

LCQ16: Nurturing and import of information technology talents

Following is a question by the Hon Charles Mok and a written reply by the Secretary for Innovation and Technology, Mr Nicholas W Yang, in the Legislative Council today (October 24):

Question:

Regarding the nurturing and import of information technology (IT) talents, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of funding applications under (i) the Postdoctoral Hub Programme and (ii) the Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme, which are implemented under the Technology Talent Scheme, received and approved by the authorities since the Scheme was launched in August this year;

(2) of the number of companies involved in the approved applications under the Postdoctoral Hub Programme, and among such companies, the respective numbers of those which are (i) organisations funded by the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF), and (ii) incubatees and innovation and technology tenants of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation/Hong Kong Cyberport Management Company Limited (incubatees and IT tenants);

(3) of the types of courses and technology involved in the approved applications under the Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme, as well as the total amount of grants approved;

(4) of the respective numbers of applications for importing talents under the Technology Talent Admission Scheme (TechTAS) received and approved by the authorities since the TechTAS was launched in May this year; the utilisation of quotas by organisations which have been granted quotas (including the number of quotas granted and the number of non-local talents employed); a breakdown of the number of such non-local talents by their nationalities, the regions in which the institutions awarding the relevant degrees to them were located, the number of years for which they have worked in the relevant technology areas, and their average monthly salaries upon arrival in Hong Kong; the number of companies whose applications were approved, and among them, the respective numbers of those which are (i) the ITF-funded organisations, and (ii) incubatees and IT tenants; a breakdown of the number of such companies by business type (i.e. biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cyber security, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies and material science) and by the quota granted (i.e. one to five, six to 10, 11 to 20, 21 to 50 and more than 50 persons);

(5) given that the 11 professions covered by the first Talent List promulgated by the authorities in August this year include (i) experienced

data scientists and experienced cyber security specialists and (ii) innovation and technology experts, and that under the General Points Test of the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, bonus marks will be given to applicants who meet the specifications of the respective professions under the Talent List, of the respective up-to-date numbers of persons who have been assessed as meeting the specifications of the two professions;

(6) of the channels through which the various aforesaid subsidy, training and talents admission schemes are publicised and promoted by the authorities, as well as the relevant details;

(7) regarding the talents in specific IT areas who are in short supply in Hong Kong, whether the authorities will draw reference from the practices of governments of overseas countries, such as the implementation of a Capability Transfer Programme by the Singapore Government, and employ foreign specialists to transfer professional knowledge and technical skills to local staff; and

(8) whether the authorities will discuss with universities and relevant organisations with a view to organising more IT courses which are recognised by the Qualifications Framework, providing tuition fee subsidies and internship opportunities for students, as well as offering continuing education scholarships and professional certifications for graduates?

Reply:

President,

The required information is as follows:

1. As of October 15, 2018, the Postdoctoral Hub Programme has received 189 applications, of which 165 applications have been approved and the remaining ones are being processed. The Reindustrialisation and Technology Training Programme (RTTP) has received 43 training grant applications, of which 34 have been approved, involving 62 trainees. The remaining applications are being processed.

2. As of October 15, 2018, the applications approved under the Postdoctoral Hub Programme involve 14 organisations (including two private companies) with Research and Development (R&D) projects funded by the Innovation and Technology Fund (ITF) and 18 incubatees/innovation and technology (I&T) tenants of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation (HKSTPC) and Cyberport.

3. As of October 15, 2018, the RTTP has approved 34 training grant applications, which involve 11 registered public courses and different technology areas such as Industry 4.0 related technologies, information technology (IT), textile and clothing, biomedical and healthcare, automobile technology and environmental technology. The total funding amounts to some \$0.68 million.

4. Under the Innovation and Technology Commission (ITC)'s Technology Talent Admission Scheme (TechTAS), the technology companies/institutes applying for quotas to admit overseas and Mainland technology talent to undertake R&D work in Hong Kong must be tenants or incubatees of the HKSTPC or Cyberport. In addition, they must be engaged in the seven specified technology areas (i.e. biotechnology, artificial intelligence, cyber security, robotics, data analytics, financial technologies or material science).

Since its launch on June 25 till October 15, 2018, the TechTAS has received 156 quota applications. The ITC has approved a total of 139 quotas for 19 technology companies/institutes. Their business areas and number of quotas being awarded are set out in the Annex.

We do not keep information on whether the companies/institutes allotted with quota(s) have received funding from the ITF.

Many technology companies/institutes allotted with quota(s) have made use of the quotas for application to the Immigration Department (ImmD) for employment visa/entry permit for their non-local technology talent. As of October 15, 2018, the ImmD has approved 12 applications. Based on the information provided by the ImmD, details of the non-local persons approved for entry under the TechTAS by regions, locations of degree-awarding institution (for their highest qualification) and monthly remuneration are listed below:

Region	Number of non-local persons approved for entry under TechTAS
Mainland China	7
Asia	4
Australia	1

Location of the degree-awarding institution (for the highest qualification)	Number of non-local persons approved for entry under TechTAS
Mainland China	6
Asia	3
Australia	2
Europe	1

Monthly remuneration (HK\$)	Number of non-local persons approved for entry under TechTAS
\$20,000 – 39,999	3

\$40,000 – 79,999	6
\$80,000 or above	3

The ImmD does not keep information on the number of years of work experience of the concerned non-local persons in relevant technology areas.

5. To complement the Talent List of Hong Kong promulgated by the Labour and Welfare Bureau, the ImmD's Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS) has since August 28, 2018 provided immigration facilitation to eligible applicants. Applicants who meet the specifications of the respective professions under the Talent List, will be awarded 30 bonus points under the General Points Test of the QMAS, subject to documentary proof. As of September 30, 2018, the ImmD has received seven applications for data scientists and cyber security specialists, and 18 applications for innovation and technology experts under the Talent List. The applications are being processed.

6. The Government is committed to promoting the QMAS and other talent admission schemes. The Government launched a new Announcement in the Public Interest (API) for the QMAS on December 20, 2017, which is broadcast in major television stations, major control points and offices of the HKSAR Government outside Hong Kong. The relevant API has also been uploaded to the Youtube Channel and Facebook of the ImmD and Information Services Department to strengthen the publicity.

In addition, the Government attaches great importance to overseas publicity, including commissioning overseas publicity visits and strengthening the promotion through the economic and trade offices outside Hong Kong, the Invest Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and relevant organisations with a view to attracting talent to come to Hong Kong for development. After launching the TechTAS, we have promoted and introduced details of the scheme through different channels such as press releases, websites and online social media. We have also issued e-mails or letters to eligible organisations inviting them to participate in the scheme. Furthermore, we have been organising and participating in briefing sessions to introduce details of the scheme to industrial and trade organisations, universities, training bodies and incubatees/I&T tenants of the HKSTPC and Cyberport.

To promote the TechTAS, the ITC, the HKSTPC and Cyberport have disseminated relevant information via their respective websites. In addition, the ITC and the ImmD have held several briefing sessions at the Hong Kong Science Park and Cyberport, attracting over 300 participants. The HKSTPC has, through its one-stop business support centre TecONE, provided consultancy services relating to the TechTAS for technology companies/institutes. Cyberport has publicised the TechTAS via its e-newsletter, in addition to offering advisory services and briefings on the scheme to individual interested companies/organisations.

7. Having regard to the latest development of the IT sector, we have included experienced data scientists and cyber security specialists in the Talent List

of Hong Kong promulgated recently to attract more international technology talents to come to Hong Kong. To address the practical business needs of the industry, the Talent List will be updated from time to time to ensure that the relevant measures match the industry's demand for IT talents.

8. Over the years, the Government has been encouraging the universities and other local course providers to apply for and organise IT programmes recognised under the Qualifications Framework having regard to the latest market situation and demand. For example, the Vocational Training Council launched the Higher Diploma in Data Science and Analytics in 2017 and the Higher Diploma in Financial Technology in 2018. The relevant programmes are listed on the Qualifications Register (QR).

In addition, a series of enhancement measures for the Continuing Education Fund (CEF) will be implemented with effect from April 1, 2019. These include doubling the subsidy ceiling to \$20,000 per applicant and expanding the scope of the CEF courses to all eligible courses registered on the QR. The QR now covers 14 areas of study and training including computer science and information technology.