

LCQ10: Vocational and professional education and training

Following is a question by Professor the Hon William Wong and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (July 10):

Question:

The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address has proposed to work with the relevant Mainland authorities to take forward the arrangements for mutual recognition between Hong Kong and the Mainland of sub degree level qualifications and put such mutual recognition arrangements on trial for selected pilot areas. In addition, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) and Shenzhen Polytechnic University (SZPU) have co-organised joint dual award programmes (the Joint Programmes). The VTC also promotes the "One Examination, Multiple Certification" arrangement (the Arrangement) under which candidates only need to pass one common examination in order to have their qualifications recognised by Hong Kong, the Mainland, and international professional organisations. Regarding vocational and professional education and training (VPET), will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether the trial run of the aforesaid arrangements for mutual recognition of qualifications has kicked off; if so, of the pilot areas, and the sub-degree programmes which are related to VPET; of the planning for pilot areas in the next three years;

(2) whether it knows, in each of the past three years, (i) the titles of the programmes offered by the VTC which are related to the industries covered by the Arrangement, (ii) the number of candidates who successfully passed the relevant examinations under the Arrangement and obtained the relevant qualifications recognition, and (iii) the number of local candidates who worked in the Mainland through having their qualifications recognised by the Mainland under the Arrangement;

(3) whether it knows, in each of the past three years, (i) the titles of the Joint Programmes offered by the VTC, (ii) the number of students enrolled in such programmes and, among them, the number of those who successfully obtained higher diplomas from the VTC and professional diplomas and certificates from the Mainland;

(4) of the mechanism through which SZPU sends students to pursue studies in Hong Kong; whether the VTC has conducted survey on the interest of SZPU students towards pursuing studies in Hong Kong; if so, of the outcome; if not, whether it will consider conducting a survey on SZPU students' perceptions of the academic structure, tuition fees, accommodation, development prospects, etc. in Hong Kong, so as to facilitate the formulation of measures to attract them to pursue studies in Hong Kong; and

(5) whether it will establish post-secondary institutions specialising in offering VPET programmes mutually recognised by Hong Kong and the Mainland in the Northern Metropolis University Town?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been promoting the development of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) as a pathway parallel to conventional academic education. To this end, we adopt the strategy of fostering industry-institution collaboration and diversified development. This is also in line with the national strategies of strengthening vocational education in the modern era, by encouraging the articulation between vocational and academic studies, co-operation between industries and education, and the integration of science and education, with a view to nurturing higher quality talent with applied knowledge and skills to support the development of strategic industries and the economy.

Our reply to Professor the Hon William Wong's question is as follows:

(1) In line with the national policy of promoting the high-quality development of modernised vocational education, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government has been collaborating with the relevant Mainland authorities to take forward the mutual recognition of sub-degree level qualifications, including the Higher Diploma qualification. The HKSAR Government will continue to follow up on the relevant initiative.

(2) Under the "One Examination, Multiple Certification" (OEMC) system implemented by the Vocational Training Council (VTC), candidates may obtain relevant certificates issued by the Mainland, Hong Kong, and Macao by passing a standardised examination. The OEMC system is currently implemented in the beauty and hairdressing industries, with two levels of examinations available for each industry. For the beauty industry, upon satisfactory completion of the examination under the OEMC system, candidates are awarded the Certificate of Occupational Skill Level for beauticians on the Mainland, the Vocational Assessment Competency Certificate for the beauty industry in Hong Kong, and the Occupational Skills Certificate for beauticians in Macao. As for the hairdressing industry, candidates who complete the examination under the OEMC system are awarded the Certificate of Occupational Skill Level for hair stylists on the Mainland, the Vocational Assessment Competency Certificate for the hairdressing industry in Hong Kong, and the Occupational Skills Certificate for hair stylists in Macao. The OEMC system operates as an independent examination and is not tied to any particular programmes. The numbers of candidates who obtained certificates under the OEMC system in the past three years are as follows:

2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
100	125	154

Remarks: The VTC does not maintain statistics on the number of candidates working on the Mainland after obtaining certificates under the OEMC system.

(3) and (4) The VTC and the Shenzhen Polytechnic University (SPU) have reached agreement on five collaborative programmes, allowing VTC students to attend these programmes at SPU, while the SPU has not yet arranged its students to study the VTC's programmes in Hong Kong. In particular, three Higher Diploma (HD) programmes, namely Electrical Engineering (Electrical Services), Building Services Engineering, as well as Games and Animation, have been successfully launched. In the 2024/25 academic year (AY), the VTC and the SPU plan to launch two other programmes in Fashion Design as well as Hotel and Catering Management.

From the 2021/22 to 2023/24 AYs, a total of 73 the VTC students of HD programmes in Electrical Engineering (Electrical Services), Building Services Engineering, and Games and Animation attended the collaborative programmes at SPU. Among them, 53 students successfully obtained qualifications from both institutions.

In relation to attracting non-local vocational and professional talent, the Government introduced the Vocational Professionals Admission Scheme (VPAS) in 2023. Under the pilot initiative, non-local students (including those from the Mainland as well as other countries and regions) enrolled in designated full-time HD programmes of the VTC in the 2024/25 and 2025/26 AYs will be eligible for applying to stay in Hong Kong for one year after graduation to seek employment in trades relevant to their studies, with a view to alleviating the manpower shortage in skilled trades. In this connection, the VTC is proactively recruiting non-local students and will be providing comprehensive support in areas such as accommodation, language and communication, living in Hong Kong, and career development, in order to attract students to study in Hong Kong.

(5) The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address announces that the Government will endeavour to develop a Northern Metropolis University Town (NMUT) in the Northern Metropolis (NM), where post-secondary institutions are encouraged to strengthen co-operation with renowned Mainland and overseas institutions, and enhance synergy through sharing resources and enhancing collaboration with the industry sector in the area. To support the development of NMUT, the Government will reserve more than 60 hectares of sites in the area for post-secondary education development use.

Based on our preliminary idea, we will gradually take forward the relevant work, having regard to a series of objectives and strategies, including following an "industry-led" principle. We hope that the post-secondary education development in NM could suitably tie in with the different positionings of individual districts, promoting diversified development in collaboration with industries and strengthening synergy. In particular, we will consider proactively promoting VPET development in NMUT, facilitating co-operation between industries and education and integration of science and education, and supporting institutions to strengthen links and collaboration with industries in the area. Through incorporating enriched internship and work-based learning opportunities in programmes, institutions

could nurture professional skilled talent with applied abilities to cater to the keen manpower needs of various sectors, adding impetus to the industry development in the area.

The Education Bureau (EDB) has introduced the post-secondary education sites in NM to post-secondary institutions and consulted the institutions on their preliminary development intentions and proposals. The EDB is currently comprehensively considering the proposals and collating the information submitted by the institutions. In accordance with the abovementioned objectives and strategies, we will closely communicate with institutions which are interested in the development of the NM, with a view to taking forward the development of NMUT in phases.