

UGC-funded institutions confirm their support of elite athletes

The eight University Grants Committee (UGC) funded institutions have confirmed that they would continue and enhance their support to Hong Kong's elite athletes, enabling them to undertake sport training while at university and encouraging them to pursue higher education while concentrating on preparing for sport competitions, as well as to take up their studies upon their retirement, the Secretary for Home Affairs, Mr Tsang Tak-sing, announced today (April 21).

"The Government is committed to promoting sports development in Hong Kong and the welfare of our athletes. I am pleased to learn that the UGC-funded institutions share the same vision with us. Their encouraging response reflects the community's recognition of the outstanding achievements of our elite athletes," Mr Tsang said.

"With great perseverance and determination to excel in their sports, our elite athletes have achieved remarkable achievements over the years. Their efforts and dedication to sports should be widely recognised," he added.

Mr Tsang met with representatives of the eight UGC-funded institutions this morning to discuss measures to facilitate elite athletes to pursue higher education in Hong Kong.

In appreciation of the contributions of the elite athletes to the community, representatives of the UGC-funded institutions have confirmed at today's meeting that their institutions would continue their support to the athletes and would attempt to enhance the support starting from the 2008-09 academic year, by:

- (a) allowing athletes who have been selected for admission to defer commencement of studies; granting them leave as necessary to enable them to continue sport training and competitions; and giving them permission to extend their period of study;
- (b) making special arrangements for elite athletes to enable them to successfully complete, and benefit from, their university studies; and

(c) providing special support and assistance to the athletes as necessary, such as through mentorship schemes.

Besides, the UGC-funded institutions will give recognitions to nominations from the Sports Federation & Olympic Committee of Hong Kong, China and the Hong Kong Sports Institute of elite athletes for consideration of admission to these institutions, possibly under a system similar to the Sub-system for School Principal's Nominations of the Joint University Programmes Admissions System.

"I would like to thank the eight UGC-funded institutions for their willingness to continue with and to enhance their support to our elite athletes in their pursuit of higher education. I believe the concerted efforts by the institutions will encourage more young people with athletic potential to take up a career in sports, which will help create a stronger sporting culture in Hong Kong.

"The united pledge from all our universities is another milestone in this Olympic Year to mark the pursuit of excellence in sports and sportsmanship," Mr Tsang added.

Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, Convenor of the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM), Vice-Chancellor and President of The University of Hong Kong, said: "The eight UGC-funded institutions are committed to supporting elite student athletes of Hong Kong."

He added: "The benefits for students that come from sports are both physical and mental, and have a holistic and enduring impact on their outlook in life. We are pleased to introduce these measures to facilitate our gifted young athletes in their pursuit of higher education and to encourage them to continue their academic endeavours even after completing their athletic careers."

Representatives from the eight UGC-funded institutions attending today's meeting include:

- Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, Vice-Chancellor and President, The University of

Hong Kong; and Convenor of HUCOM;

- Professor Richard Ho, Acting President, City University of Hong Kong;
- Professor Frank Fu, Associate Vice-President and Dean of Social Sciences, Hong Kong Baptist University;
- Professor Chan Yuk-shee, President, Lingnan University;
- Professor Lawrence Lau, President and Vice-Chancellor, The Chinese University of Hong Kong;
- Professor Anthony Cheung, President, The Hong Kong Institute of Education;
- Professor MS Demokan, Vice President (Academic Development), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University; and
- Professor Roland Chin, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, The University of Science and Technology.

Ends/Monday, April 21, 2008