

LCQ18: Shortage of professionals in banking industry

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Chun-ying and a written reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr James Lau, in the Legislative Council today (June 19):

Question:

Some members of the banking industry have relayed that the granting of eight virtual banking licences by the Hong Kong Monetary Authority so far may aggravate the shortage of manpower of the various professional grades in the industry, which will affect the operation and development of the banking industry in the long run. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the numbers of members of the various professional grades in the banking industry listed in the table below;

Professional grade	Number of members
Fintech	
Compliance	
Risk management	
Data audit	

(2) whether it has estimated the numbers of members of the various professional grades to be employed by virtual banks in each of the coming three years; (i) of the respective percentages of such numbers in the relevant total numbers in the banking industry, and (ii) out of such numbers, the respective numbers of those who will come from conventional banks and from places outside Hong Kong;

(3) given that experienced professionals in Fintech are included in the Talent List of Hong Kong promulgated by the Government in August last year, and such professionals may apply to work in Hong Kong through the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme, of the respective to-date numbers of the relevant applications received and approved by the Government, and the average time taken for the vetting and approval of each approved case; of the measures in place to expedite the vetting and approval process; and

(4) whether it will introduce incentive measures (e.g. accommodation, education allowances for children and medical allowances) to attract experienced professionals in Fintech from the Mainland and overseas to work in Hong Kong; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Having consulted the Hong Kong Monetary Authority (HKMA) and the Security Bureau, the reply to the different parts of the question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The HKMA does not collect statistics on the number of practitioners of professional grades in the banking sector. According to the business plans of the eight licensed virtual banks, the manpower required for the first three years of their operation only represents a tiny fraction of that of the banking sector in Hong Kong. The HKMA expects that the impact of virtual banks on the manpower of the banking system should be manageable. The HKMA does not collect information on the background of employees of virtual banks and is not in a position to provide any estimate to this end.

(3) and (4) The Government promulgated on August 28, 2018 the first Talent List of Hong Kong. The Talents List covers 11 professions, including "Fintech Professionals", "Data Scientists and Cyber Security Specialists" and "Asset Management Professionals". Applicants who meet the requirements of the Talent List will be awarded 30 bonus points under the General Points Test of the Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS).

As at April 2019, a total of 11 applicants under the QMAS have met the eligibility criteria of the said professions, of which seven applicants have been allotted quotas by the Advisory Committee on Admission of Quality Migrants and Professionals (the Advisory Committee). The remaining four applications are being processed. The breakdown statistics on such applications and the quotas allotted are as follows:

Profession	Applications received	Successful cases	Being processing
Fintech professionals	4	2	2
Data scientists and cyber security specialists	7	5	2
Asset management professionals	0	Not applicable	Not applicable

The processing time mainly depends on whether the required documents and information are submitted by the applicant to the Immigration Department within the specified timeframe. Upon submission of the required documents and information, it normally takes two weeks to process applications which will then be submitted to the Advisory Committee for further assessment. The Immigration Department may also seek professional advice from relevant trade and professional bodies having regard to individual cases and verify each application. In accordance with the existing assessment criteria, all applications which satisfy the prerequisites and the minimum passing mark

will be shortlisted and submitted to the Advisory Committee for further assessment.

The selection exercise is conducted quarterly for quota allocation to applicants and the Advisory Committee will recommend to the Director of Immigration how best to allocate available quota. Results of each selection exercise will be published on the Immigration Department website within 15 days.

The Immigration Department will ensure efficient processing of QMAS applications through flexible staff deployment and streamlined workflow.

Apart from the QMAS, professionals can also apply to work in Hong Kong through the General Employment Policy (GEP) for overseas, Taiwan and Macao residents and the Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMTTP) for the Mainland residents.

The statistics on applications approved under GEP and ASMTTP from applicants who were from the "Financial Services" sector in the past three years are as follows:

Year	GEP	ASMTTP
2016	4 148	1 433
2017	4 441	2 084
2018	5 057	2 141

The Government will review the relevant schemes and measures from time to time with a view to encouraging talents from the Mainland and overseas to work in Hong Kong.