

LCQ11: Supply of hostel places of post-secondary institutions

Following is a question by the Hon Benson Luk and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (October 30):

Question:

The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (the CPC Central Committee) adopted the Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization, in which support for Hong Kong's position to become an international hub for high-calibre talents was stated. Moreover, last year's Policy Address proposed to build Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education by increasing the admission quota of non-local students to Government-funded post-secondary institutions. According to a recent report published by an organisation, it was envisaged that by 2028, the shortfall in hostel places for students of local post-secondary institutions would further increase to some 120 000. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has projected and compiled statistics on the respective (i) numbers, (ii) proportions and (iii) hostel application proportions of local and non-local students in post-secondary institutions in the coming five years; given that the Government has, starting from the current academic year, increased the admission quota of non-local students to Government-funded post-secondary institutions to 40 per cent, of the current nationality distribution of the non-local students;
- (2) whether it knows (i) the respective proportions of local and non-local students in post-secondary institutions who were successfully allocated with hostel places upon application and (ii) their terms of hostel residence in the past 10 years; whether various post-secondary institutions have set a limit on the term of hostel residence; if a limit has been set, of the details (set out in a table), and whether the Government has plans to extend the term of hostel residence for students;
- (3) given that the Government established in 2018 the Hostel Development Fund with some \$10.3 billion to provide six University Grants Committee-funded universities with an additional 13 473 hostel places, whether it has compiled statistics on the current number of hostel places provided by universities across the territory; of the Government's projected growth in the supply of university hostel places in the coming five years, and the shortfall in hostel places when set against students' demand for accommodation; whether it will consider injecting funds into the Fund again in the future; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(4) whether it will study allocating idle lands in the vicinity to the post-secondary institutions concerned for the construction of academic buildings or hostels, or consider relaxing the plot ratio of land adjacent to universities in rural areas to allow for greater flexibility in university expansion; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(5) given that as indicated in the paper submitted by the Government to the Subcommittee on Matters Relating to the Development of the Northern Metropolis of this Council in April this year, 19 post-secondary institutions had participated in the engagement activity of the Northern Metropolis University Town (NMUT) and submitted proposals, whether the Government has estimated the number of post-secondary institutions that can be accommodated by the NMUT, and whether sites have been reserved for hostel purposes; if so, of the expected number of hostel places to be provided; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The 2023 Policy Address stated building Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub and a cradle of future talents. The 2024 Policy Address also announced further measures to nurture future talents and to create the "Study in Hong Kong" brand. At the same time, the Government will set up the Committee on Education, Technology and Talents to be chaired by the Chief Secretary for Administration. The Committee will co-ordinate and promote the integrated development of education, science and technology and talent, so as to enhance convergence and coherence and formulate policies to promote the synergistic development of nurturing talents, gathering talents and science and technology, as well as to facilitating international high-calibre talents to stay in Hong Kong. Developing Hong Kong into an international post-secondary education hub is also one of the three major strategies. My reply to the various parts of the Hon Benson Luk's question is as follows:

(1) The enrolment ceiling of non-local students in University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded taught programmes has been doubled from a level equivalent to 20 per cent of local student places in the 2023/24 academic year (AY) to 40 per cent with effect from the 2024/25 AY. There are no restrictions on research postgraduate programmes. It is important to note that all non-local students pursuing UGC-funded taught programmes do not receive public funding, and the number of such non-local students is accounted for separately from local student places. This ensures that the study opportunities for local students will not be affected.

In the 2023/24 AY, the total number of local students pursuing full-time locally-accredited publicly-funded and self-financing programmes was about 158 300, whereas there were about 64 200 non-local students. As far as UGC-funded taught programmes (i.e. undergraduate, sub-degree and taught post-graduate programmes) are concerned, the actual number of non-local students was about 14 900 while that of local students was about 76 400; the

proportion of non-local students was about 19 per cent. The non-local students come from over 100 places of origin. In the 2023/24 AY, the numbers of students by study levels and by places of origin are tabulated below:

Programme types	Numbers of students				Grand total	
	Places of origin			Local		
	Non-local	Mainland China	Other non-local			
UGC-funded taught programmes	76 359	10 450	4 419	14 869	91 228	
UGC-funded research post-graduate programmes	1 373	7 372	813	8 185	9 558	
Non-UGC-funded taught programmes	79 870	34 410	822	35 232	115 102	
Non-UGC-funded research postgraduate programmes	654	5 561	397	5 958	6 612	
Grand Total	158 256	57 793	6 451	64 244	222 500	

Note: If research postgraduate students are financed by the UGC-funded universities using both UGC and external funds, they will be counted towards different sources on a pro-rata basis. Figures may not add up to the corresponding totals due to rounding.

As for student hostels, the relative proportion of applications from local students and non-local students of the UGC-funded universities at the beginning of the 2023/24 AY is 55 per cent and 45 per cent respectively. Looking ahead, we envisage that universities will continue to take into account their capacity in promoting the advantages of our higher education sector around the world using the "Study in Hong Kong" brand, with a view to gradually admitting more non-local students to study in Hong Kong. Self-financing programmes will also flourish. As our post-secondary education sector in Hong Kong continues to enhance quality and expand capacity, the corresponding demand for student hostels will increase. We are delighted to explore flexible and innovative ways with the institutions and different stakeholders to increase the supply of student hostels.

(2) Based on the data provided by the UGC-funded universities, the success rate of local students and non-local students in hostel applications in the past ten AYs (2014/15 to 2023/24 AY) is at Annex. We do not maintain information on the terms of residence of local students and non-local students.

The specific arrangements for hostel allocation are formulated by the UGC-funded universities and there is generally no upper limit set for the terms of residence. The universities are encouraged to reflect the priorities

of different groups of students for hostel accommodation in the allocation mechanism, having regard to the practical needs and educational benefits, while maintaining suitable flexibility to ensure that resources of student hostels are utilised properly.

(3) and (4) Under the Hostel Development Fund (HDF), the UGC-funded universities are provided with a capital grant covering up to 75 per cent of the construction costs for 15 student hostel projects to provide a total of about 13 500 additional hostel places, with a target for gradual completion by 2027. Based on the data provided by the UGC-funded universities, the total number of hostel places (including publicly-funded, privately-funded and temporary hostel places) available for allocation in September 2023 was around 37 600. Taking into account the future supply from the projects under HDF, the number of hostel places will gradually increase to around 50 000 in the coming few years, to cater for the needs of students, including those arising from the additional intake.

Under the prevailing mechanism, the universities may apply to the Government for granting additional sites for campus expansion if they have strong justifications and specific proposals, which will then be considered by the bureaux and departments concerned from relevant perspectives such as policy, resources, practical circumstances, planning and land administration, etc. The universities could also as necessary apply for a relaxation of development parameters for the proposed sites, including building height restrictions and plot ratios, etc, which will be processed in accordance with the statutory procedures and established arrangements by the Town Planning Board and relevant departments.

To improve hostel facilities, the Chief Executive announced in the 2024 Policy Address that the Government would launch a pilot scheme to streamline the processing of applications in relation to planning, lands and building plans, so as to encourage the market to convert hotels and other commercial buildings into student hostels on a self-financing and privately-funded basis, increasing the supply of student hostels. The Government will also make available suitable sites for the private sector to build new hostels, having regard to market demand. The Development Projects Facilitation Office under the Development Bureau will provide one-stop advisory and facilitation services for these projects.

(5) The Government has earmarked over 80 hectares of land in the Northern Metropolis for the Northern Metropolis University Town (NMUT), and will encourage local post-secondary institutions to introduce more branded programmes, research collaboration and exchange projects with renowned Mainland and overseas institutions in a flexible and innovative manner. We will retain flexibility in the planning process to facilitate the development of student hostels.

Relevant Government departments are still discussing the site planning of the NMUT at this stage. We plan to publish the Northern Metropolis University Town Development Conceptual Framework in the first half of 2026.