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4 January 2017

Mr Anthony Chu  
Clerk  
Public Accounts Committee  
Legislative Council  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central  
Hong Kong

Dear Mr Chu,

**Public Accounts Committee**

**Consideration of Chapter 2 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 67**

**Funding of universities by University Grants Committee ("UGC")**

I refer to your letter dated 21 December 2016 to the Secretary-General, UGC, requesting for supplementary information on a number of issues on administration of capital grants. The requested information is now set out at the **Appendix** for reference by the Public Accounts Committee. As requested, my colleagues will send you soft copies of the information by email.

Should you need further clarifications on the above, please feel free to contact Miss Winnie Wong, Deputy Secretary-General (1) on 2844 9914.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. T. Armour', with a horizontal line underneath.

(Dr. Richard T ARMOUR)  
Secretary-General

c.c. Secretary for Education (fax no. 2810 7235)  
Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (fax no. 2147 5239)  
Director of Audit (fax no. 2583 9063)

## Appendix

### **(a) Breakdown on total and successful applications for hostel places by category of students**

UGC calculates the provisions of publicly-funded student hostels to UGC-funded universities in accordance with the criteria set out in paragraph 3.6 of Chapter 2 of the Audit Report. That said, the actual allocation of student hostel places to individual students is a matter for universities as autonomous bodies. The universities allocate their hostel places (including the publicly-funded, privately-funded and temporary hostel places) to their students (local and non-local students enrolled in the UGC-funded or non-UGC funded programmes, as well as exchange students) in accordance with their own sets of criteria and procedure. Generally speaking, apart from the criteria set out in paragraph 3.6 of the Audit Report, universities also take into account the actual number of applications, merits of individual applicants (e.g. contributions in extra-curricular activities) and compassionate grounds, etc. in assessing the applications.

Based on raw data provided by the universities, the provisional number of total and successful applications for hostel places by students enrolled in UGC-funded programmes, with breakdown by category of students under paragraph 3.6, for the past five years is tabulated at the Annex. The provisional figures are provided to PAC on a **restricted** basis and **should not be disclosed to the public**. This is because we understand that different universities have collected and reported data on applications based on different assumptions and methodologies. To enhance accuracy, we are now working with the universities to make necessary clarifications, with a view to standardizing the methodology used in data collection and reporting, and will inform PAC again once the revised data are available.

**\*Note by Clerk, PAC:** *Annex not attached.*

**(b) Provision of hostel places to students whose daily travelling time exceeding four hours**

The Government and the UGC recognise that hostel experience is an integral part of higher education, and are committed to supporting the development of publicly-funded student hostels in accordance with well-established policies and calculation criteria. We consider that students' choice of universities should be based on the quality of education and the disciplines available, and should not be unduly influenced by the proximity of their homes to the universities. Therefore, students who spend excessive travelling time should be provided with hostel places. According to the universities concerned, around 2.5% of the local undergraduate students need to travel more than four hours daily in 2015/16 academic year. Albeit there is a continuous request to meet the hostel shortfall under the existing criteria, we are not aware of a request for review of the criteria themselves, including the criterion concerned with a view to shortening the travelling time from four hours to three hours.

**(c) Review of space requirement formulae**

The space requirement formulae for assessing the universities' academic space needs were reviewed and updated in 2006. In the process of the 2006 review, the academic space requirements for the "3+3+4" new academic structure, whole person development and internationalization have already been taken into account.

The UGC-funded universities have been informed of the need to consider reviewing the space requirement formulae. The universities will be further consulted and invited to provide feedback on the need for a review later. Should the UGC decide to conduct the review, it may commence in 2017 and may take about two years to complete.

**(d) Space inventory updating exercise and space utilization survey**

The UGC Secretariat has already completed the reconciliation of the space inventory records with the UGC-funded universities. Both UGC and universities' records have been updated appropriately.

As regards space utilization survey, the UGC-funded universities have been advised to consider the need to conduct such survey. The universities will be further consulted and invited to provide feedback on the scope and way to conduct the survey shortly.