

Chapter 8

Education

In an increasingly competitive and connected world, education is of vital importance. The importance the government attaches to education is reflected in the increase in total government expenditure on education from \$58.2 billion in 2009-10 to \$124 billion in 2019-20 estimates, or 20.4 per cent of total government spending.

The Secretary for Education, who heads the Education Bureau, formulates, develops and reviews educational policies, secures funds from the government budget, and oversees the implementation of educational programmes with the support of the Permanent Secretary for Education.

Of the government's total education expenditure of \$124 billion in 2019-20 estimates, \$90.6 billion is recurrent expenditure on education, comprising 20.5 per cent of total recurrent government expenditure.

The Education Commission advises the Secretary for Education on overall educational objectives and policies and the priorities in implementing its recommendations, coordinates the work of major education-related advisory bodies, oversees the operation of the Quality Education Fund, and submits reports and recommendations to the Secretary for Education.

The commission comprises a chairman, a vice-chairman who is the Permanent Secretary for Education, eight ex-officio members and a number of non-official members. The eight ex-officio members are the chairpersons of the Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals, the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education, the Curriculum Development Council, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority Council, the Quality Education Fund Steering Committee, the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, the University Grants Committee (UGC) and the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The non-official members come from both education and non-education fields.

The UGC is a non-statutory body appointed by the Chief Executive. It offers impartial and expert advice to the government on the funding and development of higher education, and provides assurance to the government and the community on the standards and cost-effectiveness of the operations of the eight publicly funded universities, known as UGC-funded universities.

Under the UGC's aegis are the Research Grants Council (RGC), which advises on the research needs of the academic sector and the distribution of research funding, and the Quality Assurance Council, which helps assure the quality of educational experiences in all programmes of the UGC-funded universities.

UGC members are appointed by the Chief Executive in their personal capacity and all are prominent in their fields. They comprise accomplished academics and higher education administrators from outside Hong Kong, eminent community leaders and academics of high standing locally. The UGC Secretariat, a government department, provides administrative support.

Education in Hong Kong

The government provides 12 years' free primary and secondary education to all children and youngsters through public-sector schools, which form the majority in the school system. These consist of government schools operated directly by the government and aided schools that are mostly run by religious or charitable organisations or clan associations, fully subvented by the government and managed by their own incorporated management committees or school management committees. To provide for more diversity, there are other types of schools, namely Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, which can charge school fees, receive government subvention based on enrolment and enjoy greater flexibility, and self-financed private schools.

Hong Kong's 53¹ international schools in operation, including 15 run by the English Schools Foundation, provided about 46,500 places as at September, catering mainly to the demand of non-local families living in Hong Kong for work and investment. Generally operated on a self-financing basis, these schools offer different non-local curricula, including those of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the International Baccalaureate programme.

Both publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary programmes are available at sub-degree, undergraduate and higher levels. The publicly funded programmes are provided by the eight UGC-funded universities, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) and the VTC. Diverse self-financing post-secondary programmes are available at post-secondary institutions with a choice of study pathways and multiple entry and exit points.

Seven task forces were set up by the government between October 2017 and April 2018 to carry out in-depth reviews on these key areas of education: the professional development of teachers, the school curriculum, promotion of vocational and professional education and training, self-financing post-secondary education, school-based management policy, home-school cooperation and parent education and research policy and funding.

¹ One international school has been under temporary suspension for renovation since the 2017-18 school year.

Kindergarten Education

Kindergarten education is not compulsory. Nevertheless, about 100 per cent of children aged three to five were attending kindergartens in the 2018-19 school year.

Under the kindergarten education policy implemented from 2017-18, a subsidy sufficient for the provision of quality half-day service to all eligible children aged three to six is provided to local non-profit-making kindergartens joining the kindergarten education scheme. The quality of education provided by the participating kindergartens is enhanced through raising the teacher-pupil ratio from 1:15 to 1:11, a revised curriculum guide, more systematic professional development of teachers, stronger support to students with diverse needs, a strengthened quality assurance framework and promotion of parent education. Out of about 1,050 kindergartens in 2019-20, about 790 were local non-profit-making kindergartens eligible to join the scheme and 761 had joined.

Primary Education

Public-sector primary schools offer six years' free education. A child starts primary education at about age six. In September, 301,073 children were enrolled in 455 public-sector primary schools, comprising 34 government schools and 421 aided schools. In addition, 21 DSS primary schools offered 16,432 places and 67 private primary schools offered 41,276 places.

Admissions to Primary 1 in public-sector schools are administered through the centralised Primary One Admission System, divided into two stages: Discretionary Places Admission and Central Allocation. Each school will first earmark about half of its Primary 1 places as discretionary places, and parents may apply to only one government or aided school in any school catchment area, or 'school net'. The remaining half are for central allocation, which assigns children who have not been allocated a place during Discretionary Places Admission. At this stage, 10 per cent of the places are meant for parents to make up to three unrestricted school choices from any school net for their child, while 90 per cent are for parents to make restricted school choices in the school net of their residence in order of preference.

Secondary Education

Public-sector secondary schools also provide six years' free education. In September, 256,126 students were enrolled in 392 public-sector secondary schools, comprising 359 aided schools, 31 government schools and two caput schools that are subsidised mainly according to the number of students admitted. There were also 59 DSS secondary schools offering 55,369 places and 20 private secondary schools offering 8,889 places.

Secondary education comprises three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary education leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination.

Subsidised Secondary 1 places are allocated through the Secondary School Places Allocation System, divided into two stages: Discretionary Places and Central Allocation. Schools participating in the system reserve not more than 30 per cent of their Secondary 1 places as

discretionary places and parents may apply direct to not more than two participating schools in any district. The schools' remaining places, after deducting discretionary and repeater places, are used for central allocation, of which 10 per cent are meant for parents to make not more than three unrestricted school choices from any school net, while 90 per cent are for parents to make a maximum of 30 restricted school choices from the school net to which their child belongs.

Students completing junior secondary education normally remain in the same school for their senior secondary education or attend full-time, fully subvented vocational training courses run by the VTC.

The Task Force on Review of School Curriculum conducted a public consultation between June and October 2019 to gauge public views on initial recommendations grouped under six directions, namely whole-person development, values education, creating space and catering for learner diversity, Applied Learning (ApL), university admissions, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics education. It plans to submit a final report with directional recommendations to the government in 2020.

Senior Secondary Curriculum

The senior secondary curriculum is flexible, coherent and diversified. It aims to cater for students' varied interests, needs, aptitudes and abilities. Students take four core subjects, namely Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies, and acquire Other Learning Experiences. Most students also choose two or three elective subjects from 20 senior secondary subjects, a range of ApL courses and six Other Languages.

ApL courses are introduced at Secondary 5 and 6. They place equal emphasis on practice and theory linked to broad professional and vocational fields. In the 2019-21 cohort, 39 ApL courses are offered under six areas of studies: Creative Studies; Media and Communication; Business, Management and Law; Services; Applied Science; and Engineering and Production.

On completion of their study at Secondary 6, students take the HKDSE Examination. This certification receives worldwide recognition. Over 280 tertiary institutions globally, including renowned schools, recognise the qualification for admission purposes, and more are being added.

In 2018, about 91 per cent of Secondary 6 graduates pursued further full-time studies, among whom about 10 per cent studied outside Hong Kong.

Chinese History Education

Chinese history is an integral part of the curriculum for all primary and secondary schools. Learning content on the Chinese nation, Chinese history and Chinese culture is included in the General Studies subject at primary level. At junior secondary level, all schools should offer Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject from 2018-19, and devote two periods per week to Chinese History. At senior secondary level, Chinese History is an elective subject. To enhance students' interest in learning the subject, the revised Junior Secondary Chinese

History subject curriculum framework will be implemented progressively from Secondary 1 in September 2020.

Basic Law Education

The Basic Law is a constitutional document for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). It enshrines within a legal document the important concepts of ‘one country, two systems’, ‘Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong’ and a high degree of autonomy. It also prescribes the various systems to be practised in the HKSAR. The Basic Law is related closely to the daily lives of Hong Kong people.

To support Basic Law education, the government provides schools with learning and teaching resources, professional development programmes for principals and teachers, Mainland exchange programmes and territory-wide student activities, such as the inter-school Basic Law competition.

Elements of Basic Law education have long been incorporated into the curricula and learning activities of primary and secondary schools. The subjects involved include General Studies at primary level, Life and Society and Geography at junior secondary level, Liberal Studies at senior secondary level, and Chinese History and History at secondary levels.

Language Education

The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research advises the government on language education issues and on the use of the Language Fund as well as the policy and procedures governing its operation. The fund supports initiatives to improve proficiency in Chinese and English, including Putonghua.

The government’s language education policy is to train the younger generation to become biliterate in written Chinese and English and trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English.

At the same time, the government believes students should undertake their general education in a language that is not itself a barrier to learning. The policy on medium of instruction is therefore to uphold mother-tongue teaching while enhancing students’ proficiency in both Chinese and English. Public-sector primary schools generally teach in Chinese. Public-sector secondary schools can increase junior secondary students’ opportunities for exposure to, and use of, English, taking into account their ability and desire to learn in English, teachers’ capability and readiness to teach in English, and support measures to facilitate learning in English. At senior secondary level, schools can select either Chinese or English as the medium of instruction on a subject basis.

Schools are encouraged to devise a whole-school language policy in line with the policy goal on medium of instruction, sustain their good practices in promoting language learning and deepen the impact of ‘reading to learn’ by extending it to language across the curriculum through exposing students to a variety of texts of different themes. Schools are also encouraged to leverage technology to provide opportunities to read and write across the

curriculum through the use of printed and multimodal texts to motivate students, broaden their knowledge and help them relate the language to different subjects.

Native-speaking English Teacher Scheme

There are about 400 Native-speaking English Teachers (NETs) working in secondary schools and over 460 NETs in primary schools. They collaborate with local English teachers to enhance English language learning and teaching and make English learning experiences more authentic for students. They also help create a rich English language environment and promote innovative teaching strategies. Overall, the scheme improves classroom practices and students' attitudes towards learning English.

Non-Chinese-speaking Students

The government encourages and supports the early integration of non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students into the community, including by facilitating their adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework helps primary and secondary NCS students overcome difficulties in learning Chinese as a second language. Complementary measures include professional training for teachers, learning and teaching resources, and funding for schools to provide intensive Chinese Language teaching and create an inclusive learning environment. Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) is offered at senior secondary level as an additional channel to help NCS students obtain an alternative Chinese language qualification and prepare them for further studies and career pursuits. In addition to the HKDSE qualification, it is also pegged at Qualifications Framework (QF) levels 1 to 3. It is accepted for admission to UGC-funded universities and most post-secondary institutions as well as appointments to the civil service.

The Chinese Language Learning Support Centre offers support programmes for NCS students and professional development workshops for teachers. It conducts workshops for parents to encourage parental support for their children in learning Chinese.

UGC-funded universities accept various Chinese language qualifications under specified circumstances as alternatives to the HKDSE so that their applicants may meet the general entrance requirements under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System. These qualifications include the General Certificate of Secondary Education, International General Certificate of Secondary Education, and General Certificate of Education AS-Level and A-Level. Similar arrangements are available for admission to sub-degree programmes. Eligible NCS students taking these Chinese language examinations are subsidised so that the fee they pay is the same as the HKDSE Chinese Language examination fee. Those with financial needs may further receive half or full remission of the subsidised examination fees.

The government works with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to hold district-based programmes, supported by the Language Fund, to motivate NCS children to learn Chinese through fun activities. For NCS school leavers, course providers offer vocational Chinese language courses pegged at QF level 1 or 2.

Education of Students with Special Educational Needs

Students with more severe or multiple disabilities are referred to special schools for intensive support, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and parents' consent. Others with special educational needs (SEN) attend ordinary schools. As at September, there were 60 aided special schools, 21 of which had boarding facilities, providing about 9,200 school places and 1,150 boarding places. Some 53,180 students with SEN were enrolled in public-sector ordinary primary and secondary schools. The government provides these schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. Professional officers from the bureau visit these schools regularly to advise on school policies and support measures in implementing integrated education.

From 2019-20, all public-sector ordinary primary and secondary schools are provided with an additional SEN coordinator post and use the Learning Support Grant, with additional regular teaching posts offered as appropriate, to support integrated education. All public-sector ordinary schools also receive the School-based Educational Psychology Service, under which the ratio of educational psychologists to schools is 1:4 at schools with a comparatively large number of students with SEN. School-based speech therapist posts are created in public-sector schools by phases to implement the Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service. At the beginning of 2019-20, about 38 per cent of teachers in public-sector schools had completed structured training programmes of 30 hours or more to help them cater for students with SEN.

The Endeavour Merit Award and Endeavour Scholarship recognise excellence in post-secondary students with SEN at publicly funded and self-financing institutions respectively.

Gifted Education

The government attaches great importance to supporting gifted students in developing their potential. Professional development programmes, together with learning and teaching resources, are designed to equip teachers with knowledge and skills in gifted education. School networks at both primary and secondary levels are organised to promote professional exchange among schools and teachers. Territory-wide competitions in different disciplines provide a platform for students to demonstrate their areas of strength and widen their horizons. Outstanding students thus identified are given further training and nominated to take part in international competitions.

The government-subsidised Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education provides gifted students with out-of-school learning through courses, competitions, conferences, mentoring, online courses and advanced learning programmes. For parents of gifted children, it offers the Parent Education Programme, outreach, assessment and consultation.

The Gifted Education Fund, set up in 2016, had received a total injection of \$1.6 billion from the bureau by end-2019 to finance a wide variety of advanced learning programmes outside school for gifted students.

Information Technology in Education

Under the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education, basically all public-sector and DSS schools are now equipped with enhanced Wi-Fi infrastructure to facilitate the use of mobile computer devices for e-learning in schools and the implementation of the school-based Bring Your Own Device policy. The bureau supports the schools to implement e-learning by providing professional development programmes for teachers, on-site support under the IT in Education Centre of Excellence Scheme, online resources and recurrent funding.

Post-secondary Education

Hong Kong has 22 local degree-awarding post-secondary education institutions, eight of which are funded by the public through the UGC, namely the City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Education University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and University of Hong Kong. The other 14 are the publicly funded HKAPA, the self-financing Open University of Hong Kong, the VTC's Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, and 11 approved post-secondary colleges registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance, namely the Caritas Institute of Higher Education, Centennial College, Chu Hai College of Higher Education, Gratia Christian College, HKCT Institute of Higher Education, Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, UOW College Hong Kong, Tung Wah College and Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education. Together with providers of locally accredited sub-degree programmes, there are about 30 post-secondary institutions.

In terms of full-time studies in the 2019-20 academic year, the UGC-funded universities and the HKAPA together provided around 15,200 publicly funded, first-year-first-degree intake places, while self-financing undergraduate programmes offered about 9,900 places. The UGC-funded universities and the self-financing, degree-awarding institutions also provided around 5,000 senior-year undergraduate intake places and 9,400 top-up degree places respectively, mainly for sub-degree graduates. At sub-degree level, about 19,700 self-financing and 13,300 publicly funded intake places were available.

At postgraduate level, about 2,600 and 5,600 UGC-funded taught and research places were available in 2019-20 respectively. As regards self-financing places, taught and research programmes registered actual enrolments of 41,200 and 3,900 respectively in 2018-19.

The government strives to provide secondary school leavers with flexible, diversified pathways with multiple entry and exit points through promoting the quality and sustainable development of the publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors. In 2018-19, about 80 per cent of the relevant age cohort had access to post-secondary education. Among them, about half had access to degree education, including 31 per cent enrolled in publicly funded undergraduate programmes.

The government has taken follow-up actions after accepting in full the recommendations of the Task Force on Review of Research Policy and Funding. The new initiatives include increasing research funding substantially through a \$20 billion injection into the Research Endowment

Fund, setting up a \$3 billion, three-year Research Matching Grant Scheme, introducing three new fellowship schemes for researchers, reviewing the RGC's mode of operations, streamlining and rationalising the RGC's three existing collaborative research funding schemes, setting up an internal government liaison group to improve coordination among different funding bodies and adopting a common researcher identity for grant applications.

The government is also following up the recommendations of the Task Force on Review of Self-financing Post-secondary Education, which include the need to set a clear policy on the development of self-financing post-secondary education, more sharply differentiating the positioning of associate degree and higher diploma qualifications, strengthening support for self-financing post-secondary institutions and students and forging a reformed and unified regulatory framework.

Under the Ministry of Education's Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions, some Mainland higher education institutions admit Hong Kong students on the basis of their HKDSE Examination results and exempt them from taking the Joint Entrance Examination for Universities on the Mainland. In 2019-20, over 3,500 Hong Kong students applied and about 1,800 were offered places. In 2020-21, the number of participating institutions will increase from 112 to 122 across 21 Mainland provinces and municipalities and one autonomous region.

Increasing Post-secondary Education Opportunities

The government promotes the sustainable development of the self-financing post-secondary sector by providing land and premises at nominal premium and rent, interest-free start-up loans, the \$3.52 billion Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund (SPEF), financial assistance for students, quality assurance subsidies and matching grants.

As at end-2019, about \$7.7 billion of start-up loans to post-secondary institutions out of a total \$9 billion commitment had been approved, while about \$492 million of matching grants had been approved under the seventh Matching Grant Scheme, which ended in July 2019.

The number of publicly funded, senior-year undergraduate places available at UGC-funded universities for sub-degree graduates was increased to 5,000 by 2018-19. This offers more opportunities for such students to obtain a publicly funded degree education and fosters a flexible multi-entry post-secondary education framework.

The SPEF provides the Self-financing Post-Secondary Scholarship Scheme to outstanding students pursuing full-time, locally accredited self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate programmes, and granted \$83.6 million in scholarships and awards to 5,237 recipients in 2018-19. The fund also supports worthwhile non-works projects under the Quality Enhancement Support Scheme to enhance the quality of self-financing post-secondary education, and approved a total of more than \$23 million in the same academic year for nine projects.

The Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors, launched in 2015-16, subsidises students to pursue designated full-time, locally accredited self-financing undergraduate

programmes in selected disciplines. It was regularised in 2018-19, with the number of subsidised places increased from about 1,000 to about 3,000 per cohort. Eligible current students of the designated programmes also started receiving the subsidy from that year. The scheme was expanded from 2019-20 to subsidise about 2,000 students per cohort to pursue designated full-time, locally accredited self-financing sub-degree programmes in selected disciplines. Eligible current students of the designated programmes also receive the subsidy.

The Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong, launched in 2017-18, provides an annual subsidy of around \$30,000, subject to adjustments based on the composite consumer price index, to eligible students pursuing full-time, locally accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate programmes, including top-up degree programmes, offered in Hong Kong by 17 eligible institutions. The subsidy applies to Hong Kong students who have attained '3322'² in the HKDSE for enrolment in eligible first-year-first-degree programmes, and those with relevant sub-degrees for enrolment in eligible top-up degree programmes. In the 2019-20 academic year, about 16,000 students are subsidised.

Governance of Post-secondary Institutions

All UGC-funded universities, the Open University and the HKAPA are statutory bodies governed by their own ordinances. Eleven approved post-secondary colleges are registered under and governed by the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance. Each post-secondary institution has its own structure of governance, normally including a governing body, called the council or board of governors, and a body to regulate academic affairs, called the senate or academic board.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training and Adult Education

In May, the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) promulgated its initial recommendations on promoting VPET in secondary schools, reviewing the positioning of VPET in the higher education system, and building clear articulation pathways in the vocational sector under the QF. The task force completed its public consultation in July and will submit its final review report to the government in the first quarter of 2020.

Vocational Training Council

The VTC is a statutory body that offers VPET for school leavers and adult learners. It provided some 250,000 full-time and part-time places during 2018-19.

Quality-assured, internationally recognised full-time and part-time courses up to master's degree level are available for students who have completed Secondary 3 education or above, covering applied science, design, engineering, hospitality, child care, elderly and community services, business, and information technology. The courses are offered through the VTC's 13 member institutions, such as the Hong Kong Design Institute, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Institute of Professional Education and Knowledge, International Culinary

² '3322' refers to level 3 for Chinese Language and English Language and level 2 for Mathematics Compulsory Part and Liberal Studies. This is the basic entry requirement of publicly funded university undergraduate programmes. Students enrolled in self-financing undergraduate programmes will be subsidised by the government if they have met this requirement.

Institute, Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong and Youth College. The VTC also administers an apprenticeship scheme and provides trade testing and certification.

The VTC's government-funded Training and Support Scheme was regularised in 2019-20, offering 1,200 training places per year under an 'Earn and Learn' model to help trainees join industries which require specialised skills. The VTC also receives recurrent funding to provide industrial attachment for about 9,000 students every year.

Diploma Yi Jin Programme

The Diploma Yi Jin Programme provides an alternative channel for Secondary 6 school leavers and adult learners to earn a formal qualification for employment and continuing education purposes. It is run by seven self-financing institutions and may be taken either full-time or part-time. The 2019-20 enrolment exceeded 4,000 students.

Evening Secondary Courses

The Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses offers evening secondary courses conducted by approved course providers. About 1,000 adult students were enrolled in 2019-20.

Student Achievements

Hong Kong students perform well in international studies. In the Programme for International Student Assessment 2018, Hong Kong students ranked fourth in reading and mathematical literacy, and ninth in scientific literacy.

Hong Kong students also excel in international competitions. In 2019, Hong Kong teams won a total of four gold, 19 silver and eight bronze medals in the International Mathematical Olympiad, International Biology Olympiad, International Physics Olympiad, International Olympiad of Metropolises, International Olympiad in Informatics and International Junior Science Olympiad.

In music, Hong Kong students secured one first place and one third place in the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod; one first prize, two special awards and a grand prix award in the International May Choir Competition; one gold in the 7th ASEAN International Chopin Piano Competition; one third place in the 15th International Choral Competition; two silvers and one bronze in the Tokyo International Choral Competition; two golds and two special jury prizes in the Singapore International Choral Festival; one gold in the Thailand International Band and Orchestra Festival and one gold, one silver and two bronzes in the Nanyang International Music Competition.

In the visual arts, Hong Kong students won two grand prizes in the 18th International Visual Arts Competition of Latvia, one silver and five bronzes in Infomatrix-Asia, six golds in the Mizyal Gallery Museum Children's Art Competition Gaziantep, 30 first-class honours in the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements and Best Collection awards, an award by the Society of the Handcrafts and three awards of Best Students in the Small Montmartre of Bitola.

In sports, Hong Kong students won a gold at the 3rd Asian School Rugby Sevens Championship; two golds, four silvers and three bronzes at the 6th Asian School Table Tennis Championship; one silver at Badminton Asia U17 & U15 Junior Championships; two golds at the junior division of the 2nd Asian Open Taekwondo Championship; one silver at Para Table Tennis Women's TT7 (Team) of the ITTF Asian Para Championships; two silvers and three bronzes at the Asian Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships and one bronze at the National Boys U16 Volleyball Tournament.

Qualifications and Quality Assurance

Qualifications Framework

The Hong Kong Qualifications Framework, established under the Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications Ordinance, provides a transparent and accessible platform to promote lifelong learning and enhance workforce competitiveness. The QF covers academic, VPET and continuing education qualifications. It is underpinned by a robust quality assurance mechanism. All qualifications recognised under the framework are locally accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ), established under the HKCAAVQ Ordinance, or by local self-accrediting institutions. The government maintains a web-based Qualifications Register, which lists the qualifications and associated learning programmes recognised under the framework.

As at 2019, the government had helped 23 industries³ set up industry training advisory committees under the QF, covering more than half of the labour force. A major task of each committee is to draw up Specification of Competency Standards for its sector, setting out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in the sector's different functional areas, and enabling course providers to design training programmes to meet the sector's needs. These standards provide useful guides for the development of in-house training and human resources management.

The Recognition of Prior Learning mechanism under the QF enables practitioners to obtain formal recognition for the knowledge, skills and experience they acquire in the workplace, and facilitates further learning without the need to start from scratch. The QF also provides for credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) to support learning pathways for learners, and helps institutions develop and refine their CAT systems.

To ensure the sustainability of the framework, the government operates the \$2.2 billion QF Fund to provide a steady income for QF-related initiatives.

Quality Assurance of Post-secondary Education

Two quality assurance bodies monitor the quality of the post-secondary education sector. The HKCAAVQ is the statutory body responsible for the quality assurance of all operators

³ Printing and publishing; watch and clock; catering; hairdressing; property management; electrical and mechanical services; jewellery; information and communications technology; automotive; beauty; logistics; banking; import and export; testing, inspection and certification; retail; insurance; manufacturing technology (tooling, metals and plastics); elderly care services; security services; human resources management; fashion; arboriculture and horticulture; and travel.

and programmes except the UGC-funded universities, which are self-accredited. The Quality Assurance Council (QAC), a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the UGC's aegis, conducts quality audits of the UGC-funded universities to assure that the quality of educational experience in all their programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above, however funded, is sustained, improved and internationally competitive.

In November, the government set up the Sub-committee on Quality Assurance under the revamped Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education to explore how to enhance the quality of the self-financing post-secondary sector. The sub-committee replaced the Liaison Committee on Quality Assurance, which served a similar purpose.

Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance

This ordinance regulates non-local courses of higher and professional education conducted in Hong Kong through a system of registration to ensure the standards of the courses and qualifications are comparable with those in their home countries. It protects consumers by guarding against the marketing of non-local courses which do not fulfil the registration criteria. As at end-September, 1,163 non-local courses were registered or exempted from registration under the ordinance.

More Funding Resources

Quality Education Fund

This fund seeks to raise the quality of school education and promote quality school education. As at end-August, it had approved about 10,645 projects involving about \$4.9 billion.

Life Planning Education

A recurrent Career and Life Planning Grant at the mid-point salary of the Graduate Master pay scale is disbursed to public-sector and DSS schools providing senior secondary education to implement life planning education that prepares students for the transition from school to post-secondary education, including VPET, or the workplace and to make the best of opportunities ahead. Schools may opt for regular teaching posts instead of the grant to further consolidate their experiences with more stable teaching manpower.

The bureau encourages close collaboration between schools and various sectors in organising activities for secondary students to enhance their exposure to the corporate world and provide first-hand experience in different trades and careers. It implements the Business-School Partnership Programme, conducting activities with over 190 business partners in 2018-19 that benefited more than 180,000 students.

Support for Needy Students

School-based After-school Learning and Support Programmes subsidise activities that help eligible needy students improve their learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experiences outside the classroom and raise their understanding of the community and sense of belonging. In 2019-20, a total of 901 schools and 169 NGOs received the subsidies, helping about 170,000 students.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Life-wide Learning Fund, established by the bureau and the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, supports eligible financially needy students to participate in life-wide learning activities organised or recognised by schools for whole-person development. It allocated \$75 million to 937 schools in 2018-19, subsidising about 200,000 students.

The fund ended at the close of 2018-19 and a new Student Activities Support Grant was implemented from 2019-20 to continue the support for financially needy students.

Student Finance Office

To ensure no student is denied access to education because of a lack of means, the Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency provides means-tested and non-means-tested financial assistance at various study levels. The office also administers a number of scholarship schemes.

Financial Assistance for Pre-primary Education

Eligible children may receive means-tested assistance, including fee remission under the Kindergarten and Child Care Centre Fee Remission Scheme and an additional grant to defray their kindergarten-related expenses. In the school year of 2018-19, subsidies totalling around \$408 million were granted to about 39,900 students.

Financial Assistance for Primary and Secondary Education

At primary and secondary levels, means-tested assistance covers textbooks, travel, internet access and examination fees. In the 2018-19 school year, around \$829 million was disbursed to about 201,500 students to pay for essential textbooks and miscellaneous school-related expenses, \$361 million to 143,200 students as travel subsidies and \$159 million to 131,800 families to subsidise internet access by students at home. The government paid examination fees for eligible senior secondary students sitting public examinations in the 2018-19 school year as a one-off measure. The government also disburses school-based and district-based grants to support the whole-person development of needy students.

Financial Assistance for Post-secondary Education

Means-tested grants and low-interest loans are offered to eligible full-time students pursuing eligible courses at UGC-funded or publicly funded institutions. In the 2018-19 academic year, around \$799 million of grants and \$170 million of loans were provided to about 19,500 students. Eligible students pursuing full-time, locally accredited self-financing post-secondary programmes can also apply for similar assistance. In the 2018-19 academic year, around \$795 million of grants and \$144 million of loans were provided to around 16,200 students.

Non-means-tested loans operating on a no-gain-no-loss and full-cost-recovery basis are available to students pursuing eligible publicly funded or self-financing post-secondary programmes, and eligible professional or continuing education courses. In the 2018-19 academic year, about 30,600 students received loans amounting to around \$1,551 million.

Travel subsidies totalling around \$112 million were provided to about 30,100 post-secondary students.

Tuition Fee Reimbursement for Diploma Yi Jin Programme and Evening Secondary Courses

Eligible students pursuing the Diploma Yi Jin Programme or designated evening secondary education courses may receive reimbursement of 30 per cent of the tuition fee. Those who pass a means test will be reimbursed a higher percentage.

Grants for Programmes Below Sub-degree Level

Students who are eligible to receive a full or half means-tested grant under the Student Finance Office and are pursuing eligible programmes below sub-degree level, such as the Diploma Yi Jin and Diploma of Vocational Education, are entitled to reimbursement of all or half of the tuition fee respectively. For programmes of one year or longer, they may also receive all or half of the flat-rate academic expenses grant.

Mainland University Study Subsidy

For the 2019-20 academic year, a means-tested subsidy of up to \$16,800 or non-means-tested subsidy of \$5,600 per year is provided to eligible local students pursuing undergraduate studies in designated Mainland institutions under the Mainland University Study Subsidy Scheme. In 2018-19, around \$40 million was granted in subsidies to 3,147 students, and in 2019-20, the scheme attracted about 3,500 applications.

Scholarships

Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence

The Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme supports up to 100 local students per cohort to pursue undergraduate or postgraduate studies at world-renowned universities outside Hong Kong. It has awarded the scholarship to around 470 students and granted scholarships and bursaries totalling \$200 million since inception in the 2015-16 academic year. The scheme was regularised in 2019-20, with the scholarship ceiling raised from \$250,000 to \$300,000 per student per annum. Students with financial needs may also apply for a means-tested bursary that provides up to \$200,000 per annum to cover living and study-related expenses.

HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund and Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund

The \$3.07 billion HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund awards scholarships to outstanding locals and non-locals studying in full-time, publicly funded programmes at sub-degree and degree level or above in the eight UGC-funded universities, the HKAPA and the VTC. A \$3.52 billion Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund provides scholarships and awards to outstanding students pursuing full-time, locally accredited self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate programmes, and supports worthwhile initiatives to enhance self-financing post-secondary education. In 2018-19, the two funds distributed 9,794 scholarships and awards.

Scholarship for Prospective English Teachers

The government's Scholarship for Prospective English Teachers aims to attract people proficient in English to pursue local bachelor's degree programmes and/or teacher training programmes majoring in English or a relevant subject which will qualify them to become English teachers on graduation.

Management of Schools

The Education Ordinance regulates school education services. Schools must comply with its provisions, including subsidiary legislation on the registration of schools, teachers and managers, health and safety requirements, fees and charges and teacher qualifications.

To implement school-based management, aided schools are devolved with considerable autonomy and funding flexibility. In return, they have to be more transparent and accountable in their operation and include all key stakeholders in their governance structure, including representatives of the school sponsoring body, the principal, elected teachers, parents and alumni, and independent members.

In July, the Task Force on School-based Management Policy submitted its report putting forward 27 recommendations to improve the quality of school governance, strengthen the administration capabilities of schools in ways that would unleash the capacity for teachers and principals, and enhance the participation of major stakeholders in school governance. The government accepted all the recommendations and started rolling out measures implementing these recommendations from 2019-20, including the provision of additional resources to schools to strengthen their administrative support and reduce the administrative work of teachers and principals so that they could focus more on teaching and taking better care of students.

The School Development and Accountability Framework fosters sustained school development through school self-evaluation, complemented by external school reviews which provide schools with suggestions for improvement.

Professional Development of Educators

Teachers

The Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals advises the bureau on policies and measures relating to the professional development of the teaching profession at different career stages and provides a platform for professional sharing, collaboration and networking.

The Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence, organised by the bureau, recognises accomplished teachers and fosters a culture of excellence in the teaching profession. In 2018-19, awards and certificates of merit were presented to 30 teachers.

The Hong Kong Teachers' Centre organises conferences and other events to promote the continuing professional development of teachers.

The non-statutory Council on Professional Conduct in Education advises the government on measures to promote professional conduct in education and on alleged misconduct cases involving educators that are lodged with the council.

The Task Force on Professional Development of Teachers submitted its final report to the government in March. The government accepted its recommendations, which included

establishing a professional ladder for teachers, implementing the all-graduate teaching force policy, enhancing the ranking arrangement of school management in primary, secondary and special schools, and setting up commendation schemes at multiple levels to acknowledge teachers with outstanding performance. The all-graduate teaching force policy was implemented in public-sector primary and secondary schools starting from 2019-20.

Principals

Professional development requirements are in place to help aspiring, newly appointed and serving principals enhance their leadership knowledge and address their developmental needs at different career stages. Some 1,700 aspiring principals have attained the Certification for Principalship and about half of them have become principals.

School-based Support Services

School-based support services foster leadership at schools, particularly among middle managers, disseminate informed practices to improve learning, teaching and assessment and support professional learning among teachers. In 2018-19, the bureau provided school-based support services to 300 secondary schools, 399 primary schools, 31 special schools, and 252 kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres.

Regional education offices offer school-based support services in response to the needs of students, teachers, schools and other stakeholders.

Community Participation in Education

Home-school Cooperation

The Committee on Home-School Cooperation encourages the establishment of parent-teacher associations. There are about 1,400 such associations. The bureau funded about 3,600 school-based and district-based home-school cooperation activities in 2018-19.

The Task Force on Home-School Cooperation and Parent Education submitted the final report to the government in April. The government has fully accepted the recommendations and is introducing measures implementing the recommendations.

Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education

The committee advises the government on civic education, works with the government and other parties in arranging civic education activities, and sponsors community organisations to carry out projects to promote civic education outside school. It promotes the core civic values – ‘Respect and inclusiveness’, ‘Responsibility’ and ‘Love’ – to encourage the public to show respect for others and fulfil their civic responsibilities. The committee also promotes the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China and the Basic Law to enhance the public’s understanding of ‘one country, two systems’ and sense of national identity.

The committee’s Civic Education Resource Centre at the Youth Square houses reference materials on civic education and youth development. It also organises training courses, seminars, sharing sessions, film shows, guided tours and exhibitions.

Youth Development Commission

Chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration, the Youth Development Commission serves as a steering committee to enhance policy coordination within the government and enable holistic and more effective examination and discussion of issues of concern to young people. It promotes cross-bureau and cross-departmental collaboration, undertakes to address young people's concerns about education, career development and home ownership, and encourages their participation in politics as well as public policy discussion.

The commission follows three broad policy directions, namely, assisting in young people's selection of suitable study pathways, facilitating their career development and upward mobility, and strengthening communication channels with them.

The commission and the Home Affairs Bureau, through organising or sponsoring programmes such as the Youth Ambassadors Programme, provide young people with opportunities to display their talent to the fullest, sharpen their competitive edge and become future masters of Hong Kong with vision, creativity, commitment to society and leadership qualities. Offered under the various programmes are internship and exchange, start-up support, youth life planning, volunteerism and commendation schemes.

Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The commission completed a review of the Youth Development Fund and rolled out in March a Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and a Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. The schemes aim at subsidising Hong Kong NGOs to provide start-up assistance and incubation services that benefit the needs of young people who are about to start businesses in Hong Kong and in other cities of the Greater Bay Area, including helping them settle in entrepreneurial bases and further helping them meet initial capital needs. Both schemes were met with enthusiasm and received applications from more than 40 NGOs in total.

The Home Affairs Bureau also implements the Space Sharing Scheme for Youth. This scheme is carried out through a community-business-government tripartite partnership to provide a platform for owners of revitalised industrial and commercial buildings to contribute floor areas for the operation of co-working space or studios, to support start-ups of emerging industries and young people who are setting up their own businesses, and to support arts and cultural development. Participating owners rent out space to suitable NGOs at no more than one-third of the market rental or operate such space themselves. The operators provide leasing options and support to start-ups, young entrepreneurs and artists at concessionary rents no higher than half of the market rental.

Mainland-bound Thematic Youth Internship Programmes

In 2019, the Home Affairs Bureau collaborated with the Palace Museum and the Wolong National Nature Reserve again, and set up similar arrangements with the Chinese Academy of

Sciences and the Dunhuang Academy, to offer four internship programmes to increase young Hong Kong people's knowledge of the relevant disciplines and professional fields and enhance their understanding of the country's developments. In view of remarkable achievements made under the programmes since 2017, the bureau introduced another three new programmes in 2019: the Youth Internship Programme in Shandong on Marine Sciences, the Youth Internship Programme at Wuyishan on Biodiversity Conservation and the Youth Internship Programme at Beijing Organising Committee for the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. Taken together, the seven programmes provided more than 150 unique, in-depth and valuable thematic internship opportunities to young Hong Kong people during the year.

Children's Rights

The Children's Rights Forum is a platform for children's organisations, children and the government to exchange views on matters that concern children. It relays children's views on government initiatives to the Family Council for consideration in assessing the impact of government policies on the family. In 2019, the Children's Rights Education Funding Scheme supported NGOs to conduct 31 projects to enhance understanding of children's rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Helping Ethnic Minorities Integrate into Community

The government commissions non-profit-making organisations to run six support service centres and two sub-centres for ethnic minorities, offering tailor-made classes, counselling and integration programmes. One of the centres, the Centre for Harmony and Enhancement of Ethnic Minority Residents, provides free language interpretation on the telephone to help them use public services, with Vietnamese interpretation services introduced in 2019. The other support service centres also strengthened their services, particularly those catering for new arrivals and young people, during the year. New district-based programmes were launched to encourage interaction and communication between ethnic minorities and other local communities.

In addition, two government-sponsored community support teams offer special services for ethnic minorities through members of their own communities. The government funds radio programmes and publishes service guidebooks in a number of ethnic minority languages. Two ambassador schemes provide information about public services to ethnic minority families and young people, and make referrals where necessary. A team of publicity officers who are familiar with ethnic minority cultures and languages conducts talks and exhibitions to promote racial harmony in the community.

Committee on the Promotion of Racial Harmony

The committee advises the government on the promotion of racial harmony and equality, including the provision of support services for ethnic minorities, and on proposals for race-related public education and publicity. Secretariat support is provided by the Home Affairs Department's Race Relations Unit.

Websites

Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau: www.cmab.gov.hk

Education Bureau: www.edb.gov.hk

Home Affairs Bureau: www.hab.gov.hk

Home Affairs Department: www.had.gov.hk

Race Relations Unit: www.had.gov.hk/rru

Youth Development Commission: www.ydc.gov.hk