

LCQ20: Training courses organised by Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong

Following is a written reply by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mrs Rita Lau, to a question by the Hon Paul Tse at the Legislative Council meeting today (June 17):

Question:

Section 32I of the Travel Agents Ordinance (Cap. 218) stipulates that travel agents shall periodically pay to the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) a levy for it to meet operational expenses. Yet, I have learnt that no less than 20% of TIC's total operational expenses have to be met by other incomes (including the income derived from organising training courses). In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows the number of training courses organised by TIC and the income derived from such courses in each of the past three years, the percentage of income used for paying the administration expenses of organising courses, as well as the names and tuition of the five courses with the highest and lowest tuition fees;

(b) whether it knows how TIC makes use of the profits derived from organising training courses;

(c) whether it has monitored if the quality and applicability of the courses organised by TIC meet the needs of travel agents, as well as whether it knows if TIC has regularly reviewed the qualifications and choices of trainers; whether TIC has recruited trainers through open procedure; if it has, of the recruitment details; if not, of the channels through which TIC uses to recruit trainers; and

(d) of the government department and officials to whom travel agents and other people of the industry who are dissatisfied with the courses may lodge their complaints; and the number of complaints received by the departments and officials concerned in each of the past three years?

Reply:

President,

(a) Income of the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong (TIC) derived from training courses in the past three years is as follows:

Year	No. of Classes	Income (HK\$)
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2005/2006	196	2.76 million
2006/2007	171	2.34 million
2007/2008	134	1.86 million

In addition to its own courses, TIC also organises courses under the Skills Upgrading Scheme (SUS) and co-organises short-term courses with the Vocational Training Council (VTC). The tuition fees of these courses depend on factors such as the costs (for curriculum development, compilation and printing of training materials, trainers' fees, staff salaries, rentals of classrooms, procurement and maintenance of training equipment, reference books, as well as air conditioning charges during non-office hours, etc.) and the duration of individual courses, etc. TIC also takes into consideration the affordability of the courses to the trainees and actively seeks subsidies on their behalf. For example, the Government subsidises 70% of the costs of SUS courses; the TIC Bonding Fund Limited subsidises 70% of the course fee of the Cruise Selling Training Course; and trainees with less than three years of experience in ticketing service who have completed the Fare Construction and Ticketing Certificate Course can apply to VTC for reimbursement of up

to 50% of the course fee. For the reasons set out above, it is not feasible for TIC to calculate the percentage of income used for administration expenses of individual courses.

Details of the courses organised by TIC in the past three years are set out in the following table. The lowest tuition fee is \$230 and the highest is \$2,000.

Course Title -----	Tuition Fee(examination fee included) (HK\$) -----
Fare Construction and Ticketing Certificate Course (60 hours)	2,000
Certificate Course for Outbound Tour Escorts (26.5 hours)	1,250
Tourism Skills Upgrading Scheme: Tour Guide Training Course (II) (63 hours)	790
Tourism Skills Upgrading Scheme: Practical Putonghua for Tourist Guides and Tour Escorts (22 hours)	245
Tourism Skills Upgrading Scheme: Customer Services and Effective Communication Skills for Travel Agency (21 hours)	230

(b) It is not the objective of TIC to make profit through organising training courses. All income derived from training courses will go into the total income of TIC to meet its daily operational expenses, including those relating to the administration of training courses.

(c) TIC's objective in organising training courses is to upgrade the skills and knowledge of employees of the tourism trade so as to foster a higher standard of service. TIC has established a Training Committee to take charge of all training matters, including examining training needs; designing, reviewing and updating course contents; determining entry requirements for trainees and qualification requirements for trainers; as well as appointing recruitment committees to handle recruitment matters. In addition to TIC members and employees of the tourism trade, the Training Committee also comprises representatives of trade unions and professionals from training institutions who have a good understanding of the demands of the trade and changing market needs.

Trainers are recruited through open procedures, including notices issued to all members, and recruitment advertisements on TIC website as well as Chinese and English newspapers. Candidates have to pass an interview and a practical test before employment. Before starting the actual teaching, prospective trainers have to participate in training, experience sharing and class observation activities. Upon completion of courses, trainees will fill in course assessment forms which are submitted to the Training Committee for consideration and provided to the trainers concerned for review purposes. The appointment of a trainer is valid for one year, and may be revoked or renewed having regard to his or her performance.

(d) Travel agents or trade members who have any suggestions or complaints about TIC's training courses may put forward their views to TIC directly. In the past three years, the Government did not receive any complaint concerning TIC's training courses.

Ends