

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRIEF

CHANGE OF TITLE OF HANG SENG MANAGEMENT COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

At the meeting of the Executive Council on 30 October 2018, the Council ADVISED and the Acting Chief Executive (CE) ORDERED that the Hang Seng Management College (HSMC)'s application for the university title to change its English and Chinese titles to "The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong" and "香港恒生大學" should be approved.

2. Following the sanction of the CE-in-Council, the Permanent Secretary for Education has approved the change of title of HSMC to "The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong" and "香港恒生大學" in accordance with the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) (the Ordinance).

JUSTIFICATIONS

Authority to Grant the University Title

3. At present, usage of the title "university" by self-financing post-secondary education institutions in Hong Kong offering local degree programmes is restricted and the decision to award university title rests with the CE-in-Council¹.

4. The Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) (awarded university title in 1997) and the Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSYU) (awarded university title in 2006) are the only two non-University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions in Hong Kong which have the university title. While the OUHK was established by virtue of the Open University of Hong Kong Ordinance (Cap. 1145), HKSYU (formerly

¹ Section 8(1) of the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance (Cap. 320) provides that the Permanent Secretary for Education "shall not without the prior sanction of the Chief Executive in Council approve any name containing the word 'University' " to be used by institutions registered under the Ordinance.

named as the Hong Kong Shue Yan College) is registered under the Ordinance and was approved to use the university title in 2006.

Roadmap for Becoming a Private University

5. Since HKSJU became a private university in 2006, some more mature self-financing post-secondary education institutions have been aspiring to become private universities. With the progressive development and changing landscape of the higher education sector, there was a need to define a clearer roadmap with criteria for these institutions to follow in acquiring university title.

6. In view of the above need, the CE-in-Council approved in 2015 that self-financing post-secondary education institutions registered under the Ordinance should meet the following criteria before making an application for university title for consideration by the CE-in-Council –

- (a) have obtained Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status in at least three areas, which could be sub-areas under the programme areas but must be located among different programme areas;
- (b) have demonstrated a certain level of research capability by having successful applications under publicly-funded research-related schemes;
- (c) have a minimum student enrolment of 1 500 (full-time equivalent) at degree level for the past two consecutive academic years immediately preceding an application for university title; and
- (d) have obtained the Institutional Review (IR) status from the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) to demonstrate its fundamental ability to meet the standards expected of a university in terms of governance and management, financial sustainability, academic environment, quality assurance (QA) and research capability.

7. With the CE-in-Council's approval of the above criteria, the Education Bureau (EDB) promulgated the revised "Roadmap for Becoming a Private University" with criteria for acquiring university title for post-secondary colleges registered under the Ordinance (the revised roadmap).

HSMC's Fulfillment of the Four Criteria

(a) Have obtained PAA status in at least three areas

8. In March 2017, HSMC obtained PAA status for degree programmes at undergraduate level in the following three areas and fulfilled the requirement in paragraph 6(a) above –

- (i) Business and Management;
- (ii) Languages and Related Studies; and
- (iii) Mass Media and Communications, Journalism and Public Relations.

(b) Have demonstrated a certain level of research capability by having successful applications under publicly-funded research-related schemes

9. In accordance with the revised roadmap, an institution should have successful application(s) under the funding scheme(s) of the Research Endowment Fund and/or those from public funding sources. Any other evidence that indicates the institutions' research capability and standards would also be considered.

10. In the past four years, HSMC has received funding for research projects from various public funding sources, including the Competitive Research Funding Schemes for the Local Self-financing Degree Sector by the Research Grants Council under UGC, Strategic Public Policy Research Funding Scheme by the Policy Innovation and Co-ordination Office (or the former Central Policy Unit), etc. As at 31 July 2018, HSMC had secured up to \$80.5 million for a total of 90 research projects from both public and private funding sources. The HKCAAVQ has also assessed the research capability of HSMC during the IR accreditation exercise (details can be found in paragraph 15(d) below). The above has demonstrated HSMC's research capability to fulfill the requirement in paragraph 6(b) above.

(c) Have a minimum student enrolment of 1 500 (full-time equivalent) at degree level for the past two consecutive academic years immediately preceding an application for university title

11. In accordance with the revised roadmap, upon acquiring PAA status for degree programmes at undergraduate level in at least three areas, an institution shall seek EDB's confirmation that the institution has a

minimum student enrolment of 1 500 (full-time equivalent²) at degree level for the past two consecutive academic years. After receiving EDB's confirmation, the institution may commission HKCAAVQ to carry out an IR to fulfill the requirement in paragraph 6(d) above.

12. After acquiring PAA status in three areas in March 2017, HSMC wrote to EDB in the same month to confirm that the numbers of full-time student enrolment at degree level in the 2015/16 and 2016/17 academic years of HSMC were both over 4 000. EDB issued confirmation to HSMC in March 2017 that the institution fulfilled the minimum student enrolment requirement in paragraph 6(c) above, and might proceed to carry out an IR with the HKCAAVQ.

(d) Have obtained the IR status from the HKCAAVQ to demonstrate its fundamental ability to meet the standards expected of a university

13. Any self-financing post-secondary education institutions registered under the Ordinance aspiring to become private universities shall have undertaken a successful IR with the HKCAAVQ to demonstrate its fundamental ability to meet the standards expected of a university in terms of governance and management, financial sustainability, academic environment and QA, as well as research capability as mentioned in paragraph 9 above. The IR determines whether the institution concerned has put in place a well-managed academic community, embracing all members of staff, guided by carefully formulated academic development, staffing and resource plans with implemented systematic and transparent processes³.

14. HSMC commissioned HKCAAVQ to carry out an IR to demonstrate its fundamental ability to meet the standards expected of a university. HKCAAVQ conducted the IR and issued the IR report in July 2018, confirming that HSMC meets the standards expected of a private university and fulfills the requirement in paragraph 6(d) above.

² Full-time equivalent (FTE) is the unit used for counting student numbers in order to report the approximate size of an institution. FTE numbers are calculated on the basis of the proportion of time spent by a student on a course compared with the time which would be spent on an equivalent full-time course. Thus, full-time students enrolled on full-time courses of any sort are counted as one, i.e. 1 headcount = 1 FTE. Part-time students at all levels are to be counted on a pro-rata basis according to the normal duration of the course (or to the normal duration of an equivalent full-time course).

³ The IR focuses on implemented institutional plans, policies and processes, the outcomes achieved, and whether performance was effectively managed over an extended period of time.

15. In gist, HSMC has demonstrated institutional effectiveness in achieving its mission and objectives and assuring the quality of its educational provision, and put in place a well-managed academic environment with implemented systematic and transparent processes and successful outcomes. Observations made in the IR report in respect of governance and management, academic environment, financial sustainability, research capability and QA are highlighted as follows –

(a) Governance and management

HSMC has demonstrated that its governance and management are effective in ensuring that the College is operating sustainably towards accomplishing its mission, and accountable for the quality of its educational provision. HSMC's implementation of corporate governance within the structure mandated by the Ordinance had been successful. The Board of Governors and the College Council have been appropriately constituted, fit and proper persons of good standing and expertise have been appointed, and the membership composition ensures a high degree of externality. HSMC also has a well-structured management team in place, with suitably qualified personnel carrying appropriate portfolios. Besides, HSMC has a clear recognition of its institutional philosophy and mission which has guided its academic development. The College has effectively implemented its first Five-Year Strategic Plan (2013-18), with the quality of completed items gauged by a set of key performance indicators.

(b) Academic environment

HSMC has established an effective academic environment with sustainable academic leadership capable of translating institutional objectives into institutional and programme outcomes. HSMC develops a physical and teaching/learning environment supported by research and scholarship to promote or support a learning experience which fosters and improves learning and student success.

(c) Financial sustainability

HSMC has demonstrated that the financial planning and management is effective and that financial resources are sufficient to sustain the quality of its current and planned

educational provisions and to support continuous institutional development in accordance with institutional academic planning. In case of under-enrolment or unexpectedly high drop-out rates, HSMC has in place contingency measures to control the expenditure level.

(d) Research Capability

HSMC has demonstrated that it systematically develops and supports its academic staff in pursuing research and/or scholarly activities to ensure they are up-to-date with the theory, knowledge, skills, and pedagogy of their disciplines or professions. The academic staff base is generally well-qualified for conducting research. For the mentoring of junior academic staff's research development, HSMC has in place a mechanism of appointing accomplished scholars from local and/or overseas as visiting or adjunct professors. As of September 2017, HSMC has the highest cumulative total in terms of research project numbers and funding support among all self-financing institutions in Hong Kong since the implementation of the Research Grants Council's Competitive Research Funding Schemes for the Local Self-financing Degree Sector in 2014/15. The research and scholarly output generally met the required standards, and HSMC is systematically developing and supporting its academic staff to pursue research excellence.

(e) Quality Assurance

HSMC has demonstrated that its QA mechanisms are robust and effective in reviewing its performance and in driving continuous improvement to meet institutional objectives. Programme-level reviews have been conducted on a regular basis and have included appropriate levels of engagement and input from external academic and professional/industry advisors. HSMC has maintained a close working relationship with its external stakeholders, and their interactions with the College have been fruitful, with staff being receptive to comments for continuous improvement and quick to respond to them. HSMC benchmarks itself against a number of institutions in Hong Kong and overseas by making reference to various aspects of these institutions such as scope of disciplines, education model, student size, staff-student ratio, class size, employment rate, student support services, etc. Besides, HSMC has developed a set of

Key Profile Indicators to monitor performance and progress for both academic units and programmes.

16. To sum up, HSMC has fulfilled all four criteria stipulated in paragraph 6 above for acquiring university title.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

17. The proposal is in conformity with the Basic Law, including the provisions concerning human rights. It has no financial, civil service, economic, sustainability, productivity, environmental, family or gender implications.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

18. Public consultation is not necessary as the proposal mainly concerns academic accreditation matters and involves no policy change.

PUBLICITY

19. A press release has been issued. A spokesman will be available for answering public enquiries.

BACKGROUND

20. The Hang Seng School of Commerce (HSSC) was founded in 1980 to provide mainly business diploma courses, as well as matriculation courses, pre-associate and associate degree programmes in later years. Established by the HSSC, HSMC has been registered under the Ordinance since 2010. In the 2018/19 academic year, HSMC operates 19 self-financing locally-accredited post-secondary programmes, including 17 bachelor's degree programmes and two master's degree programmes, with over 4 000 students in total.

21. At present, apart from OUHK and HKSYU which are non-UGC-funded institutions, there are eight institutions funded by UGC which possess university title. Three of them⁴ have been universities

⁴ Namely The University of Hong Kong, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology.

from inception, whereas the remaining five⁵ had gone through a process of “upgrading” before they were granted university titles.

ENQUIRIES

22. In case of enquiries, please contact Ms Elaine Mak, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education, at 3509 8502.

Education Bureau
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⁵ Namely The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University and the Education University of Hong Kong.