

NOTE FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

Fourth Annual Progress Report on the Use of the Grant to Support the Assessment Development and Research Activities of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the progress of the use of the one-off grant to support the assessment development and research activities of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). This is the fourth report covering the period from March 2007 to February 2008.

BACKGROUND

2. On 27 February 2004, Members approved vide FCR(2003-04)65 a commitment of \$136.7 million for providing a one-off grant to support the assessment development and research activities of the HKEAA for about five years from 2004 to 2009 (“the grant”). The Administration undertook to inform Members of the progress of the use of the funding through annual reporting.

3. The grant covers four categories of activities, namely –
- (a) assessment development;
 - (b) use of technology to improve public examinations;
 - (c) long-term regular guarding and comparison of students’ standards and performance; and
 - (d) strengthening support to teachers.

Encl.

4. At the time when we sought funding approval from the Finance Committee, we explained that the grant was needed for HKEAA to carry out the assessment development and research activities to improve the public examinations, regardless of the way forward of the proposed new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education. The improvement measures of HKEAA could accommodate the necessary changes to pave way for the implementation of the new academic structure. Based on the current timetable of the Government to implement the new academic structure starting from the 2009/10 school year and the latest development of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, HKEAA has updated the master timetable of activities as set out in the Enclosure. In order to cater for the development of the NSS curriculum and assessment, as well as the new Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination to be launched in 2012, HKEAA estimates that some activities financed by the grant will be extended beyond the original five-year project period. We will continue to monitor the progress and update the master timetable accordingly.

MONITORING THE USE OF THE GRANT

5. In March 2004, the then Education and Manpower Bureau signed a Letter of Agreement with the HKEAA with details consistent with the proposal set out in FCR(2003-04)65. The letter specified the ambit of the assessment development and research activities to be undertaken by HKEAA. The HKEAA has opened a separate bank account for the grant, kept separate accounts of the income and expenditure relating to the grant, and submitted to the Government separate annual audited financial statements of the grant. The last such financial statement submitted to the Government recorded the financial position as at the end of August 2007.

6. Monitoring of the use of the grant has been conducted in accordance with the existing governance structure of the HKEAA, which comprises the HKEAA Council and the three committees/boards under it, namely the Finance and Audit Committee (FAC), the Research and Development Committee (R&DC) and the Public Examinations Board (PEB). The R&DC and the PEB approve the technical proposals of the projects in their respective areas, as appropriate, and recommend reports of projects for approval by the HKEAA Council. The FAC monitors the use of the grant through regular reports of the financial position of the grant prepared by the HKEAA Secretariat. The FAC also recommends the master budget and annual audited financial statements of the grant for approval by the HKEAA Council.

/PROGRESS

PROGRESS OF THE USE OF THE GRANT

7. HKEAA reported the progress of the use of the grant as follows –

- (a) the progress of the activities supported by the grant as at 29 February 2008 under the updated master timetable and progress of the activities is set out in the Enclosure; and
- (b) the expenditure and commitment position of the grant as at 29 February 2008 are set out in the table below.

Category	(1) Projected required funding as at 27 February 2004 (\$ million)	(2) Actual expenditure as at 29 February 2008 (\$ million)	(3) Amount committed as at 29 February 2008 (\$ million)	(4)=(1)-(2)-(3) Balance as at 29 February 2008 (\$ million)
(A) Assessment development	113.3	48.5	22.4	42.4
(B) Use of technology to improve public examinations	8.7	3.6	0.3	4.8
(C) Long-term regular guarding and comparison of students' standards and performance	11.0	0.7	1.3	9.0
(D) Strengthening support to teachers	11.8	1.7	0.3	9.8
Sub-total	144.8	54.5	24.3	66.0
Less : Estimated interest to be generated from the grant	(8.1)	(11.9) ^{Note}	-	3.8
Amount of approved grant	136.7	42.6	24.3	69.8

Note – \$11.9 million is the actual interest generated from the grant as at 29 February 2008.

8. As shown in the above table, about 54% of the total of the approved grant and estimated interest to be generated from the grant had been spent or committed as at the end of February 2008. The progress as well as the spending and commitment of the activities in the period accord with the updated master timetable.

Education Bureau
July 2008

**UPDATED MASTER TIMETABLE OF
ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES OF
HKEAA**

Activities	2004				2005				2006				2007				2008				2009				2010				2011							
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4				
A Assessment development																																				
A1 Standards-referenced examinations - research																																				
A1 Standards-referenced examinations - development and implementation																																				
A2 School-based assessments - research																																				
A2 School-based assessments - implementation																																				
A3 New assessment methods - research																																				
A3 New assessment methods - implementation																																				
A4 Marking reliability - study																																				
A5 Redevelopment of computer systems																																				
B Use of technology to improve public examinations																																				
B1 On-line marking – pilot study																																				
B2 On-line delivery of public examinations - study																																				
C Long-term regular guarding and comparison of students' standards and performance																																				
C1 Introduction of standard benchmarking tests (selected subjects)																																				
C2 Studies to compare the performance of candidates in public examinations (selected subjects) across years																																				
C3 Comparability study between local and overseas English language examinations																																				
D Strengthening support to teachers																																				
D1 Quantitative and qualitative feedback to schools – survey and pilot study																																				
D2 Assessment training for teachers																																				