

For information on  
21 February 2011

## **Legislative Council Panel on Public Service**

### **Acceptance of Qualifications under the New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education for Civil Service Appointments**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members on the intended arrangement for accepting attainments and qualifications under the new senior secondary academic structure for the purpose of civil service appointments.

#### **Background**

2. Under the new academic structure (commonly known as the '334' structure) which has been implemented since the 2009/10 school year, students undertake a three-year senior secondary education (Secondary 4 - 6) after three years of junior secondary education (Secondary 1 - 3). A new single examination, known as the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination, will replace the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE)<sup>1</sup>. It will be conducted annually in April and May, starting from 2012; and the results will be available in July. Students who have attained the required standards in the HKDSE Examination may enrol in a four-year undergraduate university programme (for most disciplines) as well as other sub-degree programmes. The last full-scale HKCEE was held

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<sup>1</sup> Students currently studying Secondary 5 in the 2010/11 school year are the first batch of students undertaking the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum and will sit for the first Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination in 2012.

in 2010 and the last full-scale HKALE will be held in 2012<sup>2</sup>.

3. Under the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum, students are required to take four core NSS subjects (namely Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies) and two to three elective subjects from the following categories –

- (a) Category A: NSS subjects (there are 20 elective subjects other than the four core subjects);
- (b) Category B: Applied Learning (ApL) subjects (there are a total of 30 ApL subjects in the 2010-2012 cohort)<sup>3</sup>; or
- (c) Category C: Other Language subjects (there are a total of six language subjects).

A list of NSS, ApL and Other Language subjects is at Annex.

4. A standards-referenced reporting system will be used to determine the results under the HKDSE and will replace the current norm-referenced reporting system used for the HKCEE and the HKALE. Under the norm-referenced reporting system, students' performance are analysed according to pre-defined percentages of different grades. Under the standards-referenced reporting system, students' performance will be reported against a set of prescribed standards.

5. For the NSS subjects, results will be reported in five levels (Levels 5 to 1), with Level 5 being the highest level. Those not attaining the Level 1 standard will be graded as "Unclassified" but the result will not be

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<sup>2</sup> The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority will offer the last round of Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE) in 2011 and 2013 respectively to private candidates in about 20 subjects.

<sup>3</sup> Applied Learning (ApL) courses (previously called 'Career-oriented Curriculum' courses for the 2003-05 to 2005-07 cohorts) were piloted in the 2003/04 school year to pave the way for their implementation in the NSS Curriculum in the 2010/11 school year. Students in the 2010-12 cohort may choose a maximum of three out of the 30 ApL subjects offered. So far no student has chosen more than two ApL subjects. Students in the 2011-13 cohort may choose a maximum of two out of the total ApL subjects to be offered.

reported in the HKDSE certificate. For those attaining Level 5 standard, Levels 5\*\* and 5\* will be awarded to the highest-scoring and the next highest groups of candidates respectively to provide finer differentiation of candidates' abilities at the top end. For each of the five levels, there will be a description to explain what the holder of a particular level knows and can do.

6. For ApL subjects, results will be reported as either “Attained with Distinction” (comparable to Level 3 or above in an NSS subject) or “Attained” (comparable to Level 2 in an NSS subject). Those not reaching the “Attained” level will receive an “Unattained” result, which will not be reported in the HKDSE certificate.

7. For Other Language subjects, results will be reported in five grades (Grades A to E), with Grade A being the highest. Results below Grade E will be designated as “Ungraded”, and will not be reported in the HKDSE certificate.

### **Implications for civil service appointments**

8. At present, the entry requirements (including language proficiency requirements) for most non-degree civil service grades are generally benchmarked against specific secondary education levels, or the HKCEE and/or HKALE results (e.g. Form 4 level, “five passes in the HKCEE”<sup>4</sup>, “two passes at Advanced Level in the HKALE plus three credits in the HKCEE” (2A3O)<sup>5</sup>, etc.). Notwithstanding the introduction of the new senior secondary academic structure and the phasing out of the HKCEE and HKALE in the next few years (see paragraph 2 above), the Administration will continue to accept the attainments under the ‘old’ secondary academic structure and the results of the HKCEE and HKALE. This is because a large number of persons educated under the ‘old’ structure and/or assessed under the HKCEE and HKALE will remain in the active workforce for a long time and their qualifications obtained hitherto should continue to be

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<sup>4</sup> A pass in the HKCEE means a Level 2 or above for Chinese and English Language subjects, and a Grade E or above for other subjects.

<sup>5</sup> A pass in the HKALE means a Grade E or above. A credit in the HKCEE means a Level 3 or above for Chinese and English Language subjects, and a Grade C or above for other subjects.

recognised for the purpose of civil service appointments.

9. Concurrent with the continuation of the *status quo*, the Administration needs to devise an arrangement whereby attainments under the new senior secondary academic structure and results in the HKDSE will be deemed as comparable to the attainments and results under the ‘old’ structure and the HKCEE and HKALE for the purpose of civil service appointments. This is to enable persons educated under the new structure and persons holding results in the HKDSE will have the opportunity to join the civil service. Towards this end, a Working Group, comprising representatives from the Civil Service Bureau, the Education Bureau, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) and Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualification, has deliberated on the matter, taking into account the following main considerations –

- (a) it is not possible to specify direct equivalences between the results attained in the HKDSE and those in the HKCEE/HKALE because the former are based on a standards-referenced system while the latter are based on a norm-referenced system (see paragraph 4 above);
- (b) the standard set for each grading level in the HKDSE; and
- (c) the international benchmarking studies on the HKDSE conducted by the HKEAA with the Australian Education Department, the United Kingdom (UK) National Recognition Information Center and the UK Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

10. Taking into account the Working Group’s advice, we intend to implement the following arrangement for the purpose of civil service appointments –

- (a) completion of Secondary 1 to Secondary 5 under the new academic structure will be accepted as comparable to completion of Form 1 to Form 5 respectively under the ‘old’ structure;

- (b) results in the HKDSE will be accepted as comparable to the results in the HKCEE and HKALE as set out below –

(I) General entry requirements

- (i) A candidate attaining results in five subjects in the HKDSE in any combination of the following will be regarded as having met the requirement of “five passes in the HKCEE” –
- Level 2 in NSS subjects,
  - “Attained” in ApL subjects (subject to a maximum of two ApL subjects), and
  - Grade E in Other Language subjects.
- (ii) A candidate attaining results in five subjects in the HKDSE in any combination of the following will be regarded as having met the requirement for “2A3O” –
- Level 3 in NSS subjects,
  - “Attained with Distinction” in ApL subjects (subject to a maximum of two ApL subjects), and
  - Grade C in Other Language subjects.

(II) Language proficiency requirements: A candidate attaining Level 3 and Level 2 in the HKDSE in Chinese/English Language subjects will be regarded as having met the requirement of Level 3 and Level 2 respectively in the HKCEE<sup>6</sup> in similar language subjects.

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<sup>6</sup> In response to the introduction of the standards-referenced reporting system for English Language and Chinese Language since the 2007 HKCEE, from 8 August 2007 onwards, Level 3 and Level 2 in English and Chinese Languages in the HKCEE are accepted administratively as comparable to Grades C and E respectively in English Language (Syllabus B) and Chinese Language in previous HKCEEs for civil service appointment purposes.

(III) *Specific subject requirements*<sup>7</sup>: A candidate attaining Level 3 in NSS subjects or “Attained with Distinction” in ApL subjects in the HKDSE will be regarded as having met the requirement of Grade E in the HKALE<sup>8</sup> or Grade C in the HKCEE<sup>9</sup> in similar subjects for those grades or posts with specific subject requirements. A candidate attaining Level 2 or “Attained” in NSS or ApL subjects respectively in the HKDSE will be regarded as having met the requirement of a Grade E in similar subjects under the HKCEE<sup>9</sup>.

11. In line with the Civil Service Bureau’s prevailing policy of qualifications assessment on a totality basis in appointment matters, combined results attained in the HKCEE, HKALE or HKDSE will also be accepted.

12. As the job nature and requirements underlying the prevailing minimum academic qualifications for appointments to the relevant civil service grades will not be changed, the implementation of the arrangement set out above will have no implication on the pay and conditions of service of the grades concerned.

### **Consultation and publicity**

13. We have consulted all bureaux and departments, the Standing Commission on Civil Service Salaries and Conditions of Service, and the Standing Committee on Disciplined Services Salaries and Conditions of Service on the above arrangement. They recognise the necessity and technical nature of the arrangement and have no objection to its

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<sup>7</sup> A number of grades require applicants to have attained certain results in specific HKCEE subjects (mainly in some science subjects such as Physics, Mathematics, etc.)

<sup>8</sup> Under the NSS curriculum, Mathematics consists of a ‘Compulsory Part’ and an ‘Extended Part’. The Extended Part is made up of either Module 1 (Calculus and Statistics) or Module 2 (Algebra and Calculus). A candidate attaining Level 3 in the Compulsory Part plus Level 2 in the Extended Part, or Level 5 in the Compulsory Part if he has not taken the Extended Part, will be considered as having met Grade E in Mathematics in the HKALE.

<sup>9</sup> Under the NSS curriculum, a candidate attaining Level 3 and Level 2 in the Compulsory Part in Mathematics will be considered as having met Grade C and Grade E respectively in Mathematics in the HKCEE.

implementation. We are consulting the Public Service Commission and the Staff Sides. Subject to their views, we intend to promulgate the arrangement in the second quarter of 2011. This should allow adequate time for all concerned parties to gear up for the first batch of secondary school leavers with HKDSE qualifications in July 2012 for the purpose of civil service appointments.

### **Advice sought**

14. Members are invited to note this paper.

**Civil Service Bureau**  
**February 2011**

## New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum

### Curriculum Content

<b>4 Core Subjects:</b> Chinese Language English Language Mathematics Liberal Studies	+	<b>2-3 elective subjects chosen from:</b> (A) New Senior Secondary (NSS) elective subjects (B) Applied Learning (ApL) subjects (C) Other Language subjects	+	<b>Other Learning Experiences (OLE)</b> <sup>Note</sup> Moral & Civic Education, Community Service, Career-related Experiences, Aesthetic Development, and Physical Development
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### Note:

OLE is an essential component in the NSS Curriculum. Different from core and elective subjects, it is non-examinable. While the ‘traditional’ subjects will help ensure that students taking undergraduate programmes have the necessary knowledge base, learning skills, and proficiency in languages to benefit from university education, the OLE will help students achieve whole-person development. Students’ participation and achievements in OLE, reflections on their own learning and their other awards in local and international competition will be recorded in an individual **Student Learning Profile (SLP)**. The SLP may be used to demonstrate personal qualities and competence to future employers (including the Government) and tertiary institutions.

## HKDSE Subjects

### ***Category A : NSS Subjects***

<b><i>Key Learning Areas</i></b>	<b><i>Subjects</i></b>
Chinese Language Education	1. Chinese Language ( <i>core subject</i> )
	2. Chinese Literature
English Language Education	3. English Language ( <i>core subject</i> )
	4. Literature in English
Mathematics Education	5. Mathematics ( <i>core subject</i> ) - Compulsory Part - Extended Part: Module 1 (Calculus and Statistics) <u>or</u> Module 2 (Algebra and Calculus)
Liberal Studies	6. Liberal Studies ( <i>core subject</i> )
Personal, Social and Humanities Education	7. Chinese History
	8. Economics
	9. Ethics and Religious Studies
	10. Geography
	11. History
	12. Tourism and Hospitality Studies
Science Education	13. Biology
	14. Physics
	15. Chemistry
	16. (A) Science: Combined Science (B) Science: Integrated Science
Technology Education	17. Business, Accounting and Financial Studies
	18. Design and Applied Technology
	19. Health Management and Social Care
	20. Information and Communication Technology
	21. Technology and Living

<i>Key Learning Areas</i>	<i>Subjects</i>
Arts Education	22. Music
	23. Visual Arts
Physical Education	24. Physical Education

**Category B : ApL Subjects (offered in the 2010-12 cohort)**

<i>Areas of Studies</i>	<i>Subjects</i>
Creative Studies	<b>Course Cluster: Design Studies</b>
	1. Image Design
	2. Innovative Product Design
	3. Jewellery Arts and Design
	<b>Course Cluster: Media Arts</b>
	4. Commercial Comic Art
	5. Multimedia Entertainment Studies
<b>Course Cluster: Performing Arts</b>	
6. Introduction to Theatre Arts	
7. Taking a Chance on Dance	
Media and Communication	<b>Course Cluster: Films, TV and Broadcasting Studies</b>
	8. Film and Video Studies
	9. Infotainment Production
	<b>Course Cluster: Media Writing and Production</b>
10. Radio Host and Programme Production	
Business, Management and Law	<b>Course Cluster: Business Studies</b>
	11. Marketing in Global Trade
	12. Practical Accounting for SMEs
	13. Understanding Financial Services
	<b>Course Cluster: Clientele Management</b>
	14. Purchasing and Merchandising
	15. Retail Management
	<b>Course Cluster: Legal Studies</b>
	16. Understanding Hong Kong Law

<i>Areas of Studies</i>	<i>Subjects</i>
Services	<b>Course Cluster: Hospitality Services</b> 17. Hospitality Services in Practice 18. Hotel Operations 19. Western Cuisine
	<b>Course Cluster: Event Management</b> 20. Events Planning and Operation
	<b>Course Cluster: Personal and Community Services</b> 21. Child Development and Care 22. Fundamental Cosmetology
Applied Science	<b>Course Cluster: Medical Science and Health Care</b> 23. Fundamental Health Care 24. Health and Beauty Keeping in TCM 25. Health Care Practice
	<b>Course Cluster: Sports</b> 26. Exercise Science and Health Fitness 27. Sports Coaching and Management
Engineering and Production	<b>Course Cluster: Civil and Mechanical Engineering</b> 28. Automotive Technology
	<b>Course Cluster: Services Engineering</b> 29. Aviation Studies 30. Building Facilities Engineering

***Category C : Other Language Subjects***

1. French
2. German
3. Hindi
4. Japanese
5. Spanish
6. Urdu

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