



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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17 August 2017

Ms Ada Lau
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1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Lau,

Finance Committee
Follow-up to the meeting on 19 July 2017

I refer to your letter dated 20 July 2017.

For Members's reference, our response to the 12 motions passed at the meeting is set out at Annex.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ms S M Yip'.

(Ms S M Yip)
for Secretary for Education

Encl.

Finance Committee
Follow-up to the meeting on 19 July 2017
FCR(2017-18)24

Response to the motions passed at the meeting

(1) Post-secondary education

Response to motion no. 0002, 0010, 0016, 0019 and 0023

The target group of the Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong (the Subsidy Scheme) is the eligible students pursuing full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in Hong Kong offered by eligible institutions.

Students pursuing sub-degree programmes (including associate degree and higher diploma programmes) are not the target group of the Subsidy Scheme. The Government has provided around 11 000 subsidised sub-degree places annually (representing 37% of all sub-degree places) through the Vocational Training Council and some University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities. Sub-degree graduates who aspire for further studies will be covered by the Subsidy Scheme if they choose to pursue eligible top-up degree programmes.

Besides, students pursuing self-financing programmes offered by UGC-funded universities are also not the target group of the Subsidy Scheme. It is because the Government has already been providing recurrent subsidy to the UGC-funded universities (which have greater flexibility in programme quality assessment and the offering of programmes), thus rendering them significant advantages in student admission, as compared with self-financing institutions. The Subsidy Scheme will facilitate a more balanced development between the UGC-funded universities and self-financing institutions when it only covers latter's programmes.

Students are free to choose among institutions and programmes after taking due consideration of factors such as the scope of the Subsidy Scheme and personal aspirations, etc.

As a next step, the Government will revisit the role and positioning of self-financing post-secondary education, such as the role of the self-financing operation of subvented institutions vis-a-vis self-financing institutions, the future development of sub-degree programmes etc. We do not have a concrete timetable at the moment.

Response to motion no. 0007

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. Through the development of both sectors, about 45% of our young people in the relevant cohort now have access to degree-level education. Including sub-degree education, over 70% of them have access to post-secondary education. In the 2016/17 academic year, there are sufficient publicly-funded and self-financing first-year first-degree (FYFD) places for all Secondary 6 students who meet the minimum entrance requirements for articulation to undergraduate programmes.

In the coming five years, we expect a continuous drop in the population of the relevant age cohort proceeding to post-secondary education. The number of secondary school graduates will drop from about 57 000 in 2016 to 43 000 in 2022. Meanwhile, in recent years, the Government has implemented a series of measures to further increase subsidised higher education opportunities, in a bid to provide school leavers with broader and more diversified articulation pathways, e.g. progressively increasing the number of UGC-funded senior year undergraduate intake places and introducing the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors. Besides, starting from the 2017/18 academic year, we will provide a non-means-tested annual subsidy of \$30,000 for eligible students pursuing full-time locally-accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in Hong Kong offered by eligible institutions.

Upon implementation of the above measures, all eligible students will have the opportunity to receive various forms of subsidies to pursue full-time locally-accredited undergraduate programmes. As such, the Government does not see a genuine need to adjust the number of

UGC-funded FYFD places to be offered and will maintain it at 15 000 per annum during the 2016/17 to 2018/19 triennium.

Response to motion no. 0014

In 2010, the Aspirations for the Higher Education System in Hong Kong Report of the UGC recommended that there should be a single quality assurance body for the whole post-secondary education system, so as to integrate and rationalise the approaches of quality assurance (QA) across the system.

The Government has been following up on the recommendation. In this connection, we established in 2012 the Liaison Committee on Quality Assurance (LCQA) with representatives of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and the Quality Assurance Council (QAC) under UGC. LCQA serves as a liaison platform to promote sharing of good practices among all QA bodies in a more effective manner, as well as to enhance consistency and transparency with a view to strengthening accountability. Moreover, there is currently cross membership between HKCAAVQ and QAC who can serve as a bridge between the QA practices of the two QA bodies. Besides, UGC, UGC-funded universities, HKCAAVQ and the Education Bureau (EDB) established in 2014 a working group, of which the scope of review covered the approach and mechanism of quality audits. It was found that while the degree programmes of UGC-funded universities and the programmes of self-financing institutions at sub-degree level or above were subject to regular external audits, there were no such arrangements for the sub-degree programmes, however funded, offered by UGC-funded universities and their self-financing units. The working group considered that to ensure the quality of post-secondary education, it is essential for the entire sector to be subject to oversight by a QA mechanism that includes the element of external quality audits, so as to ensure the credibility and consistency of the QA arrangements. The working group made a number of recommendations in June 2015 on the framework and long-term mechanism for the audits, which were accepted by the Government. In particular, UGC should be the overseeing body of the quality audits for programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above (however funded) offered by UGC-funded universities, with QAC as the audit operator. As for the external quality audits on sub-degree operations of the UGC-funded universities, HKCAAVQ would participate in the formulation of the Audit Manual and nomination of external experts and its staff to be member(s) of the Audit Panels. The first Audit Visit is expected to be conducted in late 2017. Meanwhile, HKCAAVQ will

continue to monitor the QA of all programmes of self-financing institutions. With the above, the aforementioned mechanism and arrangements already ensure the entire post-secondary education sector will be subject to regular external quality audits.

As regards the need for one single body to be responsible for the QA of the entire post-secondary education sector, having regard to the differences in the level of maturity of institutions in the publicly-funded and self-financing sectors as well as the current arrangements under which all programmes are subject to external quality audits, we do not see a need to pursue that for the time being. That said, the Government will continue to monitor the development and review in due course.

Response to motion no.0018

In 2004, the HKSAR Government and the Ministry of Education of China signed the “Memorandum of Understanding between the Mainland and Hong Kong on Mutual Recognition of Academic Degrees in Higher Education”, under which the recognised higher education institutions in both places are listed. Apart from participating in the “Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions” or being listed under “Project 985” and/or “Project 211” of the Mainland authorities, the Mainland institutions covered by the relevant non-means-subsidy have to be included in the list of institutions under the Memorandum of Understanding, which would facilitate students to pursue further studies in higher education institutions in the Mainland and Hong Kong. Since Hong Kong has not concluded any similar Memorandum of Understanding with other countries or regions, we consider it not suitable to extend the coverage of the subsidy to institutions of other countries or regions.

The non-means-tested annual subsidy of \$5,000 for eligible students pursuing eligible undergraduate (including top-up degree) programmes in the Mainland can supplement the means-tested subsidy provided under the existing Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme and effectively reduce the financial burden of students, as well as provide senior secondary graduates in Hong Kong with broader and more diversified further study pathways. With a booming economy in the Mainland, Hong Kong requires more talents who are familiar with the Mainland systems and have close contacts with the Mainland. Therefore, Hong Kong students graduated from Mainland universities will be highly competitive in the labour market. They can also enhance the long-term competitiveness of Hong Kong.

Response to motion no. 0026

We will instil a mechanism under the Subsidy Scheme to monitor the increase in tuition fee of eligible programmes, such as allowing institutions to increase the tuition fee by no more than the Composite Consumer Price Index (CCPI). We will only consider exceptional cases that are fully justified with necessary enhancements in teaching and learning for the programmes. All exceptional cases are subject to EDB's prior approval. Meanwhile, the subsidy amount of \$30,000 under the Subsidy Scheme will be adjusted with reference to the CCPI.

(2) Teacher-to-Class ratio

Response to motion no. 0004 and 0015

To provide additional teaching staff for schools to take forward various education initiatives and enhance the quality of education, the teacher-to-class (T/C) ratio for public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) will be increased by 0.1 across-the-board starting from the 2017/18 school year. Under the existing policy, public sector schools are provided with teaching staff resources through regular teacher establishment computed according to the number of classes approved and the T/C ratio, additional regular teaching posts provided under various initiatives, and cash grants featured by their deployment flexibility for meeting specific policy objectives. The implementation of new measures starting from the 2017/18 school year is just the initial step for enhancing education quality. The Government would holistically review the needs and concerns of various education areas, including establishing a professional ladder for teachers and enhancing the professional development of teachers as well as exploring the policy on all-graduate teaching force. The Government would further deploy resources as needed with the aim of attaining quality education.

(3) Support in information technology at schools

Response to motion no. 0012

Starting from the 2017/18 school year, EDB will provide an additional recurrent cash grant to all public sector primary and secondary schools (including special schools) for strengthening the information technology (IT) staffing support to practise e-learning and take forward various education initiatives which will harness IT.

With different paces and foci in the practice of e-learning, schools can flexibly deploy this recurrent cash grant as appropriate under the principle of school-based management to meet their operational needs for strengthening the IT staffing support, including the recruitment of their own IT staff or engagement of IT companies to provide support services in school campus and the salary is determined by market forces. This recurrent cash grant serves to provide extra resources and flexibility for schools to choose the most appropriate method to enhance their quality technical staffing support.