



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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3 September 2014

Miss Polly YEUNG  
Clerk to Panel on Education  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Miss Yeung,

**Legislative Council Panel on Education  
Issues concerning the increase in tuition fees of  
the Open University of Hong Kong**

Thank you for your letter dated 21 August 2014.

The Secretary for Education also received letters from Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung and Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan respectively on 20 August concerning the increase in tuition fees of the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK). Our consolidated reply is set out below.

In the 2014 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced a series of initiatives to provide more opportunities for local students to receive subsidised higher education. These initiatives include a proposal to study the feasibility of introducing a new scheme, namely the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP), starting from the 2015/16 academic year to subsidise up to 1 000 students per cohort to pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate programmes in selected disciplines to nurture talents to meet Hong Kong's social and economic needs.

The SSSDP will be made available to three cohorts of students starting from the 2015/16 academic year (i.e. those entering the first year of undergraduate studies in the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years) and then be subject to a review on its effectiveness.

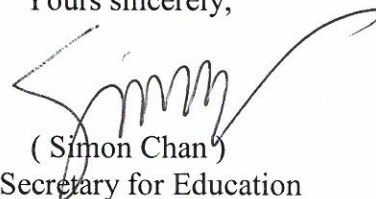
Regarding the subsidy, the unit subsidy is administered by a two-tier arrangement in which a subsidy of up to \$40,000 is provided to programmes which are not laboratory-based while a higher subsidy of up to \$70,000 is provided to more costly programmes which are laboratory-based. The subsidy is tenable for the normal duration of the programme concerned (i.e. four to six years). The actual amount of tuition fees payable should reflect the subsidy so as to benefit eligible students.

Tuition fees of the programmes under the SSSDP are generally set with reference to the existing fee level with adjustments allowed for price movement. Subject to the approval of the Education Bureau (EDB), the tuition fees can also be adjusted with sufficient justifications to make necessary enhancement to teaching and learning. In approving adjustments to the tuition fees, EDB will thoroughly consider all relevant factors including whether the increased tuition fees are used to enhance teaching and learning of the subsidised programmes and well spent, and whether the actual tuition fees payable are still affordable to students after deduction of the subsidy.

The OUHK is one of the five participating institutions. Four of its programmes will receive the subsidy under the SSSDP in the 2015/16 academic year. The existing tuition fees of these programmes are, in fact, relatively low compared to similar programmes in the market. Besides, between 2015/16 and 2020/21 academic years, the OUHK will implement a series of measures to enhance the four subsidised programmes at a cost of \$200 million<sup>1</sup>, with the enhancement measures for nursing studies alone accounting for nearly \$140 million. These enhancement measures include hiring additional senior teaching staff, improving student/teacher ratio, upgrading laboratory facilities, hiring additional support personnel, and improving library facilities. Although there will be a substantial increase in the tuition fees of these programmes in the 2015/16 academic year over the 2014/15 academic year, the OUHK has promised to keep the annual tuition fees at the same level for the cohorts of students admitted in the 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years. As such, after deduction of subsidy from the adjusted tuition fees, the tuition fees payable for the four subsidised programmes will range from \$20,000 to \$41,800, which are still affordable to students. In addition, according to the Strategic Plan 2013-2022 promulgated by the OUHK in 2013, the OUHK will set the tuition fees based on the principle of a balanced budget and has plan to adjust the tuition fees annually in the coming years for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

Based on the above considerations, EDB approved the tuition fee adjustments. In fact, after the details of the SSSDP were released by EDB on 24 July, members of the public have expressed concern over whether the post-secondary education institutions can enhance the quality of teaching and learning through the SSSDP.

Yours sincerely,



( Simon Chan )  
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung  
Dr Hon Helena WONG Pik-wan

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<sup>1</sup> About \$134 million of which will be spent on improving student/teacher ratio and hiring additional senior teaching staff. Moreover, the OUHK plans to invest \$51 million to upgrade laboratory facilities and procure the latest equipment for the programmes in testing and certification, animation and visual effects, as well as nursing. It will also invest about \$9 million to enrich the library collections and update library facilities. Together with the enhancement of student guidance and support services, the total investment will amount to \$200 million.