

PART TWO: BACKGROUND

Previous Proposals

2.1 In 2009, CityU submitted a proposal to the UGC for the establishment of a publicly-funded veterinary school. The UGC then was unable to support the proposal. When CityU re-submitted the proposal to the UGC in December 2012, the UGC established a Veterinary School Task Force to examine the proposal. In January 2014, the UGC agreed to the recommendation of the Task Force that CityU's proposal had not provided a persuasive case for the development of a UGC-funded veterinary school and thus decided that the proposal could not be supported. Subsequently, CityU launched a self-financed PhD programme with about 10 students under its College of Veterinary Medicine in late 2014. CityU also introduced a Master of Science programme in Aquatic Production and Veterinary Health in September 2016. In addition, CityU started working with Cornell University on the development of a possible joint degree programme.

Third Proposal

2.2 In May 2016, CityU submitted its third proposal seeking public funding for its proposed BVM programme. CityU's plan was to offer the BVM programme for the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years on a self-financing basis (with annual intake of 10-15), to be followed by an application to the UGC for offering a publicly-funded BVM programme starting from the 2019/20 academic year (with annual intake of 30). In August 2016, the Government replied to CityU that there is a *prima facie* case to consider introducing a professionally-accredited undergraduate training programme in veterinary medicine in Hong Kong, and the ideal veterinary school, that could suit the needs of Hong Kong, should have a small professional veterinary medicine training and a top-heavy postgraduate and research programme.

Latest Proposal

2.3 In October 2017, CityU submitted a latest proposal to UGC for a publicly-funded six-year BVM programme starting from the 2019/20 academic year (**Annex A**). The proposal was put together by CityU to include information needed by the UGC for evaluating an undergraduate programme for

public-funding. In August 2016, the UGC had given CityU an outline of the key issues to be covered in CityU's BVM proposal, including a set of conditions which CityU must meet in order to introduce a publicly-funded programme.

UGC's Key Issues of the BVM Programme

2.4 Based on UGC's past evaluation of CityU's previous proposals regarding the veterinary programme, the key issues which the UGC would like CityU to address or report progress in the latest proposal include:

- (a) reaffirmation that CityU could properly manage the finances of the BVM programme which has a higher cost structure and is longer than a regular undergraduate programme;
- (b) detailed response to the conditions summarized in paragraph 2.5 below, including: accreditation, capital requirement, budgeting, research, and cooperation with Cornell University;
- (c) budget, student numbers and cost weighting with detailed calculations of and a list of assumptions that support the conclusion;
- (d) progress of CityU's fundraising efforts and student recruitment; and
- (e) accreditation of the programme and exit plan for students and graduates, with reassurance that there is a viable pathway for graduates to practise veterinary medicine in Hong Kong after graduation.

Conditions of introducing a public-funded programme

2.5 The conditions which CityU was expected to meet and explain in the BVM proposal are:

- (a) For intakes of students from the 2019/20 academic year onwards, the students will be supported (if no additional first-year-first-degree (FYFD) places are secured through the Planning Exercise) by a combination of transfer of publicly funded places from other disciplines/programmes at undergraduate level within CityU.
- (b) CityU must seek UGC's approval of a detailed budget estimate, with robust justifications of the opportunity cost and value for money of the

proposal. This includes start-up cost (whether for the self-financing or publicly-funded operation), recurrent cost and cost of running certain facilities to be operated on self-financing basis (e.g. clinical training centre for small animals), and the underlying calculation and assumptions.

- (c) CityU must seek UGC's approval of definitive plans, with specific timetable, to seek local and international recognition/accreditation on the programme to meet the requirements imposed by the Veterinary Surgeons Board of Hong Kong (VSBHK) or other international veterinary bodies.
- (d) Assurance from the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC) that the pathway for CityU to obtain "full accreditation status" is no different from that offered to tertiary institutions in other jurisdictions.
- (e) Concrete plans concerning the specific involvement of Cornell University, including the timetable and roadmap for a joint degree programme for the publicly-funded undergraduate programme, in particular the extent of professional support that would be offered to CityU in respect of recruitment and training of staff, curriculum design and in acquiring accreditation.
- (f) CityU must assure UGC whether as part of self-financing or publicly-funded operation, throughout the life cycle of the programme, students of CityU's BVM programme are able to practise veterinary medicine in Hong Kong upon graduation with no constraints attached. The UGC wishes to ensure the existence of a viable exit plan (in case the above arrangement does not materialize).
- (g) CityU must seek UGC's approval of capital requirement/accommodation plans concerning the additional academic space required, and the timetable for providing various necessary teaching facilities (e.g. training facilities, animal health diagnostic laboratory, animal hospital, teaching farm), having regard to the implementation timetable and the student numbers as detailed above.
- (h) CityU must acknowledge that all capital requirements relating to the programme will be borne solely on the part of CityU; that no additional capital funding would be provided by the Government and the UGC, and CityU might re-deploy existing campus resources to operate the veterinary programme.

- (i) CityU must satisfy the UGC that the university has good governance and risk management in running College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences. As a matter of good governance, CityU shall ensure that it would evaluate all dimensions of risks (including but not limited to financial risk and reputational risk) associated with the package of proposals on the veterinary medicine programme in order that the CityU's Council might fulfill its duties as appropriate.

Establishment of a BVM Task Force

2.6 In October 2017, UGC established BVMTF to examine if CityU's proposal fully addressed the key issues and meet the conditions for operating a publicly-funded programme. The Terms of Reference and membership of the BVMTF are at **Annex B** and **Annex C** respectively.

2.7 The BVMTF met twice, on 23–25 October 2017 and 15 January 2018, and conducted a number of visits to major stakeholders. The Secretariat also sought and obtained CityU's responses to BVMTF's questions.