

**Community Care Fund**  
**Increasing the Academic Expenses Grant under**  
**the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students**  
**Evaluation Report (2017/18 and 2018/19 Academic Years)**

## **Background**

The Community Care Fund (CCF) Task Force agreed at its meeting on 10 March 2014 to launch a programme (the Programme) to increase the academic expenses grant under the Financial Assistance Scheme for Post-secondary Students (FASP) to strengthen the support for financially needy students pursuing locally-accredited self-financing post-secondary programmes. The Programme was planned to run for three years from the 2014/15 academic year (AY).

2. At its meeting on 12 June 2014, the Commission on Poverty (CoP) approved funding under the CCF for the implementation of the Programme by the Education Bureau and the Student Finance Office (SFO) of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency. On 3 April 2017, the evaluation results for the first three years of the Programme were reported to the CoP, which also approved the extension of the Programme for two more years until the 2018/19 AY.

## **Implementation of the Programme**

3. Target recipients of the Programme were students pursuing locally-accredited self-financing full-time sub-degree or first degree programmes who were eligible to apply for the FASP and passed the means test<sup>1</sup> administered by the SFO.

4. To inform students eligible for the additional academic expenses grant about this Programme, the SFO uploaded relevant details of the Programme

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<sup>1</sup> There are 5 tiers of assistance under the means test mechanism, i.e. 100%, 75%, 50%, 25% and 15% of the maximum assistance level, subject to discount according to the asset value of the applicant's family (i.e. -100%, -80%, -60%, -40%, -20% or -0%).

onto its website and notified students of the same through their institutions. Eligible students applying for the FASP were not required to submit separate applications for the additional academic expenses grant. The SFO informed successful applicants in writing and disbursed the additional academic expenses grant through autopay service of their banks. The actual amount of grant receivable by an eligible student was determined according to the student's level of assistance granted under the FASP.

5. In the 2014/15 AY, eligible students were each provided with an additional academic expenses grant up to \$2,000. The additional academic expenses grant is adjusted annually according to the movement of the Consumer Price Index (A) (CPI(A))<sup>2</sup>. The maximum amount was adjusted to \$2,250 and \$2,280 in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 AY respectively.

6. In the 2017/18 and 2018/19 AY (as at end of January 2019), the Programme benefited 17 934 and 13 477 students respectively with a disbursement of about \$55.05 million (an accumulated number of student beneficiaries of 96 340 person-times and a total disbursement of about \$162 million since the 2014/15 AY).

## **Evaluation of programme effectiveness**

7. The effectiveness of the Programme is summarised as follows:

### **(a) Support for students**

With the launch of this Programme, the academic expenses grant payable to students pursuing full-time self-financing post-secondary programmes was increased by about 40%. In the 2018/19 AY, with the additional academic expenses grant of up to \$2,280 on top of the academic expenses grant receivable under the FASP, student beneficiaries might receive a non-repayable academic expenses grant of up to \$7,940, which was comparable to the amount available to students pursuing science discipline under the publicly-funded programmes. The Programme could provide substantial support for the beneficiaries

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<sup>2</sup> From the 2014/15 to 2018/19 AY, the maximum level of the additional academic expenses grant is \$2,000, \$2,110, \$2,190, \$2,250 and \$2,280 respectively.

to meet their academic expenses.

(b) Adjustment mechanism for the grant

The maximum amount of the additional academic expenses grant was adjusted according to the movement of the CPI(A) annually and it was adjusted by 2.8% and 1.5% respectively in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 AY. The adjustment mechanism was consistent with that of the academic expenses grant under the FASP and facilitated programme administration by the SFO.

(c) Workflow of the Programme

The amount of grants disbursed to eligible students under the Programme was determined on the basis of the results of the means test administered by the SFO. No separate application for the additional academic expenses grant was required. Such arrangement was considered convenient to target beneficiaries and could minimise administrative cost and work.

## **Conclusion**

8. The Programme has rendered appropriate assistance to needy students pursuing self-financing post-secondary programmes in meeting their academic expenses. It has met the programme objective and is in line with the aims of the CCF. Besides, the overall administration of the Programme was smooth and cost-effective.

Education Bureau

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