CHAPTER 10

Vocational Training Council

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Shine Skills Centre

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Audit Commission
Hong Kong
27 October 2015

SHINE SKILLS CENTRE

Contents

SHINE SKILLS CENTRE

Executive Summary

1.   It has been the objectives of the Government's rehabilitation policy to facilitate the full integration of persons with disabilities (PWDs) into society. It was estimated that in 2013 Hong Kong had some 589,200 PWDs aged 15 or above. Among them, some 87,100 (15%) were economically active including some 5,500 who were unemployed. The Shine Skills Centre (SSC) is a member institution of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) Group. It is a major institution that provides vocational training to PWDs aged 15 or above for open employment. For the academic year 2014/15, it offered 660 full-time training places and 400 part-time training places.

2.   The SSC operates three vocational training sites, namely the SSC (Kwun Tong), the SSC (Tuen Mun) and the SSC (Pokfulam). The programmes and services provided to PWDs by the SSC include vocational assessment service, full-time training programmes, part-time training courses, and the provision of technical aids as well as rehabilitation and boarding services. For the financial year 2013-14, the expenditure of the SSC was $93 million. As at 31 March 2015, the SSC had an establishment of 155 staff. In April 2015, the Audit Commission (Audit) commenced a review of the operation of the SSC.

Preparing students for open employment

3.   *Need to produce more analytical information on graduated students' employment.* The SSC aims to enhance the employability of its students and prepare them for open employment after their graduation. Every year, the SSC conducts an employment survey in January covering graduated students of SSC full-time training programmes (para. 2.2). Audit found that:

   (a)   the SSC calculates employment rates of its graduated students by dividing *"the number of graduated students who were in employment"* by *"the number of graduated students who were in employment, obtained a job offer or were seeking employment"*. Based on this calculation method, the employment rate for 2013/14 was 94%, which had been reported on the VTC website and to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council.

Detailed analysis of the destinations of the graduated students revealed that only 52.1% of them were in open employment or 63.1% in employment. A significant percentage (36.1%) of the graduated students were not in employment for a variety of reasons. To enhance the transparency of reporting how the SSC graduated students fare, the SSC needs to report the detailed destinations of its graduated students (paras. 2.3 to 2.5);

(b) the Labour Department operates a Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS). Under the WOPS, employers are granted, up to a maximum of eight months, a monthly allowance for each hired PWD. Of 137 students graduated in 2013/14 who were engaged in open employment, up to January 2015, 89 (65%) worked for a period of eight months or less. Some of their employment could be under the WOPS. The financial incentive provided to their employers could have boosted the employment rate of the graduated students. The SSC does not request graduated students to state in the employment survey whether their employment was under the WOPS (paras. 2.6 to 2.9);

(c) as at January 2015, there were nine and 20 graduated students in supported employment and working in sheltered workshops respectively. The SSC did not have a structured mechanism for ascertaining and reporting to the SSC management the reasons for these students not having taken up open employment (para. 2.11); and

(d) the employment survey covers graduated students of the immediate past academic year. The SSC does not conduct further surveys to monitor the students' employment status in the longer term (para. 2.12).

4. ***Provision of career guidance services.*** The SSC has a total of nine Student Counsellors. The SSC has not set benchmarks in respect of the numbers of jobs secured and trial work placements arranged for students by the Counsellors. In 2013/14, the number of jobs secured and placements arranged by two Student Counsellors were much lower (by 39% and 48% respectively) than the average figures for the nine Student Counsellors. The number of jobs secured by another Counsellor was much lower (by 57%) than the average figure (paras. 2.16 and 2.20).

Management of vocational assessments and training programmes

5.   *Timeliness of issuing vocational assessment reports.*   Of the 1,153 vocational assessments conducted in 2013/14, in 175 (15%) assessments the PWDs were recommended to receive other services (e.g. attending sheltered workshops of non-governmental organisations) instead of receiving vocational training.   For these PWDs, the results and recommendations of the assessments would only be made known to them upon receipt of assessment reports.   Releasing early comments on performance in vocational assessments to PWDs would facilitate them to make early alternative arrangements.   Audit also found that the assessment reports of 11 (73%) of the 15 specific vocational assessments examined were issued later than the target time of four weeks.   The delay ranged from five to 14 weeks (paras. 3.2 to 3.4).

6.   *Monitoring of training programmes.*   The SSC has not set a target completion rate for individual full-time training programmes.   Audit analysed the completion rates of individual training programmes for 2013/14 and found that the completion rates for five programmes were below the overall target completion rate of 80%.   Of these five programmes, two were consistently rated by more than half of the graduated students as "fairly relevant" or "not relevant" to their employment.   Audit also found that for 2014/15, the overall satisfaction level of graduated students' employers was 7.7 out of 10.   This rating was based on the returned questionnaires of 28 of the 34 employers to whom the SSC sent a questionnaire.   Audit noted that the SSC did not send questionnaires to employers of all graduated students.   The SSC only sent a questionnaire to those employers who, based on its experience, would be willing to respond to the questionnaire (paras. 3.24 and 3.26).

Administrative issues

7.   *Usage of the SSC (Pokfulam) building.*   Due to the greater integration of PWDs into mainstream schools and the introduction of the senior secondary school curriculum into special schools, the demand for SSC training places had decreased.   The number of training places of the SSC (Pokfulam) decreased from 300 in 2002/03 to 60 in 2014/15.   The SSC (Pokfulam) building comprises the ground floor, a podium floor and eight other floors.   It has a total net operational floor area of 3,093 square metres.   The 2nd floor (391 square metres) and the 7th floor (411 square metres) of the building have been vacant since June 2012 and July 2005 respectively (paras. 4.2 to 4.4).

8.   *Staff recruitment.*   Audit examined the 37 recruitment exercises conducted by the SSC in the period 2012-13 to 2014-15 for short-term contract staff. Audit found that in three recruitment exercises, there were neither assessment forms (for recording the performance of candidates during interviews) nor board reports (for summarising the selection process and results). In two of these three exercises, the job applications were also missing (paras. 4.10 and 4.12).

Audit recommendations

9.   **Audit recommendations are made in the respective sections of this Audit Report. Only the key ones are highlighted in this Executive Summary. Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

  (a)   **consider providing detailed information on the destinations of SSC graduated students on the VTC website and to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council (para. 2.13(a));**

  (b)   **in the employment survey, collect information on the number of graduated students employed under the WOPS and include the information in reporting the detailed destinations of the students (para. 2.13(b));**

  (c)   **devise a structured mechanism for ascertaining and reporting to the SSC management the reasons for some SSC graduated students not having taken up open employment (para. 2.13(c));**

  (d)   **consider conducting, for graduated students of each academic year, a follow-up employment survey at an appropriate time after the first survey to ascertain the sustainability of the employment of graduated students (para. 2.13(d));**

  (e)   **ascertain the reasons for fewer jobs secured and trial work placements arranged by some Student Counsellors and take measures to enhance their output as appropriate (para. 2.22(b));**

(f)   **consider setting benchmarks in respect of the number of jobs secured and the number of trial work placements arranged by the Student Counsellors and closely monitor the actual performance against the benchmarks (para. 2.22(c));**

(g)   **take measures to ensure that vocational assessment reports are issued to PWDs within the target time (para. 3.5(a));**

(h)   **consider releasing early comments on performance in vocational assessments to the PWDs who are not recommended to receive vocational training to facilitate them to make alternative arrangements (para. 3.5(b));**

(i)   **consider setting a target completion rate for each full-time training programme and take measures to enhance the completion rates of programmes with lower completion rates (para. 3.29(c) and (d));**

(j)   **cover all employers of graduated students, or a representative sample of them, in the employer satisfaction surveys (para. 3.29(e));**

(k)   **take prompt measures to address the issue of vacant floor spaces of the SSC (Pokfulam) building (para. 4.6(a)); and**

(l)   **take measures to ensure that the SSC keeps proper records relating to recruitment exercises (para. 4.13(a)).**

Response from the VTC

10.   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1   This PART describes the background to the audit and outlines the audit objectives and scope.

Government's policy relating to persons with disabilities

1.2   It has all along been the objectives of the Government's rehabilitation policy to help persons with disabilities (PWDs) develop their potential, create a barrier-free environment and enable them to lead an independent life so that they can participate in various activities on an equal basis with others, thereby facilitating their full integration into society.

Definition of PWDs

1.3   There is no uniform definition of PWDs. The United Nations states that the term PWDs is used to apply to all PWDs including those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers, hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The Government follows this principle in Hong Kong.

1.4   According to the Labour and Welfare Bureau (LWB), given the diversity of disability types, persons with different disabling conditions may have different needs for rehabilitation services and support. Even persons with the same disabling condition may have different needs for services, having regard to their specific abilities and circumstances at different stages of rehabilitation. To cope with the various needs of persons with different disability types and severity of impairment, there is a need to set out different coverage and service targets under relevant legislation, policies and measures having due regard to their specific objectives, in order to provide appropriate protection, support and services commensurate with their needs. In the Vocational Training Council Ordinance (Cap. 1130), a PWD is defined as a person whose prospects of securing and retaining open employment are reduced by reason of physical or mental impairment.

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Employment situation of PWDs

1.5   In the Special Topics Report No. 62 "Persons with disabilities and chronic diseases" published by the Census and Statistics Department in December 2014, the Department estimated that in 2013 in Hong Kong:

    (a)   there were some 558,000 PWDs aged 15 or above (excluding those with intellectual disability). Among them, some 477,000 (85%) were economically inactive. Of the 81,000 (15% of 558,000) economically active PWDs (Note 1), some 4,800 (6% of 81,000) were unemployed; and

    (b)   there were some 31,200 PWDs aged 15 or above (with intellectual disability) residing in households and institutions. Among them, some 25,100 (80%) were economically inactive. Of the 6,100 (20% of 31,200) economically active PWDs, some 700 (11% of 6,100) were unemployed.

Thus, of the some 589,200 PWDs aged 15 or above, some 87,100 (15%) were economically active. Of the economically active PWDs, some 5,500 (6% of 87,100) were unemployed.

Vocational training for PWDs for open employment

1.6   There are a number of institutions that provide vocational training to PWDs for open employment. The Shine Skills Centre (SSC) is a member institution of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) Group. In terms of number of full-time training places, the SSC is a major institution that provides vocational training to PWDs aged 15 or above for open employment (see Table 1).

Note 1:   *According to the Census and Statistics Department, economically active PWDs comprise the employed PWDs and the unemployed PWDs. Employed PWDs refer to PWDs aged 15 or over who are engaged in performing work for pay or profit, or have formal job attachment during the seven days before the census. Unemployed PWDs refer to PWDs aged 15 or over who: (a) during the seven days before the census have not had a job and have not performed any work for pay or profit; (b) have been available for work during the seven days before the census; and (c) have sought work during the thirty days before the census.*

Table 1

**Institutions providing vocational training to PWDs
for open employment
(30 June 2015)**

Institution	No. of training places	
SSC	660	(Full-time)
	400	(Part-time)
Caritas Lok Mo Integrated Vocational Training Centre	220	(Full-time)
Hong Chi Pinehill Integrated Vocational Training Centre	233	(Full-time)
Employees Retraining Board	1,300 (Note)	(Part-time)

Source: Websites of institutions

Note: For the period September 2013 to August 2014, some 1,300 PWDs and persons recovered from work injuries completed the training courses of the Employees Retraining Board.

1.7   In addition to the above institutions, which provide vocational training to PWDs aged 15 or above for open employment, the Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department also provides employment assistance to job seekers with disabilities.   In 2014, the Division found job placements for 2,464 (93%) of the 2,650 such job seekers.   Furthermore, there are a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provide PWDs with vocational rehabilitation services to prepare them for potential advancement to open employment.

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Role of SSC

1.8   According to the Vocational Training Council Ordinance, an objective of the VTC is to provide and co-ordinate the provision of skills training to PWDs who are aged 15 or above for the purpose of improving their employment prospects and preparing them for open employment.   The SSC of the VTC provides a range of industry-specific skills training, rehabilitation and support services for PWDs aged 15 or above to enhance their employability.   It caters for persons having one or more of the disabilities, namely attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, autism, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, mental illness, physical disability, specific learning difficulties, speech impairment, visceral disability/chronic illness and visual impairment.

Training places provided by SSC and PWDs enrolled

1.9   Table 2 shows, from 2010/11 to 2014/15 (unless otherwise stated, all years referred to in this Audit Report are academic years, which start in mid-August of a year and end in mid-August of the following year), the number of training places provided by the SSC and the number of PWDs enrolled.

Table 2

Number of training places provided by SSC and PWDs enrolled
(2010/11 to 2014/15)

	2010/11	**2011/12**	**2012/13**	**2013/14**	**2014/15**
Full-time training programmes					
No. of training places	540	560	600	660	660
No. of PWDs enrolled (Note 1)	540	488	570	656	673 (Note 2)
Part-time training courses					
No. of training places	398	400	400	400	400
No. of PWDs enrolled (Note 3)	387	433	478	385	595

Source: SSC records

Note 1:   For full-time training programmes, the number of PWDs enrolled refers to the position as at 30 September of the academic year.

Note 2:   The number of PWDs enrolled (673) was greater than the number of training places (660) because the SSC admitted more PWDs to accommodate the applicants in the cohort as the capacity allowed.

Note 3:   In 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2014/15, there was greater demand for part-time training courses than the number of planned training places. The SSC therefore organised more part-time training classes for the PWDs.

1.10   PWDs in general do not need to wait for a long time for enrolling into full-time training programmes. As at 30 September 2014, ten PWDs were on the waiting list for enrolment. Four of them enrolled after waiting for three to seven months. The remaining six PWDs had not enrolled for reasons such as already in employment or personal reasons. There was no waiting list for enrolment for part-time training courses.

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1.11   Table 3 shows the origins of the PWDs enrolled in SSC's full-time training programmes for 2014/15, while Table 4 shows the age profile of the PWDs enrolled.

Table 3

Origins of PWDs enrolled in SSC's full-time training programmes (2014/15)

Origin	No. of PWDs	Percentage (%)
Graduates of special secondary schools (Note 1)	294	44
Graduates (students with special educational needs) of mainstream secondary schools (Note 2)	249	37
Others (Note 3)	130	19
Total	673	100

Source: SSC records and information provided by the Education Bureau

Note 1:   For 2014/15, there were 1,038 students in Secondary 6 of special secondary schools.

Note 2:   For 2014/15, there were 1,710 students with special educational needs in Secondary 6 of mainstream secondary schools.

Note 3:   Others included PWDs' self-applications (56 PWDs) and referrals from NGOs, hospitals, other member institutions of the VTC Group and government departments (74 PWDs).

Table 4

**Age profile of PWDs enrolled in SSC's full-time
training programmes
(2014/15)**

Age	No. of PWDs	Percentage (%)
15-17	84	13
18-20	427	63
21-25	137	20
26-30	11	4
31-40	6	
41-50	4	
51-60	3	
61	1	
Total	673	100

Source: SSC records

SSC training sites

1.12   The SSC operates three vocational training sites, namely the Shine Skills Centre (Kwun Tong) (SSC(KT)), the Shine Skills Centre (Tuen Mun) (SSC(TM)) and the Shine Skills Centre (Pokfulam) (SSC(PF)) (see Table 5 and Photographs 1 to 3).

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Table 5

Detailed information on SSC training sites

Training site	Year of commencement of operation	Net operational floor area (square metres — m²)	No. of students (academic year 2014/15)		No. of teaching staff (financial year 2014-15)		No. of Student Counsellors (financial year 2014-15)
			Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	
SSC(KT)	1968	2,706	297	354	31	13	4
SSC(TM)	1991	3,425	320	232	31	6	4
SSC(PF)	1995	3,093	56	9	5	2	1
Total		9,224	673	595	67	21	9

Source: SSC records

Photograph 1

SSC(KT)

Source: SSC records

Remarks: The SSC(KT) started its operation in 1968. The VTC took up the operation of the SSC(KT) in 1991.

Photograph 2

SSC(TM)

Source: SSC records

Photograph 3

SSC(PF)

Source: SSC records

Remarks: The SSC(PF) started its operation in a VTC premises in 1995. In 1998, it moved to the existing building.

Introduction

SSC training programmes and services

1.13   The SSC provides a number of programmes and services to PWDs. These programmes and services are set out in paragraphs 1.14 to 1.22.

1.14   ***Vocational assessment service.*** This service is provided by the Shine Vocational Assessment Service (SVAS) located in the SSC(KT). Before a PWD can attend a full-time training programme, the PWD needs to attend an assessment conducted by the SVAS. The aim of the assessment is to evaluate the PWD's vocational strengths and potential, and suitability for attending the programme. If a PWD is assessed as unsuitable for vocational training, the PWD will be recommended to attend programmes provided by other NGOs (e.g. sheltered workshops and day activity centres).

1.15   The SVAS offers two types of vocational assessments:

(a)   ***specific vocational assessment***, which lasts for three days, is for PWDs who are students or graduates of special schools; and

(b)   ***comprehensive vocational assessment***, which lasts for 11 days, is for PWDs other than students or graduates of special schools.

Some components of a vocational assessment are conducted in small groups and some on an individual basis. In 2013/14, the SVAS conducted 948 specific vocational assessments and 205 comprehensive vocational assessments.

1.16   For part-time training courses, PWDs are required to attend an abridged specific vocational assessment. The assessment is a three-hour assessment conducted in small groups.

1.17   ***Full-time training programmes.*** These programmes are provided at the three SSC training sites. PWDs are not required to pay tuition fees. For 2015/16, there are ten full-time training programmes grouped under three streams:

(a) *the business stream.* This stream has four programmes, namely office practice, commercial and retailing service, programme assistant practice, and business and computer practice;

(b) *the technology stream.* This stream has two programmes, namely computer and network practice, and design and desktop publishing; and

(c) *the service stream.* This stream has four programmes, namely catering service, integrated service (e.g. cleaning, food and beverage service, housekeeping, and gardening), packaging service, and health and beauty care.

1.18   Each of the ten programmes has seven trade modules. For the business and computer practice programme, the training period is one year regardless of the PWDs' backgrounds. For the other nine programmes, the training period is two years for PWDs without previous vocational training or working experience, and one year for PWDs with previous training or experience. In addition to trade modules, each programme has four generic modules, namely Chinese and English, mathematics, whole-person development and physical education.

1.19   Throughout the academic year, PWDs can be admitted to any of the seven trade modules at any time with their training periods starting from the admission dates. Each of the ten programmes has a class size of 15 PWDs. The programme cost is borne entirely by the SSC. For 2014/15, the annual programme cost for a PWD taking full-time training amounted to $106,620.

1.20   *Part-time training courses.* These courses (e.g. snack making, bakery and pastry service, and elementary digital photography) are provided at the three SSC training sites. They are mainly operated to meet the specific vocational needs of PWDs at the request of NGOs. As most PWDs attending part-time training courses are employed, they are required to pay a tuition fee of $240 per course (for courses with 15 to 30 training hours) or $470 per course (for a course with 240 training hours). Tuition fee may be waived for PWDs working in sheltered

workshops referred to the SSC for attending part-time training courses (Note 2). For 2014/15, the cost of providing part-time training courses by the three training sites amounted to some $4 million.

1.21   ***Provision of technical aids.***   Technical aids (e.g. assistive devices) are provided to PWDs by the SSC's Shine Technical Aids and Resource Centre (STARC).   The STARC has offices located in the SSC(KT) and the SSC(TM).

1.22   ***Other support services.***   Other support services are provided to PWDs at the three SSC training sites.   The services comprise:

   (a)   supportive rehabilitation services rendered by a multi-disciplinary team of rehabilitation professionals (i.e. nine Student Counsellors, two Occupational Therapists and two Registered Nurses).   These services equip the PWDs with life skills (e.g. work adaptation and adjustment skills, interpersonal and community living skills, and knowledge in occupational health and personal hygiene) to prepare them to lead an independent life in the community; and

   (b)   boarding service (120 boarding places at the SSC(TM)) and school bus service (available at the SSC(KT) and the SSC(TM)).   The boarding service aims to provide an interactive living environment to help PWDs develop social and independent skills.   The cost of the boarding service is mainly borne by the SSC.   For 2014/15, each boarding place costed $95,780 (Note 3).

Note 2:   *In support of the Education Bureau's initiative to diversify the curriculum of special education, the SSC also offers a variety of Adapted Applied Learning courses for students with intellectual disabilities.   As elective subjects in the senior secondary curriculum, the courses aim at providing these students with the opportunities to explore their orientation for career aspirations through practical training in specific areas (e.g. bakery and pastry, and gift wrapping and packaging).   The duration of a course is 240 hours spreading over two academic years.   The tuition fee for 2015/17 is $16,600 and is fully paid by the Education Bureau or the schools of the students.*

Note 3:   *For 2014/15, the boarding fees were $10,455 for PWDs receiving disability allowance and $9,966 for PWDs not receiving disability allowance.   PWDs with financial difficulties may apply for fee remission from the SSC.*

Income and expenditure of SSC

1.23   Every year, the Government will agree with the VTC on the amount of subvention for the SSC.   For the financial year 2013-14, the Government's subvention was $97 million while the expenditure was $93 million.   The SSC also had miscellaneous income (e.g. income generated from part-time training courses) amounting to $1.4 million.

Organisation of SSC

1.24   The SSC is overseen by the Director of the Vocational Training for People with Disabilities Office (VTPDO).   The Director reports to a Deputy Executive Director of the VTC.   Five managers report to the Director (see Appendix A).   As at 31 March 2015, the SSC had an establishment of 155 staff comprising the Director, the five managers, 67 teaching staff, 44 administrative staff and 38 supportive staff.

1.25   The SSC is advised by the VTC's Committee on Vocational Training for People with Disabilities (CVTPD). The objectives of the CVTPD are as follows:

(a)   investigating the need for training sites and advising the VTC on policies relating to vocational rehabilitation;

(b)   investigating the need for new courses at training sites and making recommendations to the VTC; and

(c)   advising the VTC on support services (e.g. the vocational assessment service, and the technical aids and resource service).

The CVTPD comprises a Chairman nominated by a disabled persons organisation and 16 members including the Executive Director of the VTC, government officials, and representatives of NGOs and employers' associations.

Audit review

1.26   In April 2015, the Audit Commission (Audit) commenced a review of the operation of the SSC. The review has focused on the following areas:

(a)   preparing students for open employment (PART 2);

(b)   management of vocational assessments and training programmes (PART 3); and

(c)   administrative issues (PART 4).

Audit has found room for improvement in the above areas and has made a number of recommendations to address the issues.

General response from the VTC

1.27   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

(a)   the VTC fully appreciates the Audit Report, which has made very valuable observations and recommendations. The VTC will drive the SSC for a continuous process of improvements; and

(b)   the VTC will follow up the recommendations proactively and implement them as appropriate.

Acknowledgement

1.28   Audit would like to acknowledge with gratitude the full cooperation of the staff of the SSC and the VTC during the course of the audit review.

PART 2: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR OPEN EMPLOYMENT

2.1   This PART examines the assistance provided by the SSC to its students to prepare them for open employment. Audit has found room for improvement in the following areas:

(a)   reporting of information on graduated students' employment (paras. 2.2 to 2.14); and

(b)   provision of career guidance services (paras. 2.15 to 2.23).

Reporting of information on graduated students' employment

Need to enhance transparency of information on how graduated students fare

2.2   The SSC aims to enhance the employability of its students and prepare them for open employment after their graduation (see para. 1.8). Every year, the SSC conducts an employment survey in January covering graduated students of SSC full-time training programmes of the immediate past academic year. Graduated students are requested to complete and return to the SSC a questionnaire regarding their employment information (as at January).   Survey findings, including employment rates, are reported to the CVTPD. Employment rates are also reported on the VTC website. Moreover, during their annual examination of the Estimates of Expenditure for the financial years 2011-12 to 2015-16, Members of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council asked for the employment rates of SSC graduated students. Table 6 shows the employment rates of SSC graduated students for the years 2009/10 to 2013/14.

Table 6

**Employment rates of SSC graduated students
(2009/10 to 2013/14)**

Year	Employment rate (%)
2009/10	82
2010/11	87
2011/12	89
2012/13	86
2013/14	94

Source: SSC records

2.3   The method of calculating the employment rates had been reported to the CVTPD. However, in reporting the employment rates on the VTC website or to the Finance Committee, the method of calculating the employment rates had not been disclosed. Audit noted that the employment rate was a percentage calculated by dividing "*the number of graduated students who were in employment*" by "*the number of graduated students who were in employment, obtained a job offer or were seeking employment*" (see Remarks in Table 7 for an illustration on how the employment rate for 2013/14 was calculated by the SSC).

2.4   With reference to the SSC's aim to enhance the employability of students for open employment after their graduation (see para. 1.8), Audit reviewed how the graduated students in 2013/14 fared based on the information collected from the SSC's January 2015 employment survey. Audit's findings are shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Destinations of students graduated in 2013/14

	No. of students	Percentage (%)
In employment (open employment)	137 ⎫	52.1 ⎫
In employment (supported employment)	9 ⎬ 166	3.4 ⎬ 63.1
In employment (working in sheltered workshops)	20 ⎭	7.6 ⎭
Obtained a job offer	1	0.4
Seeking employment	10	3.8
Sub-total	177	
Pursuing further study	33	12.5
Planning for further study	14	5.3
Not in employment or seeking employment due to health or personal reasons	37	14.1
Sub-total	84	
Unknown (Note)	2	0.8
Total	263	100.0

(The 0.4, 3.8, 12.5, 5.3 and 14.1 percentages are bracketed together as 36.1)

Source: *Audit analysis of SSC records*

Note: *These two graduated students did not return the SSC's employment survey questionnaire.*

Remarks: The SSC calculated the employment rate as 94% (166 ÷ 177 × 100%). The SSC considers that the employment rate is equivalent to the engagement rate used in the rehabilitation field. All graduates in open employment, supported employment or working in sheltered workshops were classified as being employed.

2.5   As shown in Table 7, of the 263 students graduated in 2013/14, only 137 (52.1%) were in open employment or 166 (63.1%) were in employment in January 2015. A significant percentage (36.1%) of the graduated students were not in employment for a variety of reasons. Audit noted that while the destinations of students were reported to the CVTPD, they had not been reported on the VTC website or to the Finance Committee. To enhance the transparency of reporting how the SSC graduated students fare, Audit considers that the SSC needs to disclose the detailed destinations of its graduated students on the VTC website and to the Finance Committee.

Need to disclose number of graduated students employed under Work Orientation and Placement Scheme

2.6   The Selective Placement Division of the Labour Department operates a Work Orientation and Placement Scheme (WOPS). Under the WOPS, financial incentives are provided to employers who participated in the WOPS and hired PWDs. Employers are granted, up to a maximum of eight months, a monthly allowance for each hired PWD who has been assessed by the Division as having employment difficulties. For the first two months of the eight-month period, the monthly allowance (up to $5,500) is equivalent to the actual salary paid to the PWD minus $500. For the remaining six months, the monthly allowance (up to $4,000) is equivalent to two-thirds of the actual salary paid. In other words, for the eight-month period, employers may be granted a maximum allowance of $35,000 per PWD hired. For each hired PWD who has been assessed by the Selective Placement Division as not having employment difficulties, the employers are granted, up to a maximum of six months, a monthly allowance (up to $4,000) equivalent to two-thirds of the actual salary paid to the PWD. For the period of six months, employers may be granted a maximum allowance of $24,000 per PWD hired.

2.7   As mentioned in paragraph 2.2, the SSC conducts an employment survey in every January covering graduated students of the SSC of the immediate past academic year. In the survey questionnaire, graduated students are requested to state whether they were in employment in January, and if in the affirmative, since when they had started employment and the names of their employers. The SSC does not request graduated students to state whether their employment was under the WOPS.

2.8   Since the WOPS provides a financial incentive to employers to hire the graduated students and could have boosted the employment rate of graduated students in open employment, it is important for the SSC to monitor their employment for a period beyond the eight-month period covered by the financial incentive (see para. 2.6).

2.9   Audit examined the SSC's January 2015 employment survey of 2013/14 graduated students.   Audit found that up to January 2015, 89 (65%) of 137 graduated students (see Table 7 in para. 2.4) who were engaged in open employment had only worked between one month and eight months (Note 4) for their employers.   Some of the 89 graduated students' employment could be under the WOPS.   As they had worked for only one to eight months, their employers might be still receiving the allowance under the WOPS at the time of the employment survey.

2.10   To improve the usefulness of the survey in providing information on the employability of graduated students, the SSC needs to request the students to state in the survey questionnaire whether their employment is under the WOPS.   Those employed under the WOPS should also state whether they have worked beyond the maximum period of the WOPS monthly allowance.

Need to devise a structured mechanism for ascertaining reasons
for graduated students not taking up open employment

2.11   As shown in Table 7 in paragraph 2.4, there were nine graduated students in supported employment and 20 working in sheltered workshops.   The SSC did not have a structured mechanism for ascertaining and reporting to the SSC management the reasons for these students not having taken up open employment.   As the SSC aims to enhance the employability of students for open employment after their graduation, the SSC needs to devise such a mechanism so that timely follow-up action would be initiated where warranted.

Note 4:   *As the SSC admits PWDs throughout the year (see para. 1.19), a 2013/14 graduated student may have graduated before the end of the academic year in August 2014 and may have worked for more than six months up to the time of survey in January 2015.*

Need to ascertain the sustainability of graduated students' employment

2.12 As mentioned in paragraph 2.2, the employment survey conducted by the SSC covers its graduated students of the immediate past academic year. The SSC does not conduct further surveys to monitor the students' employment status (e.g. whether still in open employment) in the longer term. To ascertain the sustainability of the employment of the students, the SSC needs to conduct a follow-up employment survey at an appropriate time after the first survey.

Audit recommendations

2.13 **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

(a) **consider providing detailed information on the destinations of SSC graduated students on the VTC website and to the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council;**

(b) **in the employment survey, collect information on the number of graduated students employed under the WOPS and include the information in reporting the detailed destinations of the students;**

(c) **devise a structured mechanism for ascertaining and reporting to the SSC management the reasons for some SSC graduated students not having taken up open employment so that timely follow-up action would be initiated; and**

(d) **consider conducting, for graduated students of each academic year, a follow-up employment survey at an appropriate time after the first survey to ascertain the sustainability of the employment of graduated students.**

Response from the VTC

2.14   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

(a)   the SSC has started working with the VTC's Statistics Section for the presentation of a more detailed information on the destinations of graduated students; and

(b)   the VTC will consider providing detailed information on the destinations of SSC graduated students on the VTC website, and to the Finance Committee where appropriate.

Provision of career guidance services

2.15   The work of the Student Counsellors of the SSC comprises:

(a)   providing career guidance services to SSC students.   These services include sourcing of career opportunities, and provision of career support in the first six months of employment to help graduated students settle into their workplace and ongoing support thereafter for the students on an as need basis; and

(b)   performing other tasks such as providing counselling and guidance to students regarding personal growth and inter-personal relationship, and liaising with employers and students' parents.

2.16   The SSC has a total of nine Student Counsellors, four at the SSC(KT), four at the SSC(TM) and one at the SSC(PF).   Each Student Counsellor is responsible for four to five classes. The size of each class is 15 students.

2.17   *Inaccurate information provided to management.*   The Student Counsellors are required to submit a monthly return to the Manager of Head Office and SVAS through the Managers of their SSC training sites. The monthly returns provide a statistical summary of the Student Counsellors' various work performed in the previous month.

2.18   For 2013/14, the nine Student Counsellors reported in the monthly returns that they had secured jobs for 174 students and arranged trial work placements for 270 students. Audit examined the monthly returns and the supporting documents for the statistics concerning the jobs secured and the trial work placements arranged. Audit found that there were inconsistencies between the information contained in the monthly returns and the supporting documents (see Table 8).

Table 8

**Inconsistencies between information contained in
monthly returns and supporting documents
(2013/14)**

	Per monthly returns (a)	Per supporting documents (b)	Overstatement/ (understatement)	
			(c) = (a) − (b) Number	(d) = (c) ÷ (b) × 100% Percentage (%)
Total number of jobs secured	174	209	(35)	(17)
Total number of trial work placements arranged	270	203	67	33
Total	444	412	32	8

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

These inconsistencies were related to six of the nine Student Counsellors. The SSC needs to take measures to ensure the accuracy of the monthly returns submitted by the Student Counsellors.

2.19   *Low number of jobs secured and trial work placements arranged by some Student Counsellors.* Audit analysed the 2013/14 output of the nine Student Counsellors. Audit found that the number of jobs secured and trial work placements arranged for students by some Student Counsellors were much lower than the average figures for the nine Student Counsellors (see Table 9).

Table 9

Jobs secured and trial work placements arranged by Student Counsellors (2013/14)

Student Counsellor	No. of jobs secured	No. of trial work placements arranged	Total
SSC(KT)			
A	10	40	50
SSC(TM)			
B	14	14	28
C	12	12	24
Average for 9 Student Counsellors	23	23	46

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

2.20   As shown in Table 9, the number of jobs secured for students by Student Counsellor A was much lower (by 57%) than the average output of 23 though the total number of jobs secured and trial work placements arranged was 50 (above the average of 46).   For Student Counsellors B and C, the numbers of jobs secured were lower by 39% and 48% respectively than the average of 23, while the numbers of trial work placements arranged were also lower by 39% and 48% respectively than the average of 23.   Furthermore, in examining the output of the Student Counsellors, Audit also noted that the SSC had not set benchmarks for the Student Counsellors in respect of the numbers of jobs secured and placements arranged. For continuous improvement and monitoring purposes, the SSC needs to establish benchmarks for the Student Counsellors to observe and attain.

2.21   The SSC informed Audit that the allocation of students with lower ability to some Student Counsellors was a major reason for fewer jobs secured and trial work placements arranged by the Student Counsellors. Audit considers that the SSC needs to even out the allocation of students with lower ability and ascertain whether there are additional means of enhancing the output of these Student Counsellors.

Audit recommendations

2.22   **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

(a)   **take measures to ensure the accuracy of the monthly returns submitted by the Student Counsellors;**

(b)   **ascertain the reasons for fewer jobs secured and trial work placements arranged by some Student Counsellors and take measures to enhance their output as appropriate; and**

(c)   **consider setting benchmarks in respect of the number of jobs secured and the number of trial work placements arranged by the Student Counsellors and closely monitor the actual performance against the benchmarks.**

Response from the VTC

2.23   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that the SSC's Student Counsellors endeavour to develop students' overall attributes and especially in job attitude and life skills through counselling work and close communication with their families and employers.

PART 3: MANAGEMENT OF VOCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES

3.1 This PART examines the management of vocational assessments, full-time training programmes and part-time training courses. Audit has found room for improvement in the following areas:

(a) timeliness of issuing vocational assessment reports (paras. 3.2 to 3.6);

(b) provision of training programmes (paras. 3.7 to 3.14);

(c) admission of students to full-time training programmes (paras. 3.15 to 3.20); and

(d) monitoring of training programmes (paras. 3.21 to 3.30).

Timeliness of issuing vocational assessment reports

3.2 As mentioned in paragraph 1.14, the SVAS provides vocational assessment service to PWDs. For 2013/14, the SVAS conducted a total of 1,153 vocational assessments (comprising 205 comprehensive assessments and 948 specific assessments). Of the 1,153 assessments, in 978 (85%) assessments the PWDs were recommended to receive vocational training, while in the remaining 175 (15%) assessments the PWDs were recommended to receive other services (e.g. attending sheltered workshops of NGOs). The SSC will admit PWDs who are recommended by the SVAS for vocational training to attend SSC full-time training programmes.

3.3 According to the SSC's guidelines, an assessment report should be given to the PWDs after the completion of a vocational assessment. The results and recommendations of the assessment should not be made known to the PWDs before the completion of the assessment report. To facilitate admission of the PWDs who are recommended to receive vocational training, the SVAS may provide preliminary comments on the PWDs' performance in vocational assessments to the SSC training sites before the completion of the assessment report. However, for PWDs who are recommended to receive other services, the results and recommendations of

vocational assessments would only be made known to them upon receipt of assessment reports. Releasing early comments on performance in vocational assessments is of particular significance to the latter type of PWDs because it would facilitate them to make early alternative arrangements (e.g. applying to sheltered workshops, which have a long waiting time).

Failure to meet target time for issuing specific assessment reports

3.4 According to the SSC's performance targets, after the completion of vocational assessments, the assessment reports should be issued within four weeks for specific assessments and 14 weeks for comprehensive assessments. For 2013/14, in 175 assessments (comprising 13 comprehensive and 162 specific assessments), the PWDs were recommended to receive services other than vocational training. Audit examination of 20 assessments (comprising five comprehensive and 15 specific assessments) revealed that all the five comprehensive assessment reports were issued on time. However, the assessment reports of 11 (73%) of the 15 specific assessments were issued later than the target time (see Table 10). The delay ranged from five to 14 weeks. There were no documents showing the justifications for the extra time needed to issue the reports.

Table 10

**Time taken by SVAS to issue specific assessment reports
examined by Audit
(2013/14)**

Time taken	No. of reports		Percentage (%)	
≤ 4 weeks	4		27	
> 4 weeks to 8 weeks	0		0	
> 8 weeks to 12 weeks	5	⎫	33	⎫
> 12 weeks to 16 weeks	4	⎬ 11	27	⎬ 73
> 16 weeks to 18 weeks	2	⎭	13	⎭
Total	15		100	

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

Audit recommendations

3.5   **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

    (a)   **take measures to ensure that vocational assessment reports are issued to PWDs within the target time; and**

    (b)   **consider releasing early comments on performance in vocational assessments to the PWDs who are not recommended to receive vocational training to facilitate them to make alternative arrangements.**

Response from the VTC

3.6   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that the SSC is committed to providing efficient vocational assessment services to PWDs and will take measures to ensure that vocational assessment reports are issued to PWDs within the target time.

Provision of training programmes

3.7   To ensure that vocational training meets the needs of students and market demands, the SSC regularly reviews the effectiveness of its full-time training programmes and, in consultation with the CVTPD, makes necessary changes to the programmes. For part-time training courses, NGOs may approach the SSC directly for organising tailor-made courses. For 2013/14, the SSC organised 12 full-time training programmes (involving 43 classes) and 28 part-time training courses (involving 32 classes).

Need to review the relevance of some training programmes to job requirements

3.8   As mentioned in paragraph 2.2, the SSC conducts an annual employment survey to collect information on the employment situation of graduated students of full-time training programmes. The SSC requests graduated students who are in

employment to rate the relevance of the training programmes they attended to the employment they engaged in by choosing one of the four ratings, namely "very relevant", "relevant", "fairly relevant" or "not relevant".

3.9   Audit examined the latest three employment surveys covering students graduated in the period 2011/12 to 2013/14. Audit found that for four training programmes, in each of the three years, more than 50% of the graduated students chose the two ratings "fairly relevant" or "not relevant" (see Table 11).

Table 11

**Four training programmes rated by more than 50% of
graduated students as "fairly relevant" or "not relevant" to employment
(2011/12 to 2013/14)**

Programme	Percentage of graduated students (%)								
	Fairly relevant			Not relevant			Total		
	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14	2011/ 12	2012/ 13	2013/ 14
Programme assistant practice	22	46	23	34	27	69	56	73	92
Computer and network practice	0	80	60	88	0	20	88	80	80
Catering and housekeeping practice	N.A.	67	60	N.A.	33	20	N.A.	100	80
Office practice	58	57	50	5	36	29	63	93	79

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

Remarks: N.A. denotes that the SSC did not run the training programme in that year.

3.10   Audit considers that the SSC needs to:

(a)   ascertain the reasons why some SSC full-time training programmes were consistently rated by graduated students as only "fairly relevant" or "not relevant" to their employment; and

(b)   in consultation with the CVTPD, review these training programmes to improve their relevance to the job requirements of the PWDs taking into account the trends of the employment market.

Need to collaborate with more NGOs for provision of part-time training courses

3.11   For the three years 2011/12 to 2013/14, the SSC organised 33, 41, and 32 classes for part-time training respectively. A great majority of these classes were held in collaboration with NGOs, i.e. 28 (85%), 37 (90%), and 32 (100%) for the three years respectively.

3.12   Audit examined the SSC's collaboration with NGOs for the provision of part-time training courses in the period 2011/12 to 2013/14. Audit found that the SSC collaborated with only a few NGOs (see Table 12). The SSC(PF) only collaborated with one NGO and the SSC(TM) only collaborated with two NGOs each year, whereas the SSC(KT) collaborated with an average of five NGOs each year. To enable more PWDs to benefit from the part-time training courses and to avoid the perceptions of favouritism, Audit considers that the SSC needs to take measures to collaborate with more NGOs for the provision of such courses.

Table 12

Number of NGOs collaborated with SSC
(2011/12 to 2013/14)

Year	SSC(KT)	SSC(TM)	SSC(PF)	Total (Note)
2011/12	4	2	0	5
2012/13	5	2	1	6
2013/14	6	2	1	7

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

Note: The total number of NGOs collaborated does not tally with the number of NGOs collaborated by individual SSC training sites because some NGOs collaborated with more than one SSC training site.

Audit recommendations

3.13   **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should take measures to:**

   (a)   **improve the relevance of the training programmes to the job requirements of the graduated students; and**

   (b)   **collaborate with more NGOs for the provision of part-time training courses by the SSC.**

Response from the VTC

3.14   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that the SSC solicits views from employers and trade participants for continuous improvement of the training programmes.   There have also been modifications in teaching materials, training and learning methodologies and placement strategies to form the basis of providing suitable and relevant training to the students.

Admission of students to full-time training programmes

3.15   According to the SSC's guidelines, PWDs applying for full-time training programmes must:

(a)   be aged 15 or above;

(b)   have one or more than one type of disabilities; and

(c)   go through the SVAS's vocational assessment and be classified as suitable for vocational training.

3.16   PWDs fulfilling the above criteria may apply to any one of the three SSC training sites to attend the training programmes. They will receive an intake interview conducted by a Student Counsellor and the Officer-in-charge of the SSC training site the PWDs applied to. The purpose of the intake interview is to:

(a)   discuss and confirm the training programme the applicant should receive;

(b)   get further understanding of the PWD's background and personality; and

(c)   provide further information of the training programme to the PWD.

3.17   If a training place is available, an admission letter specifying the admission date will be issued to the PWDs. Otherwise, an offer letter will be issued to inform PWDs that their applications have been accepted and that the admission date will later be notified when the start date of the training programme has been fixed.

Need to set target time for processing applications

3.18   For 2013/14, 294 new students were admitted to the three SSC training sites to attend full-time training programmes. Audit noted that the SSC has not set a target time for processing PWDs' admission applications. Audit examined the applications of 30 new students to ascertain the time taken to process the applications by measuring the duration between the receipt of an application to the

issue of an admission/offer letter. Audit's examination revealed that nine (30%) of the 30 applications took more than three months to process (see Table 13), with the longest time taken being 6.4 months. As the SSC admits PWDs throughout the year (see para. 1.19), shortening the processing time could allow PWDs to receive vocational training and subsequently to seek employment earlier.

Table 13

Time taken by SSC to process 30 applications examined by Audit
(2013/14)

Time taken	No. of applications	Percentage (%)
≤ 1 month	5	17
> 1 month to 2 months	9	30
> 2 months to 3 months	7	23
> 3 months to 6 months	8 ⎫ 9	27 ⎫ 30
> 6 months to 7 months	1 ⎭	3 ⎭
Total	30	100

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

Audit recommendation

3.19   **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should set a target time for processing applications for SSC full-time training programmes and monitor the actual time taken against the target.**

Response from the VTC

3.20   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendation.

Monitoring of training programmes

3.21   The SSC monitors its full-time training programmes and part-time training courses by:

(a)   ***Annual assessment for full-time training programmes.*** According to the VTC's guidelines for annual assessment, the SSC is required to establish performance indicators for its full-time training programmes.   These indicators include:

   (i)   ***completion rate.*** This rate is calculated by dividing *"the number of students graduated"* by *"the number of students enrolled (i.e. graduated and dropped out)"*;

   (ii)   ***student satisfaction.*** This is compiled based on the results of the satisfaction surveys of students at the time of graduation; and

   (iii)   ***employer satisfaction.*** This is compiled based on the results of questionnaire surveys of employers of graduated students;

(b)   ***Class observation for full-time training programmes.***   The Officer-in-charge of each SSC training site conducts class observations for teaching staff to evaluate their quality of teaching.   Teaching staff can obtain feedback from the Officer-in-charge for academic and professional development purposes; and

(c)   ***Class evaluation for part-time training courses.*** Questionnaires are sent to students and NGOs concerned after the completion of courses to collect their feedback for enhancing the quality of the courses.

Two training sites did not meet target completion rate

3.22   According to the VTC's guidelines for conducting annual assessment, the target completion rate for full-time training programmes for each SSC training site is 80%. Audit noted that the SSC(KT) and the SSC(TM) did not meet the target completion rate for 2013/14 (see Table 14).

Table 14

**Completion rates of full-time training programmes
of SSC training sites
(2013/14)**

	SSC(KT)	SSC(TM)	SSC(PF)	Overall
Number of students graduated (a)	132	97	34	263
Number of students dropped out (b)	39	29	4	72
Number of students enrolled (c)＝(a)＋(b)	171	126	38	335
Completion rate (d)＝(a)÷(c)×100%	77%	77%	89%	79%

Source: SSC records

3.23   The VTPDO had asked SSC training sites to investigate the reasons for the dropout cases (see item (b) in Table 14) and draw up an action plan to enhance the completion rate. Audit noted that the reasons for dropping out included "prolonged absence", "not interested in vocational training", "to study in another institution", "to attend day activity centre" and "family or health reasons". Audit also found that there was no record showing the dropping out reasons for one dropout student of the SSC(KT), nine of the SSC(TM) and the four of the SSC(PF).

The SSC(TM) had drawn up a plan for dealing with dropout cases. The SSC told Audit that the training sites had taken measures to assist students who were going to drop out (Note 5). The SSC also informed Audit that the training sites had investigated all the dropout cases, but they had not established proper procedures for ascertaining and recording the reasons for dropping out. Furthermore, according to the SSC, the SSC(KT) had drawn up an action plan, though it had not documented the plan.

Need to monitor completion rates by individual full-time training programmes

3.24   Audit also noted that no target completion rate had been set for individual full-time training programmes. Audit analysed the completion rates of individual training programmes for 2013/14. Audit found that the completion rates for five programmes were below the overall target completion rate for all programmes of 80% (see Table 15). Two programmes, namely "Office practice" and "Catering and housekeeping practice" warrant the SSC management's particular attention as in the period 2011/12 to 2013/14 they were consistently rated by more than half of the graduated students as "fairly relevant" or "not relevant" to their employment (see Table 11 in para. 3.9).

Note 5:   *For example, in the case of prolonged absence of students, phone calls would be made by the Class Masters to ascertain the reasons for the absence and support services would be provided by the Officers-in-charge and the Student Counsellors to the students.*

Table 15

**Completion rates of full-time training programmes
(2013/14)**

Programme	No. of students			Completion rate
	Graduated (a)	Dropped out (b)	Total (c) = (a) + (b)	(d) = (a) ÷ (c) ×100% (%)
Commercial and retailing service	18	10	28	64
Office practice	25	12	37	68
Catering service	31	12	43	72
Catering and housekeeping practice	9	3	12	75
Health and beauty care	7	2	9	78
Business and computer practice	8	2	10	80
Integrated service	48	12	60	80
Design and desktop publishing	27	5	32	84
Computer and network practice	23	4	27	85
Packaging service	39	6	45	87
Programme assistant practice	20	3	23	87
Massage service	8	1	9	89
Overall	263	72	335	79

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

Need to cover all graduated students' employers in employer satisfaction surveys

3.25   The SSC conducts employer satisfaction survey by sending out questionnaires to graduated students' employers to gauge their levels of satisfaction (on a rating scale of 1 (least satisfied) to 10 (most satisfied)) on the SSC's full-time training programmes and the students they hired. The VTC's guidelines for annual assessment state that a comparison of the level of satisfaction of the current year with that of the previous years should be made to track the satisfaction level over time.

3.26   According to the results of the SSC's 2014/15 annual assessment, the overall satisfaction level of graduated students' employers was 7.7 out of 10. This was higher than the levels in the previous two years which were both 7.5. Audit noted that the SSC did not send questionnaires to employers of all graduated students. For instance, the rating of 7.7 in 2014/15 was based on 28 returned questionnaires out of the 34 questionnaires sent by the SSC. However, according to the 2013/14 employment survey, 137 graduated students reported that they were in open employment (see Table 7 in para. 2.4). In response to Audit's enquiry, the SSC informed Audit that the Student Counsellors would only send a questionnaire to those employers who, based on their experience, would be willing to respond to the questionnaire.

Need to stipulate guidelines on class observation and evaluation

3.27   The SSC has not stipulated guidelines on the conduct of class observations (for full-time training programmes) and class evaluations (for part-time training courses). In 2013/14, the SSC conducted 33 class observations on its teaching staff. Audit noted that there were inconsistencies in the practices of conducting class observations:

    (a)   the SSC(KT) and the SSC(PF) conducted class observations for every teaching staff (27 for the SSC(KT) and 5 for the SSC(PF)); and

    (b)   the SSC(TM) conducted only one class observation for one of its 28 teaching staff.

3.28   Among the 32 classes of part-time training courses provided in 2013/14, Audit examined the records of class evaluations for five classes (two each for the SSC(KT) and the SSC(TM), and one for the SSC(PF)). Audit examination revealed that there were inconsistencies as follows:

(a)   the SSC(KT) and the SSC(PF) sent class evaluation questionnaires to all the students that had attended the training courses and all the NGOs that requested these courses; and

(b)   the SSC(TM) only sent questionnaires to the NGOs. None of the students who attended the training courses were sent a questionnaire.

Audit recommendations

3.29   **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

(a)   **take measures to ensure that the SSC training sites establish proper procedures for ascertaining and recording the reasons for all dropout cases;**

(b)   **take measures to ensure that the SSC training sites draw up formal action plans to enhance the completion rate of SSC students and monitor the effectiveness of the action plans;**

(c)   **consider setting a target completion rate for each full-time training programme;**

(d)   **take measures to enhance the completion rates of full-time training programmes with lower completion rates;**

(e)   **cover all employers of graduated students, or a representative sample of them, in the employer satisfaction surveys; and**

(f)   **stipulate guidelines on class observation for full-time training programmes and class evaluation for part-time training courses.**

Response from the VTC

3.30   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

(a)   the target completion rate of 80% had been set as one single rate for all full-time training programmes. The SSC will consider setting a target completion rate for each full-time training programme; and

(b)   the SSC will analyse factors of students capacity, training qualities and exceptional situations and suggest improvement measures on individual programme basis.

PART 4: ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

4.1   This PART examines the administrative issues of the SSC. Audit has found room for improvement in the following areas:

(a)   usage of the SSC(PF) building (paras. 4.2 to 4.8);

(b)   staff recruitment (paras. 4.9 to 4.14);

(c)   continuous professional development (CPD) of staff (paras. 4.15 to 4.20); and

(d)   inventory control (paras. 4.21 to 4.35).

Usage of the SSC(PF) building

4.2   Due to the greater integration of PWDs into mainstream schools and the introduction of the senior secondary school curriculum into special schools, the demand for SSC training places had decreased. In September 2002, the LWB commissioned a consultancy study to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the services provided by the SSC. The study, completed in May 2003, found that in anticipation of the reduction of student number owing to the above changes, the SSC(PF) would enrol fewer students and recommended that the SSC(PF) should be closed down. In response to the findings of the study, in July 2005, the SSC(PF) ceased to provide boarding service to its students. Since 2006/07, only four classes remained to cater for the demand of PWDs living on the Hong Kong Island. In April 2010, the SSC conducted a survey to obtain the views of stakeholders (including students of the SSC(PF) and their parents, special schools and mainstream secondary schools) on the future development of the SSC(PF). The survey showed that demand for vocational training for PWDs living on the Hong Kong Island still existed. The numbers of full-time training places and students enrolled in the period 2002/03 to 2014/15 are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

**Numbers of training places and students enrolled in SSC(PF)
(2002/03 to 2014/15)**
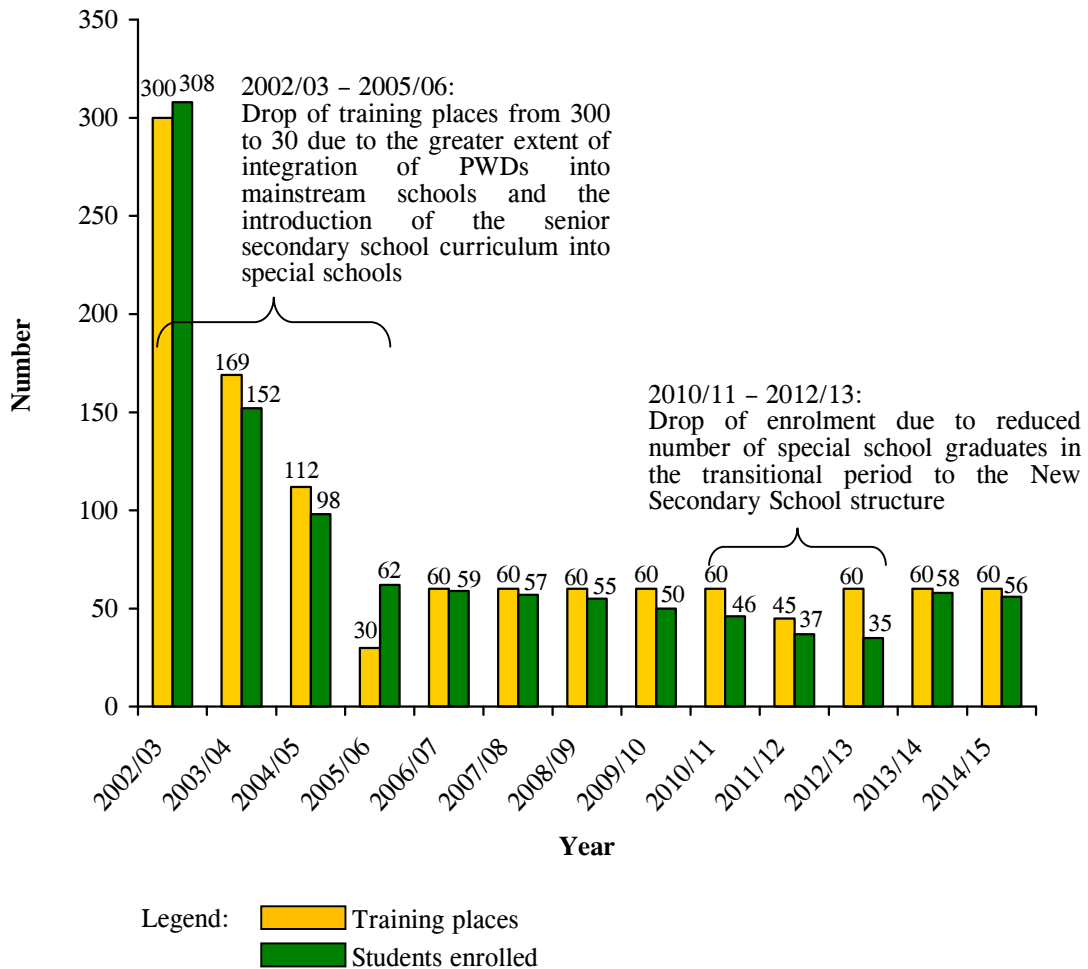
Source: SSC records

Vacant floor spaces

4.3   The SSC(PF) building has a total net operational floor area of 3,093 m^2 (see Table 16). It comprises an entrance lobby on the ground floor, a podium floor with a garden and eight other floors. To make good use of the vacant spaces arising from the reduced enrolment, the VTC had released some floor spaces of the building for use by two NGOs. This arrangement had been agreed by the LWB and the Lands Department had granted waivers for change of land use. Table 16 shows the usage of the SSC(PF) building as at June 2015.

Table 16

Usage of the SSC(PF) building
(June 2015)

Floor	Net operational floor area (m²)	Usage
1st	272	Occupied by the Hong Kong PHAB Association (an NGO) for provision of hostel services to PWDs
2nd	391	Vacant
3rd	564	Occupied by the Hong Kong PHAB Association for provision of hostel services to PWDs
4th	439	SSC(PF)
5th	489	Occupied by Po Leung Kuk (an NGO) for operation of a day activity centre and a hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons
6th	247	
7th	411	Vacant
8th	280	SSC(PF)
Total	3,093	

Source: SSC records

4.4　　　As shown in Table 16, the 2nd floor (391 m²) and the 7th floor (411 m²) of the SSC(PF) building were vacant as at June 2015. Audit's examination revealed that:

(a)　　　the 2nd floor had been vacant since June 2012;

(b)　　　the 7th floor had been vacant since the SSC(PF) ceased to provide boarding service to its students in July 2005; and

(c)　　　some of the spaces of the two floors had been used for storage of inventories (according to the SSC(PF), some of the inventories were unserviceable items pending disposal).

Inadequate monitoring of usage of spaces

4.5   Audit noted that:

(a)   in September 2010, the VTC proposed to release the 2nd and the 7th floors for use by the Social Welfare Department (SWD).   In October 2010, the LWB agreed with the VTC's proposal. The LWB also lined up the SSC and the SWD for direct liaison and impressed upon them the need to expedite action for early handing-over of the floors;

(b)   in April 2015, the VTC intended to withdraw the proposal and sought the LWB's support for remodelling the two floors for enhancing the training for the SSC's students. The VTC proposed to use the 2nd floor as a home-based independent living centre to mock up a hostel environment and the 7th floor as a central kitchen for students' training purposes. In the same month, the LWB enquired with the SWD;

(c)   in May 2015, the SWD informed the LWB that:

(i)   since February 2011, the VTC had been well aware of the SWD's intention of setting up,   for severely mentally handicapped persons, a hostel on the 2nd floor and a day activity centre on the 7th floor; and

(ii)   despite the SWD's repeated reminders, the VTC had not taken any proactive action to apply to the Lands Department for change of land use; and

(d)   in June 2015, the LWB declined the VTC's April 2015 proposal on the grounds that the two floors had been earmarked since February 2011 for releasing to the SWD for setting up a day activity centre and a hostel for severely mentally handicapped persons, and there had been a constant increase in the demand for such facilities.

Audit recommendations

4.6 **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

(a) **take prompt measures to address the issue of vacant floor spaces of the SSC(PF) building;**

(b) **closely monitor the usage of the SSC(PF) building and take measures to improve the usage where warranted; and**

(c) **monitor the enrolment situation of the SSC(PF) and, in consultation with the LWB, contemplate the way forward for the SSC(PF).**

Response from the VTC and the Government

4.7 The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that:

(a) the SSC(PF) enrolment is largely meeting the planned number of student places which has been in line with the overall SSC planning approved by the LWB; and

(b) the VTC will monitor the enrolment situation of the SSC(PF) and, in consultation with the LWB, contemplate the way forward for the SSC(PF).

4.8 The Secretary for Labour and Welfare has said that the LWB has always been concerned about the two vacant floors at the SSC(PF) building and would like to put the premises to more productive use, particularly to provide much needed rehabilitation facilities as soon as practicable. In this regard, the Bureau recently convened a meeting on 7 October 2015 with the parties concerned in order to expedite the provision of the planned rehabilitation facilities in the building. The Bureau will continue to keep in view the progress of the matter.

Staff recruitment

4.9   The staff of the SSC comprises full-time staff (on two-year employment terms), short-term contract staff (on one-year employment terms) and part-time staff. The SSC regularly conducts recruitment exercises to fill vacant posts of its staff.

4.10   Individual SSC training sites are responsible for their own staff recruitment.   For a recruitment exercise, advertisements are placed in local newspapers, on the VTC website and job websites. According to the VTC's guides on recruitment and human resources matters, applicants are shortlisted for interview according to predetermined shortlisting criteria.   A selection board is formed to interview and select candidates for appointment.   Assessment forms are used to record the performance of individual candidates during interviews.   A board report is compiled to summarise the selection process and results.   For recruitment of full-time staff, assessment forms and board reports should be forwarded to the Human Resources Division (HRD) of the VTC for vetting.

4.11   In the financial years 2012-13 to 2014-15, the SSC conducted 91 recruitment exercises (40 exercises for full-time staff, 37 for short-term contract staff and 14 for part-time staff) to fill vacancies arising from retirements and changes in the establishment.

Room for improvement in recruitment exercises

4.12   Audit reviewed the records of the 91 recruitment exercises conducted in the financial years 2012-13 to 2014-15. Audit found anomalies as follows:

   (a)   ***Missing assessment forms and board reports.*** For 4 (11%) of the 37 recruitment exercises for short-term contract staff, there were no assessment forms. For another three (8%) exercises, there were neither assessment forms nor board reports (in two exercises, the job applications were also missing). As for recruitment of part-time staff, there was no board report in one of the 14 recruitment exercises. Case 1 illustrates a recruitment exercise for short-term contract staff without both the assessment form and the board report; and

Case 1

Recruitment exercise for short-term contract staff

1. In the financial year 2012-13, the SSC(TM) recruited an Instructor. Audit found that there was only an internal e-mail of August 2012 mentioning the acceptance of offer by the candidate. An offer letter was issued to the candidate in September 2012 and the candidate formally accepted the offer in October 2012.

2. The assessment form and the board report were not available for Audit inspection. Moreover, the job application form of the candidate could not be found.

Source: SSC records

(b) ***Justifications for offering maximum pay not documented.*** According to the VTC's guides on recruitment and human resources matters, Heads of Operational Units of the VTC (including the Director of the VTPDO) have the discretion to offer a candidate entry salary higher than the minimum pay of a specified pay range to attract applicants of right quality. Nevertheless, the considerations for determining the higher level of salary offered should be properly documented. Audit noted that in recruiting two short-term contract staff (Welfare Workers) by the SSC training sites, the justifications for the approval of offering maximum pay were not documented.

Audit recommendations

4.13 **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

(a) **take measures to ensure that the SSC keeps proper records relating to recruitment exercises;**

(b) **document properly justifications for the granting of salaries higher than the minimum pay of specified pay ranges to candidates; and**

(c)   **consider the need to conduct sample vetting of assessment forms and board reports for the recruitment of short-term contract staff and part-time staff by the VTC's HRD.**

Response from the VTC

4.14   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that the SSC:

(a)   has been following the staff recruitment guides with due diligence; and

(b)   will take measures to ensure that proper records relating to recruitment exercises are kept.

CPD of staff

4.15   The VTC has launched, since 2010/11, a CPD Scheme to encourage its staff to upgrade and update their professional knowledge and skills through active participation in different forms of professional training and development activities. It is also the VTC's vision that the CPD Scheme would help demonstrate the VTC as a learning organisation.

4.16   The CPD Scheme operates on a non-mandatory basis. Nevertheless, all the VTC's teaching staff together with some other designated staff (e.g. Education Development Officers and Student Affairs Officers) are encouraged to attain not less than 40 CPD hours (Note 6) within two consecutive years. In around September each year, the VTC's HRD issues an e-mail to all the staff covered by the CPD Scheme reminding them to update their CPD records. The CPD records are captured in the VTC's Human Resources Management Information System (the System). Staff can access the System to keep track of the progress in attaining CPD. Based on the data maintained in the System, the VTC's HRD compiles

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Note 6:   *CPD hours include time spent on attending training courses, conferences and seminars. Other activities such as reading of relevant professional journals and voluntary services to professional bodies can also be counted as CPD hours.*

annually CPD information for perusal by the VTC's Staff Development Committee (Note 7). The Committee forwards the CPD information to respective Heads of Operational Units to enable them to facilitate and encourage their staff's participation in CPD activities.

Unsatisfactory fulfillment of CPD hours

4.17   As at 31 August 2014, there were a total of 63 SSC staff under the CPD Scheme who had been in service for two consecutive years (i.e. 2012/13 and 2013/14). Audit examined their CPD records in the two years. Audit found that 34 (54%) of the 63 staff had in fact attained 40 or more CPD hours. The remaining 29 (46%) staff, however, had attained less than 40 CPD hours. Among these 29 staff, 4 (6.4% of 63) staff had not attained any CPD hours at all (see Table 17).

Table 17

CPD hours of 63 SSC staff
(2012/13 and 2013/14)

CPD hour	No. of staff
0	4 (6.4%)
> 0 and < 10	4 (6.4%)
≥ 10 and < 20	6 (9.5%)
≥ 20 and < 30	5 (7.9%)
≥ 30 and < 40	10 (15.8%)
≥ 40	34 (54.0%)
Total	63 (100%)

Rows 0 to < 40 braced together: 29 (46%)

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

Note 7:   *The VTC's Staff Development Committee advises the Executive Director of the VTC on matters relating to staff development. The Committee comprises a chairman (a Senior Assistant Executive Director of the VTC) and 19 members representing various Heads of Operational Units of the VTC (including the Director of the VTPDO).*

4.18   Audit reviewed the records of the 29 staff who had attained less than 40 CPD hours. Audit found that 25 (86%) of them were full-time staff employed on permanent employment terms (VTC staff employed before 1 April 2004), while 4 (14%) were on two-year employment terms (VTC staff employed on or after 1 April 2004).

Audit recommendations

4.19   **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

(a)   **step up efforts in encouraging those SSC staff who did not attain 40 CPD hours within two consecutive years to actively participate in CPD activities; and**

(b)   **monitor the attainment of CPD hours by SSC staff.**

Response from the VTC

4.20   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that the SSC:

(a)   has made conscious efforts in arranging for a wide range of staff development programmes covering areas such as rehabilitation tools, competency-based curriculum, and teaching and learning package development; and

(b)   will monitor the attainment of CPD hours by SSC staff.

Inventory control

4.21   As at 31 July 2015, the value of the SSC's inventories amounted to some $20 million. Audit examined the SSC's control of inventories. The irregularities identified by Audit are set out in paragraphs 4.22 to 4.33.

Irregularities in SSC stocktaking

4.22   According to the VTC's Stores Manual and inventory guidelines, member institutions are required to conduct annual stocktaking in each financial year. Member institutions are also required to report results of the stocktaking to the Chief Supplies Officer of the Supplies Section of the VTC before the deadlines (usually in November or December of a financial year) specified by him.

4.23   *Annual stocktaking not always conducted.*   Audit examined the stocktaking conducted by the five branches (i.e. the SSC(KT), the SSC(TM), the SSC(PF), the STARC and the SVAS) of the SSC in the financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15. Audit's findings are shown in Table 18.

Table 18

Conduct of stocktaking by SSC's five branches
(Financial years 2010-11 to 2014-15)

Branch	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
SSC(KT)	✓	✓	✗	✓	Note
SSC(TM)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
SSC(PF)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Note
STARC	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
SVAS	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗

Source: Audit analysis of SSC records

Note: The stocktaking was conducted in May 2015, that was not within the financial year as stipulated (see para. 4.22).

Remarks: ✓ *denotes stocktaking conducted*
            ✗ *denotes stocktaking not conducted*

4.24   *Stocktaking not satisfactorily conducted.*   In May 2015, the SSC(KT) conducted a stocktaking (see Note to Table 18). The stocktaking revealed that 109 inventory items in a room on the ground floor (with a total replacement cost of $11,815) were missing (e.g. a video cassette recorder and a portable electric air pump).

4.25   In June 2015, the Manager of the SSC(KT) sought approval from the VTC's Deputy Executive Director to write off these items. In seeking the approval, the Manager explained that these items were damaged in a flooding incident happened to the ground floor in May 2013 and were disposed of promptly. As it was in a rush to tidy up the ground floor, stock condemnation procedures had been overlooked and therefore these items were not deleted from the store records. In the same month, the write-off was approved.

4.26   Audit noted that the room in question had been selected for checking in the stocktaking for the financial year 2013-14. In that stocktaking conducted in October 2013, the SSC(KT) reported in the stocktaking report that all the inventories in the room were in order but had not recorded the items actually checked. Therefore, Audit could not ascertain whether the missing items had been selected for checking and the checking team did not discover the absence of the items or the items had not been selected. In this connection, in examining the stocktaking exercises conducted by the five branches, Audit noted that among the five branches, the SSC(PF) was the only branch that had maintained proper stocktaking records (e.g. recording the inventories that had been checked in stocktaking).

Irregularities identified in Audit's inventory checks

4.27   In the period June to August 2015, Audit conducted inventory checks at the five branches (see para. 4.23) of the SSC. Audit's findings are set out below.

4.28   ***Missing/wrong barcode labels on inventories.*** To facilitate inventory control, the SSC attaches scanable barcode labels to inventories. Audit found that of the 273 inventory items (involving all the five branches) selected for checking:

   (a)   the barcode labels on 65 (23.8%) items were missing; and

   (b)   the barcode labels on 2 (0.7%) items were wrong.

4.29   ***Goods received not timely recorded.*** Audit checked the goods listed on 75 purchase orders (15 orders for each of the five branches) to the store records. These orders were placed in the financial year 2014-15 and the goods had been received and became inventories of the SSC.

4.30 The 75 purchase orders involved a total of 173 inventory items. Audit found that of the 173 items:

(a) as at the time of Audit's checking, five items of the SSC(PF) and two items of the SVAS had not been recorded in the store records. Subsequent to Audit's enquiry, the SSC(PF) and the SVAS rectified the irregularities; and

(b) 96 items (excluding the seven items mentioned above had not been recorded in the store records in a timely manner. Of these 96 items:

(i) 74 items (77%) were recorded more than one month to six months after receipt of goods from the suppliers; and

(ii) 22 items (23%) were recorded more than six months to 11 months after receipt of goods from the suppliers.

Unsatisfactory loan records maintained by STARC

4.31 The STARC loans technical aids to SSC students (Note 8) to improve their functional adaptation in study and their functional livings. Technical aids include hearing aids, electric wheelchairs, and Braille display device (for people with visual impairment). According to the STARC's loan regulations:

(a) students need to submit an application form for borrowing technical aids for up to six months. For renewals, they need to submit a new application (for up to another six months); and

(b) students must return the borrowed technical aids within six months after graduation.

Note 8: *Students with special educational needs who are studying in the mainstream programmes of the VTC may borrow technical aids from the STARC.*

4.32   The STARC has offices located in the SSC(TM) and the SSC(KT). Although the STARC has two offices, it keeps a loan register at the Tuen Mun office only.   The Tuen Mun office manually inputs all movements (i.e. issuing/renewing and returning) of technical aids into the loan register.   For movements of technical aids of the Kwun Tong office, the Tuen Mun office inputs the movements manually into the loan register basing on the students' application forms faxed from the Kwun Tong office.

4.33   Audit examined the loan register and the 219 students' application forms involving 510 loaned items for 2013/14. Audit found that:

(a)   for the Tuen Mun office, 42 renewals and 58 returns of loaned items had not been recorded in the loan register. For the Kwun Tong office, 50 renewals and 65 returns of loaned items had not been recorded in the loan register; and

(b)   as a result of the unrecorded renewals and returns, it was difficult for the offices to follow-up overdue cases (i.e. items not returned after six months) and to keep track of what items were actually in the offices or loaned out. Audit noted that as at late August 2015, 13 students had not returned the technical aids after graduation. They had borrowed these items for three to some 14 years.

Audit recommendations

4.34   **Audit has *recommended* that the Executive Director, VTC should:**

(a)   **take measures to ensure that the SSC conducts annual stocktaking in accordance with the VTC's requirements;**

(b)   **require the VTC's Supplies Section to follow up on those SSC branches which have not reported the results of annual stocktaking before the deadlines specified by the Chief Supplies Officer;**

(c)   **take measures to ensure that SSC branches maintain proper stocktaking records (e.g. recording the inventories that have been checked in stocktaking);**
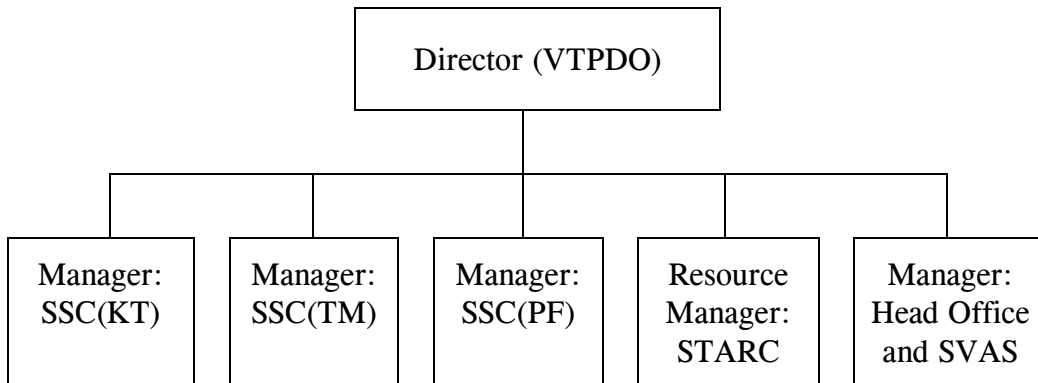
(d)   **take measures to ensure that correct barcode labels are attached to all the SSC's inventories;**

(e)   **take measures to ensure that goods received from suppliers by the SSC are recorded in the store records in a timely manner;**

(f)   **ask the STARC to record the movements of technical aids in the loan register in a timely manner;**

(g)   **ask the STARC to locate its technical aids (that had been renewed or returned but had not been recorded in the loan register) and to take appropriate action to follow up the overdue items, and to update the loan register promptly for renewals and returns; and**

(h)   **consider devising a more effective system to control the movements of the technical aids.**

Response from the VTC

4.35   The Executive Director, VTC agrees with the audit recommendations. She has said that the SSC has taken immediate measures to improve on the stocktaking and recording process and arranged additional staff training to support the improvement measures.

**Shine Skills Centre
Organisation chart (extract)
(31 March 2015)**

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │ Director (VTPDO) │
                    └─────────────────┘
                             │
     ┌──────────┬────────────┼────────────┬──────────┐
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│Manager: ││Manager: ││Manager: ││Resource  ││Manager:  │
│SSC(KT)  ││SSC(TM)  ││SSC(PF)  ││Manager:  ││Head Office│
│         ││         ││         ││STARC     ││and SVAS  │
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Source: SSC records

Remarks: The Director (VTPDO) reports to a Deputy Executive Director of the VTC.

Acronyms and abbreviations

Audit	Audit Commission
CPD	Continuous professional development
CVTPD	Committee on Vocational Training for People with Disabilities
HRD	Human Resources Division
LWB	Labour and Welfare Bureau
m^2	Square metres
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
PWDs	Persons with disabilities
SSC	Shine Skills Centre
SSC(KT)	Shine Skills Centre (Kwun Tong)
SSC(PF)	Shine Skills Centre (Pokfulam)
SSC(TM)	Shine Skills Centre (Tuen Mun)
STARC	Shine Technical Aids and Resource Centre
SVAS	Shine Vocational Assessment Service
SWD	Social Welfare Department
VTC	Vocational Training Council
VTPDO	Vocational Training for People with Disabilities Office
WOPS	Work Orientation and Placement Scheme