



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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27 November 2017

Clerk to Panel on Education  
Legislative Council  
Legislative Council Complex  
1 Legislative Council Road  
Central, Hong Kong  
(Attn: Ms Angel Wong)

Dear Ms Wong,

**Panel on Education**  
**Letter from Hon SHIU Ka-chun**

I refer to your letter of 9 November 2017 to the Secretary for Education. The information as requested by the Hon SHIU Ka-chun relating to the "Injection into the Research Endowment Fund" is set out at Annex for Members' reference.

Yours sincerely,

(Miss Sharon Ko)

for Secretary for Education

c.c. Secretary-General, University Grants Committee  
(Attn.: Mr David Leung) – w/encl.

**Response to issues raised by Hon SHIU Ka-chun on 3 November 2017**

- 1&2. Number of applications for University Grants Council (UGC)-funded research postgraduate (RPg) programmes before 2012/13 academic year is not available.

In the 2012/13 academic year, the eight UGC-funded universities altogether received 2 158 and 17 524 applications respectively from local and non-local applicants for UGC-funded RPg programmes.

In the 2016/17 academic year, the number of local applications for UGC-funded RPg programmes was 2 020, which was submitted by an estimated number of around 1 010 local applicants<sup>1</sup>. 579 of these local applicants were eventually admitted, which accounted for 57.3% of the estimated number of local applicants or 28.6% of the number of local applications. The number of applications for UGC-funded RPg programmes by non-local students was 14 433 in the 2016/17 academic year. The number of non-local intakes in the same year was 1 988, accounting for 13.8% of the non-local applications<sup>2</sup>. Based on the number of applications, the chance for local students to be admitted to UGC-funded RPg programmes is more than double of that for non-local students.

Whether local graduates choose to pursue postgraduate studies locally, especially RPg programmes, is a personal choice affected by various factors, such as the prevailing employment opportunities in the market, students' career orientation and prospect in the teaching/research fields. Furthermore, among local students who choose to pursue RPg studies, some would do so abroad so as to experience conducting research under a different culture and environment.

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<sup>1</sup> UGC-funded universities estimate that, on average, each local applicant would submit two applications for admission to UGC-funded RPg programmes.

<sup>2</sup> The number of applications submitted by non-local applicants considerably varies, and hence UGC-funded institutions are unable to estimate the number of non-local applicants on the basis of the number of non-local applications received.

3. The UGC-funded universities started to collect employment information on UGC-funded RPg non-local graduates since 2011/12 academic year through the Graduate Employment Survey. In the 2011/12 to 2015/16 academic years, the number of non-local graduates of UGC-funded RPg programmes and the number of such graduates who had engaged full-time employment with usual working location in Hong Kong are tabulated as below –

<b>Academic Years</b>	<b>Total Number of Non-local Graduates</b>	<b>Number of Non-local Graduates responded to the Survey</b>	<b>Number of responded Non-local Graduates who had Full-time Employment with Usual Working Location in Hong Kong</b>
2011/12	1 186	758	285
2012/13	1 260	767	141
2013/14	1 366	961	305
2014/15	1 457	1 019	379
2015/16	1 532	1 112	362

Note :

1. The employment information of graduates from full-time UGC-funded programmes in a given year is collected through the Graduate Employment Survey which is conducted annually by the UGC-funded universities with a time frame up to December of the same year. Graduates covered in the Graduate Employment Survey refer to the students graduated from the year in which the Survey was conducted.
2. Apart from the two mentioned categories, the responded non-local graduates may have engaged in full-time employment without specifying the working location, pursued further studies in Hong Kong, become unemployed/underemployed, or not seeking employment.
3. Information for the 2016/17 academic year is not yet available.

Non-local students who have obtained an undergraduate or higher qualification in a full-time and locally-accredited local programme in Hong Kong may apply to stay/return and work in Hong Kong under the “Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates” (IANG).

4. The Research Endowment Fund is placed with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) to earn stable and low risk investment return, which is calculated on the basis of the average annual return rate achieved by the Investment Portfolio of the Exchange Fund in the last six years.

The average investment return in 2009-2017 is 4.98%. According to HKMA, the annual projected rate of investment return for 2018 to 2021 is 2.4% to 3.3%.

5. RPg students are admitted by universities on a merit basis. We understand from the universities that in considering whether an applicant should be admitted, one of the major assessment criteria is whether the student has the potential and commitment to complete the RPg programme.

Under the proposed PRg studentship scheme, studentships will be disbursed by UGC to respective university according to their number of eligible local RPg students and those eligible students will be automatically exempted from paying the tuition fee. In the event that an RPg student withdraws from his/her study within the normative study period<sup>3</sup> for whatever reason, UGC Secretariat will look into the case and adjustment may be made to the studentships provided to the universities concerned on a pro-rata basis. As for the student, since he/she has already been exempted from paying the tuition fee, we will not ask for a "refund".

6. It is noteworthy that most RPg students are already receiving a monthly stipend of around \$15,000 to \$16,000. The new RPg studentship scheme aims to provide additional financial incentive to attract local students to pursue RPg study.
7. Regarding employment prospect of research postgraduate students, we note that different openings of teaching or research positions are offered by local post-secondary institutions. As far as the UGC-funded sector is concerned, there were about 2 740 openings of teaching or research positions in 2016.

Moreover, the Innovation and Technology Bureau has set aside \$500 million under the Innovation and Technology Fund to launch the "Technology Talent Scheme" to train and pool together more outstanding innovation and technology talents, as well as to encourage them to pursue a career in innovation and scientific research. One of the initiatives is to establish a "Postdoctoral Hub" to provide funding support for enterprises to recruit postdoctoral talent for scientific

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<sup>3</sup> The normative study period for Master of Philosophy studies is two years. The normal duration of Doctor of Philosophy studies is three years (for students who have a research master's degree) or four years (for students who do not have a research master's degree).

research and product development. We believe these initiatives will provide more employment opportunities for our RPg graduates.

8. The Government and UGC give equal support to all types of academic research. It falls under institutional autonomy for the universities to propose and accept different research projects. Specifically, universities would determine the discipline and type of research to be pursued.

While there are a number of university ranking tables assessing the universities in different aspects by adopting different assessment criteria, these ranking tables will not affect the Government's formulation of Hong Kong's higher education policy.