

**Language proficiency requirements for the
recruitment of civil servants**

According to information provided by the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), civil service grades are normally required to specify language proficiency requirements (LPRs) in Chinese and English for recruitment purposes. These requirements are needed to ensure that the civil service operates efficiently and effectively in both official languages and to meet long-term operational and development needs. The prevailing arrangements on language proficiency are necessary on operational grounds and are not excessive. LPRs for individual grades are set with reference to the academic and job requirements of the posts concerned.

2. For civil service posts with general academic qualifications set at below degree level, individual recruiting grades/ departments will stipulate, in the relevant job advertisements, the LPRs of the posts concerned. For posts with academic requirements set at or above the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) level, applicants should normally attain at least a pass in Chinese Language and English Language in the HKCEE (i.e. Level 2 or above), or equivalent. With effect from 8 August 2007, all government bureaux and departments accept Chinese Language results in International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) / UK General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) / General Certificate of Education 'Ordinary' Level (GCE 'O' Level) for appointment to civil service posts. Grade D results in Chinese Language in IGCSE / GCSE / GCE 'O' Level are accepted as comparable to Level 2 in the Chinese Language results in the HKCEE for civil service appointment purpose. The Civil Service Bureau has informed the public, including the ethnic minority communities, of the acceptance arrangement through various channels, such as its website and the Ethnic Minorities Forum.

3. For civil service posts with academic requirements below the HKCEE level, the LPRs should be aligned with the minimum academic qualification laid down for the grades concerned. As regards those grades that do not have any prescribed academic qualification, LPRs are set at a level that is commensurate with the job requirements.

4. As for civil service posts requiring degree or professional qualifications, applicants are usually required to obtain a pass in the two language papers (i.e. Use of English and Use of Chinese) under the Common Recruitment Examination (CRE). A two-tier passing mechanism for the CRE language papers is in place to cater for different LPRs based on job requirements.

5. Head of Departments/Head of Grades may apply to CSB for exemption from the stipulated LPRs on a case-by-case basis if they encounter recruitment difficulties. In the past three years from 2007 to 2009, nine grades have been granted approval to conduct altogether 32 recruitment exercises with LPRs exemption.