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Replies to supplementary questions raised by Legislative Council Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure 2026-27

Director of Bureau : Secretary for Education

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB001

(Question Serial No. S025)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (-) Not specified

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Ms May CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

On promotion of digital education, it is noted from the reply that the response to the AI for Empowering Learning and Teaching Funding Programme (the Funding Programme) has been overwhelming, with all eligible schools having submitted applications. Apart from issuing guidelines to assist schools in making good use of the funding, will the Education Bureau (EDB) share successful cases with other schools and take a more proactive approach to understand the implementation progress in schools, ensuring that the \$500,000 funding is really spent on acquiring AI tools and enhancing students' AI literacy, thereby avoiding duplication or wastage of resources?

Furthermore, regarding schools' incorporation of the "Development of AI-empowered Education" initiative into the School Development Plan, will EDB establish a monitoring mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of the Funding Programme, such as tracking data on improvements of students' AI literacy and teaching quality?

For schools currently with a relatively weak foundation in AI implementation, particularly primary schools in remote areas and special schools, will EDB provide additional start-up support to avoid ineffective use of the \$500,000 funding due to technical threshold?

Asked by: Hon CHU Lap-wai

Reply:

The Education Bureau (EDB) has launched the AI for Empowering Learning and Teaching Funding Programme (the Funding Programme) to facilitate the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) elements in schools, thereby empowering education through technology to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching. The response to the Funding Programme has been overwhelming. All eligible publicly-funded primary and secondary schools (including special schools) have applied and received confirmations of approval from EDB.

Under the Funding Programme, schools are required to submit the "Interim Report" and "Final Report" of the Funding Programme to EDB before the deadlines, so that EDB can understand the implementation of AI education in schools, including the integration of AI into

teaching into various subjects. Throughout the programme period, schools have to conduct in total at least 6 open classes or classroom demonstrations and experience-sharing sessions on AI-assisted teaching within or outside the school to facilitate exchanges of teaching examples among teachers. In addition, EDB will continue to collect exemplary practices on the use of AI, summarise schools' practices, and further promote the pedagogical application of AI to the school sector through sharing sessions and workshops.

EDB has also, through collection of information from different channels such as the Survey on Digital Education, curriculum development visits, inspections and focus groups meetings, reviewed the effectiveness of schools' implementation of AI-empowered education, including the improvements of students' AI literacy and teaching quality.

EDB has been providing a wide range of support. For example, the Digital Education Centre of Excellence (CoE) of EDB, staffed by in-service teachers with successful experiences in implementing digital education, is offering training and on-site support services to other primary and secondary schools (including special schools) and sharing good practices, including the implementation strategies for enhancing students' digital literacy and making good use of AI tools, as well as how to put the funding and resources into effective use. All these have enabled schools at different pace of development to have more opportunities for sharing and exchanges with one another, thereby raising the overall professional capacity of all schools in implementing AI education.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB002

(Question Serial No. S022)

Head: (156) Government Secretariat: Education Bureau

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: (3) Primary Education, (4) Secondary Education, (5) Special Education, (6) Other Educational Services and Subsidies

Controlling Officer: Permanent Secretary for Education (Ms May CHAN)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

Regarding the implementation of the said Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism (the Mechanism), will the Government advise this Committee of the following –

- (1) What were the respective numbers of students receiving service under the first-tier, second-tier, and third-tier mechanism in each of the past 2 school years? Among these, how many cases were referred to the Hospital Authority via the third-tier mechanism and triaged as “urgent” or “semi-urgent”? What was the longest waiting time among these cases?
- (2) It is repeatedly stated in the reply that expenditure on initiatives such as the 4Rs Mental Health Charter is subsumed under EDB’s recurrent expenditure and that no breakdown is therefore available. What are the specific reasons for this? To facilitate a better understanding of students’ mental health needs, will the Government consider maintaining expenditure data for the above services starting from the next school year? If no, what are the reasons?
- (3) In the light of the increasing demand for student mental health support, will the Government consider expanding the second-tier support network under the Mechanism to include more non-governmental organisations, so as to meet the demand? If no, what are the reasons?

Asked by: Hon LEUNG Man-kwong

Reply:

(1) and (3)

As announced in the 2025 Policy Address, the Government has regularised the Three-tier School-based Emergency Mechanism (the Mechanism) in all secondary schools in Hong Kong and has extended it on a trial basis to cover Primary 4 to 6 students in the 2025/26 school year through cross-departmental collaboration of the Education Bureau (EDB), Health Bureau and Social Welfare Department (SWD).

The first-tier mechanism is to early identify and offer support to students at higher suicidal risk, as well as to provide students concerned with timely assistance and help them seek professional counselling or treatment services as early as possible. EDB provides gatekeeper training for teachers, parents, and students to prepare them for early identification of and response to students at higher suicidal risk. Since early identification and intervention for students with emotional disturbance and mental health problems are ongoing tasks of schools, EDB does not collect relevant data and information from schools.

The second-tier mechanism is for the “off-campus support network” team (the team), formed by 5 non-governmental organisations engaged by SWD, to provide schools with enhanced support to students at higher suicidal risk in the short term. Upon receiving referrals under the second-tier of the Mechanism, the team would contact students concerned as soon as possible and arrange follow-up services, and would also match and refer the students or their families to other community support services, such as the Integrated Family Services, the Integrated Community Centre for Mental Wellness and the Integrated Children and Youth Services Centre, so that they can receive appropriate off-campus support according to their individual needs. SWD will continue to review the service demand and utilisation of the second-tier mechanism to co-ordinate relevant services and resources. From 1 December 2023 to 31 December 2025, the team engaged by SWD received a total of 664 referrals from schools.

The third-tier mechanism is for schools to refer students at high suicidal risk to the Hospital Authority (HA) to receive psychiatric specialist outpatient services. From 1 December 2023 to 31 December 2025, HA’s psychiatric services received a total of 478 referrals from school principals and 195 enquiries through the telephone consultation hotline for school principals under the Mechanism. Of these referrals, about 5% of the cases were categorised as Priority 1 (urgent), and about 44% were categorised as Priority 2 (semi-urgent). The remaining cases either fell under the Routine (stable) category or were already being followed up by HA’s psychiatric services. HA’s psychiatric specialist outpatient clinics (SOPCs) have been implementing a triage system for new cases. Newly referred cases to HA’s psychiatric services (including those made by school principals under the Mechanism) are usually screened by a nurse and then reviewed by a specialist doctor, before being classified into Priority 1 (urgent), Priority 2 (semi-urgent), and Routine (stable) cases. HA has specifically set an additional target for psychiatric SOPCs since 2023, that is, the overall median waiting time for urgent and semi-urgent new cases should be no more than 1 week and 4 weeks respectively. The relevant target has already been achieved, ensuring that patients with urgent needs can receive treatment within a reasonable time. If the patients’ mental conditions have changed during the waiting time, they may return to their respective psychiatric SOPCs for re-assessment to determine whether they need to advance their consultation or seek treatment from the accident and emergency department services.

The Government will continue to closely monitor students’ mental health needs through inter-departmental collaboration, and review the implementation of the Mechanism when appropriate.

(2)

EDB has implemented the 4Rs Mental Health Charter (4Rs Charter) since the 2024/25 school year, which aims to assist schools in setting practical and feasible goals and take concrete

actions to implement measures that promote students' physical and psychological well-being. The 4Rs Charter is not a single event. Participating schools carry out the four elements of the 4Rs Charter and objectives for promoting mental health by adopting a Whole School Approach and through school-based measures and strategies, such as planning a school-based curriculum, reviewing and formulating assignment and assessment policies, arranging timetables, and organising student activities, with a view to helping students develop healthy living habits, thereby enhancing the overall healthy culture in schools. Moreover, EDB provides schools with more services, activities, and training programmes through cross-departmental and cross-sectoral collaboration, including the Department of Health, the Labour Department, and partner organisations of the 4Rs Charter. As no additional manpower or expenditure is incurred in the implementation of the 4Rs Charter, EDB does not maintain relevant information.

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CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

S-EDB003

(Question Serial No. S036)

Head: (190) University Grants Committee

Subhead (No. & title): (-) Not specified

Programme: University Grants Committee

Controlling Officer: Secretary-General, University Grants Committee (Prof James TANG)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Education

Question:

Regarding the teaching expenditure on students under the academic programme categories of “medicine” and “Chinese medicine”, please advise this Committee of the following –

- (1) The Government mentioned in its reply to my written question that “the University Grants Committee (UGC) does not separately collect annual average teaching expenditure per undergraduate student under the academic programme category of ‘Chinese medicine’”. However, at the special meeting of the Finance Committee held on 16 April 2026, the Secretary-General of the UGC said that “the UGC requires universities to report their average teaching cost per student every year”. In this connection, please advise whether the Government has collected data on the annual average teaching cost per student from the School of Chinese Medicine of the Hong Kong Baptist University, of the University of Hong Kong and of The Chinese University of Hong Kong over the past 5 years. If yes, what are the details? If no, what are the reasons?
- (2) Will the Government further refine the data on teaching expenditure of “Chinese medicine” programmes and review the relative cost weighting for these programmes in the future, so as to ensure that the universities have sufficient resources to effectively deliver Chinese medicine talent training and education?

Asked by: Hon CHAN Wing-kwong

Reply:

The University Grants Committee (UGC) Secretariat has been maintaining communication with the universities to collect data on the average teaching cost, in a bid to review the level of funding support for the universities. The UGC-funded universities report to the UGC Secretariat annually the average teaching expenditure per student for the UGC-funded programmes, with a breakdown by academic programme category, to demonstrate how the programmes are offered with the UGC’s funding and other funding sources, such as tuition fees, donations and other income.

Chinese medicine programmes fall under “Studies Allied to Medicine and Health”. In the academic years between 2020/21 and 2024/25, the annual average teaching expenditures per undergraduate student under “Studies Allied to Medicine and Health” are as follows –

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
\$164,000	\$168,000	\$172,000	\$166,000	\$168,000

Based on the above figures, there has been no significant increase in the average teaching expenditure per student under “Studies Allied to Medicine and Health”. Chinese medicine is a discipline with specific manpower requirements; the number of student places is specified by the Government to ensure a sufficient supply of graduates for meeting the manpower requirements of the society. As Chinese medicine is categorised under “Studies Allied to Medicine and Health”, it has a higher expenditure than other disciplines and will therefore receive a higher relative cost weighting (RCW) in the funding formula. Upon receipt of proposals concerning the RCW, the UGC Secretariat will consult the relevant bureau and give holistic consideration by taking into account various factors, such as the operating costs of the programmes and the average teaching expenditure per student under different academic programme categories.

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