

FAQs on Diversity Learning Grant (DLG)

General

1. How and when will the DLG for Other Languages and Other Programmes be disbursed to schools?
 - *For aided and caput secondary schools, secondary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme and special schools with senior secondary classes, provisional DLG for the first cohort of NSS students will be disbursed in August and adjusted in December in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively according to the information submitted in the application forms, the approved NSS class structure and the number of students enrolled to Other Languages courses.*
 - *For government secondary schools, the DLG will be provided to schools in the form of budget allocations at two points in August and April of the school year. Provisional DLG for the first cohort of NSS students will be disbursed in August of 2009, 2010 and 2011 and adjusted in April of 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively according to the information submitted in the application forms, the approved NSS class structure and the number of students enrolled to Other Languages courses.*
2. Will schools be granted the DLG if they submit the application after the deadline?
 - *Schools will be reminded to submit their application a week before the deadline. Therefore, late application will not be entertained.*
3. Who will benefit from the DLG?
 - *Senior secondary students taking DLG-supported programmes, i.e. Applied Learning (ApL, formerly known as Career-oriented Curriculum) courses, Other Programmes (including network programmes for NSS subjects and education programmes for gifted students) and Other Languages as their elective subjects will benefit.*
4. What is the aim and the ambit of the DLG?
 - *The aim of the DLG is to encourage schools to offer a diversified curriculum to their students. Schools may use the grant to provide different courses / programmes to cater for the diverse needs of their students.*
 - *Details of the ambit of the DLG can be found in the EDBCM No.146/2008 and EDBCM No.42/2009*

5. What are the grant rates of different categories of the DLG?
 - *For Other Languages, the subsidy is \$3,500 per student per year. For Other Programmes (i.e. network programmes for NSS subjects and education programmes for gifted students), the subsidy is \$7,000 per NSS class per year. For ApL courses, the subsidy is 75% of the **average** course fee of the ApL courses enrolled by the school as a whole, with a ceiling of \$8,250 per student per course for two years.*
 - *Details of the subsidy can be found in the EDBCM No.146/2008 and EDBCM No.42/2009.*

6. Will special schools benefit from the DLG?
 - *Yes. Special schools can apply subsidies for Other Programmes and Other Languages. The DLG will also support students with special educational needs to study adapted ApL courses.*
 - *The DLG for senior secondary students with special educational needs studying in ordinary schools is merged into the Learning Support Grant.*

7. What are the bases on which funding for ApL courses is calculated?
 - *The projected funding amount is based on the experience gained from the ApL pilot.*

8. How will the DLG be calculated?
 - *For Other Programmes, the amount of the DLG will be calculated on the basis of the actual number of approved NSS classes in S4 of the school year concerned. As for Other Languages and ApL courses, the DLG will be calculated according to the actual number of senior secondary students taking the relevant programmes / courses in September of the school year concerned.*
 - *Schools may refer to the EDBCM No.146/2008 and EDBCM No.42/2009 for details.*

9. Will there be any adjustment in the grant according to inflation rate?
 - *The inflation factor has already been projected and considered when calculating the amount of funding for each category of the DLG programmes. Therefore, the amount will not be adjusted for inflation or salary adjustment within the tryout period for the first three cohorts of NSS students.*
 - *A review on the funding and administrative arrangements will be conducted after the 2011/12 school year.*

10. Can surplus of the DLG be rolled over to the following year?
- *Yes. Surplus can be rolled over until that cohort of students graduate, i.e. the end of 2011/12 school year for the first cohort of students. Thereafter, the surplus will be clawed back.*
11. Can the DLG be used for the procurement of learning and teaching materials or alteration work / minor adjustment / expansion of school facilities?
- *The DLG is a subsidy for diversify students' learning opportunities and will be tied with the number of students benefited by such learning opportunities. It must not be used for capital purchases, overheads or maintenance. The funding must be used for teaching within the school or procure services from course providers.*
12. Should the expenditure for two cohorts of students be recorded in different ledger accounts if they attend the same activity, e.g. a guest speaker is invited to conduct a seminar for two cohorts of students taking French?
- *Yes. The expenditure for each cohort of students should be recorded separately in a different ledger account. However, in order not to incur undue administrative workload, schools may exercise their discretion to record the expenditure in either ledger.*
13. Will schools be receiving the same amount of subsidy for the different categories of the DLG programmes? Can the grant be transferable according to the needs of the schools??
- *No. Different DLG programmes will receive different amount of subsidy and they should be kept in separate ledger accounts for each category of DLG for each cohort of students. For Other Languages, the subsidy is \$3,500 per student per year. For Other Programmes (i.e. network programmes and programmes for gifted students), the subsidy is \$7,000 per NSS class per year. The usage of the DLG should not be transferable to top up the deficit of a program of another category.*
 - *The usage of the DLG should be bound by the 3-year plan endorsed by their SMC / IMC when applying for the DLG.*
14. Can schools charge students fees for taking the DLG-supported programmes?
- *In accordance with the introduction of 12 years of free education, schools should not charge students any fee for taking ApL courses, Other Languages*

and network programmes for NSS subjects.

- *Fees may be charged for some gifted education programmes, including those fee-charging credit-bearing programmes / web-based courses offered by local and overseas tertiary institutions.*

15. Do schools need to submit the 3-year plan when they apply for the DLG?

- *Schools are required to draw up a 3-year plan and it should be endorsed by their School management Committee or Incorporated Management Committee. Schools do NOT need to submit the plan to EDB when applying for the DLG but the plan must be incorporated into the school's annual plan and uploaded onto the school's homepage before the end of November of the year concerned.*

16. Can schools apply for the DLG in the 2nd or 3rd year of students' senior secondary schooling (S5 or S6)?

- *Yes. In that case, EDB will only disburse the grant for the 2nd or 3rd year upon successful application.*

17. Can a school use the grant to employ a Teaching Assistant to be responsible for coordinating the DLG programmes?

- *Yes. The duties of the Teaching Assistant, together with an account of how the duties arising from the DLG programmes be shared out, must be clearly stated to justify the recruitment of the Teaching Assistant (or a portion of this post). We would suggest, however, that the teaching of the DLG-supported programmes be conducted by the teachers of that school.*

Applied Learning (ApL)

18. Do schools need to pay part of the ApL course fees?

- *ApL is part of the school curriculum and thus it is a shared responsibility of EDB and schools to contribute to the cost of ApL course provision for the benefit of our students. The DLG is a funding subsidy for schools to offer diversified learning opportunities in addition to the existing resources. After discussion with various stakeholders, and based on the experience gathered from the pilot, arrangement is made for schools to contribute to its funding. (i.e. schools contribute at least 25% of the average course fee (for two years).*

A safety net for ApL courses will be put in place to assist schools with genuine financial difficulty (e.g. schools with eight or more NSS classes per cohort). This would be considered on a case-by-case basis.).

- *For the amount of contribution, schools may refer to EDBCM No.146/2008 and EDBCM No.42/2009 for details.*

19. Regarding the shared funding principle in ApL, will it exert heavy financial burden to schools if they offer ApL courses to students? Schools may not want to offer expensive ApL courses to their students.

- *To reduce the course fees, schools can mobilize their allocated resources and/or make flexible arrangement to support the delivery of ApL courses (e.g. by deployment of teachers, administrative staff, facilities, venue, etc.), which can lead to possible course fee reduction offered by individual course providers.*
- *To prevent schools from depriving students' chances of taking ApL courses which are relatively more expensive, an average course fee for all ApL courses offered in a school will be worked out as a basis for calculating the DLG. The **average** course fee will be calculated based on the listed course fee (instead of the actual course fee with course fee reduction deducted).*

20. How to calculate the average course fee of the ApL courses? Will schools be given more subsidies if the average course fee exceeds the ceiling of \$8,250?

- *If 4 students of School A enrolled in 5 ApL courses, the course fees (for two years) are as follows:*

<i>School A</i>	<i>Course fee (for two years)(\$)</i>
<i>Course 1</i>	<i>9,000</i>
<i>Course 2</i>	<i>10,800</i>
<i>Course 3</i>	<i>11,000</i>
<i>Course 4</i>	<i>11,500</i>
<i>Course 5</i>	<i>13,000</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>55,300</i>
<i>Average Course fee</i>	<i>11,060</i>

**One of the students is taking 2 ApL courses out of his/her 3 elective subjects.*

- *Total course fees of the 5 ApL courses are \$55,300 and the average course fee will be \$11,060. 75% of the average course fee of School A will be \$8,295, which is higher than the ceiling of \$8,250. Hence School A will receive a subsidy of \$41,250 (= \$8,250 x 5)*

21. If the average course fee does not exceed the ceiling of \$8,250, will schools be granted the rest of the amount?

- *No, if 5 students of School B enrolled in 5 ApL courses, the course fees (for two years) are as follows:*

<i>School B</i>	<i>Course fee (for two years)(\$)</i>
<i>Course 1</i>	<i>\$9,000</i>
<i>Course 2</i>	<i>\$10,000</i>
<i>Course 3</i>	<i>\$11,000</i>
<i>Course 4</i>	<i>\$11,500</i>
<i>Course 5</i>	<i>\$11,500</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>\$53,000</i>
<i>Average Course fee</i>	<i>\$10,600</i>

- *Total course fees of the 5 ApL courses are \$53,000 and the average course fee will be \$10,600. 75% of the average course fee for School B will be \$7,950 which is lower than the ceiling of \$8,250. Hence School B will receive a subsidy of \$39,750 (= \$7,950 x 5).*

22. How to top up the deficit in the DLG, especially in the support on ApL courses?

- *Aided schools may deploy the surplus of the General Domain of the Operating Expenses Block Grant / Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant or by the school's own fund to top up deficit of DLG if required.*
- *For caput schools, any deficit under DLG should be met by Fee Subsidy or schools' own fund.*
- *For DSS schools, any deficit under DLG should be met by DSS Subsidy or school's own fund.*
- *Government schools may deploy the surplus of the Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant to cover the deficit of DLG if required.*
- *Apart from topping up the course fee through mobilizing schools' allocated resources, schools can also contribute through collaborating with course providers such as providing part of the teaching venues/ staff /administrative support for course fee reduction as schools' contribution..*

23. Are there any remedial measures for the schools in need of financial support for ApL courses?

- *A safety net will be put in place to assist needy schools during their transition period.*

24. Will students be subsidized by DLG if they repeat S.5 or take more than one ApL course as their electives?
- *Students repeating S.5 who wish to continue with the second year study of ApL courses will be subsidized by DLG.*
 - *Students can take up to three ApL courses as their electives which will be subsidized by the DLG provided that the total number of electives (including ApL courses) taken by the students is not greater than three.*
25. Will students be subsidized if they take 4 elective subjects including an ApL course??
- *No. The ApL course will be regarded as the 4th elective subject and will not be subsidized by the DLG. Under the NSS academic structure, schools should offer a broad and balanced curriculum to their students. We do not encourage students to take more than 3 elective subjects under the NSS as most students will be fully occupied by taking 4 core subjects, 2/3 elective subjects (including ApL) and Other Learning Experiences.*
26. If students taking 4 elective subjects (1 ApL course and 3 other non-ApL electives) in S.5 drop 1 non-ApL elective subject in S.6, will they be subsidized by the DLG for both years?
- *The calculation of funding will be based on the number of electives taken by the student as at September of each school year. Therefore, for the case above, the ApL course taken in S.5 will not be subsidized by the DLG. DLG will only be provided to the students in S.6.*
27. Can parents pay for the course fee if students take ApL as the 4th elective?
- *In accordance with the introduction of 12 years of free education, schools should not charge parents / students any fee for taking ApL courses even if they are taken as the 4th elective.*
28. Will the subsidy to the students be clawed back if they withdraw from the ApL courses in the second year or after a few months?
- *A headcount will be conducted in September yearly and the DLG for that particular school year will be adjusted in December based on the actual enrolment in ApL courses as at the headcount date. There will not be further adjustment or claw back of DLG for that particular school year afterwards. However, any unspent DLG by the end of the senior secondary cohort will be*

clawed back.

29. How many ApL courses can a student take? Will all the courses be subsidized?
- *Every student can take 2 to 3 elective subjects (including ApL), therefore, a student can take up a maximum of 3 ApL courses as their elective subjects and they will be supported by the DLG. However, every school is entitled to a subsidy of a maximum of 120 ApL enrolments per cohort.*

Other Languages

30. What Other Languages are supported by the DLG?
- *The six Other Languages under the DLG are French, German, Hindi, Japanese, Spanish and Urdu. The programmes of these languages must follow the curriculum and examinations pitched at AS-level offered by the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and administered by the HKEAA. The subsidy is \$3,500 per student per year.*
31. Can schools offer Other Languages as interest groups (on Saturday)?
- *Other Languages to be supported by the DLG should be offered as elective subjects for S4-6 students and the curriculum and examinations should pitch at **AS-level** offered by the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and administered by the HKEAA.*
32. Can schools offer more than one other languages?
- *There is no limitation on the number of other languages that a school can offer. Schools should offer other languages according to the needs of their students. The subsidy is \$3,500 per student per language per year.*
33. Can schools offer other languages which are not one of the above six?
- *To qualify for the DLG subsidy, a language programme must follow the curriculum and examinations pitched at AS-level offered by the Cambridge International Examinations and administered by the HKEAA. So far, only six other languages examinations will be administered by the HKEAA for the first cohort of NSS students. Therefore, the DLG will only support the study of these six languages.*

34. Can schools offer AS-level other languages in cooperation with other organisations?
- *The subsidy is \$3,500 per student per language per year when they take other languages, e.g. German. Other language courses should follow a curriculum leading to the examinations pitched at AS-level offered by the Cambridge International Examinations and administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. Schools can decide the operation mode on their own.*
35. When procuring service from external course providers, what procurement procedure should be followed?
- *The school should follow the general service procurement procedure.*
36. Are there special requirements on the qualifications of the service provider, e.g. being a tertiary institution?
- *No. Schools should exercise their professional judgment on the necessary qualifications of the service provider. They should ensure that the programmes are taught by qualified teachers.*
37. Will there be a minimum or maximum number of students in a class?
- *No. Schools are encouraged to make the best use of the grant for the benefit of their students as far as possible.*
38. Can schools use the DLG to pay their own teacher as instructor / facilitator of DLG Programmes?
- *No. This will put the school in an embarrassing situation as the teacher receiving extra pay will be perceived as “double-dipping”.*

Gifted Education Programmes

39. What are the programmes for gifted students?
- *They are further structured learning opportunities provided through school-based pull-out programmes and/or off-site support that challenge the abilities of gifted students.*
 - *These learning opportunities include enhancement programmes offered by schools/academic associations/professional bodies; credit-bearing courses*

pecially designed and offered by tertiary institutions targeted for talented/gifted students at senior secondary level; and all programmes provided by the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education.

- *Schools may refer to EDBCM No.146/2008 and EDBCM No.42/2009 for details.*

40. When students join the pull-out gifted education programmes in schools, do they need to be assessed by professional psychologists to prove that they are really gifted?

- *There are many ways and tools to identify a student if he/she is gifted. IQ test is one of them and this has to be done by professionals.*
- *Teachers, parents and peers will also be able to evaluate if someone is gifted through the student's academic achievement, performance in classes and in social life*
- *Teachers can also browse and download information regarding the tools, such as performance measuring table, and procedures for identifying gifted students from the CDI's gifted education websites and attend professional development workshops organized by the Gifted Education Section or the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education.*

41. Can a school use the DLG to employ a teacher mainly for enhancing students' skills in choral speaking or debating so that they can join the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival?

- *Firstly, we have to ensure that the training programme should fall into one of the gifted education elements i.e. creativity, high-order thinking and communication skills*
- *There should be a clear selection mechanism for screening students for the programmes*
- *There should be a clear objective that the programme is to develop or enhance students' skills and students' achievement will reflect the expected learning outcome for the programme*

42. Do students need to pay for the gifted education programmes?

- *Maybe. Depending on the needs of the schools and the programmes.*

43. Can a school use the DLG to sponsor a talented student like Chan Yik Hei, while no other students are interested in his area of interest?

- *Yes. However, we do not encourage school to use the grant for just ONE*

student.

44. Can a school use the DLG in SBG programs in junior form with an aim to prepare students and pave the way to NSS?
 - *No. The grant must be for the learning of students in NSS classes.*
45. Concerning NGOs/academic associations/professional bodies, are companies like Dramatic English or Uncle Café classified as professional bodies?
 - *The school should exercise professional judgment to vet quality service providers.*
46. Does a proposed programme need to meet all the criteria set in the guideline?
 - *Yes. A proposed programme plan should clearly lay down the nature of the programme, target students, selection of students and student products.*
47. Will the plan be checked by the EDB?
 - *The proposed programme plan should be included in the School Annual plan and plans to the Incorporated Management Committee (IMC) of school. Evaluation reports of the programmes held should be included in the School Annual Report and be reported to the IMC.*
48. Can a school use the grant to buy tickets for students if the programme is on language arts activities like drama?
 - *Yes. Ticket fare can be regarded as programme cost.*
49. When procuring service from external course providers, what procurement procedure should be followed?
 - *The school should follow the general service procurement procedure.*
50. Is there special requirement on the qualifications of the service provider, e.g. training in gifted education?
 - *No. The school should exercise professional judgment on the necessary qualifications of the service providers.*
51. Will there be a minimum or maximum number of student beneficiaries?
 - *No. Schools are encouraged to make the best use of the grant for the benefits of as many students as possible.*

52. Is there any restriction on using the grant for one particular course or can the grant be shared out among different programmes?
- *Schools can flexibly allocate the grant among different programmes.*
53. Can a school use the grant to employ a TA to be responsible for coordinating pull-out gifted education programmes?
- *Yes. The duty of the TA, the nature, objectives, targets and deliverables/expected learning outcomes of the programmes must be clearly stated. We would suggest the teachers of that school to be responsible for conducting or coordinating the GE programmes and the TA to free the particular teachers concerned.*
54. Can the DLG be spent on a pro-rata basis to cover the cost of a TA whose responsibilities include co-ordinating gifted education programme at school?
- *Yes. The percentage of time devoted to gifted programmes must be clearly stated.*
55. Can schools use the DLG to pay their own teachers as instructors or facilitators of pull-out gifted programmes as these are extra work?
- *No. Teachers of that school should contribute to the SB pull-out programmes if they have the expertise. It might lead the school to an embarrassing situation if the relevant teachers are paid extra and may lead to the suspicion of 'transfer of interest' and 'conflict of interest'.*
56. Can schools use the DLG to pay for students' examination fee? (e.g. examination fee for students learning musical instruments)
- *No. The DLG is to support the course fee but not to pay for the examination fee.*
57. Can parents or past students be hired then?
- *Yes. But scrupulous care must be taken in assessing their experience, expertise/qualifications and suitability and to avoid conflict of interest wherever possible.*
58. Is there a time frame within which the grant must be used / spent?
- *Yes. The grant must be spent on a certain cohort for 3 years and any unspent would be clawed back at the end of the three years.*

59. Can the DLG be spent on one programme for one group of gifted students (say on maths) in the first year, and then on another programme for another group of students (say drama) in the second year, but of the same year cohort?
- *Yes. As long as the funding is spent on the same cohort of students. There is no rule binding a gifted programme to be run for two or three years.*
60. Can the DLG be spent on subsidizing students to pay for the overseas exchange programmes which will include air-ticket, living expenses, etc.?
- *DLG can be used to pay for the registration fee for overseas study tour / exchange programme but not for paying the air-ticket and living expenses.*
 - *Schools can consult the organizations to itemize all the costs and list out the registration fee of the programme.*

Network Programmes

61. How will the DLG subsidy for network programmes be allocated?
- *The DLG subsidy will be provided to all schools when they offer network programmes of any NSS subject for their students.*
62. Are the network programmes under the DLG limited to Visual Arts, Music and PE?
- *No. The DLG will subsidise all NSS subjects jointly offered by schools.*
63. Is there a minimum / maximum class size for network programmes?
- *No. Schools are encouraged to make the best use of the grant for the benefit of their students as far as possible.*
64. What is the ambit for using the subsidy from network programmes?
- *They should be programmes on NSS subjects (e.g. ERS, VA, Music and PE) jointly organised by schools to enhance subject choices for students. Schools have the flexibility to arrange the expenses by themselves. For details, please refer to the EDBCM No. 42/2009.*
65. Will schools be supported with \$7,000 per senior secondary class even if they offer network programmes only with no programmes for gifted students?
- *Schools can offer network programmes and/or programmes for gifted students*

according to the needs of the schools, e.g. network programmes only, programmes for gifted students only, or both programmes. The subsidy is \$7,000 per NSS class per year.