

Chapter 8

Education

The government attaches great importance to education, as reflected in the increase in total government expenditure on education from \$60.7 billion in 2010-11 to \$112.3 billion in 2020-21 estimates, or 15.4 per cent of total government spending. Of this, \$99.6 billion is recurrent expenditure on education, accounting for 20.5 per cent of total recurrent government expenditure.

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.

The Secretary for Education receives advice from advisory boards and committees with membership drawn from a wide cross section of the community. The Education Commission, which is a non-statutory body appointed by the Chief Executive, 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 includes in its membership the chairpersons of eight key committees: 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 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 through public-sector schools, which form the majority in the school system. In the 2020-21 school year, there were 847 public-sector schools, including 65 government schools operated directly by the government; and 780 aided schools and two Caput schools that are fully subvented by the government, mostly run by religious, charitable or clan organisations, and managed by their own incorporated management committees or school management committees. To provide for more diversity, there are 80 Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, which enjoy greater flexibility in charging school fees, whilst receiving government subvention mainly based on enrolment. There are also 90 private primary and secondary schools.

Hong Kong's 54 international schools, including 15 run by the English Schools Foundation, provided about 45,900 places as at October, 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.

At the post-secondary level, the government's policy is to provide secondary school graduates with a wide range of options through the development of the publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors. In 2019-20, the participation rate in post-secondary education was about 80 per cent, including about 50 per cent at degree level. 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.

Eight task forces set up by the government since October 2017 to carry out in-depth reviews on 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) have all submitted reports to the government and their recommendations are being implemented.

Kindergarten Education

Kindergarten education in Hong Kong is optional, but virtually all children aged three to five were attending kindergartens in the 2019-20 school year.

Since the 2017-18 school year, a subsidy sufficient for the provision of good 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 a series of support measures. There were about 1,050 kindergartens in 2020-21, of which about 790 were eligible to join the scheme and 763 had done so.

Primary Education

Public-sector primary schools offer six years' free education. A child starts primary education at about age six. In October, some 293,300 children were enrolled in 455 public-sector primary schools, comprising 34 government schools and 421 aided schools. In addition, 21 DSS primary schools offered about 16,500 places and 68 private primary schools offered some 41,400 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 provide six years' free education. In October, about 257,700 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 some 55,500 places and 22 private secondary schools offering some 9,400 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 for parents' direct application 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 students from any school net, while 90 per cent are for students from their respective school nets.

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 submitted its review report to the government in September, and its recommendations were accepted by EDB in December. They included reinforcing the importance of whole-person development, according higher priority to values education, creating space and catering for learner diversity, further promoting Applied Learning as a valued senior secondary elective subject, enhancing the flexibility in university admissions, and strengthening science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.

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 (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 Applied Learning courses and six Other Languages.

Applied Learning courses are offered at the senior secondary level, with emphasis placed on practice and theory linked to broad professional and vocational fields. In the 2020-22 cohort, 41 Applied Learning 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 qualification is recognised internationally by over 290 tertiary institutions for admission purposes, and more are being added.

In 2019, about 92 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 relating to the Chinese nation, Chinese history and Chinese culture is included in the General Studies subject at primary level. At junior secondary level, all schools offer Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject from the 2018-19 school year, 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 curriculum has been implemented progressively from Secondary 1 since 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 practices to be implemented 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, including General Studies at primary level, Life and Society and Geography at junior secondary level, and Chinese History and History at secondary level.

Language Education

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 about 470 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 integration of non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students into the community, including by facilitating their early 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 enhance the support for NCS students' learning of Chinese and create an inclusive learning environment in schools. 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 also 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, vocational Chinese language courses pegged at QF level 1 or 2 are offered.

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 the community's proficiency in Chinese (including Putonghua) and English.

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 of September, there were 61 aided special schools, 22 of which had boarding facilities, providing about 9,500 school places and 1,200 boarding places. Some 56,640 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 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 2020-21, about 38 per cent of teachers in public-sector schools 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 and continues to enhance learning opportunities both within and outside school to cater for their needs. 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 enable students to demonstrate their strengths and widen their horizons. Outstanding students thus identified are given further training and nominated to take part in international competitions.

The government-subsented 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 support the academy and finance a wide variety of advanced learning programmes outside school for gifted students. Such programmes have been launched and will be continued.

Blended Learning

Under the Fourth Strategy on Information Technology in Education, 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 (BYOD) policy. The bureau supports the schools to implement e-learning by providing professional development programmes for teachers, support services under the IT in Education Centre of Excellence Scheme, online resources and recurrent funding.

Through the Community Care Fund (CCF), in the 2018-19 school year the bureau implemented a three-year assistance programme to subsidise the purchase of mobile computer devices by primary and secondary students from low-income families studying in BYOD schools. With the

outbreak of COVID-19, the bureau accepted applications from all public-sector and DSS schools implementing e-learning. The bureau also provides a one-off subsidy to schools for the additional expense of purchasing portable Wi-Fi routers and/or mobile data cards for financially needy primary and secondary students for their home e-learning.

Post-secondary Education

The government supports the parallel and complementary development of the publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education. Hong Kong has 22 local degree-awarding post-secondary education institutions, including eight universities funded by the UGC, 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 post-secondary colleges registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance. The eight UGC-funded universities are City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Education University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the University of Hong Kong. In addition, the Hong Kong Art School (a division of Hong Kong Arts Centre) and six registered schools offer locally accredited sub-degree programmes.

In terms of full-time studies in the 2020-21 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 9,700 places. The UGC-funded universities and the self-financing, degree-awarding institutions also provided around 5,000 senior-year undergraduate intake places and 9,500 top-up degree places respectively, mainly for sub-degree graduates. At sub-degree level, about 18,500 self-financing and 9,900 publicly funded intake places were available.

At postgraduate level, about 2,600 and 5,600 UGC-funded taught and research places were available in 2020-21 respectively. As regards self-financing places, taught and research programmes registered actual enrolments of 43,300 and 4,300 respectively in 2019-20.

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 2021-22, the number of participating institutions will increase from 122 to 127 across 21 Mainland provinces and municipalities and one autonomous region. In 2020-21, over 3,900 Hong Kong students applied and about 2,000 were offered places.

Research

The government attaches great importance to supporting research conducted by the higher education sector. It accepted in full the recommendations of the Task Force on Review of Research Policy and Funding. Major follow-up 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 in 2019, and introducing three recurrent fellowship schemes for researchers from 2019-20.

Self-financing Post-secondary Education Sector

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 and quality assurance subsidies. In 2020, the bureau launched the Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education (ESGS) with a funding commitment of \$1.26 billion to provide financial support for eligible self-financing post-secondary education institutions to enhance and develop programmes that meet market needs but require high start-up costs.

The Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors, launched in 2015-16 and expanded in 2019-20, subsidises students who pursue designated full-time, locally accredited self-financing undergraduate and sub-degree programmes in selected disciplines. It currently benefits about 3,000 undergraduate students and 2,000 sub-degree students per cohort.

The government also provides means-tested and non-means-tested financial assistance 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 eligible institutions. In 2020-21, about 16,300 students received assistance under the Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong.

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

The government's Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET) submitted its final report to the government in January. The government has generally accepted and is following up on the report's 18 recommendations, which focus on four areas: (1) enhancing promotion in secondary education; (2) enhancing promotion in higher education; (3) developing vocational progression pathways; and (4) strengthening future promotion. The government established the Steering Committee on Promotion of VPET and Qualifications Framework in September in response to one of the report's recommendations.

Vocational Training Council

The VTC is a statutory body that offers VPET for school leavers and adult learners. It provided some 200,000 full-time and part-time places in 2019-20.

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 business, childcare, elderly and community services, design, engineering, health and life sciences, hospitality and information technology. The courses are offered through the VTC's

13 member institutions, including the Hong Kong Design Institute, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Institute of Professional Education and Knowledge, International Culinary 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 2020-21 enrolment exceeded 3,700 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 2020-21.

Student Achievements

Hong Kong students excel in international competitions. In 2020, Hong Kong teams won a total of three gold, nine silver and eight bronze medals in the International Mathematical Olympiad, International Biology Olympiad Challenge 2020, International Olympiad of Metropolises and International Olympiad in Informatics.

In music, Hong Kong students secured three first prizes in the International Music Competition Bonn Grand Prize Virtuoso; one Champion and two second places in the International Fringe Music Festival & Competition; three gold prizes in the 5th Hong Kong International Harp Competition; one silver medal in the 5th Beijing Dizi Invitational Competition; one Grand Final Winner in the YCYW Young Musicians Competitions; one National Prize in the 28th World Music Competition; one first place in the 7th Annual Violettes by Becky Youth Composition Competition; and one second prize and one third prize in the Golden Key Piano Composition Competition.

In the visual arts, Hong Kong students won seven Rose of Lidice medals in the 48th International Children's Exhibition of Fine Art Lidice, three special prizes in the 20th Kanagawa Biennial World Children's Art Exhibition, one gold and one silver in the 32nd International Art Competition Gaziantep and one award in the 22nd International Drawing and Painting Competition Joy of Europe.

In sports, Hong Kong students won two bronzes at the German Junior International Grand Prix 2020 in badminton, two silvers at the Para Table Tennis Polish Open 2020 and a bronze at the Para Table Tennis Egypt Para Open 2020.

Qualifications and Quality Assurance

Qualifications Framework

The Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF), 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 2020, the government had helped 23 industries¹ 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 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.

¹ 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.

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 from non-local courses which do not fulfil the registration criteria. As at end-September, 1,081 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 11,400 projects involving about \$5.26 billion.

Life Planning Education

A recurrent Career and Life Planning Grant 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 140 business partners in 2019-20 that benefited more than 27,000 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 2020-21, a total of 899 schools and 160 NGOs received the subsidies, helping about 170,000 students.

The Student Activities Support (SAS) Fund, set up in 2019, helps students with financial needs to participate in activities organised or recognised by schools. From the 2019-20 school year, the fund's investment return has been used for providing the SAS Grant for applications from public-sector schools (including special schools) and DSS schools. About \$80 million was allocated to 942 schools in 2019-20, subsidising about 161,000 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 and an additional grant to defray their kindergarten-related expenses. In the school year of 2019-20, subsidies totalling around \$417 million were granted to about 41,600 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 2019-20 school year, around \$847 million was disbursed to about 201,800 students to pay for essential textbooks and miscellaneous school-related expenses, \$384 million to 146,100 students as travel subsidies and \$164 million to 136,700 families to subsidise internet access by students at home. The government paid examination fees for eligible senior secondary students sitting public examinations in the 2019-20 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 2019-20 academic year, around \$753 million of grants and \$157 million of loans were provided to about 18,000 students. Eligible students pursuing full-time, locally accredited self-financing post-secondary programmes can also apply for similar assistance. In the 2019-20 academic year, around \$748 million of grants and \$130 million of loans were provided to around 14,900 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 2019-20 academic year, about 30,400 students received loans amounting to around \$1,575 million.

Travel subsidies totalling around \$108 million were provided to about 27,900 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 2020-21 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 2019-20, around \$41 million was granted in subsidies to 3,218 students, and in 2020-21, the scheme attracted about 4,300 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 570 students and granted scholarships and bursaries totalling \$258 million since inception in the 2015-16 academic year. Starting from 2019-20, the scholarship ceiling is set at \$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 2019-20, the two funds distributed 9,471 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 2019, 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 and improvement through school self-evaluation, complemented by external school reviews.

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.

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 government accepted and has been progressively implementing the recommendations of the Task Force on Professional Development of Teachers. Starting from 2019-20, the all-graduate teaching force policy has been implemented in public-sector schools. The government has also established a professional ladder for teachers, and enhanced the ranking arrangement of school management in public-sector schools in 2020-21. Commendation schemes at multiple levels to acknowledge teachers with outstanding performance will also be set up.

Principals

Professional development requirements are in place to help aspiring, newly appointed and serving principals enhance their leadership knowledge and address their development needs at different career stages. Since 2004-05, some 1,800 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, disseminate informed practices to improve learning, teaching and assessment and support professional learning among teachers. In 2019-20, the bureau provided school-based support services to 190 secondary schools, 350 primary schools, 15 special schools, and 170 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 3,700 school-based and district-based home-school cooperation activities in the 2019-20 school year.

Measures recommended by the Task Force on Home-School Cooperation and Parent Education are being implemented progressively.

Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education advises the government on civic education, works with the government and other parties in arranging civic education activities, and sponsors eligible organisations to arrange activities promoting 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. It also promotes public knowledge of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China and the Basic Law to enhance understanding of ‘one country, two systems’ and a sense of national identity.

The committee’s Civic Education Resource Centre houses reference materials on civic education and 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 and public policy discussion.

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.

In August, the commission held an online meeting on youth employment to strengthen collaboration among government bureaus and stakeholders, enabling them to hear young people's views and to respond to their needs more effectively.

Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The commission's funding schemes for experiential programmes at innovation and entrepreneurial bases and for youth entrepreneurship, both in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, subsidise Hong Kong NGOs to provide start-up assistance and incubation services for 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. It is estimated that about \$130 million will be granted to 16 NGOs to implement youth entrepreneurship programmes, subsidising about 230 youth start-ups (involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs) and supporting services will be provided to about 4,000 young people.

The Home Affairs Bureau's Space Sharing Scheme for Youth is carried out through a community-business-government partnership that enables owners of revitalised industrial and commercial buildings to contribute space for co-working space or studios, to support start-ups in 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 the 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.

Youth Internship Programmes in the Mainland

Since 2017, the Home Affairs Bureau has worked with leading cultural and scientific research institutions, such as the Palace Museum, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Wolong National Nature Reserve in Sichuan, to provide valuable internship opportunities in the Mainland for Hong Kong young people. The number of these internship programmes has increased from two in 2017 to seven in 2019. In 2020, the bureau continued to collaborate with cultural and scientific research institutions in the Mainland to prepare five new internship programmes, covering fields such as aerospace information research, ecological and cultural conservation and archaeological research.

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 2020, the Children's Rights Education Funding Scheme

supported NGOs to conduct 33 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 also provides free language interpretation on the telephone to help ethnic minorities use public services. During 2020, the support service centres strengthened their services, particularly those catering for new arrivals and young people. District-based programmes were organised 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 holds 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.

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

Home Affairs Department's Race Relations Unit: www.had.gov.hk/rru

Youth Development Commission: www.ydc.gov.hk