

For information  
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## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL PANEL ON ECONOMIC SERVICES TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION OF TOURIST GUIDES**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This paper informs Members of a training and certification scheme for inbound tourist guides.

### **BACKGROUND**

2. The Travel Agents (Amendment) Ordinance 2002 came into force on 1 November 2002 to put in place a licensing scheme to regulate inbound travel agents. During the preparation of the licensing scheme, Government and the trade agreed that a training and certification scheme should be introduced for all inbound tourist guides. This scheme is intended to upgrade professional skills and standard of the workforce in the industry and enhance Hong Kong's reputation as a tourist-friendly city.

3. Under the training and certification scheme, only those who have completed the prescribed courses and passed the required examination will be eligible to apply for a tourist guide permit and only those with the permit will be able to serve as inbound tourist guides.

### **THE PRESENT POSITION**

#### Training of serving Tourist Guides

4. After extensive consultation with the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC), Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), the Hong Kong Association of Registered Tour Coordinators (HARTCO), Vocational Training Council (VTC) and inbound tour operators, the Government agreed that priority should be given to provide serving inbound tourist guides with formal and structured training. Consequently, TIC was

tasked to develop and design a training and certification scheme for inbound tourist guides. A 7-day full-time training course plus one day examination was launched in July 2002 to train some 8,000 serving inbound tourist guides (3,000 full-time and 5,000 part-time) over a projected period of two years. This was funded through a government subsidy of \$16M provided through the Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS)<sup>1</sup>.

5. The Tourist Guide training course aims to provide a structured introduction to basic tourist guide skills such as conducting group tours, customer service, professional ethics, corruption prevention and knowledge of Hong Kong.

6. Five professional training institutions have been commissioned to provide training courses to over 1,500 serving tourist guides so far. The SUS provides a 70% subsidy to these courses so that tourist guides who attend the SUS Tourist Guide training courses only need to pay \$725, inclusive of examination fee.

7. At the end of the training course, trainees are required to sit for an examination before qualifying as inbound tourist guides. The examination comprises two parts: a Written Test on general knowledge of Hong Kong's history, attractions, consumer service skills and professional ethics of tourist guides; and a Practical Test on skills in guiding tourists. Candidates who fail either or both parts of the examination may resit. The SUS Secretariat has formed a dedicated working group called Tourism Industry Working Group to oversee the operational details of the training courses and the examination. It comprises representatives from employers, employees, Tourism Commission and the Vocational Training Council.

#### Feedback from serving inbound tourist guides

8. The Tourism Industry Working Group is closely monitoring feedback from the participants to ensure that the training needs of the inbound tourist guides are met. At the end of the Written Test conducted by the SUS Secretariat, candidates are asked to complete an evaluation form on the Tourist Guide training course before they leave the examination halls. The evaluation solicits their views on the duration, content, usefulness of the course, performance of instructors, facilities of the training institutes, examination content and related arrangements.

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<sup>1</sup> The Skills Upgrading Scheme was introduced by the Education and Manpower Bureau in 2001. The objective is to devise training to upgrade the skills of employees, with a view to helping both the employers and employees to face challenges of economic restructuring.

The evaluation results show that 24% of the participants regard the course to be “very satisfactory” (the highest grading) and 64% grade the course as “satisfactory” (the second highest grading).

### Certification Scheme

9. With the commencement of the SUS Tourist Guide training course in July 2002 and the trade’s projection that the training of serving inbound tourist guides can be completed in about two years’ time, the TIC announced to its members that with effect from 1 July 2004, all tourist guides employed by inbound travel agents to receive visitors to Hong Kong must have a valid tourist guide permit issued by the TIC. Any serving tourist guide who has completed the prescribed training course and passed the required examination can apply to the TIC for a tourist guide permit. Other conditions for the issue of the permit include that the applicant should be 18 or above years of age, has Hong Kong resident status or is permitted to work in Hong Kong, has Form Five qualification (serving tourist guides exempted), possesses a first-aid certificate or a first-aid attendance certificate and is considered by the TIC to be a fit and proper person. The permit is valid for three years and is subject to renewal.

10. Tourist guides who have already received accredited pre-vocational training on tourism provided by VTC are exempted from taking the SUS Tourist Guide training course. They only need to pass the written and practical tests to be conducted by the TIC before applying to the TIC for a tourist guide permit.

11. As regards those who have already received accredited in-service training courses jointly provided by HKTB, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) (Chai Wan) and HARTCO since 1997, they are exempted from taking the SUS Tourist Guide training course as well as the Practical Test. They are only required to be tested on the “knowledge of Hong Kong” part of the Written Test.

12. Regarding new entrants who are not serving inbound tourist guides, TIC is planning a course curriculum to equip them with the appropriate structured training so as to inject new blood into the trade and raise the standard of inbound tourist guides.

### Code of Conduct

13. Holders of the tourist guide permit are required to observe the

Code of Conduct for Tourist Guides issued by the TIC. Failure to do so may lead to warning, suspension, revocation or non-renewal of the permit. An appeal mechanism will be in place to hear appeals against refusal of the application or non-renewal of the permit and any disciplinary action for breach of the Code of Conduct for Tourist Guides.

## **WAY FORWARD**

14. The training and certification scheme aims to provide formal training to serving inbound tourist guides. The scheme will be reviewed and refined in the light of operational experience. The Administration and TIC will continue to work closely together to monitor the training needs of tourist guides.

Tourism Commission  
Economic Development and Labour Bureau  
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