

New Academic Structure Review
The New Senior Secondary Learning Journey – Moving Forward to Excel
(For schools' reference)

2012 was a key year in the history of education in Hong Kong, when the first cycle of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) Curriculum under the New Academic Structure (NAS) as well as the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) examination has been implemented smoothly. More than 70,000 NSS graduates have entered a new stage in their life journey through multiple pathways.

The education reform in Hong Kong has started since 2000. The scope and levels of the reform are comprehensive, embracing “fundamental” changes in curriculum, learning and teaching, assessment as well as the entire system. The NSS curriculum aims at promoting all-round development and life-long learning for all students. As reflected from the feedback of students and schools, the NSS seven learning goals have been generally achieved, while there is a need to sustain the effort and make further improvement for the benefit of our students.

We are pleased to see positive impacts in the delivery of the NAS owing to the dedicated efforts of schools and teachers, and we treasure stakeholders' feedback in the implementation process. Hence, in mid-2012, the EDB, Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) joined hands to review the NAS implementation and issued the “Introduction to New Academic Structure Review” in October 2012. The broad objectives of the review are to evaluate the achievement of policy intentions, fine-tune the curriculum and assessment regularly as well as share good practices and respond to practical concerns of schools, teachers and students, such as curriculum planning and design (including NSS subjects, Applied Learning and Other Learning Experiences (OLE)), lesson time, HKDSE, School-based Assessment (SBA) and articulation to study pathways.

Through different channels, such as liaison meetings, seminars, forums, workshops, focus group interviews and written submissions, we have extensively collected views and feedback from stakeholders (schools, post-secondary sector, parents, students, employers, NGOs and key professional bodies). About 200 committee/ working group meetings were held. A number of surveys were also conducted, including the school survey on NSS curriculum and assessment conducted in late November 2012 to collect views of principals and teachers on recommendations at the system/school level and the subject level. A total of 482 schools (about 94%) returned their questionnaires. Short-term recommendations were deliberated and endorsed at the joint CDC-PEB meeting held on 25 February 2013. The progress report on the NAS, “The New Senior Secondary Learning Journey – Moving Forward to Excel”, is released on 19 April and uploaded to the New Academic Structure Web Bulletin (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas/en>) afterwards. A circular memorandum will also be issued to schools in end April to explain the short-term recommendations at the system/school level and subject level as well as the series of support measures. Medium-/long-term recommendations would also be included.

We have to reiterate that issues on the system/school level and the subject level are inter-related and have to be considered as a whole. Recommendations must be primarily student-centred. Based on the qualitative and quantitative data collected and without compromising international benchmarking/ standards, we have tried to address schools' and teachers' practical concerns as far as possible. The short-term recommendations on fine-tuning curriculum and assessment are as follows:

1. Curriculum:

- Update and revise curriculum content (9 subjects): Lit in Eng, Bio, Chem, Phy, CS, Geog, THS, ICT, Econ
- Streamline curriculum content (2 subjects): Math (M1/M2), BAFS (about 15%)
- Reduce no. of elective modules to be taken by students (without cutting the no. of choices) (3 subjects): Chin Lang, Chin Lit, Chin Hist

- Provide more choices in curriculum to cater for learner diversity: Lit in Eng
 - Clarify curriculum breadth and depth: supplementary notes for all subjects
2. SBA
- Not implement SBA (3 subjects): Math, BAFS, PE
 - Defer SBA (9 subjects): Chin Lit, Lit in Eng, Econ, ERS, Geog, THS, HMSC, TL, Music (SBA will be implemented earlier in Music if supported by schools)
 - Streamline SBA arrangements (11 subjects): Chin Lang, Eng Lang, ICT, Chin Lit, Econ, Geog, HMSC, THS, TL, Music, LS
 - Replace SBA with practical exam (1 subject): PE
3. Public Examinations
- Adjust exam time
 - lengthen exam time to align with breadth & depth of curriculum/ assessment (4 subjects): Econ, Geog, Hist, HMSC
 - reduce exam time with corresponding adjustment in paper design to align with streamlining or improvement of curriculum/ assessment (3 subjects): Chin Lit, BAFS, Lit in Eng
 - Improve assessment design
 - streamline exam papers (2 subjects): Chin Lang, Chin Hist
 - integrate exam papers (1 subject): Chin Lang
 - provide more options for exam papers (2 subjects): BAFS, Lit in Eng

At the system/school level, recommendations on lesson time, OLE and Student Learning Profile, Applied Learning, qualifications and multiple pathways, and support to schools are as follows:

- 2,400 ± 200 hours is adopted as the flexible range of total lesson time;
- OLE should emphasize quality rather than quantity with flexible allocation of lesson time (10–15%);
- provide more ApL courses, strengthen administrative support and enhance recognition;
- provide timely information on further study options for students who have attained different levels;
- offer support to schools, including professional development programmes, supplementary notes, exemplars, learning and teaching resources and information sheets on curriculum and assessment for 24 subjects (S4 to S6 student version)

These recommendations will begin to be implemented in the 2013/14 school year for Secondary 4 students who will sit the 2016 HKDSE Examination. As for the medium- and long-term review (2016-17 school year or beyond), we have to collect stakeholders' views and opinions more extensively and working groups will be formed to explore carefully the longer-term development of the subjects. The review will involve issues related to the adjustment in the curriculum and assessment framework, the introduction of set texts in Chinese Language, further improvement of the current HKDSE examination to cater for learner diversity, such as designing differentiated papers and modes of assessment, introducing half subjects, reporting students' results in more levels (e.g. Applied Learning), introducing another tier of qualification to the diploma and benchmarking with other qualifications.

From 29 April to end-May, the EDB and HKEAA will jointly conduct briefing sessions for all the subjects to explain the streamlining arrangements of curriculum and assessment. Between May and June, a workshop series for school leaders on the NAS will be held to support schools in planning the whole-school curriculum. The EDB and HKEAA will continue to maintain communication with all stakeholders, especially on concerns of schools and teachers, to facilitate collaboration in the continuous improvement of the NSS curriculum and assessment to enhance student learning.