

# 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.

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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).

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### 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).

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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));**

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- (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.