

Chapter 1

Constitution and Administration

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was established in 1997 under the principle of 'one country, two systems', 'Hong Kong people administering Hong Kong' and a high degree of autonomy, in accordance with the Basic Law.

Hong Kong has been part of the territory of China since ancient times. To uphold national unity and territorial integrity and to maintain the prosperity and stability of Hong Kong, and taking account of its history and realities, the People's Republic of China (PRC) decided that upon China's resumption of the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong, a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) would be established in accordance with the provisions of Article 31 of the Constitution of the PRC, and that under the principle of 'one country, two systems', the socialist system and policies would not be practised in Hong Kong. On 1 July 1997, Hong Kong became a Special Administrative Region of the PRC and the Basic Law came into effect. The Basic Law is the constitutional document of the 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. Under the Basic Law, the HKSAR exercises executive, legislative and independent judicial power, including that of final adjudication.

The HKSAR's executive authorities and legislature are composed of permanent residents of Hong Kong. The HKSAR remains a free port, a separate customs territory and an international financial centre and may, on its own, using the name 'Hong Kong, China', maintain and develop relations, and conclude and implement agreements with foreign states and regions and relevant international organisations in the appropriate fields, including the economic, trade, financial and monetary, shipping, communications, tourism, cultural and sports fields.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive, who is the head of the HKSAR and the HKSAR Government, leads the government. The Chief Executive is responsible for implementing the Basic Law, signing bills and budgets passed by the Legislative Council, promulgating laws, making decisions on

government policies and issuing executive orders, among other duties. The Executive Council assists the Chief Executive in policymaking.

Executive Council

The Basic Law requires the Chief Executive to consult the Executive Council before making important policy decisions, except for the appointment, removal and disciplining of officials and the adoption of measures in emergencies; introducing bills to the Legislative Council; making subordinate legislation; or dissolving the Legislative Council. The Chief Executive in Council also determines appeals, petitions and objections under those ordinances which confer a statutory right of appeal. If the Chief Executive does not accept a majority opinion of the Executive Council, he or she shall put the specific reasons on record.

As at 31 December, the Executive Council had 32 members, comprising 16 Principal Officials and 16 Non-Officials. As provided for in the Basic Law, the Chief Executive appoints members of the Executive Council from among the principal officials of the executive authorities, members of the Legislative Council and public figures. They must be Chinese citizens who are permanent residents of the HKSAR with no right of abode in any foreign country. The Chief Executive decides on the appointment or removal of Executive Council members, whose term of office shall not extend beyond the expiry of the term of office of the Chief Executive who appoints them.

The Chief Executive presides at Executive Council meetings, which are normally held once a week. Its proceedings are confidential, although many of its decisions are made public. The Executive Council held 57 meetings during 2020.

Legislative Council

Powers and Functions

Under the Basic Law, the Legislative Council of the HKSAR shall exercise the following powers and functions:

- To enact, amend or repeal laws in accordance with the provisions of the Basic Law and legal procedures;
- To examine and approve budgets introduced by the government;
- To approve taxation and public expenditure;
- To receive and debate the policy addresses of the Chief Executive;
- To raise questions on the work of the government;
- To debate any issue concerning public interests;
- To endorse the appointment and removal of the judges of the Court of Final Appeal and the Chief Judge of the High Court;

- To receive and handle complaints from Hong Kong residents;
- If a motion initiated jointly by one-fourth of all the members of the Legislative Council charges the Chief Executive with a serious breach of law or dereliction of duty and if he or she refuses to resign, the Legislative Council may, after passing a motion for investigation, give a mandate to the Chief Justice of the Court of Final Appeal to form and chair an independent investigation committee. The committee shall carry out the investigation and report its findings to the Legislative Council. If the committee considers the evidence sufficient to substantiate such charges, the Legislative Council may pass a motion of impeachment by a two-thirds majority of all its members and report it to the Central People's Government (CPG) for decision; and
- To summon, as required when exercising the above-mentioned powers and functions, persons concerned to testify or give evidence.

Composition

According to the Basic Law, the Legislative Council of the HKSAR shall be constituted by election. The sixth-term Legislative Council comprises 70 members¹, of whom 35 were returned by geographical constituencies through direct elections and 35 were returned by functional constituencies. The President of the Legislative Council is elected by and from among the council's members.

The sixth Legislative Council's term of office was originally four years from 1 October 2016 to 30 September 2020. In light of the Chief Executive's announcement on 31 July that the 2020 Legislative Council General Election, originally scheduled for 6 September, would be postponed for a year because of the COVID-19 situation in Hong Kong, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress made a decision on 11 August that the sixth-term Legislative Council would continue to discharge its duties for not less than one year until the seventh term of the council begins. After the seventh-term Legislative Council is formed in accordance with the law, its term of office will be four years.

Meetings of the Legislative Council

The Legislative Council normally meets on Wednesdays. The business at its regular meetings includes introducing and considering bills and proposed resolutions; tabling subsidiary legislation, papers and reports for the council's consideration; asking questions on the government's work; and debating motions concerning matters of public interest. All council meetings are open to the public. Members may address the council in Cantonese, English or Putonghua. Members of the public can listen in any of these three languages in simultaneous interpretation and also watch the simultaneous sign language interpretation. The proceedings are recorded verbatim in the Official Record of Proceedings of the Legislative Council.

¹ There were changes in the membership of the sixth Legislative Council giving rise to vacancies. The details are available in the 'Members' section of the Legislative Council's website (www.legco.gov.hk).

During the 2019-20 legislative session from October 2019 to July 2020, the council held 30 meetings, two of which were the Chief Executive's question and answer sessions. Members asked 123 oral questions on the government's work with 599 supplementary questions, and another 403 written questions. The council passed 23 bills. It also passed five motions moved by the government under the positive vetting procedure to seek the council's approval to either make or amend subsidiary legislation. On subsidiary legislation subject to the negative vetting procedure, the council completed scrutinising 212 of the 221 items of subsidiary legislation tabled in 2019-20, with the remaining nine items to be scrutinised in 2020-21.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee consists of all council members except the President of the Legislative Council, with its Chairman and Deputy Chairman elected from among its members. The committee is responsible for scrutinising and approving public expenditure proposals put forward by the government as well as examining the annual Estimates of Expenditure presented by the Financial Secretary to the council during proceedings relating to the Appropriation Bill.

The committee appoints two subcommittees, the Establishment Subcommittee and Public Works Subcommittee, whose memberships are open to all members of the Finance Committee.

The Establishment Subcommittee examines and makes recommendations to the Finance Committee on the government's proposals to create, redeploy and delete directorate posts, and those that seek to change the structure of civil service grades and ranks.

The Public Works Subcommittee examines and makes recommendations to the Finance Committee on the government's proposals about capital works projects.

In 2019-20, the Finance Committee held 45 meetings to scrutinise financial proposals, eight special meetings comprising 21 sessions to examine the Estimates of Expenditure and one meeting to receive the Financial Secretary's briefing on the Budget. The committee deliberated on and approved 86 financial proposals, namely 43 public works proposals costing \$177 billion in total, 13 establishment proposals and 30 other funding proposals involving a total commitment of \$285.6 billion.

Public Accounts Committee

The Public Accounts Committee considers the Director of Audit's reports on the government's accounts and the results of the director's value-for-money audits of government departments and other organisations that are within the purview of public audit. It may invite government officials, representatives of public organisations or any other persons to attend public hearings to give explanations, evidence or information. The committee's seven members are appointed by the President of the Legislative Council according to an election procedure determined by the House Committee.

In 2019-20, the committee held 17 public hearings and 11 closed meetings to examine the Director of Audit's report on the government's accounts for the year ended 31 March 2019 and his Report Nos 73 and 74 on value-for-money audits. The committee gave its conclusions and

recommendations in its Report Nos 73 and 74, which were tabled in the council on 26 February and 15 July 2020 respectively.

Committee on Members' Interests

The Committee on Members' Interests consists of seven members who are appointed by the President of the Legislative Council according to an election procedure determined by the House Committee. It considers complaints made in relation to council members' registration and declaration of interests, and members' claims for the reimbursement of operating expenses or applications for advances of operating funds. It also examines arrangements for the compilation, maintenance and accessibility of the Register of Members' Interests, considers matters of ethics related to members' conduct, and gives advice and issues guidelines on such matters. In 2019-20, the committee did not receive any complaints and did not hold any meetings.

Investigation Committees

A motion may be moved to censure a council member under Article 79(7) of the Basic Law and Rule 49B(1A) of the Rules of Procedure of the Legislative Council. Under Rule 49B(2A), upon the moving of the motion, debate shall be adjourned and the matter stated in the motion shall be referred to an investigation committee unless the council otherwise orders.

An investigation committee formed in 2016-17 concerning a motion to censure Hon Holden Chow Ho-ding and another investigation committee formed in 2017-18 concerning a motion to censure Hon Hui Chi-fung completed their work and reported to the council on 8 July 2020.

Committee on Rules of Procedure

The Committee on Rules of Procedure reviews the rules and the council's committee system, and proposes changes to the council. Its 12 members are appointed by the President of the Legislative Council according to an election procedure determined by the House Committee. In 2019-20, the committee held one closed meeting.

Committee on Access to the Legislature's Documents and Records

The Committee on Access to the Legislature's Documents and Records determines whether a document or record should be released for access earlier than the expiry of the closure period specified in the Policy on Access to the Legislature's Documents and Records. The committee also sets guidelines on implementing the policy, considers any objection against the denial of access to a document or record by the Clerk to the Legislative Council, and considers any other matters relating to the policy. In 2019-20, the committee approved 10 requests to disclose documents and records. The Clerk to the Legislative Council conducts reviews on closed documents and records in existence for more than 25 years, and approved the disclosure of 31 files in 2019-20.

Lists of the disclosed documents and records are uploaded onto the council's website.

House Committee

The House Committee consists of all council members except the President of the Legislative Council and normally meets on Friday afternoons. It deals with matters related to the work of the council and prepares for council meetings. It decides whether bills committees or subcommittees should be formed to scrutinise bills, subsidiary legislation and other instruments made under an ordinance. In 2019-20, the committee held 29 meetings, including 19 special meetings.

Bills Committees

Any member, other than the President of the Legislative Council, may join a bills committee formed by the House Committee to consider the general merits and principles of a bill allocated for scrutiny. A bills committee may also consider the detailed provisions of, and amendments to, the bill. It usually tables a report in the council and is dissolved on the passage of the bill or when the House Committee so decides. In 2019-20, the House Committee set up five bills committees to study five government bills.

Subcommittees on Subsidiary Legislation

In 2019-20, the House Committee formed seven subcommittees to study 29 items of subsidiary legislation.

Other Subcommittees

The House Committee may also appoint subcommittees to consider policy issues and any other council-related matters. In 2019-20, one subcommittee on policy issues completed its work and two subcommittees on other council-related matters were in operation.

Panels

The council has 18 panels for members to deliberate on policy matters and study issues of public concern. These panels also give views on major legislative and financial proposals before their introduction into the council or its Finance Committee, and examine relevant policy matters. Panels may appoint subcommittees or joint subcommittees to study specific issues. In 2019-20, 10 such subcommittees completed their work, while one was still operational by the end of the legislative session. Another two were placed on the waiting list for activation.

Select Committees

The council may appoint select committees for members to consider matters or bills. The select committee to inquire into an agreement between Mr Leung Chun-ying and the Australian firm UGL Limited, established according to a petition presented at the council meeting of 2 November 2016, completed its work and submitted its report to the council at the council meeting of 15 July 2020.

Redress System

The council operates a system which enables members of the public to seek help for redress of grievances resulting from government actions or policies. The redress system also deals with public representations on government policies and legislation as well as other matters of public concern. Members take turns, in groups of seven, to be on duty each week to oversee the

redress system and to receive representations and complaints made by deputations. They also take turns to be on 'ward duty' at the Public Complaints Office during their duty week to meet individual members of the public and to provide guidance to the office's staff on the processing of cases.

The Legislative Council Commission and Legislative Council Secretariat

The Legislative Council Commission is a 13-member independent statutory body chaired by the President of the Legislative Council. Its main function is to provide administrative support and services to the council through the Legislative Council Secretariat. It employs the secretariat's staff and oversees its work, determines the organisation and administration of support services and facilities, formulates and executes policies on their effective operation, and expends funds in ways it sees fit to support these activities. The secretariat is headed by the Secretary General. Its mission is to provide the council and its committees with professional and efficient support and services, enhance public understanding of the council's work and ensure the effective operation of its redress system.

District Administration

Hong Kong comprises 18 districts, each with a District Office, a District Council and a District Management Committee (DMC). Each district office is headed by a District Officer, who represents the HKSAR Government at the local level in overseeing district administration.

The 18 District Councils of the sixth term (2020-23) have 479 seats in all, comprising 452 elected seats and 27 ex-officio seats held by the chairmen of the New Territories rural committees.

The councils' main function is to advise the government on matters affecting the well-being of the people in the district, and on the provision and use of public facilities and services there. The councils also carry out minor district works and community involvement projects, for which the government allocated about \$370.6 million and \$461.6 million respectively in the 2020-21 financial year.

The DMCs are committees chaired by the District Officers. Each DMC comprises representatives of government departments providing essential services in the district. It provides a forum for departments to discuss and resolve district problems and to ensure district needs are met promptly.

Annual recurrent provision for the government's District-led Actions Scheme in the 18 districts has been increased from \$63 million to \$80 million from 2020-21 onwards to address long-standing problems and to capitalise on opportunities in the districts. The scheme enables the DMCs, by fully engaging their District Councils, to handle local issues on the management of public areas and environmental hygiene more effectively.

There are 67 Area Committees, district-based advisory bodies which help organise community involvement activities, advise on local issues and promote public participation in district affairs. Their members are drawn from a wide spectrum of the community.

Twenty Home Affairs Enquiry Centres, attached to the district offices, provide a wide range of free services to the public, including answering general enquiries about government services, distributing government forms, disseminating information and administering declarations and oaths (including affirmations in lieu of oaths) for private use. Residents can make appointments at the centres to consult volunteer lawyers under a Free Legal Advice Scheme administered by the Duty Lawyer Service. Rating and Valuation Department representatives are also available at five designated centres on specified days to advise on tenancy matters.

The Electoral System

Electoral System for Legislative Council

Composition of first to sixth terms of Legislative Council

Membership	First term (1998-2000)	Second term (2000-04)	Third and fourth terms (2004-08 and 2008-12)	Fifth and sixth terms (2012-16 and 2016-21)
• Elected by geographical constituencies through direct elections	20	24	30	35
• Elected by functional constituencies	30	30	30	35
• Elected by an election committee	10	6	—	—
Total	60	60	60	70

Geographical Constituencies

All eligible persons aged 18 or above have the right to be registered as electors and to vote in geographical constituency elections, which are held on the basis of universal suffrage. There are 4.47 million registered electors.

The HKSAR is divided into five geographical constituencies, each returning five to nine seats in the sixth-term Legislative Council. Electors choose lists of candidates using the list voting system, which operates under the 'largest remainder' formula, a form of proportional representation.

Any permanent resident of the HKSAR who is a Chinese citizen with no right of abode in any foreign country may stand for election in any geographical constituency, provided this person is a registered elector, has attained the age of 21 and has ordinarily resided in Hong Kong for the preceding three years.

Functional Constituencies

For the sixth-term Legislative Council, the functional constituencies are: (1) Heung Yee Kuk²; (2) agriculture and fisheries; (3) insurance; (4) transport; (5) education; (6) legal; (7) accountancy;

² The Heung Yee Kuk is a statutory advisory body on New Territories affairs.

(8) medical; (9) health services; (10) engineering; (11) architectural, surveying, planning and landscape; (12) labour; (13) social welfare; (14) real estate and construction; (15) tourism; (16) commercial (first); (17) commercial (second); (18) industrial (first); (19) industrial (second); (20) finance; (21) financial services; (22) sports, performing arts, culture and publication; (23) import and export; (24) textiles and garment; (25) wholesale and retail; (26) information technology; (27) catering; (28) District Council (first) and (29) District Council (second). The labour functional constituency returns three Legislative Council members and the District Council (second) functional constituency returns five Legislative Council members, while the other 27 functional constituencies return one member each.

The five seats of the District Council (second) functional constituency are returned with the whole of Hong Kong as a single constituency in accordance with the proportional representation list system. Candidates must be elected District Council members who are nominated by no fewer than 15 other elected District Council members, and electors must be registered geographical constituency electors who are not registered in other functional constituencies.

The electorate of functional constituencies representing professional groups is generally based on membership of professions with recognised qualifications, including statutory qualifications. The electorate of functional constituencies representing economic or social groups is generally made up of corporate members of major organisations representative of the relevant sectors.

A candidate in a functional constituency must satisfy the same age and residential requirements as for a geographical constituency election, be a registered elector, and be a registered elector of, or have a substantial connection with, the relevant functional constituency. To give due recognition to the significant contribution made by foreign nationals and the fact that Hong Kong is an international city, HKSAR permanent residents who are not of Chinese nationality or who have the right of abode in foreign countries may stand for election in 12 designated functional constituencies, numbered 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 20, 21 and 23 above.

Electoral System for Chief Executive

In accordance with the Basic Law, the Chief Executive is elected by an Election Committee. The committee consists of 1,200 members from four sectors comprising 38 subsectors:

- 1,034 members from 35 subsectors who are returned through elections;
- 106 ex-officio members who are Hong Kong deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and members of the Legislative Council under the NPC subsector and the Legislative Council subsector respectively; and
- 60 members under the religious subsector who are nominated by six designated bodies.

Method for Selecting Chief Executive by Universal Suffrage

Article 45 of the Basic Law stipulates the ultimate aim of selecting the Chief Executive by universal suffrage. According to the Basic Law and the relevant Interpretation and Decisions of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC), universal suffrage for the

Chief Executive can be attained only with the support of a two-thirds majority of all the members of the Legislative Council, the consent of the Chief Executive, and the approval of the NPCSC. To achieve this aim, the community needs to engage in dialogue, premised on the legal basis and under a peaceful atmosphere with mutual trust, with a view to narrowing differences and attaining a consensus agreeable to all sides. The HKSAR Government will assess the situation carefully and take forward constitutional development in accordance with the Basic Law and the relevant NPCSC Interpretation and Decisions.

Electoral System for District Councils

The District Council elections adopt a simple majority voting system. Each District Council constituency returns one elected member. The election for the sixth-term councils (2020-23) was held on 24 November 2019 with 452 constituencies. Close to three million registered electors cast their votes, representing a turnout rate of 71.2 per cent.

Electoral Affairs Commission

The Electoral Affairs Commission is an independent statutory body that ensures elections in the HKSAR are conducted in an open, fair and honest manner and in accordance with the law. Headed by a High Court judge, the commission comprises three politically neutral members, including the Chairman, all appointed by the Chief Executive. It makes recommendations to the Chief Executive on the delineation of Legislative Council geographical constituencies and District Council constituencies, makes regulations on practical arrangements for the Chief Executive election, Legislative Council election, District Council election and Rural Representative election, and handles complaints relating to these elections. The Registration and Electoral Office, a government department headed by the Chief Electoral Officer, works under the commission's direction and carries out its decisions.

Structure of the Administration

The Chief Executive is the head of the HKSAR Government. The Chief Secretary for Administration, the Financial Secretary or the Secretary for Justice deputises for the Chief Executive during any temporary absence.

The Chief Secretary for Administration and the Financial Secretary together supervise the work of 13 policy bureaux, each headed by a Director of Bureau, usually referred to as the bureau's 'Secretary'. Together, they form the Government Secretariat. There are 56 departments. The Audit Commission reports to the Chief Executive, the Hong Kong Monetary Authority reports to the Financial Secretary while the Department of Justice reports to the Secretary for Justice. The remaining 53 departments are responsible to their relevant bureau secretaries for the efficient implementation of approved policies.

In addition, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), the Office of The Ombudsman and the Public Service Commission report directly to the Chief Executive.

The Chief Secretary for Administration, the Financial Secretary, the Secretary for Justice and the 13 Directors of Bureaus are politically appointed and defined as 'principal officials' in the Basic Law. They are appointed by the CPG on the Chief Executive's nomination for a five-year term,

which will not exceed the term of the Chief Executive who nominates them. They are all members of the Executive Council (Hong Kong's equivalent of the Cabinet) and are accountable for matters falling within their respective portfolios. The Director of the Chief Executive's Office is also a politically appointed official, with the same terms of employment as those of a Director of Bureau.

Two other layers of politically appointed officials, the Under Secretaries and Political Assistants, support the principal officials in carrying out political work.

Chief Secretary for Administration

The Chief Secretary for Administration is the leading principal official of the HKSAR Government, a member of the Executive Council, and the most senior official to assume the Chief Executive's duties if the Chief Executive is not able to discharge those duties for a short period.

The Chief Secretary for Administration supports the Chief Executive in administering Hong Kong, advises the Chief Executive on policy matters, and plays an important role in policy coordination on complex issues that straddle various policy bureaus. The Chief Secretary for Administration chairs the Policy Committee which serves as the clearing house for policy and legislative proposals before they are put to the Executive Council and the Legislative Council. The Chief Secretary for Administration is responsible for fostering relations between the government and the Legislative Council, and for drawing up the government's legislative programme.

The Chief Secretary for Administration exercises certain statutory functions, including the handling of appeals and matters of certain public bodies, and also chairs various major advisory committees.

Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary's primary responsibility is to oversee policy formulation and implementation of financial, monetary, economic, trade and development as well as innovation and technology matters. He is a member of the Executive Council and exercises control over the Exchange Fund with the assistance of the Monetary Authority.

The Financial Secretary is also in charge of the Government Budget. He outlines in the annual Budget speech the government's vision and policies to sustain economic development, presents budgetary proposals and moves the Appropriation Bill, which gives legal effect to the annual expenditure proposals in the Budget.

Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office

The Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office was established in April 2018. Its key functions include coordinating major cross-bureaus policies selected by the government's senior leadership, promoting evidence-based policy research, fostering the development of a vibrant public policy research community in the city and providing 'first-stop and one-stop' project consultation and coordination services to innovative projects that can bring broad public benefits.

The office also provides secretariat support to the Chief Executive's Council of Advisers on Innovation and Strategic Development, established in March 2018 to advise the Chief Executive on Hong Kong's future development and strategies for driving innovation.

Advisory and Statutory Bodies

About 6,000 members of the public serve on around 500 advisory and statutory bodies. These bodies tap professional expertise in the community and allow a wide cross section of the community and relevant organisations to take part in the initial stage of policymaking and public-service planning, and to perform specific functions. The government maintains a regular turnover of members to ensure broad participation and the inclusion of fresh perspectives.

Some of the advisory bodies, such as the Advisory Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries, deal with the interests of a particular industry. Others, such as the Transport Advisory Committee, advise on a particular area of government policy. Statutory bodies, such as the Hospital Authority, have legal powers and responsibilities to perform specific functions according to the relevant legislation.

Civil Service

The civil service is a permanent, honest, meritocratic, professional and politically neutral institution responsible to the Chief Executive and the HKSAR Government. It supports the government in formulating, explaining and implementing policies, conducting administrative affairs, delivering public services, and undertaking law enforcement and regulatory functions. As at 31 December, the total strength of the civil service was 177,000, excluding about 1,500 judges, judicial officers and ICAC officers. This amounted to 4.5 per cent of Hong Kong's labour force.

The Civil Service Bureau has overall policy responsibility for the management of the civil service, including appointments, pay and conditions of service, performance management, manpower planning, training and development, staff relations, and conduct and discipline. The bureau is also the focal point for consultation with major staff associations and manages a number of grades, including Administrative Officers, Executive Officers, Official Languages Officers, Training Officers and clerical and secretarial staff. Management of the civil service is governed mainly by three instruments: the Public Service (Administration) Order, the Public Service (Disciplinary) Regulation and the Civil Service Regulations, all made with the authority of the Chief Executive.

The Chief Executive is advised on civil service appointments, promotions and discipline by the Public Service Commission, an independent statutory body set up under the Public Service Commission Ordinance. The Chief Executive is also advised on civil service pay and conditions of service by three independent bodies: the Standing Committee on Directorate Salaries and Conditions of Service, which covers directorate officers excluding judges, judicial officers and the disciplined services but including the heads of the disciplined services; the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service, which covers the disciplined services except the heads of the disciplined services; and the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service, which covers all other civil servants.

The government's civil service pay policy is to offer sufficient remuneration to attract, retain and motivate staff of suitable calibre to provide the public with an effective and efficient service, and to maintain broad comparability between civil service and private sector pay.

In accordance with the Basic Law, public servants serving in all government departments should be permanent residents of the HKSAR, save for those who fall within exceptions provided for in Articles 99 and 101 of the Basic Law. This requirement applies to civil servants recruited on or after 1 July 1997.

Appointment is based on open and fair competition. The government ensures persons with disabilities and ethnic minorities, like other applicants, have equal access to job opportunities in the civil service.

The government monitors staff turnover closely for manpower planning purposes. Overall wastage in the civil service was 4.8 per cent in 2019-20. A well-established mechanism is in place to review succession planning for senior staff members, identify and groom officers with potential for advancement to senior management, and develop a pool of talent for senior positions.

The government monitors the size of the civil service closely for prudent financial management. The civil service grew mostly between 1 and 1.9 per cent annually from 2007-08 to 2019-20. Its establishment in 2020-21 is estimated to increase by 3.2 per cent to facilitate the delivery of new policy initiatives and improved services to the public.

The government maintains close communication with staff and consults them on issues of concern through various channels, including an established staff consultation mechanism which consists of four staff consultative councils at the central level, namely the Senior Civil Service Council, the Model Scale 1 Staff Consultative Council, the Disciplined Services Consultative Council and the Police Force Council, and some 90 consultative committees at the departmental level.

Exemplary staff performance is recognised through various commendation schemes to motivate civil servants to provide quality service to the public, including the Secretary for the Civil Service's Commendation Award Scheme that recognises individuals with consistently outstanding performance, and the Civil Service Outstanding Service Award Scheme for achievements in service excellence on a departmental or team basis. Staff misconduct is handled under an established disciplinary mechanism for punitive and deterrent purposes. The Civil Service Bureau and the ICAC jointly run an ethical leadership programme to instil a culture of probity in the civil service.

The Civil Service Training and Development Institute formulates policies on training and development and on performance management. It organises training programmes and seminars for civil servants on leadership and management, innovation and technology, language and communication, national affairs and the Basic Law. The institute also advises bureaux and departments on how to improve staff performance, develop competency profiles, enhance leadership capabilities and prepare officers for succession. Through its e-learning

platform, Cyber Learning Centre Plus, the institute provides civil servants with ready access to training resources to promote a culture of continuous learning. A new civil service college will be established to enhance training for civil servants, deepen their understanding of the country's development and the relationship between the central authorities and the HKSAR, raise their awareness of international affairs, and promote exchanges with civil servants in other places.

During the fight against COVID-19, a large number of serving and retired civil servants performed anti-epidemic duties such as medical surveillance, contact tracing, virus testing, quarantine and treatment. Around 4,000 serving and retired civil servants undertook a range of duties at 141 testing centres across the territory for the Universal Community Testing Programme in September. The programme provided members of the public with a free COVID-19 test and by its completion over 1.78 million samples had been tested. To safeguard its staff's health and safety while maintaining emergency and essential public services, the government allowed some government employees to work from home during the pandemic.

Official Languages

Chinese and English are Hong Kong's official languages. It is government policy to have a civil service that is proficient in written Chinese and English, and competent in Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English. Important government documents are issued in both official languages, while correspondence with individual members of the public is conducted in the language appropriate to the recipient. The Civil Service Bureau's Official Languages Division helps implement the government's language policy, and provides bureaus and departments with a wide range of language-related support.

Government Records Service

The Government Records Service (GRS) oversees the overall management of government records and provides a range of records and archival management services. With regard to records management, the GRS formulates policies, guidelines and procedures; develops systems and oversees their implementation; and sets standards, gives guidance and provides training to bureaus and departments on good practices. It assists bureaus and departments in the intermediate storage of inactive government records and microfilming.

To drive electronic records management in the government, the GRS sets the standards and functional requirements of electronic record-keeping systems in the government and provides support and advice to bureaus and departments in developing or adopting such systems.

The GRS appraises, acquires, preserves and provides access to government records of enduring value. Through its public programme, reference service and online educational resources, the GRS encourages understanding, use and protection of Hong Kong's documentary heritage. Its Central Preservation Library for Government Publications contains a wealth of government publications for the research and study of Hong Kong. Members of the public can visit the Hong Kong Public Records Building in Kwun Tong or use the GRS website to search the archives and browse the online exhibitions and educational resources portal, among other services.

The Ombudsman

The Ombudsman, established under The Ombudsman Ordinance, is the city's independent watchdog of public administration. The Ombudsman investigates actions by government departments and public bodies for administrative deficiencies, and recommends remedial measures to improve the standard of public administration of Hong Kong.

The Ombudsman's functions and powers include investigation of complaints of maladministration against government departments/agencies and 27 public bodies listed in Part I of Schedule 1 to the ordinance to ensure:

- bureaucratic constraints do not interfere with administrative fairness;
- public authorities are readily accessible to the public;
- abuse of power is prevented;
- wrongs are righted;
- facts are pointed out when public officers are unjustly accused;
- human rights are protected; and
- the public sector continues to improve quality and efficiency.

The Ombudsman is also empowered to investigate complaints of non-compliance with the Code on Access to Information against all government departments, including organisations listed in Part II of Schedule 1 to the ordinance, such as the Hong Kong Police Force and the ICAC.

Besides investigating complaints, the Ombudsman may initiate direct investigations into matters of public interest and widespread concern, and publish reports to redress administrative flaws of a systemic nature and address fundamental problems or the underlying causes of complaints. The reports of all direct investigations are available on the website of the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman completed 10 direct investigations in 2019-20, which concerned:

- the government's planning and arrangements for ancillary facilities for electric private vehicles;
- the mechanism for identifying and reporting suspected child abuse cases;
- the Buildings Department's implementation of mandatory window inspection scheme;
- the Education Bureau's mechanisms for approving applications for school fee revision by direct subsidy scheme/private schools and collection of other charges by private schools;

- the Lands Department's enforcement against commercial use of public pedestrian passages and public atria in private malls;
- the issue of idle flyovers and 'Bridges to Nowhere';
- the Housing Department's allocation mechanism for ward offices;
- the notification mechanism and arrangements of the Housing Department and the Social Welfare Department for imprisoned singleton public rental housing tenants;
- the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's arrangements for depositing layout plans of public pleasure grounds in the Land Registry; and
- the mechanisms for verifying travel records of comprehensive social security assistance/ social security allowance applicants and recipients.

In 2019-20, the Ombudsman received 8,581 enquiries and 19,767 complaints and concluded 19,838 (95.7 per cent) of all cases received during the year and those brought forward from the previous year. A substantial number of complaints related to error, wrong advice or decision, delay or inaction.

As at 31 March, 83.6 per cent of recommendations made by the Ombudsman had been accepted by the organisations concerned.

Audit Commission

The Audit Commission, headed by the Director of Audit, is established under the Basic Law, which provides that it shall function independently and be accountable to the Chief Executive.

The Audit Ordinance provides for the audit of the government's accounts by the Director of Audit and for the submission of the director's report to the President of the Legislative Council. The director also audits the accounts of the Exchange Fund, the Hong Kong Housing Authority, five trading funds and more than 60 other funds, and reviews the financial operations of multifarious government-subsidised organisations.

The director carries out two types of audit: regularity audits and value-for-money audits. Regularity audits aim to provide an overall assurance of the general accuracy and propriety of the financial and accounting transactions of the government and other audited bodies. Value-for-money audits aim to provide independent information, advice and assurance about the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which any government bureau, department, agency, other public body, public office or audited organisation has discharged its functions. Except for some public organisations where the director has statutory authority to conduct value-for-money audits, these audits are carried out according to a set of guidelines agreed between the director and the legislature's Public Accounts Committee and accepted by the government.

The director's report is submitted to the President of the Legislative Council and laid before the council, where it is considered by the committee. In 2020, the director submitted three reports: one on the audit certification of the government's accounts for the preceding financial year and two on the results of value-for-money audits, Report No 74 and Report No 75.

For Report No 74, the committee selected two of the eight chapters for public hearings, and investigated three other chapters by short public hearings and the remaining three chapters by making written enquiries.

For Report No 75, the committee investigated all 10 chapters by making written enquiries. Because of COVID-19, the related public hearings for the report had not yet been held by the end of 2020.

The audit recommendations were accepted by the audited bodies. The value-for-money audit reports attracted considerable public interest.

The director's reports on the accounts of other public bodies are submitted to the relevant authorities according to the legislation governing those bodies' operation.

The HKSAR's External Affairs

Active participation in international activities and close liaison with international partners have enabled the HKSAR to maintain its status as a global financial, trade, aviation and shipping centre. In 2020, HKSAR Government representatives took part as members of the PRC delegation in 23 international conferences limited to states³. HKSAR Government representatives also attended 1,070 international conferences not limited to states⁴ using the name 'Hong Kong, China'.

The HKSAR Government also concluded five bilateral agreements with foreign states and regions and international organisations that covered free trade, avoidance of double taxation, cultural cooperation and other matters.

Foreign representation in the HKSAR includes 63 consulates-general and 56 honorary consulates. Six international bodies⁵ have representative offices in Hong Kong.

Working Relationship with Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The HKSAR Government works closely with the Office of the Commissioner of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hong Kong in these areas:

³ Including those organised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, World Health Organisation and World Intellectual Property Organisation.

⁴ Including those organised by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, World Customs Organisation and World Trade Organisation.

⁵ These are listed at Appendix 4.

- participation in international organisations and conferences, such as obtaining the CPG's views for HKSAR Government officials to take part in international conferences limited to states as members of the PRC delegation;
- negotiation and conclusion of agreements, such as obtaining the CPG's authorisation to negotiate and conclude agreements with foreign states as necessary;
- consular protection for Hong Kong residents in distress overseas; and
- matters relating to consular missions in the HKSAR.

Working Relationship with Mainland and Macao Authorities

The Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau coordinates contacts between the HKSAR Government and the Mainland and Macao authorities, promotes regional cooperation between Hong Kong and the Mainland, and between Hong Kong and Macao, and oversees the operation of the HKSAR Government's Mainland offices.

The Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office of the State Council facilitates the HKSAR Government's development of contacts with the Mainland authorities, and liaises closely with the HKSAR Government on matters of mutual concern and on arrangements for official visits between Hong Kong and the Mainland.

Regional Cooperation with the Mainland

The HKSAR Government is committed to strengthening regional cooperation with the Mainland and performing an active role as a facilitator and promotor, so as to identify more business and development opportunities for Hong Kong people and enterprises. Hong Kong participates actively in the development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA), deepens regional cooperation through its cooperation mechanisms with the Pan-Pearl River Delta (PPRD) region, Guangdong, Beijing, Shanghai, Fujian, Sichuan and Shenzhen, and promotes regional cooperation with the other provinces and municipalities by adopting a pragmatic approach and launching initiatives once they are ready.

Development of the GBA

The GBA comprises the two SARs of Hong Kong and Macao as well as nine municipalities in Guangdong: Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing.

In 2020, the HKSAR maintained close liaison with the CPG, the Guangdong provincial and municipal governments and the Macao SAR Government in taking forward the GBA's development in line with the Outline Development Plan promulgated in 2019.

On 30 October, the Chief Executive and the Governor of Guangdong Province signed the 2020 Work Plan of the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Cooperation, reaffirming commitment to the Outline Development Plan and to further deepening the

cooperation between Hong Kong and Guangdong in jointly taking forward 57 measures in eight major areas.

In November, the Chief Executive led a government delegation to Beijing, Guangzhou and Shenzhen and secured the Central Government's support for the early implementation of the 24 policy measures which had been approved in principle by the Leading Group for the Development of the GBA.

Many of the measures implemented earlier (such as tax concessions, facilitation of property purchase by Hong Kong residents in the Mainland cities of the GBA, support for young entrepreneurs, cross-boundary remittance of science and technology funding, and the pilot scheme for Hong Kong residents to open Mainland personal bank accounts in the GBA remotely by attestation) have made it easier for Hong Kong residents to live and work in the Mainland cities of the GBA. Various policy measures supporting professional services help Hong Kong's professionals in the legal, construction and insurance sectors to embrace development opportunities in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area Development Office was formally established in November to serve as the focal point for liaison between the HKSAR Government and the Mainland authorities responsible for GBA development. The office is responsible for coordinating policy proposals within the HKSAR Government. It will also promote both locally and overseas the opportunities created by the GBA development, and enhance the community's knowledge and understanding of the GBA.

Cooperation with Other Mainland Provinces and Municipalities

The HKSAR Government cooperates with various municipal and provincial governments in areas including trade, finance, I&T, creative industries and youth exchanges. In September, the Chief Executive and government officials participated online in the 2020 PPRD Regional Cooperation Chief Executive Joint Conference in Sanya, Hainan Province, and discussed various matters with other government leaders of the PPRD provinces and regions, including promoting PPRD regional cooperation in the post-epidemic era, building a modernised transport network, and jointly creating a platform for cross-system collaboration. The HKSAR Government also participated in the China International Import Expo in Shanghai in November.

The HKSAR's Offices in the Mainland

The HKSAR Government has five offices in the Mainland: the Beijing Office and the four Hong Kong Economic and Trade Offices (ETOs) in Chengdu, Guangdong, Shanghai and Wuhan⁶. It also has 11 liaison units, located in Liaoning, Tianjin, Shenzhen, Fujian, Guangxi, Shandong, Zhejiang, Chongqing, Shaanxi, Hunan and Henan. These offices and units enhance government-to-government liaison as well as trade and commercial relations and investment promotion in the Mainland, and provide support to Hong Kong residents and enterprises in the

⁶ The Beijing Office covers Beijing, Gansu, Hebei, Heilongjiang, Inner Mongolia, Jilin, Liaoning, Ningxia, Tianjin and Xinjiang. The Guangdong ETO covers Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan and Yunnan. The Shanghai ETO covers Anhui, Jiangsu, Shandong, Shanghai and Zhejiang. The Chengdu ETO covers Chongqing, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shaanxi, Sichuan and Tibet. The Wuhan ETO covers Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Shanxi.

Mainland. Immigration divisions operate in the five offices to provide practical help to Hong Kong residents in distress or seeking assistance in the Mainland, handle immigration matters and provide an HKSAR passport replacement service.

Exchanges with Taiwan

Hong Kong and Taiwan have close economic, cultural and social ties. Taiwan was Hong Kong's second largest trading partner in goods, with two-way trade amounting to US\$65,000 million in 2020. Because of COVID-19, the number of arrivals from Taiwan to Hong Kong in 2020 fell to about 105,000.

Hong Kong cooperates with Taiwan on public policy areas through the Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic and Cultural Cooperation and Promotion Council, while the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office in Taiwan promotes Hong Kong's image, strengthens exchanges between the two places and serves Hong Kong residents and businesses in Taiwan.

Websites

Administration Wing, Chief Secretary for Administration's Office: www.admwing.gov.hk

Audit Commission: www.aud.gov.hk

Civil Service Bureau: www.csb.gov.hk

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

Government Records Service: www.grs.gov.hk

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area: www.bayarea.gov.hk

Home Affairs Bureau: www.hab.gov.hk

Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (Taiwan): www.hketco.hk

Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic and Cultural Cooperation and Promotion Council:
www.eccpc.org.hk

Legislative Council: www.legco.gov.hk

Office of The Ombudsman: www.ombudsman.hk

Protocol Division: www.protocol.gov.hk