



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

本局檔號 Our Ref. : EDB(FE)7/12/2041/00 Pt.11

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14 July 2020

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

Dear Ms WONG,

**Panel on Education
Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for
Self-financing Post-secondary Education**

I refer to your letter of 8 June 2020 to the Secretary for Education on the captioned subject. In relation to the questions raised by the Hon Tony TSE Wai-chuen, the responses from the Education Bureau (EDB) are set out below.

Institutions Offering Self-financing Sub-degree or Undergraduate Programmes

In the 2019/20 academic year, 29 institutions offer full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate programmes in Hong Kong. These institutions offer a total of 778 full-time locally-accredited local and non-local post-secondary programmes (comprising 493 degree (including top-up degree) and 285 sub-degree programmes), involving about 36 600 planned intake places (comprising about 17 300 degree (including top-up degree) and about 19 300 sub-degree places). Since the 2011/12 academic year, two institutions offering full-time

locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate programmes in Hong Kong have ceased operation¹. Based on the information provided by self-financing post-secondary institutions for publication on the EDB's Concourse for Self-financing Post-secondary Education (the Concourse), 126 full-time locally-accredited degree or sub-degree programmes were removed by the institutions from the Concourse from the 2017/18 to 2019/20 academic years. We do not have information on the institutions' reasons for removing these programmes from the Concourse.

Review of Self-financing Post-secondary Education

The self-financing post-secondary education sector is a vital part of the post-secondary education ecosystem in Hong Kong, complementing the publicly-funded higher education sector, not only by providing more education opportunities, but also by injecting new perspectives and diversity in programme development. Over the years, the Government has all along supported the development of self-financing post-secondary institutions through non-recurrent subsidies.

As recommended by the Task Force on Review of Self-financing Post-secondary Education, the Government has revamped the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education (CSPE) with a view to enhancing the development and quality of the self-financing post-secondary sector. Its work includes fostering strategic coordination of self-financing post-secondary institutions in respect of their positioning and the offering of programmes, as well as providing targeted support for them to develop their distinct character and niche areas. On the other hand, the Sub-committee on Quality Assurance has been set up under the revamped CSPE to study ways to enhance the quality of the self-financing post-secondary education sector at institutional and programme levels. The EDB is working with the Sub-committee to explore ways to further improve the existing accreditation standards and quality assurance matters, etc., applicable to the self-financing sector.

The Government agrees with the Task Force that the self-financing post-secondary institutions need more support for developing their distinct character and niche areas, and for launching quality programmes which will better respond to our community needs. In recent years, the Government has leveraged the programmes of the self-financing sector and provided more subsidised places that nurture talent

¹ The institutions concerned are Sacred Heart Canossian College of Commerce and SCAD Foundation (Hong Kong) Limited. Separately, Centennial College has stopped admitting new students since the 2019/20 academic year.

for specific industries with a keen manpower demand through the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP). However, given the need to acquire expensive market-standard equipment/facilities to meet requirements for academic and professional accreditation, the institutions, with no recurrent public subvention, may be financially constrained to develop certain programmes with high start-up costs (e.g. some health programmes may require an upfront investment of tens of millions of dollars) despite the programmes' high market demand and the availability of government subsidies for students. We believe that with more targeted support, the self-financing sector can better serve Hong Kong's human resources needs and individual institutions can better develop their own strengths and niche areas. The proposed Scheme will also help alleviate the institutions' need to fully recover the set-up costs from tuition fees, thus relieving the financial burden on students.

The Proposed Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education (The proposed Scheme)

Under the proposed Scheme, the CSPE is responsible for advising on the merits of the programme proposals submitted by institutions, having regard to factors including whether the programme concerned is able to nurture talent for an industry with a strong human resources need; whether many similar programmes already exist in the market; whether the programme is in line with the institution's strategic positioning in the sector and its academic development plan; and the programme design, student admission plan, and sustainability, etc. Based on the above criteria, the CSPE will only recommend meritorious programme proposals to the EDB for funding approval. Therefore, the situation of different institutions offering a large number of similar programmes and resulting in vicious competition will not occur. In terms of programme quality, programmes launched by institutions are subject to external quality assurance and accreditation by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (other than those offered by institutions with a self-accrediting status) in order to ensure their programme quality.

In addition, institutions are required to formulate a series of performance indicators in the programme proposals submitted in making their applications for funding. If funding is approved, the participating institution will be required to undertake to bear any other costs of the approved programme within and after the project approval period, and to admit consecutively at least a certain number of cohorts of students, namely, one that doubles the years of the approved project period.

The institution will also be required to submit progress reports to the EDB to review the implementation progress of the programme concerned and whether the performance indicators can be achieved. The EDB reserves the right to terminate funding and seek full or partial repayment of the funding already granted should the institution fail to fulfill the relevant requirements under the Scheme.

The Government has all along been subsidising students who pursue designated full-time locally-accredited self-financing undergraduate and sub-degree programmes in selected disciplines related to industries with a keen human resources demand through the SSSDP; and subsidising eligible students who pursue full-time locally-accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate programmes through the Non-means-Tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong; as well as providing both means-tested grants and non-means-tested low-interest loans for students in the self-financing post-secondary sector. Under the proposed Scheme, students can still select suitable self-financing or subsidised programmes based on their own abilities, aspirations and interests, and they will not be denied access to self-financing post-secondary programmes because of their financial needs.

For enquiries, please contact the undersigned at 3509 8556.

Yours sincerely,



(Martin WONG)
for Secretary for Education