

UGC supports universities to strengthen student support services amidst pandemic

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

The University Grants Committee (UGC) will allocate \$50 million to the eight UGC-funded universities for strengthening their student support services in response to the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The universities will take forward various supporting initiatives covering the areas of psychological counselling, mental well-being and career planning and development, as well as physical fitness and healthy lifestyle, to take care of the different needs of students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused elevated stress and anxiety among university students as they face disruption to their studies and job search, while universities face difficulties in delivering face-to-face student support services. Having invited the eight universities to submit proposals on strengthening student support services earlier, the UGC has approved a one-off allocation of \$50 million to render support.

The eight universities will use the funding to take forward a total of 75 initiatives in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic years. They will expand existing services or launch new ones, such as providing psychological counselling services via the Internet, organising a series of seminars and activities for promoting mental health, hosting virtual career fairs and workshops for job hunters, and developing mobile apps on brisk walking/hiking trails within the campus. These initiatives will enable the universities to provide services tailored to the present circumstances, thereby supporting their students to tide over difficult times.

The Chairman of the UGC, Mr Carlson Tong, said, "The pandemic has brought about an unprecedented impact on Hong Kong, and the UGC cares about our students who face all kinds of challenges amidst the lingering pandemic. Apart from research grants to universities for pandemic-related projects as announced earlier, the UGC hopes to join hands with our universities and students and soldier on in this ongoing battle against the pandemic through this one-off contribution. We will also take this opportunity to encourage innovation among universities in developing a more diverse range of student support services through different delivery means."

Furthermore, to help university students with special educational needs (SEN) adapt to campus life, the UGC has allocated funding to the UGC-funded universities twice for purchasing aids, arranging training and organising inclusion activities with a view to enhancing their support for such students. The UGC will allocate an additional \$30 million to sustain its support. Universities may use the additional funding to offer learning experiences customised to the individual circumstances of SEN students,

thereby further promoting an inclusive culture on campus.

For details of initiatives by the eight UGC-funded universities to strengthen their student support services, please contact the student affairs offices of individual universities.