

EDB launches Pilot Project on the Development of Applied Degree Programmes

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (December 10) announced the launching of the Pilot Project on the Development of Applied Degree Programmes.

A spokesman for the EDB said, "The Pilot Project aims to gain experience in the practical issues involved in the development of applied degree programmes and assess the implications for the higher education system as a whole. To maximise the effectiveness of the Pilot Project, we are inviting institutions with at least three years' experience in offering self-financing degree programmes under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors (SSSDP) to express interest and submit proposals for taking part in the Pilot Project."

The spokesman said, "The selected institutions will be invited to each develop an applied degree programme by modifying the programme structure and curriculum of an existing degree programme with a strong industry element in a discipline with keen manpower demand, with reference to the coverage of the SSSDP. Subject to the satisfactory completion of relevant accreditation, the selected institutions are expected to launch the applied degree programmes in the 2022/23 academic year at the earliest."

The Pilot Project is launched in pursuance of a recommendation made by the Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET), which was established by the Government in 2018 to review and consider enhancements to the promotion of VPET in Hong Kong with a more targeted approach. The Task Force, chaired by Dr Roy Chung, submitted its review report to the Government in January 2020, recommending among others the development of applied degrees in Hong Kong with an applied focus. They should have the following distinct and prominent features that would differentiate them from other degree programmes:

- (a) the qualifications should be equivalent to those of conventional academic degrees (i.e. to be pitched at Qualifications Framework Level 5);
- (b) a more flexible admission requirement should be adopted. Apart from academic results, other relevant factors (e.g. achievements in Applied Learning subjects, skills-based competence and achievements, working experience, etc) should also be considered;
- (c) applied degree programmes should have an applied focus blending theory and practice, provide substantial internships and work-based learning experience, and prepare graduates for a specific trade/industry, though they can also support articulation to other qualifications; and

(d) there must be strong industry involvement in the development of applied degrees with trade recognition.