

**For discussion  
10 April 2015**

## **Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs**

### **Educational and Career Development Support for Elite Athletes**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on current programmes to provide educational and career development support for elite athletes.

#### **Background**

2. One of the Government's broad sports policy objectives is to support the development of elite sport in Hong Kong. We recognise that in order to encourage athletes to pursue the highest levels of performance, we need to provide appropriate support to our elite athletes, including programmes to help them with their education and future career development. We have previously briefed a meeting of the Joint Panels on Home Affairs and Education on measures undertaken by respective stakeholders to provide additional educational support for elite athletes, and in November 2011, we briefed Members on the educational and career support measures available to elite athletes and our plans to strengthen these measures.

3. In response to concerns from athletes and their families about achieving a balance between a commitment to full-time athletic training and continuing to pursue further education and improve their future career prospects, we have worked with the Hong Kong Sports Institute (HKSI) to identify programmes that will allow elite athletes to pursue a full-time career in sport whilst preparing for a transition to a "second career" after they retire from full-time training and competition.

#### **Athlete Education Initiatives**

4. As the key delivery agent for high performance training for Hong Kong's elite athletes, the HKSI recognises the importance of a "whole person" development approach to providing services to athletes, and accordingly offers athletes educational and career planning services to cater to the

different needs of athletes at various stages of their sporting career. One of the main elements of the HKSI's 2011-2015 Strategic Direction is to facilitate integrated educational opportunities for athletes to allow them to train as full-time professional sportsmen and women whilst pursuing their educational goals ("dual career model").

5. In line with the recommendations of a consultancy conducted in 2013, the HKSI has been working with the education sector to develop three new educational programmes for elite athletes, namely: the Secondary Education Programme; the Professional Accreditation Programme; and the Flexible Tertiary Education. These programmes are briefly described below.

*(A) Secondary Education Programme*

6. The basis of the Secondary Education Programme is the establishment of the "Elite Athlete-Friendly School Network" (the Network), which was set up in June 2014 to provide better educational support for younger elite athletes. The schools in the Network allow flexibility in the curriculum to better accommodate young athletes' study, training and competition schedules; allow for an extension of years of learning; and provide enhanced educational support to meet the needs of individual athletes. The Programme aims to strengthen academic support for student athletes preparing for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education examinations, and as appropriate to facilitate their pursuit of tertiary education. To date, 27 secondary schools have joined the Network (as listed at the **Annex**). To build further on the "dual career model", the HKSI is also working with secondary schools to run a "Partnership School Programme", where the participating schools will provide a tailor-made and highly integrated curriculum for athlete students, enabling them to train full-time whilst continuing to pursue their studies at senior secondary level. This Programme will be launched in the coming school year.

*(B) Professional Accreditation Programme*

7. Under the Professional Accreditation Programme (PAP), the knowledge and experience that athletes have gained through elite sports training would be formally evaluated and accredited through this Programme. The HKSI is considering partnering with local institutions to provide an on-site PAP at diploma level to elite athletes aged 15 and above, whereby their sports training will be the core of the programme and recognised for credit points.

### *(C) Flexible Tertiary Education*

8. The HKSI will continue to work with the local tertiary institutions to improve support for elite athletes by arranging for flexible study and examination timetables, extensions of years of study and targeted tutoring and mentoring. Local tertiary institutions are already taking into account the background of elite athletes in the admission process and scheduling of academic programmes. For example, one of our elite athletes was allowed to suspend studies for one year to prepare for the 2012 London Olympic Games. At present, there are 139 HKSI scholarship athletes who are pursuing degree programmes at local tertiary institutions. In mid-2014, the HKSI signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hong Kong Institute of Education to facilitate the admission of elite athletes into the Institute's undergraduate programmes through a special scheme.

### **Hong Kong Athletes Fund**

9. The Hong Kong Athletes Fund (HKAF) provides grants to individual athletes for educational and other academic training to enable them to continue their studies and to develop alternative careers upon retirement from full-time sports training and competition. Grants can be used to fund tuition fees for certificate, diploma and degree courses offered by the following educational institutions –

- (a) University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded tertiary education institutions;
- (b) Post-secondary institutions;
- (c) Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education;
- (d) Continuing education departments of UGC-funded tertiary institutions; and
- (e) approved overseas colleges or universities (if no comparable courses are offered locally).

Retired athletes who are undertaking long-term full-time study programmes may also apply to the HKAF for a subsistence allowance. To date, the HKSI has granted a total of about \$16.9 million from the HKAF to 169 athletes.

10. In order to recognise the contributions of elite athletes who have represented Hong Kong and achieved outstanding results in major international games, the Sports Commission approved in August 2013 the setting up of the Elite Athletes Performance Recognition (EAPR) Scheme. Funded by the HKAF and administered by the HKSI, the EAPR Scheme will

give a one-off cash grant to eligible athletes upon their retirement from full-time training and competition with a view to supporting their pursuit of a second career. The Scheme has been launched and open for application since January 2015, and the HKSI has earmarked \$2.5 million for grants under this scheme for the 2015-16 financial year.

### **Other Education and Career Services**

11. The HKSI provides general education and career planning services to athletes through the Enhanced Athletes Educational and Vocational Development Programmes, which offers programmes to cater to the different needs of athletes. For example, under the Elite Athletes Tutorial Support Programme, athletes may receive one-on-one instruction in languages, mathematics and other subjects. Special services, such as on-line learning materials, may be arranged when athletes are away from Hong Kong for training or competition. On average, more than 180 athletes benefit from the Programme each year. Other programmes include the Elite Coaching Apprenticeship Programme and the Elite Athletes Coach Education Support Programme, which provide a pathway for athletes to become accredited coaches – indeed some athletes who took these programmes are now employed by the HKSI. The Elite Athletes Development Programme provides around 450 training places to athletes in areas such as communication, time management and financial management skills.

12. The HKSI also offers Hong Kong athletes the opportunity to study a Bachelor of Education in Sports Training Programme jointly with the Beijing Sport University (BSU). This is a five-year part-time bachelor degree course covering sports anatomy, exercise physiology, sports nutrition, sports-specific theory and practice. So far, 70 Hong Kong athletes have completed the course and 24 are currently studying on this course.

13. In addition to the programmes offered by the HKSI, the Sports Federation and Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China (SF&OC) also provides support for athletes through its Hong Kong Athletes Career and Education Programme (ACEP). Under the programme, the SF&OC provides consultation services, scholarships, vocational training, language courses and job placement services. ACEP is largely funded by the Government, and \$2.68 million was allocated to the programme in the 2014-15 financial year.

### **Support for Athletes with Disabilities**

14. The HKSI adopts an integrated approach in training and providing

support to both disabled and non-disabled athletes. Athletes with disabilities are eligible to apply for financial support under the HKAF to study degree or other courses. The Hong Kong Paralympic Committee & Sports Association for the Physically Disabled also offers career development programmes for athletes with physical disabilities.

15. The Home Affairs Bureau will engage a consultant in 2015 to study the development of sport for the disabled and how to provide better support for athletes with disabilities. The consultant will consult stakeholders and make recommendations on the way forward. We will report on the outcome of the consultancy study to the Panel in due course.

### **Way Forward**

16. Whilst encouraging the HKSI to take forward the above-mentioned education and career development initiatives for elite athletes, we will continue to review with stakeholders the opportunities for further increasing support in this area.

17. Members are invited to note the above position in relation to the provision of education and career development support for elite athletes.

**Home Affairs Bureau**  
**April 2015**

**List of Participating Schools of the HKSI  
Elite Athlete-Friendly School Network  
(As at March 2015)**

1. Baptist Lui Ming Choi Secondary School
2. Buddhist Mau Fung Memorial College
3. Ching Chung Hau Po Woon Secondary School
4. Christian Alliance S W Chan Memorial College
5. Diocesan Girls' School
6. Discovery College
7. Fung Kai No. 1 Secondary School
8. Heep Yunn School
9. Ho Yu College and Primary School (Sponsored by Sik Sik Yuen)
10. Island School
11. Jockey Club Ti-I College
12. King George V School
13. La Salle College
14. Lam Tai Fai College
15. Lock Tao Secondary School
16. Po Leung Kuk Ngan Po Ling College
17. Pui Ching Middle School
18. Pui Tak Canossian College
19. Renaissance College
20. Sha Tin College
21. South Island School
22. St Clare's Girls' School
23. St Stephen's College
24. Tin Shui Wai Methodist College
25. TWGHs Wong Fung Ling College
26. West Island School
27. Yan Chai Hospital Wong Wha San Secondary School