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## Agency's staff woes grow

By STELLA LEE

THE agency that provides financial aid to needy tertiary students, already suffering a labour shortage, may require additional staff to cope with an increased number of applications following the Governor's pledge on extra subsidies.

The Student Financial Assistance Agency has already been under attack for failing to provide cash for tuition fees to students in time for them to secure an institutional place.

While about \$1.3 million has already been sought to recruit an extra five permanent and 10 temporary staff to handle the soaring workload next year, the agency will have to look at whether the expansion will be adequate after last Wednesday's policy address.

The agency controller, Alfred Wong Wai-kin, said more applicants were expected as Governor Chris Patten had promised to give an extra \$325 million to subsidise students' tuition fees.

An extra 1,400 students are expected to become eligible for financial assistance on top of 4,800 existing beneficiaries who will receive a higher amount of aid over the next four years.

Mr Wong said the agency could not guarantee that the application results or the subsidies could be given to students in time.

"This is because we cannot control the time when the students would apply. We usually need three months to complete a case. We encourage students to apply earlier," he said.