

## **ITEM FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE**

### **HEAD 156 – GOVERNMENT SECRETARIAT :**

#### **EDUCATION BUREAU**

#### **Subhead 700 General non-recurrent**

#### **New Item “Yi Jin Diploma”**

Members are invited to approve a new commitment of \$1 billion for the implementation of a new Yi Jin Diploma programme for an initial period of five academic years from 2012/13.

### **PROBLEM**

With the abolition of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the implementation of the New Academic Structure, the current Project Yi Jin (PYJ) programme will lapse by the end of the 2011/12 academic year. It is necessary to put in place a new programme to provide an alternative pathway for secondary 6 school leavers under the New Academic Structure as well as adult learners to obtain a formal qualification for the purposes of employment and further study.

### **PROPOSAL**

2. The Secretary for Education proposes to create a new commitment of \$1 billion for implementing the new Yi Jin Diploma programme for an initial period of five academic years starting from the 2012/13 academic year.

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## JUSTIFICATION

### *Existing PYJ programme*

3. Launched in 2000, PYJ provides an alternative avenue for further study and expands the continuing education opportunities for secondary 5 leavers and adult learners. The qualification of a full PYJ certificate has been assessed by the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (the predecessor of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ)) as comparable to five passes in the HKCEE for continuing education and employment purposes. The qualification is also accepted by the Government for appointment to over 30 grades in the civil service with academic entry requirement set at five passes in the HKCEE including Chinese Language and English Language. The programme is run by members of the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions (FCE)<sup>1</sup> on a self-financing basis.

4. PYJ has been well received by students, as evidenced by the substantial increase in enrolment figures from around 2 000 to 3 000 in the first few years to 15 000 and 16 000 in 2009 and 2010 respectively, benefitting more than 88 000 students over the years. A total of 49 900 full PYJ certificates have been issued up to the 2010/11 academic year. According to the findings of an annual tracking survey conducted by the FCE, around 50% of the PYJ graduates were engaged in work and almost 40% pursued further study in the past three years. For those who have continued their studies, some have completed their post-secondary education including the attainment of bachelor or higher degrees. The programme has proven to be a viable choice for secondary school leavers and adult learners to gain the necessary qualification to pursue continuing education and take up employment.

5. With the abolition of the HKCEE and the implementation of the New Academic Structure, the last cohort of students of the PYJ programme will complete their study in the 2011/12 academic year.

### *Objectives of the new Yi Jin Diploma*

6. In the light of the success of the existing PYJ programme, the Administration proposes to implement the new Yi Jin Diploma, modelled on the PYJ, from the 2012/13 academic year with the following objectives –

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<sup>1</sup> The FCE was established in 1994 to promote lifelong learning in Hong Kong. Its current membership consists of the continuing and professional education (CPE) units of the eight University Grants Committee-funded institutions and other major providers of CPE programmes in Hong Kong.

- (a) to provide an alternative pathway for secondary 6 school leavers under the New Academic Structure as well as adult learners aged 21 or above to obtain a formal qualification for the purposes of employment and further study;
- (b) to equip students with an array of generic skills and general knowledge including basic language skills, information technology skills, mathematical reasoning skills and interpersonal skills, thereby enabling students to build a firm foundation in these aspects; and
- (c) to strengthen students' motivation to study and facilitate students in developing self-learning skills for the pursuit of further study independently.

### ***Programme delivery and tuition fee***

7. Having regard to the expertise, experience and commitment of the FCE and its track record in ensuring quality delivery of the PYJ programme with constant updating to take account of the changing needs and circumstances, FCE institutions will be invited to deliver the new Yi Jin Diploma programme. In the 2012/13 academic year, seven FCE member institutions will run the Yi Jin Diploma programme, namely, the continuing and professional education arms of the Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University and Open University of Hong Kong, Caritas Community and Higher Education Service, Hong Kong College of Technology, Hong Kong Institute of Technology and Vocational Training Council. The tuition fee levels of the Yi Jin Diploma programme will be set at \$30,000 and \$32,000.

### ***Structure of the programme***

8. The Yi Jin Diploma programme may be studied on a full-time basis for one year or part-time basis for two years. Similar to the PYJ programme, the Yi Jin Diploma programme will have a total of 600 contact hours, including 420 contact hours for core modules and 180 contact hours for elective modules. The core modules have been revamped having regard to the new senior secondary curriculum. Core modules comprise Chinese, English, Mathematics, Liberal Studies and Communication Skills. The curricula for these core courses have been centrally developed and are common among course providers. A wide array of elective modules, which are mainly of practical nature, will be offered to cater for different interests and aptitudes of students. The curricula for the elective courses have been developed by the respective provider institutions.

9. The new Yi Jin Diploma programme will have an enriched and more diversified content. Enhanced support services will be provided to teachers and students of Yi Jin Diploma in the form of enriched extra-curriculum activities, advisory services for students on career/articulation planning, professional development for teachers and activities for sharing good teaching and learning practices.

### *Recognition of qualification*

10. The HKCAAVQ has been commissioned to conduct a benchmarking study on the new Yi Jin Diploma to ascertain the exit standard of the programme and the adequacy of the quality assurance mechanism. The HKCAAVQ has completed the study and concluded that –

- (a) the exit standard of the new Yi Jin Diploma programme is deemed comparable to the attainment of Level 2 standard in five subjects including Chinese Language and English Language in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination in terms of the skills, values and attitude of students;
- (b) satisfactory completion of the Maths Plus elective module together with the Mathematics core module of the programme sufficiently contributes to the exit standard of the Yi Jin Diploma being comparable to the attainment of Level 2 standard in five subjects including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in the HKDSE Examination; and
- (c) the quality assurance mechanism of the programme is appropriate, adequate and consistent with good practices.

11. The Yi Jin Diploma is accepted by member institutions of the FCE as meeting the admission criteria of their Associate Degree and Higher Diploma or equivalent programmes. For those students who have completed the Maths Plus elective course, the Yi Jin Diploma qualification obtained is accepted by the FCE member institutions as meeting the admission criteria of programmes requiring the attainment of Level 2 standard in five subjects including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in the HKDSE Examination. Similar to the existing full PYJ certificate, the Yi Jin Diploma qualification is accepted by the Government as meeting the academic entry requirement of over 30 grades in the civil service which require Level 2 in five subjects including Chinese Language and English Language in the HKDSE Examination. For those students who have completed the Maths Plus elective course, the Yi Jin Diploma qualification obtained is also accepted by the Government as meeting the entry qualification of civil service grades requiring Level 2 in five subjects including Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics in the HKDSE Examination.

*/Financial .....*

*Financial assistance arrangement*

12. Under the existing PYJ programme, two levels of reimbursement are available to students subject to their having achieved 80% attendance or above and passed the assessment for the module –

- (a) all students are eligible for a non-means-tested reimbursement of 30% of the tuition fees paid for each satisfactorily completed module. This is to provide incentive for students to complete the PYJ programme; and
- (b) needy students who are assessed to be eligible for full level of assistance under the means test administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA) are eligible for 100% reimbursement of the tuition fees paid for each satisfactorily completed module.

According to the feedback from students and PYJ provider institutions, the reimbursement arrangement has served well not only in providing financial support to students, but also as an incentive to encourage attendance and satisfactory completion of study.

13. For the new Yi Jin Diploma programme, there have been suggestions for providing additional financial assistance for needy students from low income families on top of existing financial assistance for PYJ students, which include 30% or 100% tuition fee reimbursement as mentioned in paragraph 12 above for full-time and part-time needy students, as well as 50% or 100% subsidy for home-school travel under the Student Travel Subsidy Scheme and subsidy for internet access charges for full-time needy students. Similar suggestions were also raised by Members of the Legislative Council Panel on Education.

14. We share these concerns and see the scope for enhancing the financial assistance for students of the new Yi Jin Diploma programme. We propose that, on top of the existing two tiers of financial support (i.e. 30% non-means-tested tuition fee reimbursement and 100% means-tested tuition fee reimbursement for needy students), an additional tier of **50% means-tested tuition fee reimbursement** be introduced for students passing the standard means test of SFAA certifying their eligibility for half level of assistance. For the 2012/13 academic year, students from a 4-member family with total monthly family income ranging from \$14,574 to \$25,301 will be eligible for 50% reimbursement of tuition fees upon satisfactory completion of the relevant modules. Assuming that the socio-economic mix of students of the new Yi Jin Diploma programme remains similar as those of the current PYJ, the additional tier of reimbursement level will benefit around 8 000 to 12 000 students, or about 11% to 13% of the annual student population, over five academic years.

15. We also propose that the student financial assistance arrangements in paragraphs 13 and 14 above be extended to students who have previously benefited from the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses (FAEAEC)<sup>2</sup> and wish to pursue study under the new Yi Jin Diploma programme. This will enable evening school students to be treated on par with their counterparts in day school so that they will not be deprived of the alternative pathway under the Yi Jin Diploma because of the lack of financial means.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

16. The student population of the Yi Jin Diploma programme is estimated to be around 14 000 to 18 000 each academic year, including full-time and part-time students. The estimated expenditure for implementing the programme for the first five cohorts of students is around \$1 billion. The funding is mainly for reimbursement of tuition fees to eligible students. Other than this, the remaining funding will be used for providing enhanced support services to students and teachers of the Yi Jin Diploma programme as well as meeting other expenses such as promotion activities, evaluation studies and surveys for the programme.

17. The projected cash flow of the programme is as follows –

Expenditure Items	Cash flow for Financial Year (\$ million)						Total
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	
Tuition fee reimbursement <sup>3</sup>	-	180	180	180	180	180	900
Enhanced support for teachers and students and other expenses	20	20	20	20	20	-	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>1,000</b>

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<sup>2</sup> From the 2012/13 academic year, approved course providers under the FAEAEC provides evening secondary courses from secondary 1 to secondary 6 level. Eligible students of the FAEAEC may receive financial assistance in the form of 30% non-means-tested or 50% or 100% means-tested tuition fee reimbursement.

<sup>3</sup> As applications for reimbursement of tuition fee will be processed after completion of the relevant modules, majority of the estimated expenditure on reimbursement of tuition fees for courses completed in an academic year will be reflected in the subsequent financial year.

18. The above breakdown represents the anticipated cash flow requirements in broad terms for implementing the Yi Jin Diploma programme. The exact amount required for each of the expenditure items in each year will depend on a number of factors, including the actual size of student intake, the percentage of students eligible for the different levels of assistance and the rate of students satisfactorily completing the modules. If Members approve the proposal, we shall earmark sufficient provision in the annual Estimates of the relevant financial years. Sufficient provision has been earmarked in the 2012-13 Estimates to meet the cash flow requirement in 2012-13.

## **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

19. We consulted the Legislative Council Panel on Education on the above proposal on 20 April 2012. Members generally supported the proposal and its submission to the Finance Committee for funding approval.

## **BACKGROUND**

20. In May 2000, the Finance Committee approved a commitment of \$200 million to provide funding support for students admitted to the PYJ programme during the three academic years from 2000/01 to 2002/03. The duration of the PYJ programme has been subsequently extended and the commitment amount has been raised on several occasions with the approval of the Finance Committee. The commitment amount was last increased to \$1,070 million to provide financial support for eligible PYJ students until the 2011/12 academic year. The current tuition fee levels of the PYJ programme are at \$27,500 and \$29,500.

21. In the 2012-13 Budget Speech, the Financial Secretary announced that \$1 billion would be earmarked to implement a new programme under the new senior secondary academic structure modelled on the PYJ. The aim is to provide an alternative pathway for students to acquire a formal qualification other than the HKDSE held for the first time in 2012.