

**Replies to initial written questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining
the Estimates of Expenditure 2004-05**

Controlling Officer : The Ombudsman

Session No. :7

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Reply Serial No.*	Question Serial No.	Name of Member	Head	Programme
<u>OMB001</u>	0026	LAU Wai-hing, Emily	114	Complaints Administration

Examination of Estimates of Expenditure 2004-05
**CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY TO
INITIAL WRITTEN QUESTION**

Reply Serial No.

OMB001

Question Serial No.

0026

Head : 114 – Office of The Ombudsman

Subhead(No. & title): 000 Operational expenses

Programme: Complaints Administration

Controlling Officer : The Ombudsman

Director of Bureau : ---

Question : The matters requiring special attention from The Ombudsman in 2004-05 include the enhancement of professionalism and the quality of complaint management in her Office and the public sector. Please provide details on this aspect. What is the estimated expenditure? How is it different from the expenditure in 2003-04 for achieving the same objective?

Asked by : Hon. LAU Wai-hing, Emily

Reply : Enhancement of professionalism in complaint management and provision of quality service to the public have always been major objectives of the Office.

Office of The Ombudsman

To this end, I have developed a comprehensive staff training strategy since delinking from Government systems and procedures, to sharpen the skills of my investigation officers and develop their potential. This includes programmes for different levels of initial entry and in mid-career, for general orientation and on special subjects. We train in-house and enlist external expertise.

In 2004-05, I shall continue to adhere to my strategy as outlined below –

- (a) To provide both induction and on-the-job training to familiarise my investigation officers with different aspects of our services and to guide them in their work;
- (b) To hold weekly team meetings to share experience and exchange ideas on case investigation;
- (c) Where specific issues arise, to organise open forum to disseminate ideas and information on our stance;
- (d) To commission experts to design courses for enhancing expertise and developing new techniques.

In 2003-04, for item (d), we organised for all our investigation staff a mediation training course in November 2003 and another on dealing with complainants requiring special attention in March 2004. To promote the use of mediation for complaint resolution and also to equip public officers with such skills, we made places in the mediation training available to five Government departments. These were the Housing Department, Home Affairs Department, Transport Department, Hong Kong Post and Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. Altogether 18 senior officers from these departments attended the course.

In 2004-05, similar activities will be organised to enhance our officers' skills and professionalism.

Public Sector

As for the public sector overall, we organised our annual Complaint Management Workshop and Ombudsman Awards Presentation to enhance professionalism and to foster quality customer service. The workshop aimed at upgrading professional skills and standards in complaint handling. Experts and practitioners spoke on different aspects of complaint management and customer service. It also provided forums for experience sharing and exchange of ideas. The awards are intended to strengthen the sense of commitment in serving the community. Awards are presented to public organisations and public officers who display the highest degree of fairness, impartiality and efficiency in complaint handling and also in the delivery of quality services. We shall organise these activities again in 2004-05.

From 2004-05 onwards, we will pay regular visits to scheduled organisations to exchange views on issues of mutual concern and to gain feedback on our procedures and practices. With these exchanges, I look forward to mapping out more efficient ways to attend to the increasing needs of the community for better public services.

Expenditure

On expenditure, except for the tailor-made training courses and events, there is no need to earmark expenditure as costs will be absorbed in the day-to-day operational expenses of my Office.

The estimated expenditure for tailor-made training in-house, Complaint Management Workshop and Ombudsman Awards Presentation Ceremony for 2004-05 together with actual expenditure for 2003-04 are shown in the table below.

	Actual Expenditure in 2003-04 (rounded to the nearest \$1,000)	Estimated Expenditure for 2004-05
Tailor-made training in-house	\$101,000	\$50,000
Complaint Management Workshop	\$135,000	\$150,000
Ombudsman Award Presentation Ceremony	\$134,000	\$150,000
Total	\$370,000	\$350,000

The higher expenditure for tailor-made in-house training in 2003-04 is due to the mediation training, which will not be repeated in 2004-05.

Signature _____

Name in block letters Alice Tai

Post Title The Ombudsman

Date 25 March 2004