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Panel on Education

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the special meeting on 30 March 2009**

New academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education

Purpose

This paper summarizes the issues of concern raised by the Panel on Education (the Panel) concerning the new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education.

Background

2. In 2000, the Education Commission (EC) recommended the adoption of a three-year senior secondary academic system to facilitate the implementation of a more flexible, coherent and diversified senior secondary curriculum. In May 2003, EC set out the proposals for developing a new senior secondary and higher education academic structure (the 334 structure). In his 2004 Policy Address, the Chief Executive confirmed the policy direction of developing the new academic structure.
3. The Administration issued in October 2004 a consultation paper entitled "*Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education*" which set out the design blueprint, the implementation timetable and the financial arrangements of the 334 structure. The consultation exercise ended on 19 January 2005.
4. On 18 May 2005, the Administration published the Report entitled "*The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education - Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong*". The Report summarized the results of the consultation exercise and set out the road map for implementing the 334 structure in 2009-2010.
5. In January 2006, the Administration published a consultation document

entitled "*Action for the Future - Further Consultation on Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools*". In August 2006, the Administration published another report entitled "*Action for the Future - Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools*".

Deliberations of the Panel

6. Over the past few years, the Panel held a number of meetings to discuss the new 334 structure and to receive views from educational bodies and student organizations. The issues of concern raised by members concerning the 334 structure are set out in the following paragraphs.

Curriculum and assessment framework

Liberal Studies

7. Members, in general, expressed support for the implementation of the 334 structure with three-year junior secondary and three-year senior secondary education linking to four-year undergraduate university programmes. They, however, were concerned about the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum, in particular about the curriculum design, assessment, pedagogies, and class size for teaching Liberal Studies which would be one of the four core subjects at senior secondary levels. Members considered that Liberal Studies should only be included as a core subject when sufficient experienced teachers were available and appropriate pedagogies, assessment mechanisms, and support measures had been put in place. According to a survey conducted by a political party, teachers, in general, considered that the Education Bureau (EDB) had not provided sufficient professional development and support for teachers to teach the subject.

8. The Administration pointed out that the subject of Liberal Studies was currently taught at the Advanced Supplementary Level. Good practices developed and experience gained from teaching Liberal Studies, Integrated Humanities, and Science and Technology under the existing curriculum would be used to support schools which had little experience in teaching the subject. Schools were encouraged to start teaching Integrated Humanities and Science and Technology in senior secondary classes so that their teachers could start teaching topics covered by Liberal Studies at an early opportunity. A web-based resource platform was launched in mid-2005 to provide the basic knowledge which underpinned the Liberal Studies curriculum for teachers' reference. An association of Liberal Studies teachers, comprising some 300 serving teachers with experience in teaching the subject, had been established to form professional networks. The implementation of three-year professional development programmes for serving teachers who would teach Liberal Studies was progressing as scheduled, and on-site professional support on the design of school-based curriculum and pedagogies for teaching Liberal Studies would also be arranged. Currently, some 100 secondary schools were offering

Liberal Studies or Integrated Humanities at senior levels, and a few hundred teachers were teaching the relevant subjects.

9. Regarding the assessment of student performance on Liberal Studies, the Administration pointed out that the assessment would involve a professional element of the assessor that would be guided by detailed marking guidelines and balanced through double marking of examination scripts. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) would develop the level descriptors and sample examination papers for Liberal Studies to facilitate understanding of the standards expected and the format of questions that would be set in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination.

Applied Learning courses (formerly known as the Career-oriented Studies)

10. Members noted strong support for the purpose, positioning, design principles, areas of studies and quality assurance framework of Applied Learning (ApL) courses¹, based on the results of consultation. Members stressed the importance of the breadth and depth of ApL courses in enhancing students' ability to find employment or pursue continuing education.

11. The Administration explained that ApL courses were not intended to be a pre-vocational curriculum. Students could select ApL courses as alternatives to the elective subjects in the light of their needs, aptitudes and interests by joining the programmes at the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) or Caritas. Alternatively, schools could invite tutors from IVE or Caritas to run the programmes at schools. A "Senior Secondary Student Learning Profile" would be compiled to record all the learning experience and the achievements of a student throughout the years of senior secondary schooling. Employers and higher education institutions would then have a complete picture of the achievements and qualities of their potential employees and students. EDB would also establish a quality assurance mechanism in collaboration with the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications to ensure the credibility and recognition of ApL qualifications.

12. Members considered it necessary to attract the professionals in the relevant trades to contribute and participate in the delivery of ApL courses. They suggested that the Administration should make reference to the experience gained from the operation of Project Yi Jin (PYJ) over the past few years.

13. The Administration explained that the progress of developments in preparation for the implementation of ApL courses under the 334 structure was according to schedule. A list and description of the first round of ApL courses under 334 to be offered to Secondary 5 (S5) students in 2010 would be made available to schools at the end of 2008 together with prototypes of courses to illustrate the nature of learning

¹ The 6 areas of studies are: Applied Science, Business Management & Law, Creative Studies, Engineering & Production, Media & Communication and Services.

and assessment in ApL courses. A number of teachers had indicated interest to be engaged in teaching ApL courses alongside and in collaboration with other professionals delivering the courses. The Administration had made reference to the experience gained from PYJ and involved the professionals in the relevant trades who had indicated an intention to contribute or participate in the development and delivery of ApL courses. Professional development programmes for teachers who wished to be engaged in ApL courses were in progress.

Pilot ApL courses

14. Members noted with concern that the qualifications of pilot ApL courses were allegedly not recognized for the Joint University Programmes Admissions (JUPAS) 2009. The Administration clarified that the ApL courses were first introduced in 2003 as a pilot of alternative curricula to suit different aptitudes of students. It was intended to pitch at the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) level and to pave the way for migrating to the NSS education. Successful completion of quality-assured ApL courses were recognized by EDB, the course providers, the Federation for Continuing Education in Tertiary Institutions, HKEAA and the Civil Service Bureau for the purposes of further studies and employment. As ApL was a new concept in Hong Kong, it took time to evaluate the design, implementation, and student performance. The recognition of pilot ApL courses as relevant qualifications other than Pre-Associate Programmes was at the discretion of relevant institutions in the current academic system. EDB had liaised with the JUPAS Office, and JUPAS Board of Management would discuss the matter. If the Board agreed to the submission of ApL results to the institutions through JUPAS, HKEAA would send the results to JUPAS. Otherwise, EDB would discuss the possibility of HKEAA sending students' pilot ApL results direct to the institutions.

School-based assessment

15. As the public assessment system to support the NSS structure would include a component of school-based assessment (SBA), members were concerned about the readiness of teachers to implement SBA, the fair administration of SBA of different subjects, and the fair assessment of the standards of students in different schools. There was a view that SBA should only be implemented for subjects with SBA in the HKCEE currently. SBA for other NSS subjects should be implemented in small classes on a pilot basis, and whether it should be formally implemented should depend on the operational experience.

16. The Administration advised that the inclusion of a school-based component would help assess the set of generic competency which could not be assessed in the context of a public written examination. A strategic approach to implement SBA was endorsed by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and HKEAA after consultation with the sector. SBA would be implemented in 2012 for 12 subjects including those with SBA in the current public examinations, Liberal Studies and the four science subjects (laboratory work only). SBA for 11 subjects would be deferred for two to four years, and there would be no time-line for the implementation of SBA

for Mathematics to alleviate the burden of teachers during the transitional years. The phased-in approach would provide sufficient time for schools to complete the development work and get familiar with the administration of planned SBA activities.

17. The Administration further advised that to facilitate fair and consistent assessment, students' performance in SBA among different schools would be statistically moderated with reference to their external examination results and other methods. HKEAA would collaborate with EDB to conduct evaluation and analysis on the implementation of SBA for the first 12 subjects starting from 2009. The useful experience and the good practices identified would help SBA implementation in the remaining subjects in the long term. The Administration would review the implementation of the new academic structure together with SBA in 2013 using the experience of the early cohorts.

New Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment Guides (NSS C&A Guides)

18. Members noted that the final versions of the 24 NSS C&A Guides had been distributed to schools at the end of April 2007. They sought information on the feedback from schools on the Guides.

19. According to the Administration, the Guides had already incorporated the feedback on successive consultations from teachers, schools and academics, as well as the results of international benchmarking of the subject curricula in Europe, Australia, the United States and Asia through international agencies. The Administration envisaged that principals and teachers would study and follow the 24 NSS C&A Guides in their design of the school-based curriculum and assessment mechanisms. The Guides set out the teaching and learning pedagogies and resources including a list of recommended text and reference books. The University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions found them useful for preparation of their four-year undergraduate curriculum. The Administration would solicit feedback from principals and teachers in the course of conducting the professional development seminars and workshops for school leaders.

Preparation for the double cohort year

20. Members considered that the smooth implementation of the NSS academic structure, the NSS C&A framework, and the new HKDSE Examination in the first three years leading to the double cohort year for university enrolment in the 2012-2013 academic year was critical to the success of the 334 structure. They were concerned about the pressure on schools in coping with the reforms in academic structure, curriculum and assessment, and public examination systems simultaneously. They suggested that the Administration should withhold the implementation of school self-evaluation (SSE) and external school reviews (ESR) and defer the implementation of SBA for subjects currently without a component of SBA.

21. The Administration responded that it had all along considered it critical and fundamental to plan the necessary support and arrangements for schools to prepare for

the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) and HKDSE examinations in the double cohort year. The Administration had conducted three rounds of consultation on the implementation of the 334 structure, with particular emphasis on tackling the challenges in the double cohort year. The Administration would provide the necessary resources and support for schools to implement the 334 structure and develop their articulation plans to tackle the challenges in the double cohort year.

22. The Administration also explained that SSE and ESR were part of the education reform to assist schools in preparation for the implementation of the 334 structure, and SBA was an integral part of the NSS C&A framework. Many school leaders and teachers had expressed support for the implementation of SSE, ESR and SBA in schools. The Administration would continue to consult the stakeholders and collect feedback from school leaders and teachers through seminars and workshops. The Administration had accepted the views of stakeholders and made substantial accommodations in the implementation of SSE, ESR and SBA under the assessment system for HKDSE examination. In particular, the second cycle of ESR would be completed in six years, and there would be no ESR for secondary schools in the second half of the 2011-2012 school year when teachers would be fully engaged in preparing students to sit for the HKALE and HKDSE examinations.

HKDSE

International recognition

23. Members were concerned about the recognition of HKDSE by overseas universities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom (UK), as compared with HKCEE and HKALE.

24. The Administration pointed out that HKEAA maintained close dialogue with overseas educational authorities and universities, and updated them on the latest developments of the 334 structure and the NSS C&A framework with special reference to standards of HKDSE. In particular, HKEAA had been working closely with the Cambridge International Examinations and major educational bodies in the UK on a methodology to establish the comparability of HKDSE with the UK qualifications to facilitate advanced recognition of HKDSE by the UK authorities. The psychometric model adopted by HKEAA to maintain the standards of achievements in HKDSE was well recognized by overseas examination authorities and institutions, and the NSS curriculum was more in line with the curriculum in most developed countries, including the UK. On the basis of the curriculum and assessment guides for the 24 NSS subjects, HKEAA was working on the exemplars and level descriptors to facilitate international benchmarking by overseas educational organizations. HKEAA had sent all the relevant information to the three main agencies in the UK including the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The study to be conducted with UCAS aimed to set up a point system in the UCAS tariff for HKDSE results. The first round of results was expected to be available in the last quarter of 2009. The whole benchmarking exercise was scheduled for completion in 2011. To facilitate parental choice and student

enrolment, HKEAA had set up a website on admission requirements of overseas institutions for public access.

Standards-referenced reporting (SRR)

25. Under the NSS structure, a SRR system would be used in reporting student results in HKDSE examinations. Instead of using grades A to F as in HKCEE and HKALE, HKDSE would adopt five levels of performance, namely Level 1 to Level 5, with Level 1 being the lowest and Level 5 being the highest. Members queried the rationale for adopting the new reporting system in HKDSE.

26. According to the Administration, unlike the existing HKALE which was taken by about one-third of the secondary school graduates, HKDSE would be attended by all senior secondary school graduates with a wider diversity in learning outcomes. It was necessary to design a broad grading system in HKDSE to provide information about actual achievement of students and enable monitoring of standards of attainment of students over time. Moreover, the adoption of the level of performance would avoid confusion between the old and the new systems of reporting results. To annotate the best performers among Level 5 students, 5* and 5** would be used. Under SRR, the standards were held constant with no fixed proportion of students for each level.

Interface between senior secondary education and higher education

27. Members considered that universities should draw up their admission criteria as early as practicable including, in particular, whether Liberal Studies would be a mandatory subject for university admission under the 334 structure. Such information was important to facilitate curriculum planning and preparation work at school levels, as well as selection of secondary schools by students.

28. The Administration advised that a working group comprising staff of EDB and university staff had been set up to work out the detailed arrangements for university admission. UGC and the Heads of Universities Committee had expressed support for the 334 structure and had indicated that the four subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies would be considered as mandatory requirements for university entrance. HKEAA was conducting simulation exercises on the minimum requirements under the existing and the new grading systems for admission to the four-year undergraduate programmes. The Heads of University Committee considered that the awards of Level 3 in English Language and Chinese Language, and Level 2 in Mathematics and Liberal Studies in HKDSE would likely be the minimum requirements of core subjects for admission purpose. The Administration also advised that in the double cohort year, 14 500 three-year and 14 500 four-year undergraduate places would be provided for students taking HKALE and HKDSE examinations respectively.

Support measures

Teachers' professional development

29. Members considered it necessary for the Administration to provide appropriate professional development programmes and sufficient support for teachers to prepare for the implementation of the NSS curriculum. The Administration advised that after consulting the teaching profession, it had proposed a 35-hour professional development programme for teaching a new subject under the NSS curriculum. Depending on individual needs, the duration of professional development programmes for a teacher could range from 35 to 100 hours. The Administration would consult teachers thoroughly on the design of appropriate development programmes for different subjects. The Administration had also provided a Teacher Professional Preparation Grant for four school years as from September 2005 to provide relief for serving teachers to receive professional training and enable schools to engage services to enhance the professional capacity of teachers.

Teacher-to-class ratios

30. Members noted that the existing basic teacher-to-class ratios for senior secondary classes were 1.3:1 for S4 and S5 and 2:1 for S6 and S7. Top-up provisions were provided in the form of split-class teaching entitlement, additional teachers for Chinese Language, school librarians, additional teachers for remedial teaching, and additional non-graduate teachers. Under the NSS structure, the top-up provisions in existing staff establishment would be subsumed into a revised teacher-to-class ratio.

31. Members were concerned whether the proposed revision of teacher-to-class ratios for the implementation of the 334 structure would lead to more surplus secondary teachers. They called on the Administration to reduce the existing class size of 40 students to facilitate effective teaching and learning at senior secondary levels, and plan the necessary manpower for implementing the 334 structure.

32. The Administration explained to members the transitional arrangements to facilitate schools to move smoothly to the 334 structure. A five-year transition period would be provided for schools to phase out the surplus teachers by natural wastage after the double cohort year. The Administration considered it not appropriate to have a single standard class size for schools with different circumstances, subjects with different contexts, and students with different needs and aptitudes. Schools were encouraged to exercise discretion to apply small group teaching for individual subjects or students as appropriate. Members noted the decision of the Administration to reduce the number of S1 students allocated under the Secondary School Places Allocation system from 38 to 36 students in 2009 and further to 34 students in 2010. From 2012-2013, the revised teacher-to-class ratios would be 1.7 teachers per junior secondary class and 2.0 teachers per senior secondary class. Additional resources including the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant

(SSCSG) would be provided for all schools. The SSCSG was a recurrent provision equivalent to 0.1 teacher per senior secondary class. The projected changes in the provision of teachers in 2012-2013 after the adoption of the revised teacher-to-class ratios and the provision of the SSCSG, as compared with that in 2008-2009, is in **Appendix I**.

Funding for UGC-funded institutions

33. Members sought information on the criteria for the allocation of the additional funding of up to \$20 million to each of the eight UGC-funded institutions in support of their planning work for the development of undergraduate curriculum under the 334 structure. The Administration advised that to be eligible for funding, each institution had to submit a proposal outlining their plan and proposed usage. In deciding the funding allocation, UGC would take into account relevant factors such as institutions' needs, the merits of their proposals, and whether the requested funding was relevant to the preparation of the undergraduate curriculum under the new academic structure, etc.

Special education under 334

34. In the Third Legislative Council, the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs appointed by the House Committee had studied the subject of education for students with special educational needs under 334. A relevant extract from the Report of the Subcommittee dated June 2008 on the subject is in **Appendix II**.

35. At the Council meeting on 11 February 2009, members sought information on the special schools which would require additional classrooms for the implementation of 334. According to the Administration, 21 special schools were identified to require conversion works for implementing the 334 structure. EDB planned to provide about 26 additional classrooms and other teaching space to these schools through reprovisioning of existing rooms, or construction of new annexes or roof-top extensions. Among these special schools, conversion works for two had been completed; five were expected to be completed before September 2009; and the remaining 14 would require construction works of a more extensive scale. The Administration would strive to complete the works before the full implementation of the 334 structure by the 2011-2012 school year.

Public education

36. Members urged the Administration to promote public awareness of the features and the implementation of the 334 structure. They called on the Administration to collaborate with schools to ensure parental awareness of the NSS C&A framework, the HKDSE examination and related arrangements under the 334 structure.

37. The Administration advised that it recognized the need to step up communication with parents to build up confidence in the 334 structure. It undertook to continue to enhance communication with stakeholders through various means, including the 334 web-bulletin, parent pamphlets, educational television programmes, interactive parent seminars, etc. The Administration would adopt a multi-faced and multi-level approach of communication to promote parental awareness of the NSS C&A framework.

Relevant papers

38. A list of the relevant papers on the Legislative Council website is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
23 March 2009

**Projected changes in the provision of teachers in 2012-2013
as compared with that in 2008-2009**

Provision of Teachers	Number of Schools* (Percentage)
Increased (> 0.5 teacher)	About 280 (about 80%)
Non significant change (= 0.5 teacher)	About 50 (about 14%)
Reduced (> 0.5 teacher)	About 20 (about 6%)

* The above projections are calculated on the basis of aided secondary schools operating three classes or more at each level.

Source : Extracted from LC Paper No. CB(2)561/08-09(01) provided by Education Bureau in December 2008.

Chapter IV – Education for students with SEN under the new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education

Introduction

4.1 Under the new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education to be implemented in the 2009-2010 school year, there will be three-year junior secondary and three-year senior secondary education linking to four-year undergraduate programmes. In the consultation document entitled "*Action for the Future - Further Consultation on Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools*" (the consultation document) published in January 2006, it is proposed that all students, including those with SEN, will be provided with six years of secondary education under the new senior secondary (NSS) structure. After a three-month consultation, the final report "*Action for the Future - Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools*" was released in August 2006 to advise on the future direction and arrangements of the NSS academic structure for special schools and Applied Learning (ApL) (formerly known as Career-oriented Studies).

Years of basic education for ID students

4.2 Members express support for the incorporation of the provision of special education and integrated education in the NSS structure. They, however, note with concern that under the new academic structure, physically disabled students (PD students) and hearing impaired students (HI students) will be provided with 10 years of basic education (six-year primary and four-year junior secondary), but ID students only nine years (six-year primary and three-year junior secondary). Members have queried the reasons for the disparity of treatment between students with different disabilities.

4.3 According to the Administration, it has adopted the broad principle that students with SEN who are intellectually capable of pursuing the ordinary curriculum will follow the ordinary curriculum and be assessed with appropriate accommodation in the same way as other students in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination under the NSS academic structure. HI students with normal intelligence but severe to profound hearing impairment may have difficulty in language acquisition and development as well as in auditory reception and oral expression, and PD students of normal intelligence may have severe or multiple physical disabilities. The learning of these students is regularly and frequently disrupted by hospitalization and the need to receive therapies. As these students are capable of following the ordinary curriculum and attending the public examinations, the Administration considers it appropriate to follow the existing practice to provide them with an additional year of study in order to prepare them better for the three-year senior secondary education, leading to HKDSE.

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4.4 As for the ID students, the Administration has advised that they will be provided with individualized education programme tailored by teachers in special schools. ID students who are unable to pursue the ordinary curriculum will not go through ordinary NSS assessments and examinations leading to HKDSE. They will therefore be provided with three years of junior secondary education and three years of senior secondary education. The Administration has undertaken that for those ID students who are absent from school for a long period of time due to health or other justifiable reasons, they can apply for repeating class as is the current practice.

4.5 Members are concerned whether the provision of different years of junior secondary education to PD, HI and ID students may contravene the provisions of DDO. The Subcommittee has sought the advice of EOC in this regard.

4.6 In its written reply to the Subcommittee, EOC has indicated that it has discussed with EDB. According to EDB, PD students and HI students will undergo the ordinary NSS leading to HKDSE. Their learning patterns suffer from delays and disruptions because of their impairment. In order to compensate for the delays and disruptions, PD and HI students in special schools will be provided with 10 years of basic education to better prepare for NSS education. ID students who are unable to pursue the ordinary curriculum will not go through ordinary NSS assessments and examinations leading to HKDSE. On the basis of EDB's explanation, EOC considers that there does appear to be a material difference between ID students and PD students or HI students in terms of whether they are to undergo the ordinary NSS leading to HKDSE, and it does not appear that the special school academic structure involves a contravention of DDO.

4.7 Notwithstanding the advice of EOC, members maintain the view that there will indeed be a disparity of treatment. Members find it unacceptable that given their intellectual limitation, ID students should receive lesser years of basic education than students of normal intelligence.

Curriculum and assessment frameworks

Curriculum for SEN students

4.8 Members support the principle of "one curriculum framework for all" with adaptations to suit the different learning needs and capabilities of students with SEN. Students with SEN but not ID should aim at achieving the same curricular objective for NSS. They will be assessed on the same criteria but with special accommodation. Members note that at present, the great majority of special

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schools operate only one class per level. They are concerned that the small school size and the small number of senior secondary classes in special schools will limit the choice and combination of NSS subjects to be offered. Members appreciate that some parents will prefer completion by their children with SEN of primary and secondary education in the same school. Although resources have been earmarked to cater for the potential demand for additional classes in special schools, members consider that EDB should encourage special schools to collaborate and share resources with other special schools and/or ordinary schools in the vicinity in order to provide a wider range of NSS subjects.

Curriculum for ID students

4.9 Members note that as ID students will not follow the curriculum for mainstream schools, the development of NSS(ID) curriculum framework and the learning outcome frameworks for ID students is necessary. The Administration has adopted the approach of trying out the development of the curriculum framework through research and development (R&D) projects. Phase I of the project, which started in the 2006-2007 school year and involved 11 special schools, focuses on the core subjects, namely, Chinese Language, Mathematics and Independent Living. The curriculum frameworks for these subjects will be ready for dissemination to all special schools before the 2009-2010 school year. The development of curriculum frameworks for the two elective subjects, i.e. Physical Education and Visual Arts, which are popular in special schools, has started in the 2007-2008 school year with Curriculum and Assessment Guides to be completed in 2009. In the 2008-2009 school year, the curriculum frameworks for two more elective subjects, namely, Information and Communication Technology and Technology and Living will be drafted with the support of subject experts and seconded teachers. The Committee on Special Educational Needs of Curriculum Development Council is also involved in the development of the various subject curriculum frameworks.

4.10 Members also note that based on the experience gained from the R&D projects, the development of learning outcome frameworks has started in the 2007-2008 school year. The learning outcome frameworks for the core subjects will be ready for consultation with schools in the 2008-2009 school year. With reference to the data collected through the development of the learning outcome frameworks, EDB will work in collaboration with HKEAA in the development of a systematic assessment mechanism starting from 2012.

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Applied Learning

4.11 One of the features of NSS is the provision of ApL courses. The ApL curriculum is an integral part of the NSS curriculum, and is intended to provide choices to meet the diverse learning needs of students, including those with SEN. Members are concerned that while students with SEN who follow the ordinary school curriculum and are interested in ApL can join the same pilot ApL courses as other students, they are provided with a limited choice of ApL courses, such as cleansing services, and food preparation and servicing. Moreover, students with SEN have to attend ApL courses at venues provided by course providers.

4.12 According to the Administration, to ensure quality and consistency of standards, the number of ApL courses is kept within a manageable limit at the initial stage. When relevant parties, including schools, parents and the relevant industries, have built up sufficient experience, ApL courses will be expanded to provide a wider range of choices for students. In the 2007-2008 cohorts, 56 students with SEN but not ID are studying the same pilot ApL courses as other students with appropriate support provided.

4.13 ApL courses are adapted for ID students. Members note that the first pilot of adapted ApL courses for ID students started in September 2006. Two course providers, Hong Chi Association and Vocational Training Council (VTC), have offered four courses. These include Hotel Housekeeping, Food Preparation, General Duties, and Western Bakery and Pastry for the mild grade and higher-end moderate grade ID students. A total of 82 students in 18 special schools are attending these courses. While agreeing that ApL courses offered to ID students will not be as diverse as those to students in mainstream schools, members urge EDB to collaborate with service providers to explore the possibility of offering a wider range of ApL courses for ID students.

Age limit

4.14 At present, ID students aged between 16 and 17 years and 11 months attending ID schools may participate in the Extension of Years of Education (EYE) Programme of their schools on a voluntary basis to facilitate the smooth transition from completing S3 to work, post-school placement and adult life. Enrolment to the EYE Programme is subject to an age limit of 18. Students who reach the age of 18 during the school year can stay in their special schools until the end of the school year. Members note that under the Code of Aid for Special Schools, except with the approval of the Permanent Secretary for Education, students with SEN are not allowed to remain in special schools after the end of the school year during which they reach their 20th birthday. Students with SEN in California are allowed

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to complete six years of junior school and six years of high school education up to the age of 22, while students in England will be allowed to stay in school until they reach the age of 19. Members are concerned whether the age limit under the Code of Aid for Special Schools will still apply for students in special schools under the new academic structure, in particular with the announcement of the Chief Executive in his 2007 Policy Address to provide 12-year free education starting from the 2008-2009 school year.

4.15 According to the Administration, under the new academic structure, all students with SEN will be provided with six years of primary education and six years of secondary education. Normally, students with SEN will reach the age of 18 after completion of these 12 years of education. Students with SEN who follow the curriculum in ordinary schools will normally be allowed to complete their secondary education in order to participate in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. Furthermore, students in special schools will be allowed to repeat a year of study if their schooling has been adversely interrupted by hospitalization. With the implementation of the NSS academic structure, there will no longer be any need to operate the EYE Programme. In the Administration's view, there is no need to revise the age-related arrangement as detailed in the Code of Aid for Special Schools. However, EDB will allow flexibility in the age limit for students attending special schools.

Post-secondary and continuing education

Admission to post-secondary institutions

4.16 Members consider that like other students, students with SEN should have equal right and access to post-secondary and continuing education. They are disappointed with the current provision of post-secondary education and continuing education opportunities for students with SEN. As shown in **Appendix VII**, the total number of students with SEN enrolled in the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded undergraduate and sub-degree programmes has remained at less than 200 over the past few years. To enhance the opportunities for students with SEN for pursuing post-secondary education, members are of the view that the Administration should formulate policies and devise special measures to encourage the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education (IVE) and the UGC-funded institutions to admit students with SEN. IVE and the UGC-funded institutions should set aside certain places for students with SEN. Given that students with SEN are weak in certain aspects, members have suggested exempting them from fulfilling certain entry requirements, taking into account their specific disabilities.

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4.17 The Administration has conveyed members' views to the UGC-funded institutions for consideration. The Administration has stressed that all UGC-funded institutions are autonomous statutory bodies. Admission to the UGC-funded institutions is based on merits. The UGC-funded institutions welcome all eligible applicants, including students with SEN, to apply for admission. There is a sub-system under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) for applicants with SEN to enable them to find out as early as possible the special assistance and facilities provided by institutions on their admission.

4.18 Members remain of the view that the Administration should coordinate efforts from various fronts to work out innovative approach to assist students with SEN to pursue post-secondary and continuing education. Participation of parents, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and post-secondary institutions is necessary.

Support

4.19 Members share the view of many organizations on the need to provide support for students with SEN to pursue post-secondary education and resources for tertiary institutions in this respect. The existing services and assistance include the provision of specific equipment to facilitate students' learning, designation of a counselor/staff to assist students with SEN, priority allocation of student hostels to students with SEN, etc. Members consider it necessary to expand the scope of the support services. Having considered the various proposals put forth by the organizations, members support the setting up of a task group to coordinate the provision of support for students with SEN in post-secondary institutions and the establishment of a dedicated fund for tertiary institutions to procure equipment and services to support students with SEN in learning.

Continuing education for ID students

4.20 Currently, three NGOs provide continuing education in the form of community colleges for ID students. They are 智齡社區大學 of The Neighbourhood Advice-Action Council, 啟藝學苑 of St. James' Settlement, and "Creativity to Independence" of Arts with the Disabled Association Hong Kong Arts School. Members have called on the Administration to be more proactive in the provision of resources and support to facilitate the operation of community colleges.

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Resources

4.21 Members note that \$115 million has been earmarked for supporting the operation of the pilot ApL programmes and senior secondary classes in special schools during the transition period leading up to 2009. They have expressed concern about the adequacy of resources to support the implementation of special education under the new academic structure.

4.22 The Administration has pointed out that the \$115 million is intended to encourage the growth of diversity of curriculum, assessment and pathways in senior secondary schools. The allocation is sufficient for piloting the ApL courses and the NSS(ID) curriculum in conjunction with the draft subject curriculum framework for students with ID in special schools. The appropriate level of resources for special schools will be determined when details of the NSS(ID) curriculum, the learning outcome, and assessment standards have been worked out with the consensus of key stakeholders.

4.23 According to the findings of the "*Study of the Effectiveness of Special Schools*" (the Study) conducted by the then Education and Manpower Bureau in 2005, the overall resource allocation to Hong Kong's special schools in terms of human, financial and capital, is good by world standards, and the real challenge lies in resource management in special schools. Members are concerned whether the Administration intends to justify the provision of the current level of resources for special education, on the basis of the findings of the Study.

4.24 The Administration has clarified the objective of the Study to assess the effectiveness of resource utilization in special schools in support of student learning and to identify the elements for successful school management as well as the areas for management improvement. The conclusion of the Study should apply to all public sector schools in terms of cost-effective deployment of scarce public resources. The Administration has assured members that it is committed to implementing the NSS academic structure and has earmarked resources to cater for the potential demand for additional classes in special schools.

4.25 Members have urged the Administration to plan the necessary conversion works for existing special schools so that they will have sufficient classrooms, facilities and boarding places for providing the new NSS(ID) curriculum from the 2009-2010 school year onwards.

4.26 The Administration has assured members that resources have been earmarked for capital works, including conversion works for ordinary and special schools for the implementation of the new academic structure. EDB is aware of the need for additional facilities in some special schools, and has already

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commenced discussion with these schools on the necessary conversion and improvement works that should be carried out in connection with NSS.

Tuition fees

4.27 At present, senior secondary students in both ordinary and special schools pay the same level of tuition fees. Members note the Administration's proposed shared funding model to meet the costs for implementing the new academic structure and its original intention to increase tuition fees to about \$7,200 and \$50,000 per annum for senior secondary classes and undergraduate programmes respectively. With the implementation of 12-year free education starting from the 2008-2009 school year as announced in the 2007 Policy Address, senior secondary education will be free. The shared funding model will apply to undergraduate education only. Members are given to understand that the proposed increase of tuition fee for undergraduate programmes will raise the cost recovery rate from 18% to 24%. They are concerned about its financial impact on low-income families. Given the fiscal surplus, members have called on the Administration to review the need for increasing the tuition fee for undergraduate programmes under the new academic structure.

4.28 According to the Administration, it will increase the investment from \$6.7 billion to \$7.9 billion to meet the capital and non-recurrent costs for the implementation of the new academic structure. The Administration will spend about \$2 billion on a recurrent basis on its full implementation. Parents' contributions will be about \$750 million. The Administration considers it reasonable for financially capable parents to share part of the costs to be incurred. The Government policy is to bring gradually the tuition fees back to the target recovery level of 18%. The cost recovery rate aims to provide an overall indicator for measuring and benchmarking students/parents' contribution to tertiary education. It may change from time to time, depending on the level of recurrent funding required by the institutions and the level of indicative tuition fee. Owing to the differences in cost structure, the same tuition fee will give different cost-recovery rates among institutions, level of studies and among disciplines. As the level of recurrent subventions to be provided to the UGC-funded sector under the four-year undergraduate study is yet to be fixed, the Administration considers it too early to determine the cost recovery rate under the new academic structure. The Administration has also pointed out that the cost recovery rates in the United Kingdom and the United States range from 30% to 60%.

Source : Extracted from the Report of the Subcommittee to Study Issues Relating to the Provision of Boarding Places, Senior Secondary Education and Employment Opportunities for Children with Special Educational Needs

**Relevant papers on
new academic structure for senior secondary and higher education**

Meeting	Date of meeting/ issue date	Paper
Legislative Council	15.10.2003	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 10 - 18 (Question)
Panel on Education	29.10.2004 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda CB(2)1721/04-05(01)
Panel on Education	20.12.2004 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	3.1.2005 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Legislative Council	5.1.2005	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 68 - 71 (Question)
Panel on Education	3.6.2005 (Items I - III)	Minutes Agenda
Finance Committee	24.6.2005	Minutes FCR(2005-06)24
Panel on Education	20.10.2005 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	13.2.2006 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda
Legislative Council	10.5.2006	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 86 - 91 (Question)
Panel on Education	12.6.2006 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda

Meeting	Date of meeting/ issue date	Paper
Panel on Education	10.7.2006 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda CB(2)2680/05-06(01) CB(2)2680/05-06(02) CB(2)2680/05-06(03) CB(2)2792/05-06(01)
Panel on Education	19.10.2006 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	25.5.2007 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	9.7.2007	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	12.11.2007 (Item VII)	Minutes Agenda
Establishment Subcommittee	28.11.2007	Minutes EC(2007-08)10
Legislative Council	21.5.2008	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 59 - 60 (Question)
Panel on Education	12.6.2008 (Item V)	Minutes Agenda
Legislative Council	11.2.2009	[Question : 16] Asked by : Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong Shortage of classrooms after the implementation of the new senior secondary academic structure Reply