

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(4)972/12-13
(The minutes have been seen by the
Administration)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

Panel on Education

Minutes of special meeting
held on Thursday, 21 February 2013, at 9:30 am
in Conference Room 2 of the Legislative Council Complex

- Members present** :
- Dr Hon LAM Tai-fai, SBS, JP (Chairman)
 - Hon IP Kin-yuen (Deputy Chairman)
 - Hon Albert HO Chun-yan
 - Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung
 - Hon TAM Yiu-chung, GBS, JP
 - Hon Tommy CHEUNG Yu-yan, SBS, JP
 - Hon Cyd HO Sau-lan
 - Hon Starry LEE Wai-king, JP
 - Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun, JP
 - Hon CHEUNG Kwok-che
 - Hon IP Kwok-him, GBS, JP
 - Hon Mrs Regina IP LAU Suk-ye, GBS, JP
 - Hon Paul TSE Wai-chun, JP
 - Hon WONG Yuk-man
 - Hon Claudia MO
 - Hon MA Fung-kwok, SBS, JP
 - Hon Charles Peter MOK
 - Dr Hon Kenneth CHAN Ka-lok
 - Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung
 - Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan
 - Hon Christopher CHUNG Shu-kun, BBS, MH, JP
- Member attending** :
- Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
- Members absent** :
- Hon Abraham SHEK Lai-him, SBS, JP
 - Hon LEUNG Kwok-hung

Public Officers attending : Agenda item I

Professor WONG Chack-kie, JP
Member(2), Central Policy Unit

Mr Stanley WONG Wing-hong
Research Director, Central Policy Unit

Mr Wallace LAU
Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education),
Education Bureau

Ms Sharon HO
Secretary, Research Grants Council, University Grants
Committee Secretariat

Invited Participants : Professor Benjamin W WAH
Chairman, Research Grants Council

Professor Roland T CHIN, BBS, JP
Former Chairman, Research Grants Council

Attendance by invitation : Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union

Dr FUNG Wai-wah
President

Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor

Mr LAW Yuk-kai
Director

Dr Eliza W Y LEE
Professor, Department of Politics and
Public Administration, The University of Hong Kong

Professor Linda LI Che-lan

Labour Party

Mr WONG Wai-kwok
Representative

Hong Kong Federation of Students

Mr LI Shing-hong
Secretary General

The Student Union of the Chinese University of Hong
Kong

Mr YEUNG Ching-yin
President

Lingnan University Students' Union

Mr Eddie CHAN Shu-fai
President

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University Students' Union

Mr CHAN Man-fai
President

Civic Party

Mr Ricky KWAN Chi-kin
Member

Democratic Party

Mr OR Yiu-lam
Member of Central Committee

Clerk in attendance : Miss Polly YEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (4)4

Staff in attendance : Mr KWONG Kam-fai
Senior Council Secretary (4)4

Ms Sandy HAU
Legislative Assistant (4)3

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I. Issues arising from the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme

(LC Paper No. CB(4)418/12-13(01) -- Paper provided by the Administration

LC Paper No. FS22/12-13 -- Fact sheet on "A summary of press reports on the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme (from 12 January 2005 to 19 February 2013)" prepared by the Research Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat)

Members noted the fact sheet prepared by the Research Division of the Legislative Council Secretariat [LC Paper No. FS22/12-13].

Briefing by the Administration

2. At the invitation of the Chairman, Research Director, Central Policy Unit ("RD/CPU") briefed members on the background and the latest development of the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme ("PPRFS") as set out in the Administration's paper [LC Paper No. CB(4)418/12-13(01)]. He said that in the 2005 Policy Address, the Government announced that \$20 million would be allocated annually for three years for promoting public policy research in higher education institutions. The PPRFS was first extended to 2011-2012 following a review; and in 2011, further extended to 2014-2015. Operationally, CPU allocated \$20 million to the Research Grants Council ("RGC") under the University Grants Committee ("UGC") annually and formulated the research areas for academics' reference. RGC was responsible for the invitation and assessment of research proposals. Applications were restricted to the eight UGC-funded institutions. In the light of significant and continued changes in the social, economic and political landscape of Hong Kong over the years and rising public expectations on the Government, CPU had reviewed the operation of the Scheme and decided to adopt a revised mode of operation to keep pace with the new environment.

3. RD/CPU further said that under the revised arrangement, CPU would administer the day-to-day operations of PPRFS. In addition to academics from UGC-funded institutions, other degree-awarding higher education institutions and non-profit-making public policy research think-tanks would also be eligible to apply for funding. To safeguard academic freedom and quality of research projects, CPU would invite well-respected academics to

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form an assessment panel and serve as its chairperson and members. Where necessary, CPU would invite officials involved in policy formulation to play a part in assessment so that the research would better address topics and issues of concern to the Government. The revised mode of operation of PPRFS would commence in 2013-2014 while projects which had already been funded would continue to be followed up by RGC.

Oral presentation by deputations/individuals

4. A total of 11 deputations/individuals presented their views. Their major concerns were summarized in the **Appendix**.

Response by the Administration to deputations' views

5. At the invitation of the Chairman, RD/CPU gave an initial response and highlighted that under the revised mode of operation, research projects would better address the current policy research needs of the community and the Government, as applications would be invited whenever a research need was identified and PPRFS would be extended to other eligible academic and research bodies. In addition, CPU would strengthen its liaison role to facilitate communication between the investigators of the funded projects and the government bureaux/departments concerned.

6. Regarding concerns about academic freedom, Principal Assistant Secretary (Higher Education), Education Bureau said that the Administration had all along respected and upheld academic freedom as enshrined in the Basic Law. Individual higher education institutions operated under their respective governing statutes and enjoyed a high degree of autonomy and academic freedom.

7. Prof Benjamin WAH, Chairman of RGC, advised that RGC attached great importance to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. All research proposals seeking funding under PPRFS were peer-reviewed by external reviewers and were primarily assessed on their academic merits. So far, out of a total of 748 proposals seeking funding from PPRFS, funding had been granted to 150 proposals. All these research projects had been initiated by academics. In the 2012-2013 year, RGC had received 128 research proposals and after assessment, approved funding for 25 proposed projects. Regarding the Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme ("SPPRFS") launched since 2008, 66 proposals had been submitted to RGC and funding was granted to 13 projects. Prof WAH added that as he had newly taken up the chairmanship of RGC, he would arrange to meet with individual institutions shortly and gauge their views on research funding and support.

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8. In his capacity as former Chairman of RGC from 2005 to 2012, Prof Roland CHIN said that RGC had all along attached great importance to academic freedom which was a core value underpinning all academic researches. He explained that research projects which received funding administered by RGC enjoyed autonomy in three aspects, namely the choice of research themes, the formulation of research proposals and the publication of research findings. RGC had not compromised its stance on upholding academic freedom and ensuring that research projects would not be subject to political or commercial interference.

9. Prof CHIN clarified that although applications to PPRFS had previously been confined to UGC-funded institutions, the principal investigators were allowed to engage external parties, such as other non-UGC-funded institutions and overseas universities, to participate in the research projects. Prof CHIN recalled that during his tenure as Chairman of RGC, there had been ongoing dialogue between CPU and RGC on issues related to the operation of PPRFS. For example, since 2008-2009, half of the annual funding of \$20 million had been assigned to run SPPRFS to fund longer-term public policy research on specific areas. Projects seeking funding from SPPRFS were required to make reference to the themes set by CPU.

10. On the themes of the research projects funded by PPRFS, Prof CHIN said that a diversity of public policy researches had been conducted, such as the population policy for Hong Kong, social integration of children born in Hong Kong to Mainland women, retirement protection system in Hong Kong, and the role of Hong Kong as a financial centre in China's development. Prof CHIN agreed to provide a copy of the information on the topics of the funded projects for members' reference.

(Post-meeting note: The information provided by Prof CHIN was circulated to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)438/12-13(02) on 22 February 2013.)

Discussions

11. The Chairman drew members' attention to Rule 83A of the Rules of Procedure which provided that a Member shall not move any motion or amendment relating to a matter in which he had a pecuniary interest, whether direct or indirect, or speak on any such matter, except where he disclosed the nature of that interest. He reminded members to declare interests, if any, in the matter under discussion. In addition, the Chairman reminded members to focus discussion on education-related issues under the purview of the Panel.

The decision to introduce changes to the administration of PPRFS

12. Dr Fernando CHEUNG declared that he was a teaching staff member at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, but had never applied for funding under PPRFS. Dr CHEUNG noted from the former Chairman of RGC that the public policy researches funded by PPRFS had covered a wide range of issues. He also noted from RD/CPU that one of the reasons for revising the mode of operation of PPRFS was to better meet the need for public policy researches which focused on local actual situations. Dr CHEUNG asked the Administration to provide information or actual examples, if any, to explain in what aspects the research projects funded under PPRFS from 2005 to 2012 had fallen short of addressing the policy research needs of the community and the Government.

13. Ms Claudia MO declared that she was teaching journalism at the Hong Kong Baptist University ("HKBU") and government and public administration at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She expressed doubt on the justification, if any, for revising the administration of PPRFS. Mr Paul TSE also questioned the need to introduce the revised arrangements and whether the revised mode of operation of PPRFS could achieve the intended objective more effectively than the prevailing arrangements.

14. In this connection, Member(2), Central Policy Unit ("M2/CPU") advised that as seen from the successful applications under PPRFS in the past, the peer-review might have focused more on the academic merit of the public policy research proposals, rather than their relevancy to the formulation of public policies or the tackling of certain issues of public concern. RD/CPU added that out of the 150 projects funded under PPRFS, there was only one research project each on governance, housing and population.

15. M2/CPU further explained that currently, only UGC-funded institutions were eligible to apply to PPRFS. Upon implementation of the revised mode of operation in 2013-2014, applications would be open to other academic/research institutions and think-tanks. Applications would be invited wherever necessary. These arrangements would provide greater flexibility as well as tap other sources of research capability. CPU, as the Government's think tank, would be able to play a more proactive role in facilitating public policy research.

16. Dr Kenneth CHAN declared that he was an associate professor of the Department of Government and International Studies at HKBU. Dr CHAN considered CPU's decision to revise the mode of operation of PPRFS a serious mistake. He said that currently, RGC was able to assess and provide funding to deserving public policy research proposals in an independent and

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merit-based manner through PPRFS. The funding scheme should be kept at arm's length from the Administration so as to facilitate the development of independent and quality public policy research. Dr CHAN was of the view that the revised mode of operation would deviate from the original intent of PPRFS.

17. Dr Helena WONG and Ms Cyd HO shared the view of Dr CHAN, and did not subscribe to the reasons provided by the Administration for revising the mode of operation of PPRFS. Ms HO remarked that government officials were often reluctant to communicate and cooperate with academics, in particular when they considered certain researches not beneficial to the Administration. She was of the view that the revised arrangements were an attempt to rein in academics through controlling the provision of research funding.

18. Dr Helena WONG said that if the Administration had the intention to facilitate academics in conducting researches, it could simply issue an instruction to all government bureaux/departments requiring them to provide the necessary assistance and cooperation to academics. She did not see the need for CPU to take up the role of a facilitator.

19. Referring to paragraph 11 of the Administration's paper which stated that under the revised mode of operation, research projects would better address the current policy research needs of the community and the Government, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung did not consider that the objective of conducting public policy research was to serve the Government. In response, M2/CPU advised that when PPRFS was launched in 2005, one of the intended objectives was to enhance the effectiveness of governance on a long-term basis. It was from this perspective that research projects funded under PPRFS should be able to address the policy research needs of the Government.

20. Dr KWOK Ka-ki recalled that in the 2004 Policy Address, the Government had proposed to strengthen public policy research to facilitate the building of consensus on public issues and help avoid sweeping, politicized and emotional debates. He doubted how CPU could achieve this promulgated objective after it had resumed the funding authority of PPRFS from RGC.

21. In this regard, M2/CPU stressed that the revised arrangements under which CPU would take over the administration of PPRFS, including the invitation of applications, assessment and monitoring, were not based on any political consideration. Operationally, CPU would specify research topics having regard to the public policy issues faced by the Government and the

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community. Applications would be invited whenever a research need was identified to allow more timely launch and completion of research to facilitate policy formulation. M2/CPU further said that PPRFS would mainly fund short-term and mid-term projects while longer-term projects might be funded should the need arise.

22. Mr MA Fung-kwok said that the background leading to the establishment of PPRFS had not been documented. Prior to the launch of PPRFS, it had been a common practice for the Administration to commission mainly international consultancy firms to carry out consultancy studies on selected policy issues. Mr MA recalled that he and some other legislators had considered the lack of local public policy research highly unsatisfactory and had raised the matter with Mr C H TUNG, the then Chief Executive, and CPU. The Administration was urged to promote public policy research by enlisting the active participation of local universities. Against this background, the Administration had decided to set up a dedicated research funding scheme to nurture the development of public policy research in local higher education institutions. After the launch of PPRFS, more researches on public policies had been carried out by local universities. Mr MA considered that since PPRFS had been implemented for about a decade, it was opportune to conduct a review on the Scheme and examine whether it should also be open to other institutions and organizations.

Consultation with stakeholders on the revised arrangements

23. Dr Helena WONG was concerned that CPU had decided to revise the mode of operation of PPRFS without any prior consultation with the institutions concerned or the Legislative Council, and considered CPU's move imperious. She was of the view that CPU should withdraw its decision to take over the administration of PPRFS including the authority to grant funding.

24. The Deputy Chairman shared Dr WONG's view. He was gravely concerned that CPU had not even discussed this matter with RGC, but had announced unilaterally in November 2012 the resumption of the funding authority under PPRFS. He said that when PPRFS was first introduced, the then Head of CPU had indicated that the Scheme would be "academics-led and Government-supported". However, the revised mode of operation would render PPRFS a government-driven scheme. The Deputy Chairman expressed his worry that researches on public policy would henceforth become consultancy studies commissioned by the Administration. He said that he intended to move a motion on this matter at the meeting.

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25. In this connection, the Chairman remarked that he would consider the Deputy Chairman's request if there was sufficient time after completion of the discussion. He also sought the Administration's explanation for not conducting any prior consultation, and whether CPU would consider maintaining the status quo.

26. Noting members' concerns, M2/CPU said that before announcing the revised mode of operation, CPU had paid a visit to Prof CHIN to discuss the change in the administration of PPRFS. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung, remarked that CPU had merely informed, but not consulted, RGC of the change.

Issues arising from the revised mode of operation of PPRFS

27. Ms Starry LEE declared that she was a member of the Council of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Noting the need to strengthen public policy research, Ms LEE supported the revised arrangement of allowing applications from other higher education institutions and research bodies. She considered that this would help address one of the concerns raised by the self-financing post-secondary institutions that government policies were always tilted in favour of UGC-funded institutions. In the light of an increase in the number of eligible applicants under PPRFS, Ms LEE urged CPU to enhance its communication with both the UGC-funded and self-financing post-secondary institutions.

28. On opening PPRFS to application by other institutions such as think-tanks, Dr Helena WONG was concerned that many think-tanks had their political stance or affiliation which might compromise the objectivity and independence of their researches. Dr Fernando CHEUNG and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che enquired whether in future, PPRFS would only accept applications from invited parties or would invite open applications. In reply, M2/CPU said that CPU would continue the current arrangement of inviting open applications for funding under PPRFS.

29. Ms Claudia MO enquired whether alternative research funding was available if the academics would not apply for funding under PPRFS in future. The Chairman invited deputations to give their views on the matter.

30. Dr Eliza LEE said that the bulk of research funding came from RGC. Apart from PPRFS, academics could apply for General Research Fund ("GRF"). However, public policy research proposals would have to compete for funding with research proposals of other disciplines. Dr LEE added that public policy research proposals might not have a competitive edge when seeking funding under GRF as the majority of GRF-funded projects were theory-oriented while public policy researches would also focus on the

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practical aspects.

31. Prof Linda LI shared similar view, and highlighted that all along, PPRFS could meet the requirement of academic excellence in research as well as the need for policy research to address issues of societal concern. Moreover, academics had confidence in PPRFS as it was administered independently by RGC.

32. Mr Charles MOK declared that he had been a part-time member of CPU in 2000. He asked whether RGC would like to continue its role in administering PPRFS. Mr IP Kwok-him and Mr MA Fung-kwok enquired whether RGC would earmark resources to continue to support the conduct of public policy research. In this regard, Prof WAH said that RGC would seek the views of institutions on the possible ways of supporting public policy researches.

Concerns about academic freedom and the quality of research

33. In response to Ms Starry LEE's enquiry on the composition of the future assessment panel, M2/CPU advised that the assessment panel, which would be responsible for deciding the themes of research, setting the assessment criteria and conducting the assessment of proposals, would initially comprise academics from local universities. M2/CPU would serve as the secretary to the panel. Such composition could facilitate consideration of the proposals from the perspective of research excellence and practical relevancy. He also said that in assessing individual proposals, relevant bureaux/departments would be consulted.

34. Dr Kenneth CHAN expressed concern about the involvement of government officials in the assessment process of the research proposals. Dr KWOK Ka-ki was gravely concerned that the change in the administration of PPRFS was the first step to interfere with academic freedom. Mr Charles MOK questioned CPU's lack of independence and expertise in academic research.

35. Since the publication of research findings would facilitate public discussion on public policies and enhance the transparency of PPRFS, some members, including Dr Fernando CHEUNG, Mr MA Fung-kwok, Ms Starry LEE, Mr Charles MOK and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che, asked whether the research findings of the funded projects would be published after CPU took over the administration of PPRFS.

36. M2/CPU said that the findings of PPRFS funded-projects would be posted on the Internet and the investigators would be required to save the data

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in the archives. On whether the findings of other projects/studies conducted or commissioned by CPU would also be published, M2/CPU advised that in line with the established practice, such publication would be considered on a case by case basis.

37. Noting the three aspects of academic autonomy mentioned by Prof CHIN earlier, namely the choice of research themes, the formulation of research proposals and the publication of research findings, Dr Fernando CHEUNG considered it necessary for the Administration to confirm that after CPU had taken over the administration of PPRFS, the research projects under PPRFS would continue to enjoy the same extent of autonomy. Mr Albert HO and Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che shared Dr CHEUNG's view.

38. M2/CPU explained that CPU would provide a list of research areas after consultation with government bureaux for the reference of applicants. The existing practice under PPRFS of allowing the applicants to formulate research proposals and publish the research findings would continue. Noting M2/CPU's explanation, Mr CHEUNG Kwok-che commented that the revised mechanism would become similar to that of SPPRFS.

39. On the various queries and issues raised by Dr Fernando CHEUNG and some other members at the meeting, the Chairman asked the Administration to provide its response in writing. To allow sufficient time for discussion, the Chairman decided to extend the meeting to 12:15 pm.

(Post-meeting note: The Administration's written responses were issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)504/12-13(01) on 19 March 2013.)

40. Ms Starry LEE was of the view that there should be interaction between the Government and the academics on the choice of research themes and the formulation of research proposals because the Government might have certain public policy research needs while academics might have their own research interests in mind. In her view, both the bottom-up and top-down approaches should be adopted.

41. Mr Albert HO did not agree with the adoption of a top-down approach in conducting researches as he considered that this would undermine academic autonomy and freedom. The research so conducted would be similar to consultancy studies commissioned by the Administration but not independent research. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung remarked that academic autonomy would be sacrificed if addressing the policy research needs of the Government was one of the selection criteria in assessing research proposals.

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42. Mr WONG Yuk-man said that academic freedom included the freedom of teaching, learning and research. He was of the view that government subvention must be provided to universities. He considered the prevailing mechanism of allocating research resources to universities through UGC and CPU not conducive to safeguarding academic freedom.

43. Prof WAH explained that projects funded under PPRFS were initiated by academics and it was not a standing practice for government officials to participate in the assessment of research proposals. For SPPRFS, the Administration would set the themes and the applications had to be related to the research themes. The assessment mechanism under SPPRFS was the same as that under PPRFS. The assessment of research proposals under PPRFS and SPPRFS was based on the academic quality of the proposals and the relevance of the proposals to the needs of Hong Kong.

44. On the issue of academic freedom, M2/CPU stressed that CPU was fully aware of the need to safeguard against interference, lest the findings of the research would not be credible or useful. He further explained that in case frontline officials were interviewed by the researcher, the supervisors of the interviewees would not be allowed to be present so as to enable the interviewees to express their views freely. M2/CPU added that members and the public could monitor the future operation and performance of PPRFS.

45. In response to Mr Paul TSE's enquiry about the assessment of PPRFS-funded projects, Prof CHIN advised that both the research proposals and the completed projects were assessed. Completed projects would be rated as satisfactory, barely satisfactory or unsatisfactory. According to the records, most of the funded projects were rated satisfactory. To share the research findings with the public at large, the investigators of the funded-projects were requested to release the completion reports, which contained abstracts in non-technical terms, objectives, research output, findings, etc., through the RGC website. RGC published the Public Policy Digest on selected topics on a bi-annual basis. Workshops had also been organized for the investigators to present the findings of their research projects.

46. Mr IP Kwok-him sought the Administration's comments on concerns that the findings of some research projects would undermine governance. In this connection, M2/CPU remarked that researches were usually conducted in response to the need to address certain issues. Upon completion of a research study, certain options based on the findings might be put forward for further consideration by the Administration. In general, he did not consider that the findings of any research would be detrimental to government administration.

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Motion

47. The Chairman referred to the Deputy Chairman's indication earlier on to move a motion at the meeting. He reminded members that the duration of the meeting had been extended beyond the appointed time and quite a number of Panel members had already left the meeting. As members should be given sufficient time and the opportunity to consider the motion, including whether or not to propose amendments, the Chairman said that he would not deal with the motion proposed by the Deputy Chairman at this meeting. Instead, the Chairman directed that the wording of the motion proposed by the Deputy Chairman be circulated to Panel members for discussion at another meeting.

48. The Deputy Chairman stated his objection to the Chairman's decision not to deal with his proposed motion at this meeting, as he had already provided the Chairman with a copy of the wording of his motion at an earlier time of the meeting. The Chairman said that he took note of the Deputy Chairman's view but he would maintain his decision for the abovementioned reasons.

(Post-meeting note: The wording of Mr IP Kin-yuen's motion tabled at the meeting was issued to members vide LC Paper No. CB(4)438/12-13(01) on 22 February 2013. The motion was dealt with at the following meeting of the Panel on 11 March 2013.)

II. Any other business

49. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 12:20 pm.

Panel on Education

Special meeting on Thursday, 21 February 2013, at 9:30 am
Issues arising from the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme
Summary of views and concerns expressed by deputations/individuals

No.	Name of deputation/individual	Major views and concerns
1.	Hong Kong Professional Teachers' Union [LC Paper No. CB(4)434/12-13(01)]	The deputation expressed grave concern that the proposed change in the administration of the Public Policy Research Funding Scheme ("PPRFS") would undermine academic freedom. It considered that under the administration of the Research Grants Council ("RGC"), PPRFS could better safeguard the independence and impartiality of research projects which would in turn provide the Administration with independent and objective findings and recommendations. Under the revised arrangement to be administered by the Central Policy Unit ("CPU"), the setting of research themes and the assessment of research proposals would be directed by the Administration. In the deputation's view, the Government had already deployed substantial resources in commissioning consultancy studies. The administration of the \$20-million funding for PPRFS should not be changed.
2.	Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor [LC Paper No. CB(4)438/12-13(03)]	The deputation did not subscribe to CPU's explanation on the reasons for revising the mode of operation of PPRFS. It was gravely concerned about increasing political interference in academic freedom and possible manipulation of academic research. CPU was urged to withdraw its decision to take over the administration of PPRFS including the authority to grant funding; otherwise the Legislative Council should consider terminating the funding in question.
3.	Dr Eliza W Y LEE [LC Paper No. CB(4)438/12-13(04)]	She pointed out that the objective of setting up PPRFS was to foster the development of public policy research in local higher education institutions rather than to address the policy research needs of the Government. She did not subscribe to CPU's explanation on the reasons for revising the mode of operation of PPRFS. She criticized that under the revised arrangement, the setting of research themes by CPU and the participation of government officials in the assessment of research proposals would seriously undermine academic autonomy and deviate from the original objective of PPRFS. She also questioned the appropriateness of including think-tanks under PPRFS as many of these bodies were affiliated with political groups. In her view, CPU might have abused its power to take over the administration of PPRFS without prior consultation.

No.	Name of deputation/individual	Major views and concerns
4.	Professor Linda LI Che-lan [LC Paper No. CB(4)434/12-13(02)]	She did not subscribe to the reasons provided by the Administration for revising the mode of operation of PPRFS. Whilst noting CPU's assistance in facilitating the cooperation and communication with relevant policy bureaux and departments during the research process, she did not support the participation of government officials in assessing research proposals. In her view, the right of academics to publish the findings of funded researches should be upheld.
5.	Labour Party	The deputation expressed grave concern about the lack of transparency in the operation of CPU and the participation of government officials in assessment of research proposals. It was worried that in future, researches funded by PPRFS would be subject to political interference. In the deputation's view, academic research should be independent, instead of serving the needs of any government policy.
6.	Hong Kong Federation of Students [LC Paper No. CB(4)418/12-13(02)]	The deputation expressed its strong objection to CPU's decision to take over the administration of PPRFS. In the deputation's view, the revised arrangement would deplete the eight institutions of research funding, as well as seriously undermine institutional autonomy and academic freedom. CPU was urged to withdraw its decision to take over the administration of PPRFS.
7.	The Student Union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong	The deputation highlighted the difficulties encountered by academics in soliciting research funding. Academic research should aim at opening new realms of knowledge rather than addressing the needs of any government policy. In the deputation's view, the revised mode of operation of PPRFS would not be conducive to fostering the development of local policy research. The Administration was urged to keep the operation of PPRFS unchanged.
8.	Lingnan University Students' Union	Universities were unable to operate with a high degree of autonomy because their funding was controlled by University Grants Committee ("UGC") and RGC, as well as by CPU upon implementation of the revised arrangement of PPRFS. The deputation was gravely concerned about increasing political interference in academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In the deputation's view, the Administration's grounds for revising the mode of operation of PPRFS were hardly convincing.
9.	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University Students' Union	The deputation pointed out that the revised mode of operation would change PPRFS from an academics-led scheme into a government-driven scheme. It was concerned that academic research would eventually become the Government's tools in promoting certain policies. Noting that academic autonomy should comprise the freedom of choice of research themes and freedom of formulation of research proposals, the deputation considered that the revised mode of operation would seriously infringe upon academic autonomy. The deputation urged the UGC-funded institutions to voice out their opposition to CPU's decision.

No.	Name of deputation/individual	Major views and concerns
10.	Civic Party [LC Paper No. CB(4)438/12-13(05)]	The deputation pointed out that as stated in the 2005 Policy Address, \$20 million funding for PPRFS would be allocated annually for promoting public policy research in higher education institutions. The deputation was concerned that the revised mode of operation would be inconsistent with the original intent of PPRFS. The Administration was urged to listen to the views of the public and not to exert its influence on academic research.
11.	Democratic Party	The deputation queried the justification for revising the mode of operation of PPRFS, and urged the Administration to critically re-examine the need to introduce the revised arrangements in the light of the concerns expressed by attending deputations about academic freedom and the quality of research.

Council Business Division 4
Legislative Council Secretariat
9 September 2013