

NOTE FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Certificate of Skills Training (Service Industries) Course
Jointly Run by
the Employees Retraining Board and the Vocational Training Council**

INTRODUCTION

At the Finance Committee meeting held on 4 December 1998 to discuss FCR(98-99)51 on the provision of a \$500 million capital grant to the Employees Retraining Board (ERB), Members discussed the Certificate of Skills Training (Service Industries) Course jointly organised by the ERB and the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The Administration undertook to provide further information on the value-added aspects of the course, including the qualifications/advancement achieved upon successful completion of the course. The information, as well as other general information about the course, is set out in this paper.

VALUE ADDED ASPECTS OF THE COURSE

2. The course aims at providing training to unemployed persons with relatively low levels of skills and education, so that they can -

- (a) acquire new and transferable skills to be better placed to rejoin the workforce in service industries;
- (b) respond to changing work environments; and
- (c) obtain recognised qualifications to further their education and training.

3. Students who have successfully completed this course will obtain the VTC and ERB's Certificate of Skills Training (Service Industries), showing the modules they have completed and their levels of competence. They would

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have a reasonable command of English, Chinese, Putonghua, computer and office administration skills. They should be able to perform a wide range of office duties independently and competently. They could take up posts such as Assistant Clerk, Junior Bookkeeper, Receptionist, Office Assistant, Storekeeper in the service sector, especially in small and medium enterprises. Graduate trainees of this course who have completed Secondary 3 are eligible to apply for the posts of Clerical Assistant, Supplies Attendant and Supplies Assistant in the civil service.

4. To enable students to pursue further training, credit is provided for subject exemption for some appropriate part-time courses of the VTC. The VTC would also develop short courses for students who leave in the middle of course to rejoin the work force and who wish to complete the course through a different mode, provided that there is a viable number of students.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE COURSE

Target Group

5. The course is run on a pilot basis for 1 000 trainees from September 1998 to June 1999. It is targeted at the unemployed who have had substantial work experience within the last three years. They should have an educational attainment of Secondary 3 or equivalent in order to ensure that they are able to follow the course. Priority is given to those aged 30 or above who have lower than Secondary 5 educational level and who have worked for an aggregate of at least 12 months in the past three years. In addition, applicants who have become unemployed during the six months immediately before applying for the course, unemployed recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance, single parents or persons who have not attended any full time course run by the ERB lasting for more than one week in the 12 months before joining this course are also accorded priority in the ranking process.

Course Content and Structure

6. The course is designed to provide students with a broad-based training in service industries. It focuses on three subject areas -

- Language and Communication Skills
- Computer Techniques
- Business Practice

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7. Training in each subject area comprises three modules or levels. Elements such as work ethics, team work, problem solving skills are integrated into the curriculum to enhance students' employability.

8. Training is full-time and each module lasts for 12 weeks, about 26 hours per week. Students normally take one module from each subject area at the same time. If a student starts at Level 1 in each subject area, he or she covers all the nine modules over a period of nine months. Students may also proceed directly to Level 2 or Level 3 modules on condition that they meet the necessary requirements. This provides students with the flexibility to learn according to their individual needs.

9. The progress of students is evaluated through continuous assessment of course work and end-of-module examinations. Students must satisfy the requirements of the modules before they can proceed to higher level modules.

10. In developing the curriculum, the VTC and ERB have sought the views of the following major employers' organisations to ensure that trainees will be equipped with new and transferable skills required by the market -

The Hong Kong Association of Banks
The Chinese General Chamber of Commerce
The Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
The Hong Kong Exporters' Association
Hong Kong Hotels Association
Hong Kong Tourist Association
Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong
Employers' Federation of Hong Kong
Federation of Hong Kong Industries
The Retail Management Association
Association of Retailers & Tourism Services
The Hong Kong Small and Medium Business Association
The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong

Course Delivery

11. Out of the 1 000 training places, 600 are offered by the Technical Institutes of the VTC, and the remaining 400 by six training bodies of the ERB.

12. The Technical Institutes and training bodies adopt an activity approach for the delivery of the course. Intensive hands-on practice is provided for modules in computer techniques. Moreover, workplace simulations are arranged to give students hands-on experience of the future work environment. There are also tutorials to cater for the individual needs of the students.

13. Cantonese is the medium of instruction for most subjects except English Language and Putonghua. Where necessary, terms are given in both English and Chinese.

Validation

14. VTC is responsible for validation of the course. It accredits ERB's training bodies participating in the course to ensure that they have the expertise, and resources to deliver the course to the appropriate standards. It also moderates the operation of the course in the training bodies through verification visits.

Placement of Graduates / Follow-up Services

15. The VTC and ERB's training bodies will provide assistance to students in seeking jobs. Teachers will keep regular contacts with the course-leavers to make sure that they are able to cope with job duties competently and have adequate job market information. Such follow-up service will be provided for about 12 months after graduation.

Cost of Providing the Course

16. The unit cost is \$8,752 per student per month, which includes tuition cost and \$4,000 retraining allowance per month for the 600 places operated at the Technical Institutes of VTC. The unit cost (including \$4,000 retraining allowance per month) for the 400 places operating at the training bodies of ERB is \$8,073 per month. The total training cost for 1 000 places for nine months amounts to around \$76 million.
