

11,000 hostel units to be built for students

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An additional 11,000 hostel places are to be built to ensure all undergraduate students can stay in hostels for at least one year of their courses.

The new policy, announced yesterday by Secretary for Education and Manpower Joseph Wong Wing-ping, will cost the Government \$1.6 billion.

But it is still not known when the hostels will be completed, as it depends on whether the institutes can bid for extra land and resources for the construction.

And the number to be built is only half that suggested by the University Grants Committee.

The committee had recommended in its report on higher education development that hostel places for tertiary students should increase by 21,200 to provide a "full campus life".

At present about 8,200 students from the University of Hong Kong, Chinese Uni-

versity, University of Science and Technology and Lingnan College enjoy government-funded residences.

About 3,560 more places will be built for these universities, under the new pledge made yesterday.

The City, Baptist and Polytechnic universities, which do not have any student hostels, can expect a total of about 7,300 places.

"Hostel life will provide an opportunity for students of different disciplines and backgrounds to meet and participate in extra-curricular activities.

"Their communication and social skills will also be improved," said Mr Wong.

Students who are studying in undergraduate programmes will be given at least one year's stay in a hostel.

Those in research postgraduate programmes, overseas students and undergraduate students whose daily travelling time exceeds four hours, will also benefit.

The Government will

meet 75 per cent of the construction cost. Individual institutes will have to raise money to pay the rest of the costs. They will also have to bid for land sites.

The Baptist University and City University have shown interest in sites near their existing campuses. The Polytechnic University intends to bid for a site at the Hunghom reclamation.

The Hong Kong University may have to do a feasibility study on its own campus to squeeze some place for further construction.

The Chinese University and the University of Science and Technology still have room to expand on their existing campuses.

Thomas Ip of the Chinese University's Provisional Students' Council said hostel places should be allocated to students who travel for two hours or more daily.

He said the Government should also fix a time schedule for completion of the hostels.