

LCQ12: Information technology contract staff in the Government

Following is a question by the Hon Mrs Regina Ip and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Alfred Sit, in the Legislative Council today (February 23):

Question:

Currently, various policy bureaux and departments of the Government (B/Ds) may, through a term contract centrally administered by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), engage contractors to employ information technology (IT) contract staff (T-contract staff) to provide IT services. Some members of the public have complained that the average salary of T-contract staff is too high and some of them access the Internet for leisure during working hours, and that the B/Ds concerned have not adopted the general regulatory standards under the performance management system applicable to civil servants for monitoring and evaluating the performance of T-contract staff. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the following information about T-contract staff as at December 2021: (i) their number, (ii) the year-on-year percentage change in their number over the past three years, (iii) the average number of years of their service and (iv) their average monthly salary, with a breakdown by B/D;
- (2) of the entry requirements (including qualification requirements) of T-contract staff, and whether they are required to possess recognised professional qualifications;
- (3) whether the OGCIO and the relevant B/Ds have provided internal working guidelines and on-the-job training for T-contract staff; if so, of the details; and
- (4) whether it has formulated key performance indicators in respect of the performance and work of T-contract staff; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

To cater for the operational needs of bureaux/departments (B/Ds), the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) selects T-contractors through a fair, open and competitive bidding process in accordance with the principles and procedures under the Stores and Procurement Regulations. The selected contractors have to propose suitable candidates meeting the required qualifications and experience of the relevant

T-contract positions for B/Ds' consideration. In accordance with the selection procedures stipulated in the Administrative Procedures of T-contract, B/Ds shall appoint a selection board comprising government officers with relevant qualifications to select qualified candidates for service engagement. In determining the remuneration packages of T-contract staff, T-contractors will take into account factors such as academic qualifications, professional skills and experience, manpower supply and demand of the market, etc. The existing T-contract (i.e. T25 Contract) lasts from February 1, 2019 to January, 31, 2023, including 14 T-contractors.

With regard to Hon Mrs Regina Ip's question, my reply is as follows:

(1) (i) to (iii) The respective number of T-contract staff engaged by B/Ds and the average years of service as at end-December 2021; and the year-on-year percentage change in the number of T-contract staff engaged by B/Ds over the past three years are set out in Tables 1 and 2 below respectively.

Table 1: Numbers of T-contract staff engaged by B/Ds in the past three years and the year-on-year percentage change (as at December 31 of each year)

B/Ds	Number of T-contract staff		
	as at December 31, 2019	as at December 31, 2020	as at December 31, 2021
Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department	35	42 (+20%)	41 (-2%)
Architectural Services Department	19	16 (-16%)	20 (+25%)
Auxiliary Medical Service	1	1 (-)	1 (-)
Buildings Department	24	27 (+13%)	29 (+7%)
Census and Statistics Department	34	32 (-6%)	39 (+22%)
Chief Secretary for Administration's Office	13	13 (-)	13 (-)
Civil Aid Service	1	2 (100%)	2 (-)
Civil Aviation Department	28	32 (+14%)	33 (+3%)
Civil Engineering and Development Department	23	23 (-)	29 (+26%)

Civil Service Bureau	16	19 (+19%)	23 (+21%)
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (Commerce, Industry and Tourism Branch)	7	8 (+14%)	7 (-13%)
Commerce and Economic Development Bureau (Communications and Creative Industries Branch)	2	2 (-)	2 (-)
Companies Registry	32	47 (+47%)	47 (-)
Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau	4	4 (-)	4 (-)
Correctional Services Department	13	13 (-)	17 (+31%)
Create Hong Kong	3	3 (-)	3 (-)
Customs and Excise Department	147	143 (-3%)	135 (-6%)
Development Bureau (Planning and Lands Branch)	6	10 (+67%)	14 (+40%)
Development Bureau (Works Branch)	29	30 (+3%)	30 (-)
Drainage Services Department	23	26 (+13%)	28 (+8%)
Education Bureau	187	211 (+13%)	219 (+4%)
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department	62	85 (+37%)	100 (+18%)
Environmental Protection Department	97	106 (+9%)	110 (+4%)

Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (Financial Services Branch)	1	1 (-)	1 (-)
Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau (The Treasury Branch)	4	4 (-)	3 (-25%)
Fire Services Department	33	37 (+12%)	39 (+5%)
Food and Environmental Hygiene Department	122	133 (+9%)	140 (+5%)
Food and Health Bureau	10	11 (+10%)	12 (+9%)
Government Flying Service	4	4 (-)	5 (+25%)
Government Laboratory	3	3 (-)	3 (-)
Government Logistics Department	17	16 (-6%)	13 (-19%)
Government Property Agency	7	7 (-)	7 (-)
Department of Health	183	235 (+28%)	253 (+8%)
Highways Department	8	9 (+13%)	10 (+11%)
Home Affairs Bureau	6	10 (+67%)	9 (-10%)
Home Affairs Department	16	21 (+31%)	20 (-5%)
Hong Kong Observatory	40	40 (-)	44 (+10%)
Hong Kong Police Force	158	165 (+4%)	167 (+1%)
Housing Department	203	248 (+22%)	237 (-4%)
Immigration Department	98	85 (-13%)	83 (-2%)
Information Services Department	18	19 (+6%)	22 (+16%)
Inland Revenue Department	147	154 (+5%)	180 (+17%)

Innovation and Technology Bureau	4	3 (-25%)	1 (-67%)
Innovation and Technology Commission	4	3 (-25%)	2 (-33%)
Intellectual Property Department	2	3 (+50%)	5 (+67%)
Invest Hong Kong	3	4 (+33%)	4 (-)
Judiciary	164	165 (+1%)	187 (+13%)
Department of Justice	55	56 (+2%)	58 (+4%)
Labour and Welfare Bureau	3	3 (-)	3 (-)
Labour Department	123	120 (-2%)	101 (-16%)
Land Registry	28	26 (-7%)	28 (+8%)
Lands Department	101	121 (+20%)	126 (+4%)
Legal Aid Department	8	9 (+13%)	8 (-11%)
Leisure and Cultural Services Department	126	116 (-8%)	133 (+15%)
Marine Department	26	28 (+8%)	29 (+4%)
Office of the Communications Authority	7	7 (-)	7 (-)
Office of the Government Chief Information Officer	340	340 (-)	366 (+8%)
Official Receiver's Office	4	5 (+25%)	3 (-40%)
Planning Department	16	16 (-)	14 (-13%)
Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office	2	2 (-)	2 (-)
Hongkong Post	93	84 (-10%)	80 (-5%)
Radio Television Hong Kong	12	11 (-8%)	11 (-)

Rating and Valuation Department	23	24 (+4%)	25 (+4%)
Registration and Electoral Office	28	33 (+18%)	44 (+33%)
Security Bureau	6	5 (-17%)	6 (+20%)
Social Welfare Department	130	190 (+46%)	235 (+24%)
Trade and Industry Department	20	25 (+25%)	27 (+8%)
Transport and Housing Bureau	1	2 (+100%)	2 (-)
Transport Department	74	72 (-3%)	70 (-3%)
Treasury	51	57 (+12%)	64 (+12%)
University Grants Committee	6	5 (-17%)	5 (-)
Water Supplies Department	18	18 (-)	24 (+33%)
Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency	91	77 (-15%)	82 (+6%)
Total ¹ / ₄ š	3 453	3 727 (+8%)	3 946 (+6%)

() Indicates percentage change as compared to the number of staff as at the same date of last year

(-) Indicates no change

Table 2: The average years of service of T-contract staff engaged by B/Ds (as at December 31, 2021)

Category of T-contract Staff	Years of Service
Senior Project Manager	11.2
Project Manager	7.1
Senior Systems Analyst	8.8
Systems Analyst	5.4
Analyst / Programmer	4.1
Programmer / Junior Programmer	2.6
Information Technology Assistant / Senior Information Technology Assistant	3.8

(iv) T-contract staff are employees of T-contractors. The Government does

not have related information on their salaries. With reference to the service fees for engaging T-contract staff by the Government, the average monthly per capita expenditure for engagement of T-contract staff is broadly on par with the pay level of comparable civil service ranks.

(2) The existing T25 Contract covers a total of ten T-contract staff categories. The requirements of basic qualifications and experience required for each staff category are set out in Part VI of the T25 Contract. In respect of positions responsible for programming, systems analysis and project management, the respective T-contract staff are generally required to possess a degree/an associate degree in information technology (IT) from a university in Hong Kong, or an associate degree or a higher diploma or a diploma in subjects other than IT or equivalent and two years' post-qualification working experience in the IT industry. After obtaining the above academic qualifications, the respective T-contract staff shall also possess relevant working experience in IT areas ranging from two to over ten years. As for the IT Assistant category, they are generally required to attain five passes (including specified subjects) in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination or the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination, and possess working experience in the control and operation of computer systems ranging from two to five years.

Apart from meeting the requirements of basic qualifications and experience of the specified T-contract staff category, the T-contract staff so engaged shall also meet the specified requirements on relevant IT skills and experience prescribed for the T-contract position concerned.

(3) In respect of the working guidelines, the T25 Contract stipulates that all T-contract staff shall observe the rules and regulations on conduct and related matters applicable to civil servants. For the supervising officers, apart from the day-to-day supervision of the work of their T-contract staff, they are also responsible for giving relevant working guidelines and regularly reminding them of the compliance requirement of relevant rules and regulations.

Generally speaking, the main function of T-contract staff is to complement the IT manpower needs of some short-term or time-limited projects. As T-contract staff have to possess the qualifications and experience required for their positions, it is generally not necessary for B/Ds to arrange on-the-job training for them. Owing to the rapid development of IT technologies, in order to enhance the IT knowledge, vision and awareness of T-contract staff, T-contractors have taken various measures, including providing discounts/subsidies for training courses, organising in-house training/workshops, and sharing the latest technology or training information on their company websites, etc. Under special circumstances or in case of direct relevance to the duties of T-contract staff concerned, e.g. supporting new technologies or emergence of new systems, B/Ds may, in accordance with the provisions of the T25 Contract, arrange job-related training for the T-contract staff or request T-contractors to arrange the required training. The OGCI0 has also opened up its training intranet for T-contract staff to access information about the latest technologies or training on the website.

(4) The Administrative Procedures of T25 Contract is formulated by making reference to relevant practices applicable to civil servants. Notwithstanding this, T-contract staff will not be assigned duties which involve confidential and sensitive information. In gist, the supervision and management of T-contract staff are mainly carried out through the following three aspects:

In respect of daily supervision, B/Ds shall assign a supervising officer to supervise the work of each T-contract staff as required in the Administrative Procedures. The supervising officer shall be at least one rank higher than the comparable civil service rank of the T-contract staff concerned;

T-contract staff are subject to regular performance assessments as applicable to civil servants. The supervising officers shall complete performance appraisal reports for their T-contract staff annually and upon their departure. Assessment aspects of the appraisal include IT knowledge and ethics, quality management, project monitoring and management skills, leadership, decision making and analytical skills, communication skills and crisis management skills. To ensure fairness and impartiality of the assessment, the performance appraisal report shall be countersigned by another government officer who is at least one rank higher than the supervising officer and shall have knowledge of the work of the T-contract staff concerned. After an appraisal report is countersigned, it will be provided to the T-contractor concerned for information and record; and

If the performance of a T-contract staff has failed to meet the requirements, B/Ds may terminate the service of the T-contract staff concerned in accordance with the Administrative Procedures of the T25 Contract and to initiate another round of procedures for engagement.