

Frequently Asked Questions on School-based Assessment (SBA)

(1) Is the design of the assessment capable of catering for a wide range of abilities of candidates?

- The assessment system will be so designed that the full range of student achievements can be captured and recognised, encompassing the achievements of those students performing at a level equivalent to the current A-level standard and those who demonstrate threshold levels of competence in their learning.
- School-based Assessment (SBA) will be one of the assessment modes for the New Senior Secondary (NSS) subjects. It is used to evaluate skills that cannot be assessed by conventional paper-and-pencil examination. In other words, various assessment modes will be adopted in assessing students' abilities and standards.
- Regarding the curriculum design of various subjects, students are given the opportunity to select modules which suit their interests and abilities from the elective part in addition to the modules in the core part. Public assessments will align with the flexible design of the curriculum.

(2) Will the new curriculum and assessment change lead to a lowering of the academic standard as there will be more students and we still have to cater for motivating the less able students?

- In designing the new senior secondary curriculum and the assessment standards, we will make reference to the existing standards of HKCEE and the HKALE (including the AS-level), as well as the requirements and assessment standards of other international curriculum like the International Baccalaureate. Therefore, the new system will not lower the standard.
- It is hoped that students at different levels would have opportunities to perform through good assessment design. For example, Standards-referenced reporting would report what students are able to do at different levels.

(3) Will there be any early exit point for students who really don't want to proceed?

- We provide 9-year universal basic education in Hong Kong. Students have much greater autonomy in their study beyond the basic education level. However, the 3-year senior secondary curriculum is a coherent curriculum designed to equip students with the life-long learning capacities to face the challenges of the 21st Century. It offers greater

diversity and choices to suit the different needs, interests and abilities of students. In this way, students will be more interested in studying in schools.

- In the senior secondary stage, every student will have a Student Learning Profile to record their achievements in other learning experiences during his senior secondary education. The Student Learning Profile together with the school report card could serve as a track record of learning of students who leave school early, and it will help them seek job or return to study in future.

(4) How to dispel anxieties over SBA?

- SBA can link up teaching and learning with assessment and can provide a **more comprehensive assessment** of students' overall performance. It enables students to recognise their strengths and weaknesses from teachers' feedback to improve continuously. Furthermore, SBA can also enhance students' interests and confidence in learning, thus fostering self-directed learning.
- The design of SBA is an **inseparable part** of the process of curriculum planning, learning, teaching and assessment. It helps teachers to timely capture students' learning progress. As such, SBA is designed to focus mainly on the evaluation of daily teaching activities which are already in place and therefore should not be regarded as **additional work**.
- In fact, this new assessment culture has been **developed and introduced in** Basic Education **long ago**. More and more schools and students have got used to continuous assessment and diversified modes of assessment.
- SBA has been **adopted by almost all examination bodies** in the western countries over the past 20 years to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment. For example, in UK and Australia, the weighting given to SBA is about 50%. Provinces in Canada have up to 100% SBA and the International Baccalaureate (IB) has a heavy emphasis on SBA supported by teacher moderation arrangements.
- There is **a long history of SBA in Hong Kong**, although it has been confined to a number of subjects. In 2006, SBA is implemented in 13 HKALE subjects and 13 HKCEE subjects. As a result, half of the subjects to be examined under the NSS curriculum have already had a component of SBA.
- As SBA will constitute part of students' public examination result, it may arouse teachers' anxieties and put them under pressure. In view of this, EMB and HKEAA have drawn up the following **measures**:
 - ✧ In response to the demands of the education sector, we will adjust our implementation strategies by adopting a **step-by-step approach** to lower the requirement and weighting of SBA;

- ◇ HKEAA will provide detailed marking criteria and exemplars to ensure consistency of standard in marking;
- ◇ To ensure reliability and fairness, HKEAA will **moderate** students' marks in SBA with reference to their result in the public examination;
- ◇ **Professional development programmes** will be provided and on-going sharing and exchange activities will be organised;
- ◇ The mode of assessment introduced for Chinese Language and English Language in 2007 HKCEE will **pave the way** for the arrangement of the new senior secondary education. Schools may use the grant provided by the EMB to recruit teaching assistants; and
- ◇ To inform parents of the arrangements by publishing leaflets so as to promote **home-school cooperation**.

(5) Will there be any passing level? Is there any mapping between the current grades and future levels for schools' and teachers' reference?

- There will be five levels in the standards-referenced reporting to report the outcomes of assessment.
- Each of the levels will be accompanied by descriptors that make it clear what a typical student at a given level is able to do. In addition, there will be samples of student work to illustrate the standards at each level.
- Key Levels will be benchmarked against existing Grades, particularly where they are linked to international standards so that students can more readily gain international recognition for their achievements.

(6) What are the rationale and purposes of SBA? Will it really benefit students? Is there any reference in other countries?

- In the new century, education objectives focus more on cultivating students' generic skills and attitudes, and these cannot be assessed by conventional paper-and-pencil examination. There are also practical subjects that put much emphasis on hands-on experiences which cannot be covered by the paper-and-pencil examination.
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(7) How can fairness and reliability be ensured in SBA? How is moderation conducted?

- HKEAA will provide detailed marking criteria and exemplars to ensure consistency of standard in marking.
- HKEAA will organise professional development programmes on SBA for teachers so as to strengthen their understanding of SBA.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the standards of their own students but are not necessarily familiar with the standards of students in all other schools. Hence, for subjects with large enrolments, statistical moderation will be used to eliminate the inconsistency in marking among schools. During the moderation process, students' rank order in school will remain unaffected.
- Non-statistical methods will be considered for subjects with small candidatures and that involve outcomes that are very different from those assessed through the written examination.
- The development of integrity is an important element in moral education. Both the schools and parents should play a role in teaching their students/children. It is of utmost importance that honesty is maintained in tests and examinations.
- However, to avoid cheating, HKEAA will require that all SBA be designed in ways that enable teachers to authenticate student work and that require school principals to sign off that the work assessed is the work of the students concerned. Moreover, a significant proportion of SBA will be done in class under direct teacher supervision.

(8) Can statistical moderation really help to promote fairness? Is it valid to moderate students' performance in SBA against the public examination?

- The areas assessed in the public examination and SBA are the key learning objectives of the curriculum. As such, it is fair to refer to students' result in the public examination (or result of the parts in the public examination which are closely related to SBA) to moderate their

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(9) What will be the arrangement of SBA for private candidates or repeaters?

- Private candidates or repeaters will continue to participate in the HKDSE. Where it is not possible for them to have a School-based Assessment, their final result will be based entirely on examination results and annotated in their HKDSE accordingly. For certain subjects, an alternative mode of assessment will be set for them to replace the School-based Assessment.

(10) Is it possible to have a smaller class size to facilitate better implementation of SBA?

- In NSS, we have provided schools with flexibility for student grouping through measures such as a revised teacher-to-class ratio (2.0 teachers per senior secondary class) and the Senior Secondary Curriculum Support Grant (equivalent to additional 0.1 teacher per senior secondary class). These measures will allow schools to have greater capacity and flexibility in deploying teachers to cater for students' diversity. Hence, teachers will be facing groups of students in various sizes depending on the school planning and student needs. This is a more effective way in the use of resources.

(11) What is flexible grouping?

- At present, many schools have adopted various ways to implement flexible grouping in subjects at the same level (such as language subjects in junior secondary level). With the launch of the NSS curriculum, schools may make use of the following ways to arrange flexible grouping for students of various number and provide better learning environment for students:
 - ◇ Dividing the students of four classes at the same level into five groups and arranging the same English period for them;

- ✧ Dividing the students of two classes at the same level into three groups and arranging the same English period for them. When compared with the above arrangement, this one can be more easily adjusted in the timetable;
- ✧ Dividing students of the same class into two groups and arranging certain number of periods (for example, two periods) in a cycle for them. Such arrangement can facilitate oral practice and assessment;
- ✧ In offering elective subjects, it is desirable for schools to conduct survey to understand students' preference of the subjects. Several combinations of elective subjects with five or six elective subjects in each group can be offered for diversified learning in senior secondary years;
- With flexible grouping, teaching load of teachers will not increase substantially. However, schools should pay attention to the following aspects:
 - ✧ Making good use of resource (such as the New Senior Secondary Curriculum Migration Grant and the non-recurrent grant for major repairs/alternations purposes) to solve the problem of insufficient space and equipment;
 - ✧ Utilising the professional development opportunities available to enhance teachers' subject knowledge;
 - ✧ Maximising the use of administrative support in school (including the use of WebSAMS for timetabling).

(12) As SBA will be implemented in all subjects, will the workload of students become heavier?

- SBA will mainly be implemented in class activities. Taken into account the views of frontline educators, the requirement and weighting of SBA of a number of subjects have been lowered. There are certain subjects that will adopt a phase-in approach to implement SBA. Some teachers have pointed out that if students perform well in SBA, the learning outcome of class activities of the core parts will also be enhanced. Teaching time and workload of teachers can therefore be reduced.
- A joint working group was formed by the EMB and the HKEAA to monitor the overall SBA and analyse students' total workload under typical combinations of subjects.
- We welcome any views from the community.