

EDB launches Quality Education Fund e-Learning Ancillary Facilities Programme

The Education Bureau (EDB) today (October 20) announced the launch of the Quality Education Fund e-Learning Ancillary Facilities Programme (the Programme) for supporting and promoting e-learning. Applications will be accepted from today.

A spokesman for the EDB said, "Under the epidemic, the blended mode of learning, i.e. face-to-face classes, e-learning at home and other modes of learning, has become the new normal in learning and teaching. The Quality Education Fund (QEF) has allocated \$500 million to set up the Programme with the aim of facilitating the development, enrichment and provision of e-learning ancillary facilities, in particular infrastructure which has the potential to be widely adopted such as systems, platforms and/or tools, etc, through fostering in-depth collaboration between the school sector, tertiary institutions, educational and professional organisations as well as the business sector, bringing benefits to the education sector at large."

With a two-pronged approach, this pilot programme will invite selected grantees of previously approved e-learning projects funded by the QEF to submit a proposal for further development and dissemination of the project deliverables (the Development and Dissemination Scheme); and open for tertiary institutions and/or school sponsoring bodies to apply for funding under the Programme to develop ancillary facilities for implementation of e-learning in schools (New Project Scheme).

The spokesman said, "Under this pilot programme, the QEF will relax the ownership of the intellectual property (IP) rights and the non-profit-making restriction under the QEF. Unlike the existing policy that the IP rights of QEF projects rests with the Permanent Secretary for Education Incorporated, the grantees will be allowed to own the IP rights of the projects under the Programme. Grantees may also generate income during the project period for covering the expenses of implementing the project. The purpose is to attract quality applications and help ensure project sustainability. Potential applicants are also welcome to identify and leverage on suitable QEF funded projects for developing new concepts for the New Project Scheme."

In July and August this year, the QEF Secretariat briefed all the tertiary institutions funded by the University Grants Committee and arranged a briefing for interested self-financing tertiary institutions. The Secretariat also briefed representatives of the school councils and major school sponsoring bodies. The education sector welcomes the Programme in general.

The QEF Secretariat will establish a task force for vetting the

applications of the Programme and providing professional advice. Members of the task force will include experts in information technology and representatives of the school sector, the higher education and business sectors as well as representatives of relevant government departments and organisations.

The spokesman added, "The EDB also issued a letter today to all public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools and kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme inviting them to participate in the Programme as partners of the projects to be developed by tertiary institutions and school sponsoring bodies. Schools may assist in contributing ideas to new e-learning initiatives, testing the deliverables through trial use as well as participating in the promotion and dissemination of project outcomes."

To facilitate local schools in learning about potential projects of project proponents and identifying e-learning projects of interest, the Hong Kong Education City (HKEdCity) has set up a matching platform for both parties. Interested schools may also use the platform to post their areas of interest for potential project proponents' invitations for participation. Meanwhile, project proponents may leverage on the strength of the HKEdCity as the centralised learning and teaching resources platform to promote their deliverables.

The QEF will provide one-off, non-recurrent and time-limited funding up to three years for the project, as well as sponsorship for publicly-funded schools to trial-use the deliverables for three years.

The information on the Programme and application details are available on the QEF website (www.qef.org.hk). The deadline for application is at the end of February 2022. The QEF Secretariat and the HKEdCity will organise briefing sessions for interested applicants later.

The QEF has earlier set aside \$2 billion to support e-learning by launching a three-year programme from the 2021/22 school year to ensure that all students will have equal opportunities in accessing e-learning and support the provision of ancillary facilities for implementation of e-learning. Under this initiative, a \$1.5 billion scheme, namely "the Quality Education Fund e-Learning Funding Programme – Provision of Mobile Computer Devices and Internet Services Support scheme", has been launched in May 2021 for schools to apply for funding with simplified procedures to purchase mobile computer devices for loan to needy students, and to provide Internet services support for students who are unable to acquire appropriate Internet services due to constraints of their living environment, so that all students have equal opportunities in accessing e-learning. Together with the launch of this e-Learning Ancillary Facilities Programme, it can help further promote and support e-learning.