

LCQ16: Non-local students being admitted to funded universities through taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination

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 9):

Question:

In this year's Budget, the Financial Secretary proposed that the Government pay the examination fees for candidates sitting for the 2019 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE). The measure applies to candidates who are enrolled in the 2018-2019 school year in registered schools approved for participation in the 2019 HKDSE and apply to sit for the 2019 HKDSE through their schools. On the other hand, it has been reported that some Mainland students have applied for admission and have been admitted to the eight universities funded by the University Grants Committee (UGC) (funded universities) through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) by means of taking HKDSE in Hong Kong. Separately, under the prevailing policies, funded universities may admit non-local students to UGC-funded programmes only by way of over-enrolment of up to 20 per cent of the total approved student number. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether registered schools approved for participation in the 2019 HKDSE include tutorial schools registered in Hong Kong; if so, whether non-local students taking the HKDSE programmes offered by such tutorial schools are eligible to sit for the 2019 HKDSE for free;
- (2) of the number and percentage of non-local students among HKDSE candidates in each of the past five years, and the average number of subjects the examination on which such non-local students applied to sit for (with a breakdown by the place of origin of such students);
- (3) whether, under the prevailing policies, non-local students may apply for admission to funded universities through JUPAS on the basis of their HKDSE results; if so, whether the authorities know the number of non-local students who applied for admission to funded universities by such means and were admitted in each of the past five years (with a breakdown by the place of origin of such students and the name of the funded universities);
- (4) whether it knows if the funded universities concerned have used the subsidised places available for local students to admit the non-local students mentioned in (3); if so, whether such universities have correspondingly increased the number of places for application for admission

by local students; if not, how UGC ensures that the admission opportunities for local students will not be reduced as a result; and

(5) as some parents have relayed to me that although funded universities may admit non-local students only by way of over-enrolment of up to 20 per cent of the total approved student number, those students will still compete with local students for the limited places of the same programme, resulting in a lower chance for local students to be admitted to certain popular programmes, whether the authorities know if the various funded universities have at present set a ceiling on the percentage of non-local students in the total student number to be admitted to various programmes; whether the authorities will review the relevant arrangements with UGC?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the questions raised by the Hon Ip Kin-yuen is as follows:

(1) The participation of schools in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) is subject to the prior approval of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). At the time of application for participation, the school should provide evidence that it is a registered school and is running courses and operating classes in accordance with the Education Bureau registration requirements; and that the school agrees to comply with the examination regulations. The HKDSE Participating School List (as at December 15, 2017) is available on the HKEAA website:

www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/HKDSE/admin/participating_schools/generalsch.html. The participating schools are not classified into categories by the HKEAA.

The measure for the Government to pay the examination fees for candidates sitting for the 2019 HKDSE is applicable to school candidates. Under normal circumstances, visitors from other places to Hong Kong would not be admitted to schools and become school candidates. The implementation details are elaborated in the ensuing paragraph.

Only bona fide Secondary 6 students in the school year 2018/2019 of registered schools approved for participation in the 2019 HKDSE (participating schools) may be entered as school candidates in the 2019 HKDSE. The students must be studying at the registered address of the schools. At present, schools have to refer to the relevant Education Bureau Circular to check whether the person is permitted by the Director of Immigration to reside in Hong Kong when offering a school place to a person who is not a resident of Hong Kong. The registration entries of all students who are presented for the HKDSE by the participating schools must be approved by the school principals and submitted through the schools. Unless clearance is obtained from the Director of Immigration, visitors from other places to Hong Kong would not be admitted to any school in Hong Kong and hence he would not be able to enter for the HKDSE as a school candidate or be eligible for the measure of Government's payment of examination fees for candidates sitting for the 2019 HKDSE.

(2) According to the information provided by the HKEAA, when enrolling for the HKDSE, candidates need to provide their relevant personal data on the Hong Kong Identity Card (HKIC) or valid identification document for making relevant examination arrangements and identity verification. The HKEAA will not collect and handle any personal data irrelevant to examination administration, including the place of origin of students. Hence, the HKEAA does not have related statistics on the number of non-local candidates of the HKDSE. Referring to the statistics of identification document used by candidates, only a very small number of candidates do not use HKIC to enter for the HKDSE every year. The number of candidates who did not use HKIC to enter for the HKDSE from 2014 to 2018, the percentage among all candidates and the average number of subjects entered by them are as follows:

Year of examination	No. of candidates not using HKIC to enter for the HKDSE (percentage among all candidates)	Average no. of subjects entered
2018	184 (0.3 per cent)	5.5
2017	55 (0.09 per cent)	5.0
2016	42 (0.06 per cent)	4.2
2015	41 (0.06 per cent)	3.7
2014	44 (0.06 per cent)	3.3

(3) to (5) Currently, the Government, through eight UGC-funded universities, provides 15 000 first-year-first-degree intake places annually. All these intake places must be used for admitting local students. In accordance with the prevailing policy, UGC-funded universities could only admit non-local students to UGC-funded programmes by way of over-enrollment of up to 20 percent of the approved student number, irrespective of the academic qualifications or results of any given examination used by non-local students for their applications. This 20 percent should all be outside the UGC-funded places. As such, non-local students would not compete with local students for UGC-funded places. In addition, to ensure public money would not be used to cross-subsidise non-local students, non-local students have to pay tuition fees at a higher level as compared to local students. At present, non-local students are paying about three to four times the tuition fees paid by local students.

Established in 1990, the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) aims at handling centrally applications for admission to university programmes by students holding specific public examination results (currently the HKDSE). It is noteworthy that JUPAS is a system for processing admission applications centrally. The decision for admission is made by respective universities having regard to the admission criteria of different programmes.

According to the information provided by the JUPAS Office and UGC-funded universities, the number of non-local students who applied for admission to UGC-funded universities through the JUPAS route with HKDSE results and the

number of such students admitted by the universities in the past five years are set out at Annex.

UGC-funded universities have put in place appropriate measure to ensure local students' opportunity for admission is not affected by JUPAS application submitted by non-local students. In brief, applications of non-local JUPAS applicants will be considered together with applications made by other non-local students through the non-JUPAS route. If a non-local JUPAS applicant is admitted, he/she will not take up any UGC-funded intake places that were for admission of local students and offered through JUPAS. Hence, non-local students will not compete with local students for UGC-funded intake places.

As a matter of fact, UGC-funded universities consider applications for admission, irrespective of whether they are made by local or non-local students, in accordance with the principle of fairness and merit-based selection. Each university administers its own admission policy and criteria as well as approved intake places to identify candidates that best fit the faculty's admission requirements. As in the past, the ranking of a JUPAS applicant in the offer list of a particular programme is not determined solely by HKDSE results. Other factors that are taken into consideration include performance in interviews/tests, banding of programme choices, the number of applicants of a given programme at a given year and other information provided in the online application forms.