

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

Date and Time : 14 March 2023 (Tuesday) at 9:30 pm

Venue : Conference Room 5, G/F, Central Government Offices, Tamar

Present

Ms. Kathy T.K. NG	Chairperson (Acting) & Member (H/GLTMS, DEVB)
Prof. Leslie CHEN, JP	Member (via video conferencing)
Mr. Kingsley CHOI	Member
Mr. Daniel HO	Member (via video conferencing from overseas)
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. Eric CHENG Tak-ming	Member (CIC)
Dr. Jackie YIP	Member (AD(P), AFCD)
Mr. Steve LAI	Member (GM/QF, EDB)
Ms. Victoria SO	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)

Absent with Apologies

Dr. Peter YAU	Member
Ir. Dr. Eric LIU	Member (VTC)

In Attendance

For IDAC Paper No. 1/2023

Ms. Josephine YANG	AS(TM)2, DEVB
--------------------	---------------

For IDAC Paper No. 2/2023

Mr. HSU Ka-man	AS(TM)3, DEVB
Ms. Karen LI	Project Manager, CIC

For IDAC Paper No. 3/2023

Miss Cindy LO	CEO(Reg), DEVB
---------------	----------------

1. The Chairperson welcomed Members to the second meeting of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry Development Advisory Committee (“AHIDAC”) 2022-2024.

Item 1 : Confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting

2. The minutes of the last meeting were confirmed without amendment.

Item 2 : Study Sponsorship Scheme – Review and Enhancement (IDAC Paper No. 1/2023)

3. AS(TM)2 introduced the Paper with the aid of PowerPoint, reporting the latest development and the proposed enhancement measures of the Study Sponsorship Scheme (“SSS”) under the Urban Forestry Support Fund (“UFSF”), including i) increase subsidy cap and/or percentage of the Study Sponsorship; ii) remove the work experience and qualification requirements for applicants aged above 30 and iii) extend the Scholarship to top-performing students in each academic year. Views from Members were sought.
4. A Member showed support to the proposed enhancement measures of the SSS.
5. A Member declared interest for working in an institute with recognised degree programme under Scholarship. He welcomed the proposed enhancement measures on different aspects, which enhanced the attractiveness and competitiveness of SSS. However, he considered that the proposed scholarship granted to best-performing students in each academic year might not be attractive enough to help increase the enrolment of the degree programme. To uplift the professional standard of the industry and promote the academic advancement, he suggested lowering the eligibility requirement of Scholarship, allowing students with 18 total grade points in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (“HKDSE”) to apply for the recognised degree programme with scholarship. This way would help increase enrolment of the degree programme with more beneficiaries, yet maintain the students’ quality. He also remarked the downward adjustment in the entry requirement

of the University Grants Committee (“UGC”)-funded universities in recent years, which led to admission pressure of non-UGC funded institutes. This echoed GLTMS’ proposed increases in subsidy cap and/or percentage, in response to the increased subsidy offered by the Continuing Education Fund to enhance the competitiveness of the SSS.

6. AS(TM)2 emphasised the intention of the Scholarship to attract high-calibre students to undertake recognised programme under the SSS. The Government would keep continuous view of the application figures for necessary adjustment of the requirement.
7. A Member declared interest as a former lecturer in the same institute. He supported the Scholarship’s principle to attract high-calibre students to undertake arboriculture programmes and thus enhancing the professionalism and facilitating skills upgrading of the industry. While application might be affected by dynamic change in population profiles, he also supported to keep in view the situation for necessary adjustment. He further proposed to grant different scholarship amounts based on HKDSE results, to reward and attract high-calibre students.
8. A Member also supported the proposed enhancement measures to encourage more youngsters to join the industry. He suggested putting more effort on retaining the youngsters in the industry, such as providing financial incentives in the early career stage of those youngsters upon their completion of the recognised programmes. Besides, expanding the scope to cover more horticulture-related trades was also suggested in promoting the diversification and enhancing the attractiveness of the industry.
9. GM/QF expressed support for the proposed enhancement measures to attract youngsters to join the industry. To align with the expected competency of the five personnel types under the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (“RSTMP”), the Qualifications Framework Secretariat had been encouraging various institutes to provide Vocational Qualifications Pathway (“VQP”) courses. He enquired if VQP courses would be covered by the SSS, and added that one of the initiatives announced in the Policy Address 2023 was expediting the development of VQP. He wished to have more collaboration with the Development

Bureau in relevant promotion in the industry to enhance synergy.

10. AS(TM)2 clarified that both Specification of Competency Standards courses (“SCS”) and VQP courses related to arboriculture at Level 2 to Level 5 of the HKQF were generally recognised under SSS. In response to Member’s concern on retaining SSS applicants in the industry, she supplemented that submission of related employment proof within six months after satisfactory completion of the programme was required under Scholarship. Besides, enhancement of the Trainee Programme (“TP”) under UFSF, to be presented in the next Paper, would help encourage graduates to stay in the industry.
11. A Member suggested extending the Scholarship from undergraduate programmes to research postgraduate studies, to facilitate the industry development.
12. A Member recommended to adopt a more flexible eligibility requirements for Scholarship by considering other merits apart from academic results, with a view to attracting high-calibre students as well as youngsters who were eager to join the industry.
13. AS(TM)2 pointed out that currently applicants for Scholarship were required to obtain 20 grade points for five-best subjects in HKDSE, that was different from the admission requirement of UGC-funded universities covering certain core subjects, such as Chinese and English language.
14. A Member expected that enrolment of HKQF Level 4 programmes would be boosted in view of the higher subsidy increment than that of Level 5 programmes, thus depleting the admission rate of the latter. He appealed the GLTMS to take note of this in considering the long term development of the industry.
15. The Chairperson concluded that the proposed enhancement measures were supported by Members, and could be proceeded to implementation. The GLTMS would nevertheless continue to review the effectiveness of the SSS, and consider suggestions provided by Members from time to time.

Item 3 : Trainee Programme – Review and Enhancement (IDAC Paper No. 2/2023)

16. Project Manager, CIC introduced the Paper with the aid of PowerPoint, reporting the review findings of implementation of the TP and the proposed enhancement measures. Views from Members were sought.
17. A Member expressed concern on the proposed 24-month training duration of the TP for Tree Climber Trainee (“TCT”) cum Chainsaw Operator Trainee (“COT”).
18. AS(TM)3 explained that the proposed training duration has been benchmarked with the work experience generally required for Arboriculture Vocational Assessment (“AVA”) for chainsaw operation.
19. A Member showed strong support on the proposed monthly wage increment of the TP, in light of its relatively lower minimum wage level as compared with that of university graduates, as well as the bundled training duration. He recognised the difficulty of hiring employees in general. To raise the attractiveness of the TP and retain more well-trained personnel in the industry, he suggested reviewing the policy so that those who have completed the TP would be qualified for direct registration under the RSTMP. He also considered the additional 6-month training duration for TP of TCT cum COT not necessary, which could be replaced by assessment / submission of documentary proof, given that chainsaw would be operated simultaneously in tree climbing very often.
20. AS(TM)3 emphasised that the prerequisites for enrolment of professional trainings / assessments in the market were used as reference when designing the TP, with illustration by some common examples. It was expected that one was qualified to apply for professional qualification/training and/or AVA upon completion of the TP, and got registered for some personnel types with sufficient work experience, that could help retain trainees in the industry.
21. A Member enquired about the survey finding regarding dropout reasons of the trainees, and any measure to allow trainees who moved from one company to another one to re-join the TP to avoid wastage.

22. Project Manager, CIC replied that survey conducted for all dropped out trainees revealed that most of them remained working in the industry. Major dropout reasons were wage and working environment. To allow flexibility and wise use of government funding, dropped out trainees were permitted to re-join the TP if justifications were provided.
23. AS(TM)3 supplemented that having regard to the dropout rate, the enhancement measures were strategically proposed to increase the TP's attractiveness and retain trainees in the industry, by providing greater financial incentive and more training opportunities.
24. Another Member echoed that private companies or contractors were facing the difficulties in hiring employees owing to high turnover rate. He opined that the operational cost of contractors would be raised due to the increased wages of trainees. Nevertheless, he agreed to increase the wage level of the trainees with a view of retaining them in the industry. Besides, the 7-year work experience required for registered Arborist under the RSTMP might hinder the willingness of the trainees to stay in the TP or industry. He also pointed out that in response to youngsters' increasing expectation of fast return and benefit, some institutes had shortened their academic programmes through credit exemption.
25. AS(TM)3 explained that the proposed extension of the TP to other trades including Tree Risk Assessor ("TRA") and Tree Work Supervisor was to provide intermediate awards or stepping stones for the trainees to become Arborists, facilitating the career development.
26. AS(TM)2 reiterated the importance of work experience in tree work in view of safety concern as agreed by Members, and thus the relevant work experience required in the RSTMP. Nonetheless, considering the structural training administered by the CIC with quality assurance, the duration of work experience required for registration in the RSTMP by trainees under TP could be reviewed.
27. A Member enquired the trainee dropout rate. He also considered the TP not attractive enough to retain trainees who could find job in another company of the industry with higher wage. To this he enquired whether the proposed training cost in the TP would be supported by the government, which could

be an incentive to the trainees. Other incentives could be provision of more structured training and clear career pathway in the TP.

28. Project Manager, CIC responded that the dropout rate was around 30%, mainly because of higher wage offered by another job. She also observed that some people aged over 30 showed interest in joining the industry as it was less influenced by the pandemic. She believed that more people could be attracted to join the industry under the synergy of the TP and SSS which removed the age limit.
29. AS(TM)3 supplemented that good employer and structured training were two major reasons for the trainees staying in the TP, according to the survey result. He advised that all costs for various trainings under TP were paid by the Government. Together with additional allowance released upon obtaining professional qualification, all the above were regarded as incentives to retain the trainees in TP.
30. AD(P) enquired about the application and operation of programme extension to other trades.
31. AS(TM)3 responded that once fulfilling the academic qualification requirement of each TP, the obtainment sequence of professional qualification was subject to the trainees' decision. Moreover, separate allowance was provided as an incentive for a trainee to acquire additional professional qualification.
32. A Member expressed support on the proposed enhancement measures which could raise the attractiveness of the TP.
33. A Member welcomed all enhancement measures in various aspects under the UFSF which were thoroughly examined by the GLTMS. Yet, he added that uplifting the industry image / branding was also important to attract more youngsters to join the industry.

Item 4 : Implementation Progress and Renewal Arrangement of the Registration Scheme for Tree Management Personnel (IDAC Paper No. 3/2023)

34. CEO(Reg) briefed Members on the Paper, with the aid of PowerPoint, regarding the implementation progress and

renewal arrangement of the RSTMP. Views from Members were sought.

35. A Member suggested uploading examples of renewal application timeline to the website of the RSTMP for reference. Besides, he opined that written reminder on renewal application via E-mail, but not phone call, would suffice.
36. A Member i) appreciated the E-mail notification of newly recognised Continuing Education in Arboriculture (“CEA”) courses; ii) requested for clarification on CEA hours required for renewal; and iii) enquired if there would be free seminars provided by the GLTMS.
37. CEO(Reg) explained that definite CEA hours under specific key job functions for each registered personnel type were required for renewal. If the recognised CEA course was targeted for more than one registered personnel types, a person under these registered personnel types would obtain CEA hours at the same time upon completion of the course. Upon successful renewal for the first time, only optional CEA hours would be required for future renewal of registration. Regarding seminars organised by GLTMS, the respective CEA hours would be accepted as optional CEA hours. All the proposed renewal arrangement discussed in the meeting would be uploaded to the website of the RSTMP upon confirmation.

[Post-meeting note: Examples of renewal application timeline and the renewal arrangement were uploaded to the website of the RSTMP on 28 March 2023.]

38. The Chairperson supplemented that the Continuing Education Units (“CEU”) of the International Society of Arboriculture would also be accepted as optional CEA hours for renewal of registration.
39. AS(TM)2 added that attendance of arboriculture-related public education sessions organised by the GLTMS would be accepted as optional CEA hours, and informed that the guidelines on application of CEA had already been uploaded to the website of the RSTMP.

40. A Member i) enquired if any market survey on demand of registered personnel was conducted; ii) suggested conducting a survey to cover demand from both government and private sectors; and if the demand exceeded the supply; and iii) suggested formulating plan to meet the demand.
41. AS(TM)2 believed that most of the demand came from government projects, while certain demand from private sectors. Based on the returns from core tree management departments, the number of prevailing registered personnel was considered sufficient to meet the projected demand in coming years. Part-time registered Arborists and full-time registered TRAs were commonly required by tree maintenance contracts. Increasing demand for frontline tree workers especially chainsaw operators was however noted, leading to a projected shortfall in 2025. To this end, the GLTMS has been putting effort to recognise more AVA qualifications and encourage practitioners who passed the assessment to get registered as Chainsaw Operators.
42. A Member enquired about i) the number of government staff registered in the Scheme which affected the availability of workforce in the market; and ii) the number of personnel registered as Tree Climber/Chainsaw Operator alone since for instance, personnel registered as both Arborist and Chainsaw Operator might not operate chainsaw in their daily work.
43. CEO(Reg) responded that less than 40 registered personnel were civil servants, and thus accounting for a very small percentage only. For number of personnel registered as Tree Climber/Chainsaw Operator only, RU could provide later.
- [Post-meeting note: As at end of February 2023, the numbers of personnel registered solely as Tree Climber or Chainsaw Operator were 23 and 56 respectively.]
44. Another Member enquired the status and findings of the manpower survey conducted by the GLTMS.
45. AS(TM)3 replied that the findings of the Manpower and Competence Study of the Arboriculture and Horticulture Industry was reported in last meeting and supplemented that a total of around 6,000 full-time practitioners including 1,500 supervisors / staff at managerial level were recorded in the

industry according to the survey of the Study conducted in August 2020.

46. AS(TM)2 added that the survey covered number of practitioners who met the registration requirement. Based on prevailing registration figures, all these qualified practitioners, except chainsaw operators, had already registered in the Scheme.
47. A Member asked for the number and reasons for failure in registration, and if there was any update since the last meeting.
48. CEO(Reg) responded that around 110 applicants failed to register. The main reasons were lack of relevant training qualification, followed by insufficient work experience and lack of academic / professional qualification. On the other hand, around 50 applicants, who re-applied were successfully registered when all the requirements were met.
49. A Member observed that some practitioners might register more than one personnel types while they might not perform all duties in their daily work (i.e. non-practice). He asked for the respective figures (i.e. practice and non-practice) as this information was important in understanding the industry.
50. CEO(Reg) replied that in-service records would only be required for renewal of registration and RU had no such data on hand at the moment.
51. Another Member expressed concern about the shortage of registered Arborists and TRAs in the market, especially before wet season, and asked for the number of these two personnel types working in contractor sectors.
52. AS(TM)2 responded that employment status of registered personnel in different sectors (e.g. government contractors, private sectors, or both) was not available. However, according to the estimation on the demand on registered personnel for core tree maintenance departments, part-time registered Arborists were generally required, and the demand could be met in coming years.
53. A Member asked if Recognition of Prior Learning (“RPL”) could be incorporated in the RSTMP to boost up the registration figures to cope with the increasing demand for

both quality tree work and tree management personnel in contractors and consultants. He also opined that public seminar could be organised by the GLTMS during public holidays to supplement the required vocational training and facilitate registration by more practitioners who had difficulties in attending training courses at night or weekends.

54. AS(TM)2 briefed that RPL under the Qualifications Framework (“QF”) is a tool to facilitate practitioners to obtain QF-recognised qualifications. The principle was widely adopted by local training institutes to ease entry to their academic programmes by practitioners with work experience, thereby uplifting their academic qualifications. Adoption of RPL was underway for the horticulture field after consultation and deliberation by the industry. For proposed direct adoption of RPL in the registration, more discussion by the industry to seek a consensus was required.
55. Another Member expressed that the major demand for tree management personnel in consultants was TRAs as tree risk assessment had to be conducted every year.
56. AS(TM)2 echoed Member’s observation, explaining the requirement of conducting tree risk assessment once before wet season every year. Part-time assessors were generally required by non-core departments/consultants while full-time assessors by major tree management departments with routine tree maintenance throughout the year. No information on the demand from consultants was available, which was difficult to obtain.
57. A Member reminded the importance of frontline personnel who were required for conducting tree mitigation measures after risk assessment. RPL could help speed up the recognition of the frontline personnel to meet their great demand for tree work.
58. In response to the report that chainsaw operators meeting the registration requirements were not registered, a Member considered that cost to obtain CEA hours for renewal might be a burden to them, suggesting if the government would organise free seminar for them to encourage registration. On the contrary to another Member’s view, the 7-year work experience required for registration of Arborists was

considered appropriate given the wide range of responsibilities and work complexity.

59. A Member reminded that tree risk assessment and management included annual assessment as well as audit, which required double work force. He suggested reviewing if the current registered personnel was sufficient to meet the demand.
60. A Member shared his observation that i) not many industries in Hong Kong were adopting RPL, while most relevant to the arboriculture and horticulture industry was property management industry including only two SCS clusters related to gardening work; and ii) adopting RPL in admission of institutes was not easy at the moment which involved assessments conducted by an independent assessment agency appointed by the Government.
61. GM/QF responded that RPL would be adopted in horticulture field with the HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education to be appointed as the assessment agency. To best fit the need of the industry, RPL would only be introduced to the horticulture field at this stage but not arboriculture field, due to the concern on the overlapping with its proposed professional assessment under the RSTMP. Nonetheless, RPL could facilitate the practitioners to obtain QF-recognised qualification. More discussion to dovetail the RPL with the development of the RSTMP was welcomed.
62. AS(TM)2 pointed out that no academic qualification was required for current registration of Chainsaw Operators and Tree Climbers. The registration requirement of Chainsaw Operators followed the policy requirement on use of chainsaw for tree pruning in government contracts since 2015, without any additional requirement. To reflect the duties, the requirement of CEA hours for renewal of frontline personnel was comparatively lower. Besides, only optional CEA hours, which covered any course or seminar relevant to the work of the registered personnel type, would be required for future renewal upon successful completion of mandatory CEA courses in the first renewal of registration. The proposed renewal arrangement, once confirmed, would ease the practitioners' concern and encourage registration.

63. The Chairperson concluded that Members generally agreed to the proposed renewal arrangement of the RSTMP. The GLTMS would review the RSTMP having regard to comments given by Members.

Item 5: Any Other Business

64. A Member observed that the manpower of frontline practitioners was generally sufficient in past few years owing to suspension of other industries during the pandemic period. It was however foreseen that coming manpower demand for greening work in Hong Kong would be increased significantly due to aging of practitioners, competition with other industries in recruitment and kick-start of various major construction projects. He enquired if the Government would conduct manpower survey again to reflect the migration flow for better planning the demand and supply in near future, and if new measures would be in place to promote a healthy manpower growth of the industry.
65. A Member suggested more frequent market survey with the interval of not more than three years, to better understand the market situation, in particular that many major government construction projects under tendering involved large number of trees and corresponding manpower demand.
66. AS(TM)3 responded that the last manpower survey was completed in 2020, and the survey frequency was generally five years. The suitable time for next survey would be considered taking into account of the post-pandemic recovery of the industry.
67. With no further items to be discussed, the Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:00 noon.

**Greening, Landscape and Tree Management Section
Development Bureau
May 2023**