-secondary institutions of SSSDP, Ag. DS(ED)1 said that the subsidy would be disbursed to the participating institutions based on the actual enrolment of eligible students subject to the quota for the designated programmes. The participating institutions would be required to submit to EDB annual reports on the enrolment situation of the relevant programmes and on the use of funds.

27. Mr TANG Ka-piu enquired how the Administration could prevent the participating institutions of SSSDP from increasing the tuition fees of the relevant programmes to make profit. Ag. DS(ED)1 elaborated that tuition fees of the selected programmes should generally be set with reference to the existing fee level and the actual tuition fees payable should be adjusted to fully reflect the subsidy under SSSDP. Adjustments would be allowed for price movement and enhancement in teaching and learning if needed with full justifications subject to EDB's approval.

28. There being no further questions from members, the Chairman put the item to vote. The Chairman declared that the Committee approved the item.

Item No. 12 – FCR(2014-15)15

HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT : EDUCATION BUREAU

Subhead 700 General Non-recurrent

New Item "Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme"

Subhead 000 Operational expenses

HEAD 173 – STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AGENCY

Subhead 000 Operational expenses

29. The Chairman advised that the item sought the Committee's approval for creating a new commitment of \$105,300,000 and increasing the ceiling placed on the total NAMS value of all non-directorate posts in the establishment of Head 156 – Government Secretariat: Education Bureau and Head 173 – Student Financial Assistance Agency by \$621,900 and \$579,060 respectively in 2014-2015 for the implementation of the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme ("MUSSS"). He said that EDB had consulted the Panel on Education on the proposal on 14 April 2014.

Effectiveness of MUSSS

30. Mr Gary FAN expressed strong reservation over the funding proposal. Pointing out that only about 40% and 30% of Hong Kong students admitted by Mainland institutions under the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions ("the Admission Scheme") had eventually enrolled in the relevant institutions in 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 respectively, Mr FAN said that the utilization rate of MUSSS, which aimed at supporting needy Hong Kong students pursuing undergraduate programmes in the Mainland under the Admission Scheme, was expected to be low accordingly. In this connection, Mr FAN enquired how the Administration would evaluate the effectiveness of MUSSS while Dr Kenneth CHAN questioned the cost-effectiveness of the scheme.

31. USED responded that the Admission Scheme, which was launched with effect from 2012/2013, provided an additional pathway for candidates of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") to apply for admission to higher education institutions in the Mainland. He said that the low enrolment rate of Hong Kong students under the Admission Scheme in the past two years might be attributable to the decline in secondary student population in the past few years, making more local undergraduate places available. The Administration would keep in view of the enrolment situation under the Admission Scheme and review the effectiveness of the scheme in due course.

Extending the funding scope of MUSSS

32. Dr Fernando CHEUNG said that many students with special educational needs ("SEN students") had chosen to pursue their undergraduate studies in Taiwan, where there was greater support for the education of SEN students. Pointing out that more Hong Kong students' applied for admission to tertiary institutions in Taiwan and Macao than in the Mainland, Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr IP Kin-yuen and Mr TANG Ka-piu were of the view that the Administration should consider extending MUSSS to students studying in

Macau and Taiwan. Mr TANG opined that the Administration should pursue with Taiwan and Macao on similar Government-to-Government ("G2G") initiatives such as the Admission Scheme.

33. USED advised that the policy objective of MUSSS was to complement the Admission Scheme, which was currently the only G2G initiative for local students to pursue further education outside Hong Kong. MUSSS only supported needy students pursuing their studies in designated Mainland institutions under the Admission Scheme. Students enrolled in non-designated Mainland universities would not be eligible for receiving the relevant subsidies. USED clarified that while SEN students would be benefited from MUSSS, it was not the policy objective of MUSSS to support SEN students.

34. DS(ED)1 added that the Admission Scheme had unique features that ensured the quality of programmes and recognition of qualifications obtained by Hong Kong students. The admission criteria and designated institutions under the Admission Scheme had been formulated with a view to safeguarding quality and the interest of Hong Kong students. Moreover, the Admission Scheme would exempt Hong Kong students from the Joint Entrance Examination for Universities in the Mainland, hence saving students' time and effort on other university admission examinations to enable them to concentrate on their preparation for HKDSE examination. This was in line with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region ("HKSAR") Government's policy objective to promote HKDSE examination as the primary channel for articulation in and outside Hong Kong. Under the above considerations, the Administration considered it prudent that in the meantime, the MUSSS applied only to students pursuing studies under the Admission Scheme rather than broadening its scope too widely.

Recognition of academic qualifications awarded by Mainland post-secondary institutions in Hong Kong

35. Dr Helena WONG expressed concern about the recognition of the academic qualifications awarded by Mainland post-secondary institutions under the Admission Scheme in Hong Kong as well as by the HKSAR Government particularly in its civil servants recruitment.

36. In response, DS(ED)1 advised that all the 75 Mainland institutions participating in the Admission Scheme were covered by the Memorandum of Understanding on mutual recognition of academic qualification signed by the Mainland and the HKSAR Government for the purpose of further studies

which enabled students to pursue further study in local tertiary institutions seamlessly.

37. In respect of employment, DS(ED)1 said that private sector employers' recognition of qualifications awarded by Mainland institutions would be subject to individual companies' recruitment policies. As far as civil servants recruitment was concerned, DS(ED)1 advised that whether an undergraduate degree awarded by the relevant Mainland institutions would be regarded as being equivalent to an honours undergraduate degree conferred by local universities in Hong Kong for meeting an entry requirement of degree holders' posts in the civil service would be subject to the assessment of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications. The same also applied to academic qualifications awarded by overseas universities.

38. Dr Helena WONG commented that the Administration's policy in respect of civil servants recruitment was not conducive to achieving the policy objective of the Admission Scheme if it did not accept the academic qualifications awarded by Mainland universities. Pointing out that some Hong Kong students were unable to enter the professional fields of their studies upon graduation from Mainland universities, Mr TANG Ka-piu considered that the recognition of Mainland academic qualifications by Hong Kong's professional sectors should be enhanced or otherwise the problem of manpower mismatch would continue.

39. Dr Kenneth CHAN suggested that the Administration should manage the expectations of students who wished to pursue their studies in the Mainland regarding the issue of qualifications recognition. USED advised that more information relating to the recognition of qualifications awarded by Mainland institutions in Hong Kong in respect of studies and employment would be provided during the publicity campaign of the Admission Scheme to be launched in the future such that students would be better informed of the opportunities and challenges in pursuing further studies in the Mainland.

Increasing the number of UGC-funded undergraduate places

40. Pointing out that the number of publicly-funded undergraduate places in Hong Kong had remained in the region of 14 000 to 15 000 for over a decade, Dr Fernando CHEUNG suggested that the Administration should seriously consider increasing the number of UGC-funded undergraduate places.

41. Dr Helena WONG and Mr IP Kin-yuen echoed Dr Fernando CHEUNG's view. They considered that the three funding proposals put forward by the Administration at the meeting, namely, the Scholarship Scheme (FCR(2014-2015)17), SSSDP (FCR(2014-2015)16) and MUSSS (FCR(2014-2015)15), aimed at encouraging students to study abroad without addressing the shortage of local subsidized undergraduate places. Dr Helena WONG reiterated the stance of the Democratic Party that UGC-funded undergraduate places should be increased to meet the demand for articulation opportunities in local universities.

42. Dr Kenneth CHAN criticized the Administration's lack of determination to increase the number of UGC-funded undergraduate places to meet the demand and that the aforesaid funding proposals were only short-term relief measures.

Other views and concerns

43. Dr Helena WONG enquired whether students subsidized by MUSSS would be required to work in Hong Kong for a certain period of time upon completion of their studies. USED explained that MUSSS was not a scholarship scheme but a scheme providing a subsidy for needy students having passed a means test. Given the nature of the scheme as well as the small amount of subsidy involved for each eligible student, no such undertaking would be imposed on students receiving subsidies from MUSSS.

44. Mr TANG Ka-piu suggested that the Administration should consider expanding the list of designated Mainland institutions under the Admission Scheme to include more top Mainland institutions which excelled in specific professional areas. USED took note of Mr TANG's view and advised that the Administration would follow up as appropriate.

45. The Chairman announced the close of the meeting and advised that the next meeting scheduled for the day would be held at 2:30 pm.

46. The meeting was adjourned at 1:07 pm.