

**Submission to Panel on Education, Legislative Council, HKSAR  
in connection with a meeting to be held on 9 May 2016**

by

Prof. Leonard Kwok-Hon Cheng  
President, Lingnan University

Lingnan University (LU) would like to thank Dr. Hon. LAM Tai-fai, Chairman of LegCo's Panel on Education, for inviting it to attend a meeting on Monday, 9 May 2016 and to give its views on the policy of research funding from UGC and RGC and a recent report on governance of UGC institutions. LU welcomes this opportunity and I am pleased to attend the meeting as the University's representative.

With regard to research funding from UGC and RGC, I would like to start out by emphasizing that LU embraces UGC's goal of role differentiation among UGC institutions. For Lingnan, we aspire to become a leading liberal arts university in Asia distinguished by our excellence in student learning, research in selected areas and community engagement. We welcome healthy competition based on clearly spelt out key performance indicators and international and regional benchmarking.

We believe that RGC has been following a fit-for-purpose approach to research funding, and we support this approach. However, I would like to point out that the nature and academic activities of the academic disciplines at LU, namely, business, humanities and social sciences, are different from those of other disciplines such as science, engineering and medicine. This would, as a result, have implications for our general funding.

In terms of general funding, 23% of block grant to each UGC institution is taken to be "research block grant" or the R-block in short, part of which is top-sliced to form a central pool for redistribution among UGC institutions based on research performance. We understand that the redistribution of the top-sliced R-block is driven equally by two sets of results: RAE outcomes and number of RGC grant awards. While LU accepts the principle of competition for funding based on research performance, it has concerns about its implementation. First, has the differential needs in research support (in the number of research projects) across different disciplines been properly addressed? More specifically, are the numbers of awards received by an institution in different broad fields adjusted before they are added up to get a grand total for the purpose of informing the redistribution of the R-block? Should the number of awards be adjusted or "normalized", making reference to the sector-wide performance in grant awards across those broad fields, before

they are added up? Lack of proper adjustment might lead to redistribution of resources in favor of some universities and against others due to their different composition of academic fields. I wish to emphasize that we are mainly concerned about the redistribution of the R-block, not the fit-for-purpose differential funding of research projects across different academic fields provided by RGC.

Role differentiation implies room for collaboration among UGC institutions in teaching, research, and community outreach. LU welcomes UGC's plan to launch a new funding scheme in support of deep research collaboration such as "research pooling." At the same time, we would like to suggest that UGC also provide funding in support of the cooperation among local institutions in student exchange as well as joint academic events/programmes that bring them together for the benefits of Hong Kong.

Second, is the designation of 23% of total block grants as research block grant appropriate for all UGC institutions regardless of their individual positioning according to UGC's goal of role differentiation? If UGC were to adopt the principle of fit-for-purpose funding recognising the institutions' different roles, would they be allowed to have input in determining the percentage of their own R-block? For example, given Lingnan's positioning as a liberal arts university emphasizing students' whole person development, could we possibly set our R-block and teaching block grant at 13% and 85% respectively (instead of the current 23% and 75% apportionment, the remaining 2% being designated for knowledge transfer), with the understanding that LU will actively seek research funding support NOT only from GRF / ECS but also from other resources for applied research and development such as PPR, Strategic PPR, as well as international grants and private donations? In addition, given the wide-spread adoption of Service Learning as a means of community-based experiential learning, would UGC consider providing research support for community based research and Service Learning, e.g., to promote scholarships in teaching and learning? I believe this kind of research funding will not only be of interest to Lingnan, but also to other UGC institutions.

Concerning the Newby Report on governance in UGC institutions, I would like to report that it is welcomed by LU. The report was discussed in general terms at its Council meeting held on 25 April, and will be further discussed in the future. The senior management of LU will continue to work closely with the Council to ensure that a robust governance system is in place.

Good governance has always been one of the major priorities of LU, and the Council looks forward to collaborating with the UGC to follow up on the implementation of the

recommendations. Among other things, the Council discussed at its most recent meeting ways to strengthen communications with stakeholders of the University in order to enhance good governance and to more effectively assist the University to become a leading liberal arts university in Asia.

As Lingnan University is strongly committed to high quality teaching and research, the call for developing performance indicators to further enhance the development of the University is welcome. Built upon the existing performance indicators, the University has decided to further enhance its performance through benchmarking with leading liberal arts universities in Asia in the areas of curriculum design, student learning, research, and community engagement. A new strategic plan for 2016-2021 is also being developed with wide consultation within the Lingnan community.

In the face of increasingly complex socio-political circumstances, LU has initiated a review of different kinds of risks such as reputation risk, financial risk, quality assurance risk and competition risk. The University will actively identify and develop appropriate and necessary measures for managing risks effectively.