

EDB announces arrangements for implementing “all-graduate teaching force” policy in aided and caput schools

The Education Bureau (EDB) issued a circular today (March 26) to all aided schools (including special schools) and caput schools to announce the implementation details of the "all-graduate teaching force" policy.

The Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, said, "The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region attaches great importance to education and hopes to provide a stable, caring, inspiring and satisfying learning and teaching environment to students and teachers. We are committed to providing support to teachers and raising their professional status. Through the implementation of the all-graduate teaching force policy, we not only recognise the contributions of those teachers with a bachelor's degree, but also hope to facilitate teachers' professional development and raise their professional roles and functions to further improve the quality of education.

"In the past two years, the current-term Government has allocated an additional \$8.3 billion in recurrent new resources for the education sector. Considerable resources have been used to increase teaching manpower and provide support to teachers' work, which include increasing the teacher-to-class ratio for primary and secondary schools by 0.1 across the board, creating the Special Educational Needs Coordinator post and other regular teaching posts, and increasing manpower for professional support, such as information technology assistants, executive officers, social workers, educational psychologists and speech therapists, so that teachers can concentrate more on teaching. In addition, we have been striving to retain surplus teachers when there were fluctuations of student-age population, maintaining a stable school environment."

Mr Yeung added, "While we will continue to enhance our support to teachers at the policy level, we hope that the school sponsoring bodies, incorporated management committees, parent-teacher associations and other stakeholders can respect and support teachers' front-line work at the school level, and thereby together we could nurture students to grow up healthily."

The EDB will implement the all-graduate teaching force policy in public sector primary and secondary schools in one go in the 2019/20 school year. In this regard, the respective ratio of graduate teacher posts in public sector primary schools and secondary schools will be increased from the current 65 per cent and 85 per cent across the board to 100 per cent. All teaching posts on the approved establishment of public sector schools will be graduate teacher posts. Aided schools may, taking into account their school-based circumstances, achieve full implementation of the policy in one go or in two

years. The new measure will incur an additional annual expenditure of around \$1.5 billion.

To cater for different school circumstances and needs, and to allow sufficient time for schools to arrange duties and hence ensure a smooth transition, aided schools may, in light of their own circumstances, fully implement the all-graduate teaching force policy in one go or in stages by the 2020/21 school year. Schools should establish a school-based mechanism to allow all serving non-graduate teachers holding a local bachelor's degree (or equivalent) who are willing to shoulder the duties of graduate teachers to be regraded as graduate teachers. Moreover, newly joined regular teachers appointed within the approved establishment from the 2019/20 school year onwards should possess a local bachelor's degree (or equivalent) and satisfy all the entry requirements and standing conditions set out for graduate teachers in the Codes of Aid.

With the implementation of the all-graduate teaching force policy, all graduate teachers are required to support school development and cater for students' needs by shouldering more diversified professional duties, such as co-ordinating tasks in the areas of student support, learning and teaching, curriculum development or teacher professional development, so that teachers' professional capacity could be realised.

Aided schools should encourage serving non-graduate teachers whose current qualifications cannot meet the requirement for regrading to attain the recognised qualifications as early as possible, so that they may be regraded as graduate teachers for better career and promotion prospects. For serving non-graduate teachers without a recognised degree, or those who choose not to be regraded as graduate teachers of their own accord, they may be accommodated in the current posts in their serving aided schools.

Caput schools should make necessary arrangements to achieve full implementation of the all-graduate teaching force policy by the 2020/21 school year.

The EDB set up the Task Force on Professional Development of Teachers in November 2017 to review and further promote teachers' professional development, which includes the drawing up of a timetable for establishing an all-graduate teaching force. The Task Force has also proposed a direction for the purpose of extensive consultation on relevant issues. In the course of consultation, stakeholders unanimously called for the early and full implementation of the all-graduate teaching force policy to further raise the professional status of teachers and retain and attract talents. In view of this, the Government accepted the recommendation of the Task Force and the Chief Executive announced the initiative of the all-graduate teaching force policy in public sector primary and secondary schools in her 2018 Policy Address.

Labour Department to hold seminar on Employment Ordinance

The Labour Department called for enrolment for a seminar on the Employment Ordinance to be held at 2.30pm on April 26 (Friday) at Hall, G/F, Banyan Garden, No.863, Lai Chi Kok Road, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon (entrance facing Sham Shing Road).

The main provisions of the Employment Ordinance (including wages, leave and termination of contract) will be introduced. In addition, the seminar will also cover the Minimum Wage Ordinance and points to note on the employment of foreign domestic helpers.

The seminar will be conducted in Cantonese and admission is free. Seats will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and the enrolment deadline is April 17 (Wednesday). The enrolment form can be downloaded from the department's website (www.labour.gov.hk). For enquiries, please call 2399 2386.

Key statistics on service demand of A&E Departments and occupancy rates in public hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

During the winter surge, the Hospital Authority is closely monitoring the service demand of Accident and Emergency Departments and the occupancy rate in public hospitals. Key service statistics are being issued daily for public information. Details are in the appended table.

Red flag hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach

Attention TV/radio announcers:

Please broadcast the following as soon as possible:

Here is an item of interest to swimmers.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department announced today (March 26) that due to big waves, the red flag has been hoisted at Clear Water Bay Second Beach in Sai Kung District. Beach-goers are advised not to swim at the beach.

[Hong Kong and Australia sign Free Trade Agreement and Investment Agreement \(with photos\)](#)

Hong Kong and Australia signed today (March 26) a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and an Investment Agreement, which are comprehensive in scope, covering trade in goods, trade in services, investment, intellectual property, government procurement, competition and other related areas; and are modern and of high standard. The Agreements provide Hong Kong traders and investors with legal certainty and more favourable access to the Australian market, whilst creating more business opportunities and enhancing trade and investment flows between the two places.

The Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Edward Yau, and the Australian Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment, Mr Simon Birmingham, signed the Agreements in Sydney, Australia today.

"Hong Kong and Australia, both staunch advocates of free trade, have today sealed two high quality deals. The commitments we made to each other far exceed our World Trade Organization commitments, thereby enabling our goods, services and investments to enter each other's market under more preferential terms. Against the prevailing uncertainties in the global economic environment, the two bilateral agreements, in providing high transparency and predictability for trade and investment, give a big boost of confidence to our rules-based trading system," Mr Yau said.

"On trade in services, the quality negotiated outcome generally represents Hong Kong's and Australia's best deal with our respective FTA partners. In some 140 services sectors that Australia has made specific commitment under the FTA, Hong Kong service providers are able to enjoy market access and treatment no less favourable than Australia's local service providers under like circumstances. In this FTA with Hong Kong, Australia has also committed to liberalising full range of its arbitration, conciliation and mediation services and certain rail transport services, which Australia has never offered to its other FTA partners, except New Zealand," he continued.

"Immediately upon the entry into force of the FTA, Hong Kong-originating

goods can enter Australia totally tariff-free and via simplified procedures. This tariff treatment is among the best offers Australia has extended to its FTA partners," he said.

"On investment, Hong Kong investors can enjoy more favourable access to the Australian market under the FTA as the monetary thresholds for investment screening have been raised. Investors from both places will also benefit from the modern provisions on treatment and protection under the new Investment Agreement, which will replace the one signed in 1993," he added.

Other benefits of the FTA include facilitative arrangements for business travel as well as provisions to facilitate access to each other's government procurement markets, effective protection of intellectual property rights and promotion of competition.

For key benefits of the Agreements to Hong Kong, please refer to the Annex. Full text of the Agreements will be uploaded to the Trade and Industry Department's website (www.tid.gov.hk).

"To help Hong Kong enterprises and investors expand their markets, further reinforce Hong Kong's status as an international trade and investment hub and establish our worldwide network of economic and trade connections, we have been actively seeking to forge FTAs and Investment Agreements with economies that have strong economic and trade connections with Hong Kong, markets with development potential or at strategic locations, as well as like-minded trading partners," Mr Yau said.

"The FTA with Australia is the fourth FTA that the current term of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has signed with its trading partners since taking office in July 2017," Mr Yau added.

The FTA and the Investment Agreement negotiations between Hong Kong and Australia commenced in May 2017 and were concluded within just 18 months in November 2018. They will take effect after Hong Kong and Australia have completed their respective internal procedures.

Australia was Hong Kong's seventh largest services trading partner in 2017, with the total services trade between the two sides amounting to HK\$44 billion. It was Hong Kong's 20th largest merchandise trading partner in 2018, and the total merchandise trade was about HK\$54 billion. On investment, as at the end of 2017, Australia ranked eighth among Hong Kong's destinations of outward direct investment, with a stock of HK\$134 billion, and it ranked 17th among Hong Kong's sources of inward direct investment, with a stock of HK\$33 billion.

