

**Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry
Development Advisory Committee (2022-2024)
(Notes of the First Meeting)**

Date and Time : 25 July 2022 (Monday) at 2:30pm

Venue : Conference Room 3, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar

Present

Ms. Angela LEE	Chairperson (DS(W)1, DEVB)
Prof. Leslie CHEN, JP	Member
Mr. Kingsley CHOI	Member
Mr. Daniel HO	Member
Ms. Iris HOI	Member
Mr. LAI Ka-ming	Member
Dr. Allen LIM	Member
Mr. Victor MAN	Member
Mr. Ken SO	Member
Mr. Chiky WONG	Member
Dr. Peter YAU	Member (via video conferencing at Melbourne, Australia)
Dr. Eric CHENG Tak-ming	Member (CIC)
Ir. Dr. Eric LIU	Member (VTC)
Ms. Kathy T.K. NG	Member (H/GLTMS, DEVB)
Mr. Steve LAI	Member (GM/QF, EDB)
Dr. Jackie YIP	Member (AD(P), AFCD)
Miss Sandy TONG	Member (SLA/VM(NT), HyD)
Mr. Sunny LO	Member (SLA/TD&C, HD)
Ms. Annie FUNG	Member (CLM(PA), LCSD)
Mr. Ryan LIN	Secretary (H/TMO, DEVB)
Miss Flora LEUNG	Note-taker (TMO3, DEVB)

In Attendance

For IDAC Paper No. 1/2022

Miss Cindy LO CEO(Reg), DEVB

For IDAC Paper No. 2/2022

Ms. Josephine YANG AS(TM)2, DEVB
Mr. Angus LAM Project Team Leader (PTL)
Mr. William WONG Project Team Member/Trade Test (PTM/TT)
Mr. Chris HO Project Team Member/Professional Assessment (PTM/PA)

For IDAC Paper No. 3/2022

Ms. Josephine YANG AS(TM)2, DEVB
Mr. HSU Ka-man AS(TM)3, DEVB

Action

1. The Chairperson welcomed Members to the first meeting of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Development Advisory Committee (“AHIDAC”) 2022-2024, including Mr. Chiky WONG Cheuk-yuet, Dr. Eric LIU Sai-lok, Dr. Eric CHENG Tak-ming and Ms. Kathy T.K. NG, who joined the meeting for the first time.

Item 1 : Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting

2. The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendment. The Chairperson notified Members of an episode 《樹在我旁》 of the Hong Kong Connection (鏗鏘集) aired by the Radio Television Hong Kong in February 2022, and expressed gratitude to Mr. Ken SO and Mr. Chiky WONG who assisted in promoting the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (“The Scheme”) and the Urban Forestry Support Fund (“UFSF”) in the episode.

Item 2 : Implementation of the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (IDAC Paper No. 1/2022)

3. CEO(Reg) introduced the Paper with the aid of PowerPoint, reporting that the Scheme had been implemented for around 1.5 years. She briefed Members on the implementation progress of the Scheme including (a) registration status; (b) continuing education in arboriculture (“CEA”) courses; (c) performance monitoring; (d) employment of registered tree management personnel in government contracts; and (e) local professional assessments and trade tests.
4. A Member enquired about the reasons for unsuccessful registration and the follow-up work.
5. CEO(Reg) advised that the main reasons for unsuccessful registration were the lack of relevant training qualifications, occupational safety and health (“OSH”) training qualification and proof of relevant work experience. Applicants could submit supplementary information for re-application when all the requirements were met.
6. Referring to a Member’s observation that the Greening,

Landscape and Tree Management Section (“GLTMS”) of Development Bureau (“DEVB”) would offer advice to qualified practitioners to get registered as far as practicable, CEO(Reg) confirmed and added that the GLTMS would advise individual applicants on the reasons of unsuccessful application and provide them with information of relevant training courses to facilitate their re-application.

7. The Chairperson supplemented that a guideline had been uploaded onto the Scheme’s website to enhance applicants’ understanding on the application requirements and procedures.
8. A Member expressed concern over the difficulty in obtaining recognised academic qualification for registration which might affect the number of registered arborists in the market. He suggested that the GLTMS allow some flexibility in recognising overseas academic qualification so as to boost up the number of registered arborists. Besides, he pointed out that the use of different terminologies regarding tree specialists in some new government contracts has given rise to inconsistent contract requirements amongst departments.
9. The Chairperson remarked that the Scheme was intended to uplift the standard of in-service practitioners and the GLTMS would review the application in due course. She undertook to follow up with the relevant departments on the issue of use of terminology in government contracts with a view to addressing the Members’ concern.
10. A Member noted the high proportion of unsuccessful application due to lack of OSH training qualification. He enquired if the applicants could simply re-apply upon completion of relevant courses and the success rate would then be raised. A Member expressed concern about the availability of OSH training courses in the market and enquired about the number of accepted courses.
11. CEO(Reg) explained that OSH training qualification was required for three out of the five registered personnel (i.e. arborist, tree climber and tree work supervisor), and thus failure to obtain OSH training qualification would result in relatively high proportion of unsuccessful application. Regarding availability of OSH training courses, CEO(Reg) elaborated on some examples of accepted courses available in

the market, including those provided by the Occupational Safety and Health Council, Hong Kong Metropolitan University (“HKMU”), Vocational Training Council (“VTC”), TCHK and LNS Limited.

12. A Member recognised the need for 7-year work experience requirement for arborists but commented that the academic requirement of Level 4 in the Hong Kong Qualification Framework (“HKQF”) could be a bit stringent. He proposed the GLTMS to consider developing trade test or short course as alternative means for recognition. He also noted more OSH training courses being accepted by the GLTMS and expected that the registration number would increase. Besides, he shared that the Scheme was conducive to career development and it was well supported by the practitioners. He suggested more promotion on the CEA courses for renewal.
13. CEO(Reg) added that an electronic form for recording CEA hours for renewal was being developed. CEA hours of a course under specific functional area, if applicable, could be used for renewal of more than one registered personnel type.
14. AS(TM)2 supplemented that once the teaching materials were accepted by the GLTMS, information of the recognised CEA courses would be uploaded to the Scheme’s website and the Registration Unit would also notify the target registered personnel by email.
15. GM/QF noted the wide use of the Specification of Competency Standards (“SCS”) under HKQF in the Scheme including the CEA courses. He suggested specifying the core competency of specific job type to facilitate development of SCS-based courses by the training institutions to standardise and uplift the industry standard.
16. AS(TM)2 elaborated that gap analysis had been conducted to identify the required Unit of Competency (“UoC”)s which were specified in the CEA courses for information by the participants. In end-of-course evaluation, participants of the CEA courses (2021/22) gave positive feedback on the learning outcome, indicating a good learning achievement. She further responded that mapping of the UoCs for each personnel type was underway in the Study under Paper 2 and more discussion for further adjustment would be required.

17. A Member enquired if Recognition of Prior Learning (“RPL”) could be introduced as an alternative route to obtain QF-recognised qualification by experienced practitioners for registration.
18. AS(TM)2 responded that while the prime intent of the Scheme was to uplift the professional standard of practitioners, the GLTMS welcomed all measures pursuing to this intent. It was learnt from the Education Bureau (“EDB”) that RPL was currently adopted by some training institutions for admission purpose and thus facilitate the practitioners to obtain QF-recognised academic qualification. GLTMS would communicate with the EDB to explore viable use of RPL.
19. GM/QF supplemented that RPL provided an alternative route for practitioners to obtain QF-recognised qualifications in lieu of a training programme and facilitated their subsequent progression in learning by minimising unnecessary duplication of learning. He echoed that RPL could facilitate access to or exemption from completion of the whole learning programme, subject to the identification of the clusters of UoCs. However, the precondition was whether the industry had a genuine need to adopt RPL. He supplemented that not all industries with SCS in Hong Kong were using RPL.
20. Regarding the required training qualification for registered arborists and tree risk assessors, a Member noted that two training programmes in tree risk assessment were newly recognised but could not find the programmes on the websites of the course providers. He recommended to provide more information on the programme content and benchmark criteria so as to enhance the transparency of recognition. Besides, it was presumed that a quality assurance mechanism was in place.
21. AS(TM)2 explained that the two local training programmes provided by the HKMU and Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (“THEi”) were recognised in November 2021 and March 2022 respectively. The former was corporate training programme and the latter would be launched in August 2022. She supplemented that the GLTMS would conduct compliance checking on the programmes including reviewing the teaching/assessment materials and administrative arrangement, and conducting class inspection, etc.

22. A Member enquired if there was any target number of registered arborists to meet the market demand. He urged for a clear instruction to departments regarding employment of registered personnel in all government contracts.
23. AS(TM)2 reported that based on the returns from core tree management departments, the number of prevailing registered personnel was considered sufficient to meet the projected demand in the coming years. The GLTMS would continue to communicate with relevant departments for updating the manpower demand figures and clarifying the personnel requirement.
24. The Member further expressed that some registered personnel were engaged by consultants but not by contractors, and enquired if the GLTMS could obtain more information for better understanding the market demand. Another Member recalled his concern on the underestimated demand for registered arborists in the last meeting as only part-time arborists were counted in departmental returns.
25. AS(TM)2 appreciated the projected demand of registered arborists as shared by the Member after the last meeting which could generally be met by the prevailing number of registered arborists. She clarified that figures of both full-time and part-time arborists were included in departmental returns when estimating the manpower demand. She welcomed the Member to provide more updated figures, if available, for further analysis.
26. The Chairperson remarked that the GLTMS would continue to review and refine the Scheme having regard to comments given by Members and experience in administering the Scheme.

Item 3 : Progress Report on the Study on Local Professional Assessments and Trade Tests of the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (IDAC Paper No. 2/2022)

27. AS(TM)2, PTL, PTM(TT) and PTM(PA) reported the progress on the study on local professional assessments and trade tests of the Scheme with the aid of PowerPoint. The report covered (a) study methodology; (b) operation of professional assessments and trade tests; (c) reference core

- UoCs and syllabus; and (d) eligibility to sit for the professional assessments / trade tests.
28. A Member enquired if award of tree risk assessor would be granted to one passing the first part of the professional assessment of arborist.
 29. PTM(PA) confirmed the same and supplemented that with the required academic qualification and work experience, one passing the professional assessment of tree risk assessor could be exempted from taking the first part of the professional assessment of arborist.
 30. Regarding the trade test for chainsaw operator, a Member stressed the importance of safe use of chainsaw and considered the 30-minute practical test insufficient in particular under exam stress. Another Member agreed and emphasised the use of chainsaw in cutting trees.
 31. PT(TT) explained that in determining the duration of the test, relevant vocational assessment run by the VTC was taken as reference, in which around 70-80% of the candidates completed the assessment within 30 minutes.
 32. The Chairperson remarked that the professional assessments and trade tests were still under development and more discussion and refinement were required before implementation.
 33. Regarding the proposed work experience for sitting for the assessments/tests by the study, a Member asked if the GLTMS would adhere to the recommendation and adopt it in the enhanced registration requirements.
 34. AS(TM)2 expressed that the proposed work experience had certain reference value as the VTC had made reference to prevailing registration requirements and that of other registration organisations, as well as advice from the Expert Groups of the study. She added that unlike the prevailing registration requirements, post qualification work experience was specified.
 35. In regard to the trade test for tree climbers, a Member asked if first aid qualification was required and if aerial rescue and tree pruning would be covered in the practical test for which

40 minutes was considered insufficient.

36. PTM/TT and PTM/PA pointed out that valid first-aid certificate was one of the eligibility requirements to sit for the trade test while aerial rescue would be covered in the written test. The design of the pilot practical test was intended to assess the safe climb, climbing skill, safe work positioning in tree and communication with ground workers.
37. AS(TM)2 supplemented that candidates sitting for the trade test should be competent in-service practitioners with the required academic qualification and post qualification work experience. Design of the practical test should take into account a balance between the time and content, allowing the candidates to complete the practical test within acceptable physical demand. She nevertheless welcomed Members' views on major elements to be covered in the test.
38. The Chairperson explained that the study was still underway with the framework proposed for the three professional assessments and two trade tests. While the timetable for implementation was yet to be determined and the design was in its early stage, given the complex nature, the GLTMS would continue to seek views from Members on the design details.
39. A Member who was member of the Expert Groups explained that upon some heated discussion the Expert Group came to the view that basic skills should be assessed in the practical tests having regard to the practical operation by future operators. He reckoned the complex nature of the matter and suggested drawing up guidebooks to both operator and candidate, as well as taking into account the potential burden on the practitioners when formulating the implementation plan.
40. A Member enquired whether the standards of these local assessments/tests would be lower than that of prevailing requirements, and considered that the level of assessment should not be bounded by the constraints in sourcing suitable trees and venues which could be overcome.
41. A Member emphasised the importance of adopting local elements in professional assessments/trade tests for better tree

management. She also suggested to revisit the term “portfolio” which usually represented a showcase of creative ideas. Besides, the ultimate assessment framework should avoid unnecessary duplication of assessment/test.

42. PTM/TT responded that some overseas assessment/test contents considered not applicable to local context were not incorporated into the proposal. The portfolio was referred to examples of past work.
43. A Member opined that in setting the assessments/tests, it was necessary to start with complex thinking, and then distill complex ideas to simple essence with a view to facilitating and encouraging participation. Regarding the different combinations in academic qualification and work experience for sitting for professional assessment of arborists, the proposed eligibility might discourage new entrants from applying for programme of HKQF Level 5 as it took longer time to complete when compared with programme of HKQF Level 4. The same should be reviewed for applied degree programme which had more work-based learning.
44. A Member enquired about the award of the assessment/test, future operator, assessment panel and test frequency which would have a bearing on the supply and demand of workforce in the market.
45. PTM/PA suggested that the assessment/test should be run by operator(s) appointed by the government. At least 3 assessors, including 1 observer, were proposed for the practical test to ensure fairness. The assessment frequency would be subject to the number of application. AS(TM)2 supplemented that tree personnel registration figures would also be a relevant factor in considering the appropriate time for implementation.
46. A Member considered the study a good start which could complement the Scheme to uplift the safety and professional standards of the industry. The assessment/test should comprise local elements and be down-to-earth. Nevertheless, the scope, details and timetable for implementation could be further discussed and determined having regard to the development of the industry.

47. A Member i) enquired about the transition arrangement of the enhanced registration requirement; ii) expressed the expectation for accreditation and job opportunity of registered tree management personnel in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area; iii) showed concern on the manpower replenishment especially frontline workers when all in-service practitioners had got registered; and iv) urged for more promotion to attract youngsters to join the industry.
48. AS(TM)2 responded that the prevailing voluntary registration scheme would carry on and the professional assessments and trade tests would be implemented as enhanced registration requirement when the need was ascertained and the design was consolidated through more discussion and deliberation by the industry. Regarding Member's concern on new entrants to the industry, publicity and industry capacity building work under the Urban Forestry Support Fund would be presented in Paper 3.
49. A Member supported more stringent requirements in practical tests with a view to building up a representative local professional assessment/trade test. Along this line, five questions on tree identification for arborists and tree risk assessors was considered insufficient. For tree climbers, climbing skill but not speed, and physical rigging should be tested.
50. The Chairperson concluded that the study was carried out in response to the request from the industry on development of local professional assessment and trade test. The GLTMS needed to take into account a number of factors including i) standard and scope of the assessment/test; ii) pilot test reports; iii) manpower supply and demand in the market; iv) potential operator; and iv) transition arrangement, etc. in determining the need and timetable for the implementation. She thanked Members for the useful comments and agreed to report the progress of the development when it became more mature.

Item 4 : Updates on the Study Sponsorship Scheme and Trainee Programme under the Urban Forestry Support Fund (IDAC Paper No. 3/2022)

51. AS(TM)2 and AS(TM)3 briefed Members on the Paper, with the aid of PowerPoint, regarding the updates on the Study Sponsorship Scheme ("SSS") and Trainee Programme ("TP")

under the Urban Forestry Support Fund (“UFSF”), and respective application figures and review.

52. A Member appreciated the high number of beneficiaries of the SSS which helped promote the development of the industry. However, given the dynamic changes in population profile, university admission mode and grade point, the Member enquired if the policy on scholarship could be adjusted accordingly.
53. The Chairperson responded that the SSS could be reviewed having regard to the said dynamic changes with a view to encouraging more people to join the industry.
54. A Member asked about the wage level provided to the Government Trainees. In response, AS(TM)3 informed that the wage level of Government Trainees followed the minimum salary as requested in the TP.
55. Regarding the opinion survey of TP, a Member expressed that the information of employer categories was important, for better understanding and exploring if more consultancy companies could be involved.
56. AS(TM)3 confirmed that some consultancy companies had been involved in the survey.

Item 5 : Any Other Business

57. A Member urged for allocation of resources to the horticulture industry as the manpower demand for both frontline and managerial grades in the market was high. To enhance the image of the industry, the Member expressed the expectation to have the average daily wages of tree management personnel reported in the wage index published by the Census and Statistics Department, aligning with those workers engaged in construction sites under the CIC. Besides, it was also expected that subcontractors of the industry could get registered under the CIC, facilitating dissemination of information and the acceptance of Registration Scheme by their staff members.

[Post-meeting note: Information of average daily wages of Workers Engaged in Public Sector Construction Projects was

provided by the Member, as a reference. Representative of CIC held an exchange meeting with the Member and the relevant stakeholders, where CIC provided a detailed introduction of the Registered Specialist Trade Contractors Scheme.]

58. The Chairperson welcomed Members to suggest specific topics on horticulture industry for more focused discussion in future meetings. She understood that there was the subcontractor registration under CIC for different industries and appreciated the need to take steps gradually.
59. A Member recognised the promotion work and positive feedback from the general public on the industry. She further enquired if more research on soil and planting could be commissioned by the GLTMS to enrich the understanding by the industry for better tree management.
60. The Chairperson advised that a study on planting soil was in progress and some improvement measures under trial, which would be discussed in another advisory panel. Nonetheless, relevant information, if available, could be shared with interested Members.
61. With no further items to be discussed, the Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5:20pm.

**Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section
Development Bureau
September 2022**