

PRESS RELEASE

22 April 2010

FOR IMMEDIATE REPORTING

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE COUNCIL FOR PRIVATE EDUCATION STUDENT SERVICES CENTRE

1. The Council for Private Education (CPE) has established the Student Services Centre (SSC) to promote consumer awareness of the private education industry. The Centre was declared open by Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence, today. The SSC will spearhead CPE's consumer education initiatives and provide student support services.

Building Consumer Sophistication

2. The SSC will provide greater information to guide prospective students in making informed educational choices. These include producing public education collaterals, such as brochures, student handbooks and relevant checklists, and running outreach programmes, awareness campaigns and education advisory talks for prospective students. Information on the private education sector will also be provided on its website.

Providing Support to Students

3. As CPE's primary customer interface with students and the public, the SSC serves as its first-stop centre to handle enquiries or complaints from students. It will advise and direct students with more serious complaint cases to the relevant parties for follow-up actions, including enforcement interventions when regulatory contraventions are involved. In the event of closure of private education institutions (PEIs), the SSC will also play an integral role in providing support for affected students by managing their queries and ensuring that they are kept updated on the processes of their fee refunds and/or course transfer schedules.

4. To better protect student welfare, the CPE, Singapore Mediation Centre (SMC) and the Singapore Institute of Arbitrators (SIArb) officially signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding today to establish the CPE Mediation-Arbitration Scheme, a structured and cost-effective dispute resolution mechanism to cater to the needs of students and PEIs. The scheme marks the commitment by the three parties towards providing a structured, independent, and cost-effective avenue for the resolution of disputes involving students and PEIs. The SSC will act as the referral agency for students who require assistance in resolving disputes with PEIs through the scheme.

Developing Partnerships with Agencies

5. To extend SSC's public education initiatives and student support functions, the CPE will also develop a strong network of partnerships with relevant local and overseas agencies, such as the Singapore Tourism Board, Economic Development Board, IE Singapore, Ministry of Foreign Affairs' overseas missions and the Consumer Association of Singapore (CASE). These strategic partnerships will allow CPE to reach out to prospective international students by leveraging on these agencies' existing resources and networks.

Developing the Private Education Sector

6. Regulatory measures alone are not sufficient to build a trusted and well-regarded private education sector to support Singapore's position as an education hub. The CPE will embark on a major initiative to formulate a five-year industry development roadmap for the sector. This initiative will be done in close consultation with other government agencies and industry partners, to meet the manpower development needs of the private education sector.

7. The roadmap would be tiered such that PEIs are able to progressively upgrade themselves for continual capability enhancement and improvement. The roadmap will take a holistic approach to facilitate teacher training, as well as the upgrading of skills for administrators, managers and school leaders of PEIs. It would also cover initiatives to build brand equity of the private education sector. More details of the roadmap will be provided when they are ready.

8. In the immediate term, the CPE will work on initiatives to assist PEIs to prepare for the higher standards of the Enhanced Registration Framework and EduTrust Certification Scheme.

COUNCIL FOR PRIVATE EDUCATION

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