

For discussion
on 12 January 2015

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Progress of 2014 Policy Address initiatives to broaden subsidised higher education opportunities

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress of implementation of the initiatives announced in the 2014 Policy Address to broaden the opportunities for local students to receive subsidised higher education.

Background

2. All along, the Government has been striving to provide secondary school leavers with flexible and diversified articulation pathways with multiple entry and exit points through promoting the quality and sustainable development of the publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors. About 38% of our young people in the relevant cohort now have access to degree-level education. Including sub-degree places, nearly 70% of them have access to post-secondary education.

3. Bearing in mind the expected continuing decline in the number of local secondary school graduates, from about 62 000 in 2014 to 42 700 in 2022, the Government has been planning cautiously on the provision of subsidised higher education opportunities, with due emphasis on both quality and quantity. In his 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced a series of initiatives to provide school leavers with broader and more diversified articulation pathways both in and outside Hong Kong. These initiatives include, among others:

- (a) progressively increasing the number of University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded senior year undergraduate intake places by another 1 000, i.e. from 4 000 to 5 000 places per annum;
- (b) studying the feasibility of introducing a new scheme to subsidise up to 1 000 students per cohort to pursue self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines to meet Hong Kong's manpower needs. The scheme has subsequently been named as the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP);

- (c) launching the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme (MUSSS) to support needy students pursuing studies under the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions (Admission Scheme); and
- (d) introducing a new scholarship scheme to support up to 100 outstanding local students each cohort to pursue studies in renowned universities outside Hong Kong. The scheme has subsequently been named as the Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme (HKSES).

4. The Government briefed the Panel on Education (Panel) on the 2014 Policy Address initiatives on 27 January 2014 (see paper CB(4)323/13-14(01)). We further consulted the Panel on the key parameters of the SSSDP, MUSSS and HKSES on 14 April 2014 (see paper CB(4)545/13-14(01)). The Finance Committee (FC) approved new commitments of \$960,000,000, \$105,300,000 and \$347,965,000 on 12 July 2014 for implementation of the SSSDP, MUSSS and HKSES respectively (see papers FCR(2014-15)16, FCR(2014-15)15 and FCR(2014-15)17 respectively). As for the increase in UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places, the additional funding required will be reflected in the recurrent grants to the UGC-funded institutions.

Increase in UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places

5. As announced in the 2014 Policy Address, the number of UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places will progressively increase by 1 000 places from the 2015/16 academic year and the triennium that follows. The additional intake places will provide meritorious sub-degree graduates with more opportunities for articulation to the last two years of a publicly-funded undergraduate programme. The initiative will also help foster a flexible, diversified and multiple-entry multiple-exit education framework with greater inter-flow between the self-financing and publicly-funded sectors, and between the sub-degree and degree sectors.

6. The UGC and its funded institutions have since responded positively to this initiative and been working on the progressive allocation of the additional places with a view to putting them into the most effective use. As a modest start, the Government has approved the UGC's recommendation to increase the number of UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places by 265 to 4 265 in the 2015/16 academic year. As regards the remaining 735 additional places, they will be phased-in in the context of the academic planning exercise for the 2016/17 to 2018/19 triennium.

Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors

7. We have introduced the SSSDP starting from the 2015/16 academic year to subsidise up to 1 000 students per cohort to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs. The scheme will be implemented on a pilot basis for three cohorts and then be subject to a review on its effectiveness.

8. The SSSDP aims to achieve the following objectives –

- (a) to increase the supply of subsidised undergraduate places by leveraging on the supply of the self-financing sector;
- (b) to nurture talent in support of specific industries with urgent or keen demand for human resources;
- (c) to encourage the self-financing education sector to offer programmes in selected disciplines that meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs by providing targeted financial support; and
- (d) to support the healthy and sustainable development of the self-financing post-secondary education sector to complement the UGC-funded sector in broadening and diversifying study opportunities.

9. In consultation with relevant policy bureaux, health care, architecture and engineering, testing and certification, creative industry, logistics and tourism and hospitality are identified as key disciplines that are in keen and urgent demand for talent. There are five participating post-secondary institutions providing 13 programmes and offering a total of 940 subsidised places under SSSDP for the cohort to be admitted in the 2015/16 academic year. The places of the subsidised programmes will be allocated mainly through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) in order to ensure eligible students are selected through a merit-based system. Details of the relevant institutions, programmes and number of places to be subsidised under each programme are set out at **Annex**.

10. To facilitate access by students, parents and the general public to the details of SSSDP, a dedicated webpage (www.cspe.edu.hk/SSSDP) has been established under the Concourse website of the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education (CSPE)¹, with links to the websites of the participating institutions and JUPAS.

¹ Established in April 2012 in response to the recommendation of UGC's Report on Higher Education Review 2010, CSPE serves as a useful platform for discussing macro and strategic issues of common interest to the self-financing post-secondary sector, as well as promoting quality and good practices.

Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme

11. The MUSSS was launched on 31 July 2014 to support needy Hong Kong students who will pursue undergraduate studies on the Mainland under the Admission Scheme. The MUSSS is not subject to any quota. Students who pass a means test will receive either a full-rate subsidy of HK\$15,000 or half-rate subsidy of HK\$7,500 per student per year, depending on their needs. The MUSSS will benefit three cohorts of students starting from the 2014/15 academic year (i.e. those entering the first year of undergraduate studies in the 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years) and then its effectiveness will be reviewed.

12. Applications for the MUSSS for entering the first year of undergraduate studies in the 2014/15 academic year in the Mainland under the Admission Scheme were invited from 1 to 29 August 2014. By the closing of the application period, 448 applications were received. We have completed processing 446 applications² thus far. Of the applications received, the applicants of 280 applications were verified with the concerned Mainland institutions to have enrolled in the first year of undergraduate in those institutions under the Admission Scheme. Of those 280 applicants, the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) has completed the means test on 278 applicants². 263 applicants pass the means test, with 152 eligible to receive the full-rate subsidy of HK\$15,000 per year and the remaining 111 to receive the half-rate subsidy of HK\$7,500 per year.

13. The subsidy under the MUSSS will last for the normal duration of the programmes concerned enrolled by the successful applicants and will be disbursed by annual instalment subject to annual verification of the student status of the applicants with the relevant Mainland institutions. The total amount of subsidy to be granted to the 263 successful applicants in the 2014/15 academic year is HK\$3,112,500. Apart from the two applicants on whom the means test by SFAA is still under process, all applicants have been notified of the assessment results and disbursement of subsidy for the 2014/15 academic year has been arranged.

Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme

14. The objective of the HKSES is to support local students to pursue studies in world renowned universities outside Hong Kong with a view to grooming a top cadre of talents with global vision, international network and world-class education, thereby contributing to enhancing Hong Kong's competitiveness as Asia's World City in a globalised knowledge economy.

² The applicants of the remaining two applications have not yet submitted the required supplementary information for the Student Financial Assistance Agency to conduct the means test.

The scheme also seeks to support those students who have excellent academic achievement but lack the financial means to study in top-notch universities outside Hong Kong. The HKSES will benefit three cohorts of students, with initially up to 100 students per cohort, starting from the 2015/16 academic year and then be subject to a review on its effectiveness. All awardees will receive a scholarship to cover their tuition fees, subject to a ceiling of HK\$250,000 per student per annum, whichever is lower. Financially needy students may also apply for a means-tested bursary, subject to a ceiling of HK\$200,000 per student per annum.

15. A Steering Committee was set up in September 2014 to advise the Administration on the policy, strategy and administration of the HKSES. The implementation details of the HKSES deliberated and endorsed by the Steering Committee are set out in the Administration's "Report on the Implementation Details of the Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme" issued to the Panel on 25 November 2014 (see paper CB(4)197/14-15(01)).

16. The HKSES was launched on 25 November 2014. Eligible students who wish to apply for the scholarship for studies commencing in the 2015/16 academic year should submit applications on or before 31 January 2015. The Steering Committee will adopt a three-stage selection process - preliminary screening (from February to April 2015), shortlisting (from April to May 2015) and interview (from May to August 2015). Results will be announced and disbursement of the scholarship and bursary will be arranged in August 2015.

Advice Sought

17. Members are invited to note this paper.

Education Bureau
January 2015

**Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors
Participating Institutions and Programmes
for Cohort to be Admitted in the 2015/16 Academic Year**

Institutions	Programmes	Number of places to be subsidised
Chu Hai College of Higher Education	Bachelor of Architecture (Honours)	40
Hang Seng Management College	Bachelor of Business Administration (Honours) in Supply Chain Management	70
The Open University of Hong Kong	Bachelor of Fine Arts with Honours in Animation and Visual Effects	80
	Bachelor of Nursing with Honours in General Health Care	150
	Bachelor of Nursing with Honours in Mental Health Care	70
	Bachelor of Science with Honours in Testing and Certification	50
Tung Wah College	Bachelor of Health Science (Honours) (Nursing Major)	200
Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, Vocational Training Council	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Landscape Architecture	10
	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Civil Engineering	60
	Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) in Environmental Engineering and Management	60
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Fashion Design	60
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Product Design	60
	Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Culinary Arts and Management	30