



中華人民共和國香港特別行政區政府總部教育局
Education Bureau
Government Secretariat, Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
The People's Republic of China

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15 March 2018

Ms Angel Wong
Clerk to Panel on Education
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central
Hong Kong

Dear Ms Wong,

Panel on Education
Response to the issues raised by Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
on Liberal Studies at the Senior Secondary Level

I refer to the letter of 14 February from Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun to the Chairperson of the Legislative Council Panel on Education about the issues on Liberal Studies at the senior secondary level. The reply from the Education Bureau (EDB) is enclosed at the Appendix for the Chairperson's reference.

Regarding the suggestion of Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun for the Panel on Education to discuss the issues on Liberal Studies at the senior secondary level, relevant issues were discussed in the Panel on Education in February 2017. The EDB set up a task force in November 2017 to commence a review of the school curriculum, including the areas of "catering for learner diversity", "multiple pathways" and "whole-person development". The views of different stakeholders on Liberal Studies will be relayed to the task force for deliberation in the review of the school curriculum. When the consensus on curriculum becomes clearer, the EDB will report to the Panel on Education regarding the recommendation of the task force on Liberal Studies.

(MK CHENG)
for Secretary for Education

Legislative Council Panel on Education
Response to the issues raised by Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun
on Liberal Studies at the Senior Secondary Level

Purpose

This information note aims to respond to the letter from Dr Hon Priscilla LEUNG Mei-fun to the Chairperson of the Legislative Council Panel on Education about the issues on Liberal Studies at the senior secondary level.

The Rationale of the Curriculum

2. Liberal Studies aims to help students enhance their understanding of the developments in themselves, society, the nation, the world as well as the environment; broaden their knowledge base and expand their perspectives in viewing things; connect the knowledge across different disciplines; enhance critical thinking skills and develop positive values so that they can become informed and responsible citizens. As a core subject at the senior secondary level, Liberal Studies enables students to be prepared for pursuing further studies, entering into the workplace, and coping with the contexts and issues in life, as well as ensures a sound foundation for life-long learning.

The Review of Liberal Studies

The Review

3. After the first cohort of students under the New Academic Structure (NAS) had completed the Senior Secondary Curriculum and the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination in 2012, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC), the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment

Authority (HKEAA) and the Education Bureau (EDB) jointly launched the New Academic Structure (NAS) review. Recommendations of the review were discussed and endorsed by relevant committees under the CDC and the HKEAA. The respective committees are all well-represented, with members comprising representatives of post-secondary institutions, school principals, serving teachers, etc. The short-term review was completed in April 2013 while the medium-term review was completed in June 2015. The review of individual senior secondary subjects is conducted on a need basis for the continual renewal of the subject curricula. The review of Liberal Studies, as an integral part of the NAS review, was similarly conducted by the relevant Liberal Studies committees¹ under the CDC and the HKEAA to enhance the operationalisation of the curriculum, school-based assessment and public examination.

Curriculum Framework

4. Regarding the curriculum, relevant committees of the Liberal Studies curriculum affirmed that the existing curriculum structure was crucial to maintaining Liberal Studies as a core subject of the senior secondary curriculum. It was recommended in the NAS Medium-term Review that revisions to part of the curriculum content were to be made to refine the scope and focus of the related areas, and to update some contents and examples to keep abreast of the development in knowledge and society and to relieve teachers' and students' workload.

Learning Effectiveness

¹ The relevant committees of Liberal Studies include the CDC Committee on Liberal Studies, the CDC-HKEAA Committee on Liberal Studies and the HKDSE Liberal Studies Subject Committee.

5. Based on our understanding, as schools have accumulated quite a lot of experience and achieved positive outcomes, they have exhibited enhanced confidence. We recognise the positive outcomes achieved as a result of the efforts made by the education sector on the subject. The *Report on the New Academic Structure Medium-term Review and Beyond – Continual Renewal from Strength to Strength* released in 2015 further revealed that most teachers and students agreed that the curriculum aims and the learning outcomes of Liberal Studies had been achieved in general.

Public Assessment

6. Regarding the assessment, refinements were made to the examination papers according to teachers' feedback. For example, when setting the examination paper, a wider range of issues, topics and concepts were adopted, more sub-questions containing fewer marks were provided so as to cater for learner diversity, to reflect thinking from multiple perspectives required by the curriculum so as to assess candidates' ability in a more comprehensive way. Concrete measures and streamlining of workflows on the implementation and assessment of the Independent Enquiry Study (IES) were also proposed in the medium-term review on Liberal Studies to alleviate teachers' and students' workload.

7. The suggestion of replacing the existing grading system for Liberal Studies examination papers with a “passed/failed” grading system, in the motion passed at the meeting of the Legislative Council Panel on Education on “The Liberal Studies Subject under the New Senior Secondary Curriculum” in February 2017, was discussed by the CDC Committee on Liberal Studies and

the CDC-HKEAA Committee on Liberal Studies at their meetings held in March, April, October and November 2017. These two committees affirmed the value of Liberal Studies and the revised curriculum as recommended in the medium-term review, and agreed in general to the existing grading system of the subject. The committees considered that the existing assessment mode and assessment criteria could reflect the performance and outcomes of students' learning in a fair and effective manner. In addition, the grading of Liberal Studies is closely related to the requirements of the university admission and the international benchmarking of the local curriculum. Any changes related to its grading system and assessment criteria should be carefully and comprehensively deliberated.

Support services provided to schools

Learning and Teaching Resources

8. The EDB has launched the Web-based Resource Platform for Liberal Studies (ls.edb.hkedcity.net) and uploaded the learning and teaching resources. Through this Platform, a wide variety of free and practical curriculum resources, learning and teaching materials as well as assessment items are provided for teachers. These resources, which are in line with the various parts of the curriculum and are suitable for various learning contexts and students' diverse abilities and interests, are updated and enriched on a regular basis.

9. In addition, the EDB has published a total of six booklets on the Liberal Studies Curriculum Resources Booklet Series and organised a series of related professional development programmes. Each of the modules in the Liberal Studies Curriculum Resources Booklet Series provides teachers and students

with the essential basic knowledge and concepts, the learning focuses and exemplars, learning materials, exemplars of issue enquiry, suggestions for school-based adaptation, extended reading, reference materials, etc. of the respective module to be covered in the three-year curriculum.

Teacher Training

10. From 2005 to the present, over 5 500 teachers have received more than 30 hours of related training organised by the EDB for Liberal Studies. Among them, nearly 1 500 teachers have accumulated over 100 hours of related training. The total number of teachers participating in the professional development programmes provided for the subject has reached nearly 10 000 headcounts per year. The tertiary education institutions have also been offering degree programmes, post-graduate diploma courses for pre-service as well as in-service teacher training on the subject. The EDB will continue to organise more and a wider range of professional development programmes to address teachers' needs.

11. Apart from this, the EDB has been providing considerable assistance to schools through the school-based support services, including enhancing the school-based curriculum, developing learning and teaching resources, strengthening learning and teaching strategies, catering for learner diversity, enhancing assessment for learning, developing experiential learning and strengthening the vertical interface between junior and senior secondary education. At the same time, professional communication and collaboration across schools have also been enhanced through an array of professional learning communities and district-based network activities. From the 2013/14 to

2016/17 school years, a total of 171 secondary schools have received school-based support services on Liberal Studies. In the past four years, the district-based networks also organised more than 120 diversified exchange activities to further enhance and disseminate good practices on learning and teaching.

12. The EDB has been gaining an understanding of the implementation of the Liberal Studies curriculum through curriculum development visits, school-based support services, school networks, external school reviews and focus inspections on Liberal Studies, etc. Suggestions would be given to schools to enhance their self-improvement. With the provision of various support measures on Liberal Studies in recent years, including the publication of Liberal Studies curriculum and assessment resources, the implementation of the streamlined measures on the School-based Assessment in Liberal Studies and the revised curriculum, teachers' and students' workload has been alleviated. Their understanding of the breadth and depth of the curriculum and their mastery of the requirements of the public examination have also been enhanced.

Curriculum Review

13. To follow up on the 2017 Policy Address, the EDB set up a task force in November 2017 to commence a review of the school curriculum. The task force comprises academics, experienced educators, professionals, etc. The EDB understands that there are different views on Liberal Studies in the community. These views will be relayed to the task force for deliberation in the review of the school curriculum.

Education Bureau

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