

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 127/2013

From: Permanent Secretary for Education To: Supervisors / Heads of all aided,
Ref.: EDB(CD/C&S)/SC/1/1/1 (3) government and caput secondary
Date: 11 October 2013 schools, secondary schools under the
Direct Subsidy Scheme and special
schools with secondary classes

New Academic Structure Review (Medium-term)

Summary

This circular memorandum (CM) announces the launch of the New Academic Structure Review (Medium-term). The document: *New Academic Structure Review (Medium-term) – Moving Forward to Excel* has been uploaded onto the designated webpage (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas/review>) on 11 October 2013 to inform the public of the objectives and details of the review and seek their comments.

Background

2. The scope and levels of education reform in Hong Kong, which started since 2000, embrace fundamental paradigm changes in curriculum, learning and teaching, assessment as well as the structure of years of schooling. The NSS curriculum aims at promoting all-round development and life-long learning for all students. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of schools and teachers, the NSS seven learning goals have been generally achieved and there are positive impacts on schools and students pursuing further education. We treasure all stakeholders' feedback and as part of the regular and on-going review process, the Education Bureau (EDB), the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) have jointly launched the NAS Review since mid-2012 to respond to the concerns and fine-tune the delivery of the NAS. The document: *Introduction to New Academic Structure Review* was issued and uploaded to the EDB website on 5 October 2012 to consult the school sector, stakeholders and the public. The broad objectives of the review are to evaluate the achievement of policy intentions, strengths and challenges of the NAS, as well as identify and share good practices. A strategic approach with multiple stages has been adopted to promptly address the practical concerns of schools and students in the short term while allowing more time to formulate and discuss medium- and long-term

recommendations when more data are available.

3. A holistic and principle-led design has been adopted in the review for deciding on the short-term recommendations (for teaching at Secondary 4 in the 2013/14 school year (sy) leading to the 2016 HKDSE Examination), which are based on the valuable feedback and suggestions collected through forums, seminars, liaison meetings, focus groups and written submissions from all relevant stakeholder groups. A progress report (the Report) on the NAS Review: *The New Senior Secondary Learning Journey – Moving Forward to Excel* and the circular memorandum (EDBCM No. 48/2013) were released in April 2013 summarising the short-term recommendations and the support measures for the implementation of the fine-tuned curriculum and assessment. Support measures have been further enhanced to help schools and teachers to implement the fine-tuned NSS curriculum and assessment, and they include professional development programmes, supplementary notes and enhanced school-based support as well as networking. Meanwhile, the medium-term review is recommended to address the unresolved issues that may require a longer time and a more holistic/macro-approach to the NAS/NSS policy.

Details

4. The NAS review is an ongoing process to facilitate the continual implementation of the NAS/NSS policy for the betterment of student learning. The objectives of the medium-term review are to: (1) follow up on the major feedback on the Report; (2) address the unresolved issues in various subjects and curriculum areas which require a longer time and a more holistic/macro-approach to the policy (please see details in the Appendix); (3) sustain the regular review of the curriculum and assessment of all subjects; and (4) further fine-tune the recommendations with reference to qualitative and quantitative data as well as feedback collected throughout the process.

5. While the principles for the short-term review would continue to be observed, the following major governing principles should also be emphasized in the medium-term review:

- i) Student interest comes first;
- ii) Continuous collection of feedback & information/evidence-driven;
- iii) Consistent and aligned fundamental paradigm changes to support student learning and whole-person development;
- iv) Contemporary curriculum design to align with continuous collection of feedback;
- v) Maintaining international standards;

- vi) Flexibility for different school contexts; and
- vii) Maintaining existing and transparent mechanism as well as close communication with stakeholders for further engagement

6. The medium-term review would continue to be co-ordinated jointly by EDB, CDC and HKEAA for relevant issues and the 24 NSS subjects, and conducted by the relevant CDC Committees (CDCC), HKDSE Subject Committees and CDC-HKEAA Committees (One Committees). CDCC will first discuss and decide on the key issues to review, and work out the strategic/action plans for their KLA/subject. One Committees set up under CDCC and HKEAA Public Examinations Board (PEB) will take the direction from CDCC and PEB and decide on the detailed action plan as well as the setting up of working groups on a need basis. HKDSE Subject Committees will work with the relevant committees to make proposals concerning assessment changes, taking into consideration the impact of the examination feedback on the review and recommendations. All committees will work collaboratively as necessary (e.g. including joint meetings) to deliberate on and to address critical issues and recommendations. It is important to continue to adopt the existing transparent mechanism and conduct comprehensive consultations at all levels through all channels (e.g. consultation sessions, forums, questionnaires and focus group interviews) to engage all relevant stakeholders particularly the school sector as appropriate. A school survey would be conducted on the recommendations to collect views to inform the final recommendations as necessary. CDC and HKEAA will also engage different stakeholders and maintain close communication with other partner organisations and stakeholder groups via relevant/regular liaison meetings such as Principals' Liaison Meeting, Liaison Group on "334" Interface Issues and Employer Working Group.

7. Based on the overarching principles that govern our review and the feedback collected, recommendations will be made to address schools' concerns as well as benefit students as soon as possible. To accommodate different needs of time among subjects/issues, **announcement of the first batch of medium-term recommendations would be made in July 2014** so that schools could prepare and plan for the coming school year. **The medium-term recommendations would be made for teaching at Secondary 4 in the 2014/15 sy or 2015/16 sy leading to the 2017 or 2018 HKDSE Examination** respectively to benefit students and schools at the earliest possible time. **The last batch of medium-term recommendations would be made no later than July 2015.** Following the announcement of medium-term recommendations, review of all senior secondary subjects should be conducted on a regular basis taking into consideration the subjects' needs and the regular curriculum and assessment development cycle. The regular review of the curriculum and assessment for all subjects should adhere to the review mechanism and respond to needs appropriate to the development of the subject.

Consultation and engagement

8. We appeal to schools' and teachers' generous professional advice and collaboration again in the review in the best interest of students and schools. For further details of the medium-term review, please refer to the document: *New Academic Structure Review (Medium-term)– Moving Forward to Excel* available on the designated webpage (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas/review>). Comments and suggestions on the review can be sent to:

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Chief Curriculum Development Officer (Council and Secondary) Curriculum Development Institute Education Bureau Room 1302, Wu Chung House 213 Queen's Road East Wanchai, Hong Kong Fax: 2573 5299 Email: councilandsecondary@edb.gov.hk	General Manager Assessment Development Division Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority 13/F Southorn Centre 130 Hennessy Road Wanchai, Hong Kong Fax: 3628 8091 Email: add@hkeaa.edu.hk

9. Please visit the New Academic Structure Web Bulletin (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas>) or the designated webpage (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas/review>) for the latest developments.

Stephen YW YIP
for Permanent Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections --- for information

**Major Issues for Deliberation in
the New Academic Structure Review (Medium-term)**

School-based Assessment (SBA)

- As part and parcel of the whole-school curriculum and public assessment, a holistic review on the total impact of SBA would be conducted to explore the possibility of further streamlining in order to address the workload issues while maintaining international recognition and the underlying principles of SBA.

Core Subjects

- **Chinese Language** - explore introducing classical set texts and assessment of these texts in the examination
- **Liberal Studies** - review curriculum and assessment design
- **Mathematics** - review the NSS Mathematics curriculum framework

Elective Subjects

- **Business, Accounting and Financial Studies** - explore the feasibility of splitting the subject and/or separate grading and reporting
- **Chinese Literature** - explore revision of set texts
- **Economics** - (i) consider the feasibility of incorporating a news commentary type question / data response question in the examination to replace SBA and (ii) explore further development of the topics of the curriculum
- **Ethics and Religious Studies** - explore reduction of SBA workload
- **Geography** - study the need to revise the NSS Geography curriculum; and to study the issue of insufficient lesson time for the learning and teaching and to propose possible solutions
- **Health Management and Social Care** - review the curriculum and assessment designs and SBA, including the format of the report in SBA (written / audio-visual) and weighting of SBA

Applied Learning Courses (ApL)

Apart from the regular review of ApL courses, the medium-term review will include:

- reviewing the grading mechanism; and
- evaluation of early commencement of ApL in S4 and linking ApL to the Qualifications Framework.

HKDSE Examination

Further exploration on the HKDSE Examination to better accommodate learner diversity, if deemed appropriate, which may include:

- introduction of half subjects in some suitable NSS subjects; and
- revisiting the ‘grading’ system.

Other Related and Emerging Issues

Further studies on emerging issues which include:

- “unintended” impact, e.g. whether the student programme has achieved a broad and balanced curriculum with specialization achieved in a broad knowledge base (i.e. 4 core subjects + 2/3 elective subjects: “shrinking knowledge base”? Is there a need to offer more Other Language Courses?);
- some curriculum design/assessment principles, e.g. whether values have been appropriately applied in public assessment; whether the admission requirements and scoring system should be further improved;
- professional capacity and sustainability, nature of support for schools and teachers;
- catering for learner diversity & need to support schools (both lower achievers and more able students);
- Other Learning Experiences (OLE) and Student Learning Profile (SLP) (e.g. How is it affected by 2400±200 lesson hours?);
- some emerging issues related to other NSS subjects such as Visual Arts and Chinese History; and
- other issues related to curriculum and assessment but outside the curriculum and assessment development cycle which would be suitably discussed and communicated to relevant partner organisations and stakeholders