Quality Assurance Council releases Audit Report on sub-degree operations of Education University of Hong Kong

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Quality Assurance Council (QAC) today (June 26) released the Audit Report on the sub-degree operations of the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK).

The Audit Report presents the findings on the quality of learning at the sub-degree providing unit (SDPU) of the EdUHK. The Chairman of the QAC, Mr Lincoln Leong, said, "The QAC is pleased that the Audit Panel concludes that the University's three sub-degree programmes, offered by the Department of Early Childhood Education (ECED) in its Faculty of Education and Human Development, are effectively integrated with the Department's degree provision, with clear pathways for sub-degree students to progress to higher levels of study. The sub-degree provision is fully aligned with the strategic priorities of the Department, the Faculty and the University, and it reflects the EdUHK's vision, mission and core values. There are effective governance structures and procedures for setting and maintaining academic standards. In addition, there is a consistent and comprehensive approach to quality assurance. The ECED systematically implements the University's approach in its monitoring of the quality of sub-degree programme delivery."

The QAC is pleased with the quality of educational provision at the SDPU of the EdUHK. The University's efforts in various areas are commended as positive features in the Audit Report. These include a comprehensive approach that leads to effective and tailored professional development of sub-degree programmes teaching staff; and the University's application and review of its comprehensive policy framework governing student learning assessment for sub-degree programmes.

The full report (with EdUHK's Institutional Response attached) has been uploaded to the website of the University Grants Committee (UGC) (www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/qac/about/term/publications/report.html). The QAC welcomes the EdUHK to keep the Council informed of its development in further enhancing student learning.

Background of the quality audit on sub-degree operations of EdUHK

The quality audit on the sub-degree operations of the EdUHK was undertaken by an Audit Panel appointed by the QAC. The Audit Panel was chaired by Professor Denis Wright, and members included Dr Ella Chan, Professor Mark Davies, Mr Ian Marshman and Professor Ricky Wong. The Panel reviewed the Institutional Submission, which was prepared by the EdUHK following a period of self-study, and visited the EdUHK on October 30 and 31, 2018, to meet with staff and students. It also met with a number of external stakeholders, such as local employers and graduates of EdUHK sub-degree programmes.

Background of the QAC and its auditing activities

The QAC was established in April 2007 as a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the aegis of the UGC. The UGC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the quality of the UGC-funded universities and their activities. In view of the institutional expansion of university activities and a growing public interest in quality issues, the QAC was established to assist the UGC in providing third-party oversight of the quality of the universities' educational provision. The QAC assists the UGC in assuring the quality of all programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above (however funded) offered in UGC-funded universities. The QAC fulfils this task primarily by undertaking periodic quality audits of the universities.

Auditing is an external quality assurance process that involves independent peer review by senior academics in the higher education sector. Its principal aims are to confirm that existing arrangements for quality assurance are fit for purpose, that the quality of provision is comparable to international best practices, that universities are committed to continuously improving the quality of their academic programmes, and that students are well taught and well supported so that they are able to achieve the expected academic standards.

Prior to 2016, the QAC's audit activities covered only first degree programmes and above. The first and second QAC audit cycles were completed in 2011 and 2016 respectively. In 2016, the UGC assumed the role of the overseeing body of the quality audits on the sub-degree operations of UGC-funded universities, with the involvement of QAC as the audit operator. The audit visits to universities in this cycle were conducted from late 2017 to early 2019.

CSSA caseload for May 2019

The overall Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) caseload in May showed a drop of 427 cases, representing a decrease of 0.2 per cent compared with that of April, according to the latest CSSA caseload statistics released by the Social Welfare Department today (June 26).

The total CSSA caseload at the end of May stood at 223 568 (see attached table), with a total of 318 281 recipients.

Analysed by case nature, low-earnings cases registered a month-to-month decrease of 1.1 per cent to 3 345 cases. Old age cases dropped by 0.3 per cent to 140 187 cases while unemployment cases slightly slipped by 0.1 per cent to 11 725 cases.

Ill-health cases edged up by 0.3 per cent to 23 175 cases. Permanent disability cases rose by 0.2 per cent to 16 642 cases while single parent cases slightly increased by 0.1 per cent to 24 330 cases.

LCQ11: Regulation of person-to-person telemarketing calls

Following is a question by the Hon Shiu Ka-fai and a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

The Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance (Cap. 593) implemented since December 2007 regulates the sending of commercial electronic messages, but it is not applicable to person-to-person (P2P) telemarketing calls. Last year, the Government proposed to bring such calls within the ambit of the Ordinance and establish a do-not-call register (the Register) for such calls. Under the proposed regulatory arrangement, no person shall make telemarketing calls to those telephone numbers on the Register, unless the caller has obtained prior consent from the recipient. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) given that during the time when the relevant bill was scrutinised by this Council in 2007, the Hon Wong Ting-kwong had proposed Committee Stage amendments (CSAs) to bring P2P telemarketing calls under regulation, with an exemption for those telemarketing calls to persons made pursuant to a previous or current business or client relationship (but the CSAs concerned were not incorporated into Cap. 593), and recently the Government has indicated, in reply to my enquiries, that the proposed regulatory arrangement will be similar to the concept of the CSAs proposed by that Member back then, whether the Government can confirm if the proposed regulatory arrangement will include this exemption;

(2) as Cap. 593 provides that "consent" means (a) express consent or (b) consent that can reasonably be inferred from the conduct of the individual or organisation concerned, and the Government has indicated that it will, by making reference to such meaning, define the "consent" under the proposed regulatory arrangement, whether the Government has studied if it can be inferred from a person's conduct of giving out business cards on social

occasions that the person has given consent to the recipients of the business cards to make telephone calls to that person in future to introduce products or services;

(3) given that the listing of telephone numbers on the Register will take effect 10 working days after registration, and that companies will have to arrange manpower to check regularly (say, weekly) the telephone numbers of existing and potential clients against those in the Register, so as to avoid breaching the law by mistakenly calling a telephone number on the Register, whether the Government has assessed: (i) the obstacles to economic activities that will be caused by such checking work, and (ii) the manpower and time to be spent on performing such work weekly by companies which have hundreds or thousands of telephone numbers of existing and potential clients; if it has assessed, of the outcome; if not, whether it will conduct such an assessment expeditiously;

(4) of the measures to be put in place for alleviating the compliance costs for micro, small and medium enterprises to be brought about by the implementation of the proposed regulatory arrangement; and

(5) as there are views that the proposed regulatory arrangement cannot eradicate telemarketing calls from overseas and those pretended to have come from legitimate financial institutions, whether the Government has assessed if adopting non-legislative approaches, such as promoting the use of call-filtering applications and educating the public on how to handle telemarketing calls, will be more effective than enacting legislation; if it has not assessed, of the reasons for that?

Reply :

President,

In recent years, person-to-person telemarketing calls (P2P calls) have caused nuisance to many members of the public. There are growing demands for strengthening the regulation of such calls. Based on the views collected in a public consultation conducted by the Government in mid-2017 and further to the discussions at the relevant Panels of the Legislative Council, the Government proposes to regulate P2P calls by legislation through amending the Unsolicited Electronic Messages Ordinance (Cap. 593) (UEMO). The Government is now drafting the legislative provisions. We will maintain close contact with the industries, with a view to striking a balance between minimising nuisances caused by P2P calls and reducing compliance cost of the trade.

Our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(1) The existing UEMO aims to, through an "opt-out" arrangement supported by do-not-call registers, allow members of the public to avoid nuisances by opting for not receiving unsolicited electronic messages (UEMs). Nevertheless, for a user who has not registered with the do-not-call registers or has not clearly indicated his intention not to receive such messages, the trade can still send marketing messages to such user provided that certain requirements (e.g. provision of sender identity) have been

complied with.

Moreover, Schedule 1 to the UEMO exempts certain types of ordinary business communications, such as information relating to product maintenance or updating, information relating to business transactions agreed between a recipient and a sender, employment-related information, etc. A sender may send such messages without the need to obtain the recipient's prior consent. The Government propose that the future legislative framework for regulating P2P calls, sharing similar nature with electronic messages, should adopt the same principles in regulating P2P calls.

In other words, if a phone user has given consent for receiving marketing calls from a certain marketer, that marketer may make calls to that phone user regardless of whether the latter is the marketer's current or previous client, or whether the latter has already registered her/ his phone number with the Register.

(2) Making reference to the practice of regulating UEMs under the existing UEMO, whether exchanging contact information or giving out business cards on social occasions constitutes "consent" depends on whether the concerned recipient has indicated agreement (either express consent or consent inferred from conduct) to receive P2P calls from the concerned organisation during the process of exchanging contact information or business cards.

(3) and (4) The Government's objective of regulating P2P calls by legislation is to provide an option to members of the public who would like to avoid nuisances by not receiving such calls. To users who are willing to receive such calls, the trade may still make marketing calls to them as long as certain basic requirements have been complied with. The Government note that some trade sectors have established their own codes of practice on Person-to-Person Marketing Calls and requested members of their respective sectors to comply with.

We understand that the establishment of the Register may increase operational cost of the trade, and may also bring certain impact on the mode of operation. The trade may also need some time to adapt during the early stage of implementation. In drafting the Bill, the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau will engage the trade, with a view to striking a balance between concerns of the trade and the public interest. Moreover, with reference to the arrangements for regulating UEMs under the existing UEMO, if the bill is passed, the Government will formulate codes of practice to provide clear guidance to the trade. The Office of the Communications Authority (OFCA) will also, by making reference to the arrangements for implementing the UEMO, enable companies making P2P calls to apply conveniently to OFCA for subscription accounts, so that companies may at any time use and download phone numbers in the Register for screening and updating their call lists in order to comply with the legislative requirements.

(5) In addition to formulating legislative proposals, the Government will also take forward non-legislative measures. OFCA will enhance public

education to remind smartphone users of the option to download call filtering applications and the related points to note, including user terms and conditions, permission requests, etc.

Moreover, the Government will educate the public through various channels, for instance, incorporating brief introductions for the elderly on the means to reject or filter phone calls and the points to note in the syllabus of the related courses provided by the Elder Academies.

LCQ4: Treatment of cancers

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Chiang Lai-wan and a reply by the Secretary for Food and Health, Professor Sophia Chan, in the Legislative Council today (June 26):

Question:

As projected by the Hong Kong Cancer Registry (HKCaR) under the Hospital Authority (HA), with a continuously growing and ageing population, the number of new cancer cases in Hong Kong in 2030 will be 40% higher than that in 2016 and exceed 44 000. Some patients have relayed that at present, quite a number of cancer patients at public hospitals can only take drugs with more side effects and lower efficacy as they cannot afford the expensive self-financed drugs, thus suffering immensely in their illnesses. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the Government will propose to HA to discuss with the Mainland authorities purchasing cancer drugs jointly, with a view to reducing expenses on drugs, and whether it will expedite the vetting and approval of clinical trial schemes to be carried out in Hong Kong for new cancer drugs and new treatment protocols so that cancer patients participating in the schemes can try them out for free; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that the Government has earmarked $5 billion in the current financial year for the upgrading or acquisition of medical equipment by HA, whether it knows if HA will spend the money on acquiring state-of-the-art medical equipment for treating cancers, including that for proton therapy and electric field therapy; if HA will, of the details; if not, whether HA will discuss with the private hospitals which have acquired the relevant equipment the implementation of public-private partnership programmes so as to make use of such kind of equipment for treating public hospital patients; and

(3) given that the provision of cancer data to HKCaR by hospitals is currently voluntary in nature, whether the Government will adopt measures to facilitate HKCaR in collecting data as well as using artificial intelligence and big data technologies to speed up the analysis of cancer data; if so, of

the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the various parts of the question raised by Dr the Hon Chiang Lai-wan is as follows:

(1) The Hospital Authority (HA) has put in place an established drug procurement mechanism, which is fair and stringent, for procurement of pharmaceutical products that are registered with the Department of Health (DH) and meet quality requirements for use in its public hospitals and clinics in accordance with the requirements and guidelines of the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization and the DH. The existing mechanism is effective and allows the HA to procure the most cost-effective drugs from the market. We do not think that there is sufficient justification to change it.

As regards clinical trials on drugs, anyone who wishes to conduct a clinical trial on pharmaceutical product(s) in Hong Kong is required to apply to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong for a Certificate for Clinical Trial (certificate) according to the provisions and requirements of the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138). As set out in the performance pledges, the DH will issue a certificate within three months on receipt of an application submitted with the necessary supporting documents. In 2018-19, the DH issued a total of 173 certificates. All applications were vetted and approved within three months, meeting the target set in the performance pledge.

Moreover, the DH has implemented a number of enhancement measures in recent years to further shorten the time for vetting and approving such applications. These measures include extending the validity period of certificates and simplifying the application procedures for low-risk clinical trials.

(2) The Government has earmarked an additional $5 billion in 2019-20 for the HA to expedite the upgrading and acquisition of medical equipment, and to allow the HA to formulate plans for acquiring relevant medical equipment in the longer term. The HA will further modernise and upgrade its medical equipment to provide quality services for patients. For example, upgrading or acquiring new linear accelerators, computed tomography scanners and magnetic resonance imaging scanners with more advanced functionalities will improve the diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients. The HA will also diffuse the application of advanced technology. For example, additional robotic surgery systems will be acquired to enhance minimal invasive surgical services, and Next Generation Sequencing technology will be used for treating cancer patients.

Regarding suggestions such as the introduction of proton therapy and tumor treating fields therapy, the HA will keep in view the technological advancement in this regard. Under the established mechanism of the HA, experts will continue to examine and review regularly treatment options as well as the latest development of the clinical and scientific evidence of relevant technology, taking into account factors such as scientific evidence, cost-effectiveness, opportunity cost, technological advancement and views of patient groups.

In respect of collaboration with private hospitals, the HA rolled out the "Project on Enhancing Radiological Investigation Services through Collaboration with the Private Sector" in 2012 through purchase of computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging services from private healthcare organisations to provide cancer (See note) patients with the option to receive radiological investigation services in the private sector. The HA will carefully consider relevant factors when examining new Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programmes, such as the potential complexity of the programmes, and the capacity and readiness of the private sector, etc. The HA will continue to communicate with the public and patient groups, and will work closely with stakeholders to explore the feasibility of introducing other PPP programmes, so as to meet the public's demand for healthcare services.

(Note: Colorectal cancer, breast cancer, nasopharyngeal cancer, lymphoma, prostate cancer, stomach cancer, cervix cancer, corpus uteri cancer, head and neck cancer, sarcoma or germ cell tumor.)

(3) The Government attaches great importance to the collection and monitoring of cancer data, and supports the work of the Hong Kong Cancer Registry (HKCaR) on analysis of the overall cancer data from the public and private healthcare service providers and surveillance of local cancer situation. As early as in the 2000s, the HKCaR began to set up progressively a cancer case review system for the collation and analysis of the structural clinical data in the HA's Clinical Management System and the information collected from private hospitals.

The HA also strives to assist the HKCaR in enhancing the efficiency of data analysis, and has established a working group last year to study, through big data analysis, how to use clinical data to speed up the collation of cancer data. Meanwhile, the Food and Health Bureau and the HKCaR invited in writing private hospitals across the territory to provide pathology reports of cancer tissues for further collation and verification by the HKCaR. The arrangement is currently working smoothly and effectively. The HKCaR will continue to do its best to shorten the time required for collecting and publishing information.

Result of tenders of People’s Bank of China RMB Bills held on June 26, 2019

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

Result of the tenders of the People's Bank of China RMB Bills held on June 26, 2019:

Tender Result

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Tender Date	:	June 26, 2019
Bills available for Tender	:	One-Month RMB Bills
Issuer	:	The People's Bank of China
Issue Number	:	BCMKFP19025
Issue Date	:	June 28, 2019
Maturity Date	:	July 26, 2019 (or the closest coupon payment date)
Application Amount	:	RMB 43,980 million
Issue Amount	:	RMB 20,000 million
Average accepted Coupon Rate	:	2.73%
Highest accepted Coupon Rate (Bills’ Coupon)	:	2.80%
Lowest accepted Coupon Rate	:	2.35%
Allocation Ratio	:	Approximately 52.20%

Tender Result

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Tender Date	:	June 26, 2019
Bills available for Tender	:	Six-Month RMB Bills
Issuer	:	The People's Bank of China
Issue Number	:	BCMKFP19026
Issue Date	:	June 28, 2019
Maturity Date	:	December 27, 2019 (or the closest coupon payment date)
Application Amount	:	RMB 42,410 million
Issue Amount	:	RMB 10,000 million
Average accepted Coupon Rate	:	2.66%
Highest accepted Coupon Rate (Bills’ Coupon)	:	2.82%
Lowest accepted Coupon Rate	:	2.35%
Allocation Ratio	:	Approximately 1.67%