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9 January 2019

Clerk to Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn.: Mr Anthony CHU)

Dear Mr CHU,

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Public Accounts Committee

Consideration of Chapter 9 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 71

**Training and development work of the Civil Service Training
and Development Institute**

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I refer to your letter of 17 December 2018 to the Secretary for the Civil Service requesting our response and/or information on matters set out in the Appendix attached to the letter.

Please find our response at Appendix.

Yours sincerely,

(Eric CHAN)
for Secretary for the Civil Service

Encl.

c.c. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury (Attn.: Mr Mike CHENG, PEO(G))
Director of Audit (Attn.: Mr Terry MOK, Sr Auditor (C))

Chapter 9 of the Director of Audit's Report No. 71
Training and development work of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute

Audit Report Paragraph no.	Questions from the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council	Civil Service Bureau's Response
Part 2: Management of Training Programmes		
Training administration		
Paragraph 2.5	1) According to paragraph 2.5, the Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) said that some bureaux/departments (B/Ds) have developed their own computer systems to facilitate training administration though such systems have no direct interface with the Training Information and Administration System (TIAS). In this connection, please inform this Committee of the following: (a) Why was an interconnected system not centrally developed to save manpower and minimise the chances of error that might arise from manual collation of information? (b) As for B/Ds that have developed their own computer systems, where did the resources come from? (c) Given that the TIAS had been set up by CSTDI, why did certain B/Ds still develop their own computer systems for training administration? Was such an arrangement decided by individual B/Ds? If so, why?	Since 2008, CSTDI has been using the TIAS to deal with various training administration processes. At present, all B/Ds receive invitations to courses organised by CSTDI, upload nomination lists for various courses and receive trainees' training records by electronic means through the TIAS. Some B/Ds may develop their own computer systems for handling internal human resources and training matters having regard to their own management and operational needs. Some other B/Ds may also choose to use the "Government Human Resources Management Services" computer system developed by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). No matter which type of computer systems the B/Ds use, CSTDI will render technical support to facilitate the interface of these departmental systems with the TIAS of CSTDI, thus enabling the B/Ds to handle applications and nominations for courses organised by CSTDI through their computer systems. The funding used for the development of such computer systems is processed in accordance with the Government's established funding application procedures for computer projects. Computer projects with costs below $200,000 are funded by the recurrent allocations of the respective B/Ds. Computer projects with cost over $200,000 but not exceeding $10 million are funded by the block allocation under Capital Works Reserve Fund Head 710 Subhead A007GX. Computer projects costing over $10 million are subject to approval by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

Audit Report Paragraph no.	Questions from the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council	Civil Service Bureau's Response
Paragraph 2.10(a)	2) According to paragraph 2.10(a), the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) will continue to encourage B/Ds to use information technology or other electronic means to enhance the management of their training services, and facilitate B/Ds in interfacing their computer systems for training management with the TIAS, including the Government Human Resources Management Services, Training Administration System (TAS) and other departmental human resources systems as necessary. In this connection, please advise how CSB will encourage B/Ds to use information technology or other electronic means to enhance the management of their training services; whether there is any specific plan.	CSTDI has been encouraging B/Ds to make wider use of information technology to enhance the management of training services at the B/D level. Every B/D has appointed its own Training Manager to manage departmental training matters. CSTDI maintains close contact with the departmental Training Managers and provides consultancy services to B/Ds on various training-related matters, including technical support for the function design and system interface of their training administration systems.
Paragraphs 2.6, 2.10(b) and 2.11	3) According to paragraph 2.6, for those classes which do not require prioritisation of nominations by B/Ds, as a measure to reduce the time and efforts in processing applications for such classes, CSTDI has since 2016 introduced an e-form solution whereby the application details are uploaded automatically to the TIAS. However, e-forms are used for some training courses only. In 2017, out of the 610 classes of central programmes, only 58 (10%) classes used e-forms for enrolment. In this connection, please advise: (a) How did the Administration come to the decision to introduce e-forms for enrolment of training courses? What were the procedures involved?	Most of the central training programmes organised by CSTDI require prioritisation of nominations through CSTDI's TIAS. For programmes which do not require prioritisation of nominations by B/Ds, enrolment can be made through e-forms. Of the 610 classes of central programmes held in 2017, 535 classes required prioritisation of nominations. Among which, 463 classes (about 76%) used CSTDI's TIAS to invite B/Ds to submit prioritisation of nominations and inform them of the accepted list of nominations by electronic means. There were 72 classes in which the prioritization of nominations was considered individually based on the more detailed information submitted by the course applicants. The related nomination procedures were dealt with individually through emails. For the remaining 75 classes which did not require prioritisation of nominations by B/Ds, 58 classes (about 77%) used e-forms for enrolment.

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	(b) Why the e-forms could not be more widely used for all training courses? (c) How to decide which particular training courses could use e-forms? 5) According to paragraph 2.10(b), CSB will continue to make wider use of e-forms or other electronic means to streamline the training enrolment process. In this connection, please advise: (a) Which department is responsible for considering and implementing the use of e-forms? (b) What plans does CSB have to encourage B/Ds to make wider use of e-forms or other electronic means for course enrolment? 6) Regarding paragraph 2.11, please advise what specific plans CSB has to encourage B/Ds to make wider use of technology for the administration of training applications/nominations.	CSTDI will make wider use of e-forms or other electronic means to streamline its training enrolment process as far as practicable. CSTDI maintains close contact with the Training Managers of B/Ds and will encourage them to make further use of information technology to streamline their training administration process for enhanced efficiency. CSTDI will provide technical support for system interface. CSTDI will also discuss with the Training Managers of B/Ds how to make wider use of information technology to handle training applications or nominations at their regular meetings.
Paragraphs 2.7 & 2.8	4) According to paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8, some B/Ds expressed concerns in 2010 about the long time taken to receive the attendance records from CSTDI and, with a view to improving operational efficiency and reducing manual efforts on data input, CSTDI submitted a funding application to OGCIO in July 2017 for developing an e-registration system. In this connection, please advise: (a) Given that some B/Ds expressed concerns as early as in 2010 about the long time taken to receive the attendance records from CSTDI,	Between 2010 and 2017, CSTDI had been streamlining training administration through enhancing the functions of the TIAS and implementing improvement measures so as to improve the overall efficiency of administering training services. For instance, CSTDI enhanced the TIAS in 2011, shortening the time taken to release attendance records to B/Ds from four months upon commencement of a course to within two months after its completion, and adding a new function of using e-forms for training course enrolment. In 2017, CSTDI submitted a funding application to OGCIO for developing an e-registration system to use QR code to register and record the attendance of trainees. After the funding was obtained in September 2018, CSTDI immediately commenced preparation for

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	why did CSTDI only submit a funding application to improve the situation in 2017? (b) What factors had to be taken into account by CSB before submitting a funding application for developing an e-registration system and what were the procedures involved?	system analysis and design.

Meeting the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses

Audit Report Paragraph no.	Questions from the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council	Civil Service Bureau's Response
Paragraph 2.16(a)	7) According to paragraph 2.16(a), CSTDI held 25 re-runs in 2017 for 14 of the 33 over-subscribed workshops. For the remaining 19 workshops without re-runs in 2017, Audit found that seven of them were also over-subscribed by 100% or more in 2016 but without increase in the number of scheduled classes of central programmes in 2017. In this connection, please advise: (a) the reasons for not arranging additional classes for more than half of the over-subscribed workshops; and (b) the difficulties precluding the arrangement of additional classes for these workshops, and what would be CSB's solutions.	CSTDI has all along been closely monitoring the demands of training services in different subject areas, and would increase the training places for over-subscribed courses as far as possible to meet the demands subject to availability of resources. For instance, regarding the over-subscribed workshop on "Replying to complaints" mentioned in paragraph 2.16(a) of the Audit Report, CSTDI organised re-runs through substantially increasing the number of customised classes in 2017 (from four classes in 2016 to 12 classes in 2017). The total number of trainees who attended the training (including both central and customised) also increased substantially from 282 in 2016 to 486 in 2017. When working out the number of classes to be organised for a particular course, CSTDI will strike a balance among the training needs of different departments on different topics and consider whether to increase the number of central programmes or customised programmes for individual departments to increase the overall number of training classes to address the needs of different departments. In future, CSTDI will continue to increase the number of training places for over-subscribed courses as far as possible, subject to availability of resources. CSTDI will also continue to upload suitable learning resources to the Cyber Learning Centre Plus (CLC Plus) to facilitate e-learning in the civil service.

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Paragraph 2.16(b)	8) According to paragraph 2.16(b), of the two over-subscribed seminars, CSTDI arranged a larger venue to organise one of them. For the other seminar without a re-run, CSTDI had not arranged video-taping or uploading the course materials on the CLC Plus. In this connection, please advise: (a) of the way in which the seminars were conducted (e.g., in the form of interactive seminars or lectures); (b) of the reasons for not arranging a re-run or alternative learning channels for those could not take part in the seminar (e.g., video clips of the seminar); and (c) whether CSB has explored solutions to the above problem.	The two seminars mentioned in paragraph 2.16(b) of the report were conducted in the form of lectures. One of the seminars related to Chinese language training was arranged to be held in a larger venue. As for the other seminar on legal knowledge, CSTDI had anticipated that there would be over-subscription and hence, when arranging the first seminar, CSTDI had at the same time arranged a re-run of the seminar with the same contents to be held within three months. As there may be copyright issue in the contents of individual training courses, CSTDI must obtain the consent from speakers or course providers before videotaping the seminars or uploading the course materials to the CLC Plus. CSTDI will continue to discuss with the speakers or course providers on the issue of uploading the contents of popular courses to the CLC Plus for viewing by civil servants who are unable to attend the courses.
Arrangements for the setting and documentation of target class size of training courses		
Paragraph 2.18	9) Regarding paragraph 2.18, please explain the criteria used by CSTDI in setting the target class size of courses in the past.	CSTDI generally sets the target class size of courses having regard to factors such as the nature, content design and mode of delivery of the courses, capacity of training venues and service agreements with course providers.
Paragraph 2.19	10) Regarding paragraph 2.19, why was there a discrepancy between the target class sizes and the actual attendance of courses? Were the resources earmarked for the courses sufficient to meet the needs of the trainees exceeding the target class sizes? How were the training resources allocated? Were there established criteria for allocating resources to different types of training courses? Please illustrate with examples.	Take the 3-day Putonghua course as an example, CSTDI entered into a service agreement with the course provider and set the target class size of the course according to the nature, content design and mode of delivery of the courses, capacity of venues, etc. CSTDI also worked out the number of classes to be organized according to the training demands of B/Ds. The actual attendance depends on factors such as the number of enrolment, number of selected nominees, and withdrawals and absences of individual trainees due to different reasons. When allocating training places for over-subscribed classes, CSTDI would, depending on previous attendance rate of

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		different courses, select slightly more trainees than the target class size so that training places could still be fully utilised in case of withdrawals and absences of individual trainees due to different reasons.

Subject to availability of speakers, venues and resources, CSTDI will try to meet the training demands of B/Ds as far as possible through organising more similar courses and re-distributing trainees to training classes with lesser enrolment. |

Fully utilising training places

Audit Report Paragraph no.	Questions from the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council	Civil Service Bureau's Response
Paragraph 2.21	11) According to paragraph 2.21, Audit found that the number of selected nominees of 25 classes (7%) of the 346 over-subscribed training classes in 2017 fell short of their respective target class sizes by 1% to 14% (averaging 6%). In this connection, please explain why CSTDI did not allocate those places which became available at a later time to the nominees on the waiting list.	Depending on whether there is enough time to contact nominees on the waiting list, CSTDI will arrange them to fill the training places arising from those selected nominees who could not attend classes due to different reasons. CSTDI will step up efforts to monitor withdrawals of selected nominees and arrange nominees on the waiting list to fill the training places arising from withdrawals of selected trainees due to different reasons as far as possible.
Paragraph 2.26	12) According to paragraph 2.26, due to limited time between the scheduled seminars and the re-runs, it was considered not practicable or cost-effective to request B/Ds to submit another round of applications for these re-runs. In this connection, what effective measures could the CSTDI take to optimise the use of training places for re-run seminars?	The three re-run seminars mentioned in paragraph 2.26 of the Report were held about three to five weeks after the original scheduled classes, having regard to the availability of the speakers and venue arrangements. Due to the limited time between the scheduled classes and the re-runs, it was not feasible to request B/Ds to submit another round of applications for the three re-run seminars. In future, CSTDI will endeavour to take all feasible measures to meet training demands of B/Ds, taking into account factors such as availability of seminar speakers, venue arrangements and resources. If time permits, CSTDI will invite B/Ds to submit a new round of applications for re-run seminars as far as possible. Moreover, with speakers' consent, the seminars will be video-taped so that those nominees who could not attend can also view the seminar through the CLC Plus online.

Audit Report Paragraph no.	Questions from the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council	Civil Service Bureau's Response
Attending national studies programmes		
Paragraph 2.31	13) According to paragraph 2.31, as at 31 March 2017, there were about 16,000 middle-level civil servants who should attend national studies programmes within six years. Up to 2017, about 3,000 middle-level civil servants had attended such programmes. In other words, some 13,000 middle-level civil servants had yet to attend the programmes. Besides, the number of planned training places provided by the three designated universities would only increase from 280 in 2017 to 340 in 2018 and further to 420 in 2019. In this connection, please advise: (a) Has consideration been given to commissioning other universities in organising the programmes? If yes, what is the situation? If no, what are the reasons? (b) If it is possible to commission other universities in organising the programmes, what factors will be considered in selecting the universities? If no, what are the reasons? (c) If middle-level civil servants cannot attend the programmes, what will be the effect?	CSTDI is working with various universities and training institutes in the Mainland to organise national studies programmes for civil servants. In the past few years, CSTDI has been increasing the provision of Mainland national studies courses to middle-level civil servants and, in general, the number of training places provided is adequate for entertaining all the nominations received from B/Ds. CSTDI will continue to encourage B/Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend these courses, and will correspondingly increase the number of training places offered to meet their training demands. In addition to the seven existing Mainland universities and training institutes, CSTDI newly engaged the Wuhan University and the Sun Yat-sen University to organise national studies programmes for civil servants in 2018. In commissioning Mainland institutions to organise such programmes, CSTDI will generally consider factors such as the teaching characteristics and expertise of the institutes, curriculum design, qualifications and experience of instructors, and campus facilities of the institutes as well as the support they can offer for such courses. CSB attaches great importance to national studies training in order to ensure that civil servants are equipped with updated knowledge of the social and economic policies and national strategies of our country that might have an impact on Hong Kong. Apart from arranging civil servants to attend national studies programmes organised by Mainland universities, CSTDI also organises thematic seminars on national studies in Hong Kong to enhance civil servants' understanding of our country's latest policies and its history and culture.

Audit Report Paragraph no.	Questions from the Public Accounts Committee of the Legislative Council	Civil Service Bureau's Response
Part 3: Initiatives to promote continuous learning		
Provision of e-learning resources		
Paragraph 3.6	14) According to paragraph 3.6, there were 139,362 CLC Plus user accounts as at 17 May 2018. Of the 124,407 usable accounts examined by Audit, it was found that users of 85,788 (69%) accounts had not used the CLC Plus for one year or more ("inactive accounts"). In this connection, please advise: (a) How does CSTDI handle the large number of inactive accounts? (b) Has CSB studied the reasons for the low utilisation rate of the CLC Plus? (c) If inactive accounts belong to serving civil servants, what measures does CSTDI implement to encourage and attract more civil servants to use the e-learning resources of the CLC Plus?	CSTDI will suspend the user access rights of those accounts that have been inactive for a long time in accordance with the security policies and guidelines formulated by OGCIO, and require these users to go through procedures to reactivate the service when they need to use the CLC Plus again. CSTDI has been monitoring the utilisation of the CLC Plus including statistics on the number of page views and visits. User surveys have also been conducted to find out the learning patterns of users as well as their demands for learning contents and system functions. These measures facilitate CSTDI to implement improvement initiatives and enrich the learning resources of the CLC Plus leading to increased page views and usage by civil servants through different online devices. For example, CSTDI launched the newly designed CLC Plus in April 2018 in response to the demands of users. CSTDI will continue to increase the e-learning resources and step up promotion in the civil service to encourage more civil servants to pursue continuous learning through the CLC Plus. For departments with a lower number of CLC Plus users, CSTDI will contact them to understand their online training needs so as to better cater for the training and development needs of these departments when devising improvement measures and promotion programmes.
Measures to facilitate mobile learning		
Paragraphs 3.11(b), 3.12 and 3.20	15) According to paragraphs 3.11(b) and 3.12, CSTDI obtained funding of $2.7 million in December 2015 for the enhancement of the CLC Plus. The enhancement work mainly included two aspects: (i)	Enhancement in 2015 mainly involved two aspects: optimisation of the system infrastructure of the CLC Plus (e.g. enhancement of server capacity) and enhancement of the system application (including a new user interface).

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	optimisation of system infrastructure (e.g. enhancement of server capacity) and (ii) enhancement of the system application. Revamping the CLC Plus with a new user interface was one of the key enhancements of the system application. The new user interface of the CLC Plus was launched on 21 April 2018. 16) In addition, Audit tried to access 30 resources with the highest number of page views from January to April 2018 using a tablet computer and a smartphone in July 2018. Audit found that 17 (57%) e-learning resources could not be viewed on both mobile devices because they were developed using a legacy software not supported by major operating systems of mobile devices. In this connection, please advise whether CSTDI noted in the course of enhancing the CLC Plus that many e-learning resources developed with a legacy software could not be viewed on mobile devices. If yes, why was the problem not resolved then? 18) According to paragraph 3.20, CSTDI will strive to have the e-learning resources developed using the legacy software migrated to prevailing technology platforms or retired by June 2020. In this connection, please advise: (a) The time required to process each legacy software; (b) The measures to speed up the relevant processing work.	In the course of enhancing the CLC Plus, CSTDI already noted that 130 e-learning resources (about 5% of 2,450 e-learning resources) would need to be updated for viewing on mobile devices. The CSTDI has drawn up a timetable for the e-learning resources requiring migration based on their complexity and has been migrating/retiring these e-learning resources developed using a legacy software in phases since 2017. By the end of 2018, CSTDI finished processing 36 such e-learning resources. Among the 130 e-learning resources, more than 50 of them were provided by various B/Ds. CSTDI has requested the B/Ds concerned to provide their migration/retirement schedules and offered them appropriate assistance. All the e-learning resources requiring processing will be migrated or retired before the vendor concerned ceases supporting the software in December 2020.

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Paragraph 3.17 & 3.20	17) Regarding paragraph 3.17, according to a survey of CLC Plus users on the CSTDI App conducted by CSTDI in 2015-16, 77% of 2,084 respondents had not used the CSTDI App before. In this connection, what measures will CSTDI implement to address the low usage rate of the CSTDI App? 19) According to paragraph 3.20, CSTDI is taking actions to enhance the CSTDI App to facilitate user access to the CLC Plus via mobile devices. In this connection, please advise: (a) The actions being taken; (b) The timetable for the enhancement of the CSTDI App.	CSTDI is implementing a series of improvement measures to enhance the utilisation rate of the CLC Plus, including enhancing the interface of the CSTDI App to facilitate civil servants' direct access to the learning resources on the CLC Plus, and further enriching the contents of the e-learning resources to attract more civil servants to use the CSTDI App. A new version of the CSTDI App is expected to be launched in 2019.

Services of the Learning Resource Centre (Dispose of unserviceable resources in a timely manner)

Paragraphs 3.25 & 3.27	20) According to paragraphs 3.25 and 3.27, there were 2,526 items of obsolete and physically deteriorated learning materials (with a total purchase cost of about $1.4 million) at CSTDI pending disposal. However, Audit noted that there was no record showing when the 2,526 unserviceable resource items had been identified. In this connection, pleaseadvise: (a) Were the aforesaid unserviceable resource items used or brand new? (b) If they were brand new or partly brand new, has CSTDI updated its procurement plan so as to avoid wastage of resources in future?	All of the learning resources pending disposal have been used for years, and most of them were procured in the 1990s or sometime around 2000, such as damaged or outdated videotapes and books. Procurement for the Learning Resource Centre is co-ordinated by the E-Learning Unit of CSTDI. The Unit consults various units of CSTDI and Training Managers of other B/Ds regularly before deciding on the procurement of suitable training and reference resources for use in different training courses and for continuous learning in the civil service. All procurement work strictly follows the Stores and Procurement Regulations of the Government.

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	(c) Which unit of CSTDI is responsible for procurement?	
	(d) Had CSTDI laid down criteria/guidelines to regulate the procurement by the staff concerned?	

Part 4: Other administrative issues

Paragraph 4.8	21) According to paragraph 4.8, as for online booking of CSTDI venues and facilities, CSTDI has only made use of the Shared Online Reservation System (SORS) to automate the booking by its internal users and the users of the General Grades Office. Other B/Ds are still required to follow a set of manual booking procedures. In this connection, please advise why CSTDI has not made the system available to other B/Ds;	The CSTDI training venues are opened for use by other B/Ds. The current Shared Online Reservation System (SORS) was developed by OGCIO in 2009 for use by B/Ds which did not have meeting room booking systems or would like to share the use of their meeting rooms and facilities with other B/Ds. Currently, the CSTDI is the only user of the system. If other B/Ds is willing to install and use the SORS, CSTDI stands ready to facilitate the interface of our SORS with those installed in other B/Ds. Meanwhile, CSTDI will explore other feasible measures to streamline the venue booking procedures, including considering how updated information on venue availability could be made available to other B/Ds.
Paragraphs 4.11 & 4.12 of the Audit Report	22) According to paragraph 4.11 and Table 14 of paragraph 4.12, the two multi-function areas (MFAs) in CSTDI are ancillary facilities to support classroom training, and they are not available for booking by other B/Ds. In this connection, please advise: (a) Given the low utilisation rates of the MFAs as shown in Table 14, will CSTDI consider making them available to other B/Ds in order to increase their utilisation rates and avoid wastage of resources, and what are the relevant factors to be considered?	The two multi-function areas (MFAs) are not regular training classrooms. MFA 1 is an open area with sofas, Internet booths and vending machines for receiving trainees and visitors, who may access the Internet, take short-breaks or have mutual exchanges between classes there. To maximise the use of space, CSTDI uses the area for group discussions and activity-based training sessions, and for activities like graduation and presentation ceremonies. MFA 2 is also designed for receiving visitors and guest speakers. Since the room has a glass door at its entrance and a narrow layout without sound-proof fittings, it is difficult to use the area for normal class training. CSTDI welcomes other B/Ds to use the MFAs if they

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	(b) How much manpower has CSTDI deployed to manage the MFAs?	find the MFAs suitable for holding their training activities. CSTDI does not have dedicated staff for managing the two MFAs. The clerical and supporting staff of CSTDI manage the two concerned areas, and they are also responsible for the provision of general office support and reception services, venue management and setup as well as procurement and maintenance of office facilities and equipment for CSTDI.

Civil Service Bureau
January 2019