

University Grants Committee welcomes “The Chief Executive’s 2024 Policy Address”

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

The Chairman of the University Grants Committee (UGC), Mr Tim Lui, said today (October 16) that he welcomed the Chief Executive's announcement of several relevant measures in the 2024 Policy Address, which aim at nurturing future talent and establishing the "Study in Hong Kong" brand. The UGC will join hands with the eight UGC-funded universities to optimise Hong Kong's competitive advantages under "One Country, Two Systems", as well as the highly internationalised and diversified characters of the higher education landscape, thereby pressing ahead with the development of Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education and high-calibre talent.

The Government announced in this year's Policy Address that it will establish the Hong Kong Future Talents Scholarship Scheme for Advanced Studies (SSAS) starting from the 2025/26 academic year, under which up to 1 200 local students enrolling in designated taught postgraduate programmes will receive a scholarship each year.

Mr Lui said, "Over the past five years, the UGC has implemented the Targeted Taught Postgraduate Programmes Fellowships Scheme on a pilot basis, which incentivised local students with aspirations for advanced studies to pursue over 100 master's programmes within our priority areas. They have fuelled Hong Kong's impetus for development as they equip themselves for the future. We welcome the establishment of the SSAS by the Government with reference to the experience and achievements of the pilot scheme. This clearly demonstrates the Government's commitment towards the nurturing of high-calibre local talent and the development of new quality productive forces."

The Policy Address also announced that Hong Kong will strive to host international education conferences and exhibitions, as well as encourage local post-secondary institutions to enhance collaboration and exchanges with their counterparts around the world in promoting the "Study in Hong Kong" brand on a global scale. In this regard, the UGC will further strengthen collaboration with the Heads of Universities Committee's Standing Committee on Internationalisation to actively enhance external promotion efforts targeting the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other Belt and Road countries, and strive to foster closer partnerships with institutions worldwide in student mobility and research collaboration. The UGC also welcomed the Government's introduction of a series of new measures to improve hostel facilities, including a pilot scheme to encourage the market to convert hotels and other commercial buildings into student hostels on a self-financing and privately funded basis. This will increase the supply of

student hostels and facilitate the recruitment of more non-local students to pursue their studies in Hong Kong.

In terms of research promotion, the UGC extended its gratitude to the Government for providing \$1.5 billion to launch a new round of the Research Matching Grant Scheme (RMGS), which will incentivise more organisations to fund research activities by institutions. The inaugural round of the RMGS was concluded with resounding success in July 2024, which effectively expanded research funding sources of the higher education sector. The UGC also welcomed the introduction of a series of measures to facilitate close collaboration among the Government, industry, academic, research and investment sectors. Mr Lui is confident that the new round of the RMGS as well as various measures will deepen the collaboration between higher education and other sectors, thereby raising Hong Kong's research capabilities as well as enhancing the local ecosystem for innovation and technology.

Mr Lui continued, "Looking ahead, our higher education sector can tap into the immense opportunities presented by the Northern Metropolis University Town to leverage our distinctive advantage of having strong support from the motherland and close connection with the world, thereby enabling Hong Kong to scale new heights. Together with our UGC-funded universities, we will devote ourselves relentlessly to cultivating local talent, attracting elites from all over the world and reinforcing our global reputation, so as to contribute positively to Hong Kong's development into an international hub for post-secondary education."