



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部食物及衛生局
Food and Health Bureau, Government Secretariat
The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

Our Ref. :
Your Ref. : CB2/SS/4/20

Tel : 3509 8940
Fax : 2840 0467

14 November 2020

Ms Maisie LAM
Clerk to Subcommittee
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms LAM,

**Subcommittee on Medical Laboratory Technologists
(Special Exemptions) Regulation**

**Follow-up actions required of the Administration
arising from the discussion at the meeting on 6 November 2020**

Further to the meeting on 6 November 2020, the requested supplementary information is provided at **Annex**.

Yours sincerely,

(Mr Ricky WU)
for Secretary for Food and Health

**Subcommittee on Medical Laboratory Technologists
(Special Exemptions) Regulation**

**List of follow-up actions required of the Administration
arising from the discussion at the meeting on 6 November 2020**

The Administration was requested to advise:

- (a) the respective daily coronavirus disease 2019 (“COVID-19”) testing capacities of (i) the Public Health Laboratory Services Branch under the Department of Health; (ii) The Hospital Authority; (iii) The medical schools of The University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong; and (iv) local COVID-19 nucleic acid testing institutions recognized by the Government in early August 2020 to justify the need for granting the exemptions under the Medical Laboratory Technologists (Special Exemptions) Regulation (“the Regulation”);
- (b) the respective qualifications, experience and training required for qualifying as (i) a “specified person” under the Regulation (i.e. a member of the National accredited laboratory testing personnel arranged by the National Health Commission of the People’s Republic of China to conduct specified tests in Hong Kong for the Government) and (ii) a registered medical laboratory technologist under the Medical Laboratory Technologists Board for conducting COVID-19 nucleic acid tests;
- (c) in respect of the local manpower supply of medical laboratory technologists,
 - i. the annual intake places of the relevant University Grants Committee-funded programs of each triennium in the past decade; and
 - ii. the manpower planning for the profession in the longer term in order to meet the anticipated increase in local demand for medical testing services; and
- (d) the respective eligibility requirements for being (i) an accredited medical testing laboratory under the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme and (ii) a local COVID-19 nucleic acid testing institution recognized by the Government.

Reply

- (a) In early August 2020, the public sector (including the Department of Health (“DH”), the Hospital Authority (“HA”) and the two universities) had a regular capacity of some 3 300 samples/day. By staff deployment and overtime work, together with suspension or reduction of other testing services, the maximum daily capacity could reach around 6 000 samples/day. Details are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Public Sector Testing Capacity in early August 2020

| Institution | | Regular daily testing capacity | Daily maximum surge capacity | Sub-total |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| (A) | DH | 1 980 | 1 320 | 3 300 |
| (B) | HA | 1 000 | 1 500 | 2 500 |
| Total existing capacity of DH & HA | | 2 980 | 2 820 | 5 800 |
| (C) | The University of Hong Kong (“HKU”) | 200 | N/A | 200 |
| (D) | The Chinese University of Hong Kong (“CUHK”) (stool samples) | 100 | N/A | 100 |
| Total capacity of DH, HA and universities | | 3 280 | 2 820 | 6 100 |

The COVID-19 testing capacity in Hong Kong has been enhanced significantly in the past months. With the commissioning of the DH’s laboratory in the Hong Kong Children’s Hospital and the new laboratories of CUHK and HKU in late July and early September 2020 respectively, the testing volume that can be handled by public testing services on a regular basis increased to the current level of over 7 000 per day. In addition, the public sector will procure testing services from private laboratories when necessary to further enhance public testing capacity.

Regarding private laboratories, the daily COVID-19 testing capacities of the private sector in late June was around only 4 000, including private laboratories which have yet to obtain relevant accreditation, according to a survey by the Food and Health Bureau. With the efforts of the industry and the facilitation by the Government, the overall daily testing capacity of private laboratories which have obtained relevant accreditation in Hong Kong has increased significantly to around 40 000 in early-August and further to close to 100 000 at present.

- (b) For those who would like to register as a medical laboratory technologist in Hong Kong, they should hold the qualifications as prescribed in section 4 of the Medical Laboratory Technologists (Registration and Disciplinary Procedure) Regulations. For applicants holding other qualifications, their applications will be considered on individual merits. The specified persons under Medical Laboratory Technologists (Special Exemption) Regulation are National accredited laboratory testing personnel, who possess adequate training and experience on COVID-19 nucleic acid testing, arranged by the National Health Commission of the Central People's Government to conduct the COVID-19 tests in Hong Kong. Given the Mainland and Hong Kong have their respective registration requirements and regulatory mechanism, it would not be possible to make a direct comparison.
- (c) The Hong Kong Polytechnic University ("PolyU") is the only institution offering University Grants Committee ("UGC")-funded degree programme in the field of medical laboratory science. In the past ten years, the number of UGC-funded First-Year-First-Degree ("FYFD") training places in medical laboratory science has increased by almost 70%, from 32 in the 2011/12 academic year to 54 in the 2020/21 academic year.

In addition to the UGC-funded training places offered by PolyU, University of Hong Kong School of Professional and Continuing Education runs a higher certificate course in medical laboratory science, providing about 70 training places on an alternate-year basis. Tung Wah College ("TWC") has also started to operate a self-financing degree programme in medical laboratory science. The programme is subsidised by the Government under the Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors. The number of subsidised training places for the 2019/20 cohort is 45.

Based on the Strategic Review on Healthcare Manpower Planning and Professional Development ("Strategic Review") promulgated in 2017, there would be a slight shortage (but close to equilibrium) of MLTs in the short to medium term. The increased UGC-funded training places and provision of self-financing programmes in medical laboratory science could help meet the increasing demand for MLTs in both the public and private sectors.

Following the recommendation of the Strategic Review, the Government will update the manpower projection for healthcare professionals (including MLTs) once every three years in step with the UGC triennium. A new round of manpower projection exercise is now in full swing, and the result is expected to be ready by end 2020/early 2021. Subject to the findings of the manpower projection, the Government will consider whether to further increase the training places in medical laboratory science in the next UGC triennium.

- (d) In order to obtain accreditation under the Hong Kong Laboratory Accreditation Scheme (HOKLAS), the medical testing laboratory shall be a legal entity in Hong Kong; meet the standard requirements of ISO 15189:2012 “Medical laboratories - Requirements for quality and competence” and relevant supplementary requirements stipulated by the Hong Kong Accreditation Service (HKAS); and fulfill the general regulations related to the administration of accreditation schemes by the HKAS.

In order for the relevant accreditation to be recognised by the Government for the purpose of the Laboratory Recognition Scheme, local COVID-19 nucleic acid testing institutions must have attained medical laboratory accreditation from the College of American Pathologists, HKAS or its Mutual Recognition Arrangements (MRA) partners; and certification of SARS-CoV-2 Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) from the Centre for Health Protection of DH or Proficiency Testing Providers accredited by HKAS or its MRA partners.