

NOTE FOR FINANCE COMMITTEE

Measures to support the development of the New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the Administration's plan to extend the duration by one additional school year (i.e. to cover 2012/13 school year) for taking measures to support the implementation of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, with the outstanding balance of the funding commitment approved under FCR(2005-06)24.

BACKGROUND

2. At the meeting on 24 June 2005, the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council approved vide FCR(2005-06)24 the creation of a commitment of \$2,447.2 million for implementing measures to support the development of the new academic structure **over a period of seven school years from 2005/06 to 2011/12**. The new academic structure was implemented as scheduled with the first cohort of students taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination in 2012.

3. During the implementation of the new academic structure, most teachers and students considered that Liberal Studies (LS) one of the most difficult subjects of the NSS curriculum. A time-limited Liberal Studies Curriculum Support Grant (LSCSG) which is a component of the NSS Curriculum Migration Grant covered by the above approved commitment of \$2,447.2 million, was provided to schools to assist them in the implementation of the LS curriculum during the transitional period. Each of the publicly-funded secondary schools was provided with \$320,000 for use in the 2010/11 and 2011/12 school years to flexibly acquire additional manpower resources or learning and teaching materials for the LS subject.

4. The support measures covered by the approved commitment also include provision of funding to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to conduct a mock run of the HKDSE examination in 2012 (by means of production of practice papers of the NSS subjects for the reference by schools and students) to familiarise the first cohort of students with taking the HKDSE examination, as well as to ensure the validity and reliability of the examination and to assist standard setting and international recognition.

EXTENDING THE SUPPORT MEASURES FOR THE LS CURRICULUM

5. The school sector has recently requested extension of support from the Government on the learning and teaching of the LS subject upon the expiry of the LSCSG at the end of the 2011/12 school year, i.e. 31 August 2012. They also suggested the HKEAA to produce practice papers on LS again in 2013, which they found very useful in helping teachers and students in understanding how examination items were set for this new subject.

6. As the first HKDSE examination was just held and both teachers and students are still familiarising themselves with the NSS curriculum, especially the LS subject, we consider that there is a genuine need to extend the duration of the support to schools in this regard. We will therefore extend the tenure of the existing LSCSG for schools by one more school year till 31 August 2013 and consider requests from schools for additional LSCSG for the 2012/13 school year on a case-by-case basis, having regard to the spending situation of their existing LSCSG and their overall financial position. Moreover, we will provide additional funding to HKEAA for the production of LS practice papers in 2013 to help teachers and students get a better understanding of the depth and breadth of the subject. The extension of support measures on the LS subject is in line with the objective of the NSS Migration Grant to facilitate the smooth migration to the NSS curriculum.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7. Up to the end of 2011-12, the balance of the approved commitment is \$109.1 million. Taking into account the estimated cash flow of \$51.4 million budgeted for other time-limited support measures in 2012-13, the remaining balance of \$57.7 million will be sufficient for the provision of additional LSCSG and production of LS practice papers mentioned in paragraph 6 above. No additional funding is required.

8. Members are invited to note this paper.
