

# LCQ19: Qualifications Framework

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

The Qualifications Framework (QF), launched in 2008 by the Education Bureau (EDB), defines clear and objective standards applicable to the qualifications in the academic, vocational and professional as well as continuing education sectors. To dovetail with the implementation of QF, EDB has set up 22 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs) which are tasked with drawing up the Specification of Competency Standards (SCSs) for the relevant sectors. SCSs set out the skills, knowledge and outcome standards required of employees in different functional areas in order to assist in the formulation of training programmes to enable employees to obtain recognition under QF. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as it is learnt that ITAC of the retail banking industry has received the assistance of The Hong Kong Institute of Bankers in drawing up its SCSs, whether the Government knows if ITACs of other industries have also received the assistance from the professional bodies and related organisations of the relevant sectors in drawing up their respective SCSs; if it knows, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) given that EDB signed in June this year a Letter of Intent on Qualifications Framework Co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong with the Department of Education of the Guangdong Province to strengthen the collaboration on QF between the two places, and that Hong Kong and Guangdong will set up a working group to develop a mechanism for co-operation, communication and coordination, of the details of the relevant work and the progress made so far; and

(3) given that EDB has completed the referencing/comparability projects of Hong Kong's QF with the QFs of a number of regions (such as Europe, Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand), whether the Government has drawn up a work plan and timetable for the co-operation in QF between Hong Kong and the Mainland?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the Hon Chan's question is as follows:

(1) We have set up 22 Industry Training Advisory Committees (ITACs), which provide a platform for stakeholders to implement the Qualifications Framework (QF) and to exchange views on the training needs and manpower developments of industries. The ITACs comprise representatives from employers, employees,

trade associations, professional bodies, and trade unions of the industries to ensure that different stakeholders can participate in the implementation of the QF.

When the ITACs draw up the Specification of Competency Standards (SCS), their members who represent different sectors of the industries will participate in the work. During the process, the ITACs will also consult different stakeholders of the industries (including relevant professional bodies) to ensure that the SCS so drawn up meet the needs of the industries. For example, the Arboriculture and Horticulture (A&H) ITAC just published the SCS for the industry this month, and the ITAC members representing the trade associations, professional bodies, and trade unions, etc. participated in the drawing up of the SCS. Moreover, that ITAC consulted the industry on the draft SCS in July and August this year, and invited representatives from the trade associations, professional bodies, trade unions, and training providers, etc. to attend the consultation session and listened to their views.

(2) and (3) The intention to develop the nation's QF was announced in the National 13th Five-Year Plan in 2016. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government is committed to playing an active role during the setting up of the nation's QF.

Over the years, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the QF Secretariat have shared our experience of developing and implementing the QF with various organisations and parties on the Mainland. We have also been in close liaison with the Mainland authorities to facilitate qualifications recognition in different industries. In 2011, the QF Secretariat signed a letter of intent with the Guangdong Occupational Skill Testing Authority (OSTA) and set up a working group to explore the development of common vocational competency standards and mutual recognition of vocational qualifications.

At present, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and the OSTA conduct examinations on the occupational skills of the electrical maintenance industry, and actively promote the development of "One Examination, Multiple Certification" arrangement for the beauty and hairdressing industries. Under the arrangement, candidates need to pass one common examination for them to have their qualifications recognised by Hong Kong, the Mainland, and international professional organisations. Moreover, for the Chinese catering industry, the Chinese Culinary Institute under the VTC and the OSTA jointly administer the assessment under the "One Trade Test, Two Certificates" arrangement. Under this arrangement, candidates who pass written tests of both the VTC and the National Occupational Qualification, together with a common practical assessment, may have their qualifications recognised in Hong Kong and the Mainland.

The planning and development of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area provide more opportunities for the HKSAR Government to explore with the Guangdong Province the feasible approaches and options in the recognition of qualifications. As stated in the Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area promulgated by the Central

Government in February 2019, the higher education institutions of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao are encouraged to explore the mutual recognition of academic credits of specified courses. In May 2019, the HKSAR Government and the Guangdong Provincial Government signed the 2019 Work Plan of the Framework Agreement on Hong Kong/Guangdong Co-operation to follow up on, among others, the initiative of encouraging the higher education institutions of Guangdong and Hong Kong to explore the mutual recognition of academic credits of specified courses. In June this year, the EDB also signed the Letter of Intent on Qualifications Framework Co-operation between Guangdong and Hong Kong with the Department of Education of the Guangdong Province. The letter of intent covers the co-operation in the QF between Guangdong and Hong Kong, the exploration of mutual recognition of credits in different categories of education and training in the Greater Bay Area, and the promotion of talent exchange in the Greater Bay Area. The EDB, the QF Secretariat, and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications will continue to co-operate with the relevant authorities in the Guangdong Province to foster collaboration between the two places on the QF and to facilitate qualifications recognition in more industries.

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## [LCQ17: Sexual violence allegations](#)

Following is a question by the Professor Hon Joseph Lee and a written reply by the Secretary for Security, Mr John Lee, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

“An online questionnaire survey on sexual violence in the movement of opposition to the proposed legislative amendments (the movement) was conducted from August to September this year. Sixty-seven respondents indicated that they had been subject to sexual violence (including sexual intercourses under threats or intimidation, threatened or attempted sexual assaults, touching of sensitive body parts, provocation and insults by remarks with sexual connotations). Besides, the respondents indicated that their reasons for not reporting such mishaps to the Police included that: they considered letting the Police handle their cases to be ineffective, they worried that the Police would conversely charge them with other offences, they lost confidence in the Police's capability in enforcing the law, they lacked the personal information of the perpetrators, and the perpetrators were in fact police officers or other law enforcement officers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of sexual violence cases relating to the movement received by the Police since June this year; the details of the Police's current procedure for handling such type of cases (including reporting the case to

the Police, conducting medical examination, collecting evidence and conducting investigations);

(2) as a female demonstrator openly alleged some time ago that police officers had inflicted sexual violence on her during her detention, whether the Police will take the initiative to investigate such type of allegations; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as it is learnt that at present, most police officers tasked with handling demonstrations neither wear warrant cards nor display their police identification numbers on their uniforms and even cover their faces while on duty, whether such practices of the police officers comply with the relevant requirements in the Police General Orders and the Hong Kong Police Force Procedures Manual; if not, of the follow-up actions; and

(4) as the findings of the aforesaid survey have shown that quite a number of members of the public have lost confidence in the fairness of the Police's law enforcement, and that there are allegations that the perpetrators of sexual violence are in fact police officers, whether the Government will consider afresh the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate such allegations?

Reply:

President,

Sexual violence is a serious allegation. The complainant shall formally provide the Police with information, so that the Police may conduct a full investigation. This would not only protect the interests of the victim but also ensure that the complainees will not be falsely accused, which is fair to both the complainant and the complainees. Both parties shall bear the legal responsibilities and be protected.

As recently seen in the media, there are occasions when people claim that they have been sexually assaulted. Nevertheless, they are unwilling to contact the Police or provide information, making it impossible to verify the authenticity of these claims. It is an offence to provide false information or make a false report to the Police but a real victim will be duly protected by law. The Police also have a duty to protect the real victims' interests and rights.

The Government attaches importance to combating cases involving sexual offences. In each case, the Police will conduct full investigation, protect the victim's rights and safety, and alleviate the stress and psychological trauma faced by the victim when assisting in the investigation. The Police will handle all sexual violence cases with a serious and sensitive professional attitude. When investigating sexual violence cases, the Police will take various measures to ensure that the rights and safety of the victims are fully safeguarded. The Police have formulated a series of relevant procedures and guidelines.

My reply to various parts of the question raised by Professor Hon Joseph Lee is as follows:

(1) Since early June this year, more than 900 protests, processions and public assemblies have been staged in Hong Kong, many of which eventually turned into severe and illegal violent acts. As at November 28, the Police arrested more than 5 800 people in large-scale public order events, of which 939 have been charged. As for sexual offence cases, the Police do not maintain breakdown statistics on whether they are related to public events.

(2) As stated previously, sexual violence is a serious allegation, therefore the complainant should contact the Police and provide information to allow the Police's investigation and collection of evidence. The Police will follow up in a serious, fair and impartial manner. While we will not comment on individual cases, past experience shows that some alleged victims of sexual abuse never contacted the Police to provide information, some repeatedly revised the account of their alleged experience after making the allegation on the media, or some ceased to provide information to the Police after lodging their complaints through lawyers. We appeal to alleged victims of sexual violence to provide information to the Police. This would then be fair to both the complainant and the complaine. The Police will ensure that the victims' interests and rights are fully protected.

(3) At present, there are ways to identify every police officer regardless of the officer's post. In recent large-scale public order events, uniformed police officers on duty would display their unique identification numbers or identifiable operational call signs. When plainclothes police officers exercise police powers, they would identify themselves and produce warrant cards, or display identifiable operational call signs, as long as doing so would not be infeasible under operational circumstances.

Operational call signs are identifiable call signs for all police officers participating in an operation which enable effective identification of an officer. Operational call signs are as effective as unique identification numbers. Apart from enhancing the overall effectiveness of the Police in large-scale operations, this arrangement also strikes a reasonable balance between ensuring the identification of police officers by members of the public, and protecting their personal data from malicious disclosure on the other. This new mechanism applies to the current special operational period and does not contravene the Police General Orders or the Force Procedures Manual. The Police will continue to listen to the views from within and from members of the public and conduct a review in due course having regard to operational needs.

On the other hand, since June this year, rioters have charged police officers with extreme means. The level of violence has escalated over time and they even launched personal attacks against police officers. When police officers perform their duties, their personal safety and even lives come under severe threat. From June 9 to November 29, a total of 483 police officers were injured in operations, some of whom are still unable to return to work. To ensure the personal safety of police officers, the Police

procured protective face masks for front-line officers to protect their face from being attacked by rioters. Earlier, a police officer was hit by metal beads in the mouth injuring his lips and teeth. Subsequently, after putting on a protective mask, a police officer was protected from being hit by beads in the face. The Police will use different equipment and protective gears based on operational needs to afford the maximum protection to the personal safety of front-line officers who are handling violent incidents, while enhancing their operational capabilities.

(4) There is a well-established two-tier statutory complaints against police mechanism. The first tier of the mechanism is the Complaints Against Police Office (CAPO) of the Police which receives and investigates complaints. The second tier is the Independent Police Complaints Council (IPCC) which is a statutory body. The two-tier complaint mechanism operates effectively under the Independent Police Complaints Council Ordinance (Cap 604), which provides a clear legal basis to ensure that every complaint against the Police will be handled in a fair and just manner.

Under the two-tier mechanism, when CAPO, which operates independently of other units of the Police, has completed the investigation of each reportable complaint, it will submit a detailed investigation report for the scrutiny of the independent IPCC. CAPO has set up a designated team comprising 26 members who did not take part in handling the unrest in the past few months. This designated team is sparing no effort in following up the complaints in relation to the large-scale public order events which have taken place since June this year. If IPCC is of the view that there are deficiencies in CAPO's handling and investigation, it may request CAPO to provide clarification or relaunch the investigation. Meanwhile, IPCC may convey its views and recommendations to the Commissioner of Police and the Chief Executive in respect of any complaint.

The Government considers that having the statutory IPCC to handle complaints against police officers is a well-established and appropriate mechanism. Cases involving criminal elements (including sexual offences) will be handled by the Police's criminal investigation teams in an impartial manner. In handling criminal cases over the years, the Police have performed professionally and fairly.

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## **LCQ5: Supporting public transport sector**

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

It has been reported that a number of public service vehicles (including buses, minibuses, taxis and school private light buses) have been vandalised or burnt out during the public meetings and processions held in recent months. Some of the owners and drivers concerned have relayed that the vandalism of their "vehicles as a means of subsistence" has gravely affected their livelihood. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the number of reports of vandalism of public service vehicles received by the Police since June this year, with a tabulated breakdown by the class of and extent of damage caused to the vehicles;

(2) whether it will consider setting up a fund to subsidise the owners concerned to pay for the expenses on vehicle repair or procurement of new vehicles; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that taxis and minibuses are vulnerable to vandalism as most of them are parked at public places such as roadside and public transport interchanges at night, whether the Government will consider providing additional temporary car parks for the parking of public service vehicles, so as to minimise the chance of such vehicles being vandalised?

Reply:

President,

Currently, 90 per cent of Hong Kong people rely on public transport services to travel and the number of daily passenger trips is as high as 12 million. Due to the continuous public events in the past six months, various road facilities and land transport services have been affected to varying degrees, which have greatly hampered the land public transport services and seriously obstructed the travel of the general public. All relevant government departments, including the Transport Department (TD) and Highways Department, and public transport service operators have been making their best endeavours to resume the provision of relevant services as soon as possible. I hereby once again urge all people that, regardless of your political stance or views towards the incidents, you should never damage the public transport vehicles and road traffic facilities. We should all treasure Hong Kong, and restore calm and stability in society.

My reply to the various parts of Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) According to the Police, they classify the reported cases by the case nature so as to keep the relevant cases in their records. Simply speaking, vandalisms done to the road traffic facilities are classified as cases of criminal damage. The Police does not maintain any statistics breakdown based on the types of damaged object or facility. Therefore, we are not able to provide detailed figures as requested. Nonetheless, according to the information obtained by TD from the public transport service operators, it is

understood that from June to the end of November 2019, around 420 franchised buses and seven tram cars were vandalised to different extent during the public order events in the past few months, including being burnt, smeared, glass windows being broken or vandalised, and tyres being deflated, etc. As for public light buses (PLBs), taxis and non-franchised buses, according to the rough estimates provided by the relevant major service operators to TD, more than 100 vehicles were vandalised.

(2) Public transport services in Hong Kong are generally provided by relevant service operators on commercial principles. Maintenance and procurement of vehicles, etc, are under the daily operation scope, for which the operators or vehicle owners should be responsible. At present, we have no plan to set up a special fund for vehicle owners affected to repair or procure vehicles. However, we understand that the operating environment of the public transport sector has been greatly affected by the social activities in recent months. In this regard, the Financial Secretary announced a series of measures on August 15 and October 22 this year respectively, aiming to help the transport trades to cope with the pressure brought by the social and economic environment. The measures include the following:

Firstly, from December 30, 2019 onwards, the vehicle licence fees and examination fees for registered commercial vehicles, fees payable for the new issue or renewal of Passenger Service Licence (PSL) and PSL Certificate for eligible types of vehicles will be waived for 12 months.

Secondly, the Government will introduce a six-month fuel subsidy or a one-off subsidy to assist the transport trades. In terms of land transport, the Government will offer a \$1 discount per litre of liquid petroleum gas (LPG), i.e. approximately a one-third discount, for six months for LPG taxis and PLBs, and reimburse one-third of the actual diesel cost for six months for each diesel PLB. The Government will also reimburse one-third of the actual fuel cost and one-third of the actual electricity cost to the five franchised bus companies and Tramways respectively for six months. In addition, every licensed non-franchised bus and goods vehicle will receive a one-off non-accountable subsidy of \$5,000. TD is drawing up the specific details of the arrangement. We plan to consult the Legislative Council Panel on Transport on the implementation details in early 2020, and will seek the funding approval in accordance with the established mechanism.

Thirdly, the rental for short-term tenancies for government land for fee-paying public car parks under the Lands Department, as well as the rental for fee-paying public car parks under the Government Property Agency and Leisure and Cultural Services Department will be reduced by 50 per cent for six months, with retrospective effect from October 1, 2019. If the relevant operators would share such concessions with the car park users, this will benefit the transport trades and car owners in general.

The Government will continue to closely monitor the operating environment of the public transport service sector, and will consider introducing further measures to help the whole transport sector if necessary.

(3) As regards parking spaces, given the operational characteristics and



needs of the major public transport modes, the arrangements for the provision of parking spaces for public transport service vehicles differ from those for general commercial vehicles and private cars. For franchised buses, at present, their parking spaces are mainly provided at bus depots and bus terminals in various districts. To cater for the operational needs of the relevant public transport services and optimise the use of limited land resources, the Government also permits franchised buses and PLBs to park at designated public transport interchanges and PLB stands at night.

As for taxis, given their mode of operation, they generally operate on the road round the clock and their parking demand is mainly for short duration stay. Hence, all along, TD has not made specific planning for parking provision for taxis. In fact, if taxi owners or drivers need to park for longer duration, they may choose to park at general parking spaces for private cars. The government multi-storey car parks under TD also provide parking spaces for taxis, and monthly parking tickets are sold to taxi owners or drivers at a concessionary rate.

Meanwhile, there are quite a number of short-term tenancy car parks in various districts of Hong Kong, providing parking spaces for different types of vehicles including public service vehicles like PLBs and taxis. Given the land resource situation in Hong Kong and the aforementioned policies, the Government has no plans at the current juncture to provide additional temporary car parks dedicated for public service vehicles. That said, we will closely monitor the parking demand of such vehicles.

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## **LCQ3: Theft of dangerous chemicals from university laboratories**

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Kin-por and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (December 11):

Question:

It has been reported that the laboratories of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and two other universities were intruded into one after the other by radical demonstrators last month, and some dangerous chemicals therein were stolen. The poisonous and dangerous chemicals stolen from CUHK include 17.5 litres of concentrated sulphuric acid, 2.5 litres of hexane, as well as 80 litres of concentrated nitric acid that may be used for making 10 000 acid bombs. If radical demonstrators use weapons made from such chemicals at demonstrations, the lives and safety of police officers and members of the public will be seriously threatened. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the total quantities of chemicals stolen from the various universities since June this year, and the quantities of lethal weapons that may be made from such chemicals;

(2) why CUHK's laboratories were allowed to store such large quantities of dangerous chemicals; of the legislation currently in place to regulate the storage of dangerous chemicals in various university laboratories; whether the Government will require the various universities to strengthen the security measures at their laboratories, so as to prevent dangerous chemicals from being stolen again; and

(3) in the light of the potential threats posed by demonstrators' possible use of highly lethal chemical weapons, how the Government safeguards the safety of frontline police officers and members of the public?

Reply:

President,

Recently, some universities were damaged or even occupied by protesters. Some even made and used weapons on campus, leaving university campuses in a devastated state and causing multiple injuries. The universities are assessing the damage done to their campuses while some have commenced restoration works. Moreover, some chemicals stored on campus for teaching and research purposes have been stolen. These include some toxic, corrosive, and inflammable chemicals. If outlaws use these items to make weapons, the lives and property of members of the public will be seriously affected with adverse consequences. The cases concerned are extremely serious and have posed dangerous threat to public safety. The universities have reported to the Police and left the cases to the Police for follow-up actions and investigations.

Our reply to Hon Chan Kin-por's question is as follows:

(1) The Education Bureau (EDB) has been maintaining liaison with the universities in respect of the incidents that have happened on campus in recent months. The EDB is aware of the theft of chemicals stored in certain universities, and the universities concerned have reported the matter to the Police for action. It is understood that the dangerous chemicals stolen from the three universities (including the City University of Hong Kong, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University) include toxic, corrosive, and inflammable items such as concentrated nitric acid and concentrated sulfuric acid. If these chemical substances are mixed with other liquids or mishandled, combustion and explosion might occur. Moreover, the improper use or storage of those substances will cause danger to oneself and others. Universities concerned are still sorting and counting the stolen chemicals, so the relevant quantities cannot be provided for the time being. The Police are actively recovering the missing items and so far no one has been arrested.

According to the Dangerous Goods Ordinance (DGO) (Cap 295), it is an offence for a person to store, convey or use dangerous goods exceeding an

exempt quantity without a valid licence. Besides, there have been cases in which people learned to make dangerous items from methods circulated on the Internet. The Police remind the public that manufacturing or conspiring to manufacture explosives is an extremely serious offence. According to section 54 of the Crimes Ordinance (Cap 200), the maximum penalty upon conviction will be 20 years' imprisonment. The Police have the confidence and ability to investigate such crime and urge members of the public should refrain from engaging in illegal activities.

(2) The storage of dangerous goods is regulated under the DGO, and the classification of dangerous goods and the exempt quantities of different categories of dangerous goods under the DGO are stipulated in the Dangerous Goods (Application and Exemption) Regulations (Cap 295A) and the Dangerous Goods (General) Regulations (Cap 295B) respectively. A licence issued by the Fire Services Department (FSD) under the DGO is required for storage of dangerous goods exceeding exempt quantities. Upon receipt of an application for a dangerous goods licence, the FSD will conduct a risk assessment based on the actual circumstances of each case and formulate corresponding fire safety requirements for the applicant to comply with. A licence for storage of dangerous goods will be issued to an applicant only after an inspection has been conducted and full compliance with the fire safety requirements is confirmed. FSD will also conduct inspections proactively from time to time. Should there be any violation of the fire safety requirements or conditions of licence, the FSD will take relevant enforcement actions in accordance with the DGO.

The EDB has learnt from the relevant institutions that there are laboratories in individual faculties (such as faculties of science, engineering, and medicine) of the University Grants Committee-funded universities and that the use of different chemicals is required for teaching and research purposes. If the chemicals in the laboratories fall within the definition of dangerous goods under the DGO, the universities have established a monitoring mechanism to ensure that the storage and use of dangerous goods on campus meet the requirements of the relevant ordinance. The laboratory management staff of the universities will procure and store the chemicals in accordance with actual teaching and research needs and strictly observe the DGO and other relevant fire safety regulations.

In response to the theft of chemicals in universities, all universities have taken prompt action to enhance on-campus security by hiring additional security staff, increasing security patrols, adopting identity verification and registration procedures at campus entrances/exits, and strengthening the security measures for dangerous goods stores. All students and staff of the universities have been informed of the relevant arrangements.

In view of the recent social situation and to further safeguard public safety, the FSD has proactively contacted the tertiary institutions to review the situation of the storage of dangerous goods on campus, and to remind the institutions to step up security measures, and report to the Police immediately if any dangerous goods or chemicals were found missing. The EDB will also provide universities with appropriate assistance in enhancing their security measures, depending on actual needs.

(3) The mission of the FSD is to protect the life and property of the public from fire or other calamity. When facing and handling incidents involving dangerous goods and chemicals, fire personnel will carry out firefighting and rescue operations in accordance with the relevant guidelines. In case unknown chemicals are found during an operation, the FSD will perform a risk assessment and take appropriate measures immediately. If necessary, the FSD will contact staff of the Government Laboratory and seek their professional advice on the proper handling of chemicals to protect public safety.

The Police attach great importance to the safety of police officers during their execution of duties, and have been proactively taking measures to review the personal protective equipment of front-line police officers from time to time. The Police will also procure or replace suitable equipment as appropriate, so as to meet the actual operational needs and enhance the safety of officers. If members of the public find any dangerous goods, they should seek assistance from the Police as soon as possible. To avoid injury, they should keep an appropriate distance from the dangerous goods and refrain from getting close to or touching them.

Thank you, President.

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## **Effective Exchange Rate Index**

The effective exchange rate index for the Hong Kong dollar on Wednesday, December 11, 2019 is 106.4 (up 0.1 against yesterday's index).