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Panel on Education

**Background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 10 November 2008**

**Recognition and articulation of the
Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education qualification**

Purpose

This paper summarizes the discussions of the Panel on Education (the Panel) on the recognition and articulation of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) qualification under the new senior secondary (NSS) academic structure.

Background

2. In 2000, the Education Commission (EC) recommended the adoption of a three-year senior secondary academic system to facilitate the implementation of a more flexible, coherent and diversified senior secondary curriculum. In May 2003, EC set out the proposals for developing a new senior secondary and higher education academic structure (the 334 structure). In his 2004 Policy Address, the Chief Executive confirmed the policy direction of developing the new academic structure.

3. The Administration issued in October 2004 a consultation paper entitled "*Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education*" which set out the design blueprint, the implementation timetable and the financial arrangements of the 334 structure. The consultation exercise ended on 19 January 2005.

4. On 18 May 2005, the Administration published the Report entitled "*The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education - Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong*". The Report summarized the results of the consultation exercise and set out the road map for implementing the 334 structure in 2009-2010.

5. Under the 334 structure, a new examination known as HKDSE will be administered from 2012 onwards. HKDSE will replace the existing Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). HKDSE will be standard-referenced, and all subjects over time will contain a school-based component. The Curriculum Development Council and the Public Examinations Board of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) endorsed a strategic approach to implement the school-based assessment (SBA). SBA for 12 subjects including those with SBA currently in HKCEE, Liberal Studies and the four science subjects (laboratory work only) will be implemented in 2012. SBA for the 11 other subjects will be deferred for two to four years, and there will be no time-line for implementation of SBA in Mathematics.

Deliberations of the Panel

6. Since October 2004, the Panel held a number of meetings to discuss the 334 structure and to receive views of educational bodies and student organizations. The discussions of the Panel on the recognition and articulation of HKDSE are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Recognition of HKDSE

7. Members were concerned about the international recognition of HKDSE, in particular by overseas universities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom (UK) where most Hong Kong students pursued further studies. Members pointed out that senior secondary education would be reduced from four to three years, leading to four-year local undergraduate programmes under the new academic structure. However, most UK universities adopted three-year undergraduate programmes. Members were worried that students completing local senior secondary education would have difficulty in articulating to overseas three-year undergraduate programmes.

8. According to the Administration, HKEAA had been focusing on three areas to establish international recognition of HKDSE. The first area of work started in April 2005 when HKEAA contacted universities in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, UK and the United States to update admissions officers on the standards of HKCEE and HKALE, and to inform them of the 334 reform with special emphasis on the curriculum, the standards and the proposed assessment

plans. The second area of work commenced in the third quarter of 2007 and focused on updating overseas universities on the finalized NSS curriculum and assessment framework with special reference to standards of HKDSE. Sample examination papers and level descriptors of subjects were sent to universities to demonstrate the standards of HKDSE. The third area of work focused on collaborating with the Cambridge International Examinations in UK on a methodology to establish the comparability of HKDSE with UK qualifications. The benchmarking process would involve moderation of sample papers, study of pilot scripts and the analysis of results. HKEAA was also working closely with international agencies to secure advanced recognition of HKDSE, including National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) and Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) in UK, and the Australian Consulate. The NARIC study would focus on recognition of HKDSE for the purpose of general admission and employment. The UCAS study was to set up a point system in the UCAS tariff for HKDSE results linking into other international qualifications in the UCAS Tariff system. The benchmarking results were expected to be available before the first administration of the HKDSE examination.

9. The Administration assured members that the psychometric model adopted by HKEAA to maintain the standards of achievements in HKDSE was well recognized by overseas examination authorities and institutions, and the NSS curriculum was more in line with the curriculum in most developed countries, including UK. To facilitate parental choice and student enrolment, HKEAA had set up a website on admission requirements of overseas institutions for public access.

Articulation to local post-secondary institutions

10. Members noted that the Heads of Universities Committee (HUCOM) announced on 5 July 2006 the general admission requirements and programme specific requirements of the eight University Grants Committee-funded institutions under the new undergraduate programme structure. The HUCOM had made clear its support for a more broad-based curriculum for senior secondary students with more choice to suit individual aptitudes and interests. Most institutions required four core subjects and one or two elective subjects (specified or unspecified) for admission to their undergraduate programmes. Universities were open on the development and recognition of Applied Learning courses to be included in HKDSE. The Education Bureau (EDB) assured members that it would continue to discuss with post-secondary institutions the alignment of HKDSE with the admission requirements of associate degrees, higher diploma and diploma courses.

Articulation to employment

11. Members noted that EDB had set up an agreed process to discuss with the Civil Service Bureau and HKEAA on benchmarking/drawing comparability of HKDSE qualification with other qualifications currently recognised by different Civil Service grades. The announcement of requirements of Civil Service grades would serve very good reference for other employers in considering the new HKDSE qualification. Announcements on requirements for different grades would be made progressively from 2009.

Relevant papers

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

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
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**Relevant papers on recognition and articulation of the
Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education qualification**

Meeting	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Education	29.10.2004 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	3.6.2005 (Items I - III)	Agenda
Panel on Education	12.6.2006 (Item IV)	Minutes
Panel on Education	10.7.2006 (Item IV)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	25.5.2007 (Item I)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	9.7.2007	Minutes
Panel on Education	12.11.2007 (Item VII)	Minutes Agenda
Panel on Education	12.6.2008 (Item V)	Minutes Agenda