

**LegCo Panel on Education
Meeting on 9 May 2016**

Submission from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

(I) The Policy on Research Funding from the University Grants Committee and the Research Grants Council

UGC and RGC play a crucial role in championing and supporting research that benefits teaching and learning, as well as contributing strategically and significantly to the advancement of the local higher education sector and Hong Kong as a whole. Their vision and mission are widely supported while their guidance and efforts over the years have been very commendable.

The increasingly competitive, globalized world and the specific socio-economic situation of Hong Kong in the past decade or so have presented many challenges to the local higher education institutions. They no longer exist in a vacuum of academic endeavour, but are obliged to answer to societal needs and support the development of Hong Kong following the direction provided by the HKSAR Government. As such, we believe there needs to be a stronger emphasis of research that best serves this time, this place, both socially and economically. This is indeed one of the key roles of RGC, which is charged to develop “a research base adequate for the maintenance of academic vigour and pertinent to the needs of Hong Kong” (terms of reference of RGC). For UGC and RGC to contribute in a more substantial way to address the needs of Hong Kong, we wish to share the following observations:

1. Equal weighting for ERG and other grants for allocation of R-portion

The amount of RGC Earmarked Research Grants (ERG), mainly provided for academic research, is used to determine the allocation of the Research Portion (R-portion) of funding for each university. This will result in de-emphasis of research that has application values. We suggest grants obtained from other sources such as Innovation and Technology Fund be included in this allocation exercise and be given an equal weighting as ERG.

2. Ratings in RAE must be carefully used

The ratings in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) are mainly determined by the achievements in academic research, which must be carefully used in subsequent funding allocations in order not to bias against applied research.

3. Enhance expertise within UGC and RGC

UGC and RGC need to have more individuals who have experience in applied research and knowledge transfer serving on their Committee/Council. Only with such expertise will they be able to formulate policies and make decisions that best support the development of Hong Kong.

4. Respect and support the individual roles of universities

As defined by UGC in 2004, one of PolyU's primary roles is "Emphasizes application-oriented teaching, professional education and applied research." This role statement has to a great extent steered the research direction and effort of our faculty members in the last two decades. The current UGC and RGC policy on research funding, which emphasizes academic research, would mean penalizing a university which fulfills its government entrusted duties and which bears the future of Hong Kong firmly in mind.

5. Collaboration with Innovation and Technology Bureau for better synergy

As noted in the 2016 Policy Address, the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB) will proactively co-ordinate the work of universities and other related bodies, and establish a robust system for scientific research and fund research undertaken by universities. For the purpose of synergy, UGC/RGC may explore the feasibility of co-ordinating the funding resources with ITB, and then consider the allocation to academic research and applied research from a more comprehensive perspective.

(II) Report on "Governance in UGC-funded Higher Education Institutions in Hong Kong"

PolyU appreciates the effort of the UGC in commissioning a study on institutional governance and welcomes the report on "Governance in UGC-funded Higher Education Institutions in Hong Kong" released on 30 March 2016. The findings and recommendations have no doubt offered much food for thought for local institutions, particularly at a time when they have to address various challenges in the political, economic and social landscapes.

Fully aware of the importance of a robust governance, PolyU takes a very positive view of various recommendations and will form a working group in the very near future to study the report and its recommendations in detail, and will try to evaluate the possible implications of the adoption of the recommendations.

6 May 2016