

# 立法會

## *Legislative Council*

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### **Panel on Education**

### **Meeting on 29 March 2019**

### **Background brief on payment of examination fees for school candidates sitting for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination**

#### **Purpose**

This paper provides background information on the payment of examination fees for school candidates sitting for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination ("HKDSE") and summarizes major concerns of the Panel on Education ("the Panel") on the subject.

#### **Background**

2. The Financial Secretary ("FS") announced in the 2018-2019 Budget that the Government would pay the examinations fees for candidates sitting for the 2019 HKDSE. To be eligible for the payment of examination fees, a candidate must be enrolled in a registered school approved for participation in the 2019 HKDSE in the 2018-2019 school year and be entered for the 2019 HKDSE through his/her school, regardless of whether he/she was a first-time candidate or was repeating part or whole of the senior secondary curriculum in a day school or evening school. The payment of examination fees included the subject fees of Category A (Senior Secondary) subjects, Category B (Applied Learning) subjects and Category C (Other Languages) subjects for the 2019 HKDSE, but excluded the supplementary fees <sup>1</sup>.

3. In the 2019-2020 Budget, FS proposed to pay the examinations fees for candidates sitting for the 2020 HKDSE.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples of supplementary fees are fees for late entry, fees for addition/change of subject entry, fees for re-scheduling of oral examinations, application fees for rechecking and remarking, appeal review, and data access request, etc. to be paid by the candidates.

## **Major views and concerns**

4. The Panel discussed the one-off measure to pay the examination fees for school candidates sitting for the 2019 HKDSE at its meeting on 13 April 2018. The major concerns raised by members are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

### *Scope of application for the one-off measure*

5. Members expressed concern as to whether the measure would incur additional administrative costs. The Administration explained that the measure would not cover private candidates. The administrative costs involved in paying the examination fees for school candidates would be absorbed by the existing resources of the Education Bureau ("EDB") and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority ("HKEAA") would handle the registration of candidates for the 2019 HKDSE according to its established mechanism. Hence, the measure would not incur any significant administrative costs.

6. Members considered there a need to extend the scope of the measure to cover private candidates and passed a motion urging the Administration to pay the examination fees for private candidates who had taken HKDSE in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and would enter for the 2019 HKDSE. The Administration explained that in deciding to set the scope of application for the measure to school candidates only, the prime principle was the interests of candidates sitting for the 2019 HKDSE. In its view, the arrangements of confining the measure to school candidates could effectively remove the worries of candidates and parents that someone might enter the examination for "fun" because of free examination fees or intentionally disturb the order at the examination venues. EDB would give due consideration to members' views for future measure, if any.

### *Regularization of the examination fee waiver*

7. Members strongly called on the Administration to regularize the examination fee waiver. In their views, the Government in principle should not collect from candidates examination fees under the 15-year free education policy. Some members considered that if the Administration did not intend to regularize the measure, it should pay the examination fees for HKDSE candidates every time when there was a fiscal surplus.

8. Some other members took this opportunity to urge the Administration to explore effective measures to help alleviate the financial pressure of HKEAA, such as injecting fund into HKEAA, taking up the extra costs arising from the provision of special examination arrangements and funding HKEAA by public money.

9. The Administration informed the Panel that it had no plan to regularize the measure at the present stage. Also, the measure did not seek to alleviate the financial difficulties of HKEAA which was an independent and self-financing statutory organization for conducting public examinations. In order not to undermine the independence of HKEAA, HKEAA was only provided with non-recurrent grants under special circumstances and with sound justifications to assist towards the cost of conducting examinations.

### **Latest position**

10. At the Panel meeting on 29 March 2019, the Administration will brief members on the payment for the examination fees for school candidates sitting for the 2020 HKDSE.

### **Relevant papers**

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

Council Business Division 4  
Legislative Council Secretariat  
22 March 2019

**List of relevant papers**

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Paper</b>
Panel on Education	13 April 2018	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>
Finance Committee	18 May 2018 (Item IV)	<a href="#">Agenda</a> <a href="#">Minutes</a>

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