

For discussion on
9 May 2011

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-secondary Students

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the details of the Administration's proposal to launch a pilot Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-Secondary Students.

Background

2. The Financial Secretary proposed in the 2011-2012 Budget to allocate \$100 million to launch a five-year pilot Mainland Experience Scheme for Post-secondary Students (the Scheme) to subsidise on a matching basis post-secondary students participating in short-term internship or learning programmes in the Mainland. Each student may receive a subsidy of up to \$3,000. It is estimated that over 30 000 students will benefit from the Scheme.

3. The objective of the Scheme is to encourage post-secondary students to participate in short-term programmes in the Mainland such that participants will be able to see for themselves and learn more about the prevailing social, economic and cultural landscape of our country through these programmes. The experience will also facilitate the long-term career development of the post-secondary students, especially those who wish to explore their opportunities in the Mainland China or other parts of Asia. Through providing government subsidies on a matching basis, we wish more resources from the society can be drawn in to help enhance our students' understanding of the development and opportunities in the Mainland.

The Scheme

Eligibility

4. All institutions offering locally-accredited post-secondary programmes will be eligible to participate in the Scheme to benefit their students, both local and non-local, who are enrolled in full-time subvented or self-financing locally-accredited post-secondary programmes. Participation is on a voluntary basis and priority should be given to those who have no or minimal Mainland experience.

5. Institutions will be provided a grant ceiling calculated on a pro rata basis based on the full-time student enrollment in the 2010/11 academic year. The grants will be disbursed on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis (i.e. a 1:1 matching ratio) in respect of private donations received up to the grant ceiling of respective institution. If, by the end of the five-year period, there remains funding under the grant ceiling which has not yet been matched by the concerned institutions, such funds will be opened up for application by all institutions on a first-come-first-served basis and \$1 for \$2 matching basis (i.e. \$1 Government grant for every \$2 raised through donation).

Use of funds

6. Funds will be available for institutions' applications during a five-year period, tentatively from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2016. The application should be accompanied by institutions' project proposals, setting out the programme objective and details, the number of beneficiaries and budget.

7. The matching grants can only be used for the Scheme. All programmes must be arranged/endorsed by the institutions and conducive to achieving the objective of the Scheme as mentioned in paragraph 3 above. The matching grants can be used to subsidise each participating student up to \$3,000 or 50% of the cost per capita (whichever is lower). The students or institutions may supplement using the matched donations or students' own contributions. Private donations received for matching purpose should be used for the Scheme or other student exchange or internship programmes.

8. Institutions may use the matched funds for operating programmes under the Scheme for a period of up to eight years, i.e. up till 30 June 2019. Unspent funds will be returned to the Government at the end of the Scheme unless with the approval of the EDB.

Account of funds

9. Institutions should maintain separate proper books of accounts and records for the funds. They should ensure all receipts and payments in respect of the Scheme are properly and timely recorded. All interest accrued should be ploughed back into programmes under the Scheme.

Evaluation

10. An evaluation report reviewing the effectiveness of the programmes should be submitted to EDB at the end of each year. EDB will make reference to the evaluation reports in considering future applications from the institutions concerned.

Financial Implications and Vote Control

11. The Government has earmarked \$100 million for the Scheme. The proposal has no recurrent financial implications for the Government.

12. For administrative convenience and simplicity, the University Grants Committee (UGC) Secretariat will deal with donations matching from all institutions concerned. This arrangement with respect to non-UGC-funded institutions carries no other policy or funding implications.

Way Forward

13. Subject to Members' views, we plan to seek the funding approval of the Finance Committee for the Scheme in June 2011 and to launch the Scheme on 1 July 2011.

Education Bureau
April 2011