

UGC welcomes Central Government's new policy to allow cross-border remittance of research funding

The following is issued on behalf of the University Grants Committee:

The Chairman of the University Grants Committee (UGC), Mr Carlson Tong, today (May 16) welcomed the new policy of the Central Government to open up science and technology funding by the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the Ministry of Finance for application by the higher education institutions and research institutions in Hong Kong.

Mr Tong said, "I am very pleased and appreciate very much the support given by the Central Government in allowing the UGC-funded universities to bid for state funding to undertake science and technology projects in the Mainland. This new initiative is an important milestone in supporting research in the higher education sector of Hong Kong. It will certainly give our universities great impetus for further development. The UGC calls upon the universities to capture this valuable opportunity and continue to foster collaboration between Hong Kong and the Mainland on the research front.

I believe this new policy would attract young people to join academia and retain talents in Hong Kong. This will surely enhance the overall competitiveness of Hong Kong in the long run."

The Chairman of the Research Grants Council (RGC), Professor Benjamin Wah, welcomed the policy, which he said will allow the RGC to work more closely with the MOST and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Manager of unlicensed guesthouse convicted

A woman was sentenced to four weeks' imprisonment, suspended for two years and fined \$12,000 at Kowloon City Magistrates' Courts today (May 16) for contravening the Hotel and Guesthouse Accommodation Ordinance.

The courts heard that in October last year, officers of the Office of the Licensing Authority (OLA), the Home Affairs Department, inspected a suspected unlicensed guesthouse on Sai Yee Street in Mong Kok. During the inspection, the OLA officers posed as lodgers and successfully rented a room in the guesthouse on a daily basis.

According to the OLA's record, the guesthouse did not possess a licence under the Ordinance on the day of inspection. The woman responsible for managing the premise was charged with contravening section 5(1) of the Ordinance.

A department spokesman stressed that operating or managing an unlicensed guesthouse is a criminal offence and will lead to a criminal record. Upon conviction, the offender is liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The spokesman appealed to anyone with information about suspected unlicensed guesthouses to report it to the OLA through the hotline (Tel: 2881 7498), by email (hadlaenq@had.gov.hk), by fax (2504 5805) using the report form downloaded from the OLA website (www.hadla.gov.hk), or through the mobile application "Hong Kong Licensed Hotels and Guesthouses".

LCQ7: Expenditure on consultancy fees for public works projects

Following is a question by the Hon Tony Tse Wai-chuen and a written reply by the Secretary for Development, Mr Michael Wong, in the Legislative Council today (May 16):

Question:

Regarding the expenditure on consultancy fees involved in the delivery of public works projects, will the Government inform this Council of:

1. the following information in respect of the public works projects with an approved estimated cost exceeding \$15 million implemented by each works department in the past three years:

- (i) the title of the construction project;
- (ii) the approved estimated project expenditure;
- (iii) the comparison between the original estimated expenditure on consultancy fees at the design stage and the approved estimated project expenditure;
- (iv) the awarded price of the contract for the construction works;
- (v) the comparison between the original estimated expenditure on consultancy fees at the design stage and the awarded price of the consultancy contract (design stage); and
- (vi) the reasons for the discrepancy between the original estimated expenditure on consultancy fees at the design stage and the awarded price of the consultancy contract (design stage) (set out in a table).

(2) the criteria and methods adopted for calculating the expenditure on consultancy fees for public works projects at the design stage, and whether a limit has been imposed on the expenditure concerned?

Reply:

President,

To continuously improve people's quality of life, enhance Hong Kong's long-term competitiveness and promote our economic development, the Government has been implementing all types of public works projects in an orderly manner. The implementation of public works projects involves efforts on various fronts including project study, investigation, design, construction supervision and contract management, and requires the participation of a large number of professional and qualified persons as well as support of other technical personnel. In general, government departments will procure architectural or engineering consultancy services when the Government does not have sufficient in-house manpower resources to implement public works projects within a reasonable period of time.

My reply to Hon Tony Tse Wai-chuen's question is as follows:

(1) For public works projects implemented by the works departments (involving project design undertaken by consultants) with funding approved in the past three years, the information including the title of the construction project, the approved project estimate (APE), the awarded prices of works contract(s) as well as the comparison between the original estimated consultancy fees for the design stage and the APE of the construction project is set out at Annex 1 (Note 1).

The comparison between the original estimated consultancy fees for the design stage and the awarded prices of consultancy agreements (design stage) is provided at Annex 2 (Note 2).

As indicated in Annex 2, the awarded prices of about 71 per cent of the architectural or engineering consultancy agreements concerned are lower than the works departments' pre-tender estimates.

In general, the differences between the original estimated consultancy fees for the design stage and the awarded prices of consultancy agreements (design stage) are attributable to a number of factors, which can broadly be classified as follows:

- * competition and price fluctuations in the consultancy services market;
- * changes in the job market and wage fluctuations for professionals and technical personnel;
- * different working strategies proposed by consultants based on the complexity and risks of individual projects;
- * Innovative and creative proposals of different consultants to meet the needs of individual projects; and
- * Previous experience, knowledge and expertise of different consultants and

their employees.

(2) At present, the procurement of architectural or engineering consultancy services undertaken by works departments shall follow the Stores and Procurement Regulations, the Architectural and Associated Consultants Selection Board Handbook or the Engineering and Associated Consultants Selection Board Handbook, and the relevant Development Bureau Technical Circulars (Works) (DEVB TC(W)).

During the procurement of architectural or engineering consultancy services, works departments will follow the above guidelines to compile the estimated consultancy fees taking into account the required manpower input of various categories of professional and technical personnel and the associated market rates based on the degree of complexity of and efforts required for various disciplines in taking forward individual public works projects. Therefore, there may not be a fixed relationship between the estimated consultancy fees for the design stage and the APE of a construction project.

All along, the works departments have attached great importance to the quality and cost-effectiveness of professional services provided by architectural or engineering consultants. Therefore, both the professional technical proposals and tender prices are key considerations in the selection of consultants. According to DEVB TC(W) No. 2/2016 and the related Consultants Selection Board Handbooks, the works departments will generally adopt a "two-envelope" bidding system in the selection of consultants, in which consultants' technical proposals and tender price proposals are assessed separately and then the overall best performing tender will be selected. The competitiveness of a tender is subject to the quality of its technical proposal and how high or low its price is. Moreover, to prevent consultants from bidding at an unreasonable price level, the works departments would compare consultants' tender prices with the estimated prices as well as the market prices. The above assessment criteria, which help establish an appropriate and fair bidding system, have been included in the said technical circular and adopted in tender documents for architectural or engineering consultancy agreements.

At present, if the estimated expenditure on the design, preparation of tender documents and other related work carried out by a consultant prior to commencement of the construction works does not exceed \$30 million, the consultancy fees at the design stage will normally be charged against the funding of a Category D item. If the estimated expenditure exceeds \$30 million, the works department will need to make application to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council for upgrading part of the public works project to Category A to fund the consultancy fees at the design stage. The works department should ensure that the estimated expenditure at the design stage for any awarded architectural or engineering consultancy agreement will not exceed the APE of the Category D or A item concerned.

Note 1: The construction projects in Annex 1 do not cover the block vote projects, projects entrusted to other organisations, projects designed and built by contractors, and those designed by in-house staff of works

departments.

Note 2: To avoid over disclosure of information which would affect the competitive position(s) of the Government and/or consultants, the information is presented in a consolidated form.

[Credit card lending survey results for first quarter 2018](#)

The following is issued on behalf of the Hong Kong Monetary Authority:

The Hong Kong Monetary Authority published today (May 16) the credit card lending survey results for the first quarter of 2018.

Total card receivables decreased by 8.1% in the first quarter to HK\$120.7 billion at end-March 2018, after an increase of 10.8% in the previous quarter that was mainly contributed by festive spending and the payment of salaries tax using credit cards.

The combined delinquent and rescheduled ratio edged up to 0.33% at end-March 2018 from 0.31% at the previous quarter-end.

The charge-off amount increased slightly by HK\$5 million during the quarter to HK\$517 million, while the quarterly charge-off ratio remained stable at 0.41%.

[Extra shows for six International Arts Carnival programmes \(with photos\)](#)

Additional performances of six programmes at the International Arts Carnival (IAC) have been scheduled in response to overwhelming public demand. The programmes are the ballet "Hansel & Gretel", the physical theatre show "Air Play", the multimedia circus theatre production "Bedtime Stories", the magic theatre work "SNAP", the circus and music theatre show "Carrousel des Moutons" and the multimedia shadow puppet theatre production "Mulan". Details of the extra shows are as follows:

1. "Hansel & Gretel" by the Scottish Ballet (UK)
Date and time: July 7 (Saturday), 3pm
Venue: Hong Kong Cultural Centre Grand Theatre

Prices: \$160, \$220, \$280, \$380, \$480

2. "Air Play" by Acrobuffos (US)

Date and time: July 22 (Sunday), 11am

Venue: Kwai Tsing Theatre Auditorium

Prices: \$140, \$200, \$260

3. "SNAP" by Gruejarm Production (Korea)

Date and time: July 28 (Saturday), 3pm

Venue: Sha Tin Town Hall Auditorium

Prices: \$160, \$240, \$320

4. "Bedtime Stories" by Upswing (UK)

Dates and times: July 31 to August 2 (Tuesday to Thursday), 7.30pm

August 3 (Friday), 3pm

Venue: Hong Kong Cultural Centre Studio Theatre

Prices: \$200, \$280, \$680 (family package)

5. "Carrousel des Moutons" by d'irque & fien (Belgium)

Date and time: August 11 (Saturday), 5pm

Venue: Hong Kong City Hall Theatre

Prices: \$140, \$200, \$260

Date and time: August 12 (Sunday), 8pm

Venue: Kwai Tsing Theatre Auditorium

Prices: \$140, \$200, \$260

6. "Mulan" by Shanghai Puppet Theatre

Date and time: August 12 (Sunday), 8pm

Venue: North District Town Hall Auditorium

Prices: \$140, \$200

Tickets for these additional performances will be available at URB TIX (www.urbtix.hk) from May 18 onwards. For credit card telephone bookings, please call 2111 5999.

For programme enquiries and concessionary schemes, please call 2370 1044, or refer to the IAC programme brochure or visit www.hkiac.gov.hk.

The IAC, organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, will run from July 6 to August 12 and feature a variety of events for family entertainment.

