

Submission regarding

Pilot Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions

Special Meeting on 10 December 2018

**Background**

It is our understanding that the Panel on Health Services will discuss issues related to the Pilot Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions on a special meeting on 10 December 2018. As set out by the government, the Pilot Scheme aims to provide information for the public to make informed decisions, and to assure the professional competence of healthcare professionals. The Pilot Scheme operates under the principle of "one profession, one professional body, one register". The accredited professional bodies are expected to demonstrate a broad representation of their profession and maintain a well-established operation of professional practice.

**Current Situation**

As one of the five healthcare professions accepted to participate in the first phase of the Pilot Scheme, the audiologist profession is delighted to join the speech therapists, the clinical psychologists, the educational psychologists and the dietitians to be assessed. The five healthcare professions are going through stringent accreditation procedures by the independent Accreditation Agent according to the established accreditation standards, which include governance, operational effectiveness, risk management and quality improvement, standards for registrants, educational and training requirements, and management of the register of the professional body. These healthcare professions have been required specifically to set their educational

standards with due consideration to risks to service users and the public, knowledge, skills and experience required to provide good quality care, and development and advancement of the profession, including the assurance of their registrants keeping abreast of knowledge and developments in the profession through requirements in continuing professional development. They have also been specifically demanded to require their respective registrants to meet their education standards, with due checking to ensure only those who fulfil these requirements are admitted into their registers, with a view to inform the public and service users and to promote a high level of service standards for these professionals.

In the preparation process for accreditation, we noted that though the respective basic professional training for these five healthcare professions ranges from bachelor to master degree, all these professions are encouraging the continuing professional development among their members, so that doctorate qualifications are not uncommon among these five professions. We would like to share the information from the Hong Kong Institute of Audiologists (HKIA), which was granted full accreditation status under the Pilot Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions (AR Scheme) 10 days ago, as an example. The HKIA is authorised as the accredited healthcare professional body responsible for administering a register for the audiologist profession. The current members of register of audiologists accredited by Department of Health represent approximately 52% of the eligible local professionals. Among the current registered members, 16% of them have a Doctor of Audiology (AuD) qualification, 7% of them have a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) qualification, and 23% of them applied for the registration with a basic professional degree obtained overseas. The high level of service standards provided for the local community by all these five professions however relies not only on their educational qualifications, but also locally

relevant experiences. These five healthcare professions provide their services through understanding of local language, cultural and social context, daily life and habits of the local community. They obtain their respective practical experiences through practising for hundreds of hours under on-site supervision and mentorship. Besides, continuing professional development is also necessary for professionals to keep abreast of knowledge and developments in the professions throughout their professional life. The Continuing Professional Development Program for local audiologists was started 10 years ago by the Hong Kong Society of Audiology, and thus has been included as one of the requirements for renewal of registration in the accredited register. Similarly, the other four professions set their specific registration requirements on skills and experience for providing good quality care in local context.

## **Suggestions**

We therefore suggest that -

1. The Pilot Scheme continues to operate under the principle of "one profession, one professional body, one register", so that the public may receive services from each single profession, regulated by one single recognised professional body, at a stable standard.
2. Specific remedial training, assessment or other arrangements can be provided for professionals who have not obtained their basic professional training from locally recognised training programmes, or who have not obtained sufficient practical experiences in locally relevant context, as recommended by the respective professional bodies. This may ensure a high level of service standards provided by these professionals for the local community.

3. The welfare of the public and service users should be put first and foremost. Members of individual professional bodies should be required to meet education standards and to fulfil requirements on practical experiences, in particular in locally relevant and recognised context. The public and service users may thus make informed decisions, and the service standards of these professionals may thus be promoted.

Hong Kong Institute of Audiologists Limited

December 2018