

For discussion on
6 February 2026

Legislative Council Panel on Education

Enhancing the Teacher Registration Mechanism through Amendments to the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279) and Safeguarding the Education Profession

Purpose

This paper briefs Members and seeks views on the proposed amendments to the Education Ordinance (“EO”) (Cap. 279) to introduce the practising certificate and regular renewal requirements for enhancing the teacher registration mechanism. It also reports on the work of the Education Bureau (EDB) in relation to enhancing the professionalism of teachers.

Background

2. 2026 marks the first year of the National 15th Five-Year Plan, a critical period of inheriting the past and heralding the future in developing China into a leading country in education. The EDB has been supporting the national strategy of invigorating the country through science and education on all fronts, proactively responding to the “2024-2035 master plan on building China into a leading country in education” (“Master Plan”) and taking forward the integrated development of education, technology and talents. In tandem, the EDB is committed to enhancing the professional quality and competencies of teachers, cultivating and fostering a high-calibre teaching force and promoting the spirit of outstanding educators, in a bid to achieve the goal of cultivating values and nurturing people.

3. The EDB has been strengthening different measures with regard to teachers’ appointment, management and training, with a view to enhancing the professional quality of the teaching force and safeguarding the well-being of students. The ensuing paragraphs set out in details the proposed arrangements for

enhancing the teacher registration mechanism and introduce our work in relation to enhancing the professionalism of the teaching force.

A. Enhancing the Teacher Registration Mechanism

4. The EDB continues to review the EO and its efforts in teacher management. The Chief Executive has announced in the 2025 Policy Address that the EDB will enhance the teacher registration mechanism and explore amending the EO to introduce the practising certificate and regular renewal requirements, so as to ensure that all school teachers in Hong Kong are fit and proper persons, thus upholding the professionalism of the teaching force.

Prevailing Requirements for Teacher Registration under the EO

5. Section 42 of the EO, Cap. 279 of the Laws of Hong Kong, stipulates that any person who teaches in a school has to be a registered teacher (RT) or a permitted teacher (PT). Under the prevailing mechanism, once an application for registration as RT or PT is approved, the registration of RT is valid for a lifetime while the permit to teach will only become invalid if the PT ceases to be employed in the school specified in the permit, unless the Permanent Secretary for Education cancels the registrations on grounds of the conditions specified in sections 47 and 52 of the EO respectively.

6. According to EDB's records, there are currently more than 160 000 RT, with about 70 000 teachers teaching in publicly-funded schools¹, private schools, international schools and kindergartens. The rest are mainly individuals who have attained retirement age, left the teaching profession or had no appointment records in schools.

Purposes of Enhancing the Teacher Registration Mechanism

7. Amid the complex and rapidly changing development of our society, the public and parents have increasingly high expectations on teachers' professionalism, and there are concerns as to whether the existing lifetime validity of teacher registration can ensure the professional quality of teachers. As the statutory authority for teacher registration, the EDB bears the crucial gate-keeping

¹ Publicly-funded schools include government schools, aided schools, caput schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme.

responsibility in handling each application for teacher registration rigorously, and managing the teaching force by ensuring the quality of registered teachers.

8. Having carefully considered the views of the sector and the expectations on teachers' professionalism, the EDB proposes to amend the EO by making reference to the teacher registration systems in various jurisdictions and the registration requirements of different professions in Hong Kong, making the acquisition of a practising certificate a prerequisite for teaching in addition to the existing statutory requirement for teachers being registered as RT or PT. The new mechanism is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- **To enhance teachers' professionalism:** In line with the registration mechanisms of other professions, the new mechanism will enhance the society's recognition of the education profession and raise the social status of teachers;
- **To encourage teachers to keep pace with the times:** The new mechanism will encourage teachers to pursue continuing development and keep pace with the times, so as to further enhance the professional standards of the teaching force; and
- **To strengthen teacher management:** The new mechanism will enable the EDB to keep abreast of the status of registered teachers in a more timely and accurate manner, thereby further strengthening teacher management and safeguarding students' well-being.

Key Proposals

9. In formulating the proposals, EDB aims to, as a guiding principle, strike a balance between upholding the requirements expected of the education profession and meeting the actual operational needs of schools, with a view to ensuring that the implementation details are reasonable and conducive to achieving the objectives.

(a) Scope of Application of the Practising Certificate Requirement and its Validity Period

10. The practising certificate requirement will be applicable to teachers (including principals) of all publicly-funded schools, private schools², international schools and kindergartens, and the validity period of the practising certificate will be no more than three school years.

11. At present, section 9 of the EO stipulates that any school entirely maintained and controlled by the Government, i.e. government schools, shall be exempt from the Ordinance. The EDB proposes to amend the EO to stipulate that teachers who teach in government schools are also subject to the requirements concerning teacher registration and practising certificate as laid down in the relevant provisions of the Ordinance.

(b) Application Criteria for a Practising Certificate

12. Persons who apply for a practising certificate must meet the following requirements:

- Possess a valid certificate of registration as a teacher or permit to teach;
- Being employed by a school as its teacher;
- Declare whether they have been convicted of any criminal offences in the past three years;
- Declare whether they are willing to uphold the professionalism of teachers, abide by the laws and comply with relevant statutes, including the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law;
- Meet the designated requirements on continuing professional development (CPD); and
- Ordinarily reside in Hong Kong³.

² The practising certificate requirement does not apply to teachers employed by private schools exempted under the Education (Exemption) (Private Schools Offering Non-Formal Curriculum) Order (Cap. 279F).

³ According to the definition of “ordinary residence” as stated on the website of the Immigration Department (<https://www.immd.gov.hk/eng/services/roa/term.html>), a person has ordinary residence in Hong Kong if he/she remains in Hong Kong legally, voluntarily and for a settled purpose (such as for education, employment or residence), whether of short or long duration. Under this definition, the factors for consideration include the reason, duration and frequency of any absence from Hong Kong; whether he/she has habitual residence in Hong Kong; whether he/she is employed by a Hong Kong based company; and the whereabouts of the principal members of his/her family.

13. As regards the requirements on CPD, apart from setting a soft target of 150 hours of CPD in each three-year cycle for teachers, from the 2020/21 school year onwards, the EDB has developed a training framework for newly-joined teachers, in-service teachers and those aspiring for promotion, under which in-service teachers are required to spare a minimum of 30 hours in each three-year cycle to take part in core training under two categories, namely Teachers' Professional Roles, Values and Conduct and Local, National and International Education Issues, with not less than six hours spent on each category. With reference to this arrangement, the EDB proposes that in-service teachers would be required to meet the target of achieving 150 hours of CPD every three years for fulfilling the application criteria for a practising certificate. In meeting the schools' actual operational needs, the EDB proposes that short-term supply teachers⁴, who are employed for not more than 30 school days within a 12-month period, shall be exempt from the practising certificate requirement. Those who join the teaching force immediately upon graduation will be considered to have met the CPD requirements by the EDB. As for daily-rated supply teachers with a longer appointment term and those who re-join the teaching profession, the EDB will explore training programmes for them to meet relevant requirements.

14. Teachers holding a practising certificate must meet all the requirements set out in paragraph 12 throughout its entire validity period. For teachers who are suspected of committing serious offences or professional misconduct, in case their teacher registration is to be cancelled, their practising certificates will be cancelled accordingly.

15. The EDB will draw up guidelines on application for practising certificate, enabling applicants and schools to fully understand the application procedures, the documents required, the application fee⁵, the vetting time, notification of application results, etc. In addition, the EDB will maintain a register of teachers with their names and practising certificate numbers.

⁴ Short-term supply teachers refer to daily-rated supply teachers who are employed by schools for relief duties due to unforeseeable circumstances and emergencies.

⁵ If necessary, the EDB will collect a prescribed fee for each practising certificate application from the applicant to cover relevant expenditure incurred in processing the application. The application fee for a practising certificate will be specified in the amended EO.

Consultation with the Sector and Work Plan

16. The EDB consulted stakeholders on the proposed framework for enhancing the teacher registration mechanism and collected views from the sector between September and November 2025. The stakeholders in general support introducing the practising certificate and regular renewal requirements on the basis of the existing requirements for teacher registration. They concur that these measures are conducive to achieving the objectives set out in paragraph 8 above. The concerns raised by the sector are mostly about the implementation details, such as the specific CPD requirements, as well as the application procedures for a practising certificate and the implementation timeline. The EDB takes heed of their concerns and will continue to listen to and study their views carefully for formulating the specific implementation details.

17. The EDB has commenced working on the amendments to the EO and will continue to consult the Department of Justice to finalise the amendments to the legislative provisions. Subject to Members' views, we plan to introduce the amendment bill to the Legislative Council for scrutiny in the second half of 2026.

B. Promoting the Spirit of Outstanding Educators, Safeguarding the Education Profession

18. As the primary resource and key cornerstone for the high-quality development of education, teachers are a driving force for building China into a leading country in education. The Master Plan expressly proposes building a professional teaching force of high quality, taking actions to strengthen the teaching force by instilling the spirit of outstanding educators⁶, and promoting the integration of such spirit in the entire process of cultivation and training of teachers. To tie in with the strategies of the Master Plan, the EDB continues to provide teachers with professional training in relation to the curriculum, teaching and assessment, with a view to encouraging them to participate in different levels

⁶ In a letter sent to representatives of outstanding teachers in September 2023, President Xi Jinping introduced the unique Chinese concept of “the Spirit of Educators” which encompasses the following elements: they cherish ideals and convictions of bearing the collective in mind and serving the country with absolute sincerity; they have moral sentiment with what they say as guides for learners and what they do as examples of the times; they have the wisdom of enlightening those they teach and teaching students in accordance with their aptitudes, and professional attitude of being hard-working and seeking truth and innovation; they have benevolence that makes them love their job and those they teach, and willing to devote themselves to what they do; they have a global vision to develop virtues for a better world.

and modes of professional development activities for enhancing teaching quality. In respect of pre-service teacher training, the EDB has collaborated with teacher education universities to develop a guiding framework for teacher education programmes, covering professional conduct, understanding relevant laws and national affairs, etc. The framework has been gradually implemented by the teacher education universities starting from the 2023/24 academic year. As regards in-service teacher training, since the 2020/21 school year, the core training for newly-joined teachers and those aspiring for promotion has included a workshop on teachers' professional conduct and values, and covered contents on the Constitution, the Basic Law and the National Security Law, so as to enhance the spirit of the rule of law among teachers.

19. Over the past year, the EDB has focused on carrying forward the spirit of outstanding educators and strengthening relevant training while providing different platforms for teachers to share their stories about teaching and nurturing people, so as to inspire them to reflect on their aspirations to educate people and encourage them to integrate their pursuit of professionalism with personal virtues. Our efforts in this regard are introduced in the paragraphs below.

Integrating the Spirit of Outstanding Educators into Teacher Training

20. At present, the EDB has included in the core training for newly-joined teachers and those aspiring for promotion the contents of professional roles of teachers, so as to guide them to reflect on teachers' professionalism and reinforce their educational beliefs through various scenarios. In the workshops themed on teachers' professional conduct and values as well as the "T-standard⁺" online course, training in the form of case studies is provided to help teachers internalise idea of the eight codes set out in the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct (Guidelines), thereby integrating their pursuit of professionalism with personal virtues and striving to nurture students with correct moral values. Furthermore, leaders and experienced teachers from the Mainland schools are invited to share their stories about education in our training programmes, such as the Mainland study tours for newly-joined teachers and promoted teachers, and the Navigators for Excellence in Education Training Programme. Through their sharing, participants can learn about the professional competencies and ethics as well as the role model of teaching by example of their Mainland counterparts, thereby enhancing their sense of responsibility and mission in teaching and nurturing students while strengthening their professional competencies.

21. In the 2025/26 school year, we have further integrated the spirit of outstanding educators into teacher training through multifaceted approaches for deepening teachers' understanding of the unique spirit of Chinese educators. For example, participants of the Mainland study tours for newly-joined teachers are inspired to commit themselves to the ideals and convictions of education and pass on the spirit of educators through engaging in the exchange and sharing sessions with Mainland teachers and experts, as well as learning from the stories of the outstanding educators by the use of multimedia such as the video series of *The Spirit of Outstanding Educators*⁷.

Lectures and Sharing Activities on the Spirit of Outstanding Educators

22. In October 2025, the EDB held the Ministry of Education (MoE) National Lecture Tour on the Spirit of Educators (Hong Kong and Macao Session) in Hong Kong for the first time. The lecture, under the theme of “strengthening the teaching force with the spirit of educators, composing a glorious chapter in building a leading country in education”, featured members of the lecture tour from different Mainland provinces/municipalities and Hong Kong sharing their personal moving experiences and invaluable insights into education, which vividly showcased their unwavering commitment to carrying forward and putting into practice the spirit of outstanding educators as well as their passion for education. With the support of the MoE, the EDB will continue to organise related activities to promote the spirit of outstanding educators so that it can take root in Hong Kong and contribute to the development of China into a leading country in education.

23. The EDB also participated in an activity organised by the MoE on telling the stories of nurturing students in 2025 by nominating three awardees of the Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence (CEATE) to share with newly-joined teachers their experiences in nurturing students and visit Shenzhen for exchanges with teachers from various Mainland provinces and municipalities. One of the awardees was also nominated to appear in a special programme of CCTV for Teachers' Day 2025⁸ and further share insights in the MoE National Lecture Tour on the Spirit of Educators (Hong Kong and Macao Session). The EDB strongly supports our teachers in Hong Kong to participate in these

⁷ *The Spirit of Outstanding Educators* (《教育家精神》) is a series under *Chinese Historical Memory* (《國家記憶》), a programme of CCTV-4 Asia.

⁸ For details, please refer to the CEATE website at <https://www.ate.gov.hk/tc/about/whats-news/31.html> (in Chinese only).

activities, so as to demonstrate their dedication to education through vivid and multifaceted portrayals, promote their professional ethics and positivity, and tell the good stories of Hong Kong teachers.

24. In the era of artificial intelligence, it is particularly necessary for teachers to firmly uphold their professional ethics to cope with the challenges brought by rapid technological advancement. The EDB has all along been supporting the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Academic Seminar on Cultivation of Teachers' Morality and Ethics by arranging for principals and teachers of secondary and primary schools in Hong Kong to participate in the annual event. Held in Dongguan in December 2025, the seventh seminar adopted the theme of "redefining teachers' professional ethics in the era of digital intelligence with the spirit of outstanding educators". During the keynote seminars and roundtable forums, the participants from Hong Kong engaged in in-depth discussions with their fellows in the education sector in the GBA on how to become a reputable mentor with the spirit of outstanding educators to advise students on their conduct and behaviour in the era of digital intelligence.

On Education: Grasping the Context of National Educational Development

25. To implement the spirit and strategies of the Master Plan, school leaders must fully acquaint themselves with the nation's top-level planning and design in advancing its goal of becoming a leading country in education, and proactively align with the national education development plans. Upon the publication of the traditional Chinese edition of *On Education*, a book sharing session was held in November 2025 by the EDB, during which the Secretary for Education and invited guests guided the participants to explore a collection of key discourses and ideas on education made by President Xi Jinping in a systematic manner to understand the nation's future plans for education, as well as the vital significance of delivering quality education in the new era from the holistic perspective.

Commending Distinguished Teachers

26. The EDB is committed to fostering a positive culture of respect for teachers and love for students in schools in recognition of teachers' contributions. Apart from supporting the Committee on Respect Our Teachers Campaign in organising the Respect our Teachers Campaign and Commendation Certificate Presentation Ceremony, the EDB has also organised a series of promotional activities under the theme of "promoting the spirit of respect and showing

gratitude for teachers” in this school year, such as gatherings in celebration of the Teachers’ Day and the Salute to Teachers 2025 - Teachers’ Day Ceremony. Schools were also encouraged to actively organise diversified activities within and beyond the classroom to show respect for teachers, so as to promote the fine traditional culture of respect for teachers and love for students. In addition, to recognise the dedication and contribution of teachers, the EDB organises the annual CEATE, with the “Award for Budding Teachers” and the “Award for Education Innovation” introduced since the 2024/25 school year to give recognition to more distinguished teachers who excelled in different areas, thereby enhancing the professional image and social status of teachers, and reinforcing the culture of respect for teachers.

Safeguarding Education Profession

27. A professional and dedicated teaching force is the key to the success of Hong Kong’s education. The EDB is committed to maintaining the quality of the teaching profession and safeguarding its professionalism. In this regard, the EDB promulgated the Guidelines at the end of 2022, setting out eight codes of professional conduct, providing illustrative examples under each code to explain the “dos” and “don’ts” of teachers’ behaviour, encouraging teachers to integrate their pursuit of professionalism with personal virtues so that students can be nurtured with correct moral values; issued EDB Circular No. 14/2023 on “Measures for Strengthening the Protection of Students: Appointment of Teaching and Non-teaching Staff in Schools” in August 2023, reminding schools to request applicants to declare whether they have been, or are currently, involved in any criminal offenses or investigations, as well as professional misconduct. Schools are also required, prior to appointing teachers and upon seeking the consent of the applicants, apply to the EDB for checking information on their registration status; check the certificates of service issued by the applicants’ previous employers; and consult their previous employers about their performance; starting from the 2023/24 school year, schools intending to appoint teachers who have left the teaching profession for one year or more should also request the teachers concerned to declare their criminal conviction records for onward submission to the EDB for verification.

28. As to the small number of black sheep who fail to meet the ethical and moral standards expected of them, the EDB has all along been adopting “zero tolerance” attitude and handling cases of professional misconduct of teachers in a serious and rigorous manner. The follow-up actions taken by the EDB against

teachers' professional misconduct in the past three years (2023 to 2025) are tabulated below:

	2023	2024	2025
Cancellation of teacher registration	47	71	37
Reprimand letter	13	38	18
Written warning	69	149	70
Written advice	13	21	17
Verbal reminder / Record for future reference	29	25	5

There was a significant decrease in the overall number of cases in 2025 compared to that of the previous year, and the cases leading to cancellation of teacher registration mainly involved offences relating to sex, child abuse, serious traffic contraventions, etc.

The Way Forward

29. The EDB will continue to promote the spirit of outstanding educators, enhance the professional image and social status of teachers, and foster the culture of respect for teachers. Teachers are encouraged to translate the spirit of outstanding educators into practical action for cultivating values and nurturing people, and integrate such spirit into different areas of school work. These efforts will help build a strong teaching force to support the vibrant development of education and the cultivation of future talents for Hong Kong and the country. Meanwhile, the EDB will continue to play the role as a gate-keeper in teacher registration and handle cases of unlawful acts or professional misconduct of teachers in a serious manner, so as to ensure that all serving teachers are fit and proper persons for protecting students' well-being.

Advice Sought

30. Members are invited to note the content of this paper and provide views on the proposed amendments to the EO (Cap. 279) to introduce the practising certificate and regular renewal requirements for enhancing the teacher registration mechanism.

Education Bureau
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