

CHAPTER 9

Civil Service Bureau

Training and development work of the Civil Service Training and Development Institute

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TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT WORK OF THE CIVIL SERVICE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

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TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT WORK OF THE CIVIL SERVICE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Executive Summary

1. With overall policy responsibility for the management of the civil service, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) works in collaboration with bureaux/departments (B/Ds) to provide learning opportunities for some 183,000 government employees that would equip them with the skills, knowledge and mind-set necessary for providing quality services to the public. In 2016-17, the CSB and B/Ds spent a total of \$1.2 billion on the provision of civil service training and development for some 700,000 participants. While B/Ds are mainly responsible for providing their staff with vocational training to meet job-specific needs, the CSB has a dedicated Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) responsible for providing training programmes that fulfil the common training needs of civil servants in areas of senior leadership development, national studies, communication and management. The CSTDI also implements initiatives to promote continuous learning in the civil service, such as providing e-learning resources through the e-learning portal, i.e. the Cyber Learning Centre Plus (CLC Plus) and training sponsorship to encourage civil servants to attend job-related courses in their own spare time. As at 31 March 2018, the CSTDI had an establishment of 116 staff and training facilities including an auditorium, 22 training rooms and a Learning Resource Centre (LRC). The financial provision of the CSTDI in 2017-18 amounted to \$148.3 million. The Audit Commission (Audit) has recently conducted a review to examine the training and development work of the CSTDI.

Management of training programmes

2. *Training administration.* Training programmes organised by the CSTDI can be broadly classified into local and non-local programmes. In 2017, the CSTDI organised 1,216 classes of local training programmes for 57,414 trainees, comprising 610 classes of central programmes (i.e. open to all B/Ds) and 606 classes of customised programmes for specific B/Ds. The CSTDI also organised 25 classes of Mainland national studies programmes for 683 civil servants, and civil service exchange programmes held in the Mainland and overseas study programmes for another 34 civil servants. The successful delivery of training events depends on both

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the contribution of trainers and trainees, and effective and efficient training administration. The CSTDI is assisted by the computerised Training Information and Administration System (TIAS) in various training administration functions, including inviting and processing nominations, training place allocation, attendance status update, training record maintenance and management reporting. Authorised users of B/Ds (e.g. Training Managers) can login to the TIAS to input training nominations and download training records. The TIAS also supports interface with two computerised training management systems installed by 14 B/Ds (as at September 2018) to facilitate electronic transfer of applications/nominations (paras. 2.2 to 2.5 and 2.12). Audit examination has revealed room for wider use of technology in enhancing the training administration process:

- (a) ***Manual processing of training applications/nominations by some B/Ds.*** The CSTDI issues invitations to training courses to B/Ds for direct dissemination to their staff. While the application and nomination process is automated for 14 B/Ds using the two computerised training management systems, other B/Ds need to consolidate applications from staff and upload nominations to the TIAS. According to the CSTDI, some B/Ds have developed their own computerised systems to facilitate training administration though such systems have no direct interface with the TIAS. However, for those B/Ds without any computerised system for training management, they need to manually collate application details for uploading to the TIAS, which is time and resource consuming, and prone to errors. The CSB needs to explore ways to make better use of technology to enhance the administration of training applications/nominations by B/Ds (para. 2.5);

- (b) ***Scope for wider use of e-forms.*** For those classes which do not require prioritisation of nominations by B/Ds, applicants may e-mail or fax their completed applications direct to the CSTDI. Prior to 2016, CSTDI staff had to manually input details of such applications into the TIAS. As a measure to reduce the time and efforts in processing these applications, the CSTDI has since 2016 introduced an e-form solution whereby the application details are uploaded automatically to the TIAS. However, only 58 (10%) of the 610 classes of central programmes held in 2017 used e-forms for enrolment. In Audit's view, the CSTDI needs to make wider use of e-forms to streamline the training enrolment process in B/Ds as far as practicable, especially for courses with short application periods such as re-run classes (additional classes held in the same year for popular courses) or second round of applications for under-subscribed classes (para. 2.6); and

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- (c) ***Collecting trainees' feedback by electronic means.*** To improve operational efficiency and reduce manual efforts on data input of attendance status of individual trainees into the TIAS, the CSB informed Audit in September 2018 that a project would be commenced shortly to develop an e-registration system which could: (i) generate unique Quick Response Code to trainees for on-site registration; and (ii) integrate with the TIAS for automatic updating of attendance records. However, for course evaluation, the CSTDI currently uses paper-based evaluation forms to collect feedback from participants. The CSTDI should consider collecting trainees' feedback by electronic means (paras. 2.3(d) and 2.8).

3. ***Need to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses.*** Of the 610 classes of central programmes held in 2017, 346 (57%) were over-subscribed. According to the CSTDI, for over-subscribed seminar-type classes which involve mainly dissemination of principles and guidelines, it may change to a larger venue to accommodate more eligible trainees. For over-subscribed workshop-type classes which are not practical to increase the class size without compromising training effectiveness, additional classes may be arranged in the same year (i.e. re-run) or the following year. However, Audit found that for 83 classes (involving 33 workshops and 2 seminars) with over-subscription rate of 100% or more in 2017, no re-run was held for 19 workshops and 1 seminar. Moreover, 7 of the 19 workshops were also over-subscribed by 100% or more in 2016 but without increase in the number of scheduled classes in 2017. While the CSTDI in conjunction with individual B/Ds had organised 55 customised classes for 2 of the 7 over-subscribed workshops during 2013 to 2017, the over-subscription of these 2 popular workshops under the central programmes was not addressed during the period. For the over-subscribed seminar without a re-run in 2017, the CSTDI had not arranged video-taping or uploading the course materials on the CLC Plus. There is a need to step up efforts to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses, including arranging additional classes for persistently over-subscribed courses and making use of the CLC Plus to provide alternative learning opportunities for unselected nominees (paras. 2.14 to 2.17).

4. ***Need to improve the planning of target class size.*** According to the CSTDI, annual training plans are prepared to set out the target participants, mode of delivery, class size and schedule of each training programme. However, Audit found that the practice of setting target class size varied among different training units. While a target class size was set for each management course organised by two training units, it was not set for individual language or national studies courses

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organised by another two training units. Instead, an overall target number of trainees was set for each category of courses. For instance, an overall target of 3,000 trainees was set in the 2017 annual plan for all Putonghua courses but the target class size for each Putonghua course was not available. Moreover, the target class size for individual courses (even available as in the case of management courses) was not recorded in the TIAS to facilitate the selection of nominees. There is a need to improve the setting and documentation of the target class size for better management of training resources (paras. 2.18 and 2.19).

5. ***Need to fully utilise training places.*** According to the CSTDI, to minimise wastage of training places, when allocating training places for over-subscribed classes, it would: (a) select more trainees than the target class size as a buffer for withdrawals and absences of trainees where practicable (i.e. the buffer arrangement); and (b) maintain a waiting list so that unselected nominees will be enrolled to fill the training places upon receipt of withdrawal notifications from selected nominees. However, Audit found that for 25 (7%) of the 346 over-subscribed classes in 2017, the number of selected nominees fell short of their respective target class sizes by 1% to 14% (averaging 6%). For example, for a language course with a target class size of 25 to 35, the number of selected nominees in 9 over-subscribed classes was less than the maximum class size of 35 by 9% to 14% (averaging 12%), resulting in unused training places. Audit also found that in 7 over-subscribed classes of other courses with the actual attendance less than the target class size, there was no record to show that unused training places arising from withdrawals had been reallocated to waitlisted nominees. There is a need to make better use of the buffer arrangement and the waiting list mechanism to fully utilise training places. In 2017, the CSTDI arranged re-runs for 8 over-subscribed seminars. However, it had not invited new applications for the re-runs even when the venues could accommodate more attendees because of time constraint. Audit considers that there is merit to consider using e-forms (see para. 2(b) above) to save time and efforts in coordinating applications (paras. 2.20 to 2.23, 2.25 and 2.26).

6. ***Difficulties in arranging all middle-level civil servants to attend national studies programmes within six years.*** Over the years, the CSB has been encouraging B/Ds to arrange middle-level civil servants (i.e. officers at Master Pay Scale Point 34 to 44 or equivalent) to attend national studies programmes with a time schedule drawn up in 2018 for them to attend such programmes within 6 years from reaching Master Pay Scale Point 34 or equivalent. Up to 2017, some 13,000 middle-level civil servants had yet to attend the programmes. Audit noted that the number of planned training places would only increase from 280 in 2017 to 340 in 2018 and further to 420 in

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2019. On this basis, it is unlikely that all middle-level civil servants can attend national studies programmes within 6 years. Moreover, based on the attendance records of such programmes from 2013 to 2017 and the maximum number of training places of 320 each year, Audit found that on average, 37 (12%) additional trainees could be accommodated. There is a need to review the 6-year time schedule, and further promote and encourage B/Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend such programmes in order to make full use of the training places (paras. 2.30 to 2.32).

Initiatives to promote continuous learning

7. ***Provision of e-learning resources.*** The CSTDI launched the web-based CLC Plus in September 2002 to provide a range of online training resources for civil servants to learn at their own time and according to their own pace. As at May 2018, the CLC Plus hosted 2,384 items of CSTDI e-learning resources and 351 items of departmental-specific training resources. All government employees are eligible to use the e-learning resources through two channels, i.e. the Internet (requiring registration of a CLC Plus account) or departmental portal via the Government Intranet (no prior registration required). As at May 2018, there were 139,362 user accounts, of which 79,713 (57%) were CLC Plus accounts and 59,649 (43%) were departmental portal accounts (paras. 3.2 to 3.4). Audit examination has revealed the following issues that warrant the CSTDI's attention:

- (a) ***Large number of inactive accounts.*** As at May 2018, 14,955 (11%) of 139,362 accounts were not usable, e.g. deleted accounts or locked accounts. For the remaining 124,407 usable accounts, Audit found that 85,788 (69%) accounts were inactive (i.e. the user had not used the CLC Plus for one year or more) and the CSTDI's reminder e-mails could not reach the 41,941 inactive departmental portal account users because the CSTDI did not have their e-mail addresses as no prior registration was required for such accounts. There is a need to step up efforts to motivate inactive account users to use the CLC Plus, including enlisting the assistance of relevant B/Ds in this regard for the inactive departmental portal account users (paras. 3.6 and 3.7);
- (b) ***Inadequacies in user account management.*** In accordance with the relevant information technology security policy and guidelines issued by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer in 2016, all user access rights should be reviewed periodically and revoked after a pre-defined

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period of inactivity or when no longer required (e.g. upon a staff's termination or change of employment). Of the 85,788 inactive accounts, 17,910 (21%) accounts had remained inactive for 5 years or more. Moreover, in one B/D, the number of user accounts had exceeded its establishment by over 100%, suggesting that some accounts could have been held by officers who have left the B/D. There is a need to review the user access rights of such accounts (paras. 3.6 and 3.9); and

- (c) ***Low participation rate of the CLC Plus in some B/Ds.*** In analysing user accounts of B/Ds (see (b) above), Audit also found that the number of user accounts of 15 B/Ds only accounted for less than 50% (ranging from 13% to 49%) of their establishment. There is a need for the CSTDI in collaboration with relevant B/Ds to find out the reasons for the low participation rate of the CLC Plus with a view to devising effective measures to attract new users (para. 3.10).

8. ***Measures to facilitate mobile learning.*** To facilitate the use of e-learning resources through mobile devices, the CLC Plus was enhanced in April 2018 to provide an optimal viewing and interactive experience to support effective mobile learning. A mobile application, namely the CSTDI App, was also launched for two mobile operating systems in March 2014 and March 2015 respectively (para. 3.11). Audit examination of the measures to facilitate mobile learning has revealed the following areas for improvement:

- (a) ***Need to expedite actions on migration/retirement of e-learning resources developed using a legacy software.*** Based on a test check of 30 e-learning resources, Audit found that 17 (57%) could not be viewed on mobile devices because they were developed using a legacy software not supported by major operating systems of mobile devices. There is a need to improve accessibility of e-learning resources on mobile devices. As at September 2018, of 130 e-learning resources on the CLC Plus developed using the legacy software, 33 items had been migrated to prevailing technology platforms or retired. The remaining 97 items were planned to be migrated or retired by 2020. However, the migration plan did not cover 32 e-learning resources acquired from third party suppliers. There is a need to expedite actions on the migration/retirement of e-learning resources developed using the legacy software, especially those not included in the plan (paras. 3.12, 3.14 and 3.15); and

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- (b) ***Need to enhance the CSTDI App.*** Audit noted that since the launch of the CSTDI App for two mobile operating systems in 2014 and 2015 respectively, there had not been significant enhancements to its functions. The numbers of downloads and visits decreased from 3,197 in 2015 to 1,136 in 2017 and from 18,260 in 2015 to 5,967 in 2017 respectively. There is a need to commence the enhancement work of the CSTDI App as soon as practicable (paras. 3.16 and 3.18).

9. ***Need to improve services of the LRC.*** The LRC provides basic services including borrowing of books and multi-media learning resources. However, the usage of the LRC in terms of numbers of visits and borrowing records had been on a decreasing trend from 2015 to 2017 (paras. 3.22 and 3.23). Audit has noted that there is room for improving the provision of LRC services:

- (a) ***Simplifying LRC membership registration procedure.*** Borrowing services are only available to government employees who have registered as CLC Plus users. A first-time borrower also needs to register as an LRC member in person by providing basic information on a membership form. As the information to be supplied in the LRC membership form is the same as that required for registering as a CLC Plus user, the CSTDI should consider simplifying the LRC membership registration procedure (para. 3.24(a)); and
- (b) ***Reviewing opening hours of the LRC.*** The opening hours of the LRC are from 9:15 am to 5:15 pm, Monday to Friday. Audit analysis revealed that about 46% of the visitors of the LRC were trainees of CSTDI training courses. To facilitate trainees visiting the LRC before and after class (which normally starts at 9:00 am and ends at 5:30 pm), there is merit to explore the feasibility and usefulness of extending the opening hours of the LRC (para. 3.24(b)).

10. ***Need to improve the management of training sponsorship.*** Since 2005, the CSTDI has launched a training sponsorship scheme for frontline staff to take work-related training courses outside working hours. In a sample check of 106 approved applications, Audit has found that: (a) in 2 approved applications, the applicants were offered gifts (e.g. a new model smartphone) by the external training institutions. The CSTDI needs to lay down guidelines for B/Ds to ensure the proper handling of applications with gifts offered by external training institutions; (b) in 10

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approved applications for attending bus-driving courses/pre-service courses for public-light-bus drivers, there was no documentation on how the approved courses were related to the work of the applicants; and (c) in 3 approved applications, the applications were submitted 5 to 33 days after the courses had started, contrary to the application requirements. In respect of (b) and (c), the CSTDI needs to remind B/Ds to take improvement measures accordingly (paras. 3.30 and 3.33).

Other administrative issues

11. *Need to improve booking arrangements of training venues.* CSTDI training venues are designed to cater for different training settings, such as group-based workshops or seminars. Most of them are also opened up for use by other B/Ds subject to availability. While the utilisation rates for most CSTDI training venues from January 2013 to May 2018 were generally above 50%, Audit examination revealed the following issues which could not optimise the utilisation of the training venues (paras. 4.2 and 4.5):

- (a) *Bookings cancelled at short notices.* A total of 3,105 (i.e. 35% of a total of 8,830) advance bookings of the training venues for the period from January 2017 to March 2018 made by the CSTDI and the General Grades Office of the CSB were subsequently cancelled. The notices given for 1,077 (35% of 3,105) cancelled bookings were less than 15 days and the released time slots of only 141 (13% of 1,077) cancelled bookings were subsequently taken up by other users. Audit found that better utilisation of the released time slots could be achieved by giving earlier notice of cancellation, e.g. up to 58% of 260 cancelled bookings with notice periods longer than 90 days were used (paras. 4.6 and 4.7);
- (b) *Manual system of booking by other B/Ds.* The CSTDI made use of a web-based booking system to automate the booking by its internal users and the users of the General Grades Office. However, other B/Ds were still required to follow a set of manual booking procedures (para. 4.8); and
- (c) *Unused bookings not reported.* The CSTDI's computer room was reserved by the General Grades Office from February 2018 to April 2019 for conducting recruitment tests on computer skills every day. However, Audit's site visits on 35 working days in June and July 2018 revealed that the room had not been used for a total of 26 (74%) working days. There

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was no cancellation of the bookings and a 100% utilisation rate was registered for both June and July 2018 (para. 4.10).

12. ***Reporting of performance information.*** The CSB has set six performance pledges on training and development and quality of services, and reported the actual results on its website. The CSB has also set key performance indicators on the training and development work of the CSTDI in its Controlling Officer's Reports, covering service outputs of classroom training, e-learning programmes and other services such as advice and consultancies (paras. 4.16 and 4.17). Audit examination has revealed the following issues:

- (a) ***Need to review the target levels of some performance targets.*** The performance for four of the six performance pledges reported on the CSB's website was persistently above the target levels from 2014-15 to 2016-17, e.g. the actual time taken for submitting service proposals to B/Ds for customised training services only averaged 2.9 days as against the target of 4 weeks. The CSTDI needs to review these targets to ensure that they remain useful in motivating continuous improvement (para. 4.18); and
- (b) ***Need to improve the accuracy of reported performance.*** The actual results of three of the four types of performance indicators reported in the Controlling Officer's Reports for 2016 and 2017 were less than those shown in the supporting records by 1% to 19%. For example, while CSB reported that the page views of the CLC Plus were 4,101,000 and 4,120,000 in 2016 and 2017 respectively, the page views based on the supporting records were 5,085,560 and 4,739,679 in the two years. There is a need to improve the accuracy in reporting performance information in future (para. 4.19).

Audit recommendations

13. **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 Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) **make wider use of technology to enhance the administration of training applications/nominations by B/Ds (para. 2.9(a));**

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- (b) **step up efforts to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses (para. 2.27(a));**
- (c) **make better use of the buffer arrangement to fully utilise training places (para. 2.27(c));**
- (d) **review the 6-year time schedule for all middle-level civil servants to attend national studies programmes, and further promote and encourage B/Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend such programmes (para. 2.35(a) and (c));**
- (e) **step up efforts to promote the usage of the CLC Plus and review the user access rights of the inactive accounts of the CLC Plus (para. 3.19(a) and (b));**
- (f) **improve the accessibility of e-learning resources on mobile devices (para. 3.19(d));**
- (g) **improve the services of the LRC with a view to improving its usage (para. 3.28(a));**
- (h) **lay down guidelines for B/Ds in handling training sponsorship applications with gifts offered to trainees by external training institutions (para. 3.34(a));**
- (i) **make greater efforts to optimise the utilisation of CSTDI training venues (para. 4.14); and**
- (j) **improve the accuracy in reporting performance information (para. 4.21(b)).**

Response from the Government

14. The Government generally 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.

Background

1.2 Training and development is an integral and important part of an organisation's comprehensive human resource management strategy to align staff efforts towards the organisation's vision, mission and values. The Government provides civil servants learning opportunities that would equip them with the skills, knowledge and mind-set necessary for providing quality services to the public. In March 2018, there were about 173,000 civil servants and 10,000 full-time non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff (Note 1).

1.3 ***Roles and responsibilities.*** With overall policy responsibility for the management of the civil service, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) works in collaboration with bureaux/departments (B/Ds) to enhance the human resource capacity of the civil service, as follows:

- (a) ***CSB.*** The CSB has a dedicated Civil Service Training and Development Institute (CSTDI) responsible for:
 - (i) formulating training and performance management policies and guidelines;
 - (ii) providing training programmes to civil servants in areas of senior leadership development, national studies, communication and management;
 - (iii) providing consultancy and advisory services to B/Ds on human resource development; and
 - (iv) promoting a culture of continuous learning in the civil service; and

Note 1: *The provision of training for NCSC staff includes orientation programmes, job-related training and training activities that are held in Hong Kong.*

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- (b) *B/Ds.* B/Ds are responsible for: (i) assessing their staff training and development needs; (ii) formulating, implementing and reviewing their training and development plans and activities to ensure that they support their policy/departmental objectives; and (iii) providing their staff with vocational training to meet job-specific needs.

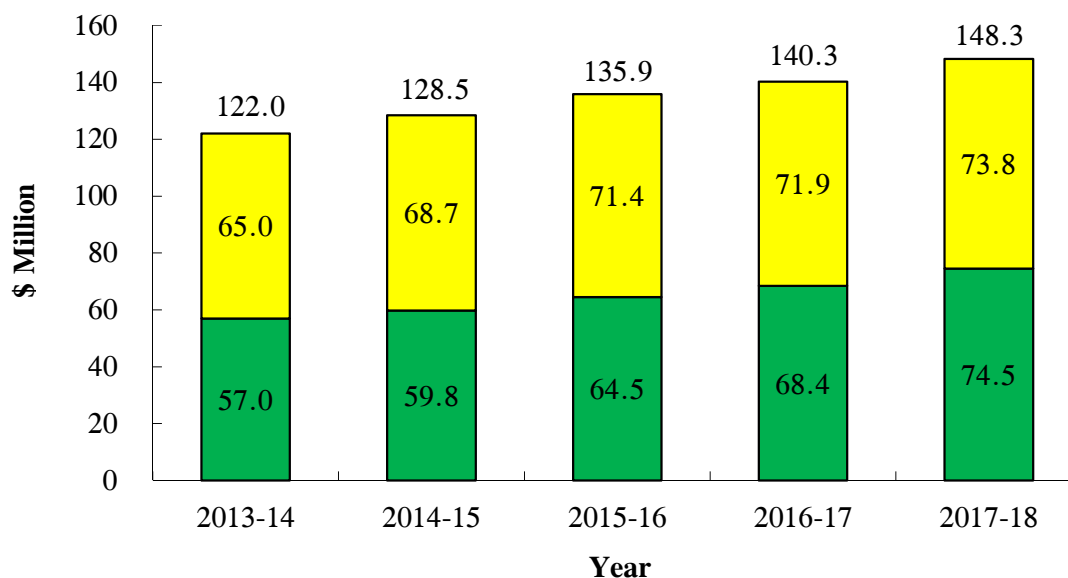
According to CSB statistics, the CSB together with other B/Ds spent a total of \$1.2 billion on the provision of civil service training and development for some 700,000 participants in 2016-17.

Civil Service Training and Development Institute

1.4 As at 31 March 2018, the CSTDI had an establishment of 116 staff including 60 Training Officer Grade staff. An extract of the organisation chart of the CSB is at Appendix A. Figure 1 shows the financial provision of the CSTDI from 2013-14 to 2017-18.

Figure 1

**Financial provision of the CSTDI
(2013-14 to 2017-18)**



Legend: ■ Training and general departmental expenses
■ Personal emoluments and personnel related expenses

Source: *Audit analysis of CSB records*

Remarks: *The increase in financial provision was generally in line with the increase in training output (see Table 1 in para. 1.6).*

1.5 **Major training and development work.** The CSTDI is mainly responsible for providing training programmes that fulfil the common training needs of civil servants. Its training and development work focuses on the following areas:

- (a) **Leadership and management development.** Apart from helping B/Ds draw up leadership development strategies, the CSTDI designs and delivers leadership and management training programmes. The CSTDI also forges partnership with different universities and institutions in organising programmes for civil servants to enhance their leadership and management skills. These programmes include: (i) leadership courses that run for 10 days to 3 weeks; (ii) workshops that run for one to two days; (iii) overseas executive development programmes; and (iv) a wide spectrum of management and communication courses;

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- (b) ***National studies and Basic Law training.*** The CSTDI joins hands with various institutions and universities in the Mainland to organise national studies programmes that run for five to 17 days. The CSTDI also organises local seminars of various themes on the latest policies and trends in the Mainland. On Basic Law training, the CSTDI organises foundation courses for new recruits, intermediate/advanced courses for middle and senior-level officers, and thematic seminars for all civil servants;
- (c) ***Language and communication.*** The CSTDI organises training to cater for civil servants' job-specific requirements and enhance their communication and language capabilities, including writing classes, workshops, seminars, and e-learning resources on English and Chinese languages;
- (d) ***Consultancy services on human resource management.*** The CSTDI provides consultancy services on training and performance management for individual B/Ds, such as analysis of staff training needs, formulation of training and development plans, development and implementation of competency-based performance management systems, and use of e-learning; and
- (e) ***Other initiatives to promote continuous learning.*** To promote continuous learning in the civil service, the CSTDI provides web-based learning resources through the e-learning portal, i.e. the Cyber Learning Centre Plus (CLC Plus). The CSTDI also operates a Learning Resource Centre (LRC) which contains a library of printed and multi-media learning materials for loan or on-site use. In addition, the CSTDI implements a sponsorship scheme by providing reimbursement of fees to encourage civil servants to attend job-related courses in their own spare time (Note 2).

1.6 ***Performance measures.*** Table 1 shows the CSB's performance indicators on civil service training and development from 2014 to 2018 as reported in its Controlling Officer's Reports (CORs).

Note 2: *The scheme was launched in 2005 to encourage frontline staff to pursue continuous learning and was extended in 2018-19 to staff whose salary point is on Master Pay Scale Point 49 and below or equivalent. This is an additional training support to those provided under the Civil Service Regulations. Under the scheme, heads of Department/Grade may approve reimbursement of course and examination fees for their staff undertaking courses run by institutions outside of the Government.*

Table 1

**The CSB's performance indicators on
civil service training and development
(2014 to 2018)**

Performance indicator	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Actual)	(Estimate)
	(Number)				
(a) Classroom training (Note)					
<i>Senior leadership development</i>					
Trainees	2,600	2,700	2,700	2,700	2,700
Trainee-days	5,000	5,300	5,500	6,000	6,000
<i>National studies</i>					
Trainees	13,000	13,200	15,300	16,700	17,600
Trainee-days	14,100	14,100	14,900	15,000	16,500
<i>Management courses</i>					
Trainees	27,500	28,600	28,800	30,000	30,000
Trainee-days	35,100	35,500	35,500	37,500	37,500
<i>Language courses</i>					
Trainees	15,000	16,200	17,000	17,800	17,800
Trainee-days	30,100	28,400	25,000	22,500	22,200
(b) E-learning programmes					
Learning resources	2,250	2,250	2,330	2,400	2,450
Page views	4,050,000	4,080,000	4,101,000	4,120,000	4,150,000
Visits to the CLC Plus	590,000	595,000	600,000	605,000	610,000
(c) Departmental services					
Consultancies conducted	270	270	270	270	270
Advice rendered to departments	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400
(d) Learning projects and schemes	20	20	20	21	21

Source: CSB records

Note: The classroom training figures included those provided for general grades staff by the General Grades Office and for Administrative Officer grade staff by the Administrative Service Division of the CSB (see Appendix A). The financial provision for training of general grades staff was included in another CSB programme area of human resource management.

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1.7 *Performance pledges.* The CSTDI has set pledges on its services provided to B/Ds. Table 2 shows the attainment statistics of the performance pledges for 2015-16 and 2016-17.

Table 2

**Performance pledges of the CSTDI
(2015-16 and 2016-17)**

Service	Time/service target	Target achieved	
		2015-16	2016-17
<i>Training and development</i>			
(a) Submit proposals to B/Ds on requests for customised training services	4 weeks	100%	100%
(b) Submit proposals to B/Ds on requests for consultancy services or Human Resources Development studies	8 weeks	100%	100%
(c) Issue regular invitations to B/Ds for course nomination	4 weeks before deadline of nomination	100%	100%
(d) Issue notifications to B/Ds to confirm placement	2 weeks before commencement of course	100%	100%
<i>Quality of service</i>			
(e) Provide training programmes	For 80% of the courses/programmes, 80% of the trainees rate them “very effective” or “outstanding” on a 5-point scale	100%	100%
(f) Provide consultancy services/Human Resources Development studies	80% of client departments are “very satisfied” or “completely satisfied” with the services provided on a 5-point scale	100%	100%

Source: CSB records

1.8 ***Training venues and facilities.*** The CSTDI is located in the North Point Government Offices (NPGO) with a total floor area of 6,244 square metres (see Appendix B for layout plans of the training venues and facilities). The training facilities comprise an auditorium with a maximum seating capacity of 140 (see Photograph 1), 22 training rooms of different setting and capacity (see Photograph 2 for one of the training rooms) and the LRC (see para. 1.5(e)). The CSTDI also hires other off-site venues (e.g. Lecture Theatre of the Hong Kong Central Library) to organise seminars with a large number of participants. While the training facilities at the NPGO are mainly used by the CSTDI for running its training programmes, they are also available for reservation and use by other B/Ds subject to availability.

Photograph 1

The auditorium located on the fifth floor of the NPGO



Source: CSB records

Photograph 2

A classroom located on the third floor of the NPGO



Source: CSB records

Establishing a civil service college

1.9 In her 2017 Policy Address, the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region proposed to establish a new civil service college with upgraded training facilities so as to further enhance training for civil servants in the areas of leadership development, interaction and communication with the public, innovation, use of technology, etc. The new civil service college should also place emphasis on deepening civil servants' understanding of the development of the People's Republic of China and the relationship between the Central Authorities and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, enhancing their awareness of international affairs, as well as promoting exchanges with civil servants in other places, through which knowledge, experience and insights gained from local public service management could be shared. According to the 2018 Policy Address, the new civil service college is expected to be completed in 2026.

Audit review

1.10 In April 2018, the Audit Commission (Audit) commenced a review to examine the training and development work of the CSTDI, focusing on:

- (a) management of training programmes (PART 2);
- (b) initiatives to promote continuous learning (PART 3); and
- (c) other administrative issues (PART 4).

In connection with the review on the use of computer systems for training administration in PART 2 and the administration of training sponsorship in PART 3, Audit examined the records of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Correctional Services Department (CSD). 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 Government

1.11 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations.

Acknowledgement

1.12 Audit would like to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance and full cooperation of the staff of the CSB, OGCIO, HKPF, FSD and CSD.

PART 2: MANAGEMENT OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES

2.1 This PART examines the CSTDI's work in managing training programmes, focusing on:

- (a) training administration (paras. 2.3 to 2.11);
- (b) management of local training programmes (paras. 2.12 to 2.28); and
- (c) management of national studies and Basic Law training (paras. 2.29 to 2.36).

Training programmes provided by the CSTDI

2.2 The CSTDI focuses on providing training programmes that fulfil the common training needs of civil servants. For 2018-19, it planned to organise training programmes for about 68,000 participants at an estimated expenditure of \$165.8 million. Training programmes organised by the CSTDI can be broadly classified into local and non-local programmes:

- (a) ***Local programmes.*** They cover the training areas of: (i) leadership development; (ii) management; (iii) language; and (iv) national studies and the Basic Law. These training programmes are typically organised in the form of seminars or workshops, and are delivered by in-house or commissioned trainers (Note 3). An analysis of a total of 5,453 classes of local training programmes from 2013 to 2017 by training areas is shown in Table 3; and

Note 3: *In 2017, about 60% of the local programmes were outsourced to course providers at a total cost of some \$27 million.*

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Table 3

**Analysis of local training programmes by training areas
(2013 to 2017)**

Training area	Training output	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Percentage change from 2013 to 2017
		(Number)					
Senior leadership development	Classes	56	62	76	78	82	+46%
	Trainees attended	1,902	1,875	1,967	2,500	2,237	+18%
National studies	Classes	107	101	110	113	200	+87%
	Trainees attended	12,316	12,054	14,144	14,308	16,516	+34%
Management	Classes	373	443	476	502	532	+43%
	Trainees attended	18,996	21,285	21,437	23,565	23,940	+26%
Language (Note)	Classes	512	458	422	348	402	-21%
	Trainees attended	12,997	14,000	13,702	13,750	14,721	+13%
Overall	Classes	1,048	1,064	1,084	1,041	1,216	+16%
	Trainees attended	46,211	49,214	51,250	54,123	57,414	+24%

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Note: According to the CSTDI, the number of language classes decreased from 512 in 2013 to 402 in 2017 because: (a) there was a decrease in the number of Putonghua classes as the demand had dropped due to the improved Putonghua proficiency of the younger generation of civil servants; and (b) while the CSTDI had organised more courses on English speaking and Chinese writing in recent years to meet the growing demand for such training from B/Ds, these courses were seminar-type training with a larger class size.

Remarks: The above figures were collated from the CSTDI's Training Information and Administration System (see paras. 2.3 and 2.4(a)) and excluded training programmes provided by the CSB's General Grades Office and Administrative Service Division (see Note to Table 1 in para. 1.6).

- (b) **Non-local programmes.** They mainly comprise: (i) Mainland national studies programmes; (ii) civil service exchange programmes held in the Mainland; and (iii) overseas study programmes. In 2017, the CSTDI

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organised 25 classes of Mainland national studies programmes, which were attended by 683 civil servants. Another 34 civil servants (Note 4) participated in the civil service exchange programmes held in the Mainland and overseas study programmes.

Training administration

2.3 The successful delivery of training events depends on both the contribution of trainers and trainees, and effective and efficient training administration. The CSTDI is assisted by the computerised Training Information and Administration System (TIAS — see para. 2.4(a)) in various training administration functions. According to the CSTDI, the administration of the training process involves the following major stages of work:

- (a) **Planning.** In the fourth quarter of each year, the CSTDI draws up an annual training plan for the following calendar year based on an assessment of training needs, which takes into consideration: (i) Policy Address of the Chief Executive and other central initiatives; (ii) manpower and financial resources available; (iii) training and development requests from B/Ds (including customised training programmes for dedicated B/Ds); and (iv) past enrolment statistics and feedback from participants of central programmes (i.e. those open to all B/Ds). The training plan sets out the target participants, mode of delivery (e.g. workshop or seminar), class size, and schedule of each training programme. The annual plan would be regularly updated taking into account changing circumstances, such as new central initiatives, ad-hoc requests from B/Ds, and latest usage and enrolment situation;
- (b) **Enrolment and placement.** The CSTDI invites nominations from B/Ds on a bi-monthly basis for training courses which are run on a regular basis and about 2 to 3 weeks before enrolment deadline for other courses. For courses with a small class size, the CSTDI requires the B/Ds' Training Managers to set priority in their nominations. Trainees are mainly selected having regard to the priority set by nominating B/Ds, rank/salary point, years of active service, relevancy of the training to the work of the nominees, and class mix. For over-subscribed courses, the CSTDI

Note 4: *The figure excluded overseas study and attachment programmes for Administrative Officers arranged by the Administrative Service Division.*

normally maintains a waiting list (see para. 2.20(b)) and will enrol those on the waiting list if there are withdrawals from the selected participants;

- (c) ***Attendance management.*** On the day of training, participants are required to sign on an attendance register. Registration usually starts 15 minutes before the start of the training session. CSTDI staff will update the trainees' attendance in the TIAS after class. To shorten the admission time for large-scale seminars that involve more than 1,500 trainees (e.g. pre-retirement seminars), numbered tickets are printed and distributed to individual trainees by dispatch service beforehand. Admission to the training venue requires presentation of the ticket. After the training event, CSTDI staff would match the unique tracking reference number on the ticket stubs against the master list of trainees and update their attendance in the TIAS; and

- (d) ***Evaluation.*** To ensure that the training programmes are effective, useful and relevant to the work of the participants, the CSTDI assesses the course effectiveness by collecting feedback from participants using paper-based evaluation forms. The ratings given are then input into the TIAS by CSTDI staff manually. For some programmes, assessment would also be made by pre-course surveys, class observations, focus group meetings or inputs from the course providers. In 2017, 82% of the trainees submitted evaluation forms to the CSTDI and 94% of the responding trainees rated their courses as either "outstanding" or "very effective".

Computer systems for training administration

2.4 The following computer systems are currently used by the CSTDI and some B/Ds for managing and monitoring staff training:

- (a) ***TIAS developed for the CSTDI.*** Launched in 2008, the TIAS is a departmental portal application which supports the CSTDI in various training administration functions, including inviting and processing nominations, training place allocation, attendance status update, training record maintenance and management reporting. Authorised users of B/Ds (e.g. Training Managers) can login to the TIAS to input training nominations and download training records. The TIAS also supports interface with two computerised training management systems installed at

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B/Ds' side (see (b) below) to facilitate electronic transfer of applications/nominations; and

- (b) ***Computerised training management systems installed by some B/Ds.*** There are two departmental training management systems with interface with the TIAS of the CSTDI:
- (i) ***Training Administration System (TAS).*** Launched in 2005, the TAS automates and increases efficiency in the training administration processes at B/D level. B/D staff can view the CSTDI's training course invitations, submit applications together with supervisors' endorsement and obtain their training records in the TAS. B/Ds' Training Managers can endorse, prioritise and submit nominations and compile training statistics. In 2007, the CSB announced a service-wide rollout of the TAS. However, the rollout was subsequently curtailed in light of OGCI0's initiative to develop another system (see (ii) below) in 2010. Currently, there are nine B/Ds using the TAS; and
- (ii) ***Government Human Resources Management Services (GovHRMS).*** The GovHRMS project was initiated by OGCI0 and the then Efficiency Unit (Note 5) in 2009 to transform the management of human resources in the Government through the use of common information technology services. In November 2009, a working group comprising representatives from the four early adopter B/Ds of the GovHRMS (i.e. OGCI0, the CSB, the Rating and Valuation Department and the then Efficiency Unit) and the Treasury was formed to examine the business case of the GovHRMS programme. In June 2010, the working group agreed that a programme management office and a governance mechanism would be set up to take forward the development of the GovHRMS, using cloud computing to integrate and automate human resources activities. The Training Management Module (TRM), which is one of the core modules of the GovHRMS, automates the training management workflow and provides improvements including:

Note 5: *The Efficiency Unit was transferred from the Chief Secretary for Administration's Office to the Innovation and Technology Bureau and renamed as the Efficiency Office on 1 April 2018.*

(1) allowing staff in B/Ds to obtain up-to-date training course information and submit applications online; (2) facilitating B/Ds' Training Managers in organising departmental training; and (3) generating training statistical information as required by B/Ds and the CSTDI. After rollout of the GovHRMS to the four early adopter B/Ds from 2014 to 2016, the GovHRMS Programme Steering Committee (Note 6) endorsed in August 2016 the wider rollout of the basic modules to other B/Ds starting from July 2017. According to OGCIO, as at September 2018, one more department had rolled out the TRM. Implementation of the GovHRMS was underway in six B/Ds for system rollout by January 2019. Three other B/Ds also planned to roll out the system within 2019. Engagement with some more B/Ds was in progress.

Need for wider use of technology in training administration

2.5 *Manual processing of training applications/nominations by some B/Ds.* The CSTDI issues invitations to training courses to Training Managers or departmental secretaries of B/Ds for direct dissemination to their staff. While the application and nomination process is automated for 14 B/Ds using the GovHRMS or the TAS, other B/Ds need to consolidate applications from staff and upload nominations to the TIAS (see para. 2.4(a)) after assigning application priority (see para. 2.3(b)). According to the CSTDI, some B/Ds have developed their own computerised systems to facilitate training administration though such systems have no direct interface with the TIAS. However, for those B/Ds without any computerised system for training management, they need to manually collate application details for uploading to the TIAS, which is time and resource consuming, and prone to errors. The CSB needs to explore ways to make better use of technology to enhance the administration of training applications/nominations by B/Ds.

2.6 *Scope for wider use of e-forms to streamline the enrolment process.* For those classes which do not require prioritisation of nominations by B/Ds, applicants may e-mail or fax their completed applications direct to the CSTDI. Prior to 2016,

Note 6: *The GovHRMS Programme Steering Committee, chaired by the Government Chief Information Officer and comprising key senior management representatives from the early adopter B/Ds and the Treasury, provides the overall strategic direction for the implementation of the GovHRMS Programme.*

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CSTDI staff had to manually input details of such applications into the TIAS. As a measure to reduce the time and efforts in processing these applications, the CSTDI has since 2016 introduced an e-form solution whereby the application details are uploaded automatically to the TIAS. However, e-forms are used for some training courses only. In 2017, out of the 610 classes of central programmes (see Table 4 in para. 2.12), only 58 (10%) classes used e-forms for enrolment. The CSB informed Audit in October 2018 that for the remaining 552 classes, 17 classes did not require prioritisation of nominations by B/Ds and could therefore be processed by e-forms. In Audit's view, the CSTDI needs to make wider use of e-forms to streamline the training enrolment process in B/Ds as far as practicable, especially for courses with short application periods such as re-run classes (see para. 2.26) or second round of applications for under-subscribed classes.

2.7 Manual registration and attendance record updating. At present, trainees are required to sign on an attendance register for every training session and CSTDI staff conduct manual checking before inputting attendance status of individual trainees into the TIAS. According to the CSTDI: (a) 16 clerical staff were deployed, among other duties assigned to them (Note 7), to man the registration counters and process over 54,000 attendance records created for over 1,000 classes held in 2016; and (b) after a class ended, it took 4 to 8 weeks for checking and updating attendance records in the TIAS. In 2010, some B/Ds expressed concerns about the long time taken to receive the attendance records from the CSTDI. Audit noted that from 2013 to 2017, the CSTDI took on average 2 months (ranging from 1 to 4 months) to make the attendance reports available to B/Ds. When analysing the enrolment and attendance statistics generated from the TIAS, Audit also noted discrepancies due to manual input errors (e.g. duplicated entries).

2.8 Wider use of technology to improve registration, attendance record-keeping and course evaluation. With a view to improving operational efficiency and reducing manual efforts on data input, the CSTDI submitted a funding application to OGCI in July 2017 for developing an e-registration system which could: (a) generate unique Quick Response Code to trainees for on-site registration; and (b) integrate with the TIAS for automatic updating of attendance records. In September 2018, the CSB

Note 7: *According to the CSTDI, the clerical staff concerned were also required to: (a) provide general office support; (b) handle course administration and nomination logistics; (c) set up training venues; and (d) provide administrative support for learning projects. Manning of registration counters and processing of attendance records only represented a small percentage of their overall duties.*

informed Audit that with OGCIO's funding approval, the CSTDI would commence the project shortly and continue to explore different information technology alternatives to enhance the administration of training service. For example, it planned to launch a pilot scheme to use a cloud-based e-registration service to further enhance registration and attendance management in late 2018. Audit appreciates the CSTDI's efforts to use technology to enhance the operational efficiency of registration and attendance record-keeping. In this connection, the CSTDI should also consider collecting trainees' feedback by electronic means instead of paper-based evaluation forms (see para. 2.3(d)).

Audit recommendations

2.9 **Audit has *recommended* that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) **make wider use of technology to enhance the administration of training applications/nominations by B/Ds, including:**
 - (i) **in collaboration with the Government Chief Information Officer, exploring ways to expedite the service-wide implementation of the TRM of the GovHRMS or other computerised systems to automate the training administration functions; and**
 - (ii) **facilitating B/Ds with their own computerised systems for training management other than the TAS and GovHRMS to interface their systems with the TIAS;**
- (b) **make wider use of e-forms to streamline the training enrolment process in B/Ds; and**
- (c) **consider collecting trainees' feedback by electronic means.**

Response from the Government

2.10 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

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- (a) the CSB will continue to encourage B/Ds to use information technology or other electronic means to enhance the management of their training services, and facilitate B/Ds in interfacing their computerised systems for training management with the TIAS, including the GovHRMS, TAS and other departmental human resources systems as necessary; and
- (b) the CSB will continue to make wider use of e-forms or other electronic means to streamline the training enrolment process.

2.11 The Commissioner for Efficiency agrees with the audit recommendations on making wider use of technology to enhance the administration of training applications/nominations by B/Ds.

Management of local training programmes

2.12 From 2013 to 2017, the CSTDI organised an average of 1,090 classes of local training programmes a year, which comprised 669 (61%) classes of central programmes and 421 (39%) classes of customised programmes (see para. 2.3(a)). The overall attendance rate was 90%. The enrolment and attendance statistics for local training programmes from 2013 to 2017 are summarised in Table 4.

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Table 4

**Enrolment and attendance statistics of
local training programmes
(2013 to 2017)**

Type of training programmes	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
	(Number)				
<i>Central programmes</i>					
Classes	735	738	666	598	610
Nominations received (a)	48,954	51,501	50,954	54,140	51,971
Selected nominees (b)	40,649	43,886	44,328	45,464	43,900
Percentage of unselected nominees (c)=[(a) – (b)]/(a) × 100%	17.0%	14.8%	13.0%	16.0%	15.5%
Attendees (d)	36,052	38,768	38,510	39,555	37,766
Attendance rate (e) = (d)/(b) × 100%	88.7%	88.3%	86.9%	87.0%	86.0%
Withdrawals (f)	2,953	3,254	3,867	3,870	4,263
Withdrawal rate (g)=(f)/(b) × 100%	7.3%	7.4%	8.7%	8.5%	9.7%
Absentees (h)	1,644	1,864	1,951	2,039	1,871
Absence rate (i)=(h)/(b) × 100%	4.0%	4.3%	4.4%	4.5%	4.3%
<i>Customised programmes</i>					
Classes	313	326	418	443	606
Nominations received (j)	10,196	10,462	12,865	14,639	19,791
Selected nominees (k)	10,196	10,457	12,792	14,639	19,789
Attendees (l)	10,159	10,446	12,740	14,568	19,648
Attendance rate (m) = (l)/(k) × 100%	99.6%	99.9%	99.6%	99.5%	99.3%
Withdrawals (n)	3	1	15	28	65
Withdrawal rate (o)=(n)/(k) × 100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.2%	0.3%
Absentees (p)	34	10	37	43	76
Absence rate (q)=(p)/(k) × 100%	0.4%	0.1%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Remarks: According to the CSTDI, withdrawal referred to non-attendance with notification irrespective of whether the notification was received before, on the day of or after the class. Absence referred to non-attendance without any notification.

Need to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses

2.13 As shown in Table 4 in paragraph 2.12, the overall percentage of unselected nominees for classes of central programmes ranged from 13% to 17% between 2013 and 2017, indicating that these classes were generally over-subscribed. Over-subscription was rarely found for classes of customised programmes because the class sizes were tailor-made for the requesting B/Ds, with enrolment and attendance coordinated by their Training Managers.

2.14 According to the CSTDI, for over-subscribed seminar-type classes which involve mainly dissemination of principles and guidelines, it may change to a larger venue, subject to availability, to accommodate more eligible trainees. For over-subscribed workshop-type classes (e.g. those involving group discussions, case studies, individual presentations and trainer's feedback) which are not practical to increase the class size without compromising training effectiveness, additional classes may be arranged in the same year (i.e. re-run) or the following year.

2.15 Of the 610 classes of central programmes held in 2017 (see Table 4 in para. 2.12), 346 (57%) were over-subscribed. An analysis of the over-subscription rates for the 346 classes is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

**Analysis of over-subscription rates of 346 classes
of central programmes
(2017)**

Over-subscription rate	Number of classes
< 25%	134 (39%)
25% to < 50%	59 (17%)
50% to < 75%	36 (10%)
75% to < 100%	34 (10%)
≥ 100%	83 (24%)
Total	346 (100%)

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Remarks: The 346 over-subscribed classes were related to 131 courses as some courses were held more than once in the year.

2.16 Audit examined the measures taken by the CSTDI in meeting the excess demand with reference to the 83 classes with over-subscription rate of 100% or more. These 83 classes were related to 35 courses, comprising 33 with a class size of 40 or less each (hereinafter referred to as workshops for simplicity) and 2 with a class size of 100 or more (hereinafter referred to as seminars). Audit has noted that there is room for improvement in meeting the demand for training places of some over-subscribed courses:

- (a) **Workshops.** The CSTDI held 25 re-runs in 2017 for 14 of the 33 over-subscribed workshops. For the remaining 19 workshops without re-runs in 2017, Audit found that 7 of them were also over-subscribed by 100% or more in 2016 but without increase in the number of scheduled classes of central programmes in 2017. In two extreme cases, there was no increase in the number of scheduled classes for five consecutive years despite persistent over-subscription (see Table 6). Audit understands that there might be practical difficulties (e.g. resources constraints) in arranging additional classes for all over-subscribed courses. However, the CSTDI needs to accord priority to those courses which are persistently over-subscribed or are important for supporting central initiatives. A case

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in point is the workshop on “Replying to complaints” with over-subscription rates increasing from 26% in 2016 to 86% in 2017 and its objective aligns with the 2017 Policy Address to enhance civil service training on interaction and communication with the public (see para. 1.9); and

Table 6

Number of applications and selected nominees of two over-subscribed workshops (2013 to 2017)

Year	Number of			Over-subscription rate (c)=[(a) – (b)]/(b) × 100%
	classes	applications (a)	selected nominees (b)	
“Workshop on Practical Negotiation Skills”				
2013	6	614	232	165%
2014	6	422	224	88%
2015	6	388	219	77%
2016	6	474	223	113%
2017	6	534	227	135%
“Financial Management Course: Capital Works Expenditure”				
2013	3	200	110	82%
2014	2	104	71	46%
2015	2	132	62	113%
2016	2	190	74	157%
2017	2	171	76	125%

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

- (b) **Seminars.** Of the two over-subscribed seminars, the CSTDI organised a re-run for one of them in a larger venue. For the other seminar without a re-run, the CSTDI had not arranged video-taping or uploading the course materials on the CLC Plus.

2.17 In response to Audit’s enquiry, the CSB in September and October 2018 said that it had all along been closely monitoring the training demands on different subject areas and would organise more training in those areas with high demand as far as practicable. For example, it would organise more central programmes in regular intervals and customised training classes dedicated for individual B/Ds. Regarding the three over-subscribed courses mentioned in paragraph 2.16(a):

- (a) there was a substantial increase in the number of customised classes (i.e. from 4 classes in 2016 to 12 classes in 2017) for the workshop on “Replying to complaints”, despite that the number of central classes remained the same for 2016 and 2017. The total number of trainees who had attended such classes (including both central and customised) increased from 282 in 2016 to 486 in 2017. E-learning resources on the subject were also available on the CLC Plus. Training needs were addressed through a multi-pronged approach according to the demand of B/Ds; and
- (b) similarly, for the two over-subscribed courses shown in Table 6, there was a substantial increase in the number of customised classes (i.e. from 7 classes in 2016 to 13 classes in 2017 for the “Workshop on Practical Negotiation Skills” and from 1 class in 2016 to 5 classes in 2017 for the “Financial Management Course: Capital Works Expenditure”). The total number of trainees (including both central and customised classes) increased from 399 in 2016 to 572 in 2017 for the “Workshop on Practical Negotiation Skills” and from 167 in 2016 to 320 in 2017 for the “Financial Management Course: Capital Works Expenditure”. In total, the CSTDI organised 45 customised classes on the “Workshop on Practical Negotiation Skills” and 10 customised classes on the “Financial Management Course: Capital Works Expenditure” from 2013 to 2017 to address the training needs of different B/Ds.

Notwithstanding the customised classes, Audit noted that there was persistent over-subscription of these courses under the central programmes, indicating that there was still a need to address the unmet demand over the years. Audit considers that in the event that arranging re-runs of the central programmes is not practicable, the CSTDI needs to consider using the CLC Plus to provide alternative learning opportunities, e.g. video-taping the courses or uploading the course materials for online viewing (after obtaining speakers’ consent or reaching contractual agreements with the course providers) by the unselected nominees.

Need to improve the arrangements for the setting and documentation of target class size of training courses

2.18 According to the CSTDI, the annual training plan sets out the target participants, mode of delivery, class size, and schedule of each training programme (see para. 2.3(a)). Audit examined the annual training plans from 2013 to 2017 of individual training units of the CSTDI and found that the practice of setting target class size varied among different training units. For example, while a target class size was set for each management course organised by the Human Resource Management Advisory Units 1 and 2 in their annual training plans, a target class size was not set for individual language or national studies courses organised by the National Studies and Training Services Units 1 and 2. Instead, an overall target number of trainees was set for each category of courses. For instance, an overall target of 3,000 trainees was set in the 2017 annual plan for all Putonghua courses but the target class size for each Putonghua course was not available. Moreover, the target class size for individual courses (even available as in the case of management courses) was not recorded in the TIAS to facilitate the selection of nominees.

2.19 Given that the target class size for each course was neither readily available in the annual training plans nor the TIAS (see para. 2.18), Audit requested the CSTDI to provide such information in May 2018. In the course of analysing the target class size information provided by the CSTDI in July 2018, Audit found the following issues:

- (a) the target class size of 3-day Putonghua courses commissioned (involving 47 individual classes) to two course providers was 25 trainees per class according to the information provided by the CSTDI in July 2018. Audit however found that the number of trainees stated in both of the service agreements with the course providers was about 30 per class, and the number of attendees for each class ranged from 19 to 39. In response to Audit's enquiry, the CSB in September 2018 said that although the class size stated in the agreements was "about 30 participants", the range of class size should be between 20 and 40 participants depending on the content design of each course instead of 25 participants previously provided to Audit; and
- (b) the target class size of a workshop "Effective Putonghua telephone skills" was 20 trainees per class according to the information provided by the CSTDI in July 2018. Audit found that the number of trainees stated in the

service agreement was 20 to 40, and the number of attendees for each class ranged from 16 to 39. In response to Audit's enquiry, the CSB in September 2018 said that the optimal class size of the workshop should be between 20 and 40, which allowed some flexibility to cater for different training needs. The target class size previously provided to Audit was the lowest optimal class size.

According to the "Step-by-step guide to performance measurement" issued by the then Efficiency Unit in 2000, performance targets should be specific and clearly defined to avoid problem of misinterpretation. In Audit's view, the CSTDI needs to improve the arrangements for the setting and documentation of the target class size for better management of training resources.

Need to fully utilise training places

2.20 Given that CSTDI training courses are popular in general, it is important to fully utilise the available training places. As shown in Table 4 in paragraph 2.12, the withdrawal rate averaged about 7% to 10%, and the absence rate averaged around 4% for central programmes from 2013 to 2017. According to the CSTDI, the following measures have been put in place to minimise wastage of training places due to absences or withdrawals:

- (a) **Buffer arrangement.** When allocating training places for over-subscribed classes, the CSTDI would select more trainees than the target class size as a buffer for drop-outs (i.e. withdrawals and absences) where practicable. The target class size, range of buffer and/or the actual class size depend on a number of factors, including: (i) nature and design of the course; (ii) actual number of enrolment; (iii) seating capacity of the training venue; (iv) whether re-runs could be arranged; and (v) the estimated number of trainees as stated in service agreements with course providers; and
- (b) **Waiting list.** In general, the CSTDI issues notifications to selected nominees to confirm their places at least 2 weeks before a class commences. Selected nominees are advised to notify the CSTDI if they cannot attend the class, normally by 1 week before the class date. The CSTDI maintains a waiting list so that unselected nominees will be enrolled to fill the training places upon receipt of withdrawal notifications.

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2.21 *Need to make better use of the buffer arrangement to fully utilise training places.* As a test check on the effectiveness of the buffer arrangement, Audit analysed the number of selected nominees of the 346 over-subscribed classes in 2017 (see para. 2.15). As it is important to fully utilise the available training places for over-subscribed classes, when the target class size provided by the CSTDI was in a range (e.g. 25 to 35 per class), the upper limit of the range (i.e. 35) was used for comparing with the number of selected nominees in the analysis. Audit found that for 25 (7%) over-subscribed classes, the number of selected nominees fell short of their respective target class sizes by 1% to 14% (averaging 6%). For example, for a 1-day course on “Better spoken English for frontline staff”, the target class size provided by the CSTDI was a range of 25 to 35. In 9 of the 10 over-subscribed classes, the number of selected nominees was less than the maximum class size of 35 by 9% to 14% (averaging 12%), resulting in unused training places. In response to Audit’s enquiry, the CSB in September 2018 said that the course was an oral course with group activities and designed with a target class size of 30 for training effectiveness. However, to allow certain flexibility, the CSTDI accepted a range of 25 to 35 participants. Based on the original target class size of 30 and discounting the number of absentees, the number of unused training places should be 19. In Audit’s view, the available training places should be fully utilised having regard to training quality for achieving cost-effectiveness and fulfilling the training demand for over-subscribed classes. The CSTDI needs to make better use of the buffer arrangement to fully utilise training places.

2.22 *Need to improve utilisation of training places arising from withdrawals.* As shown in Table 4 in paragraph 2.12, the withdrawal rate of central programmes had been on an increasing trend from 7.3% in 2013 to 9.7% in 2017. While the CSTDI informed Audit that the waiting list mechanism was in place (see para. 2.20(b)), the TIAS did not track the change of status of those waitlisted nominees who were subsequently selected to fill training places arising from withdrawals. Audit examined CSTDI records of 10 over-subscribed classes with the actual attendance less than the target class size but no documentary evidence was available showing that the waiting list mechanism had been used in 7 classes (Note 8). For example, the class of “Performance appraisal writing in English” held on 29 November 2017 with a target class size of 30 was significantly over-subscribed with a total of

Note 8: *For one of the remaining three classes, there was evidence of calling waitlisted nominees to fill the training places arising from withdrawals. For the other two classes, the waiting list mechanism could not be used for various reasons such as withdrawals at very short notices or lack of suitable applicants on the waiting list.*

227 nominations received. However, only 32 nominees were selected. Confirmation e-mails were sent on 27 October 2017, advising the selected nominees to inform the CSTDI by 23 November 2017 if they could not attend the workshop. By 23 November 2017, 5 withdrawal notifications were received. While the expected number of attendees of 27 (32 less 5) fell short of the target class size by 3, there was no record to show that these unused training places had been reallocated to waitlisted nominees.

2.23 In response to Audit's enquiry, the CSB in September 2018 said that the 7 classes examined by Audit were courses with high demands and the CSTDI had adopted a series of measures to fully utilise the training places and meet the training demands as far as possible, including: (a) organising more central classes and re-runs; (b) arranging nominees who were not selected to other classes in the same round of invitation or to an additional class held on the same date; (c) re-distributing applicants to under-subscribed classes; and (d) making arrangements with B/Ds to organise customised courses. For example, all unselected nominees in 2 of the 7 classes were arranged to join other classes of the same course. While noting the above measures taken by the CSTDI to meet the training needs, Audit considers that there is still a need to make full use of training places arising from withdrawals as far as practicable, as some waitlisted nominees might not be able to attend classes in alternative time slots provided by the CSTDI.

2.24 Currently, withdrawal notifications from selected nominees are received by e-mail or fax and are processed manually. This may cause delays in inviting waitlisted nominees to take up the unused training places. Before the service-wide implementation of the GovHRMS or other computerised systems for training management (see paras. 2.4(b)(ii) and 2.5) which can automate this process, the CSTDI needs to remind relevant staff to take prompt actions in reallocating unused training places arising from withdrawals.

Need to optimise the use of training places for re-run seminars

2.25 In 2017, the CSTDI arranged re-runs for 8 over-subscribed seminars to meet the excess demand. Audit found that the CSTDI had not invited new applications for the re-runs even when the venues could accommodate more attendees than the excess demand. In the event, there were unused training places in 3 of the 8 re-runs (see Table 7).

Management of training programmes

Table 7

Re-run seminars with unused training places (2017)

Class	Venue capacity (a)	Number of			
		applications (b)	selected nominees (c)	attendees (d)	unused places (e) = (a) - (c)
“從中國傳統典籍看中國文化 — 第三講”					
Scheduled	140	238	134	121	6
Re-run	140	—	104	78	36
“從中國傳統典籍看中國文化 — 第四講”					
Scheduled	140	280	150	134	—
Re-run	140	—	121	93	19
“從中國傳統典籍看中國文化 — 第五講”					
Scheduled	140	241	150	125	—
Re-run	140	—	90	71	50

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

2.26 In response to Audit’s enquiry, the CSB in September 2018 said that the 3 re-run seminars were held about 3 to 5 weeks after the original scheduled classes. Due to limited time between the scheduled classes and the re-runs, it was considered not practicable or cost-effective to request B/Ds to submit another round of applications for these re-runs. While noting the CSB’s concern over time constraint, Audit considers that the CSTDI needs to take effective measures to optimise the use of training places for re-run seminars, including inviting new applications. In this connection, there is merit to consider using e-forms (see para. 2.6) for inviting new applications for such re-run seminars to save time and efforts of B/Ds’ Training Managers in coordinating applications.

Audit recommendations

2.27 **Audit has *recommended* that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) step up efforts to meet the demand for training places of over-subscribed courses, including:**
 - (i) arranging additional classes especially for courses which are persistently over-subscribed or are important for supporting central initiatives; and**
 - (ii) making use of the CLC Plus to provide alternative learning opportunities for unselected nominees where feasible, such as video-taping the courses or uploading the course materials for online viewing;**
- (b) improve the arrangements for the setting and documentation of target class size of training courses;**
- (c) make better use of the buffer arrangement to fully utilise training places;**
- (d) remind relevant staff to take prompt actions in reallocating unused training places arising from withdrawals of trainees; and**
- (e) take effective measures to optimise the use of training places for re-run seminars, including inviting new applications using e-forms.**

Response from the Government

2.28 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the CSB will continue to monitor the training demand for different courses and strive to arrange additional classes for those with high demand subject to availability of resources. Civil servants will also be encouraged to use**

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on-line learning resources in the CLC Plus as an alternative training platform; and

- (b) during the administration of training programmes, the CSB will try to accept as many participants as possible while ensuring that the training quality would not be compromised. For example, for the 47 3-day Putonghua classes held in 2017 (see para. 2.19(a)), the average number of attendees selected per class was 35, which was about 17% higher than the class size of about 30 participants per class as set out in the service agreements with the course providers.

Management of national studies and Basic Law training

2.29 *National studies training.* According to the Chief Executive's 2010-11 Policy Address, the CSB would enhance training and organise more exchange activities for civil servants to deepen their understanding of national development and affairs. In April 2011, the CSTDI launched an enhanced training plan on national studies. Under the enhanced training plan, the CSTDI would: (a) increase the number of training places of Mainland national studies programmes and thematic visits; (b) incorporate a module on national studies in the induction programme for new recruits of degree and professional grades; and (c) organise more in-depth local seminars on various aspects of the latest developments in the Mainland. On e-learning resources, a one-stop learning portal, providing comprehensive and up-to-date information about the Mainland, is available on the CLC Plus for civil servants to pursue national studies at their own pace and in their own time. In 2017, the CSTDI organised 25 classes of Mainland national studies programmes for 683 trainees, and 58 local national studies seminars for around 6,000 trainees. The national studies learning portal recorded around 78,000 page views in the same year.

Difficulties in arranging all middle-level civil servants to attend national studies programmes within six years

2.30 Over the years, the CSB has been encouraging B/Ds to arrange middle and senior-level officers to attend national studies programmes according to the following time schedules:

- (a) *Since 2011.* Directorate officers and officers at Master Pay Scale (MPS) Point 45 to 49 or equivalent have been strongly encouraged to attend

courses held in the Mainland. Directorate officers should attend courses at the Chinese Academy of Governance within 3 years from their promotion to Directorate Pay Scale Point 1 and 3 respectively. For officers at MPS Point 45 to 49 or equivalent, they should attend a course organised by either Tsinghua University or Peking University within 6 years from reaching MPS Point 45 or equivalent; and

- (b) *Since 2018.* Officers at MPS Point 34 to 44 or equivalent (hereinafter referred to as middle-level civil servants) should attend a course organised by Jinan University, Nanjing University or Zhejiang University within 6 years from reaching MPS Point 34 or equivalent.

2.31 According to the CSB's statistics, as at 31 March 2017, there were about 16,000 middle-level civil servants who should attend national studies programmes within 6 years. Up to 2017, about 3,000 middle-level civil servants had attended such programmes. In other words, some 13,000 middle-level civil servants had yet to attend the programmes. According to the CSTDI, the number of civil servants attending such programmes would depend on the number of staff nominated and released by B/Ds. In the past few years, the CSTDI had been increasing the provision of Mainland national studies courses to middle-level civil servants, and in general the number of training places offered was enough to entertain all the nominations received by B/Ds. However, Audit noted that the number of planned training places provided by the three designated universities would only increase from 280 in 2017 to 340 in 2018 and further to 420 in 2019. On this basis, it is unlikely that all middle-level civil servants can attend national studies programmes within 6 years. The CSB needs to review the 6-year time schedule taking into account the feasibility of commissioning more Mainland universities in organising suitable training programmes and the expected number of nominations submitted by B/Ds. In the interim, the CSTDI also needs to work closely with B/Ds in the selection and release of trainees for attending the programmes so that priority would be accorded to those with pressing need for updated knowledge of the national social and economic policies in their work.

Need to make full use of the training places of national studies programmes for middle-level civil servants

2.32 Every year, the CSTDI enters into agreements with the three designated universities setting out the terms and conditions of running the national studies

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programmes for middle-level civil servants. According to the agreements from 2013 to 2017:

- (a) the training cost was charged based on a standard class size of either 30 or 35 trainees, but the agreements allowed a maximum class size of 40 trainees; and
- (b) one university accepted additional trainees above the standard class size without additional fee, while the other two universities charged additional fee on additional trainees on a per-head basis (at a rate lower than the average cost per head calculated using standard class size).

Audit examined the attendance records of the national studies programmes organised by the three universities from 2013 to 2017 and found that on average, 37 (12%) additional trainees could be accommodated based on the maximum number of training places of 320 each year (see Table 8). Given that some 13,000 middle-level civil servants had yet to attend the national studies programmes (see para. 2.31), there is a need for the CSTDI to further promote and encourage B/Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend such courses in order to make full use of the training places.

Table 8

**Utilisation of training places of
national studies programmes for middle-level civil servants
(2013 to 2017)**

Year	Maximum number of trainees (a)	Actual number of trainees (b)	Unused training places (c) = (a) – (b)
2013	320	253	67
2014	320	303	17
2015	320	297	23
2016	320	284	36
2017	320	278	42
Total	1,600	1,415	185 (averaging 37 a year)

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Need to enhance the tracking of Basic Law training for civil servants

2.33 ***2008-09 action plan.*** Since the promulgation of the Basic Law in the early 1990s, the CSTDI has been providing training on Basic Law for civil servants centrally. The CSB regularly reports its work in this regard to the Working Group on Civil Servants under the Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee (Note 9). In line with the Chief Executive's 2007-08 Policy Address on enhancing Basic Law training to form an integral part of training for civil servants, the CSB drew up an action plan to ensure that Basic Law training would be provided in a systematic and well-planned manner with effect from 2008-09:

- (a) ***Three core programmes for civil servants of different levels.*** They included: (i) introductory courses for all new appointees (Note 10); (ii) intermediate courses for all middle-level civil servants to be completed within 7 years; and (iii) advanced courses for all officers at MPS Point 45 to 49 to be completed within 5 years and all directorate officers to be completed within 2 years; and

- (b) ***Thematic seminars and e-learning resources.*** Thematic seminars would be provided to cater for the needs for more in-depth understanding of specific topics of the Basic Law. Basic Law content in the CLC Plus would be enriched and a web-based introductory course on the Basic Law would also be launched.

In December 2007, the CSB decided that instead of making Basic Law training mandatory in nature at that time, officers should be encouraged to take the courses while the CSB should keep in view progress on a regular basis to see if more coercion

Note 9: *The Basic Law Promotion Steering Committee was established in January 1998 to further step up promotional efforts of the Basic Law. The Working Group on Civil Servants, comprising official members from the CSB and the Department of Justice, is responsible for reviewing the strategies, drawing up action plans, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing activities for promotion of the Basic Law among civil servants, and fostering cooperation and exchange of experience within government departments, where appropriate.*

Note 10: *In 2016, the CSB introduced an enhanced Basic Law training plan under which all new civil service appointees, recruited in 2016 recruitment exercises and thereafter, would receive Basic Law training as part of their induction training within 3 years upon joining the civil service.*

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was necessary. The TIAS (see para. 2.4(a)) would enable the CSB to monitor the progress of Basic Law training among different levels of staff.

2.34 ***Tracking progress on Basic Law training.*** According to the CSTDI, since the implementation of the 2008-09 action plan, it has reiterated the training schedules for middle and senior-level officers in its invitations to B/Ds for nominations of Basic Law training courses. By the end of 2012, about 28,000 civil servants had attended the three core programmes (see para. 2.33(a)). To facilitate B/Ds to keep track of their progress in meeting the training schedules, the CSTDI provided them with records of their middle and senior-level officers who had attended pertinent Basic Law training courses on a regular basis. Similarly, since the launch of the central initiative in 2016 for new appointees to attend Basic Law training within 3 years upon joining the civil service (see Note 10 to para. 2.33(a)), the CSTDI has been providing B/Ds every 6 months with records of their staff who have attended the Basic Law foundation courses. According to CSTDI records, as at May 2018, about 15,000 new recruits had completed such training courses. However, B/Ds have not been required to report on the results of their monitoring. As such, the CSTDI has not been informed of the overall progress of meeting the training schedules (especially the number of officers who have yet to attend the stipulated training courses) and whether any follow-up action is necessary (such as adjusting the number of training courses to meet demand and considering stepping up measures if the progress is unsatisfactory).

Audit recommendations

2.35 **Audit has *recommended* that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) **review the 6-year time schedule for all middle-level civil servants to attend national studies programmes, taking into account the feasibility of commissioning more Mainland universities in organising suitable training programmes and the expected number of nominations submitted by B/Ds;**
- (b) **in the interim, work closely with B/Ds in the selection and release of middle-level civil servants for attending national studies programmes so that priority would be accorded to those with pressing need for updated knowledge of the national social and economic policies in their work;**

- (c) **further promote and encourage B/Ds to nominate more middle-level civil servants to attend the national studies programmes organised by the three designated universities to make full use of the training places; and**

- (d) **require B/Ds to report on the progress of meeting the Basic Law training schedules promulgated in 2008-09 (for middle and senior-level civil servants) and 2016 (for new appointees) and based on which, take necessary follow-up actions accordingly.**

Response from the Government

2.36 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) in the past few years, the CSTDI has been increasing the provision of Mainland national studies courses to middle-level civil servants and, in general, the number of training places provided is adequate for entertaining all the nominations received from B/Ds. The CSTDI will continue to encourage B/Ds to nominate and release more middle-level civil servants to join these courses, and will correspondingly increase the number of training places offered to meet their training demand; and

- (b) since the promulgation of the Basic Law training schedules in 2008-09, around 70,000 civil servants have attended different classes of Basic Law training. Regarding the initiative introduced in 2016 to provide Basic Law training for all new appointees within 3 years of joining the service, the CSTDI will collate attendee data from B/Ds by September 2019 to assess the effectiveness of this initiative.

PART 3: INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE CONTINUOUS LEARNING

3.1 This PART examines the CSTDI's initiatives in promoting continuous learning in the civil service, focusing on the provision of:

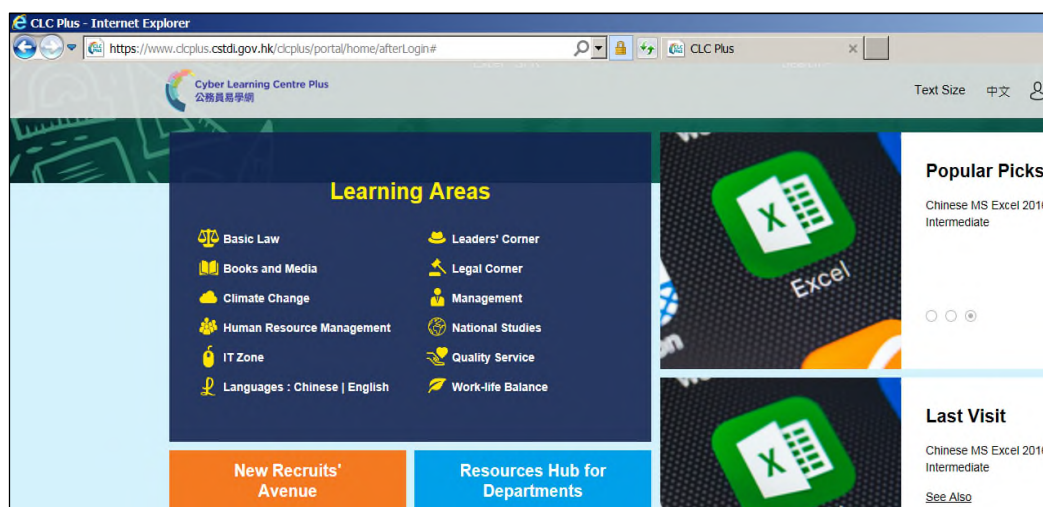
- (a) e-learning resources (paras. 3.2 to 3.21);
- (b) library services (paras. 3.22 to 3.29); and
- (c) training sponsorship (paras. 3.30 to 3.35).

Provision of e-learning resources

3.2 *CLC Plus*. As part of its commitment to promote a culture of continuous learning in the civil service, the CSTDI launched the web-based CLC Plus (see Figure 2 for the CLC Plus homepage — <https://www.clcplus.cstdi.gov.hk>) in September 2002 to provide a range of online training resources for civil servants to learn at their own time and according to their own pace.

Figure 2

The CLC Plus homepage



Source: *CLC Plus homepage*

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3.3 *Types of resources.* The CLC Plus hosts a wide range of e-learning resources spanning across 14 different content categories (Note 11). Apart from those offered by the CSTDI, other B/Ds may also make use of the CLC Plus to host department-specific training resources for their staff. As of May 2018, 25 B/Ds used the CLC Plus to host their learning materials. The CSTDI also makes use of the CLC Plus to disseminate latest information, such as details of seminars and programmes and booking arrangements of training venues. Table 9 shows the major types of e-learning resources hosted on the CLC Plus as of May 2018.

Table 9

**Major types of e-learning resources hosted on the CLC Plus
(May 2018)**

Type of e-learning resources	Source of e-learning resources	
	CSTDI	Other B/Ds (including the Official Languages Division of the CSB)
	(Number)	
Learning tips	1,230	5
E-books and publications	893	0
Course reference materials	117	34
Web courses	86	97
Video clips	28	201
Theme-based portals (Note)	14	7
Guidelines and best practices	13	0
Others	3	7
Total	2,384	351

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Note: Theme-based portals are purpose-built websites which provide multi-media learning resources, such as videos, web courses, audio clips, e-books and articles on specific subjects.

Note 11: *They are the Basic Law, books and media, climate change, human resource management, information technology zone, languages, leaders' corner, legal corner, management, national studies, new recruits' avenue, quality service, work-life balance and departmental resources.*

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3.4 ***CLC Plus users.*** All government employees (including civil servants and NCSC staff) are eligible to use the e-learning resources on the CLC Plus through the following two channels:

- (a) ***Internet.*** To access the CLC Plus via the Internet, a government employee needs to register for a CLC Plus account on the website's login page and login his/her account with a password; and
- (b) ***Departmental portal.*** To promote the wider use of the CLC Plus, the CSTDI launched the "Easy Sign-on to CLC Plus" Scheme in 2012. Under the Scheme, access to the CLC Plus is available via the Government Intranet, i.e. the departmental portals of B/Ds, for which no prior registration or Internet connection is required. At present, 57 B/Ds have joined the Scheme.

The CSTDI advises users with both a CLC Plus account and a departmental portal account to link the two accounts if they wish to keep a complete learning history, e.g. their total learning time of a web course regardless of their access channels. The CSTDI also advises users with only a departmental portal account to register a CLC Plus account for accessing a full range of learning resources, including those web resources which are available through the Internet only. Depending on their learning habits and availability of Internet services at the time of learning, users are free to choose accessing the CLC Plus via their CLC Plus accounts or departmental portal accounts. Based on CSTDI computer records, as at 17 May 2018, there were 139,362 user accounts, of which 79,713 (57%) were CLC Plus accounts and 59,649 (43%) were departmental portal accounts.

Areas for improvement on CLC Plus

3.5 From 2014 to 2017, the usage of the CLC Plus as reflected by the numbers of page views and visits to the CLC Plus only showed moderate increases of 1.7% and 2.5% respectively, i.e. from 4,050,000 views to 4,120,000 views and 590,000 visits to 605,000 visits (see item (b) of Table 1 in para. 1.6). Audit examination has revealed the following issues that warrant the CSTDI's attention:

- (a) large number of inactive accounts (paras. 3.6 and 3.7);
- (b) inadequacies in user account management (paras. 3.8 and 3.9); and

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- (c) low participation rate of the CLC Plus in some B/Ds (para. 3.10).

3.6 **Large number of inactive accounts.** According to CSTD I computer records, of the 139,362 user accounts as at 17 May 2018, 14,955 (11%) were not usable, e.g. deleted accounts of resigned civil servants, expired accounts of ex-NCSC staff, locked accounts due to wrong passwords and accounts pending activation/resetting passwords. For the remaining 124,407 usable accounts, Audit examined their last login dates and found that users of 85,788 (69%) accounts had not used the CLC Plus for one year or more (hereinafter referred to as inactive accounts). An analysis of these inactive accounts by their duration of inactivity is shown in Table 10.

Table 10

**Analysis of inactive accounts
(17 May 2018)**

Duration of inactivity	Number of inactive accounts
1 to <2 years	24,511 (28%)
2 to <3 years	18,143 (21%)
3 to <4 years	15,246 (18%)
4 to <5 years	9,978 (12%)
≥ 5 years	17,910 (21%)
Total	85,788 (100%)

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

3.7 **Need to step up efforts to motivate inactive account users to use the CLC Plus.** Audit noted that the CSTD I had been taking a number of measures to promote the usage of the CLC Plus, including: (a) issuing regular e-mails/e-newsletters to promote various learning resources and activities; (b) hosting CLC Plus briefings for B/Ds; (c) recommending learning resources to trainees participating in CSTD I training courses; (d) partnering with B/Ds to promote selected learning resources to specific target groups from time to time; and (e) automatically issuing reminder e-mails through the CLC Plus computer system to users who have not used the CLC Plus for over 6 months. However, one of the above measures

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(i.e. item (e)) could not reach the departmental portal account users because the CSTDI did not have their e-mail addresses as no prior registration was required for such accounts (see para. 3.4(b)). Of the 85,788 inactive accounts, 41,941 (49%) were departmental portal accounts. There is a need to step up efforts to motivate inactive account users to use the CLC Plus, including enlisting the assistance of relevant B/Ds in this regard for the inactive departmental portal account users.

3.8 *User account management.* According to the CSTDI, the following user account management measures are in place to prevent unauthorised access:

- (a) for managing the user accounts of NCSC staff, the CSTDI has set an expiry date for each user account in the CLC Plus computer system such that the accounts would be automatically disabled upon contract expiry;
- (b) as regards civil servants, departmental portal account users would not be able to access the CLC Plus once they leave the service or are transferred out of the departments. For CLC Plus account users, they are required to notify the CSTDI once they cease to be government employees (i.e. resignation or retirement). The CSTDI would remove the accounts upon receipt of the notifications or whenever it has come to the CSTDI's notice that the accounts would no longer be required (e.g. B/Ds with learning resources hosted in the CLC Plus may update the CSTDI when their staff leave the service). Retirees who wish to retain access to the CLC Plus can apply for accounts with restricted access to certain learning resources (e.g. generic content categories such as languages and climate change). For changes of posts/ranks, users are required to update their personal profiles in the CLC Plus. The CSTDI would remind users to update personal profiles through the monthly e-newsletters, or when they register for the online learning activities held throughout the year; and
- (c) for B/Ds with departmental training resources hosted in the CLC Plus, there are in-built functions in the CLC Plus computer system for the B/Ds' Training Managers to approve applications for accessing departmental training resources to ensure that their resources could be accessed by the intended serving officers only.

3.9 ***Inadequacies in user account management.*** In accordance with the relevant information technology security policy and guidelines issued by OGCIO in 2016, all user access rights should be reviewed periodically and revoked after a pre-defined period of inactivity or when no longer required (e.g. upon a staff's termination or change of employment). In view of the large number of inactive CLC Plus user accounts (with some 18,000 accounts having remained inactive for 5 years or more — see Table 10 in para. 3.6), there is a need to review the user access rights of such accounts in accordance with the relevant information technology security policy and guidelines issued by OGCIO. To obtain an understanding of how well the present self-reporting updating arrangements have been working (see para. 3.8(b)), Audit also compared the number of usable user accounts (see para. 3.6) held by civil servants in B/Ds against their establishment. Audit found that the number of user accounts of the Transport and Housing Bureau (i.e. 462) exceeded its establishment (i.e. 207) by 255 or 123%. Given that a government employee can have at most two user accounts (i.e. a CLC Plus account and a departmental portal account — see para. 3.4), the number of user accounts in a B/D in excess of its staff establishment by over 100% suggests that some accounts could have been held by officers who have left the B/D due to resignation, change of post or retirement. In Audit's view, the CSB should in consultation with the Transport and Housing Bureau ascertain the reasons for such excessive number of user accounts in the Transport and Housing Bureau to see if there is a need to step up control against improper access to the CLC Plus.

3.10 ***Low participation rate of the CLC Plus in some B/Ds.*** In analysing CLC Plus user accounts of B/Ds (see para. 3.9), Audit also found that the number of user accounts of 15 B/Ds only accounted for less than 50% (ranging from 13% to 49%) of their establishment. There is a need for the CSTDI in collaboration with relevant B/Ds to find out the reasons for the low participation rate of the CLC Plus with a view to devising effective measures to attract new users.

Measures to facilitate mobile learning

3.11 In light of the high smartphone penetration rate and the emerging trend of mobile learning in recent years, the CSTDI implemented a number of measures to facilitate the use of various e-learning resources through mobile devices, including the following:

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- (a) ***Mobile website.*** In 2011, the CSTDI launched the mobile website of the CLC Plus, which was designed to support the mobile devices' operating systems and screens of the second/third generation mobile phones. With the launch of the new user interface of the CLC Plus in 2018 (see (b) below), the mobile website was retired;

- (b) ***New user interface.*** In December 2015, the CSTDI obtained funding of \$2.7 million for the enhancement of the CLC Plus. The enhancement work mainly included two aspects: (i) optimisation of system infrastructure (e.g. enhancement of server capacity); and (ii) enhancement of the system application. Revamping the CLC Plus with a new user interface was one of the key enhancements of the system application. The new user interface of the CLC Plus was launched on 21 April 2018. With the new user interface, web pages can be automatically adjusted to fit the screen display of different types of computers and mobile devices so as to provide an optimal viewing and interactive experience to support effective mobile learning; and

- (c) ***Mobile application.*** The CSTDI launched its mobile application, namely the "CSTDI App" for two mobile operating systems in March 2014 and March 2015 respectively. The CSTDI App shows details of seminars and courses to be held in the coming two months (see Figure 3(a)) and provides users with bite-size learning resources (see Figure 3(b)).

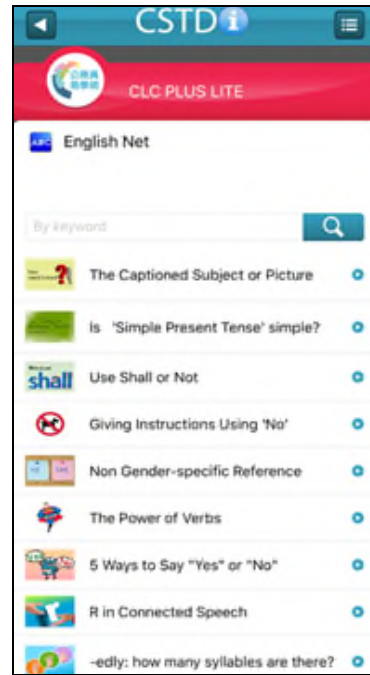
Figure 3(a)

Details of seminars and courses to be held in the coming two months shown on the CSTDI App



Figure 3(b)

Bite-size learning resources shown on the CSTDI App



Source: CSB records

E-learning resources developed using a legacy software

3.12 *Some e-learning resources not accessible through mobile devices.* As a test check on the accessibility of the e-learning resources on the CLC Plus through mobile devices, Audit tried to access 30 resources with the highest number of page views from January to April 2018 using a tablet computer and a smartphone in July 2018. Audit found that 17 (57%) e-learning resources could not be viewed on both mobile devices because they were developed using a legacy software not supported by major operating systems of mobile devices. There is a need to improve the accessibility of e-learning resources on mobile devices.

3.13 *Migrating/retiring e-learning resources developed using the legacy software.* In April 2017, the CSTDI started an internal discussion on the legacy software issue. In July 2017, the vendor of the legacy software announced its plan to

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cease supporting the software at the end of 2020, i.e. stop updating and distributing the software after that time. In December 2017, OGCIO advised B/Ds to:

- (a) retire the relevant contents/applications before the end-of-support of the legacy software if they were no longer required; and
- (b) work out the migration plan (i.e. to migrate to prevailing technology platforms) at the earliest to allow adequate time to replace the aged technologies to avoid unnecessary risk to the web services.

3.14 *Need to expedite actions on migration/retirement of the e-learning resources.* In January 2018, the CSTDI identified 142 e-learning resources on the CLC Plus (including 86 items offered by the CSTDI and 56 items offered by 16 other B/Ds) which had been developed using the legacy software. In September 2018, the CSTDI informed Audit that:

- (a) for the 86 e-learning resources offered by the CSTDI, 12 items were subsequently found not developed using the legacy software. For the remaining 74 items, 28 items had been migrated to prevailing technology platforms and 46 items would be migrated or retired by 2020; and
- (b) for the 56 e-learning resources developed by 16 other B/Ds, the CSTDI requested the B/Ds to provide their migration/retirement schedules between March and May 2018. Up to September 2018, 5 of the 56 e-learning resources had been migrated to prevailing technology platforms or retired. The positions for the remaining 51 resources were as follows:
 - (i) 22 (43%) e-learning resources would be migrated to prevailing technology platforms before June 2020; and
 - (ii) 29 (57%) e-learning resources would be retired before June 2020.

According to OGCIO, some web browser makers may phase out the legacy software earlier than 2020, i.e. restricting the legacy software from running in their browsers. To minimise the disruption of e-learning services to mobile device users, the CSTDI and relevant B/Ds need to expedite actions on the migration/retirement of their e-learning resources.

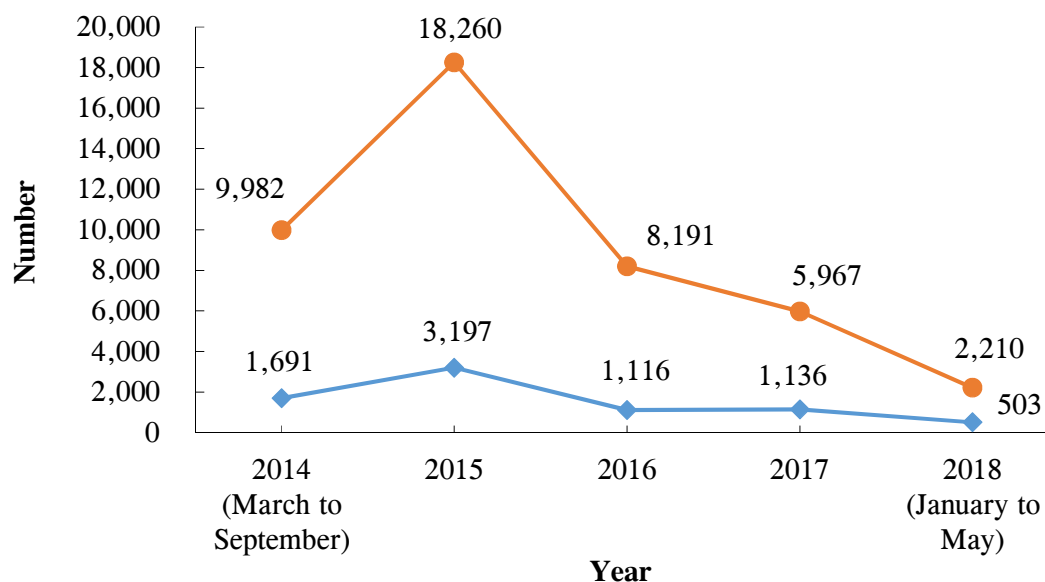
3.15 Audit also noted that the CSTDI's migration plan did not cover e-learning resources acquired from third party suppliers. There were 32 acquired e-learning resources on information technology (e.g. web courses on personal computer skills) which had been developed using the legacy software. The CSTDI needs to include such e-learning resources in its migration plan.

Decreasing usage of mobile application

3.16 From 2013-14 to 2015-16, the CSTDI outsourced the development, implementation and maintenance of the CSTDI App to contractors with one-off development and enhancement costs (including the first-year maintenance) of \$146,500 and an annual maintenance cost of \$36,000. Audit noted that since the launch of the CSTDI App for two mobile operating systems in March 2014 and March 2015 respectively, there had not been significant enhancements to its functions. Audit examination of the usage statistics of the CSTDI App revealed that both the numbers of downloads and visits were on a decreasing trend since its first launch (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

**Numbers of downloads and visits of the CSTDI App
(March 2014 to May 2018)**



Legend: ●—● Number of visits
◆—◆ Number of downloads

Source: *Audit analysis of CSB records*

3.17 **2016 review.** In 2015-16, the CSTDI conducted a survey of CLC Plus users on the CSTDI App. According to the survey, 77% of 2,084 respondents had not used the CSTDI App before. The respondents also commented that new functions such as receiving course enrolment notifications and sending reminders before start of course could be added. After an internal review in May 2016, the CSTDI decided that: (a) the CSTDI App should be enhanced to offer more personalised services to users, such as sending targeted notifications and gathering data about users' preference; and (b) the enhancement of the CSTDI App should commence after completion of the CLC Plus enhancement project (see para. 3.11(b)). According to the CSTDI, with the completion of the CLC Plus enhancement enabling web pages to be automatically adjusted to fit the screen of different mobile devices, the CSTDI App could be further enhanced to facilitate users to login to the CLC Plus using mobile devices.

3.18 *Need to commence the enhancement work of CSTDI App.* In view of the decreasing usage of the CSTDI App in recent years (see Figure 4 in para. 3.16), the CSTDI needs to take measures to improve its usefulness and user-friendliness. According to the CSTDI's 2016 review (see para. 3.17), the planned enhancement work of the CSTDI App should commence after completion of CLC Plus enhancement project which had nevertheless been deferred from May 2017 to 31 October 2018 due to the complexity of the project. In Audit's view, the CSTDI needs to commence the enhancement work of the CSTDI App as soon as practicable, taking into account users' feedback obtained during the 2015-16 survey and any latest development.

Audit recommendations

3.19 **Audit has recommended that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) **step up efforts to promote the usage of the CLC Plus, including:**
 - (i) **enlisting the assistance of relevant B/Ds to motivate their inactive departmental portal account users to use the CLC Plus; and**
 - (ii) **ascertaining the reasons for the low participation rate of the CLC Plus in the 15 B/Ds (mentioned in para. 3.10) with a view to devising effective measures to attract new users;**
- (b) **review the user access rights of the inactive accounts of the CLC Plus in accordance with the relevant information technology security policy and guidelines issued by OGCIO;**
- (c) **in consultation with the Secretary for Transport and Housing, ascertain the reasons for the excessive number of user accounts in the Transport and Housing Bureau to see if there is a need to step up control against improper access to the CLC Plus;**
- (d) **improve the accessibility of e-learning resources on mobile devices by expediting actions on the migration/retirement of e-learning resources developed using the legacy software, especially those not included in the CSTDI's migration plan; and**

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- (e) **commence the enhancement work of the CSTDI App as soon as practicable, taking into account the users' feedback and any latest development.**

Response from the Government

3.20 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the CSTDI will strive to have the e-learning resources developed using the legacy software migrated to prevailing technology platforms or retired by June 2020; and
- (b) actions are being taken to enhance the CSTDI App to facilitate user access to the CLC Plus via mobile devices.

3.21 Regarding the excessive number of CLC Plus user accounts of the Transport and Housing Bureau (see paras. 3.9 and 3.19(c)), the Permanent Secretary for Transport and Housing (Transport) has said that:

- (a) the Transport and Housing Bureau is not involved in the process of registration or management of CLC Plus user accounts of individual staff;
- (b) the CLC Plus is managed by the CSTDI; and
- (c) the Transport and Housing Bureau shall render the necessary assistance to the CSB to facilitate their investigation, if required.

Provision of library services

3.22 The LRC (see Photograph 3), located on the third floor of the NPGO, has been established with the mission to support: (a) continuous learning in the civil service; and (b) the work of Training Officers in design and development of training programmes. The LRC provides: (i) basic services including borrowing of books and multi-media learning resources, and on-site use of desktop and tablet computers for online learning and accessing library catalogue; (ii) online library services such as

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resource searching, reservation and renewal via the CLC Plus platform; and (iii) other related services (Note 12). As at 31 March 2018, 4,566 items of learning resources were available for loan.

Photograph 3

The LRC



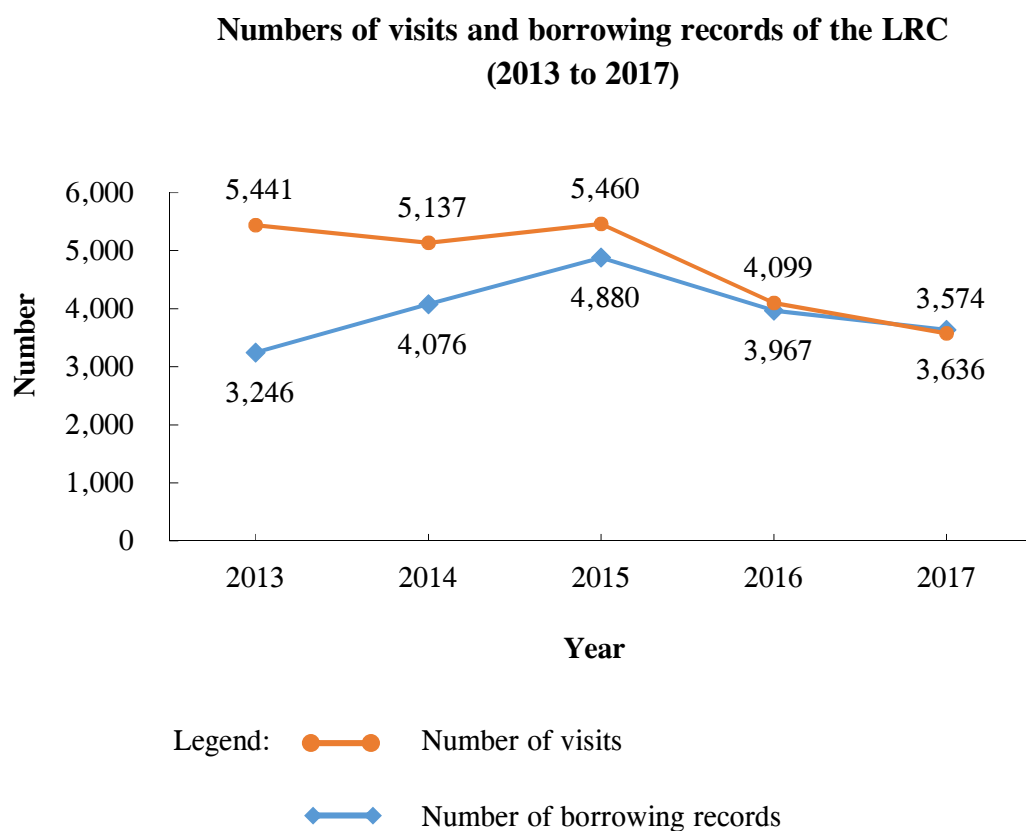
Source: CSB records

Need to improve the usage of the LRC

3.23 *Usage statistics.* Audit analysed the visitor register and borrowing records of the LRC from 2013 to 2017 and noted that after reaching their peaks in 2015, both usage figures were on a decreasing trend in the following two years (see Figure 5).

Note 12: *The LRC also operates a book-cross scheme and organises book exhibitions on different themes. Moreover, it regularly produces e-newsletters that feature titles available at the LRC, and book summaries and e-books offered by the CLC Plus.*

Figure 5



Source: *Audit analysis of CSB records*

3.24 ***Room for improving the LRC services.*** In light of the decreasing usage of the LRC in the recent two years, the CSTDI needs to explore ways to attract more users. In this connection, Audit has noted that there is room for improving the provision of the LRC services:

- (a) ***Simplifying LRC membership registration procedure.*** According to the borrowing rules of the LRC, while all serving government employees can use the facilities of the LRC, borrowing services are only available to those who have registered as members of the CLC Plus. For the effective management of borrowing records and follow-up on overdue cases, a first-time borrower needs to register as an LRC member in person by providing basic information on a membership form. An LRC member can use the online library services (see para. 3.22(ii)) via the CLC Plus platform. As at 31 May 2018, there were 1,159 LRC members. Audit notes that the information to be supplied in the LRC membership form (e.g. the first four digits of Hong Kong identity card number, B/D, rank and

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e-mail address) is the same as that required for registering as a CLC Plus user. As such information has been checked at the time of registering as a CLC Plus user, the CSTDI should consider simplifying the LRC membership registration procedure for CLC Plus users; and

- (b) ***Reviewing opening hours of the LRC.*** Currently, the opening hours of the LRC are from 9:15 am to 5:15 pm, Monday to Friday. Based on the CSTDI's records, there were about 25,000 visitors during the period from January 2013 to May 2018. Audit analysis of the visitor register revealed that about 46% of the visitors were trainees of CSTDI training courses. To facilitate trainees visiting the LRC before and after class (which normally starts at 9:00 am and ends at 5:30 pm — Note 13), there is merit to explore the feasibility and usefulness of extending the opening hours of the LRC.

Need to dispose of unserviceable resources in a timely manner

3.25 According to the CSTDI's records, apart from the 4,566 items of learning resources available for loan (see para. 3.22), there were another 2,526 items of obsolete and physically deteriorated learning materials with a total purchase cost of about \$1.4 million being kept in two storerooms pending disposal (see Photograph 4).

Note 13: *Audit noted that in May and June 2018, all 52 full-day training programmes held in CSTDI training venues at the NPGO started at 9:00 am and ended at 5:30 pm.*

Photograph 4

Unserviceable LRC learning resource items pending disposal



Source: Photograph taken by Audit staff on 6 August 2018

3.26 **Disposal arrangement.** According to the CSTDI, a stocktaking exercise was conducted annually on the learning resource items at the LRC in accordance with the Stores and Procurement Regulations (SPRs). In the course of the stocktaking exercise, officers would review the items and identify unserviceable ones, i.e. those unsuitable for use because they were either worn out or obsolete having regard to the latest training development. The unserviceable items would be disposed of subject to the agreement of the departmental disposal committee set up in accordance with the SPRs. During the five years from 2013 to 2017, a total of 4,631 unserviceable items with a total purchase cost of about \$2 million had been disposed of.

3.27 However, Audit noted that there was no record showing when the 2,526 unserviceable resource items (see para. 3.25) had been identified and why they had not been dealt with in previous disposal exercises. In response to Audit's enquiry, the CSTDI in August 2018 said that:

- (a) of the 2,526 unserviceable resource items, 1,501 (59%) items (with a total cost of about \$0.4 million) had been identified in 2016 and the remaining 1,025 (41%) items (with a total cost of about \$1 million) had been identified in 2017; and

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- (b) the approval of departmental disposal committee would be sought for disposing of the 1,501 items identified in 2016 first and the remaining by batches, with an aim to have 90% or more of the whole lot of the unserviceable resource items submitted to the departmental disposal committee for approval in 2018-19.

To save storage space and administrative efforts (e.g. annual stocktaking), the CSTDI needs to expedite the disposal of the unserviceable resource items in accordance with the SPRs.

Audit recommendations

3.28 **Audit has recommended that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) **improve the services of the LRC with a view to improving its usage by:**
 - (i) **considering simplifying the LRC membership registration procedure for CLC Plus users; and**
 - (ii) **exploring the feasibility and usefulness of extending the opening hours of the LRC; and**
- (b) **expedite the disposal of the unserviceable LRC resource items in accordance with the SPRs.**

Response from the Government

3.29 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations.

Provision of training sponsorship

3.30 *Training Sponsorship Scheme for Frontline Staff (TSSF).* In 2005, the CSTDI launched the TSSF which aimed at providing additional training support to frontline staff to pursue continuous learning and to enhance their capacity in meeting

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new challenges at work. The training courses should: (a) be work-related; or (b) help enhance applicants' education up to secondary education level. The staff should take the courses outside working hours. The TSSF was operated on a reimbursement basis and applicants could claim the full amount of the course fee and examination fee, subject to a ceiling of \$6,000. Applicants must submit applications to their respective B/Ds before commencement of the courses.

3.31 *Training Sponsorship Scheme (TSS)*. Since 2018-19, the CSTDI has enhanced the TSSF and renamed it as TSS. The enhancements include:

- (a) widening the eligible group from officers whose starting salary is on MPS Point 16 and below or equivalent to officers whose salary point is on MPS Point 49 and below or equivalent; and
- (b) raising the sponsorship ceiling amount from \$6,000 to \$10,000.

In 2016-17 and 2017-18, of 1,406 applications received under the TSSF, 1,320 (94%) were approved and training sponsorship of about \$5 million was provided.

Need to improve the management of training sponsorship

3.32 According to the operational guidelines of the TSSF/TSS issued by the CSTDI, as the approving authority for individual sponsorship applications, B/Ds are responsible for vetting applications and processing reimbursement claims of their staff in accordance with the requirements set out in the guidelines (Note 14). They are required to keep records of all applications and submit reports showing the latest position of applications received and cash flow requirements to the CSTDI in accordance with the submission schedule. Upon receipt of the reports, the CSTDI will provide the required funding to the B/Ds for reimbursement to individual applicants. The CSTDI will also prepare a summary report analysing the applications received based on the reports submitted by the B/Ds.

Note 14: *Reimbursement will be made upon production of receipts and evidence of passing the end-of-course examinations or, if no examination is needed, certificates of completion or at least 70% attendance of the course.*

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3.33 To ascertain how well the training sponsorship has been administered, Audit selected three B/Ds (i.e. the HKPF, the FSD and the CSD) with the highest number of approved applications in 2016-17 for examination. During 2016-17 and 2017-18, the three selected B/Ds approved a total of 778 applications and rejected 16 applications. Audit test checks of 106 (Note 15) approved applications and all 16 rejected applications of the three B/Ds have identified the following areas for improvement:

- (a) ***Need for guidelines in handling applications with gifts offered to trainees by external training institutions.*** In one approved application of the HKPF in May 2017, the external training institution offered a smartphone as a gift (Note 16) to the applicant for enrolling in a social media graphic design course with a course fee of \$6,980. The applicant was reimbursed \$6,000, i.e. the maximum claimable amount under the TSSF (see para. 3.30) in January 2018. In September 2018, in response to Audit's enquiry, the HKPF said that the applicant had withdrawn the application and returned the reimbursed amount to the Government in September 2018. In another approved application of the FSD, the external training institution offered a \$100 dining gift voucher to the applicant for early enrolment of a course on effective e-mail writing skills with a course fee of \$3,180. The application for reimbursement of the full course fee of \$3,180 was under processing up to August 2018. In September 2018, in response to Audit's enquiry, the FSD said that the applicant concerned had returned the gift voucher to the external training institution concerned in September 2018. Audit notes that for other publicly-funded training schemes, such as the Continuing Education Fund (Note 17), participating training course providers are advised not to offer gifts or other financial inducements to applicants of the Fund. As there are no specified participating training course providers for the TSSF/TSS, the CSTDI needs to lay down guidelines for B/Ds to ensure the proper handling of applications with gifts offered by external training institutions;

Note 15: *Audit initially selected 100 approved applications for test checks and in light of the audit findings examined 6 more applications of similar nature.*

Note 16: *Audit research found that the smartphone was a new model launched in May 2017 with a suggested retail price of \$5,698.*

Note 17: *The Fund is administered by the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency of the Labour and Welfare Bureau for Hong Kong residents with aspirations to pursue continuing education and training courses.*

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- (b) *Need to improve the documentation on how the approved courses are work-related.* Among the applications examined, Audit noted that:
- (i) the HKPF had approved 4 applications for attending pre-service courses for public-light-bus drivers. According to the Transport Department, the course aimed at improving the driving attitude of new public-light-bus drivers and hence the safety and quality of public-light-bus service, before the issue of relevant driving licence. There was no documentation on how the approved training course was related to the work of the applicants; and
 - (ii) the HKPF had approved 6 applications for attending bus-driving courses (5 of the applicants were the HKPF's transport team officers and the remaining one was a patrol team officer) but rejected 3 applications for attending similar bus-driving courses (all applicants were patrol team officers). There was no documentation on the basis of approving some applications but rejecting others.

In September 2018, in response to Audit's enquiry, the HKPF said that police officers who were required to perform driving duties would benefit from attending the pre-service courses for public-light-bus drivers for enhancing the quality and diversity of their driving skills as they might have to drive a public vehicle in case of emergency. As regards the bus-driving courses, the approved application for a patrol team officer was processed in 2016-17. Due to the increase in number of applications for such courses in 2017-18, the HKPF only approved those lodged by officers of the transport team and rejected those of the patrol team. Moreover, there was no guideline requiring B/Ds to document how the approved courses were work-related. In Audit's view, the CSTDI needs to remind B/Ds to improve the documentation on how the approved courses are work-related (especially when special consideration has been taken into account); and

- (c) *Need to comply with the application requirements.* In 3 approved applications, the applicants submitted their applications 5 to 33 days after the courses had started (i.e. delays of 18 and 33 days for two HKPF-related cases and a delay of 5 days for one CSD-related case), contrary to the application requirements (see para. 3.30). The CSTDI needs to remind B/Ds to check the applications' compliance with the laid-down requirements before granting approval.

Audit recommendations

- 3.34 **Audit has recommended that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**
- (a) **lay down guidelines for B/Ds in handling TSS applications with gifts offered to trainees by external training institutions to ensure proper use of the financial sponsorship solely for training purpose; and**
 - (b) **remind B/Ds to:**
 - (i) **improve the documentation on how the approved training courses are work-related; and**
 - (ii) **check TSS applications' compliance with the laid-down requirements before granting approval.**

Response from the Government

3.35 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that according to the TSSF guidelines issued by the CSTDI to B/Ds, as the approving authority for individual sponsorship applications, the respective B/Ds are responsible for vetting applications and processing reimbursement claims of their staff in accordance with the requirements set out in the guidelines. The TSSF guidelines stipulate that the financial assistance provided to staff under the TSSF should cover tuition and examination fees of courses only, and other expenses (such as registration fees or textbook costs) are not reimbursable. Adopting this principle, if the courses include the provision of gifts, the financial assistance provided under the TSSF should not be used for gift items. The CSB will revise the guidelines to make this clear to B/Ds.

PART 4: OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

4.1 This PART examines other administrative issues relating to the training and development work of the CSTDI, focusing on:

- (a) management of training venues and ancillary facilities (paras. 4.2 to 4.15);
and
- (b) reporting of performance information (paras. 4.16 to 4.22).

Management of training venues and ancillary facilities

4.2 *Training venues of the CSTDI.* CSTDI training venues are designed to cater for different training settings, such as group-based workshops or seminars. They are fully equipped with audio-visual equipment and provided with both wired and wireless Internet access. Details of CSTDI training venues are shown in Table 11. Apart from running its training programmes, the CSTDI uses its training venues for meetings, receptions of delegations and other events. The CSTDI also opens up these venues (except the syndicate rooms) for other B/Ds' use by reservation three months in advance subject to availability. The training venues are available from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm, Monday to Friday. There are two time slots available for booking each day, i.e. morning and afternoon sessions. Guidelines for booking and use of the training venues are promulgated on a web page of the CLC Plus.

Table 11

**Training venues of the CSTDI
(30 June 2018)**

Type of training venues	Number	Purpose	Maximum seating capacity	Size (square metre)	Available for booking by other B/Ds
Auditorium	1	Seminar	140	210	✓
Executive classroom	2	Group-based training	30 and 36	112 and 182	✓
Lecture room	3	Seminar	40 and 41	68 to 193	✓
Classroom	11	Group-based training	24 to 36	52 to 155	✓
Computer room (Note 1)	1	Computer training	28	92	✓
Syndicate room (Note 2)	5	Small-group activity	6 to 8	Not available	✗

Source: CSB records

Note 1: The computer room was managed by the Information Technology Management Unit (see Appendix A).

Note 2: The five syndicate rooms were mainly used in conjunction with the executive classrooms for small-group activities during a training programme.

Utilisation of training venues

4.3 **Monitoring of venue utilisation.** The CSTDI is assisted by a web-based Shared Online Reservation System (SORS) (developed by OGCI — see para. 4.8) in managing its training venues and ancillary facilities. The system can generate different management reports such as monthly utilisation by room type, summary of cancellation and non-occupancy statistics. On a monthly basis, the Divisional Administration Unit of the CSTDI (see Appendix A) consolidates information in these reports for management review.

Other administrative issues

4.4 Based on the management reports of the SORS, the utilisation rates (Note 18) of various types of training venues of the CSTDI from January 2013 to May 2018 are summarised in Table 12.

Table 12

**Utilisation rates of CSTDI training venues
(January 2013 to May 2018)**

Type of training venues	Utilisation rate					
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan to May)
Auditorium	78.0%	58.4%	62.6%	42.5%	45.5%	44.9%
Executive classroom	74.9%	57.9%	60.7%	55.0%	58.5%	62.6%
Lecture room	67.1%	59.6%	59.8%	42.4%	58.5%	53.5%
Classroom	68.6%	72.8%	68.2%	70.8%	73.1%	77.2%
Computer room	25.1%	42.3%	19.6%	60.9%	35.8%	86.6%
Syndicate room	72.7%	65.6%	59.1%	52.8%	62.9%	73.0%

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Areas for improvement in booking arrangements

4.5 As can be seen from Table 12 in paragraph 4.4, while the utilisation rates for most of the training venues were generally above 50%, those for the auditorium and the computer room were relatively lower. Audit examination of the booking arrangements revealed the following issues which could not optimise the utilisation of the training venues:

- (a) bookings cancelled at short notices (paras. 4.6 and 4.7);

Note 18: *Utilisation rate was calculated by dividing the number of booked time slots by the number of available time slots.*

- (b) manual system of booking by other B/Ds (paras. 4.8 and 4.9); and
- (c) unused bookings not reported (para. 4.10).

Bookings cancelled at short notices

4.6 ***Advanced bookings and subsequent cancellations.*** To coordinate the use of training venues, training units of the CSTDI and the General Grades Office hold bi-monthly meetings to discuss their venue requirements 12 to 13 months in advance (e.g. the allocation of training venues for December 2017 and January 2018 was discussed at a meeting of December 2016). After agreeing on the allocation, the respective training units of the CSTDI and the General Grades Office can login to the SORS to book their required training venues 11 months in advance (e.g. the reservation of training venues for December 2017 was made in January 2017). Audit found in a test check that most of the available time slots of the training venues (which are managed by the CSTDI and opened up for other B/Ds' use — see Table 11 in para. 4.2) had been reserved through the advance booking arrangement. For example, 546 (90%) of 608 available time slots of the training venues for December 2017 had been reserved by different training units of the CSTDI and the General Grades Office. However, according to the records of the SORS, a total of 3,105 (i.e. 35% of a total of 8,830) bookings of the training venues made by different training units of the CSTDI and the General Grades Office for the period from January 2017 to March 2018 were subsequently cancelled.

4.7 ***Need to minimise cancellation of venue bookings at short notices.*** Audit analysed the 3,105 cancelled bookings by their notice periods and found that the notices given for 1,077 (35%) cancelled bookings were less than 15 days. Audit further analysed the utilisation of the released time slots of these 1,077 cancelled bookings and found that the released time slots for only 141 (13%) cancelled bookings were subsequently taken up by other users. By comparison, Audit found that better utilisation of the released time slots could be achieved by giving earlier notices of cancellation, i.e. of the released time slots for the 896 cancelled bookings with notice periods between 15 to 30 days, 225 (25%) were used by other users. This was further increased to 397 (46%) for the 872 cancelled bookings with notice periods between 31 to 90 days, and 150 (58%) for the 260 cancelled bookings with notice periods longer than 90 days (see Table 13). There is a need to remind the training units of the CSTDI and the General Grades Office to minimise cancellation of venue bookings at short notices.

Table 13

**Analysis of utilisation of released time slots
arising from cancelled bookings by their notice periods
(January 2017 to March 2018)**

Notice period of cancelled bookings	Number of cancellations	Cancellations with released time slots utilised	
	(a)	Number (b)	Percentage (c) = (b)/(a) × 100%
< 15 days	1,077 (35%)	141	13%
15 to 30 days	896 (29%)	225	25%
31 to 90 days	872 (28%)	397	46%
> 90 days	260 (8%)	150	58%
Overall	3,105 (100%)	913	29%

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Manual system of booking by other B/Ds

4.8 **SORS.** In 2009, OGCIO obtained funding of \$2.9 million to develop the SORS for use by B/Ds which did not have meeting room booking systems or would like to share the use of their meeting rooms and facilities with other B/Ds. Ten potential users including the CSTDI (which could benefit from the SORS in automating the processing of enquiry, reservation, approval and reservation cancellation of their meeting rooms and facilities) were identified. In the event, the CSTDI was the only user when the SORS was rolled out in 2010. In 2014, the SORS was transferred to the CSTDI which also took over the system maintenance responsibility from OGCIO. However, the CSTDI has only made use of the SORS to automate the booking by its internal users and the users of the General Grades Office. Other B/Ds are still required to follow a set of manual booking procedures, as follows:

- (a) the B/D concerned is required to call the CSTDI to check the availability of the venue;

- (b) if the venue is available, the B/D is requested to complete and submit a booking form within three working days to the CSTDI by fax or e-mail;
- (c) upon the receipt of the booking form from the B/D, the CSTDI inputs the reservation details into the SORS and sends a confirmation reply e-mail to the B/D to confirm the booking; and
- (d) any cancellation should be made at least two weeks in advance in writing to the CSTDI by fax or e-mail.

4.9 ***Need to streamline manual venue booking procedures.*** Audit analysis of the utilisation of the training venues by users indicated that some facilities were regularly used by other B/Ds, e.g. of the 44.9% utilisation rate of the auditorium from January to May 2018 (see Table 12 in para. 4.4), other B/Ds constituted 12.1% while the CSB constituted 32.8%. To allow more efficient and user-friendly booking of CSTDI training venues by other B/Ds, there is a need to streamline the manual venue booking procedures, such as making better use of the SORS to provide updated information to other B/Ds about venue availability.

Unused bookings not reported

4.10 ***Need to tighten monitoring of prolonged booking of training venues.*** As shown in Table 12 in paragraph 4.4, there was a sharp increase in the utilisation rate of the computer room from 35.8% in 2017 to 86.6% during the five months from January to May 2018. According to CSTDI booking records, the computer room was reserved by the General Grades Office from February 2018 to April 2019 (i.e. 15 months) for conducting recruitment tests on computer skills every day. However, Audit's site visits to the computer room on 35 working days in June and July 2018 revealed that it had not been used for a total of 26 (74%) working days. Moreover, there was no cancellation of the bookings for these 26 working days and CSTDI records still registered a 100% utilisation rate of the computer room for both June and July 2018. In Audit's view, there is a need to tighten monitoring of any prolonged booking of CSTDI training venues to ensure that these venues are put into effective use and any unused time slots will be released in a timely manner for reallocation.

Utilisation of ancillary facilities

4.11 ***Ancillary facilities of the CSTDI.*** Apart from training venues, the CSTDI has two multi-function areas (MFAs — i.e. MFA 1 and MFA 2 as shown in Appendix B). According to the CSTDI, the MFA 1 (see Photograph 5) is an open area with Internet booths, relaxing sofas and vending machines for receiving and welcoming trainees and visitors to the CSTDI. It is used by trainees and visitors for short-breaks and informal exchanges between classes, and photo-taking of graduation and other presentation ceremonies. Owing to the limited space of the CSTDI's classrooms, the CSTDI would also make use of the open space of the MFA 1 for group discussions and activity-based training sessions of classes. Likewise, the MFA 2 (see Photograph 6) is designed for similar activities for reception and receiving visitors and guest speakers. Moreover, it can be combined with the adjacent classroom (see Appendix B) to form a larger area for classroom activities. Both MFAs are ancillary facilities to support classroom training and not available for booking by other B/Ds.

Photograph 5

The MFA 1 located on the third floor of the NPGO



Source: Photograph taken by Audit staff on 2 October 2018

Photograph 6

The MFA 2 located on the third floor of the NPGO



Source: Photograph taken by Audit staff on 10 May 2018

4.12 **Room for improving utilisation of MFA 2.** Based on the management reports of the SORS, the utilisation rates of the two MFAs of the CSTDI from January 2013 to May 2018 are summarised in Table 14.

Table 14

**Utilisation rates of the MFAs
(January 2013 to May 2018)**

Venue	Utilisation rate					
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018 (Jan to May)
MFA 1	18.4%	4.9%	5.5%	3.4%	4.5%	3.0%
MFA 2	26.3%	59.6%	38.4%	25.2%	30.4%	23.3%

Source: CSB records

Other administrative issues

4.13 *Need to improve utilisation of MFA 2.* While the MFA 1 is an open space (see para. 4.11), the MFA 2 is a self-contained room which can be combined with the adjacent classroom to form a larger area for classroom activities. Audit considers that the CSTDI needs to explore ways to improve the utilisation of the MFA 2, such as opening it up for reservation and use by other B/Ds.

Audit recommendations

4.14 **Audit has recommended that the Secretary for the Civil Service should make greater efforts to optimise the utilisation of CSTDI training venues and ancillary facilities, including:**

- (a) **reminding the training units of the CSTDI and the General Grades Office to minimise cancellation of their bookings of the training venues at short notices;**
- (b) **streamlining the manual venue booking procedures such as making better use of the SORS to provide updated information to other B/Ds about venue availability;**
- (c) **tightening monitoring of any prolonged booking of the training venues to ensure that these venues are put into effective use and any unused time slots will be released in a timely manner for reallocation; and**
- (d) **exploring ways to improve the utilisation of the MFA 2.**

Response from the Government

4.15 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the computer room has a purpose-built setting for computer training only and it is difficult to use the room for other types of classroom training. The CSB plans to remodel the room so that its internal settings could be flexibly adjusted to cater for different types of training; and

- (b) while the MFA 2 is a self-contained room, its entrance is a glass door, the room is not sound-proof, and its layout is quite narrow. It is difficult to use the MFA 2 for normal classroom training given its physical constraints. However, it can be combined with the adjacent classroom to form a larger area for certain classroom activities. The CSB will explore ways to improve the utilisation of the MFA 2.

Reporting of performance information

4.16 *Performance targets.* According to CSB Circular No. 7/2009 on performance pledges in the civil service, performance pledges, if reviewed and updated regularly, help B/Ds to monitor their performances in service delivery and to enhance such performances where practicable. While the CSTDI only provides services to internal customers, it has set six performance pledges on its training and development and quality of services (see Table 2 in para. 1.7), and reported the actual results on the CSB's website. The CSB has implemented a three-tier monitoring mechanism, comprising: (a) day-to-day continuous tracking of service levels of the performance targets; (b) a mid-term review; and (c) a comprehensive biennial review (i.e. every two years) to monitor performance. According to the biennial review conducted in 2017, the CSTDI achieved its performance pledges in the last two years and did not propose any revision to the existing performance pledges and/or the corresponding time targets.

4.17 *Performance indicators.* The CSB has set key performance indicators on the training and development work of the CSTDI in its CORs, covering service outputs of classroom training, e-learning programmes and other services such as advice and consultancies (see Table 1 in para. 1.6). The Divisional Administration Unit of the CSTDI is responsible for consolidating inputs from various training units of the CSTDI, the General Grades Office and the Administrative Service Division (see Note to Table 1 in para. 1.6) for compiling performance reports in the CSB's CORs.

Need to review the target levels of some performance targets

4.18 According to CSB Circular No. 7/2009, performance targets should be challenging enough to drive continuous improvement, while being realistic and achievable, and persistent over-achievements may provide a basis for B/Ds to review

Other administrative issues

the pledges and raise the standards. In this connection, Audit has noted that the reported performance for four of the CSTDI's six performance pledges (see items (a), (b), (e) and (f) of Table 2 in para. 1.7) was persistently above the target levels from 2014-15 to 2016-17, as follows:

- (a) ***Submitting service proposals.*** The CSTDI has set time targets for submitting service proposals to B/Ds, i.e. 4 weeks for customised training services and 8 weeks for consultancy services or Human Resources Development studies. Based on an examination of 410 service proposals submitted during the three years from 2014-15 to 2016-17, the actual time taken from receipt of a request to submission of a proposal only averaged 2.9 days (as against the target of 4 weeks) for customised training services, and 4.7 days (as against the target of 8 weeks) for consultancy services or Human Resources Development studies; and
- (b) ***Evaluating service quality.*** The CSTDI has set a service target for 80% of the courses/programmes attaining "very effective" or "outstanding" rating on a 5-point scale by 80% of the trainees. A similar service target has also been set for consultancy services/Human Resources Development studies with 80% of the client departments rating "very satisfied" or "completely satisfied" with the services on a 5-point scale. For both service targets, the actual achievement ranged from 95.5% to 99.5% for the period from 2014-15 to 2016-17, i.e. exceeding the service target of 80%.

In Audit's view, the CSTDI should review the need to raise the service/time targets of the four performance pledges to ensure that they remain useful in motivating continuous improvement.

Need to improve the accuracy of reported performance

4.19 The usefulness of performance information depends on its reliability and validity. To assess the reliability of the performance information reported by the CSTDI, Audit examined the supporting records provided by the CSTDI and found that the actual results of three of the four types of performance indicators reported in the CORs for 2016 and 2017 were less than those shown in the supporting records by 1% to 19% (see Table 15). In Audit's view, there is a need to ascertain the reasons for the discrepancies in the reported performance of the CSTDI for 2016 and 2017 with a view to improving the accuracy in reporting performance information in future.

Table 15

**Discrepancies between CSTDI performance indicators reported
in the CORs and the supporting records
(2016 and 2017)**

Performance indicator	2016			2017		
	Reported in the CORs (a)	Based on supporting records (b)	Discrepancies (c) = [(a) - (b)] / (b) × 100%	Reported in the CORs (d)	Based on supporting records (e)	Discrepancies (f) = [(d) - (e)] / (e) × 100%
(A) Classroom training (Note)						
Trainees	50,677	54,869	-8%	52,338	58,131	-10%
Trainee-days	58,142	58,755	-1%	54,484	62,612	-13%
(B) E-learning programmes						
Learning resources	2,330	2,371	-2%	2,400	2,520	-5%
Page views	4,101,000	5,085,560	-19%	4,120,000	4,739,679	-13%
Visits to the CLC Plus	600,000	644,874	-7%	605,000	612,899	-1%
(C) Departmental services						
Consultancies conducted	270	275	-2%	270	284	-5%
Advice rendered to departments	1,400	1,721	-19%	1,400	1,560	-10%

Source: Audit analysis of CSB records

Note: Audit only examined the records of classroom training provided by the CSTDI but not those provided by the General Grades Office and the Administrative Service Division which were outside the scope of this review.

Need to clearly define services to be covered by a performance target

4.20 The CSTDI reported on the CSB website that its service target for issuing notifications to B/Ds to confirm placement 2 weeks before commencement of courses (see item (d) of Table 2 in para. 1.7) was 100% met in 2016-17. However, based on a sample check of 30 classes, Audit found that for 5 (17%) classes, notifications had only been issued less than 14 days before commencement of the classes, suggesting that the actual achievement of the target was less than the reported 100%. In September 2018, in response to Audit's enquiry, the CSTDI said that:

- (a) the service target for issuing notifications to B/Ds was for regular training programmes, including the CSTDI's year-start, mid-year and bi-monthly calls for nominations, Basic Law Foundation Courses and regular Advanced Management Workshops for senior staff. The CSTDI pledged to issue notifications to B/Ds to confirm placement 2 weeks before commencement of courses; and
- (b) the five classes identified by Audit were all non-regular courses and therefore should be excluded from calculation of the actual results of the performance target.

In Audit's view, the CSTDI should clearly define services to be covered by the performance target to improve the clarity of the expected level of services (see para. 2.19).

Audit recommendations

4.21 **Audit has *recommended* that the Secretary for the Civil Service should:**

- (a) **review the need to raise the service/time targets of the four performance pledges with persistent over-achievement to ensure that they remain useful in motivating continuous improvement;**
- (b) **ascertain the reasons for the discrepancies in the reported performance of the CSTDI for 2016 and 2017 with a view to improving the accuracy in reporting performance information; and**

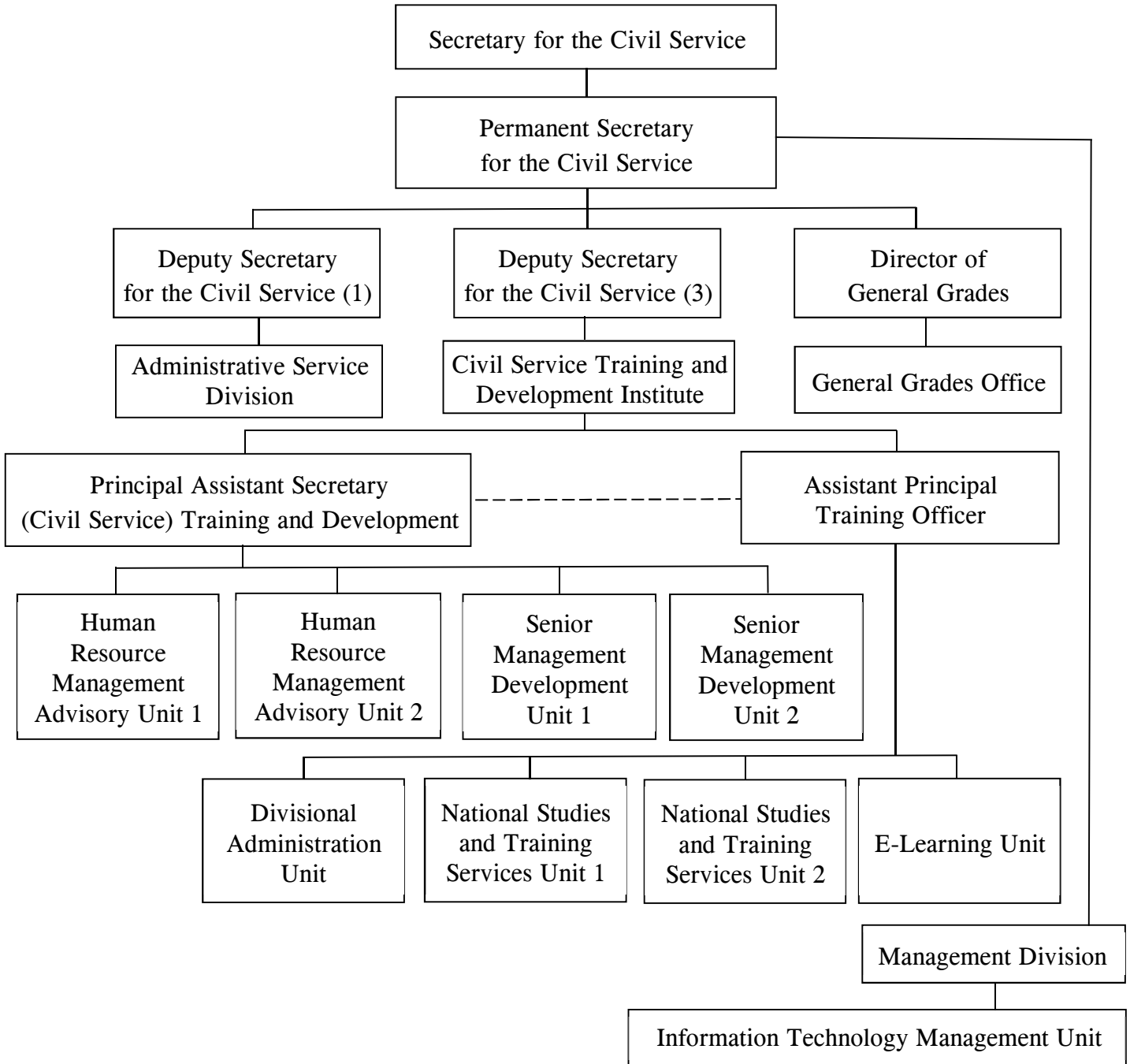
- (c) **clearly define services to be covered by the performance target for issuing notifications to B/Ds to confirm placement.**

Response from the Government

4.22 The Secretary for the Civil Service generally agrees with the audit recommendations. He has said that:

- (a) the actual outputs of the performance indicators were generally higher than those reported in the 2016 and 2017 CORs as more time was required to collate and cross-check certain statistics and the CSTDI adopted a prudent approach to compile the figures in the CORs; and
- (b) the CSTDI will explore ways to cut short the time required for collating and cross-checking the key statistics.

**Civil Service Bureau:
 Organisation chart (extract)
 (31 March 2018)**



Source: CSB records

Remarks: Each unit under the CSTDI is headed by a Chief Training Officer, except the Divisional Administration Unit, which was headed by a Senior Executive Officer up to 2 July 2018 and is headed by a Chief Executive Officer effective from 3 July 2018.

Layout plans of training venues and facilities (31 March 2018)

1. Training venues and facilities located on the third floor of the NPGO



2. Training venues and facilities located on the fifth floor of the NPGO



Legend:	C1 to C11	Classrooms
	LRC	Learning Resource Centre
	LR1, LR 2A and LR 2B	Lecture rooms
	EC 1 and EC 2	Executive classrooms
	MFA 1 and MFA 2	Multi-function areas
	Rm 517 to Rm 521	Syndicate rooms
	CR	Computer room
	C12	Lactation room

Source: CSB records

Acronyms and abbreviations

Audit	Audit Commission
B/Ds	Bureaux/departments
CLC Plus	Cyber Learning Centre Plus
COR	Controlling Officer's Report
CSB	Civil Service Bureau
CSD	Correctional Services Department
CSTDI	Civil Service Training and Development Institute
FSD	Fire Services Department
GovHRMS	Government Human Resources Management Services
HKPF	Hong Kong Police Force
LRC	Learning Resource Centre
MFA	Multi-function area
MPS	Master Pay Scale
NCSC	Non-civil service contract
NPGO	North Point Government Offices
OGCIO	Office of the Government Chief Information Officer
SORS	Shared Online Reservation System
SPRs	Stores and Procurement Regulations
TAS	Training Administration System
TIAS	Training Information and Administration System
TRM	Training Management Module
TSS	Training Sponsorship Scheme
TSSF	Training Sponsorship Scheme for Frontline Staff