



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Clerk to Panel
Legislative Council Panel on Education
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn: Ms Polly YEUNG)

Dear Ms YEUNG,

**Legislative Council Panel on Education
University Grants Committee-funded
Research Postgraduate Programmes**

I refer to your letter dated 3 June and the letter dated 31 May from Dr Hon Helena Wong to the Chairman of the Legislative Council Panel on Education attached thereto. Our reply is set out below.

We have, in our reply of 10 May, explained the prevailing funding policy on University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded research postgraduate (RPg) programmes. We have stressed therein that research is crucial to enhancing academic standards, extending the frontiers of knowledge and developing theories. As RPg students not only participate directly in research activities but also assist in teaching activities, tertiary institutions around the world have been seeking to attract outstanding RPg students both locally and overseas, with a view to enhancing their academic standards and benefitting their teachers and students.

Regarding Dr Hon Wong's further enquiry in her letter dated 31 May, we would like provide the following supplementary information:

Setting upper limits on the number of non-local RPg students

Admission of outstanding research talents to RPg programmes on a merit basis by local institutions is in line with the common practice of the international academic community, which helps boost research quality and is conducive to the development of the local higher education sector and promotion of research and development in Hong Kong. Putting restrictions on the places of origin of RPg students will drive away some of the high quality research talents and projects to other places hence hinder the academic development of the local higher education sector. Also, institutions may not be able to fund the most deserving and outstanding research projects, thus making it impossible to maximise the use of public funds.

Safeguarding the articulation prospects of local students and their access to teaching and learning resources

As we pointed out in our reply dated 10 May, in the 2012/13 academic year, only about 10% of the applications for admission to UGC-funded RPg programmes by non-local students (including those from the Mainland) were successful, as compared with an admission rate of 25% in respect of local students, indicating that the opportunity for local students to study RPg programmes is indeed much higher than that for non-local students.

Moreover, institutions may enroll RPg students up to 40% over and above their respective approved student numbers for RPg programmes. Over the years, institutions have been exercising this flexibility in over-enrolment to support their research projects, boost their research capability and sustain their internationalisation efforts. In the 2012/13 academic year, the actual number of RPg students is 6 773 and 21% above the approved student number (5 595 per annum) for RPg programmes throughout the 2012/13 to 2014/15 triennium, representing about half of the 40% upper limit of over-enrolment. If outstanding local students apply to study RPg programmes, UGC-funded institutions will still have ample capacity to consider their admission on a merit basis. It is therefore apparent that local students have not been affected by non-local students, either in their enrolment in RPg programmes or their access to teaching and learning resources.

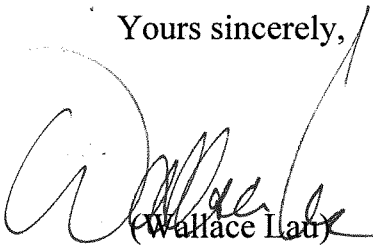
Proportion of local and non-local RPg students in overseas institutions

We have stated in our earlier response that top universities around the world in general have a higher proportion of non-local RPg students.

This is to illustrate that currently tertiary institutions around the world welcome and encourage non-local students to study and conduct research there. While policies on funding and fees for non-local RPg students may vary among universities across the world, they all endeavour to attract talents through different methods such as offering scholarships and teaching assistant positions.

In sum, we reiterate that the development of research activities in Hong Kong's higher education sector should be promoted with a forward-looking vision and international perspective. Supporting local tertiary institutions to attract high quality research talents and projects will help strengthen our research capabilities, thereby benefitting the overall economic development in Hong Kong.

Yours sincerely,



(Wallace Lau)

for Secretary for Education