

Chapter 8

Education

The government attaches great importance to education, as reflected in the increase in total government expenditure on education by 63 per cent from \$67.9 billion in 2011-12 to \$110.9 billion in 2021-22 estimates, representing 15.2 per cent of total government spending. Of this, \$100.7 billion is recurrent expenditure on education, accounting for 19.5 per cent of total recurrent government expenditure.

The role of the government in education is not merely a provider of resources, but also a policy maker, administrator and regulator. The Education Bureau formulates, develops and reviews education policies, and oversees the implementation of educational programmes. Its vision for education is to nurture young people into quality citizens with a sense of national identity and social responsibility, an affection for Hong Kong as well as an international perspective.

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 2021-22 school year, there were 848 public sector schools, including 65 government schools operated directly by the government; and 781 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, while receiving government subvention mainly based on enrolment. There are also 93 private primary and secondary schools.

Hong Kong's 54 international schools, including 15 run by the English Schools Foundation, cater 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 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 2020-21, the participation rate in post-secondary

education was about 80 per cent, including about 55 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 universities funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC), the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) and the Vocational Training Council (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.

Kindergarten Education

Kindergarten education in Hong Kong is optional, but virtually all children aged three to five attend kindergartens. In the 2021-22 school year, the enrolment was about 156,000.

Since 2017-18, 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 kindergarten education is enhanced through a series of support measures. There were about 1,040 kindergartens in 2021-22, of which about 790 were eligible to join the scheme and 762 had done so.

Primary Education

Public sector primary schools offer six years' free education. A child starts primary education at about age six. In September, about 279,700 children were enrolled in 456 public sector primary schools, comprising 34 government schools and 422 aided schools. In addition, 21 DSS primary schools offered about 16,600 places and 69 private primary schools offered about 36,800 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 for parents to directly apply to one public sector school in any school catchment area, or 'school net'. The remaining half are for central allocation, of which 10 per cent are for students from any school net while 90 per cent are for students in the school net of their residence in order of preference.

Secondary Education

Public sector secondary schools provide six years' free education. In September, about 254,900 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 about 57,000 places and 24 private secondary schools offering about 9,200 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 to directly apply to not more than two participating schools in any district. The remaining places are 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.

Local Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Initiatives

The Hong Kong school curriculum features a broad and balanced curriculum with an open and flexible framework, highlighting seven learning goals¹ and five essential learning experiences². It comprises the three interconnected components of knowledge (subjects from Key Learning Areas³), generic skills, and values and attitudes. A 15-year school curriculum framework from kindergarten to Secondary 6 helps students progress through the different stages of learning to achieve whole-person development and lifelong learning.

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 Citizenship and Social Development) and participate in Other Learning Experiences. Measures to optimise these four core subjects have been implemented from Secondary 4 in the 2021-22 school year. The enhanced curriculum flexibility creates space for students to take an additional elective subject and engage in other personal pursuits, thereby catering for students' diverse learning and development needs.

Applied Learning courses are offered at the senior secondary level, with emphasis placed on practice and theory linked to broad professional and vocational fields. There are six areas of studies under Applied Learning: Creative Studies; Media and Communication; Business, Management and Law; Services; Applied Science; and Engineering and Production. In addition, there are Applied Learning (Vocational English) and Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) courses.

¹ For primary education, the following aspects are covered: healthy lifestyle, breadth of knowledge, learning skills, language skills, habit of reading, national identity, and responsibility. For secondary education, the following aspects are covered: national and global identity, breadth of knowledge, language proficiency, generic skills, information literacy, life planning, and healthy lifestyle.

² The five essential learning experiences are: values education, intellectual development, community service, physical and aesthetic development, and career-related experiences.

³ Key Learning Areas are: Chinese language; English language; mathematics; science; technology; personal, social and humanities education; arts; and physical education.

On completion of their study at Secondary 6, students take the HKDSE Examination. This qualification is recognised internationally by around 300 tertiary institutions for admission purposes, and more are being added.

In 2020, about 94 per cent of Secondary 6 graduates pursued further full-time studies, among whom about 14 per cent studied outside Hong Kong.

National Education

The bureau adopts a multi-pronged and coordinated approach to support schools in implementing national education inside and outside the classroom, so as to enable students to understand Chinese culture, Chinese history, national affairs, the Constitution, the Basic Law and the concept of national security, as well as to cultivate students' identity with Chinese culture and the nation, and strengthen the awareness of teachers and students of their responsibility to safeguard national security.

The bureau promulgated the Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong and 15 related national security education subject frameworks in 2021. Onsite teacher workshops are organised for all primary and secondary schools which implement the local curriculum during the 2021-22 and 2022-23 school years.

The bureau organises diversified activities to promote national education, including the Territory-wide Inter-school Basic Law Competition and online quizzes for National Day, National Constitution Day and National Security Education Day.

Chinese History Education

Chinese history is an integral part of the curriculum for all primary and secondary schools. Learning content relating to the nation, Chinese history and Chinese culture is included in General Studies at primary level. At junior secondary level, all schools have offered Chinese History as an independent compulsory subject since 2018-19, and devote two periods per week to Chinese History. At senior secondary level, Chinese History is an elective subject. To enhance students' interest in the subject, the revised Junior Secondary Chinese History curriculum has been implemented from Secondary 1 since September 2020.

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 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.

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.

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 bring diversified teaching strategies and methods/beliefs, professional experience and cultural literacy to local English language classrooms to enrich students’ language learning experience and strengthen the English language learning environment. Overall, the scheme improves classroom practices and students’ attitudes towards learning English.

STEM Education

The government attaches great importance to the promotion of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education in schools with a view to nurturing students’ interest, enhancing their creativity, collaboration and problem-solving skills as well as developing their innovativeness.

In the local primary and secondary school curricula, STEM education is implemented through learning and teaching across Key Learning Areas/subjects. It emphasises enhancing students’ ability to integrate and apply knowledge and skills and to solve problems through hands-on and minds-on activities both inside and outside the classroom.

Various strategies and support measures for promoting STEM education are in place. These include curriculum renewal, enrichment of student learning activities, enhancement of teacher training, development of learning and teaching resources, and collaboration with community partners in organising large-scale STEM activities.

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 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.

To further support implementation of a blended mode of teaching and learning, the bureau implemented a three-year programme through the Quality Education Fund in 2021 to not only support the provision of ancillary facilities for e-learning but also subsidise schools to buy mobile computer devices and internet access facilities (portable Wi-Fi routers and mobile data cards) to loan to financially needy students.

Support for Students

The bureau has implemented measures to support students' learning and emotional needs. Professional services such as social workers, speech therapists and educational psychologists are available at schools. A one-stop information website, Mental Health@School, was launched in 2021 to provide information on promoting mental health among students. Schools are encouraged to provide appropriate activities directed at three levels – universal, selective and indicated – to promote mental health among students and strengthen support for students with mental health needs.

After-school Programmes, Activities and Grants

School-based after-school learning and support programmes subsidise activities that help eligible students improve their learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experiences outside the classroom and raise their understanding of the community and sense of belonging. In 2021-22, a total of 899 schools and 155 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) received the subsidies, benefitting about 170,000 students.

The Student Activities Support Grant helps students with financial needs participate in activities organised or recognised by schools. About 162,000 students from 928 schools benefitted in 2021-22.

Life Planning Education

A recurring Career and Life Planning Grant is disbursed to public sector and DSS schools providing senior secondary education to help prepare students for the transition from school to post-secondary education, including Vocational and Professional Education and Training, or the workplace. Schools may opt for regular teaching posts instead of the grant to further consolidate their experiences with more stable teaching manpower. The bureau also assists schools to begin life planning education at upper primary and junior secondary levels.

The bureau encourages 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. Through the Business-School Partnership Programme, it conducted activities with over 110 business partners that benefited more than 53,000 students in 2020-21.

Supporting Students with Diverse Needs and Abilities

Non-Chinese-speaking Students

The government encourages and supports the integration of non-Chinese-speaking (NCS) students into the community through 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. Support 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. 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 holds workshops for parents to encourage 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 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 the fees they pay are 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 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.

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 62 aided special schools, 23 of which had boarding facilities, providing about 9,650 school places and 1,250 boarding places. Some 58,890 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 policies and support measures in implementing integrated education.

All public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools are provided with an SEN coordinator post and a 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 about 1:4 at schools with a comparatively large number of students with SEN. School-based speech therapist posts are created in public sector ordinary schools by phases to implement the Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service. At the beginning of 2021-22, about 38 per cent of teachers in public sector ordinary 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-subsidised Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education provides gifted students with out-of-school learning through courses, competitions, conferences, mentoring, online courses and advanced learning programmes. For parents of gifted children, it offers the Parent Education Programme, outreach, assessment and consultation services.

The Gifted Education Fund supports the academy and finances a variety of advanced learning programmes outside school for gifted students.

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 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.

To implement the Professional Ladder for Teachers, the government has enhanced training for teachers since 2020-21, providing them with opportunities for more systematic and focused professional development and strengthening the contents on teachers' professional roles and conduct and on Constitution, Basic Law and national security education. The government has also enhanced the ranking arrangement of school management in public sector schools in 2020-21.

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 1,900 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 in schools and disseminate informed practices to enhance the professional capacity of teachers. In 2020-21, the bureau provided school-based support services to 190 secondary schools, 350 primary schools, 15 special schools, and 171 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.

Post-secondary Education

The government supports the parallel and complementary development of publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education. Hong Kong has 22 local degree-awarding post-secondary education institutions, namely eight universities⁴ funded by the UGC, the publicly funded HKAPA, the self-financing Hong Kong Metropolitan University (formerly the Open University of Hong Kong), the VTC's Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, and 11 post-secondary colleges⁵.

All UGC-funded universities, the Metropolitan 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.

⁴ 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.

⁵ The 11 post-secondary colleges are Caritas Institute of Higher Education, Centennial College, Chu Hai College of Higher Education, Gratia Christian College, HKCT Institute of Higher Education, Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, Tung Wah College, UOW College Hong Kong, and Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education.

In terms of full-time studies in the 2021-22 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 8,500 places. The UGC-funded universities and the self-financing, degree-awarding institutions also provided around 5,000 senior-year undergraduate intake places and 9,400 top-up degree places respectively, mainly for sub-degree graduates. At sub-degree level, about 17,600 self-financing and 9,400 publicly funded intake places were available.

At postgraduate level, about 2,600 and 5,600 UGC-funded taught and research places were available in 2021-22 respectively. As regards self-financing places, taught and research programmes registered actual enrolments of 42,700 and 5,500 respectively in 2020-21.

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.

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, the \$1.26 billion Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education, financial assistance for students and quality assurance subsidies.

The Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors 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 2021-22, about 15,300 students received assistance under the Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong.

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 Research Matching Grant Scheme, and introducing three recurrent fellowship schemes for researchers from 2019-20.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training and Adult Education

The government is following up on the 18 recommendations submitted by the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET), which focus on four areas: enhancing promotion in secondary education, enhancing promotion in higher education, developing vocational progression pathways, and strengthening future promotion.

VPET in Secondary Education

At junior secondary level, students are progressively provided with career-related experiences and exposure through life-wide learning activities. At senior secondary level, students' understanding of VPET is further enhanced through Applied Learning courses, the career-related experiences embedded in Other Learning Experiences activities, and other subjects in key learning areas such as science and technology education.

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 2020-21.

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, Hotel and Tourism Institute, Chinese Culinary Institute, 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 offers 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 2021-22 enrolment exceeded 4,000 students.

Evening Secondary Courses

The Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses offers evening secondary courses conducted by approved course providers. About 1,000 adult students were enrolled in 2021-22.

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 2021, the government had helped 23 industries⁶ 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.

⁶ 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 Courses of Higher and Professional Education

The Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) 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, 1,144 non-local courses were registered or exempted from registration under the ordinance.

Student Achievements

Hong Kong students excel in international competitions. In 2021, Hong Kong teams won a total of 13 gold, 18 silver and six bronze medals in the International Mathematical Olympiad, International Biology Olympiad Challenge 2021, International Physics Olympiad, Asian Physics Olympiad, International Olympiad of Metropolises, International Junior Science Olympiad and International Olympiad in Informatics.

In music, Hong Kong students secured two gold prizes in the London Young Musician, one first prize and one third prize in the Chopin Avenue International Piano Competition Awards, one first prize in the 4th Franz Schubert Music Conservatory of Vienna International Composer Competition, two gold awards in the 2021 Italy-Hong Kong International Music Competition, one first prize in the 2021 Euregio Piano Award International Piano Competition, one first prize and one second prize in the 6th Kawai Asia Piano Competition, one second prize and two third prizes in the Nordic International Piano Competition 2021, one third prize in the Menuhin Competition, and one third prize in the 2021 International Harp Competition ‘Glowing Harp’.

In visual arts, Hong Kong students won four honourable mentions and six medals in the 49th International Children’s Exhibition of Fine Art Lidice, three special prizes in the 21st Kanagawa Biennial World Children’s Art Exhibition, and 14 awards in the 23rd International Painting Competition – Joy of Europe.

In sports, Hong Kong students won two championships and one third prize in the 30th Sport Dance Competition in China, and one tennis championship in the US Open Boys’ Doubles.

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 more than 12,200 projects involving about \$5.91 billion.

Student Finance Schemes

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 2020-21, subsidies totalling around \$435 million were granted to about 41,700 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 2020-21 school year, around \$892 million was disbursed to about 205,800 students to pay for essential textbooks and miscellaneous school-related expenses, \$392 million to 149,000 students as travel subsidies and \$187 million to 144,900 families to subsidise internet access by students at home. The government paid examination fees for eligible senior secondary students sitting public examinations in the 2020-21 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 2020-21 academic year, around \$758 million of grants and \$142 million of loans were provided to about 17,600 students. Eligible students pursuing full-time, locally accredited self-financing post-secondary programmes can also apply for similar assistance. In the 2020-21 academic year, around \$770 million of grants and \$129 million of loans were provided to around 14,700 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 2020-21 academic year, about 30,300 students received loans amounting to around \$1,636 million.

Travel subsidies totalling around \$114 million were provided to about 28,500 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 2021-22 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 2020-21, around \$49 million was granted in subsidies to 3,844 students, and in 2021-22, the scheme attracted over 4,800 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 670 students and granted scholarships and bursaries totalling \$338 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 2020-21, the two funds distributed 6,870 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.

The School Development and Accountability Framework fosters sustained school development and improvement through school self-evaluation, complemented by external school reviews.

Community Participation in Education

Advisory Committees

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 UGC and the 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 UGC-funded universities.

Under the UGC's aegis are the Research Grants Council, 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.

The Curriculum Development Council advises the EDB on all matters relating to curriculum development for the school system from kindergarten to senior secondary levels.

Home-School Cooperation

There are about 1,400 parent-teacher associations. The bureau funded about 3,700 school-based and district-based home-school cooperation activities in the 2020-21 school year.

Collaboration with the Mainland and International Education Sector

Under an agreement between the bureau and the Shenzhen Municipal Education Bureau, 11 'minban' schools in Shenzhen offer Hong Kong curriculum classes to about 3,600 Hong Kong students residing in Shenzhen.

The Mainland-Hong Kong Teachers Exchange and Collaboration Programme, co-organised by the Ministry of Education and the bureau, aims to foster professional exchange between

Mainland expert teachers and local teachers. In the 2021-22 school year, 34 Mainland expert teachers were nominated by the ministry to collaborate with 71 local schools.

The Belt and Road Scholarship is offered to outstanding students from countries/regions along the Belt and Road pursuing full-time publicly funded university studies in Hong Kong. Over 330 students have been awarded the scholarship since its inception in the 2016-17 academic year.

The government continues to support Hong Kong post-secondary institutions to offer education services in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) and to give full play to the strengths of Hong Kong's higher education sector in terms of high-quality teaching and research as well as internationalisation.

The VTC works with its Mainland and international partners, including academic institutions and professional bodies, to nurture young talent with global perspective for society. They work in major areas and cities on the Mainland, including the GBA, Beijing, Shanghai and Suzhou, and other countries, including Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan.

Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education

The Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education advises the government on civic education outside schools, and works with the government and other parties to organise or sponsor civic education activities. In 2021-22, the committee continued promoting the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law to deepen public understanding of 'one country, two systems' while enhancing their awareness and sense of responsibility towards national security, and encouraging them to learn about the latest developments of the GBA. As for core civic values, greater emphasis was placed on 'Respect' and 'Responsibility' while the promotion of 'Love' and 'Inclusiveness' continued.

The committee's Civic Education Resource Centre houses reference materials on civic education and organises training courses, seminars, film sharing sessions, guided tours and exhibitions.

Youth Development Commission

Through the platform of the Youth Development Commission, relevant policy bureaux and NGOs address young people's concerns about education, career pursuits and home ownership, and encourage their participation in politics as well as public policy discussion and debate. The commission and the Home Affairs Bureau, through organising or sponsoring programmes such as the Youth Ambassadors Programme, internships and exchanges, start-up support, and life planning, enable young people to develop positive values, nurture multi-faceted development, and facilitate their upward mobility.

In January and September, the commission held online policy thematic meetings on multiple pathways and positive thinking respectively to strengthen collaboration among government bureaux and stakeholders, enabling them to hear young people's views and to respond to their needs more effectively.

Promotion of Young People's Positive Thinking and Well-being

In July, the commission launched a pilot scheme to promote local outdoor adventure training activities to nurture young people's resilience and positive thinking, and guide their healthy development. The scheme is expected to benefit about 2,600 young people.

Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship

The commission's Funding Scheme for Youth Entrepreneurship in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area subsidises 16 NGOs to implement youth entrepreneurship programmes, providing capital to about 230 youth start-ups involving more than 800 Hong Kong young entrepreneurs, and rendering entrepreneurial support and incubation services to about 4,000 young people. The Funding Scheme for Experiential Programmes at Innovation and Entrepreneurial Bases in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area subsidises 15 NGOs to organise experiential programmes at entrepreneurial bases in the GBA, benefitting about 700 young people.

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 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 2021, the bureau continued to collaborate with cultural and scientific research institutions in the Mainland to enhance and expand the internship programmes to cover more professional fields.

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 2021, the Children's Rights Education Funding Scheme supported NGOs to conduct 29 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 2021, the support service centres continued to strengthen their services, particularly those catering for new arrivals and young people. District-based programmes were organised to encourage interaction and exchange 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