

# **立法會**

## ***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(4)765/13-14(04)

Ref : CB4/PL/ED

### **Panel on Education**

**Meeting on 9 June 2014**

### **Background brief on issues related to the review of the new senior secondary curriculum and assessment**

#### **Purpose**

This paper summarizes the deliberations of members of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on issues related to the review of the new senior secondary ("NSS") curriculum and assessment.

#### **Background**

##### The new senior secondary curriculum under the new academic structure

2. The NSS curriculum under the new academic structure ("NAS"), which comprise a three-year senior secondary curriculum and a four-year undergraduate programme, has been implemented in all secondary schools at Secondary ("S") 4 level with effect from September 2009.

3. The NSS curriculum is made up of three components, namely, four core subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies ("LS"), elective subjects<sup>1</sup> and other learning experiences<sup>2</sup>. Starting from 2012, the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education ("HKDSE") Examination, administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA"), has replaced the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination. Students now receive 12 years' school education and will take only one public examination upon completion of S6.

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<sup>1</sup> Students may choose two or three subjects from 20 elective subjects, a range of Applied Learning courses and other languages.

<sup>2</sup> These include moral and civic education, community service, aesthetic development etc.

4. A standards-referenced reporting ("SRR") system is used in reporting student results in the HKDSE Examination. Instead of using grades A to F as in the past, the results of the NSS subjects in the HKDSE 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. Unlike the previous reporting system under which Grade E is a passing grade, there is no official passing level under SRR.

#### Review of the new academic structure

5. According to the Administration, the delivery of the first three-year cycle of the NSS curriculum and the inaugural HKDSE Examination in 2012 had been generally smooth. As it took time for experiences to be consolidated, the Administration would conduct a review of NAS in strategic stages. The short-term stage (from October 2012 to March 2013) of the review focused on refinements and concerns and issues that had already emerged from the implementation of the NSS curriculum and assessment.

6. In April 2013, the Administration released a report entitled "The New Senior Secondary Learning Journey – Moving Forward to Excel", with details of the fundamental changes, achievements and challenges of NAS as well as an overview of the recommendations for fine-tuning the NSS curriculum and assessment<sup>3</sup>. The recommendations contained in the aforesaid report pertaining to "Curriculum", "Assessment", "three specific subjects" and the recommendations at the system/school level are set out in **Appendix I** and **Appendix II** respectively.

7. According to the Administration, continuous efforts will be made to deliberate on the medium- and long-term recommendations. Regular and ongoing review will continue on all NSS subjects, especially the LS subject and other curriculum components. The Applied Learning ("ApL") courses and the current HKDSE Examination will also be reviewed to better cater for learner diversity.

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<sup>3</sup> The report is available at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas/review>.

## **Deliberations on issues of concern**

8. The Panel attached great importance to the review of the NSS curriculum and assessment. At the meeting held on 30 May 2013, members discussed with the Administration issues related to the relevant findings and recommendations after the release of the report on the short-term review mentioned in paragraph 6 above. The major views and concerns expressed by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### Objective and scope of the review

9. Members noted that in response to concerns about the lack of clear objectives of the review against which the success or otherwise of the NSS curriculum could be evaluated, the Administration had stated that given the scale of the education reform, it would take time for experiences to be consolidated. Hence, a pragmatic approach had been adopted to conduct the review in stages, with the first stage focusing on the more immediate and practical concerns.

10. There was a view that the review had not addressed issues related to the provision of teacher manpower in schools. The decline in secondary student population would eventually lead to a reduction in the number of classes, teachers and elective subjects offered by schools. Hence, it was necessary for the Administration to examine how the teacher manpower in schools could be deployed to ensure the smooth implementation of the NSS curriculum and assessment.

11. According to the Administration, the review had attached equal importance to teacher manpower and to curriculum and assessment. It nevertheless reiterated that the short-term recommendations aimed at addressing immediate and practical concerns and some of them were scheduled for implementation in the 2013-2014 school year. Issues related to the overall workload of teachers and students would be monitored on an ongoing basis.

### Subjects under the new senior secondary curriculum

#### *Liberal Studies*

12. Members held different views over the LS subject under the NSS curriculum. Some members disagreed that LS should be a mandatory subject for admission to local undergraduate programmes. They considered that the absence of structured curricular content and the lack of clear objective assessment criteria had made it difficult for many teachers and students to grasp the subject. There was a view that the LS subject focused too heavily on local

political issues. There was also concern about possible bias and subjectivity arising from the political stance, if any, of the teachers teaching the subject. Some other members however agreed that LS should be a mandatory subject in the NSS curriculum as it was important for students to acquire a broad base of knowledge and develop analytical and critical thinking skills. They considered that certain hiccups in the initial stage should not become impediments to implementing the LS subject.

13. According to the Administration, the objective of LS was to develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills, which were essential for students of all disciplines. Regarding concerns about the fairness and reliability of the assessment of students' performance in LS as such assessment was based on the judgment of the examination script markers, HKEAA confirmed that the assessment design for individual subjects had followed the Curriculum and Assessment Guide. The assessment of the LS subject covered all the modules of the subject instead of focusing on a particular module only.

14. Noting that the Liberal Studies Curriculum Support Grant ("LSCSG") would cease after the 2012-2013 school year<sup>4</sup>, some members urged for its continuation. In this regard, the Administration explained that when LSCSG was first launched in the 2010-2011 school year, it had been made clear that LSCSG was a time-limited one-off grant. Schools could flexibly deploy the recurrent Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant ("SSCSG") provided to them since the 2008-2009 school year to support the ongoing implementation of the NSS curriculum, including the LS subject.

#### *Other subjects*

15. The Panel noted that the subject of Business, Accounting and Financial Studies ("BAFS") was a new subject under the NSS curriculum which had combined and replaced several subjects in the past curriculum. Some members shared the concern expressed by teachers about the depth and breadth of the BAFS curriculum, and its course contents which were overloaded to the extent of resembling a miniature undergraduate course in Business Administration. Noting stakeholders' concerns, the Administration informed the Panel that one of the short-term recommendations was the reduction of the content of the BAFS curriculum by 15%. Communication with stakeholders would continue in the medium- and long-term review to further improve the subject.

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<sup>4</sup> LSCSG in the amount of \$320,000 was disbursed to each publicly-funded secondary school for use in the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years. With the approval of the Finance Committee, the tenure of LSCSG was extended for one more year and the remaining amount in the commitment was disbursed to schools on application in the 2012-2013 school year.

16. Members had deliberated on the need to beef up education on history, in particular Chinese History, as they had noted a reduced interest in history subjects among secondary students. Some members suggested that Chinese History should be made a compulsory subject under the NSS curriculum. In response, the Administration reported that in the 2012-2013 school year, about 90% of secondary schools offered Chinese History at S4 to S6 levels. Out of more than 20 elective subjects, Chinese History ranked as the eighth most popular elective subject in terms of student enrolment. The EDB had also indicated that it would provide written proof that from 2000 onwards, it had recommended to schools to make Chinese History a mandatory subject in the junior secondary curriculum.

17. There was concern about the drop in the number of candidates taking the subject of Visual Arts in the 2012 HKDSE Examination. Some members questioned the need to assess students on their ability in "Art Appreciation and Criticism", as well as appointing subject teachers to serve as markers instead of engaging independent experts. According to HKEAA, the teachers surveyed in the course of the review had agreed that the assessment on "Art Appreciation and Criticism" should be maintained. As subject teachers were most familiar with the requirements of the curriculum and assessment, it had been an established practice for subject teachers to serve as markers of the subject in public examinations.

#### Support for students with special educational needs

18. Members noted that for students with special educational needs ("SEN students") studying in ordinary schools, one of the main concerns was the support measures to help them cope with the NSS curriculum. They also noted that as short-term measures, EDB would promote teachers' confidence and competence by providing exemplars and resource materials for teachers in designing school-based curriculum with adaptation and relevant assessment processes that could better cater for the needs of SEN students.

19. Some members reiterated their concern about the difficulties faced by SEN students under the NSS curriculum, such as in studying and preparing for the examination of the LS subject. Given the importance of the LS subject as one of the mandatory subjects for university admission, not attaining good results in the subject would become an impediment to SEN students' pursuit of higher education. Some members considered that in launching the NSS curriculum, there had been inadequate planning on the provision of support to SEN students.

20. Regarding concerns about specific measures or alternative assessment for SEN students taking the LS subject, HKEAA informed the Panel that advice

had been sought from educational psychologists on the necessary adaptation measures for SEN students in the HKDSE Examination, such as extending the examination time, exemption of students with hearing impairment from the listening assessment etc. HKEAA was also exploring the feasibility of allowing certain SEN students to use assistive software such as speech-to-text conversion software.

### **Latest position**

21. The Administration will brief the Panel on the progress of the NAS Medium-term review at the meeting to be held on 9 June 2014.

### **Relevant papers**

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

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
3 June 2014

**Table 1: Recommendations on Curriculum**

(Note: Number of subjects involved and the cohorts that benefit in respective school years are put in brackets)

Recommendations	Effective school year (sy) and levels				
	2013/14 sy	2014/15 sy	2015/16 sy	2016/17 sy	2017/18 sy
<b>1. Update and revise curriculum content</b> (9 subjects)	Lit in English (S4) Bio, Chem, Phy, CS (S4) Geog (S4) THS (S4) ICT (S4) Econ (S4)	Lit in English (S4, S5) Bio, Chem, Phy, CS (S4, S5) Geog (S4, S5) THS (S4, S5) ICT (S4, S5) Econ (S4, S5)	Lit in English (S4, S5, S6) Bio, Chem, Phy, CS (S4, S5, S6) Geog (S4, S5, S6) THS (S4, S5, S6) ICT (S4, S5, S6) Econ (S4, S5, S6)		
<b>2. (a) Trim curriculum content</b> (2 subjects)	Math (S4) BAFS (S4)	Math (S4, S5) BAFS (S4, S5)	Math (S4, S5, S6) BAFS (S4, S5, S6) – curriculum contents trimmed by about 15%		
<b>(b) Adjust number of electives to be taken by students</b> (3 subjects)	Chin Lang (S4, S5, S6) Chin Lit (S4, S5, S6)				
	Chin Hist (S4)	Chin Hist (S4, S5)	Chin Hist (S4, S5, S6)		
<b>3. Provide more choices for diversity</b> (1 subject)	Lit in English (S4)	Lit in English (S4, S5)	Lit in English (S4, S5, S6)		
<b>4. Provide supplementary notes to further clarify the breadth and depth</b>	All subjects (S4, S5, S6)				

**Table 2: Recommendations on Assessment** (aligning with the principles and changes in curriculum)

For SBA, **streamlining arrangements in 7 subjects (Chinese History, History, Visual Arts, Biology, Integrated Science, Chemistry and Physics) which were confirmed in February 2012 will continue**, and the current S5 cohort taking the 2014 HKDSE Examination already benefits from them. Besides, streamlining arrangements in Chinese Language and Liberal Studies announced in February 2012 already benefit the current S6 cohort taking the 2013 HKDSE Examination, and further streamlining is implemented for the 2014 HKDSE Examination and beyond.

<b>1. SBA</b>	<b>Subjects involved</b>	<b>Effective year of HKDSE exam (NSS cohorts affected)</b>
<b>(a) Not implementing SBA subject to further review in the long term (3 subjects)</b>	Math, BAFS, PE	From 2013 HKDSE (S4, S5, S6 in 2012/13 sy) onwards
<b>(b) Defer SBA (9 subjects)</b>	Chin Lit, Lit in Eng, Econ, ERS, Geog, THS, HMSC, TL, *Music	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From 2014 HKDSE (S4, S5, S6 in 2013/14 sy)</li> <li>SBA implemented from 2019 HKDSE (S4 in 2016/17 sy) onwards</li> </ul>
<b>(c) Streamline SBA components (11 subjects)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LS</li> <li>Chin Lang, Eng Lang</li> <li>ICT</li> <li>Chin Lit, Econ, Geog, HMSC, THS, TL, *Music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cancel submission of Process assessment records (S6 in 2013/14 sy, 2014 HKDSE)</li> <li>From 2014 HKDSE (S4, S5, S6 in 2013/14 sy) onwards</li> <li>From 2015 HKDSE (S4, S5 in 2013/14 sy) onwards</li> <li>From 2019 HKDSE (S4 in 2016/17 sy) onwards</li> </ul>
<b>(d) Replace SBA with public practical exam (1 subject)</b>	PE	From 2014 HKDSE (S4, S5, S6 in 2013/14 sy) onwards

*\* SBA will be implemented in Music earlier if supported by schools*

<b>2. Adjusting exam time</b>	<b>Effective school year (sy) and levels</b>				
	<b>2013/14 sy</b>	<b>2014/15 sy</b>	<b>2015/16 sy</b>	<b>2016/17 sy</b>	<b>2017/18 sy</b>
<b>(a) Lengthen exam time (to provide candidates with more time to study the questions and organise their answers) (4 subjects)</b>	Econ, Geog, Hist, HMSC (S4, S5, S6) (From 2014 HKDSE)				
<b>(b) Reduce exam time (corresponding streamlining in paper design) (3 subjects)</b>	Chin Lit, BAFS (S4, S5, S6) (From 2014 HKDSE)				
	Lit in English (S4) (From 2016 HKDSE)	Lit in English (S4, S5)	Lit in English (S4, S5, S6)		

3. Improving assessment design	2013/14 sy	2014/15 sy	2015/16 sy	2016/17 sy	2017/18 sy
(a) Streamline exam paper (2 subjects)	Chin Lang (S4, S5, S6) (From 2014 HKDSE)				
	Chin Hist (S4) (From 2016 HKDSE)	Chin Hist (S4, S5)	Chin Hist (S4, S5, S6)		
(b) Integrate exam papers (1 subject)	Chin Lang (S4) (From 2016 HKDSE)	Chin Lang (S4, S5)	Chin Lang (S4, S5, S6)		
(c) Provide more options in exam papers (2 subjects)	BAFS (S4, S5, S6) (From 2014 HKDSE)				
	Lit in English (S4) (From 2016 HKDSE)	Lit in English (S4, S5)	Lit in English (S4, S5, S6)		



**Table 3: Recommendations on three specific subjects**

Subject	Effective from 2013/14 sy	Medium-/Long-term (Issues to explore)
<b>Chinese Language</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adjust no. of electives to study:</b> from 3-4 to 2-4 (S6; 2014 HKDSE)*</li> <li>• <b>Streamline exam paper:</b> Paper 4 -- delete reading aloud and include 1 min. speech in 1st round of group discussion (S6; 2014 HKDSE)</li> <li>• <b>Integrate exam paper:</b> Combine Papers 3 &amp; 5 (S4; 2016 HKDSE)</li> <li>• <b>Streamline SBA:</b> Delete SBA task on “Coursework and Other Language Activity” of the Compulsory Part (S6; 2014 HKDSE)</li> <li>• <b>Clarify SBA requirement:</b> Reading records</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore introducing classical set texts and assessment of these texts in Chinese Language</li> </ul>
<b>Liberal Studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Clarify curriculum breadth and depth</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Issue a curriculum and assessment resource package</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Streamline SBA:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Implement streamlined IES (S6; 2014 HKDSE, announced in Feb 2012)</li> <li>■ Schools are not required to submit the Process assessment records (benefit S6 in 2013/14 sy, 2014 HKDSE onwards)</li> <li>■ Clarify IES assessment requirement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Provide more support for learning and teaching:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enhance school-based support wherever necessary</li> <li>■ Enhance resource platform (e.g. resource pack and good practices)</li> <li>■ Strengthen interface between Junior Secondary curriculum and NSS LS</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review curriculum and assessment design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Recommendations on reviewing curriculum and assessment design in the medium term, to be ready by mid-2015</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Business, Accounting and Financial Studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Trim curriculum content (about 15%):</b> compulsory &amp; elective parts (S4; 2016 HKDSE)</li> <li>• <b>Adjust exam time</b> (in line with adjustment in curriculum): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Paper 1: reduce exam time from 1 hr 30 mins to 1 hr 15 mins (S6; 2014 HKDSE)</li> <li>■ Paper 2: reduce exam time from 2 hrs 30 mins to 2 hrs 15 mins (S6; 2014 HKDSE)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Improve assessment design:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Introduce optional questions in Section B of Paper 1 (S6; 2014 HKDSE)</li> <li>■ Corresponding changes in exam rubrics (S6; 2014 HKDSE)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Provide support for learning and teaching</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Specify clearer cut-off date for accounting standards (S4; 2016 HKDSE)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Explore the possibility of separate reporting</b></li> <li>• <b>Not implementing SBA</b> (S4; 2016 HKDSE onwards)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the feasibility of splitting the subject and/or separate grading and reporting in BAFS</li> </ul>

\*(S4; 2016 HKDSE): for students studying in S4 in the 2013/14 sy and taking the 2016 HKDSE Examination

\*(S5; 2015 HKDSE): for students studying in S5 in the 2013/14 sy and taking the 2015 HKDSE Examination

\*(S6; 2014 HKDSE): for students studying in S6 in the 2013/14 sy and taking the 2014 HKDSE Examination

Source : LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(01)

**The NSS Curriculum and Assessment Review**  
**Recommendations at the system / school level**

**1. Lesson time**

- The NSS curriculum is designed on the basis of 2 500 lesson hours. A flexible range of total lesson time at 2 400±200 hours over three years is recommended for school-based planning purposes to cater for school diversity and varying learning needs while maintaining international benchmarking standards.
- The flexible lesson time recommended, based on the evidence collected, is for schools' reference in addressing their difficulty in timetabling. Lesson time is the time when students are in 'close contact' with teachers for purposeful learning, normally conducted in, but not confined to, classrooms. Flexible timetabling should be explored to ensure entitlements and make effective use of strategies and resources to enhance student learning.
- To ensure learning effectiveness, some activities (especially OLE) may not be timetabled and schools should decide on how to arrange them effectively so that they are in line with their schools' mission and culture.
- To cater for students' diverse interests, needs and abilities, schools should provide a reasonable number of elective subjects (i.e. at least ten elective subjects including Other Languages, Applied Learning courses and network programmes) and OLE by exercising professional judgement and flexibility.
- The suggested time allocation for each NSS subject over three years is as follows:

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Suggested time allocation</b>
Chinese Language	310 to 375 hours
English Language	310 to 375 hours
Mathematics	
Compulsory Part	250 to 310 hours
Compulsory and Extended Part	375 hours
Liberal Studies	250 hours
Each elective subject	250 hours
Other Learning Experiences	
Moral and Civic Education	
Aesthetic Development	
Physical Development	
Community Service	
Career-related Experiences	
	250 to 375 hours
Each Applied Learning course	180 hours over two years in S5 and S6

## **2. Other Learning Experiences (OLE) and Student Learning Profile (SLP)**

- To allow greater school-based flexibility, the recommendation on allocating “10-15%” of the total curriculum time for OLE is adopted.
- There is no longer any word limit in the self-account of SLP so that schools have the flexibility to align the number of words with the Other Experiences and Achievements in Competitions / Activities (OEA) of JUPAS application (rolled out in WebSAMS in Aug 2012).
- The number of OLE activities in SLP can be aligned with OEA form.
- Quality rather than quantity matters in OLE. Schools should flexibly use the curriculum time to further develop OLE based on the existing strengths with reference to Booklet 5A of the Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide to include the five components (e.g. the provision of structured arts learning sessions is an important mode of implementation of Aesthetic Development; the recommended mode of implementation of Physical Development is PE lessons, etc).
- Further streamlining SLP and aligning the admission requirements of different local study pathways in the long run while maintaining the importance of viewing SLP as a reflection tool for self-development.

## **3. Applied Learning (ApL)**

- Improve provision of ApL courses to cater for further studies and career opportunities.
- Enhance recognition (e.g. explore benchmarking with other qualifications such as the Qualifications Framework)
- Strengthen administrative support to cater for diverse needs (e.g. pilot early commencement of some ApL courses at S4, along with opportunities for taster programmes in that year)

## **4. Qualifications and pathways**

Provide timely information on further study options for students with different levels of attainment, including those not attaining Level 2 in five subjects (English Language and Chinese Language included) and those who choose to exit before completing 12 years of education.

## **5. Support to schools**

Support measures will be further enhanced to help schools and teachers to implement the fine-tuned NSS curriculum and assessment, and they include the following:

- Provision of professional development programmes (e.g. those on whole-school curriculum planning for school leaders).
- Supplementary notes, practical examples and resource packages will be available in time.

- Professional learning networks under Key Learning Areas / subjects, OLE and ApL will continue to be organised.
- Communication and interaction with relevant stakeholders, particularly on more controversial subjects, will be stepped up to collect more feedback and views to inform further development.
- Good practices in curriculum planning, learning, teaching and assessment strategies of different subjects will also be collected and shared with schools and teachers.
- The work of school-based support services, university partnership projects and the Quality Education Fund will be further aligned to support schools to implement the recommendations to address relevant concerns and improve student learning.
- Taking into consideration the pace and practicality of introducing the recommendations, we will continue to disseminate important information to relevant stakeholders including students as necessary.

Source : LC Paper No. CB(4)685/12-13(01)

**List of relevant papers**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Education	30.4.2010 (Item II)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	12.7.2010 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	13.6.2011 (Item VII)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	12.3.2012 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">CB(2)1681/11-12(01)</a>
Panel on Education	20.4.2012 (Item V)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Legislative Council	9.5.2012	<a href="#">Official Record of Proceedings</a> <a href="#">Pages 48 – 55 (Question 6)</a>
Panel on Education	11.6.2012 (Item VI)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	10.7.2012 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Panel on Education	12.11.2012 (Item VI)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a> <a href="#">CB(4)385/12-13(01)</a>
Panel on Education	25.1.2013	<a href="#">CB(4)318/12-13(01)</a>
Panel on Education	30.5.2013 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>