

**立法會**  
***Legislative Council***

LC Paper No. CB(2)585/05-06

(These minutes have been  
seen by the Administration)

Ref : CB2/PL/ED

**Panel on Education**

**Minutes of meeting  
held on Monday, 14 November 2005 at 4:30 pm  
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

<b>Members present</b>	: Dr Hon YEUNG Sum (Chairman) Hon Audrey EU Yuet-mee, SC, JP (Deputy Chairman) Hon Mrs Selina CHOW LIANG Shuk-yee, GBS, JP Hon CHEUNG Man-kwong Hon LEUNG Yiu-chung Hon Jasper TSANG Yok-sing, GBS, JP Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP Hon MA Lik, GBS, JP Dr Hon Fernando CHEUNG Chiu-hung Hon Patrick LAU Sau-shing, SBS, JP
<b>Member absent</b>	: Hon Andrew LEUNG Kwan-yuen, SBS, JP
<b>Public Officers attending</b>	: <u>Item IV</u> Mrs Fanny LAW, GBS, JP Permanent Secretary for Education & Manpower  Mr Chris WARDLAW Deputy Secretary for Education and Manpower (5)  Dr Francis CHEUNG Deputy Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

Mr Peter LEUNG  
Director, Corporate Services, Hong Kong Examinations  
and Assessment Authority

**Clerk in attendance** : Miss Flora TAI  
Chief Council Secretary (2)2

**Staff in attendance** : Mr Stanley MA  
Senior Council Secretary (2)6

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**I. Confirmation of minutes**

[LC Paper No. CB(2)167/05-06]

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2005 were confirmed.

**II. Information paper issued since the last meeting**

2. Members noted the following papers which were issued since the last meeting –

- (a) two letters from Park Island Owners' Committee dated 14 October 2005 [LC Paper No.CB(2)105/05-06(01)];
- (b) the Administration's reply letter to Park Island Owners' Committee dated 7 November 2005 [LC Paper No. CB(2)344/05-06(01)]; and
- (c) draft proposal on the redevelopment of St Stephen's Girls' Primary School at Park Road, Mid Levels [LC Paper No. CB(2)348/05-06(01)].

**III. Items for discussion at the next meeting**

[Appendices I and II to LC Paper No. CB(2)323/05-06]

Items to be discussed at the next meeting

3. Members agreed to discuss the following items proposed by the Administration at the next meeting scheduled for Monday, 12 December 2005 at 4:30 pm –

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- (a) Review of medium of instruction for secondary schools and secondary school places allocation; and
- (b) Injection into the Language Fund.

4. Regarding the discussion item in paragraph 3(a) above, the Chairman requested that the Administration should consider the views and suggestions of members which would be expressed at the next meeting, before submitting its proposal for the relevant long-term arrangements to the Executive Council.

Items to be discussed at future meetings

5. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that there were widespread concerns about the quality and subsidisation of sub-degree programmes. He suggested that the Panel should discuss the issue with the Administration and receive views from the sub-degree sector in January 2006. Mr Patrick LAU added that the discussion should include the provision of further education opportunities for graduates of sub-degree programmes.

6. Permanent Secretary for Education and Manpower (PSEM) said that the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) had established a working group to review the development of the sub-degree sector. The review would include, among others, gathering opinions on the quality and fees of sub-degree programmes from students and employers' satisfaction with sub-degree graduates. In addition, the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions had also established a quality assurance committee to review the quality of their sub-degree programmes. PSEM suggested that the Panel could discuss the item when the Administration had consolidated the views collected from the review and put forward initial recommendations for consultation in early 2006, i.e. February or March 2006.

7. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong also suggested that the Panel should discuss education for children of ethnic minorities at a future meeting. Members agreed to include the item for discussion at the regular meeting in January 2006.

8. Mr Patrick LAU expressed concern about the curriculum design of Liberal Studies under the new academic structure for senior secondary education. PSEM said that EMB had completed the consultation with the school sector on the design of the curriculum and assessment framework for the new senior secondary structure. The Administration would provide the Panel with an update on the latest developments in respect of the new academic structure for senior secondary education and higher education in early 2006.

9. Members agreed that the Panel would discuss the issues relating to the curriculum design of Liberal Studies when the Administration provided the update in early 2006.

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**IV. Grant to support the modernisation and development of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority's examination systems**  
[LC Paper Nos.CB(2)323/05-06(01) and (02)].

Need to modernise the examination support systems

10. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that following the incident of errors being found in the results of some candidates taking the 2005 Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) English Language (Syllabus B) Oral paper on 11 August 2005 (the Incident), the community appreciated the urgent need to modernise the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA)'s examination systems. He asked how far the proposed measures to modernise the examination support systems were made in the light of the Incident. Mr CHEUNG also queried whether implementation of the proposed measures could prevent recurrence of the Incident since it was concluded that the Incident was caused not only by a programme bug but also by inadequate supervision and communication.

11. Deputy Secretary General, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (DSG(HKEAA)) responded that HKEAA had established two independent committees to investigate the causes of the Incident and recommend improvement measures to prevent recurrence of similar incidents. Like the External Review Committee, the two independent committees had recommended measures to improve the administration of public examinations. The HKEAA Council had endorsed the implementation of 15 measures within 2006-08 to improve public examination administration and the following were specifically aimed at preventing recurrence of similar incidents –

- (a) redesigning score sheets to reduce human errors;
- (b) strengthening the random sampling strategies for the rechecking of the checking process of examination scripts for all subjects;
- (c) implementation of onscreen marking to reduce human errors in marking;
- (d) strengthening the management and control of examination systems with built-in elements of authorisation, verification, documentation and reporting;
- (e) building in active detectors for possible systemic errors at various stages of processing;
- (f) carrying out simulation check for systemic errors before the release of results;

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- (g) provision of sensitivity training on incident management for all staff involved in examination administration;
- (h) reviewing and strengthening incident management policies and procedures; and
- (i) implementation of a new training policy to ensure the provision of relevant training to staff concerned at least one month before the introduction of any new or revised operational procedure or security protocol in examination administration.

Implementation of digital scanning and onscreen marking

*Schedule of implementation and establishment of onscreen marking centres*

12. Mrs Selina CHOW noted that according to the schedule of implementation, onscreen marking and examination processing centres needed to be established with systems and equipment in place by 2007 in order to enable HKEAA to build up sufficient experience for a smooth transition to full implementation for the new Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) in 2012. She asked whether HKEAA could facilitate the implementation of onscreen marking through speeding up the establishment of the centres.

13. DSG(HKEAA) explained that implementation of onscreen marking was a major cultural change in script marking which should be thoroughly tested and implemented with extreme care. HKEAA would conduct a pilot run on onscreen marking of scripts starting March 2006. The results of the pilot run would provide useful information for the refinement of procedures and operations as well as hardware and software requirements which would be carried out in June to September 2006. The installation and testing of the onscreen marking system in selected centralised marking venues would be carried out before March 2007, in preparation for onscreen marking of Chinese Language and English Language in the 2007 HKCEE. HKEAA would extend onscreen marking to other subjects in HKCEE and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE), having regard to the results of onscreen marking for the two subjects, and would adjust the implementation schedule in the light of the implementation progress of onscreen marking.

14. Mrs Selina CHOW agreed that onscreen marking should be cautiously planned and progressively implemented to ensure smooth transition to the HKDSE in 2012. She, however, considered that the Administration should strive to simplify the administrative procedures for identification and allocation of suitable venues for the establishment of centralised marking centres in order to speed up the implementation progress.

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15. PSEM responded that the allocation of vacated school premises to HKEAA for conversion into onscreen marking centres would have to undergo the necessary process for allocation of land resources. The Administration aimed to confirm the location of the venues in time for the necessary conversion and fitting out works to start in mid-2006. According to the current schedule, the centralised marking centres with the necessary scanning facilities and computer installations should be ready for operation in January 2007 so that HKEAA could finalise the preparatory and testing work for onscreen marking of Chinese Language and English Language in the 2007 HKCEE.

*Number and location of centralised marking centres*

16. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that at least three centralised marking centres should be made available at convenient locations to provide accessibility and convenience for markers so that the need of markers residing in New Territories West and New Territories East would be catered for. Mrs Selina CHOW expressed a similar view.

17. DSG(HKEAA) said that he also agreed with the view of Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong. HKEAA would collaborate with EMB to establish centralised marking centres at convenient locations. PSEM pointed out that at present, there was only a limited supply of vacated school premises which would be ready for conversion into centralised marking centres in mid-2006. She added that EMB and HKEAA had identified two possible locations for establishment of centralised marking centres. Subject to clearance within the Administration, she aimed to incorporate information on these centres in the financial proposal to be submitted to the Finance Committee for consideration in December 2005. Ms Emily LAU requested that the Administration should also include in the proposal its response to the views and concerns of members expressed at the meeting.

18. Mr Jasper TSANG asked whether HKEAA had considered implementing onscreen marking without the need to establish centralised marking centres. He pointed out that given the scarcity of land in Hong Kong, the identification of suitable and sufficient locations for establishment of centralised marking centres would take time and incur substantial costs.

19. DSG(HKEAA) explained that the provision of centralised marking centres would enhance the security and supervision of the marking process. In addition, it would facilitate the provision of timely professional support to markers in the marking process. He added that some overseas examination authorities had implemented onscreen marking for markers to do marking at their chosen locations. Due to unsatisfactory results, these authorities had changed to conduct onscreen marking at centralised centres. Mrs Selina CHOW considered that onscreen marking at centralised marking centres would be a

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preferred option as the security and supervision of the marking process were important in examination administration.

*Reliability of digital scanning and onscreen marking*

20. Ms Audrey EU expressed concern about the accuracy of digital scanning and the protection of the onscreen marking system from unauthorised access. In response to her enquiry about the experience of overseas examination authorities in the implementation of onscreen marking, DSG(HKEAA) informed the Panel that some 14-15 cities and provinces in the Mainland had practised onscreen marking for their public examinations for many years. The United Kingdom had started onscreen marking recently. According to the implementation experience in these places, the reliability of digital scanning with the use of appropriate equipment and paper was almost 100%.

21. Ms Audrey EU considered that given the importance of public examination results to candidates in terms of their opportunities for further studies or employment, HKEAA should make sure that the onscreen marking system was perfectly reliable before implementation. Mr MA Lik, Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung and Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed similar concerns. Mr MA considered that HKEAA should formulate appropriate contingency plans in case of failures of the onscreen marking system.

22. DSG(HKEAA) reiterated that on the basis of the experience in the Mainland and overseas places, the reliability of onscreen marking had been ascertained. HKEAA would make reference to the experience in these places in the course of developing its onscreen marking systems.

23. Ms Audrey EU asked how HKEAA would enable markers to get familiar with the operations of the onscreen marking system and enhance candidates' confidence on the reliability of onscreen marking.

24. DSG(HKEAA) responded that teachers might initially have reservations about onscreen marking of scripts at centralised marking centres. However, experiences from other parts of the world indicated that when teachers became familiar with the features and operations, they would prefer onscreen marking to manual marking as the former provided a range of timely support to markers. HKEAA would ensure that the operations of the onscreen marking system were simple and user-friendly, and organise sufficient training for markers before implementation.

25. DSG(HKEAA) further said that before the implementation of onscreen marking, HKEAA would implement the digital scanning of examination scripts for about 70% of current subjects in March 2006. At the same time, a pilot run of onscreen marking would be carried out. Based on the results of the pilot run, HKEAA would refine the policies and procedures for implementing onscreen

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marking for Chinese Language and English Language in the 2007 HKCEE.

*Impact on candidates, teachers, schools and universities*

26. Ms Audrey EU asked how onscreen marking would affect candidates taking Chinese Language and English Language in the 2007 HKCEE. DSG(HKEAA) responded that there should be no major changes in examination administration and arrangements which would affect the candidates. He, however, added that due to time constraints, HKEAA had yet to reach an agreement with the Government Logistics Department on the arrangement for incorporating the necessary barcodes in examination scripts. Candidates participating in the 2007 Chinese Language and English Language examinations might be required to affix barcode labels onto their examination scripts. He assured members that if this was the case, HKEAA would provide appropriate briefings and references for schools and candidates to follow.

27. The Chairman said that HKEAA should bear in mind that under the tremendous pressures at examination centres, candidates might fail to follow the instructions of the examination centre supervisor correctly. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong and Ms Audrey EU shared the Chairman's concern about the need for students to affix barcode label onto the examination scripts.

28. DSG(HKEAA) responded that HKEAA would provide sufficient information and training to examination centre supervisors and invigilators on the procedures and instructions for candidates to affix the barcode label onto their examination scripts. HKEAA would arrange teachers and students to participate in trial runs in February 2006. He added that candidates would also be required to enter their candidate numbers on the scripts, following the current practice.

29. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong suggested that HKEAA should collaborate with EMB and the Government Logistics Department to work out a safe and reliable mechanism for printing examination scripts with appropriate barcodes.

30. DSG(HKEAA) responded that he personally was not in favour of requiring candidates to affix the barcode label onto their examination scripts. He undertook that HKEAA should continue to liaise with the Government Logistics Department to explore the feasibility of printing examination scripts with the necessary barcodes for the 2007 HKCEE. In addition, HKEAA would also explore whether there was other reliable service providers.

31. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung pointed out that teachers and students should be provided with sufficient information on onscreen marking, including sample questions and answers for the subjects to which onscreen marking would apply.

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32. DSG(HKEAA) responded that implementation of onscreen marking would not affect the existing question format and the assessment mode for individual subjects, which should be designed in the context of the subject curricula. He added that HKEAA had published sample questions and answers for individual subjects for the reference of teachers and students at least two years ahead of the examinations.

33. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung asked whether schools should also adopt onscreen marking in their internal assessment of students' performance. PSEM replied that in line with the spirit of school-based management, schools had discretion to decide separately whether or not to adopt onscreen marking for assessment of students' performance in individual subjects. DSG(HKEAA) added that the design of the onscreen marking system would take into consideration the current practices and operations of manual marking. For instance, the system would incorporate the provision of tablet personal computers with horizontal screen for markers to mark the electronic scripts.

34. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that schools would always prefer that HKALE could start at a later date so as to allow more time for teaching and learning in Secondary Seven and UGC-funded institutions had always requested that results of HKALE could be made available as early as possible to facilitate the university admission processes. He asked whether the modernisation of the examination systems would advance the announcement of the results of HKALE.

35. DSG(HKEAA) responded that in the long term, onscreen marking could advance the announcement of public examination results such as HKALE by two to three weeks. HKEAA would work towards the goal of advancing the announcements, subject to markers' acceptance of centralised marking and the accessibility of centralised marking centres. To facilitate the marking process, HKEAA would plan the provision of a comfortable environment and flexible time for markers to perform on-screen marking in the centralised marking centres.

*Security and supervision of public examination operations*

36. Mr Patrick LAU asked about the need to install Close Circuit Television (CCTV) and Access Control systems at all security stores and web/video cameras at examination centres to improve examination security and supervision.

37. DSG(HKEAA) explained that HKEAA handled some two to three million copies of examination scripts a year which were kept at separate security stores. While the existing security system was effective in identification of unauthorised acts in these stores, installation of CCTV system would create a deterrent effect against any such attempts. As regards the installation of

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web/video cameras at examination centres, the main purpose was to facilitate provision of timely support and immediate advice to supervisors of examination centres in handling any irregularities and unexpected events in the course of the examination process.

*Further grants*

38. Mrs Selina CHOW considered that modernisation of examination systems was the right direction for HKEAA to improve efficiency and reliability in examination administration. She asked whether further grants would be required to support modernisation of the HKEAA's examination systems in the future.

39. DSG(HKEAA) responded that HKEAA was collaborating with EMB to identify suitable vacated school premises for conversion into centralised marking centres. In this connection, HKEAA would need additional funding support for re-provisioning these centres, including costs for possible building and construction works, furniture and audio-visual systems. In addition, HKDSE examinations under the new academic structure would come into operation in 2012. HKEAA would need additional grants to support the design and establishment of an examination system for administering HKDSE examinations, the requirements of which would be clearer when the new curriculum and assessment framework were finalised in about mid-2006.

Increase of examination fees

40. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong said that the Administration had already sought the approval of the Finance Committee on 27 February 2004 for the provision of \$136 million to support HKEAA's assessment development, policy and research activities for about five years until 2009. He asked whether HKEAA would further increase the examination fees if the proposed grant of \$155.33 million was approved by the Finance Committee in December 2005.

41. DSG(HKEAA) responded that HKEAA had conducted a strategic review of its role and functions in 2002. The report of the review published in May 2003 had highlighted that HKEAA operated within a limited Ordinance and with limited sources of revenue, i.e. examination fees being the only source of revenue. He also pointed out that examination fees for HKCEE and HKALE had been frozen for seven consecutive years since 1999 until the 5% increase scheduled for 2006. The long-term policy was to recover the full costs of HKCEE and HKALE by way of progressive increase of examination fees, and to increase revenues by way of administering examinations on behalf of other educational bodies. He pointed out that HKEAA's recurrent costs would increase as a result of the substantial capital investment on modernisation of examination systems. HKEAA would endeavour to improve cost-effectiveness of examination administration in order to maintain increase in examination fees

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at reasonable levels. PSEM pointed out that EMB had considered the possibility of providing office space to HKEAA with a view to reducing the HKEAA's recurrent expenditure.

42. Mr CHEUNG Man-kwong expressed concern about the increases in recurrent costs arising from modernisation of the examination systems. Mr MA Lik expressed a similar concern and asked whether there would be further increase of examination fees after the 5% increase in 2006.

43. DSG(HKEAA) replied that modernisation of the examination systems would give rise to recurrent expenditure, such as the need to use higher quality papers for digital scanning and the utilisation of barcode technology. He pointed out that the increase of recurrent costs would be ascertained after the completion of the pilot run of onscreen marking in March 2006. Apart from the 5% fee increase in 2006, HKEAA would decide on the need for further fee increase in the light of the prevailing social and economic circumstances in the future.

44. Mr LEUNG Yiu-chung considered that HKEAA should provide a timetable for the progressive increases in examination fees in the years ahead. He added that HKEAA should consider the affordability of parents and students in deciding the percentages of increase in examination fees.

45. DSG(HKEAA) explained that HKEAA operated on a self-financing basis and did not receive any recurrent subvention from the Government. Currently, HKEAA suffered an annual deficit of about \$6 million for administering the HKCEE and HKALE. The deficit was offset by the revenue generated from running a range of assessments, and professional and international examinations. Nevertheless, DSG(HKEAA) agreed that HKEAA should consider any future increase in the HKCEE and HKALE fees, having regard to the affordability of parents and students.

**V. Any other business**

46. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 5:50 pm.

Council Business Division 2  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
6 December 2005