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VTC initiative will offer real-life work experience for students and more skilled personnel for the retail industry

The Vocational Training Council's (VTC) Retail Lab, which was launched today, represents "a key measure" in a drive to satisfy an industry where manpower demands outstrip that of most other sectors, according to HKSAR Financial Secretary John Tsang.

Officiating at an opening ceremony alongside and Dr Clement CHEN, Chairman of VTC, and Chairman of Hong Kong Retail Management Association Caroline MAK, Mr Tsang said it is estimated that the retail industry's manpower demand will grow at an average annual rate of 1.2% between 2012 and 2022, higher than the general local manpower demand of 0.9%.

"In order to satisfy this demand, multiple measures will be continued including investment in training, attracting talent and strengthening the reputation of Hong Kong as a 'shopping paradise'. As part of the Government's \$30 billion funding support in last year's Budget, the implementation of a Retail Lab was one of several suggestions from the Task Force on Manpower Development of the Retail Industry adopted to enhance productivity and strengthen vocational education and training."

"VTC is committed to providing quality professional education and training, constantly improving the learning and teaching environment," he stressed. "In the past we have set up several simulated learning centres for aviation, film and television production, design, accounting and engineering, to cater for the teaching needs of different disciplines. The newly launched Retail Lab will provide students with genuine integration with the retail industry as well as an inspiring learning environment."

Chairman of Hong Kong Retail Management Association, Caroline MAK said, "Thanks to the efforts of different parties, the Earn & Learn Pilot Scheme has already become an efficient way to nurture talents. We believe the launch of Foundation Diploma and Higher Diploma will bring even greater success."

The simulated retail shop, Retail Lab, a collaboration between VTC, the Government and industry, is expected to go a considerable way towards satisfying manpower demand.



Equipped with advanced teaching facilities which will enable young people to fully acquire the knowledge and skills demanded by the retail industry, it will nurture talent while contributing to Hong Kong's economic development, believes Dr Clement CHEN, Chairman of VTC.

Retail Lab is one part of the Earn & Learn Pilot Scheme, a tripartite collaboration between the Government, industry and VTC which integrates structured vocational education and on-the-job training with clear progression pathways and provides apprentices with a steady income. VTC has implemented six key industries since 2014, introducing training modes tailored for the operational needs and development of the electrical/construction, printing, retail, watch/clock and automobile sectors.

Retail Lab is equipped with professional teaching facilities and designed to simulate real-life work environments offering different retail services such as beauty care, fashion, watch and jewelry and supermarkets. It helps enrich the learning experience of IVE students and equip them for future career development.

Providing advanced industry software and equipment, such as Virtual Learning software and LED screens, which enable the filming of real-life work environments, Retail Lab is also equipped with POS and Smart Tray and RFID EAS.

For the 2015/16 academic year, the Earn & Learn Pilot Scheme for Retail Industry offers programmes at both foundation diploma and higher diploma levels for Secondary 6 students to choose according to their ability and needs.

A collaboration between the Government, the Hong Kong Retail Management Association and the VTC, the Pilot Scheme for Retail Industry integrates structured classroom learning and on-the-job training to provide participants with an opportunity to pursue a well-defined progression path. Participants can “earn and learn” during their studies, enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills, as well as enjoying a steady income and allowances from the Government and employers.

Tailored for Secondary 6 school leavers or above, the newly added Higher Diploma in Retail and Merchandising Management of Pilot Scheme for Retail Industry academic year will start this September. Participants enrolled for the 30-month “Higher Diploma in Retail and Merchandising Management” will attend classes at IVE for three days and acquire a

further three days' work experience every week, averaging a total of 27 weekly working hours.

The Pilot Scheme offers generous compensation and clear career progression pathways. With the employer's sponsorship equivalent to \$2,500 per month, participants will only need to pay an average of \$1,250 tuition fee per month during the training period. Participants will also be guaranteed the employer's remuneration of an average of \$5,500 per month and a Government allowance averaging \$2,000 per month, making the average monthly income \$7,500. Upon graduation, participants will be offered an income of no less than \$11,000 per month if they go on to become full-time employees of participating companies. Higher Diploma graduates can also opt to pursue further studies to acquire higher academic qualifications such as top-up degree.

Launched in July last year, the Pilot Scheme for Retail Industry has received solid support from the industry with nearly 50 participating company brands, covering more than ten retail categories including fashion and accessories, watch and jewelry, cosmetics, electronic and electrical appliances.

Established in 1982, the Vocational Training Council (VTC) is the largest vocational and professional education and training provider in Hong Kong with some 250,000 students and trainees each year. The mission of VTC is to provide a valued choice to school leavers and working people to acquire the values, knowledge and skills for lifelong learning and enhanced employability, and also to provide valued supports to industries for their manpower development. VTC has 13 member institutions including the Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong (THEi), the Institute of Professional Education And Knowledge (PEAK), the School for Higher and Professional Education (SHAPE), the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE), the Hong Kong Design Institute (HKDI), Hotel and Tourism Institute (HTI), Chinese Culinary Institute (CCI), International Culinary Institute (ICI), Maritime Services Training Institute (MSTI), Youth College, Pro-Act by VTC, Integrated Vocational Development Centre (IVDC) and Shine Skills Centre.

VTC website: www.vtc.edu.hk

Photo Captions



Photo 1: Officiating at the Opening Ceremony for the Retail Lab, HKSAR Financial Secretary John TSANG (centre), Chairman of VTC Dr Clement CHEN (third from right), Chairman of Sham Shui Po District Council Jimmy KWOK (second from left) Chairman of Hong Kong Retail Management Association Caroline MAK (second from left), and Executive Director of VTC Carrie YAU (second from right) turned a new page for nurturing talents of the retail industry



Photo 2: A collaboration with the retail industry, VTC produces virtual learning teaching materials



Photo 3: Officiating guests visited the Smart Tray demonstrations



Photo 4 : Participants on the Pilot Scheme for Retail shared their learning experiences with the guests