

For information
on 30 December 2008

Panel on Education
Information Notes on the New Reporting System in
the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination

Background

The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region announced in 2005 that a 3-year senior secondary and 4-year undergraduate academic structure will be implemented in 2009. The new structure provides all students with the opportunity to receive six years of secondary education to meet the changing needs of Hong Kong. A new Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination will be implemented in 2012 to replace the two existing public examinations, namely the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE).

Detailed Information

The new system of reporting

2. Under the NSS, a standards-referenced reporting (SRR) system will be used in reporting student results in the HKDSE examination. Instead of using grades A to F as in the current reporting system, there are five levels of performance in the new system, namely Level 1 to Level 5, with Level 1 being the lowest and Level 5 being the highest. In this new reporting system, students' results will be reported with reference to a set of defined levels or standards of performance. The reason for having levels rather than grades is to avoid confusion between the old and the new systems of reporting results. To annotate the best performers among the Level 5 students, 5* and 5** will be used. SRR is a new reporting format. There is no direct equivalence between the levels and grades in the new and old reporting systems.

3. Under SRR, the standards are held constant and there is no fixed proportion of students for each level. The proportion of students awarded a given level depends on the proportion of the students meeting the defined standard. This means that it is possible to know how standards are changing over time with the new reporting system.

4. The prescribed standards of performance are defined by descriptors which are developed by a team of subject experts, experienced markers and teachers. They evaluate and analyze student performance in pilot tests and in previous examinations during the development. Samples of student work will also be used to illustrate the standards expected of students. These samples, when used together with the level descriptors, will be able to illustrate the standards expected at the various levels of performance. These standards are transparent and will be made known to both students and teachers.

Advantages of the SRR system

5. The new system of reporting has the following advantages:
- (a) It ensures a close association between the assessments and the learning outcomes of the curriculum.
 - (b) It reports students' results against a hierarchy of described levels of performance based on the typical performances of students. In this way, there will be a clearer and more informative report of student performance. Teachers and students will have a better understanding of the standards of performance so that appropriate goals for learning and teaching could be set.
 - (c) Explicit standards facilitate learning and teaching. Students can be shown what they have to do to be awarded higher levels and teachers know what they have to do to assist students to get better results. Explicit standards are also useful to employers and tertiary institutions in making selection decisions.
 - (d) This system is in line with international practice. It provides the assessment results which are reported against standards internationally recognized.

International recognition

6. The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) has been working closely with international benchmarking bodies on the recognition of HKDSE examination results. The benchmarking results are expected to be available before the first administration of the HKDSE examination. As agreed in the Panel on Education meeting held on 10 November 2008, EDB and HKEAA will report on the progress of the benchmarking exercise of the HKDSE qualification in late 2009.

Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority and
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