

LCQ11: Overseas-trained physiotherapists and occupational therapists

Following is a question by the Hon David Lam and a written reply by the Secretary for Health, Professor Lo Chung-mau, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

Some professional bodies for physiotherapy and occupational therapy in Hong Kong have indicated that it takes at least eight months for Hong Kong physiotherapists and occupational therapists who graduated overseas (overseas-trained therapists) to complete their registration applications in Hong Kong. It is learnt that there are quite a number of overseas-trained therapists awaiting assessment and approval for registration. Some of these therapists have been interviewed by the Hospital Authority (HA) while awaiting registration, but have been placed on a waiting list due to their unresolved registration status. Meanwhile, some overseas-trained therapists have worked as ward assistants, or taken up temporary positions as student physiotherapists or student occupational therapists. There are views that while the registration procedures must be rigorous, the excessively long waiting times for registration are unfair to applicants and prevent them from fully utilising their expertise to serve members of the public. As a result, some applicants have even left Hong Kong to serve in the countries where they graduated. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the following information regarding the time taken for overseas-trained physiotherapists and occupational therapists who meet the eligibility for registration to register in Hong Kong: the 10th percentile time, the 90th percentile time and the median time;

(2) whether the Physiotherapists Board and the Occupational Therapists Board have established performance indicators or performance pledges for registration processing times; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) of the number of overseas-trained therapists who applied for registration in Hong Kong and the rate of successful registration in each of the past three years, and whether it has compiled statistics on the number of those who left Hong Kong before completing their registration; and

(4) whether the Government will urge the Physiotherapists Board and the Occupational Therapists Board to expedite the vetting and approval of registration applications, so as to encourage overseas-trained therapists to return to Hong Kong to serve therein; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In consultation with the Secretariat of the Supplementary Medical Professions Council (the Council), my consolidated reply to the question raised by the Hon David Lam is as follows:

Healthcare professions in Hong Kong observe the principle of professional autonomy. Their statutory boards and councils were established by legislations. They are responsible for the registration of professionals, and maintaining and uplifting professional standard and conduct. Under the Supplementary Medical Professions Ordinance (the Ordinance), the Council and the Boards of each supplementary medical profession (SMP) are responsible for handling the registration, disciplinary and other regulatory matters of supplementary medical professionals.

Under section 12(1)(b) of the Ordinance, the Council may recognise the professional qualifications of non-locally trained supplementary medical professionals for meeting the requirement for local registration. When considering whether individual applicants are qualified for local registration, the Council will consider the applicants' education, training, professional experience and skillset, and consult the relevant Board of the SMPs. The processing time required for individual applications depends on a host of factors, including the discussions and views of the Council and the relevant Board on whether to recognise the qualification and experience of the applicant, and whether the training institute or regulatory authority of the region where the applicant comes from can timely provide information or verify information submitted by the applicant. Upon receiving the complete application and required documents, the Council could generally complete processing the application for registration in around three months' time.

Registration as a healthcare professional is a serious process to ensure the academic and clinical competency of the overall healthcare profession and protect patient safety. Given the unique circumstances of each application, their processing time will vary, making it difficult to prescribe a timeframe to complete the processing of applications. The Secretariat will maintain communication with the applicant to inform them timely of the progress of the application and/or any supplementary information required. The general situation of applications of non-locally trained physiotherapists and occupational therapists in the past three years is set out at Annex. The overall average processing time of these cases is 3.5 months and the 90th percentile is 6.0 months, rather than "at least 8 months" as mentioned in the question.

Department of Health (DH) will continue to streamline administrative procedures and enhance the use of information technology to more effectively support the boards and councils in discharging their duties, including handling registration-related matters. For example, DH will introduce e-forms for registration of supplementary medical professionals as an enhancement

measure in the second half of this year, with a view to expanding to other healthcare professions.

LCQ3: Occupational safety of Government's outsourced workers

Following is a question by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung and a reply by the Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Mr Christopher Hui, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

It is learnt that since 2021, there have been at least four cases of workers falling from wooden folding ladders resulting in deaths or serious injuries, and some members of the public have relayed that some of the Government's outsourced service contractors have not complied with the requirements set out in the Overview of Work-at-Height Safety issued by the Labour Department to provide their staff with working platforms that meet the safety standards for work-above-ground. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether it has stipulated in the outsourced service contracts that the contractors must strictly comply with the Code of Practice on Safety Management, including the provision of safe working equipment to staff and the formulation of safety guidelines at work; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) of the occupational safety and health statistics of the Government's outsourced services (including the number of cases of occupational injuries, industrial accidents and occupational diseases) over the past three years, and the average number of days of sick leave taken by staff for work-related injuries, broken down in table form by types of work and accident; and
- (3) of the number of inspections of the workplaces of outsourced staff carried out by the Government over the past three years, and whether it has formulated an assessment indicator in this regard; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; what measures in place to enhance the safety management standard of contractors to ensure the safety of their staff at work?

Reply:

President,

The Government has all along attached great importance to the protection of occupational safety and health (OSH) of outsourced workers employed by

government service contractors (GSCs). GSCs, as with other local employers, are regulated by OSH-related legislation, including the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (OSHO) and its relevant subsidiary regulations, etc. The OSHO stipulates that every employer must, so far as reasonably practicable, ensure the safety and health at work of all the employees.

Having consulted the Labour and Welfare Bureau and the four major procuring departments (i.e. the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, the Government Property Agency and the Housing Department), our reply to the question raised by the Hon Kwok Wai-keung is as follows:

(1) All GSCs must ensure that the OSH of their employees are duly safeguarded. When procuring outsourced services, government departments may, depending on the nature and scope of the services, stipulate in the contract terms the relevant OSH-related requirements that the GSCs must comply with. Such requirements may include the codes of practice/guidelines to be observed, the requirement for the contractors to provide their staff with adequate equipment and tools as well as OSH training, etc. Departments may also request tenderers to submit management proposals in respect of OSH as necessary, which the successful tenderer must implement such proposals in the performance of the contract.

For GSCs employing non-skilled workers, the Government requires them to fulfil their OSH management responsibilities on various fronts:

(i) Tenderers who have been convicted of a relevant offence under the OSHO and the Factories and Industrial Undertakings Ordinance, etc will be debarred from bidding government service contracts for a maximum period of up to five years. In evaluating tenders for a service contract involving the employment of non-skilled workers, the department concerned will check whether any of the tenderers are subject to debarment; and

(ii) Tenderers for service contracts that involve non-skilled workers performing duties outdoors, in an indoor environment without air-conditioning and/or in the vicinity of high temperature installations are required to submit a Heat Stroke Prevention Work Plan (Work Plan) certified by a Safety Officer who has a valid registration with the Labour Department (LD). Any tender submitted without a Work Plan will not be considered further in the tender assessment. Contractors who fail to comply with the measures committed in the Work Plan may also be issued with demerit points under the Demerit Point System.

In addition to the above contractual and tendering requirements, the LD has been committed to ensuring, through inspection and enforcement, publicity and promotion, as well as education and training, that employers (including GSCs) comply with the relevant statutory requirements, with a view to minimising safety and health risks at workplaces and safeguarding the OSH of employees.

(2) As regards the Member's enquiry about the cases of OSH-related injuries

and deaths in the past three years, we have collected relevant information on outsourced non-skilled workers from the four major procuring departments. Such information is set out at Annex.

(3) The LD has all along adopted a multi-pronged strategy in promoting employers (including GSCs) to enhance the safety management standard and protect the OSH of their employees. Relevant measures include:

(i) adopting a risk-based approach in conducting OSH inspections at different workplaces. If OSH issues are identified during inspections, the LD will exercise its professional judgement in assessing the seriousness and consequences of the issues and, based on the evidence available, take enforcement actions. Such actions may include issuing written warnings, improvement notices and suspension notices, or even initiating prosecutions. The said inspections also cover the workplaces of GSCs. In respect of GSCs employing non-skilled workers, the LD conducted 185, 199 and 224 OSH inspections respectively from 2022 to 2024, and took 41, 52 and 27 enforcement actions.

(ii) issuing OSH guidelines to help contractors and other employers enhance their safety management standard. Such guidelines include "Guidance Notes on Prevention of Heat Stroke at Work", "Cleansing Workers – Safe Use of Chemicals", "Lightening the Load" and "Guide on Safety at Work in times of Inclement Weather"; and

(iii) co-organising activities (e.g. OSH talks, seminars and training programmes) with organisations such as the Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC), trade associations and workers' unions to enhance the OSH awareness of both employers and employees. The LD and the OSHC have also set up hotlines to answer OSH-related enquiries.

In addition to the inspections conducted by the LD, procuring departments are also, in general, required to formulate suitable arrangements for inspection of contractors' workplaces (including the number of inspections) having regard to factors such as nature of the outsourced services and their manpower, and to develop assessment indicators as necessary.

The Government will remain committed to safeguarding the OSH of outsourced workers employed by service contractors through the implementation of various measures.

Thank you, President.

A relatively dry and mild March

The weather of March 2025 was drier and milder than usual in Hong Kong. The monthly mean relative humidity of 74 per cent was 8 per cent below the normal of 82 per cent and one of the fourth lowest on record for March. The monthly total sunshine duration amounted to 143.8 hours, about 44 per cent above the normal of 100.0 hours. With more sunshine, the monthly mean maximum temperature of 23.5 degrees was 1.6 degrees above the normal and one of the 10th highest on record for March. The monthly mean temperature of 20.1 degrees and monthly mean minimum temperature of 17.7 degrees were 0.6 degrees and 0.1 degrees above their corresponding normals. Rainfall in the month was 38.1 millimetres, about 51 per cent of the normal of 75.3 millimetres. The accumulated rainfall in the first three months of the year was 68.4 millimetres, about 54 per cent below the normal of 147.4 millimetres for the same period.

Affected by a humid maritime airstream, the weather was mainly cloudy and humid with rising temperatures on the first four days of the month. It was foggy from March 2 to 4. The visibility in many places once fell below 1 000 metres on March 2. A cold front moved across the coast of Guangdong on the night of March 4. Under the influence of the associated northeast monsoon and a broad band of clouds covering the coast of Guangdong, temperatures fell progressively with a few rain patches on the following three days. More than 10 millimetres of rainfall were recorded over many parts of the territory on March 6. The temperatures at the Observatory fell to a minimum of 12.1 degrees the next morning, the lowest of the month.

The northeast monsoon over the coast of Guangdong was gradually replaced by a relatively dry easterly airstream on March 8. While it was mainly cloudy with one or two light rain patches that morning, there were sunny periods that afternoon and in the following two days. With a band of clouds covering the coast of Guangdong, the weather became mainly cloudy from March 11 to 12, with one or two rain patches on March 12. Winds were weak over the coast of Guangdong on March 13. Locally, it was hot with sunny periods. With a humid easterly airstream affecting the coast of Guangdong the next day, the weather turned mainly cloudy with one or two light rain patches. Visibility was rather low in some areas and once fell to around 1 000 metres in the harbour.

With a trough of low pressure over inland Guangdong developing into a cold front and moving across the coastal areas on March 15, heavy showers and severe squally thunderstorms ahead of the cold front brought around 20 millimetres of rainfall and violent gusts to many places in Hong Kong that afternoon. Hail was even reported at Tai Po. Under the influence of the associated northeast monsoon, the weather became drier and cooler in the following six days. There were sunny periods on March 16. Affected by a band of clouds covering southern China, it became cloudier with one or two rain patches on the next two days. With the departure of the band of clouds and the influence of an anticyclone aloft, the weather turned fine and dry from March 19 to 25. Under the influence of a southerly airstream, the weather

became relatively humid with rising temperatures from March 26 to 28. There were fog patches and the weather was hot on March 28. The temperatures at the Observatory rose to a maximum of 29.4 degrees that afternoon, the highest of the month. A cold front moved across the coast of southern China that evening and brought a few rain patches and significantly cooler weather to Hong Kong that night and the following two days. Under the persistent influence of the associated northeast monsoon, the last two days of the month remained cold in the morning.

There was no tropical cyclone over the South China Sea and the western North Pacific in March 2025.

Details of issuance and cancellation of various warnings/signals in the month are summarised in Table 1. Monthly meteorological figures and departures from normal for March are tabulated in Table 2.

Land Registry releases statistics for March

The Land Registry today (April 2) released its statistics for March 2025.

Land registration

- * The number of sale and purchase agreements for all building units received for registration in March was 6 661 (+54.7 per cent compared with February 2025 and +32.9 per cent compared with March 2024)
- * The 12-month moving average for March was 5 940 (2.4 per cent above the 12-month moving average for February 2025 and 38.0 per cent above that for March 2024)
- * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements of building units in March was \$45.6 billion (+61.4 per cent compared with February 2025 and +22.1 per cent compared with March 2024)
- * Among the sale and purchase agreements, 5 367 were for residential units (+67.7 per cent compared with February 2025 and +35.2 per cent compared with March 2024)
- * The total consideration for sale and purchase agreements in respect of residential units was \$38.8 billion (+68.7 per cent compared with February 2025 and +29.1 per cent compared with March 2024)

Statistics on sales of residential units do not include sale and purchase agreements relating to sales of units under the Home Ownership

Scheme, the Private Sector Participation Scheme, the Tenants Purchase Scheme, etc, unless the premium of the unit concerned has been paid after the sale restriction period.

Figures on sale and purchase agreements received for the past 12 months, the year-on-year rate of change and breakdown figures on residential sales have also been released.

As deeds may not be lodged with the Land Registry until up to 30 days after the transaction, these statistics generally relate to land transactions in the previous month.

Land search

* The number of searches of land registers made by the public in March was 393 010 (+16.3 per cent compared with February 2025 and +7.0 per cent compared with March 2024)

The statistics cover searches made at the counter, through the self-service terminals and via the Integrated Registration Information System Online Services.

LCQ4: Education and talent development planning

Following is a question by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang and a reply by the Under Secretary for Education, Dr Sze Chun-fai, in the Legislative Council today (April 2):

Question:

It has been reported that the director of the film *Ne Zha 2* chose to abandon a career in pharmacy in order to pursue his passion for animation production, ultimately achieving remarkable success. There are views that his story offers profound insights for education and talent development planning in Hong Kong. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) as it is learnt that many university students currently choose to pursue careers in fields unrelated to their major, whether the Government will consider providing students with more macro and comprehensive information at the stage of subject selection in secondary schools and in life planning education, so as to deepen students' understanding of relevant disciplines and professions and help them explore their interests and give play to their strengths; if so, of the specific plans; if not, the reasons for that;
- (2) as there are views that a large creative team and talent pool are

important factors contributing to the success of the aforesaid film, whether the Government will further strengthen the training and guidance on creative thinking for students in the curricula of primary and secondary schools; if so, of the specific plans; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) as there are views pointing out that Hong Kong's current education system places too much emphasis on assessment and examination preparation, which is not conducive to the development of students' creative thinking, whether the Government has plans to make improvements; if so, of the specific plans; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Quality education is the key to nurturing talent, and is essential for the continuous development of the society. In the face of a complicated and ever-changing global environment, fostering creativity in students is crucial for their future development. As such, through kindergarten, primary and secondary education curricula, the Education Bureau (EDB) has continuously integrated elements that nurture creative thinking, facilitating students' holistic development and enabling those with diverse interests, abilities and backgrounds to fully unleash their potential.

Regarding the question raised by Professor the Hon Lau Chi-pang, I will respond in four aspects including school curricula, student activities and competitions, latest developments in the modes of assessment, and life planning education (LPE):

(1) to (3) Nurturing creativity throughout the primary and secondary curricula

The school curriculum developed by the EDB in collaboration with the Curriculum Development Council consists of components including knowledge, generic skills, values and attitudes. Creativity is one of the generic skills which emphasises students' demonstration of creative thinking in new ideas or products grounded on a solid knowledge foundation. Students are required to integrate knowledge, discern details from observation, synthesise and apply knowledge, be eager to explore, display perseverance and commitment in the face of difficulties, and solve problems with creative thinking.

To dovetail with the national strategy of invigorating the country through science and education, the EDB is proactively promoting STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) and innovation and technology (I&T) education in primary and secondary schools. By integrating and applying knowledge and skills in science, mathematics and technology, students develop their capabilities of innovation and problem-solving through the process of knowledge creation and I&T inventions.

At the same time, the EDB has reformed Science Education by introducing Primary Science and updating the junior secondary Science curriculum. A programme on artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted teaching has also been

launched in junior secondary Science to foster pedagogical innovation. Moreover, we actively promote I&T education at the upper primary and junior secondary levels, such as teaching programming and AI learning to strengthen the cultivation of students' innovative and problem-solving skills so that they can adapt to the ever-changing world.

As for other Key Learning Areas, Arts Education promotes arts technology and interdisciplinary learning, and Personal, Social and Humanities Education promotes "entrepreneurial spirit", both of which cover the qualities of creativity and innovativeness. At present, there are 55 Applied Learning courses offered at the senior secondary level, of which courses under the Areas of Studies "Creative Studies" and "Media and Communication" place particular emphasis on nurturing students' creativity. Courses such as Computer Game and Animation Design, and Film Production are specifically designed for students interested in creativity and the media. In the 2024/25 school year, a total of 3 932 students enrolled in the related courses under "Creative Studies" and "Media and Communication", reflecting that the courses are popular among students.

Unleashing students' innovative potential through diversified activities

In recent years, Hong Kong students have had outstanding performances beyond the classroom in various fields, such as science and technology, and creative thinking, etc. Much to our delight, they bring glory to Hong Kong with remarkable achievements in international or major competitions, such as the International Mathematical Science and Creativity Competition, Odyssey of the Mind World Finals.

The EDB also provides diversified activities to offer students with more opportunities to unleash their creativity. We also arrange for students with potential in STEAM to participate in systematic training and competitions of a considerable scale, and they have thrived and flourished on international stages time and again. The EDB also continues to collaborate with the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education to promote the effective use of the "school-based student talent pool", so as to identify students who are gifted in different areas. At the same time, we arrange for students to engage in exchanges with arts and cultural specialists from the Mainland, so that students can gain an understanding of the country's development and outstanding achievements.

Developing students' potential by integrating creativity into assessment

Assessment is an integral part of the curriculum and learning and teaching. Students' performance both within and beyond the classroom can reflect their learning progress and inform learning and teaching. The current assessment policy no longer relies solely on the conventional modes of assessment, but employs diversified formative assessments to promote student learning on all fronts and stimulate their learning motivation and curiosity. We have always recommended schools to adopt diversified assessment modes and assignment designs that allow students to demonstrate their learning outcomes and unleash their creativity in the forms of text, images, physical models and others.

The EDB continues to organise professional training activities for teachers and develop learning and teaching resources to support teachers in designing assessments and assignments. We also encourage schools to review and optimise their assessment policies, so as to enable students to participate in more inspiring learning activities and develop their potential.

Starting life planning early in age to understand aspirations

To help students understand early their own aspirations, interests and abilities, and develop a broader view of further studies, future careers and pathways, the EDB has strengthened LPE at primary and secondary levels.

Regarding information on subject choices, the EDB organises talks for parents annually and updates the website "One-stop Portal on Articulation to Multiple Pathways·Transition to Senior Secondary and Post-secondary Education" to disseminate the latest information on elective subjects and multiple pathways.

In addition, through the Life Planning Information website, the EDB provides the latest career information of over 300 types of work from different industries, including director and stage designer, etc. On the website, there is also an online learning system, "My Life Planning Portfolio", for students to conduct career aptitude assessments.

The EDB also implements the Business-School Partnership Programme (BSPP) in collaboration with different business corporations, government departments and community organisations. Through the non-traditional learning platform provided by BSPP partners, students have been provided with diversified career exploration activities, with a view to equipping them with knowledge and information about different industries, including arts, culture and entertainment industries. In the 2022/23 school year, the EDB further promoted co-operation between the business sector and schools through launching the BSPP 2.0 with more business partners, covering more industries for widening students' exposure. Holiday Work Experience Programmes arranged under the BSPP 2.0 enable senior secondary students to gain first-hand experience and understand different industries, including animation production and performing arts industries. Study tours to workplaces under the "Greater Bay Area Career Exploration Tours" Programme also deepen students' understanding of the developments and talent needs of various industries in the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area.

To conclude, the EDB will continue to optimise the curriculum and collaborate with different stakeholders to nurture students' creativity through diversified strategies, with a view to cultivating talent for our society.

Thank you, President.