

Submission from The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

for

HKSAR Legislative Council

Panel on Education

Meeting on 13 February 2012

“Provision of international school places”

In line with the position of Hong Kong as a truly international city, HKUST aims at establishing a global distinction as a university of science and technology with a highly international orientation in focus, research and impact, preparing students as global citizens with an international horizon in its education. On recruitment of academic staff, much efforts have been made in upholding an internationalized faculty mix. There are however not without challenges in the recruitment and retention of faculty staff on a worldwide basis.

One major difficulty the University faces in its global faculty recruitment efforts lies in finding suitable places at international schools for faculty’s children for whom English is their first language and studying in international schools become their top or only choice. Unfortunately, Hong Kong is now facing an acute shortage of international school places, with demand coming not only from expatriates relocated to Hong Kong but also from many local families. It is understood from recent reports in the news that English School Foundation schools are seeing record-high application figures this year with number of applicants being twice the number of available vacancies. Top international schools in Hong Kong are also swamped with applications with record waiting lists.

The shortage of places also leads to cost affordability issue, with hefty debenture fees in securing places in certain schools in addition to the high tuition fees. We are seeing definite negative impact of the shortage of places at international schools on the University’s 3-3-4 faculty recruitment efforts. This becomes more critical with all universities now stepping up faculty recruitment during the 334 transition period.

To maintain the vibrancy of its unique international character, Hong Kong requires the appropriate infrastructure to facilitate the bringing in of overseas talents. The importance of facilities for children's education for expatriates cannot be overstated. We would appeal that the matter be given urgent attention by the senior Government administration and that appropriate strategies and measures (both long term and short term) for tackling the problem of insufficient international school places be identified as early as possible.