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Table 4

Name of institution	(iv)								
	2021/22 school year			2022/23 school year			2023/24 school year		
	RPg	TPg	Total	RPg	TPg	Total	RPg	TPg	Total
(a)									
(b)									
(c)									

(2) of the total number of projects receiving funding under the Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education in the past two school years, and set out in a table the following information in respect of each approved project: (i) institution, (ii) the industry/sector involved in the project, (iii) project name, (iv) offering mode (i.e. full-time or part-time), (v) grants approved, (vi) cost savings and percentage, (vii) the key areas for which the grants are used and (viii) the number of students benefited; if there were rejected project applications, the percentage of rejected projects in each round of application and the specific reasons for that;

(3) whether the UGC has considered launching a new round of Matching Grant Scheme, and through regularly injecting funds and adopting a two-tier matching formula to promote the long-term development of local post-secondary institutions (including self-financing post-secondary education institutions (self-financing institutions)) in projects such as independent research and development (R&D), commercialisation of R&D outcomes, and facilitation of the construction of disciplines in which Hong Kong has a pressing need for talents, so as to tie in with the National 14th Five-Year Plan and the Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Development Blueprint to develop Hong Kong into an international innovation and technology centre; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) given that currently there is still a cap on the number of non-local students that publicly-funded institutions and self-financing institutions may admit, of the specific details of the implementation of the relevant requirements by various post-secondary institutions in the 2022/23 school year and the current school year, and set out, by programme level, in tables 5 and 6: (a) in respect of non-local students, (i) their number and (ii) their percentage in the funded student quota of the relevant programmes, and (b) in respect of the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan students enrolling in SD and Ug programmes, (iii) their number and (iv) their percentage in the total student enrolments of the relevant programmes in the preceding school year;

Table 5

Name of institution	Level of study	(a)			
		2022/23 school year		2023/24 school year	
		(i)	(ii)	(i)	(ii)
	SD programme				
	Ug programme				
	TPg programme				

Total	SD programme				
	Ug programme				
	TPg programme				

Table 6

Name of institution	(b)					
	2022/23 school year			2023/24 school year		
	(iii)		(iv)	(iii)		(iv)
	SD	Ug		SD	Ug	

(5) whether it will consider completely revoking the cap on the number of non-local students (especially Mainland students) who may be admitted to self-financing programmes offered by publicly-funded institutions and self-financing institutions in order to make good use of higher education resources and build up the talent pool, thereby further achieving the goal of building Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education as proposed by the Chief Executive in the 2023 Policy Address; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) as it is learnt that self-financing institutions, before offering programmes in a new subject (including SD, Ug and TPg programmes), are required to obtain approval from the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications, the relevant professional bodies and the Education Bureau, and it can take years from the organisation to the offering of such programmes, some members of the sector are of the view that some of the relevant procedures are redundant and outdated and have imposed many constraints on self-financing institutions, whether the authorities will, on the premise of maintaining the quality of education and credibility, consider reviewing and streamlining the administrative procedures for vetting and approving the programmes offered by self-financing institutions, in order to meet the manpower demand in the market (particularly for the development of innovation and technology as well as emerging industries) and expeditiously offer places in the corresponding programmes; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

It has all along been the Government's policy to support the parallel development of the publicly-funded and self-financing post-secondary education sectors. The self-financing sector helps diversify our higher education system and provides more education opportunities for our secondary school graduates. In pursuance of this policy, the Education Bureau (EDB) exercises oversight of the self-financing institutions, focusing on ensuring their transparency of operation, quality assurance, and good governance, while implementing a host of support measures for institutions as well as providing subsidies for students to promote the healthy and sustainable development of the self-financing sector.

Our reply to the questions raised by Dr the Hon Chow Man-kong is as follows:

(1) The numbers of academic staff members of the self-financing post-secondary institutions by institution from the 2022/23 to 2023/24 academic years (AYs) are at Annex 1.

The Competitive Research Funding Schemes for the Local Self-financing Degree Sector was launched in 2013 to support the academic and research development of the local self-financing degree-awarding sector on a competitive basis through the funding of the Research Endowment Fund. The amounts of funding allocated to participating institutions under the Schemes by institution from 2022-23 to 2023-24 are at Annex 2.

The numbers of students enrolled in full-time locally-accredited self-financing sub-degree (SD) and undergraduate (Ug) programmes by institution from the 2021/22 to 2023/24 AYs are at Annex 3.

The numbers of students enrolled in locally-accredited self-financing research postgraduate (RPg) and taught postgraduate (TPg) programmes by institution from the 2020/21 to 2022/23 AYs are at Annex 4. The relevant statistics for the 2023/24 AY are being consolidated and are not available at the moment.

(2) In the 2021/22 and 2022/23 rounds of applications of the Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education (ESGS), 19 and eight applications were received respectively, among which four and two projects were approved with a total grant of about \$117 million and \$57 million respectively. The approved projects cover a range of sectors, including allied health, art technology, game design, engineering, construction management, and supply chain management, which are conducive to catering for the keen manpower demands of the relevant industries. Details of the approved projects are at Annex 5.

Under the ESGS, the Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education (CSPE) will advise the Secretary for Education on the merits of the applications, having regard to the following:

(a) whether a programme under application is able to nurture talent for a specific industry that has been identified with a strong human resources need/gap that has not been filled;

(b) whether a programme under application is in line with the relevant institution's strategic positioning in the sector and its academic development plan; and

(c) the programme design, costs, financial sustainability, student admission plan, and any other relevant factor.

The Secretary for Education will consider the recommendations of the CSPE and all relevant factors when making funding approval under the ESGS.

(3) With the approval of a commitment of \$3 billion by the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council in June 2019, the University Grants Committee (UGC) implemented the Research Matching Grant Scheme (RMGS) in August 2019. To date, participating universities/institutions have submitted applications with donations amounting to \$5.13 billion for matching grants approved under the RMGS. The total amount of matching grants disbursed is \$2.87 billion and the remaining \$130 million is expected to be disbursed within this year.

From the reports submitted by the universities/institutions to the UGC, it is noted that the RMGS has contributed to a wide range of outcomes relating to funded research projects, including journal publications, scholarly books, patents, international academic/research awards, and international accreditation. Some scientific research outcomes have been successfully commercialised, contributing to society in innovation and technology areas such as artificial intelligence, big data, and biomedical engineering. The Government currently has no plan to launch a new round of RMGS.

(4) and (5) The eight UGC-funded universities may admit non-local students to UGC-funded taught programmes by way of over-enrollment. The non-local student enrolment ceiling will be doubled from the currently a level equivalent to 20 per cent of the local student places to 40 per cent with effect from the 2024/25 AY. It is worth noting that all non-local students pursuing UGC-funded taught programmes do not receive public funding, and that the number of such non-local students is accounted for separately from local student places so as to ensure that study opportunities for local students will not be affected.

In the 2022/23 and 2023/24 (provisional figures) AYs, the proportion of non-local students studying UGC-funded Ug programmes were 19.2 per cent and 19.9 per cent, and the proportion for TPg programmes were 6.2 per cent and 6.5 per cent respectively. There were only very few non-local students enrolled in SD programmes. Statistics of non-local students studying SD, Ug, TPg, and RPg programmes at individual UGC-funded universities are set out at Annex 6. There is no quota restriction for the admission of non-local students to UGC-funded RPg programmes.

As regards the self-financing post-secondary sector, save for students from the Mainland, Macao and Taiwan (MMT), there is no restriction on the admission of non-local students to full-time locally-accredited self-financing local SD, Ug, TPg, and RPg programmes. For MMT students, six local self-financing post-secondary institutions, namely, Hong Kong Metropolitan University (HKMU), Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSJU), The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong (HSUHK), Hong Kong Chu Hai College, Tung Wah College, and Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong under the Vocational Training Council, have been approved by the Ministry of Education (MoE) to admit Mainland students to their full-time locally-accredited self-financing local degree programmes. Under the mechanism agreed by the MoE, there is a quota restriction on the number of MMT students enrolled in full-time locally-accredited self-financing local SD and Ug (including top-up

degree) programmes by these six specified self-financing institutions in each AY, which should normally not exceed 10 per cent of the total student enrolment in such programmes in the preceding AY. There is no quota restriction for postgraduate programmes. In accordance with the abovementioned mechanism, taking into account relevant institutions' satisfactory track record, performance in admission of local and Mainland students, and the utilisation of the prevailing quota, the EDB has increased the relevant quota applicable to HKMU, HKSYU, and HSUHK to 20 per cent with effect from the 2023/24 AY. As regards SD programmes, all self-financing institutions may admit non-local students (including MMT students) to their full-time locally-accredited self-financing local SD programmes, and the above-mentioned 10 per cent or 20 per cent quota is also applicable.

The numbers of MMT students of full-time locally-accredited self-financing local SD and Ug programmes of self-financing post-secondary institutions as well as the respective percentages of the total student enrolments in such programmes in the preceding AY from the 2022/23 to 2023/24 AYs, by institution and level of study, are at Annex 7.

The Chief Executive's 2023 Policy Address outlined the direction to develop Hong Kong into an international education hub and a cradle of future talent. The Government is further harnessing the advantages of Hong Kong's post-secondary education in terms of internationalisation and diversification, with a view to proactively developing Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub. While attracting and nurturing diverse talent, and creating strong impetus for the development of Hong Kong, we aim to facilitate people-to-people bond, serve Hong Kong, and contribute to the country. In this connection, the Government is launching a number of initiatives, including doubling the non-local student quota of publicly-funded post-secondary institutions to 40 per cent of the local student places with effect from the 2024/25 AY. The institutions may, having regard to their own conditions, progressively attract more non-local students. As regards the self-financing post-secondary education sector, the Government will continue to explore with the MoE feasible enhancements to the arrangements for Mainland students to study in Hong Kong, with a view to achieving the abovementioned policy objectives.

(6) In view of their self-financing mode of operation, self-financing institutions enjoy greater flexibility in programme development to respond to the ever-evolving manpower needs of different sectors of society, complementing publicly-funded institutions in providing diversified articulation pathways for young people and nurturing talent needed by the market.

While upholding the spirit of institutional autonomy, the EDB has been working closely with self-financing institutions and the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) to ensure that the quality of the programmes offered by relevant institutions meet the corresponding standards on the one hand, and to facilitate the strategic co-ordination of the self-financing sector on the other hand, supporting institutions to develop their distinct niche areas and responding

to society's manpower needs in a timely manner.

In general, except for institutions with self-accrediting status, self-financing institutions are required to go through the relevant accreditation by the HKCAAVQ before launching post-secondary programmes (i.e. degree and sub-degree programmes), so as to ensure that the governance structure, academic standards and quality, teacher quality, quality assurance mechanisms, and financial conditions, etc, meet the required standards.

For degree programmes, self-financing institutions registered under the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) are required to go through HKCAAVQ's independent external academic accreditation and obtain the prior approval of the Chief Executive-in-Council (CE-in-C) before awarding new degrees. Before conducting academic accreditation, institutions are required to consult the EDB on their proposed programmes to facilitate the strategic co-ordination of the self-financing sector, with a view to ensuring that self-financing programmes could cater to actual market needs and nurture talent with the required skills of the industries.

As regards sub-degree programmes (i.e. Higher Diploma and Associate Degree programmes), institutions are required to develop relevant programmes in accordance with the EDB's Revised Common Descriptors for Associate Degree and Higher Diploma Programmes and go through HKCAAVQ's independent external academic accreditation, so as to ensure that the design and teaching and learning of the relevant programmes could meet society's needs and expectations. Relevant programmes are not required to obtain the prior approval of CE-in-C.

In fact, HKCAAVQ's quality assurance mechanism and standards are widely recognised internationally. It underwent external benchmarking exercises in 2021 and 2023 respectively and has become the first quality assurance agency in the Asia-Pacific Region to have attained recognition from both the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education. The EDB will continue to work closely with the HKCAAVQ to continuously enhance the quality assurance mechanism for the self-financing sector and provide facilitation, with a view to supporting self-financing institutions to develop quality programmes that meet manpower needs, while promoting the development of vocational and professional education and training.