

LCQ10: Post-secondary institutions' innovation and technology research projects and national security

â€‹Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (January 10):

Question:

National security covers 20 major fields, including science and technology security, cyber security and data security. On the other hand, according to Article 9 of the Hong Kong National Security Law, "The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall strengthen its work on safeguarding national security and prevention of terrorist activities. The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall take necessary measures to strengthen public communication, guidance, supervision and regulation over matters concerning national security, including those relating to schools, universities, social organisations, the media, and the internet". Regarding post-secondary institutions' innovation and technology (I&T) research projects and national security, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it knows, under the principle of safeguarding science and technology security, cyber security and data security, if various post-secondary institutions have taken measures to protect their I&T research projects from being stolen, pried into, unlawfully obtained, interfered or destroyed by hostile organisations or individuals;
- (2) whether the Government has taken measures to urge various post-secondary institutions to implement the work mentioned in (1); and
- (3) whether the Government has, under the principle of safeguarding science and technology security, cyber security and data security, taken measures to prevent hostile organisations or individuals from inciting, enticing or coercing researchers of various post-secondary institutions to engage in the acts mentioned in (1)?

Reply:

President,

The eight University Grants Committee funded universities are institutions established under their respective ordinances and are governed in accordance with the powers and procedures vested in their Councils under the respective ordinances. The institutions are not above the law, as all staff members and students must abide by the law, including the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (NSL). Article 6 of the NSL stipulates that any

institution, organisation or individual in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) shall abide by the NSL and other laws of the HKSAR in relation to the safeguarding of national security, and shall not engage in any act or activity which endangers national security.

While post-secondary institutions enjoy autonomy and academic freedom under the Basic Law, they must also ensure good governance and hold themselves accountable to the public. Their operations should comply with the law and meet the interests of their students and the community at large. Appropriate measures should also be taken by institutions to fulfil their obligations of safeguarding national security and promoting national security education in accordance with Articles 9 and 10 of the NSL. The Government has communicated with the institutions through regular channels to remind them of their statutory obligations under the NSL in order to strengthen the prevention and suppression of activities on campus that may violate the NSL or other laws.

For innovation and technology research, the Research Grants Council also reminds institutions and researchers of the need to comply with the law and other health, safety and ethic-related standards in the application forms for various research funding schemes. The institutions are also required to undertake to properly monitor their research projects to ensure compliance with the above requirements when submitting applications and accepting the approved funding. In addition, applicant organisations (including the institutions) are also required to conform with the laws of Hong Kong, including the NSL, under the various funding schemes of the Innovation and Technology Fund administered by the Innovation and Technology Commission.

Besides, the Government attaches great importance to information system and cyber security. Organisations in both the public and private sectors are crucial parts of our cybersecurity defense. The Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) has uploaded the Government IT Security Policy and Guidelines to its website for reference by public and private organisations concerning risk management principles and measures.

Additionally, the OGCIO has been working closely with the Hong Kong Computer Emergency Response Team Coordination Centre, the Cyber Security and Technology Crime Bureau of the Hong Kong Police Force and the Hong Kong Internet Registration Corporation Limited to provide appropriate support to public and private organisations, including publishing information related to cybersecurity incidents and security advice; setting up cybersecurity staff training platforms; promoting information security good practices; organising seminars and competitions; and implementing the "CyberDefender" programme and holding information security seminars, etc.