**Career-oriented Studies** with stronger elements of applied learning will be introduced as an integral part of the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum to offer diverse options and multiple pathways for students. The design of COS courses will provide progression in both academic and career directions. The performance level in COS will be recorded in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) transcript. To inform the future planning and implementation of COS, Career-oriented Curriculum (COC) piloting for senior secondary students has been launched since 2003.

**Background**

In response to the learning needs of students, the documents *Learning for Life Learning through Life: Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* (2000) and *Learning to Learn* (2001) set out a broad and balanced curriculum to cater for students’ different interests, learning styles and inclinations. The Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) is exploring the viability and way of introducing diversified options of curriculum at the senior secondary level.

COC piloting was first introduced in 2003 as a variation of COS to accumulate experiences to inform the future planning and enable effective implementation of COS, in particular, to pave the way for the proposed new senior secondary curriculum.

**Objectives**

The COC piloting aims at:
- offering diverse learning programmes for students with interest and inclination in areas other than those provided by the existing Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) subjects;
- providing students with the opportunities to explore their orientation for life-long learning and career aspirations in specific areas;
- enabling students to develop generic skills, values and attitude, acquire the knowledge and skills as well as understand the workplace requirement of a particular professional or vocational area; and
- offering a substantial outcome for students to obtain recognition for further studies, work, or both at the senior secondary level.

**Target Students**

The target students of COC are secondary 4-5 students from a wide spectrum of schools. To cater for the diverse learning needs of students with varied interests, aptitudes and abilities, schools are encouraged to make necessary arrangements to enable interested students to study COC.

**Design**

The COC would:
- develop students’ generic and career skills as well as values and attitude;
- be able to cater for the diverse learning needs and interests of students;
- be given due recognition for articulation to higher level studies at designated local/overseas education/training providers; and
- be updated regularly to reflect the social, economic and technological development.

**Quality Assurance**

To ensure the standard and quality of COC courses for progression to further studies and work, a quality assurance mechanism will be built upon a firm oversight of the curriculum, assessment and course delivery and underpinned by EMB, the Hong Kong Council for Academic Accreditation (HKCAA) and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.

**Recognition and Articulation**

To facilitate the articulation to further studies and work, the recognition of COC courses is very crucial. As a head start, EMB and HKCAA have completed the pilot quality assurance exercise for all COC courses offered in the first cohort (2003-05 school years) and concluded that the standard of these COC courses is comparable to a subject pass in the HKCEE.

For admission to academic programmes commencing in the 2005/06 school year, successful completion of one quality-assured COC course will be recognised as comparable to:
- one HKCEE subject pass for admission to further studies in the same field in the respective institutions of course providers where students have successfully completed the COC courses; and
- one HKCEE subject pass for admission to Secondary Six and for entry to the Hong Kong
Advanced Level Examination;

- one HKCEE subject pass, excluding Chinese Language and English Language, for admission into Pre-Associate Degree Programmes; and
- successful completion of two electives under Project Yi Jin (PYJ) for enrolling in PYJ.

The Civil Service Bureau also accepts the successful completion of one quality-assured COC course under the first cohort as comparable to one HKCEE subject pass, excluding Chinese Language and English Language, for civil service appointment purpose.

It is proposed that in the long run, the performance level in COS will be recorded in the HKDSE transcript. The qualifications gained in COS will also contribute to the Senior Secondary Student Learning Profile. Besides, the COS ‘attainment’ (competence) level will be referenced to certain levels of the Qualifications Framework depending on the course design and in accordance with the specifications developed by the respective industries.

Incorporation of COC into the Existing School Curriculum

Schools could implement COC as part of their senior secondary curriculum in a way similar to the implementation of the existing subjects at Secondary 4-5. Schools are encouraged to adopt different modes of implementation by allowing students to enroll in a wide spectrum of COC courses according to their own interests and learning needs at the venue of course providers, and / or working collaboratively with course providers to offer selected COC courses to students at school.

COC Piloting Courses

In the first two cohorts, the piloting courses were offered by the two invited course providers, viz. the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education & Industrial Training Division, Vocational Training Council and the Caritas Adult and Higher Education Service. Two new course providers, namely Hong Kong Association of Accounting Technicians and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, were invited to offer piloting courses in the third cohort.

Around 600 students from about 60 schools participated in the 12 piloting courses and 2 partnership courses offered by course providers of the first cohort commencing in 2003/04 school year. In the second cohort commencing in 2004/05 school year, around 2,000 students from about 130 schools participated in the 32 piloting courses. The number of students increased to around 3,000 in the third cohort commencing in 2005/06 school year.

In the fourth cohort commencing in 2006/07 school year, more course providers will be invited to pilot courses in the following six areas of studies:

- Applied Science
- Business, Management and Law
- Creative Studies
- Engineering and Production
- Media and Communication
- Services

Initial feedback from schools, teachers, students, parents and course providers reflects that the concept of COC has been well received. This has positive impact on student learning, in particular, in building up their confidence and interest in learning other school subjects. The experience gathered from COC piloting will be used to inform the future planning and development of COS.

Participation and Communication

The report The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong published in May 2005 stated that COS is an integral part of the NSS curriculum that will match the interests and abilities of all students. COS complements rather than duplicates the NSS subjects by offering studies with stronger elements of applied learning linked to broad professional and vocational fields. EMB will continue the dialogue with stakeholders on various matters where further development is required.
