

For information

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the Government’s plan to refine the prevailing eligibility criteria of the non-means tested portion of the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme (MUSSS) to cover students who are admitted to Mainland universities through the School Principal Nomination Scheme (SPNS) under the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions (the Admission Scheme).

Background

2. With the approval of the Legislative Council Finance Committee (FC) vide FCR(2014-15)15 in July 2014, the Education Bureau (EDB) launched the MUSSS to provide financial support to Hong Kong students pursuing undergraduate studies on the Mainland, thereby ensuring that no student will be deprived of post-secondary education opportunity because of a lack of means.

3. The MUSSS, introduced as a pilot scheme for three cohorts, provided means-tested subsidy only. In July 2017, EDB sought the FC’s approval vide FCR(2017-18)24 to implement a package of priority initiatives on quality education, including the introduction of an additional non-means-tested subsidy for students meeting the general entrance requirements (GER) for admission to undergraduate programmes¹ but failed to obtain a place. Eligible students pursuing studies in both local

¹ The GER for admission to undergraduate programmes is “3322” for the four core subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) respectively. With the reform of the Liberal Studies subject to be “Citizenship and Social Development” with grading of “Attained (A)” and “Not Attained (NA)”, the GER will be revised to “332A”, starting from the 2024 admission year.

undergraduate programmes as well as in Mainland institutions would be offered a subsidy through the Non-Means-Tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong and the MUSSS respectively. As such, the non-means tested portion of the MUSSS was established with the GER as an eligibility criterion for students pursuing undergraduate degree programmes at Mainland universities². A table showing the number of MUSSS recipients and amount of subsidy disbursed in the 2017/18 to 2020/21 academic years is at [Annex A](#).

4. The level of subsidy under the MUSSS is determined based on the costs of Hong Kong students studying on the Mainland. Information on study-related expenses is collated for analysis from those Mainland universities where the majority of Hong Kong students are studying. The rates are reviewed annually by EDB where the subsidy level of the non-means tested portion of the MUSSS is set at about one-third of the full-rate means tested portion of the MUSSS to maintain relativity³. At present, the level of subsidy of the non-means tested portion of the MUSSS stands at HK\$5,600 per year.

SPNS under Admission Scheme

5. The Admission Scheme has been introduced jointly by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and EDB since the 2012/13 academic year to enable participating Mainland universities to admit Hong Kong students based on HKDSE results, hence exempting these students from the need to take the Mainland's Joint Entrance Examination or universities' own entry examinations. While most programmes under the Admission Scheme adopt the GER, Mainland universities may admit students through the SPNS with a slightly lower threshold, i.e. at least 10 scores from the four core subjects with each subject score not lower than "2".

² With the exception of students pursuing undergraduate degree programmes in Huaqiao University (華僑大學) in Fujian under the "Pilot Scheme on the Articulation of Hong Kong Sub-degree Graduates in Huaqiao University" (香港副學位畢業生升讀華僑大學銜接學位課程試行計劃), a scheme similar to top-up degrees in Hong Kong and open to graduates of sub-degree programmes in Hong Kong without prescribing the HKDSE minimum results as the entry threshold.

³ There are three subsidy levels under the MUSSS, namely (i) the means tested full rate, (ii) the means tested half rate (at 50% of the means tested full rate), and (iii) the non-means tested rate. The actual amounts of the subsidy at the three levels in the 2020/21 academic year are HK\$16,800, HK\$8,400 and HK\$5,600 respectively.

6. Whilst students admitted through SPNS are also eligible for the means-tested subsidy under MUSSS, they are eligible for the non-means-tested subsidy under MUSSS only if they meet the GER. There have been recent calls for the Government to review the prevailing eligibility criteria of the non-means-tested subsidy so that those students admitted through the SPNS but do not attain the GER can also benefit in recognition of their non-academic achievements.

7. Having reviewed the matter, we have concluded that the GER should continue to be adopted as a general requirement for the non-means tested portion of the MUSSS for consistency across different subsidy schemes. That said, to allow students admitted through the SPNS but do not attain the GER to apply for the non-means tested portion of the MUSSS, the eligibility criteria relating to this type of students could be refined. This is in recognition of the objective of the SPNS to allow students who may not have good grades but possess other non-academic achievements (e.g. sports, arts, etc.) to further their studies on the Mainland.

Implications

8. According to the information from the MoE, 2 026 HKDSE students were offered a place at Mainland universities through the Admission Scheme in the 2020/21 academic year, of whom 655 were nominated through the SPNS. It is estimated that around 35% of the students who were offered a place took up the offer eventually (Figures of the Admission Scheme and SPNS in recent years are tabulated at **Annex B**). We understand that some of the students admitted through the SPNS may have attained the GER and would therefore be eligible for the non-means tested portion of the MUSSS under the prevailing eligibility criteria. We estimate that the additional caseload and resultant financial implications arising from the proposed refinement should be limited and can be absorbed by EDB's existing resources.

Way Forward

9. The proposed refinement of the eligibility criteria for the non-means tested portion of the MUSSS will take effect from the 2021/22 academic year onwards.

10. Members are invited to note the content of this paper. We will also inform the FC of the proposed refinement by way of an information note to be issued in end July 2021.

Education Bureau
July 2021

Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme
Number of Recipients and Amount of Subsidy Disbursed
in the 2017/18 to 2020/21 Academic Years

Academic Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 (as at end February 2021)
Total number of recipients of subsidies	3 056	3 147	3 218	3 490
(a) Full-rate subsidy under means-tested subsidy	1 797	1 872	1 901	2 077
(b) Half-rate subsidy under means-tested subsidy	744	667	640	710
(c) Non-means-tested subsidy	515	608	677	703
Amount of subsidy disbursed under means-tested subsidy (HK\$) for (a) and (b)	32,535,000	37,052,400	37,312,800	40,857,600
Amount of subsidy disbursed under non-means-tested subsidy (HK\$) for (c)	2,575,000	3,404,800	3,791,200	3,936,800

**Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions
and its School Principal Nomination Scheme (SPNS)
Student Enrolment Figures for the 2016/17 to 2020/21 Academic Years**

Academic Year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
(A) Total Number of Students Receiving an Offer	1 391	1 295	1 556	1 784	2 026
(B) Number of Students Receiving an Offer through SPNS, included in (A)	657	649	502	562	655
(C) Ratio of SPNS Offers to Total (B)/(A)	47%	50%	32%	32%	32%
(D) Enrolment Rate of (A) (i.e. ratio of students with offer eventually enrolled in the programme)	32%	33%	38%	35%	41%