

LCQ12: Employment of academic staff by post-secondary institutions

Following is a question by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (May 23):

Question:

Regarding the employment of academic staff by three types of institutions, namely universities funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC), departments of self-financing programmes under UGC-funded universities and self-financing post-secondary institutions, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number and percentage of part-time academic staff among the academic staff employed by each type of the institutions in each of the past five academic years, as well as a breakdown of such number and percentage of part-time academic staff by their duties (i.e. (i) research and teaching, (ii) research duty only and (iii) teaching duty only); set out in a table the aforesaid figures by name of institution and rank of staff;

(2) whether it knows a breakdown by employment mode (i.e. temporary contracts, fixed-term contracts of three years or less, long-term employment contracts and employment on tenure) of the number and percentage of academic staff employed by each type of the institutions in each of the past five academic years, as well as a breakdown of the number and percentage of the staff employed under each employment mode by their duties (i.e. (i) research and teaching, (ii) research duty only and (iii) teaching duty only); set out in a table the aforesaid figures by name of institution and rank of staff;

(3) whether it knows the respective mechanisms adopted by each type of the institutions under which the academic staff on fixed-term contracts may be promoted to become/converted to staff on long-term employment contracts and employment on tenure, and set out the details by name of institution;

(4) whether it knows the respective numbers of academic staff on (i) fixed-term contracts and (ii) long-term employment contracts of each type of the institutions who were promoted to become staff on tenure employment in each of the past five academic years, with a tabulated breakdown by name of institution and rank of staff;

(5) whether it knows the number of academic staff of each type of the institutions who departed in each of the past five academic years, with a tabulated breakdown by name of institution and rank of staff;

(6) whether it knows if each type of the institutions have established their salary scales for academic staff, as well as the median and average monthly

salary of academic staff of each type of the institutions in the past five academic years, with a tabulated breakdown by name of institution and rank of staff;

(7) whether it knows, among the academic staff currently employed by each type of the institutions, the median and average monthly salary and fringe benefits of those staff who have served in their respective positions on various ranks (i.e. Chair Professor, Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Principal Lecturer/Instructor, Senior Lecturer/Instructor, Lecturer/Instructor I and Lecturer/Instructor II) for five years or more, with a tabulated breakdown of the figures and information by name of institution and rank of staff;

(8) whether it knows, among the academic staff employed by each type of the institutions in the past five academic years, the number and percentage of those for whom the institutions provided quarters or housing allowances, with a tabulated breakdown by name of institution and rank of staff;

(9) whether it knows if the academic staff of each type of the institutions may, when they are not offered contract renewal, lodge a complaint through any mechanism other than the internal mechanism of the institution concerned; if they may, of the details; and

(10) whether the authorities have issued guidelines to the institutions on the remuneration packages for the academic staff employed by each type of the institutions?

Reply:

President,

The eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities (including their self-financing arms) are independent autonomous bodies established pursuant to their respective ordinances and each has a council to serve as the supreme governing body. The respective ordinances and statutes of the universities set out their objectives, functions and governance structure, and provide the universities with the power to carry out their objectives and functions.

The UGC Notes on Procedures clearly state that UGC-funded universities enjoy autonomy in the development of curricula and academic standards, selection of staff and students, initiation and conduct of research, internal allocation of resources, etc., and they are accountable for their decisions in these matters. The UGC has all along supported and safeguarded academic freedom and institutional autonomy in accordance with the Notes on Procedures, in the context of appropriate financial and public accountability. Appointment, promotion and remuneration of academic staff is a matter within the autonomy of the UGC-funded universities, and the Government and the UGC are not involved. In fact, the Government has deregulated the salary scales of UGC-funded universities in 2003.

Based on their individual circumstances, all UGC-funded universities have their personnel policies and mechanisms for handling the appointment and promotion of academic staff taking into account the merits of the cases and teaching needs, with an appeal mechanism to ensure fairness and impartiality in the conduct of such matter. The mechanism and procedures are clear and also made known to the staff through suitable channels, e.g. publication of internal circulars or the universities' intranets, etc. All universities will review and enhance in a timely manner the relevant arrangements as necessary. Academic staff may convey their views to the universities and relevant committees through different channels.

Similarly, self-financing post-secondary institutions enjoy academic freedom and are highly autonomous in internal management. The Education Bureau does not have a mechanism for collecting information requested in this question regularly, and does not issue guidelines to these institutions on the remuneration packages for their academic staff. Besides, the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education published the "Code of Good Practices on Governance and Quality Assurance" in June 2015 for self-financing institutions' voluntary compliance. The Code contains the following two provisions, among others –

"3.1.1 Institutions should have a fair and transparent human resources system which includes policies such as, but not limited to, recruitment and appointment, appraisal, complaint / grievances, promotion and termination, as well as policies and measures to facilitate staff development and to encourage and recognise good performance.

3.2.2 Institutions should publish annually information on staffing (including academic staff profiles) and learning and teaching facilities available to support programme delivery and student admission targets."

In view of the question raised by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen, the Education Bureau has invited UGC-funded universities and self-financing post-secondary institutions to respond to the relevant parts of the question. Information provided by those responding institutions is at Annex 1 to Annex 17. It should be noted that the information originates from individual statistical systems of institutions. Since individual systems may adopt different basis for data collection, the figures reported by different institutions are not directly comparable.