

## **Women's Commission**

### **Training Support for Women**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on Employees Retraining Board (ERB)'s training courses and services to women, as well as the latest enhancement measures of Continuing Education Fund (CEF).

#### **(I) ERB's Training Support for Women**

##### ***Training Courses and Services for All Eligible Persons***

2. ERB is an independent statutory body established in 1992 under the Employees Retraining Ordinance. ERB coordinates, funds and monitors training courses and services offered by some 80 appointed training bodies. There are around 360 training centres across the territory. The service targets of ERB are those aged 15 or above with education attainment at sub-degree level or below. ERB courses are market-driven and employment-oriented. It offers around 700 training courses with market demand and employment prospect, straddling 28 industries and generic skills training.

3. In 2019-20, ERB provides 140 000 training places and earmarks an additional 30 000 training places as reserve in order to promptly respond to possible changes in the employment market. The three major categories of ERB courses are:

- (i) Placement-tied courses: Generally in full-time mode, these courses are dedicated for the unemployed and assist in equipping trainees with vocational skills required by the market as well as personal attributes and job search skills. Training bodies provide 3-6 months' placement follow-up services for trainees who had attained an attendance rate of at least 80% to help them

enter the job market<sup>1</sup>. Courses are free-of-charge. Eligible trainees are granted retraining allowances<sup>2</sup>.

- (ii) Generic skills training courses: Generally in part-time or evening mode, these are non-placement-tied courses provided to the unemployed or in-service eligible persons, assisting in equipping trainees with generic skills applicable in different industries including foundation skills (such as vocational languages, e.g. English, Chinese and Putonghua), IT applications, business numeracy and personal attributes, etc. Courses are fee-charging. Trainees may apply for fee waiver or payment of “highly subsidised fee” according to their income levels<sup>3</sup>.
- (iii) “Skills Upgrading Scheme Plus” (SUS Plus) courses: Generally in part-time or evening mode, these are non-placement-tied courses assisting the unemployed or in-service eligible persons in enhancing the skills level of practitioners and fostering their attainment of multi-dimensional skills. Non-practitioners considering switching jobs may enrol in some of these courses which provide them with basic knowledge of the industries for broadening their employment opportunities and enhancing understanding of the industries. Course fee is determined by

<sup>1</sup> During the placement follow-up period, training bodies will provide trainees with job vacancy information, job matching and referral services, and post-employment follow-up. In the past 3 years (i.e. 2016-17 to 2018-19), the overall placement rate (percentage of trainees who engaged in employment during the placement follow-up period over the number of trainees who completed the placement-tied courses) of female trainees who had completed the placement-tied courses was about 84%.

<sup>2</sup> Retraining allowance is determined by types of training courses and categories of trainees as follows:

Types of training courses	Categories of trainees	Retraining allowance per day
Placement-tied “Foundation Certificate” courses	Trainees aged 30 or above and with educational attainment of Secondary 3 or below	\$153.8
	Other eligible trainees	\$70
Placement-tied “Certificate” or “Diploma” courses	All eligible trainees	\$70
“Youth Training Programme” courses	All eligible trainees	\$30

<sup>3</sup> Course fee for non-placement-tied course is determined by income level of applicants:

Type of course fee	Income level
Course fee waiver	Nil income or monthly income of \$11,000 or below
“Highly subsidised fee”	Monthly income between \$11,001 and \$19,500
“Normal subsidised fee”	Monthly income of \$19,501 or above

income levels of trainees as well.

4. In the past 3 years (i.e. 2016-17 to 2018-19), the number of trainees enrolled in courses offered by ERB was around 120 000 per year. Over 80% of them were female. The number of trainees enrolled in ERB courses by gender, age and education attainment are listed in **Annex**.

### ***Training Courses and Services to Cater for Women's Needs***

5. Training courses and services that cater for women's needs are as follows:

#### **(a) Training courses**

6. Women trainees may apply for around 700 courses<sup>4</sup> offered by ERB having regard to their career aspirations, interests and training needs. Apart from full-time placement-tied courses, women with family commitments may enroll in SUS Plus courses and generic skills training courses offered in part-time or evening mode taking into account their own circumstances.

7. In recent years, in terms of the enrollment ratio, the most popular placement-tied courses among female trainees are “Foundation Certificate in Post-natal Care Worker Training”, “Foundation Certificate in Nail Technician Training” and “Foundation Certificate in Junior Beautician Training”. For non-placement-ties courses, the most popular ones are those related to knowledge on post-natal care, such as post-natal diet concepts, breast feeding and infant special care, and awareness of pediatrics diseases and common medicine, etc. Almost all of the trainees enrolled in these courses are women.

#### **(b) “First-Hire-Then-Train” Scheme**

8. ERB has been implementing “First-Hire-Then-Train” Scheme since 2015-16, in which participating employers suitably modify the working hours and leave arrangements of trainees to cater for their family commitments, and provide on-the-job training and other related support measures to encourage middle-aged women and homemakers to enter the employment market. The

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<sup>4</sup> As all courses are suitable for enrollment by women, ERB does not provide dedicated courses specifically for women.

Scheme has so far covered industries such as healthcare services, hotel, environmental services, transportation and support services, etc. Target jobs include care workers and cleaners in residential care homes for the elderly, hotel room attendants, shop cleaning assistants, dish washing workers, tunnel traffic officer trainees, etc. ERB will outreach for more employers of different industries to participate in the Scheme.

(c) Modular Certificates Accumulation Scheme

9. Modular Certificates Accumulation Scheme of ERB encourages women who are unable to pursue full-time courses due to family commitments to make flexible study arrangements and acquire recognised qualifications. Trainees on completion of specified half-day or evening courses may apply for a certificate recognised under the “Qualifications Framework” (QF) as a qualification equivalent to the corresponding full-time course. Currently, the Scheme has covered courses such as “Foundation Certificate in Post-natal Care Worker Training”, “Foundation Certificate in Care Worker Training”, “Foundation Certificate in Infant and Child Care Worker Training” and “Foundation Certificate in Occupational Therapist Assistant Training”. ERB will extend the scope of the Scheme this year to cover “Certificate in Health Worker Training” course to broaden the options of trainees and supply more manpower resources for the industry.

(d) Credit Accumulation and Transfer

10. ERB has been actively participating in the “Credit Accumulation and Transfer” (CAT) policy<sup>5</sup> under QF implemented by Education Bureau in 2014 to encourage trainees to pursue lifelong learning. Currently, holders of graduation certificate of the “Foundation Certificate in Property and Facility Management (Part-time)” course under ERB may apply for exemption of a specific module when applying for the course of “Certificate in Property and Facilities Management” organised by Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education under Vocational Training Council<sup>6</sup>.

11. In 2019-20, ERB will expand the coverage of CAT in collaboration

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<sup>5</sup> Under this policy, learners having acquired a qualification may accumulate credits, which can be counted in (or transferred to) another qualification, thereby reducing the need of learners for duplicated learning and the time and money involved.

<sup>6</sup> The module concerned is “Fire Safety Measures and Incident Handling” (total 6 QF credits).

with other education institutions to dovetail the newly launched centralised CAT database (the database)<sup>7</sup> promoted by Education Bureau. In this context, ERB will explore with Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) and the Open University of Hong Kong on the feasibility of allowing graduates of designated programmes<sup>8</sup> under Capacity Building Mileage Programme to apply for exemption of two designated modules, namely “Foundation Certificate in Personal Attributes (Part-time)” and “Foundation Certificate in Job Search Skills (Part-time)”, upon enrolment in specified programmes under ERB’s Modular Certificates Accumulation Scheme. In the long run, ERB will actively explore regularising the CAT arrangements, further extending the coverage, and actively pursuing feasibility of CAT arrangements with the higher-level courses offered by other education institutions.

(e) “Tailor-made Training Course for Part-timers” Pilot Scheme

12. Last year, (i.e. 2018-19), ERB launched the “Tailor-made Training Course for Part-timers” pilot scheme, providing short-term training in the hotel and property management & security industries to facilitate women and homemakers, etc. to take up part-time jobs in these industries. In 2019-20, ERB will extend the scheme to catering, tourism, retail and hotel industries which face labour shortage.

(f) Job Referral Platforms

13. ERB has three job referral platforms which assist women and other social groups to land in jobs:

- (i) “Smart Living”: The “Smart Living” referral platform for domestic services was launched since 2009 to provide free matching and referral services of relevant job vacancies for trainees who have completed ERB courses in the areas of domestic cleaning, care and massage. “Smart Living” receives an average of 39 000 vacancies a year, of which about 71% are filled. As at March 2019, about 22 000 trainees have registered

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<sup>7</sup> In October 2018, Education Bureau promoted its newly introduced CAT arrangement by incorporating CAT information and programme articulation arrangements in the centralised CAT database under the Qualifications Register (QR). The database does not only strengthen the transparency and communication of CAT arrangements between institutions and programmes, but also provides a platform for public members to check CAT arrangements of qualifications on QR.

<sup>8</sup> Including two programmes, namely “Job Searching Skills” and “Life Planning and Management”.

with “Smart Living”, of which 99% are women.

- (ii) “Smart Baby Care”: The “Smart Baby Care” Scheme was launched since 2013 to provide free job matching and referral services for graduate trainees of post-natal care and infant and child care courses of ERB. “Smart Baby Care” receives an average of 3 500 vacancies a year, of which about 43% are filled. As at March 2019, about 19 000 trainees have registered with “Smart Baby Care” and they are all women.
- (iii) “Smart Starter”: The “Smart Starter” pilot scheme was launched since 2016 for new arrivals (especially women) who have completed ERB courses or designated workshops, providing one-stop referral of part-time jobs and follow-up services as well as a host of value-added support measures including mutual support groups. As at March 2019, about 12 000 trainees have registered with “Smart Starter”, of which 91% of them are women.

(g) District Support and Promotional Activities

14. ERB has set up 2 “ERB Service Centres” and 22 “ERB Service Spots” in districts, and will set up 15 additional “ERB Service Spots” in Kowloon East in 2019-20, providing diversified support services to social groups with special needs, such as workshops on career planning, industry seminars and work experience activities, etc. Employers may also arrange on-site interviews for interested participants. ERB has also launched the Outreaching Training Consultancy Service by actively liaising with social groups with special needs and providing them with information on training and employment market. Besides, in 2018-19, ERB sponsored training bodies to organise a total of 57 district promotional activities through the “Funding Programme for Courses and Industries”, among which 50 activities were targeted at women.

***Enhanced Support for Mature Persons***

15. In 2019-20, ERB will enhance the training and employment support for mature persons aged 50 or above (including mature female), and launch special programmes and promotional campaigns with a view to unleashing the latent workforce. In the past 3 years, over half of the 120 000 trainees enrolled in ERB courses per year were aged 50 or above.

16. In addition to the around 700 training courses, ERB also provides support services for mature persons, including extending the service targets of “Smart Starter” on a pilot basis from January 2019 to mature persons aged 50 or above who have completed ERB courses or designated workshops.

17. To step up support for mature persons with training and employment needs, ERB will launch the “Post-50 Branding Campaign” and promotional activities<sup>9</sup>, “Post-50 Internship Programme”<sup>10</sup> and “Post-50 Love Upgrading Scheme”<sup>11</sup> in 2019-20.

18. ERB will also explore enhanced collaborations with the Labour Department, including installation of automatic service kiosks of “Training Net” in its Job Centres and strengthening ERB’s outreaching training consultancy service, in order to provide timely information and referral service to those interested in training courses.

## **(II) Latest Enhancement Measures of Continuing Education Fund (CEF)**

19. Set up by the Government in 2002, CEF provides subsidies to adults with learning aspirations to meet the development need of an increasingly globalised and knowledge-based economy of Hong Kong, and encourages local working population to pursue continuing education to better equip themselves. Hong Kong residents<sup>12</sup>, irrespective of their education level, employment and financial status, may apply for the CEF subsidy. Course providers may design and develop courses in accordance with the market demand, and apply for registering courses under CEF. As at end March 2019, around 7 800

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<sup>9</sup> ERB will use a new title “Post-50” for persons aged 50 or above, and promotes the unique advantages of the “Post-50”, including possession of extensive life and working experience, handling matters in a mature way, commitment to the work, etc., with a view to arousing public recognition to the latent workforce of “Post-50”, encouraging “Post-50” to upgrade and enhance skills as well as encouraging employers to recruit more “Post-50”.

<sup>10</sup> “Post-50 Internship Programme” will be launched in September 2019 to encourage “Post-50” who have retired but with aspirations and capability for employment or plan to change job to re-enter the employment market through short-term internship for strengthening their skillset and mindset.

<sup>11</sup> The special programme of “Post-50 Love Upgrading Scheme” will be launched from June to August 2019 to allow “Post-50” to enrol in one half-day or evening non-placement-tied course free of charge, with a view to encouraging them to learn about and enrol in ERB courses. The limitation on educational attainment for enrollment will be relaxed as appropriate.

<sup>12</sup> A Hong Kong resident who has the right of abode or the right to land or to remain in Hong Kong without restriction; or a holder of one-way permit from Mainland China

reimbursable courses under CEF (CEF courses) are offered by over 300 course providers. Applicants may determine the use of subsidy by enrolling in CEF course(s) suiting their needs best. As at end February 2019, a cumulative total of about 870 000 applications for opening CEF accounts were approved, of which 57% were female. In the past three years, based on the number of beneficiaries, the most popular CEF course categories among female learners are languages, financial services, beauty & hairdressing, business services and design.

20. After completing a review on CEF, the Government injected an additional funding of \$10 billion to CEF last year for implementation of a series of enhancement measures effective from 1 April this year. This would further encourage the public to better equip themselves through continuing education. The enhancement measures include doubling the subsidy ceiling to \$20,000 per applicant, raising the upper age limit for applicants from 65 to 70, expanding the scope of CEF courses to all eligible courses registered in the QR, streamlining application procedures and lifting the restrictions on validity period and number of claims, and enhancing the quality assurance monitoring of CEF courses, etc. All those who once opened a CEF account are eligible for the enhancement measures. These measures will greatly increase the choices and flexibility for learners.

21. The publicity and promotion on CEF and the enhancement measures has launched since early 2019. We will closely keep in view the implementation progress after the enhancement.

### **Advice Sought**

22. Members are invited to note the content of the paper and offer comments.

Labour and Welfare Bureau  
Executive Office of Employees Retraining Board  
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## Distribution of Trainees Enrolled in ERB Courses by Gender, Age and Education Attainment in 2016-17 to 2018-19

Gender

	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%
Male	22 050	18%	22 240	18%	22 652	18%
<b>Female</b>	<b>100 660</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>98 060</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>104 284</b>	<b>82%</b>
Total	122 710	100%	120 300	100%	126 936	100%

Age

	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%
15 – 19	1 960	2%	1 730	1%	1 631	1%
20 – 29	10 020	8%	9 790	8%	9 064	7%
30 – 39	19 740	16%	19 300	16%	19 437	15%
40 – 49	27 890	23%	27 120	23%	27 574	22%
<b>50 – 59</b>	<b>39 020</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>37 240</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>38 968</b>	<b>31%</b>
60 or above	24 080	20%	25 120	21%	30 262	24%
Total	122 710	100%	120 300	100%	126 936	100%

Education Attainment

	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%	No. of Enrolled Trainees	%
Primary or below	9 690	8%	8 360	7%	8 900	7%
<b>Secondary 1 – 3</b>	<b>40 150</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>37 640</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>38 055</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Secondary 4 – 5</b>	<b>47 440</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>47 640</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>51 382</b>	<b>40%</b>
Secondary 6 – 7	14 250	12%	14 510	12%	15 358	12%
Sub-degree or individual above sub-degree level <sup>13</sup>	11 180	9%	12 150	10%	13 241	10%
Total	122 710	100%	120 300	100%	126 936	100%

Remark: The sum of percentage may not be equal to 100% due to rounding.

<sup>13</sup> ERB courses are targeted for persons aged 15 or above with education attainment at sub-degree level or below. Under very exceptional circumstances, applicants who are with higher education attainment but can prove that they have genuine difficulties in job seeking/switching may apply for discretionary approval for admission to ERB courses.