

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)1272/11-12(02)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

Panel on Education

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 12 March 2012**

Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination

Purpose

This paper summarizes the issues of concern raised by the Panel on Education ("the Panel") about the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") examination.

Background

2. In 2000, the Education Commission 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 his 2004 Policy Address, the Chief Executive confirmed the policy direction of developing the new academic structure ("NAS"), i.e. three-year junior secondary, three-year senior secondary and four-year undergraduate education. NAS has been implemented in all secondary schools at Secondary ("S") 4 with effect from September 2009.

3. Under NAS, there are four core subjects, namely, Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies ("LS"). A new 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 ("HLALE"). HKDSE examination, administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA"), comprises three categories of subjects, namely the new senior secondary ("NSS") subjects, Applied Learning subjects and Other Language subjects.

4. A standards-referenced reporting ("SRR") system will be used in reporting student results in HKDSE examination. Instead of using grades A to F as in the current reporting system, the results of the NSS subject examination will be reported in five levels, i.e. 1 to 5, with Level 5 being the highest. Candidates with top performance will be represented by Level 5** and next top performance by 5*. Achievement below Level 1 will be designated as "unclassified". Under SRR, the standards are held constant with no fixed proportion of students for each level. Contrary to the previous reporting system under which Grade E is a passing grade, there is no official passing level under SRR.

Deliberations of the Panel

5. Over the past few years, the Panel held a number of meetings to discuss issues relating to NAS. At the Panel meetings on 12 July 2010, 11 April and 13 June 2011, members expressed concern, among others, about the assessment and rechecking of HKDSE examination papers. The major issues of concern raised by members are summarized below.

Assessment of LS

6. Members were concerned about the fairness and reliability of the assessment of students' performance in LS. As the assessment of LS was based on the judgment of the markers and in the absence of uniform assessment criteria, teachers, students and parents were concerned about how LS examination papers would be marked and possible disputes on the assessment results. Some members commented that as the objective of LS was to develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills, merits should be given to innovative answers and personal contributions of students. Teachers should change their mentality and be more open-minded in LS assessment in order not to dampen students' creativity and interest in learning.

7. The Administration explained that the emphasis of assessment in the LS examination would be put on the skills the students applied in analyzing a situation, integrating the information and explaining their views in developing an answer. Examiners were required to respect individual responses and give credits to creativity and individual contributions which were very important elements in LS. The Administration would provide LS teachers with more information on the appropriate assessment of LS. Sample examination questions and exemplars of students' responses over a range of different levels of performance would be made available for teachers to have an idea of the standards of responses expected from students and how the questions would be marked. Examination scripts would be marked by two markers and when there were significant differences in the markers' opinions, a third marker would

be called in to resolve the discrepancies. With the established guidelines, candidates would receive fair grades. In response to members' request, the Administration had provided supplementary information in March 2011 on how LS examination papers were marked and some sample LS examination papers with good or bad grades (LC Paper No. CB(2)1242/10-11(01)).

Reporting method for HKDSE Examination

8. Members noted that unlike HKCEE and HKALE which used norm referencing, HKDSE would adopt SRR to report candidates' examination results. Members were concerned that the use of SRR might result in wide fluctuations in marks and candidates' results would be affected by the different levels of difficulty of the examination papers and hence increase in disputes over results.

9. According to the Administration, SRR had been used for the HKCEE English Language and Chinese Language examinations starting from 2007. It was a global trend to use SRR which was an internationally recognized method for reporting examination results. SRR enabled employers and universities to understand the candidates' levels of performance with reference to a set of standards rather than their relative ability among candidates taking part in the same public examination. It also provided a good basis for comparing the standards and performance of students who took the examination in different years. SRR could also facilitate teachers to adjust the pedagogy according to the ability of students.

Support to LS teachers and markers

10. Members were of the view that as the assessment of LS was based on the judgment of the markers and there was no model answers for LS, the support to teachers in respect of the assessment of students' performance in LS should be strengthened.

11. The Administration advised that a LS School Network Scheme comprising 25 district coordinators who were experienced in teaching LS and assessing LS examination papers was set up in November 2009 to provide support to both schools and teachers on the curriculum and assessment of LS. The Administration recognized the importance of school network building and would continue to strengthen the support to schools and teachers regarding LS.

Mechanism for rechecking/remarking of HKDSE examination

12. Members pointed out that the release of the HKDSE examination practice paper for LS by HKEAA in January 2012 had raised concern about the lack of objective marking standards for the subject. In view of the concern and given

that LS examination results would impact on university admission, it was expected that there would be many applications for rechecking of results of LS. Members considered it important to put in place a fair appeal mechanism to handle disputes on the assessment results and were concerned whether HKEAA had sufficient manpower to handle a large number of rechecking applications within a short period of time after the release of the HKDSE examination results in July 2012.

13. According to the Administration, the LS examination scripts would be marked by two markers. In case of discrepancy, a third or even a fourth marker would be used to obtain a consensus mark. Upon a request for review of the results, the responses would be assessed by another two markers for a broader range of input. Assessment results would be reviewed by the Appeal Review Committee ("ARC") appointed by the HKEAA Council. All appeals would be handled by ARC in accordance with the established mechanism.

14. Some members also expressed concern about the high rechecking fee and the lack of a fee remission mechanism. In their view, it would be unfair to students who could not afford to apply for rechecking of examination results because of a lack of means. It was therefore necessary for the Administration to monitor the level of the rechecking fees. There was also a view that in considering the provision of fee subsidy for rechecking examination results, the Administration should strike a balance between ensuring fair access to the rechecking mechanism and preventing abuse of the subsidy.

15. According to information provided by the Administration, the objective of the Examination Fee Remission Scheme administered by the Student Financial Assistance Agency and the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance administered by the Social Welfare Department was to provide needy students with financial assistance to sit for public examination. On the basis of this objective, both schemes all along did not cover supplementary services provided by HKEAA, such as change of subjects or language version, rescheduling of oral examination dates and applications for rechecking/remarking. Nevertheless, HKEAA might still consider waiving all or part of the supplementary fees for candidates with grave financial difficulties on a case-by-case basis. Fees for rechecking/remarking would also be refunded to candidates who got an upgrade in the examination result after the review.

Latest developments

16. The Administration will brief the Panel at the meeting on 12 March 2012 on the mechanism for rechecking/remarking of HKDSE examination.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
8 March 2012

**Relevant papers on
Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	12.7.2010 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	11.4.2011 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes Supplementary information provided by the Administration on review of the Examination Fee Remission Scheme CB(2)1851/10-11(01)
Panel on Education	13.6.2011 (Item VII)	Agenda Minutes
Panel on Education	---	Paper provided by the Administration on marking of Examination papers of Liberal Studies CB(2)1242/10-11(01)