

SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD

Notes of the One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Meeting of the Committee on Administration

Date: 18 April 2016

Time: 7:15 p.m.

Venue: Conference Room, 26/F Eastern Commercial Centre, 83 Nam On Street,
Shau Kei Wan, Hong Kong

Present: Dr. LEUNG Chuen-suen (Convenor)
Mr. CHUNG Wai-lung, Rivalino
Mr. KWAN Wing-shing, Vincent
Mr. HUI Chung-shing, Herman
Mr. TAN Tick-yee

Absent with apology: Mr. LO Wa-kei, Roy
Mr. SHIU Ka-chun
Mr. WONG Ka-ming

In-attendance: Mr. LEUNG Sui-keung, Registrar
Ms. FAN Lai-yee, Veronica, Assistant Registrar (Secretary)

Notes

1 Confirmation of the notice of meeting and the notes of last meeting

The notice of the meeting and the notes of last meeting were endorsed without amendment.

2 Matters Arising

Matters arising from last meeting would be discussed at separate agenda items.

3 Perusal of the draft 37th issue of Newsletter

3.1 Members had no comment on the draft layout of the 37th issue of Newsletter. The Registrar briefed members that with reference to the usual practice, the final version will be submitted to the Honorary Secretary for approval before printing. Members agreed to adopt the usual practice.

3.2 In response to member's enquiry, the Registrar explained that the

Newsletter was in Chinese only because the majority of RSWs understood Chinese. Due to resources limitations, only the table of content was translated to English for the minority of RSWs who did not understand Chinese.

4 Perusal of progress report on promotion of the Board

Members took note of the progress report and the questions raised by the social work students during the talks. Members proposed the Board Office to include the questions and answers in the Board's newly revamped website.

5 Review of honorarium to Assessment Team for conducting Qualification Recognition Assessment / Review

5.1 At the 50th meeting of the Committee on Qualification Assessment and Registration on 23 February 2016, members proposed to review the honorarium to the Assessment Team for conducting Qualification Recognition Assessment / Review and the issue was recommended to put forward to the Committee of Administration for discussion.

5.2 The Convenor briefed that the Board would assign an Assessment Team and a Professional Consultant to conduct the Qualification Recognition Assessment / Review for recognizing qualification in social work. The Assessment Team included four local members and one overseas academic. The local members were representatives from local academic, employing agency, social work professionals and other professions. The Board would offer honorarium in the amount of HK\$2,000 per day to each Assessment Team member. The Board would pay air passage, hotel accommodation and transport allowance for the overseas member. The Professional Consultant would be responsible to provide secretariat support to the team and prepare the interim and final reports.

5.3 The Registrar added that before 2014/15, the Board had subsidized the assessment / review exercises. However, with effect from 2014/15, the policy of full cost recovery was implemented and the cost was charged to tertiary institution at a fixed rate.

5.4 Members agreed that the current level of honorarium in the amount of HK\$2,000 per day (i.e. HK\$250 per hour) was relatively low with reference to the market rate of HK\$450-HK\$1,500 per hour. It was reasonable to increase the honorarium for the Assessment Team. Two levels of honorarium were proposed and the cost implications were prepared for the Committee's consideration. During discussion, members

considered the followings:

- (a) The amount of honorarium should be at reasonable level.
- (b) The Board should not subsidize or make profit from the qualification recognition assessment / review exercises.
- (c) The Board would not increase the amount charged to tertiary institution as the full cost recovery policy was implemented in 2014/15.
- (d) The overhead cost of Board office was absorbed internally and was not included in the total cost.
- (e) The total cost should not be larger than the amount charged to tertiary institution.

5.5 After discussion, members agreed to increase the honorarium to HK\$3,000 per day per Assessment Team member. The total cost would then be increased by HK\$18,000. The same would be presented to the Committee on Qualification Assessment and Registration.

6 Arrangement on nomination exercise for appointment of Disciplinary Committee Panel Members for the term from 16 January 2017 to 15 January 2020

6.1 The Registrar briefed that the current terms of Disciplinary Committee would be expired on 15 January 2017. The new terms of tenure of the Disciplinary Committee would be from 16 January 2017 to 15 January 2020. It was necessary to start the nomination exercise now.

6.2 He further updated that the Board was required to conduct three nomination exercises in 2016. The nomination exercises included Disciplinary Committee Panel members, Assessment Panel members and co-opted members for the Committee on Qualification Assessment and Registration. The latter two exercises would be discussed at the Committee on Qualification Assessment and Registration. To save the mailing cost, the three nomination exercises would be conducted in one go.

6.2 According to the Social Workers Registration Ordinance, the composition of the Disciplinary Committee Panel included the following three categories:

- (a) Not less than 12 RSWs with recognized degree in social work
- (b) Not less than 12 RSWs with recognized diploma in social work
- (c) Not less than 10 non-RSW members

6.3 In the current list of the Disciplinary Committee, there were 127 members including 76 members from category (a) above, 19 members from category (b) above and 32 members from category (c) above. The non-RSW members in category (c) were representatives from other professions, for example solicitors, psychologist, doctors, schools principals or others. The non-RSW members were mainly nominated by Board members.

6.4 The Board Office would invite the current Disciplinary Committee Panel members to indicate their interests to continue the appointment. In the meantime, letters would be sent to all RSWs to invite nominations. The nominees would be screened by the Committee on Administration and a proposed member list would be put forward to the Board for endorsement.

6.5 With reference to past experience, it was difficult to find sufficient members from category (b) and (c) above i.e. RSWs with recognized diploma in social work and the non-RSW members due to the following reasons:

(a) In category (b), the nominees were required to be holders of recognized diploma in social work and at the same time to possess at least 5 years social work experience. However, most of the diploma holders with 5 years experience would have already completed the degree programme. The possible solution was to amend the Ordinance and simplify the composition of Disciplinary Committee Panel but it was not supported by the Government.

(b) The workloads of being DC members were heavy with high commitment. The disciplinary hearings would take a few days. It was difficult for the non-RSW members to spare time to attend the disciplinary hearings and the meetings.

6.6 It was required that the person to be nominated for categories (a) and (b) above should possess social work experience of not less than 5 years. The Convenor invited members to review the criteria in the nomination form. Members exchanged views as follows:

(a) Members concurred that there was no strong justification to relax the requirement of 5-year social work experience.

(b) Members agreed that additional information was not required as the current information in the nomination form was sufficient for

selection by the Committee.

- (c) All complaint cases should be heard and handled in a fair manner. In this regard, DC members should not have any conflict of interests with complainant or RSWs being complained. It was also important that the DC members should have relevant and sufficient working experience.
- (d) It was important to appoint fit and proper persons as DC members. The Committee had to be careful during the screening process.

7 Discussion on the provision of bilingual documents for dissemination of information

7.1 The Convenor briefed that at the Board meeting on 7 March 2016, it was agreed that the Board should have more transparency to RSWs and the public so as to earn their respects. The Board agreed that all information should be disclosed except the information which should not and could not be disclosed. The meeting agenda and minutes/notes of the Board and the Committee would be posted to the website. The Board also in principle agreed to the Committee's proposal of adopting a wider scope of bilingual policy in disseminating information to RSWs and the public.

7.2 The Committee was invited to discuss on how to implement the adoption of a wider scope of bilingual policy. At the Meeting, it was proposed to employ additional staff or contract out the translation work. The pros and cons of the two proposals were presented to the Committee members. If the Board employed additional staff, the estimated expenses would be about (business information deleted) per year. If the Board contracted out the translation work to service provider, the estimated expenses would be ranged from (business information deleted) to (business information deleted). In this regard, the expenses for contract out the translation work would be lower cost.

7.3 Members shared the view that with reference to the financial reports in recent years, the Board's financial condition was improving in 2014/2015. The income was enough to cover the extra expenses incurred from employing additional staff or contracting out the translation service.

7.4 Members agreed that the bilingual policy should be implemented in a progressive approach. It was suggested to change the Newsletter to bilingual version first and as a trial. The Chinese version of Newsletter would be printed as scheduled and the English version would be uploaded

to the website after translation. The Board Office was instructed to obtain quotations from the service provider and circulated to Committee members for consideration.

7.5 Members agreed to review the bilingual policy one year later when more feedbacks would be collected from RSWs and the public.

8 Consideration of installing online survey system in SWRB's website

8.1 Further to the discussion at the previous meeting on how to increase the communications between the Board and RSWs, the Convenor demonstrated an online survey system which could be installed in SWRB's website. He briefed that the online survey system was a free software. The design of survey was flexible and the survey questions could be designed by Board itself. Every recipient would receive a designated internet link for completing the online survey form. This link would be used for one time only and there would not be duplication of responses from the same person. In addition, the total operating cost would be minimal. It only included rental fee of a compatible web server of (business information deleted) per month and one-off installation fee of (business information deleted). Members agreed that the online survey system could provide one more communication channel between RSWs and the SWRB.

8.2 In response to members' enquiry, the Registrar updated that among 20,000 RSWs, more than 13,500 RSWs indicated to receive registration renewal letter and Newsletter/other materials not related to registration by post while 6,500 RSWs indicated to receive the above information by email. The Board Office could provide the number of email address in the RSW Register and the usage of online registration system after the meeting.

(Post meeting note: number of email addresses provided by RSWs is 16,722. From 2011-2016, number of unique applicants submitting online registration form is 1,492 whilst number of unique RSWs submitting online renewal form is 4,371.)

8.3 Members shared the view that when conducting any survey among RSWs, the Board had to ensure that the survey form could reach every RSW who might indicate to receive the survey either by post or by email. Therefore, the online survey system alone could not serve the intended purpose.

8.4 Members agreed that the Board should first work out a promotion plan to encourage RSWs to receive information by email and to increase the

usage of online registration system and VCPD system. After a period of time, when more RSWs were willing to receive information by email or use online platforms, it would be easier for the Board to launch other online communication channels. In this regard, the Committee decided that the installation of online survey system would be deferred until there was a need.

9 Any other business

9.1 The Registrar reported that the Board Office received a letter from the Registration and Electoral Office on 14 April 2016 to solicit our assistance to inform eligible RSWs to register as voters for Functional Constituencies. As the Board Office had already posted relevant information to the Board's website, members agreed that it was not necessary to send separate emails to RSWs.

10 Date of next meeting

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. Members proposed two meeting dates i.e. 13 June 2016 (7:15pm) and 15 June 2016 (7:15pm) subject to availability of other member.

(Post meeting note: the meeting was scheduled on 13 June 2016 at 7:15pm)

2 June 2016