

For discussion on 20 April 2012

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Progress on the Implementation of the New Academic Structure

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress on the implementation of the New Academic Structure (NAS) and delivery of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination (including School-based Assessment (SBA) and the marking of Liberal Studies papers), multiple pathways and international recognition available to students taking the first HKDSE Examination, communication with various stakeholders, preparation for the release of HKDSE Examination results in July 2012, and evaluation and monitoring.

Background

2. In 2000, the Government of the HKSAR recommended the adoption of a 3-year junior secondary, 3-year senior secondary and 4-year undergraduate academic system to facilitate the implementation of a more flexible, coherent and diversified senior secondary curriculum. The purpose is to prepare all Hong Kong students for whole-person development and life-long learning to cope with the changing world and meet the needs of the changing global environment. Since its commencement in Secondary 4 from September 2009 onwards, the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum has been implemented smoothly. NSS students are now taking their HKDSE Examination, which will finish by end May 2012, and receive their results on 20 July 2012.

3. We have been communicating the latest development of the NAS and HKDSE to various stakeholders regularly and extensively. We have also reported to the Education Commission and the Panel on Education of the Legislative Council every year. This report aims to give a general update on the key development since the last report given on 13 June 2011.

Implementation of the NSS curriculum

4. To track the implementation progress and to inform future improvement of the curriculum framework design and public assessment, the Education Bureau (EDB) and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) have been reviewing the implementation of the NSS curriculum and assessment, collecting quantitative as well as qualitative data through surveys, school visits, focus group interviews, receiving feedback from regular meetings with stakeholders, the media and studies conducted by other parties. Since September 2009, schools have been providing students with a broad and balanced curriculum, thereby reducing early specialisation. Secondary schools in general are currently offering an average of 11 to 12 elective subjects to their Secondary 4, Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 students, and over 60% of the students take elective subjects from two to three Key Learning Areas. Schools have been making good progress in whole-school curriculum planning, catering for learner diversity as well as assessment for learning which help to enhance student learning. Teachers' professional capacity has also been enhanced. On the other hand, there are still great concerns about workload, allocation of lesson time and how to cater for student diversity. EDB will continue to enhance support measures for schools and teachers, disseminate good practices to schools to facilitate learning and teaching, and review the curriculum and assessment framework in order to inform future development.

Administration of the HKDSE Examination

5. HKEAA has provided schools and students with various supports in order to prepare them well for the first HKDSE Examination. Candidates' Handbooks for the Examination were distributed to students in December 2011, and videos for candidates on major examination procedures were released from late February to early March 2012. In January 2012, practice papers for the 24 Category A subjects were provided to familiarise teachers and students with the formats and requirements of the Examination. To provide useful feedback to schools, briefing sessions on individual subjects were held from January to February 2012. They helped teachers understand better the requirements, marking criteria, students' general performance and samples of students' performance. Schools' response towards the practice

papers was positive, finding that the assessment aligned with the design of the NSS curriculum and the level of difficulty was appropriate.

6. For Liberal Studies (LS), a total of 28 Markers' Training sessions were conducted in the year 2010/11 and over 1,300 teachers completed the training. The aims of the training sessions were to familiarise LS teachers with onscreen marking as well as the marking criteria and standards of the LS examination in the HKDSE. Each training session comprised a 3-hour markers' meeting and individual marking at the Assessment Centre. During the markers' meeting, participants were briefed about the marking criteria, standards and marking guidelines, illustrated by the authentic performance of students in sample scripts. Through trial-marking of sample scripts and discussions in group meetings led by experienced LS teachers, participants were able to acquire a good understanding of the marking standards. After the markers' meeting, participants marked a number of scripts on their own at the Assessment Centre. The marking statistics generated also provided useful information to facilitate the selection of markers for the live examination.

7. In the 2012 HKDSE Examination, SBA is implemented in 12 of the NSS subjects. HKEAA has appointed District Co-ordinators to provide professional input and feedback to schools as ongoing support for these subjects. In addition, EDB and HKEAA have been offering year-round professional development courses on SBA and public examinations for school teachers, and re-running courses for new teachers to ensure that all teachers have opportunities to receive training to enhance their professional capacity in implementing SBA.

8. HKEAA has conducted a longitudinal study on the implementation of the Independent Enquiry Study (IES), the school-based component of LS, in schools for the first cohort since the end of 2010. Through collecting information from various stakeholders during the administration of the IES from 2010 to 2012, the study will facilitate HKEAA to acquire a good understanding of the implementation of the IES, identify any implementation issues and difficulties encountered by schools as well as enable the Authority to provide timely feedback and support to them. The study was divided into two phases according to the various stages of conducting IES. In each phase, questionnaires were sent to teachers and students in selected schools to

collect their views on various implementation aspects. In addition, focus group discussions and interviews were carried out with key stakeholders, including parents, students, school principals, LS panel heads and District Co-ordinators. The study is scheduled to be completed by August 2012 and the result will provide valuable information contributing to the review and enhancements of the administration of the IES in future examinations.

9. In response to feedback from schools and stakeholders and the experiences gathered from the administration of SBA in the 2010/11 school year, EDB and HKEAA developed a streamlining proposal for SBA in the HKDSE Examination. It aims at making SBA more manageable for students and teachers by minimising duplication of assessment efforts within/across subjects and reducing the administrative work in conducting the assessments and submitting marks. The spirit of SBA, being an integral part of learning and teaching and an essential component of public assessment, remains upheld. The streamlining was proposed for the benefit of students while keeping all the essential learning elements in place across all subjects.

10. The proposals will have minimal impact on learning and teaching and will be implemented in accordance with Curriculum and Assessment Guides. They will not affect the work schedule and assessment of students in Secondary 5 this school year as the conduct of SBA for the 2013 cohort has already commenced. After extensive consultation and with support from schools, the following streamlining measures were announced in February 2012:

- The conduct of SBA in nine subjects in the 2014 HKDSE Examination will be streamlined, including reducing the number of tasks, assessments and mark submissions;
- The implementation of the streamlined SBA for Chinese Language will be advanced to the 2013 cohort, while interim measures will be adopted for LS in 2013;
- Full implementation of SBA in the 11 deferred subjects will be postponed to the 2016 HKDSE Examination. The SBA of six of the 11 subjects will be streamlined, and the design of others would be subject to further review by the relevant subject committees of

the Curriculum Development Council/HKEAA. Schools can trial run SBA of the deferred subjects in 2014 on an optional basis, and there will be a compulsory school trial for all 11 deferred subjects in 2015. HKEAA will provide feedback to the schools concerned.

Multiple pathways and international recognition

11. The NSS curriculum facilitates students' articulation and choice of pathways. Since 2010, EDB has been working closely with HKEAA to promote the recognition of the HKDSE among local and overseas stakeholders and gained extensive support, which has greatly enhanced the smooth articulation of our students to multiple pathways globally.

12. Local higher education institutions are getting ready for the new cohort of students under the NAS. For the publicly-funded institutions, for example, regular meetings have been held among the sector and EDB to plan on interface issues and be prepared for contingency. The development of the four-year curriculum was completed. With the general education elements being enhanced, undergraduate students would have more flexibility in subject choices under the new curriculum. In view that the freshmen will be one year younger in age than before, the institutions will have academic advising systems in place to assist students not only academically but also on their whole-person development during their university life. The construction of NAS-related capital works projects by institutions is near completion. Where necessary, the institutions have also been requested to work out detailed contingency plans with necessary assistance from EDB and the University Grants Committee. As a special arrangement in the double cohort year of 2012, the commencement date of the first term will be deferred by 10 to 17 days.

13. At the same time, the Government is committed to providing multiple pathways for our young people through promoting the parallel development of the publicly-funded sector and the self-financing sector. For the 2012/13 academic year, publicly-funded first-year-first-degree places will be doubled, i.e. 15,150 places each for students taking the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination and the HKDSE Examination respectively. In

total, over 75,000 locally accredited post-secondary places and around 35,000 continuing education/vocational education and training places will be available to secondary school leavers. The provision is generally sufficient to meet the demand of the 103,500 school candidates in the double cohort year of 2012. Students can further their studies in degree and sub-degree programmes, other courses including the new Yi Jin Diploma and vocational programmes, or go for employment, according to their interest, aptitudes and abilities.

14. Like before, students may consider studying at other places. As a pilot scheme in 2012, 63 higher education institutions in Mainland China will admit Hong Kong students on the strength of their HKDSE Examination results (adopting the same requirements as those of local institutions) and exempt them from the Joint Entrance Examination for Universities in Mainland China. Over 4,200 students from more than 480 schools have applied to study in the Mainland under the scheme. Universities in Taiwan will also waive the Overseas Joint College Entrance Examination for Hong Kong school leavers and consider their admission on the strength of their HKDSE Examination results starting from 2012. Internationally, over 110 universities (including some renowned ones) have already acknowledged their recognition of the HKDSE qualification for admission purpose, and more are being added.

Communication with various stakeholders

15. EDB has maintained close communication with various sectors to keep them abreast of the latest development on multiple pathways and the preparation for the result release on 20 July 2012. The regular liaison meetings held with different stakeholder groups have provided platforms to share updated information and key messages as well as to develop coping strategies together.

16. In the coming months, we will continue to focus on disseminating the key messages that every student can succeed and that their aspirations can be met through the multiple pathways available under the NAS. EDB will continue to co-ordinate the communication and action plans among respective stakeholder groups, including tertiary/post-secondary institutions, Non-government Organisations (NGO), secondary school heads, career and

guidance teachers, as well as employers, parent associations to solicit their support and collaboration on the action planning for the day so that events will happen orderly. Further, we have engaged NGOs that are providing counselling services to students and parents as their core business so that their professional support can be enlisted. We are also providing parent representatives with the latest development and updates on multiple pathways.

17. To help those students who may opt for work after the HKDSE Examination but with little access to employment information, EDB has been facilitating the employer sector to reach out to schools' career guidance teachers to disseminate respective information, in particular trades that are in great demand for recruiting school graduates. A series of Career Information Expo and talks/seminars have been held since February 2012 to provide career information to careers teachers and students on some targeted industries.

18. To clarify the general understanding of the NSS curriculum and HKDSE, we have been disseminating a number of positive messages through different channels. We have also delivered these key messages on NAS, HKDSE and multiple pathways to the public by using APIs (TV and radio), bus advertisements, articles, etc. These media will continually be deployed with more frequency nearer the result release day.

19. We would also keep our overseas Economic and Trade Offices and overseas strategic partners posted of latest development and useful information before, on and after 20 July 2012 so that they could help share information or take necessary action regarding overseas study pathways. Publicity activities and overseas publication would be arranged whenever appropriate.

Preparation for the result release day

Conveying key messages and managing expectations

20. To enable students to benefit from the NAS, it is essential to promote the paradigm shift from the traditional selective education system to the new

system that develops and recognises the potentials of all students by catering to their diverse interests, aptitudes and abilities. Under the NAS, there is no pass or fail and every student will succeed in demonstrating their potentials to the full. In particular, we need to change the mindset and expectations of parents - university is not the only option or the only way to success, and students can meet their aspirations through the diverse pathways available to them.

Support to schools, students and parents before and on the result release day

21. Since the start of the 2011/12 school year, EDB has strengthened the communication with schools to step up their preparation for the HKDSE Examination, with emphasis on managing expectations and helping students meet their aspirations. We will continue to prepare schools, students and parents so that students can make the most suitable choice among the multiple pathways when they get their examination results. More details are listed in Appendix 1.

22. The follow up actions responding to the release of HKDSE results on 20 July 2012, in principle, would be handled on-line to minimise crowds and queues as far as possible, e.g. changing programme choices, accepting offers, appeal for re-marking, access to updates on provision of places, while personal contacts would remain essential for certain services, e.g. advice by schools to students. To ensure that the events are launched in an orderly manner, schools' attention was drawn, in February 2012, to the latest measures supporting teachers, students and parents directly nearer the day for their timely preparation and action. The measures are outlined in Appendix 2.

23. To continue to manage expectations and convey the key messages, communication with schools and parents will be further strengthened. Updated information will continue to be provided through various means. Continuous updates will be available on EDB's NAS Web Bulletin to include important information from various sources, such as the e-version of Careers Guidance Handbook for Secondary School Graduates. It is hoped that schools will gain insights into the critical issues and better plan their own strategies in managing expectations and risk management on the result

release day.

Strengthening co-ordinated multi-sector decision making for the result release day

24. Anticipating that 20 July 2012 will be the focal point in town, good preparation with concerted efforts from all sectors and effective communication with all stakeholders is critical to making the day a success. EDB will take the lead in setting up a multi-sector “communication backbone” by late June 2012 to facilitate good communication among different parties so that clear and consistent key messages will be delivered on the day by each sector. HKEAA’s Risk Management Committee is meeting regularly. It would also provide a contingency plan for relevant parties in case there are hiccups on the day.

Evaluation and monitoring

25. EDB, the Curriculum Development Council and HKEAA are collaboratively evaluating the implementation of the NSS curriculum and the delivery of the first HKDSE Examination in 2012, including SBA. There will be a comprehensive review of all the 24 NSS subjects, embracing both curriculum and assessment issues. The findings and recommendations from this review are expected to be available in early 2013. The recommendations, if adopted, will affect, at the soonest, the 2016 HKDSE Examination as the learning and teaching of the revised curricula and assessment requirements will start in September 2013 for the 2016 examination cohort.

Way Forward

26. We look forward to gauging the experience of implementing the HKDSE Examination for the first time, as the examination, together with other forms of reporting on students' learning experience, represent the crystallisation of the NAS and the education reform. As the result release day is approaching, EDB will continue to strengthen communication and convey key messages to all stakeholders so as to manage expectations and

ensure that all students succeed in one way or the other. EDB and HKEAA will also continue to evaluate the NAS and HKDSE Examination in order to inform the future development. Apart from the studies that we have been conducting, we will collect the information from respective stakeholders on the first cohort of NSS students. For instance, we will collaborate with schools to collect information on their students' pathways after Secondary 6; tertiary and post-secondary institutions to feedback on their student intake as well as their first year experience; employers to express their views on the capability and attitude of their employees. All such important information will inform the progress of the NAS and HKDSE Examination and shed light on improving the quality of education for the benefits of students and enhancing human resources for the benefit of Hong Kong as an international city.

Advice Sought

27. Members are requested to note the progress on the implementation of the NAS and HKDSE Examination, multiple pathways for students, preparation of various stakeholders for the result release day as well as evaluation and monitoring as reported in this paper.

Education Bureau
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
April 2012

Support to schools, students and parents before and on the result release day

Since the start of the 2011/12 school year, essential support has been provided to schools, students and parents, which aim to change their mindset and expectations on students' articulations as well as prompt their early preparation for 20 July 2012. These include:

- “Information Pack on the New Academic Structure – Meeting Aspirations through Multiple Pathways” specifically prepared for the first cohort of Secondary 6 students and their parents, was distributed through schools in September 2011;
- Four regional parents seminars, targeted at the same cohort of parents, were held in October 2011 to provide updates on multiple pathways and success stories of students pursuing sub-degree and other programmes to help change mindset and widen perspectives when parents consider for their children's aspirations;
- Thirteen identical workshops were held from September to November 2011 for schools on “Planning to Meet Students' Aspirations via Multiple Pathways under the NAS” to raise their awareness of “success under the NAS” and the need for a new approach to making early planning and working with parents and students; and
- The NAS Web Bulletin has been revamped since early 2012, with the front page showing a chart on multiple pathways and the motto “Of the multiple pathways to success, there's always one for you”, to strengthen the key message disseminated to all students.

Appendix 2

To ensure that events on 20 July 2012 are to be launched orderly, EDB is providing a range of support measures to schools, students and parents for their timely preparation and action. These include:

- A list of key dates concerning application to post-secondary institutions and announcement of various results before and after the result release day;
- Three identical symposia for schools entitled “Student Aspiration Symposium” to be organised in May 2012 as part of the continuous effort to further update on pathways and services available, and to facilitate peer sharing, scenario planning (such as counseling, career guidance, mock interview and mock result release), and case studies for the result release day, etc;
- An electronic tool, “e-Navigator: Multiple Pathways under NAS” has been launched since February 2012 to assist students and parents for exploring opportunities in further studies and career development (students can download the APP version for smart phones by May);
- A pamphlet with essential information (such as telephone hotlines, and websites of EDB, HKEAA, NGO, institutions, students’ roadmap) will be distributed by 13 July 2012 (e-version uploaded earlier in June) so that schools can gather their students as well as parents for a final briefing just before 20 July 2012 and provide any last-minute counseling and assistance;
- A parent seminar will be held on 13 June 2012 to provide support and updates to parents of the first cohort alongside with other parent seminars organised by other parties;
- A designated webpage hosted by EDB will be set up nearer the day to provide easy access to latest information on all pathways, including post-secondary institutions and organisations;
- A call centre will be set up by EDB from 18 July to 27 July 2012 to provide a one-stop point in co-ordinating enquiries from and responses to the students and schools while most of the services for students will still be best handled by schools; and
- Regional Education Offices of EDB will provide, from 18 to 27 July 2012, assistance to those students and parents in need of information and advice on multiple pathways, and to supplement the support provided by schools to their students.