

For discussion on
30 March 2009

Panel on Education

Progress of Preparation for the New Senior Secondary and Higher Education Academic Structure

PURPOSE

This paper reports on the progress of the preparation for the New Senior Secondary and Higher Education Academic Structure (New Academic Structure) focusing on the areas of curriculum, learning and assessment, support for schools, preparation of schools, interface with post-secondary and university education, and communication with various stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

2. The New Academic Structure (also known as 334Ø) would replace the 4-year senior secondary education (Secondary 4 to 7) and 3-year undergraduate degree programme provided by the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions with 3-year senior secondary education (Secondary 4 to 6) and 4-year university programme respectively. The two public examinations of Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination would be replaced by one examination of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). All students, irrespective of abilities, would be entitled to 12 years of schooling from 2009 onwards. It has taken four years, since the recommendation made in 2005 on implementing the New Academic Structure, for the Government and the school sector to prepare for the implementation at Secondary 4 in September 2009. The structural change is introduced in tandem with curriculum and assessment reform to enable whole-person development and life-long learning for school and university students.

3. We have taken a multi-stage approach of development and consultation, and have been communicating to different stakeholders including parents, principals, teachers, post-secondary institutions, universities, employers, and providing support to schools based on their needs as reflected in their feedback through different channels. We have been reporting to the Education Panel every year. In the previous updates (July 2006, May 2007 and June 2008), we have reported on the latest development of the New Academic Structure and the progress of preparation we have made. The paper on 10 November 2008 reported specifically on the local and international recognition of HKDSE, and the paper in December 2008 discussed the revamping and upgrading of the computer system of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) to cater for the needs of administering the HKDSE Examination.

4. As the New Academic Structure will be implemented at Secondary 4 in September this year, this paper aims to update Members on the progress made since our last report in June 2008 on support measures that facilitate the smooth implementation of the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum and assessment in schools, preparation of schools, and development at the interface between secondary education and post-secondary education.

PROGRESS

(I) Curriculum, Learning and Assessment

Liberal Studies (LS)

5. LS is the most concerned subject among schools and parents as it is new to most of them. A multi-pronged strategy is developed to support the smooth implementation of LS. Teachers are the direct change agents in the classroom to bring about effective student learning. The planning and provision of professional development courses for LS teachers are based on the principle that all teachers teaching LS would have the opportunities of attending professional development (PD) courses in six aspects, namely, (1) *Understanding and Interpreting*

Curriculum, (2) *“Assessing Student Learning”*; (3) *“Learning and Teaching Strategies”*; (4) *“Enriching Knowledge”*; (5) *“Independent Enquiry Study”* and (6) *“Curriculum Management, Planning and Leadership”*. (1) and (2) are provided to all prospective LS teachers, while the others are attended by teachers, LS co-ordinators and principals according to their own needs. Based on the needs for PD expressed by schools in our survey, we have provided courses on (1) to (5) above, each offering about 3,600 places for teachers, and about 2,800 places for school and curriculum leaders on (6). In total, about 34,000 participants attended the LS PD courses from July 2005 to March 2009. So far, about 7,800 teachers have attended LS courses on various aspects mentioned above. In the 2009/10 school year, we will continue to provide induction course for LS teachers who are new to the profession, and for those who would start to teach LS in 2010. The provision of courses on updating subject knowledge would be on-going, whereas more emphasis would be put on practical learning and teaching in the classroom and the planning of Independent Enquiry Study (IES), the task of SBA in LS.

6. There has been collaboration of efforts in the Education Bureau (EDB) in facilitating exchange, peer support and expert help to schools. By 2008, about 100 schools have taken part in the three School Support Partnership Scheme (SSPS) teacher networks. In each network, four to five professional development meetings were held every year for teachers to share good practices and problems so that peer support and expert help could be offered. Schools experienced in implementing LS are invited to play the role as professional development schools which would provide direct help to a cluster of schools. Networked service is also provided by the Regional Education Office (REO) to help schools form professional learning communities.

7. For the 2009/10 school year, efforts of the three networks would be synergized in order to form one satellite network to provide more imminent and effective support to schools on LS (including IES) via collaboration with REOs and other Non-Government Organisations.

8. As the learning and teaching of LS relies on the provision of contemporary resources, the LS Resource Platform has been specifically

developed since 2005 to provide a one-stop service for teachers' reference. It provides teachers with curriculum and assessment documents, fact sheets, glossaries, examples of learning and teaching activities, articles and booklists. The website will be revamped further and the new website will be available in early May. As LS is an innovation to most parents, special seminars would be organised and a parent handbook will also be published in June 2009 to help parents understand the subject and their role.

Applied Learning (ApL)

9. ApL courses are a means to diversify the senior secondary curriculum through the provision of subjects that combine practical learning and theoretical learning in areas which suit the changing economic and social needs of Hong Kong. They would be offered as elective subjects to students studying at Secondary 5 and 6 commencing the 2010/11 school year. The provisional final draft of the ApL Curriculum and Assessment (C&A) Guide was uploaded on the EDB website in January 2009 to inform schools and the general public of the nature and structure of ApL, the courses to be offered, and to guide course providers to design details of the courses. The assessment framework and moderation mechanism are being developed by the HKEAA and will be completed around August 2009.

10. 30 ApL courses are proposed and being developed by 11 course providers. To provide early information to schools, the provisional course list of ApL courses was uploaded on the EDB website in September 2008. To build up the capacity of course providers in developing ApL courses, a series of workshops on course development and meetings with individual course providers have been organised by EDB and the HKEAA since October 2008. The courses will be finalised in the beginning of the 2009/10 school year. Briefing seminars and exhibitions will also be organised for schools, teachers, students, parents and the public to enhance their understanding of ApL.

11. The discussion on the recognition of ApL with universities and sub-degree providers is on-going. Descriptors and exemplars of student

work would be available later this year for users' reference. Further details on recognition of ApL will be announced in early 2010.

Development of NSS Curriculum for Intellectually Disabled (ID) Students

12. The principle of 'one curriculum framework for all' guides the adaptation of different curricula to cater for students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (including ID students). EDB has revised the adapted curriculum documents for the three core subjects of Chinese Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies/Independent Living, and four elective subjects (Physical Education (PE), Visual Arts (VA), Technology & Living (T&L) and Information & Communication Technology (ICT)).

13. The try-out of the three core subjects for special schools (ID) in the collaborative research and development projects has come to its third year, and the try-out of the elective subjects of PE and VA has come to its second year. The projects are supported by university, local and overseas experts. The Supplementary Guides to the C&A Guides for these subjects have been drafted and teachers are being consulted. The final version will be uploaded on the EDB website in May 2009 and hard copies will be dispatched before the summer holiday so that schools will have time to prepare for the 2009/10 school year. The adapted curriculum frameworks of T&L and ICT are being tried out in special schools and the Supplementary Guides for these two elective subjects will be distributed to schools in May 2010. More elective subjects (e.g. Music and Design & Applied Technology) will be adapted and tried out in the 2009/10 school year.

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE)

14. The HKDSE is a new qualification developed by the HKEAA to recognise the achievements of students at the end of Secondary 6 based on the recommendations on the school curricula under the New Academic Structure. We updated Members on the progress of promotion of the HKDSE qualification in November 2008. A recapitulation with an

update is set out below.

Local recognition & articulation of pathways

15. The Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) Statement announced on 5 July 2006 has set out the specific requirements for admission to individual faculties / departments. In addition to the four core subjects of the NSS school curriculum, most universities will include one elective in their entrance requirements and in some cases, a second elective from a wider group of subjects. To reaffirm the universities' support for Other Learning Experiences (OLE) of students, HUCOM issued another statement on 21 October 2008 to confirm that the Student Learning Profile (SLP) of NSS students will be a document with good reference value for consideration of university admission. The issue of admission requirements was further deliberated in the last Liaison Group meeting held in February 2009 where all UGC-funded institutions were represented. Further details on the recognition of foreign languages as elective subjects were also provided. It was understood that admission requirements were intended to serve the purpose of selecting students for university studies as well as to help broaden the school curriculum rather than to narrow it.

16. EDB has started discussion with post-secondary institutions on the suitable alignment of 3-year senior secondary education with the programmes for associate degrees, Higher Diploma and Diploma courses to be offered to the first cohort of new Secondary 6 when they graduate in 2012. Briefings were held by EDB and the HKEAA to provide information for the consideration of admission requirements into these programmes and their design.

International recognition

17. The HKEAA has been working closely with the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) on the review of the HKDSE sample papers. The peer review ensures that the standard of the HKDSE examination papers is up to the A level to facilitate selection by tertiary institutions. The first two rounds of review of the HKDSE sample papers were completed in 2008. The third which is the final round of

review will be completed in mid-2009. So far, the comments from CIE are positive.

18. The HKEAA has also been working closely with international agencies to secure advanced recognition of the HKDSE, including the National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the UK. Measures are underway to conduct benchmarking exercises on the recognition of the HKDSE standards. The NARIC study outcomes will focus on recognition of the HKDSE for the purpose of general education and employment. The outcome of the UCAS study is to allocate UCAS tariff points to HKDSE Examination results so that they are also linked to other international qualifications in the UCAS Tariff system. The HKEAA has met with the UCAS and the response is positive. The HKEAA will make a first stage announcement by the end of 2009. In order to meet the requirements of the necessary procedures, the final benchmarking results will be available before the first administration of the HKDSE Examination.

19. At the end of last year, the Australian Government recognized HKDSE as comparable to the Australian Senior Secondary School Certificate.

School-based Assessment (SBA)

20. After the extensive consultation with the school sector in 2007 and 2008, a strategic implementation time-table, together with simplification of the SBA design in many subjects, was finalized. To ensure a smooth implementation of SBA in the HKDSE Examination, a SBA Advisory Group on the overall co-ordination and working groups for specific subjects was set up last year. The SBA Advisory Group, comprising school principals and teachers, advises the HKEAA on various issues related to the implementation of SBA. The subject working groups, comprising school teachers, tertiary academics, EDB and HKEAA officials, develop SBA-related requirements, guidelines and exemplars. In addition to the strategic implementation schedule and allocation of lesson time to conduct the assessment activities proposed in the C&A Guides, the following measures will also be adopted to help

relieve the workload of teachers and students in implementing SBA:

- The HKEAA will provide specific guidance to schools on how to effectively conduct the assessment ;
- Schools will be required to complete a minimum amount of the relevant SBA by the end of Secondary 5;
- Simplified assessment designs will be adopted for school repeaters and transfer students; and
- SBA marks will be collected in stages (in Secondary 5 and Secondary 6) and the submission period will be staggered across different subjects.

21. The HKEAA has also conducted 62 briefing sessions for teachers of all subjects from October 2008 to January 2009. The sessions aimed to update teachers on the latest development in the HKDSE Examination including the proposed arrangement for the public assessment of the 24 subjects (public examination and SBA) as well as soliciting their further comments. Responses from teachers were positive and they found the information useful. Taking into account teachers' feedback, an SBA Handbook containing assessment requirements, assessment criteria, guidelines and procedures for the conduct of the SBA will be published by the end of June 2009 for each of the 24 subjects. For subjects which do not carry an SBA component in the 2012 examination, the handbooks will enable teachers to familiarize themselves with the implementation of SBA at a later stage. Furthermore, a handbook containing general guidelines and administrative procedures will also be published to facilitate planning and monitoring by school administrators. The handbook will also be available to the general public who are interested in knowing the implementation of SBA in general.

Support materials for the HKDSE Examination

22. As the assessment format and reporting of assessment results would be changed in order to align with changes in curriculum development and learning, the HKEAA will produce the following from April to the end of June 2009 to help teachers understand better the assessment requirements and standards of the HKDSE Examination:

- Standards-referenced Reporting (SRR) Information Packages for each of the 24 HKDSE subjects, which include the assessment framework, sample papers, level descriptors and marking guidelines; and
- The 2012 HKDSE Examination Regulations and Assessment Frameworks.

Professional Development Programmes (PDP) and School-based Support for Teachers and School Leaders

23. Taking into consideration teachers' feedback through various channels, PDP have been conducted and will continue to be offered to enhance the understanding and capacity of teachers and schools in implementing the NSS curriculum smoothly. The planning of the PDP is premised on the following: all NSS subject teachers are entitled to basic courses for understanding the curricula and assessment; programmes should be offered in advance of implementation so that teachers have time to prepare; optional courses are offered to teachers with different roles and needs in schools; survey of needs each year; and programme evaluation to ensure continuous improvement of quality. Induction courses for new NSS teachers will also be conducted each year. For the 2007/08 school year, we have offered over 80,000 training places for all teachers of NSS subjects, including training on assessment offered by the HKEAA. Up to the end of February 2009, over 45,000 training places had been offered in the 2008/09 school year. They have all met the targets as planned.

24. Following the success of the series of 3-days School Leaders Workshops for Planning for school leaders of 464 schools in the 2005/06 school year, two other series of Middle Managers Workshops (MMWs) and School Leaders Meetings (SLMs) were respectively organised in the 2006/07 - 2007/08 and 2008/09 school years. By the end of June 2008, over 10,500 middle managers (including Key Learning Areas (KLA) co-ordinators, subject panel chairpersons, special functional post holders and school librarians) from 513 schools attended the MMWs and over 1,600 school leaders attended the SLMs from September 2008 to March 2009. The MMWs and SLMs have facilitated early

curriculum planning and understanding of students' interests and needs in schools.

25. Teachers are also supported by on-site school-based support service which is delivered by university-school partnership projects and EDB officers from REOs; and school and curriculum development according to the needs of schools such as whole-school curriculum planning, catering for learner diversity, learning and teaching in KLA, project learning and assessment for learning. In the 2008/09 school year, the School-based Support Services Office (SBSSO) is providing on-site support to about 320 secondary schools. The preparation of LS is the thrust of these supports.

Textbooks & Learning Resources

26. A Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide on whole-school curriculum development and implementation matters such as interface with junior secondary curriculum, effective learning and teaching, assessment for learning, catering for learner diversity, schools as professional communities would be published by the Curriculum Development Council in May 2009. To ensure that the quality of textbooks would meet the aims and objectives of the NSS curricula, the Curriculum Development Institute (CDI) has been working closely with the publishers in the development process and providing them with feedback sessions so that clarification can be made and communication can be enhanced throughout the whole process. The recommended textbook lists were published on the EDB website for schools' reference in August 2008 and another list on re-submitted textbooks were published in mid-February 2009. Apart from textbooks, we encourage the use of multiple resources to facilitate learning and teaching. Approximately 110 resource development projects conducted by CDI for NSS subjects are running smoothly in accordance with pre-set targets. The NSS Subject Resource list of each NSS subject was uploaded to the Web Bulletin in December 2008, which clearly lists out the availability and sources of relevant learning and teaching materials (e.g. textbooks, the learning packages and websites) for teachers' reference.

Funding Support

The Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant (SSCSG)

27. The SSCSG provides each senior secondary class with an additional 0.1 teacher recurrently, on top of the class:teacher ratio at 1:2. The purpose is to provide more resources for diversifying the school curriculum and to ease teachers' workload. EDB has advanced the provision of the recurrent SSCSG by one year starting from the 2008/09 school year to help schools better prepare for and implement the NSS curriculum. In the 2008/09 and 2009/10 school years, EDB will ensure that the amount of SSCSG is at least equivalent to the mid-point salary of one GM for each secondary school offering the NSS curriculum.

The Diversity Learning Grant (DLG)

28. The DLG will be provided to schools starting from the 2009/10 school year upon application to encourage the development of ApL, other languages, gifted education and network programmes to be shared among schools as measures to diversify the school curriculum. Schools will be invited to apply for the DLG in March / April 2009 for the first cohort of NSS students.

Teaching space

29. Schools are supported with government fund to make space for broadening curriculum provision. To help schools execute minor alteration works, EDB has engaged the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) to provide technical advisory services to schools in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 school years. A set of guidance notes was uploaded in mid November 2008 in the "334" Web Bulletin for reference. Schools could make use of the NSS Curriculum Migration Grant, the surplus of the general domain of the Operating Expenses Block Grant (OEBG) or the Expanded OEBG for minor alteration works so as to create additional teaching space. Schools with genuine financial difficulties may apply for a top-up provision which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

(II) Preparation of Schools

30. There is much interest in the preparation of schools for the New Academic Structure. In the process of collecting feedback from schools on how they have been preparing for the implementation of the NSS curricula and how we could improve our support strategies, we conducted a related survey in November 2008 (i.e. 1st semester of 1st S3 cohort). Some 100 secondary schools responded to the survey. The data were generally consistent with our observations and feedback received from different sources of contacts with schools.

From the survey, our overview of the preparation of schools, teachers and students so far is as follows:

- a. Preparation at school level: The majority of secondary school heads (over 90%) indicated that they have made preparation for NSS in curriculum planning, resources & manpower allocation, catering for students' choice of subjects, development of OLE & SLP and arrangement for LS.
- b. Preparation of teachers: The majority of secondary school teachers (over 80%) indicated that they have developed professional competence and confidence in implementing NSS curriculum and SBA through participation in professional development.
- c. Student learning (Perception of S3 Students): The majority of S3 students (over 80%) indicated that they have developed project learning and generic skills as well as positive values and attitudes. They also reported that their schools have given them information on the NSS core and elective subjects including ApL and LS.

31. The NSS curriculum and assessment reform is aiming to reduce early specialization and to encourage a broad and balanced curriculum to cater for diverse interests, abilities, aptitudes and aspirations of students. Details of the survey reflect the preparation of schools in the following particular aspects.

Subject choices and selection

32. The progress of schools' planning for subjects and their involvement of students and parents in subject selection based on strengths and interests is encouraging. Over 90% of the school heads expressed that they would (i) no longer stream students into arts, science and commercial classes; (ii) make flexible resources arrangements to maximise students' choice of subjects; (iii) take students' preferences as the major consideration in deciding on the subjects to be offered; and (iv) provide students with guidance in selecting elective subjects.

33. The School Information Network (hosted in the EDB's Web Bulletin) also shows that up to March 2009, 383 schools (over 82%) have already uploaded their school-based information on NSS. According to the data collected in the School Leaders' Meetings, about 95% of 240 schools which have responded indicated that they had collected information of students' preferences in choosing elective subjects and used block timetabling arrangement to maximize the number of elective subject combinations in order to provide a broad and balanced curriculum for students.

Preparation for LS

34. Over 93% of the school heads in the survey have adopted measures in developing and preparing for the teaching of LS, though fewer of them (85% of school heads and 75% of LS coordinators) reflected that they had more concrete ideas about the arrangement of 90-hour Independent Enquiry Studies (IES) which is in the form of SBA.

Preparation for OLE and SLP

35. Over 96% of the school heads agreed that they have been developing a whole-school plan for OLE and they already have plans to enhance students' whole-person development through SLP.

Preparation for SBA

36. Over 95% of the school heads and over 87% of the panel heads

agreed that their teachers have participated actively in SBA training, have gathered experiences in SBA, and are confident of implementing SBA. 82% of the school teachers agreed that they have participated actively in SBA training and are confident of implementing SBA, and 76% have gathered experiences in SBA.

Preparation of teachers

37. Over 96% of the school heads and over 90% of the panel heads agreed that their teachers/ they (i) have an understanding of the change in NSS curriculum; (ii) accumulated experiences in assessment for learning which helps to implement SBA; (iii) participate actively in NSS training & PDP; and (iv) are confident of teaching NSS curriculum.

38. The majority (about 90%) of teachers reflected that they have developed professional competence and confidence in teaching the NSS curriculum.

(III) Preparation of UGC-funded institutions

39. After 2012, all UGC-funded institutions will offer 4-year instead of 3-year first-degree programmes. Besides working on admission-related issues, institutions are now actively addressing a number of issues associated with the double cohort years, covering aspects such as curriculum planning, provision of teaching space and boarding facilities and recruitment of teaching staff. To meet the demand of the 4-year programme, UGC has been closely working with various institutions on the relevant capital or non-capital projects. Extra funding was provided by UGC for the institutions to set up relevant infrastructure, develop their new 4-year curriculum, and recruit and develop staff. The Administration had already approved 12 334-related capital works proposals from the UGC-funded sector with funding of about \$5.88 billion earmarked. The institutions are now working on the detailed design of the projects, and UGC is closely monitoring the progress. Six of the projects have been approved by the Public Works Subcommittee/Finance Committee. The remaining projects will be submitted to the Finance Committee for funding approval within 2009.

(IV) Communication with Different Stakeholders

40. We have been communicating and working closely with different stakeholder groups to enhance their understanding and support, as well as to smooth out issues/concerns in the implementation of the New Academic Structure.

UGC-funded Institutions

41. The Liaison Group on 334 Interface Issues set up in 2004 and represented by EDB, the HKEAA, the UGC Secretariat and 8 UGC-funded institutions has regularly discussed issues relating to entrance requirements under 334 and interface between the senior secondary education and the 4-year undergraduate curriculum. This has facilitated several joint decisions such as those regarding basic minimum entrance requirements, language requirements for non-Chinese speakers, recognition of OLE as part of whole-person development of students and SLP as supportive document for admission. These unified announcements were made with reference to agreed principles, which is critical in building confidence in the wider community.

42. The UGC-funded institutions are actively engaged in the preparation for the New Academic Structure, and are committed to providing a smooth transition to the four-year undergraduate structure. Regular talks/briefings on the development of NSS were delivered by EDB and the HKEAA at different institutions.

43. EDB and the HKEAA are working in close collaboration with the Management Office of the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) in the development and promotion of the new JUPAS application procedures to schools, students and parents.

44. The 334 Web Bulletin (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/334>) established by EDB since 2004 has provided a window where the latest information on minimum university entrance requirements could be updated and accessed by schools, parents and the public. The HKEAA has also developed the HKDSE Newsletter website at <http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse> where the latest information for

schools, development of the qualification, and local and international recognition are available for public access.

Post-secondary institutions

45. EDB has met and briefed post-secondary institutions on the development of NSS curriculum and assessment, ApL, OLE/SLP, Standard-Referenced Reporting and SBA. The HKEAA is facilitating the institutions in considering admission requirements for their programmes. A window at the EDB 334 Web Bulletin will be provided for post-secondary institutions to upload the latest development regarding their preparation for the New Academic Structure.

Schools

46. The Principalsø Liaison meetings, established since 2004, have held regular meetings to update representatives of school heads on latest progress of NSS, consult them on issues such as class structure, curriculum and assessment, arrangement of additional funding, and to resolve issues related to other stakeholders. Attention of representatives was also drawn to the feedback from front-line teachers expressed in school leaders meetings, middle managers workshops, briefings and seminars. It is hoped that barriers in schools could be removed at the school level as far as possible to facilitate a smooth launch in September 2009. A new round of regional principalsø seminars updating progress of the New Academic Structure will be conducted in May 2009. A circular updating schools on the latest development of the New Academic Structure during 2008-09 and future critical milestones up to 2012 would be issued in July 2009.

47. Teacher networks have already been in place on KLA/subject basis to facilitate exchange of good practices and collection of feedback. Teachersø feedback is also collected from PDPs, annual survey, focused groups, and other face-to-face contacts in meetings with them.

Students

48. Students are both the beneficiaries and the key participants in

the New Academic Structure. In order to enhance students' understanding of their roles as learners in the NSS Curriculum, we have produced and broadcast a TV and radio API, "*NSS Academic Structure - Students' role*" in 2008. In parallel, a learning resource, "*Finding Your Colours of Life for S1-3 students: NSS Subject Choices and the Development of Career Aspirations*" has been developed in partnership with the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters to help students in the NSS cohorts at junior secondary level (S1-3) to make informed choice on NSS elective subjects through self-planning. In the beginning of S4, we will develop a student handbook for all NSS students to deepen their understanding of the framework of the NSS curricula and to promote effective engagement in NSS learning.

Employers

49. We have been working with the HKEAA to communicate regularly with employers, mainly on their broad understanding of what students would learn and achieve, how the new standards in the HKDSE might be interpreted, and the connections with other qualifications so as to facilitate their consideration and revision of relevant entry/job requirements. EDB has set up an agreed process to discuss with the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) and the HKEAA on benchmarking/drawing comparability of HKDSE qualifications with the entry qualifications requirements of civil service grades that are set under the current public examinations system. CSB expects that details on the arrangements will be announced in 2010. We expect the acceptance arrangements of HKDSE qualifications as entry qualifications requirements for civil service appointment could serve as a useful reference for other employers in considering the acceptance of the new HKDSE qualification.

50. In parallel, we have also been facilitating the communication between the employer sector and the education institutions such as inviting employers as guest speakers to speak at EDB's seminars for teachers, students and parents (about 1,400 participants in the 2008/09 school year) on the employers' expectations and requirements of NSS students and the implications of subject choices; and at several district-based parent seminars.

Parents

51. The concerns of parents and the public have changed as the preparation of the New Academic Structure has progressed to reach different milestones. As the preparation of UGC-funded institutions is more widely known through their public communication, there is increasing attention paid to the articulation of HKDSE with post-secondary pathways and employment, as well as how parents could support the studies of their students. Communication with parents in the near future would need to focus more on how the New Academic Structure would provide smoother pathways to meet the diverse interests and abilities of students by having only one examination, the programmes available in post-secondary institutions, and employment opportunities that may be changing.

52. Messages related to the New Academic Structure are currently conveyed to the public through means such as articles published in newspapers, Web Bulletin, parent pamphlets (issued every 6 months), DVD and booklets on frequently asked questions, Educational Television (ETV) Programmes, Announcement of Public Interest (API), bus advertisement, roving exhibitions as well as interactive district-based parent seminars. A total of 35 parent seminars have been organised since the 2006/07 school year and about 28,500 parents have attended the seminars. The NSS School Information Network provided in the Web Bulletin has continued to provide a one-stop platform for parents and the public to gain access to information on the preparation of schools in different districts.

Inter-stakeholder group sharing

53. In addition to communicating with each stakeholder group, we need to facilitate and coordinate consistent messages across the board in a timely manner and provide opportunities for sharing among the stakeholder groups. EDB has set up a Task Group on Communication Strategies to plan and co-ordinate the communication strategies and messages on the New Academic Structure. It includes representatives from EDB, the HKEAA, UGC, universities, post-secondary institutions, schools, teachers, parents, and employers.

We have arranged inter-sector sharing sessions involving curriculum developers, school representatives, parents, employers, post-secondary institutions and government officers. We also report regularly to the Education Commission, the Curriculum Development Council and the HKEAA and seek their views on how to ensure a smooth implementation of the New Academic Structure to achieve the goals of whole-person development and life-long learning.

The wider community

54. In reinforcing the community's awareness of this important leap forward in education and encouraging community support to schools, we have worked out a publicity plan for the coming months. The key messages include reiterating the purpose of introducing the New Academic Structure and that its framework is ready as schools and teachers are well supported. Various channels including television and radio broadcast would be used to convey the messages.

WAY FORWARD

55. Given the complexity of the necessary changes, while we would try our best to ensure smooth implementation, we would expect new concerns to emerge during the change processes. Hence, we would continue to use appropriate and effective communication channels to solicit feedback, listen to issues and concerns, and to take account of all these in fine-tuning / improving support measures, as well as to work in partnership with our stakeholders. We will also commission studies to evaluate the progress and outcomes of the New Academic Structure over the next few years to complement or supplement the information that we have collected.

ADVICE SOUGHT

56. Members are requested to note the progress of preparation for the New Academic Structure as reported in this paper.

Education Bureau
March 2009