

## LCQ2: Promoting co-operation between Hong Kong and Mainland higher education institutions

Following is a question by the Hon Stanley Ng and a reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (June 7):

Question:

There are views that with limited university places and an insufficient scale of academic staff members and researchers in Hong Kong, it is difficult to generate economies of scale. In order to develop Hong Kong into and consolidate its position as a regional hub for international higher education, a very important measure is to make use of and combine with the Mainland's educational resources to achieve the complementarity of advantages and combination of strengths. Hence, universities in Hong Kong should establish long-term co-operation and strategic relationships as well as deepen co-operation in academic research and teaching with outstanding universities on the Mainland, so as to achieve the complementarity of resources and mutual recognition of qualifications. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the work carried out by the Government in respect of promoting co-operation and establishing strategic relationships between Hong Kong and Mainland universities;

(2) how the Government will facilitate and encourage co-operation between Hong Kong and Mainland institutions to achieve the complementarity of advantages; and

(3) as there are views that while the Mainland attaches great importance to vocational education and has a well-developed and multi-level vocational education system, the development of vocational education in Hong Kong is relatively slow, how the Government strengthens the mutual recognition of both academic qualifications and qualifications conferred by Hong Kong and Mainland institutions, deepens academic exchanges and connectivity between Hong Kong and Mainland institutions and their co-operation in vocational education, as well as takes advantage of the country's opportunities and vast market to provide young people with better vocational development opportunities?

Reply:

President,

Hong Kong is home to 22 degree-awarding post-secondary education institutions which dedicates themselves to the nurturing of a new generation

of young people with an affection of our country and Hong Kong and equipped with global perspectives with the provision of diversified programmes. Five of these institutions are even among the top 100 universities in the world, actively engaging in world-class research with their highly diversified and internationalised advantages. Hong Kong strives to become a regional hub of international higher education with a view to providing quality talents in support of the rapid development of the country, thereby playing the role of leveraging Hong Kong's advantages for meeting the country's needs.

Our reply to the Hon Stanley Ng's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The Government has done substantial work in the drive, facilitation and encouragement of higher education co-operation between Hong Kong and the Mainland with a view to complementing each other's advantages, especially in maintaining a close collaboration in the areas of scientific research co-operation, student exchange, talent nurturing and collaboration in providing education services. As of November 2022, there were 2 320 active academic research collaboration projects between higher education institutions of Hong Kong and the Mainland. Six Hong Kong higher education institutions have thus far set up industry-education-research bases or institutes in Shenzhen to further strengthen co-operation with Mainland institutions in scientific research, giving full play to Hong Kong's position as an international innovation and technology centre.

Firstly, on the joint provision of education services, with the country's policy support in recent years, a number of Hong Kong's higher education institutions have begun education collaboration projects in different forms in the Mainland cities of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA). Among them, Hong Kong Baptist University partnered with Beijing Normal University to establish the Beijing Normal University-Hong Kong Baptist University United International College in Zhuhai in 2005; the Chinese University of Hong Kong partnered with Shenzhen University to establish the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen) in 2014; and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou) commenced operation in September 2022. Meanwhile, the first phase of City University of Hong Kong's Dongguan campus is expected to complete within 2023, while the Shenzhen campus of the University of Hong Kong is under preparation. The Education Bureau (EDB) will actively assist Hong Kong higher education institutions in exploring more flexible and innovative operation models to promote closer collaboration with their GBA campuses, so as to facilitate the flow of faculty members and students with a view to nurturing outstanding talents needed by the country's development and synergising the complementary academic structures and facilities of the Hong Kong and Mainland campuses.

Secondly, the EDB supports the establishment of alliances between higher education institutions of Hong Kong and the Mainland. With the support of the Ministry of Education and relevant education departments, Hong Kong's higher education institutions have established four alliances with institutions of the Mainland and Macao, namely the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao University Alliance, the Beijing-Hong Kong University Alliance, the Shanghai-Hong Kong University Alliance and the Jiangsu-Hong Kong-Macao University Alliance,

bringing together over 80 elite institutions. Through a comprehensive co-operation mechanism, the alliances gather high-quality teaching and research resources and deepen the mutual benefits of member institutions in areas such as scientific innovation and talent exchange, thereby enhancing the level and standard of regional co-operation.

In addition, the EDB has entered into education co-operation agreements with a number of Mainland provinces and municipalities, providing the framework for co-operation in education exchanges between the two places. This will encourage higher education institutions of the two places to strengthen exchanges and co-operation in the areas of talent nurturing, teacher exchange and academic research, as well as support institutions to explore the joint provision of education services by leveraging on their respective areas of academic strengths and characteristics.

Looking forward, we will continue to actively participate in and promote higher education collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland. This is to be achieved through the establishment of multilateral and cross-disciplinary partnerships, thereby capitalising on the characteristics of our higher education sector and its advantages of being internationalised, as well as through creating favourable conditions for research development, knowledge transfer and industrialisation as a demonstration of the complementary advantages of the two places.

(3) The Government has been proactively promoting mutual recognition of academic qualifications between Hong Kong and Mainland institutions, as well as deepening exchanges and collaboration on Vocational and Professional Education and Training (VPET). The Government has all along been committed to promoting the development of VPET. As a major VPET provider in Hong Kong, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) has been cultivating a diversified workforce for Hong Kong and proactively exploring collaboration with Mainland and non-local VPET institutes in different areas.

Firstly, to further promote VPET collaboration with the Mainland, the VTC officially opened its first operation centre in Shenzhen in March 2023. Through the operation centre, the VTC will build a VPET exchange platform to foster its collaboration with partners on the Mainland, including in the areas of field studies, workplace attachment and training, and programme exchange, with a view to helping more young people in Hong Kong understand the developments of the country and enabling students on the Mainland to learn about the VPET scene and different progression pathways in Hong Kong, thereby cultivating more talents with applied skills for Hong Kong, the GBA and the country.

In addition, with the support of the HKSAR Government and the Shenzhen Municipal People's Government, the VTC works closely with the Shenzhen Polytechnic (SZPT). The two parties signed a collaborative framework agreement in December 2020 to pursue further collaboration in areas including offering joint programmes, providing workplace attachment and training and exchange opportunities, and research and development. In 2021, they signed a further collaborative agreement to strengthen their collaboration in organising joint programmes and workplace attachment and training. There are

eight programmes jointly organised by the two parties that have successfully passed the accreditation of the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and are recognised by the Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF). The VTC is also actively expanding its networks with Mainland institutes by different means, which include establishing the GBA Student Exchange Alliance with the SZPT, Zhongshan Polytechnic and Guangzhou Huashang Vocational College, fostering the development of vocational skills in the GBA.

Thirdly, since the signing of the Letter of Intent on QF Co-operation between Hong Kong and Guangdong between the EDB and the Department of Education of Guangdong Province in 2019, the EDB, the QF Secretariat, and the HKCAAVQ have been working closely with the relevant authorities in the Guangdong Province to foster qualifications framework-related collaboration between the two places. In early 2022, the HKCAAVQ accepted the invitation from the relevant authorities in the Guangdong Province to provide a two-year consultancy service to support the development of the Guangdong Lifelong Education Qualifications Framework, including providing assistance in establishing a quality assurance mechanism, accreditation standards and procedures, piloting accreditation exercises, and developing guidelines for setting up a qualifications register. We support the HKCAAVQ in providing further assistance in the development of the Guangdong Lifelong Education Qualifications Framework, thereby laying the foundation for liaison and co-operation between the qualifications frameworks of the two places in the long term.

In the future, through the platforms of the qualifications frameworks of the two places, we will also continue to actively facilitate and support the relevant bureaux and departments with regard to the situation of individual sectors in pursuing constructive interactions and diversified co-operation in the areas of manpower resources and qualifications with the Mainland, providing momentum for the developments of Hong Kong, the GBA and the country.