



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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Mr Edward Cheng, SBS, JP
Chairman
University Grants Committee
7/F Shui On Centre
6-8 Harbour Road
Wan Chai
Hong Kong

Dear *Edward,*

**The Hong Kong Institute of Education :
Application for University Title**

On 7 July 2014, The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) submitted a formal application for university title to the Government (Annex A^(a)). As HKIEd is one of the institutions under the aegis of the University Grants Committee (UGC), in line with the established practice, I am writing to invite the UGC to conduct a special review on HKIEd for this purpose and let us have UGC's expert views for our assessment on the application.

Background

As you are aware, HKIEd submitted a development blueprint together with an application for university title for the first time in June 2007 via a document entitled *Development Blueprint: Becoming a University of Education*. Subsequently, the UGC kindly accepted the Government's invitation and established an ad hoc Review Group to conduct a special review, resulting in the publication of a Report in February 2009. Having considered the UGC Review Group Report, the Chief

Executive-in-Executive Council (CE-in-Council) decided on the way forward with respect to institutional development of HKIED on 23 June 2009. Among other things, the CE-in-Council decided to support HKIED to develop into a multi-disciplinary institution with a focus on education and a good spread of complementary disciplines, as well as to strengthen its research capability, through provision of additional student numbers (120 first-year first degree and 30 research postgraduate places). On the question of whether or not HKIED should be granted university title, the CE-in-Council decided that it should be considered at a later date. Paragraphs 17 to 19 of the relevant Legislative Council brief on the CE-in-Council's decision in 2009 are extracted in full below in view of their significance:

“17. In considering whether a higher education institution should be granted the university title, the Administration will take into account all relevant factors, including the quality and standard of its academic programmes, the level and mix of programmes offered, the quality of students and standing of academic staff, research capability, internal governance, quality assurance structures and the extent of self-accrediting powers, resources available to the institution, and the public interest.

18. As a UGC-funded institution, HKIED is already funded on the same basis as the other seven UGC-funded institutions. We agree with the assessment of UGC that HKIED is not at this point in time ready to be granted the university title, and believe that the developments now envisaged, including the offering by HKIED of new programmes complementary to and supportive of teacher education and the enhancement of its research capability, represent the necessary steps that HKIED should take as it strives to develop into a university with teacher education as the primary focus.

19. Following the implementation of these necessary steps, HKIED may, when it is ready and willing to do so, submit to the Government a formal request for being granted the university title. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the development of new programmes complementary to teacher education and the building up of research capacity will not automatically lead to a university title. Before such a title may be so granted, HKIED must be able to demonstrate that it already possesses the qualities and attributes

commonly expected of a university. This implies that the new disciplines and research programmes will need to be in operation long enough for their quality to be assessed. Otherwise, we will be degrading the value and meaning implied by the university title, with adverse implications for the higher education sector as a whole. Accordingly, upon receipt of a request for being granted the university title from HKIEd, the Government intends to invite UGC to conduct a special review having regard to the matters referred to in paragraph 17 above. The Government will then take a view on the request in the light of UGC's advice and other relevant considerations."

HKIEd has been granted self-accrediting status in teacher education programmes since 2004. Further to the CE-in-Council's decision, HKIEd has introduced a number of new undergraduate programmes in complementary disciplines, as well as research programmes. Of note, HKIEd successfully went through Programme Revalidation of its BSocSc(Hons) in Global and Environmental Studies and BA(Hons) in Language Studies programmes by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) in November 2013. In July 2014, HKIEd was further granted Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) status by HKCAAVQ for the programme areas of Chinese Studies, English Studies and Environmental Studies at QF Level 5, with a validity period of five years from the 2014/15 to 2018/19 academic years. The PAA status is subject to Periodic Reviews by HKCAAVQ under its Four-Stage Quality Assurance Process. More information about HKCAAVQ's Four-stage Quality Assurance Process can be found at: <http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/services/accreditation/four-stage-qa-process>.

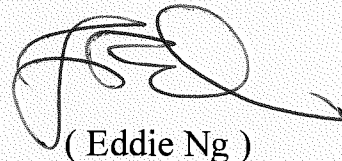
Invitation to UGC to conduct special review

Against the above background, I would like to invite the UGC to consider HKIEd's present application for university title in detail by conducting a review on HKIEd, with a view to letting the Government have the UGC's recommendations by September 2015. In this exercise, the UGC may, where appropriate, also wish to make reference to the PAA Report issued by HKCAAVQ in July 2014 which contains a number of observations on and recommendations for continuous improvement for HKIEd at the institutional and discipline levels. Our terms of reference to the UGC for this review are set out at **Annex A**⁽²⁾.

As in the exercise conducted last time, we are fully aware that HKIED may need to engage relevant key stakeholders on some of the major issues involved. Please let us know if we can be of assistance in any such process that the UGC may decide to initiate as the exercise unfolds.

We very much hope that, as in the last time, you and your Committee will be generous enough to agree to take on this important and most meaningful exercise. We look forward to receiving your favourable response soon.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Eddie Ng', written in a cursive style.

(Eddie Ng)
Secretary for Education

Encls.

**# This annex
is NOT for public consumption.**

Note: Due to the sensitive nature of this document, this annex is not for public consumption. Readers may enquire with the Hong Kong Institute of Education for access to such information.

Terms of Reference

1. To advise the Government, in the light of the community's needs and the promotion of excellence in the higher education sector, and having regard to the Government's decision on institutional development of The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED) on 23 June 2009^{*}, the Programme Area Accreditation (PAA) Report on HKIED issued by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications in July 2014, as well as any other evidence that may be obtained through a special review on HKIED: –
 - (a) on HKIED's progress in developing into a multi-disciplinary institution with a focus on teacher education and a good spread of other complementary disciplines and implementing the recommendations made in the University Grants Committee (UGC)'s Report of the Review Group on Hong Kong Institute of Education's Development Blueprint published in February 2009;
 - (b) on whether HKIED should be granted self-accrediting status in the programme areas covered by its existing PAA status, having regard to the quality of the relevant programmes and in terms of both teaching and research performance;
 - (c) in light of (a) and (b), on whether HKIED already possesses the qualities and attributes commonly expected of a university and should be granted the university title at this juncture;
 - (d) on whether there are any other actions HKIED should take in future to further its role and improve the quality of education it provides.
2. To bring to the Government's attention issues of concern, if any, in relation to HKIED's application for the university title.

^{*} Details are set out in the relevant Legislative Council brief which is available at: http://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/about-edb/press/legco/others/legco%20brief%20on%20hkied%20development%20_eng_.pdf