

## FAQs on New Senior Secondary Applied Learning

Jun 2011 version

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## FAQs on New Senior Secondary Applied Learning

Jun 2011 version

### Curriculum Design of New Senior Secondary (NSS) Applied Learning (ApL)

#### Q1 What is Applied Learning (ApL)?

A1 ApL is an integral part of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) curriculum. In addition to the four core subjects of Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies, students may choose ApL course(s) as elective subject(s) according to their interests, aspirations and aptitudes.

ApL aims at enabling students to understand fundamental theories and concepts through application and practice, and to develop their generic skills in authentic contexts. The design principle of ApL courses is the same as that of other school subjects, with equal emphasis on the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes.

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#### Q2 What are the courses offered in ApL? What can students learn?

A2 There are six areas of studies in ApL, namely, (1) Creative Studies; (2) Media and Communication; (3) Business, Management and Law; (4) Services; (5) Applied Science; and (6) Engineering and Production. Different courses are offered under each area of studies in ApL to better suit the learning interests and needs of students. Students may choose one or two ApL course(s) to develop the foundation skills, thinking skills, interpersonal skill, values and attitudes and career-related competencies necessary to prepare themselves for further studies and employment in the future.

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### Course Provision and Application

#### Q3 How many ApL courses can each student take under the NSS curriculum?

A3 Under the NSS curriculum, apart from the four core subjects (i.e. Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies), students have to take two to three elective subjects among NSS elective subjects, ApL courses and other languages. Each student can take up to two ApL courses as their elective subjects.

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#### Q4 How long does an ApL course last? Who are the teaching staff of ApL courses?

A4 The duration of each ApL course is 180 contact hours, extending over two school years in Secondary 5 and 6. All ApL courses are offered by course providers accredited by EDB and delivered by instructors of the respective course providers.

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**Q5 What is the medium of instruction for ApL courses?**

A5 Most ApL courses offer classes using English or Chinese as the medium of instruction. Some ApL courses offer only Chinese classes with consideration to the course nature.

Non-Chinese speaking students may apply for the English classes offered by certain ApL courses.

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**Q6 How will ApL courses be conducted?**

A6 There are two modes of implementation to offer ApL courses: Mode 1 and Mode 2. If schools choose Mode 1, courses are usually conducted on Wednesdays or Saturdays at the venues of course providers. For schools choosing Mode 2, courses take place mainly on students' own school premises with timetables arranged by course providers and schools concerned.

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**Q7 How can students enrol in ApL courses?**

A7 All students must apply through their schools for enrolment in ApL courses. Schools may consider nominating students for ApL courses in light of schools' curriculum plan and students' needs. Thus, students who are interested in enrolling in ApL courses need to obtain schools' nomination for the application. The application results will be subject to the selection results from course providers.

If the ApL courses that students are interested in are not offered in the school, students or parents can reflect their needs to the school management so that the school may explore the possibility of offering ApL courses in Mode 1.

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**Q8 Do students need to pay for ApL courses?**

A8 All students in aided, government and caput secondary schools, as well as secondary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme and special schools with senior secondary classes following the New Senior Secondary curriculum recommended by the Curriculum Development Council will be fully subsidised by the Education Bureau and schools concerned to take ApL courses. Students need not pay the course fees. Each student may take a maximum of two ApL courses as elective subjects.

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**Q9 How can students or parents obtain information about ApL courses?**

A9 Students and parents may visit the EDB website at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/apl> for course details. Course information such as "Course List" and "Prospectus for Applied Learning" are available on the EDB website and updated annually.

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## Funding Arrangement of ApL

### **Q10 Do schools need to pay part of the ApL course fees?**

A10 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 benefits of students. The Diversity Learning Grant (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 piloting, arrangements are 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 difficulties (e.g. schools with a very large number of NSS classes per cohort). This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For the amount of contribution, schools may refer to [EDB Circular Memorandum No. 186/2010 “New Senior Secondary Applied Learning Courses \(2011-13 Cohort\)”](#) for details.

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### **Q11 How can schools handle a large number of student applications for ApL courses?**

A11 Schools should help students acquire a genuine understanding of their interests and aptitudes, and assist them in making informed choices of ApL courses. In handling student applications, schools are expected to mobilise their resources to meet students’ demand for taking ApL courses by nominating students as far as possible and to address students’ learning needs. Schools may refer to the appendix “Guidelines for Nominating Students for New Senior Secondary Applied Learning Courses” of the [EDB Circular Memorandum No. 186/2010](#) for details.

If the number of applications exceeds the upper limit set for the DLG, schools may seek assistance from the EDB. EDB will consider schools’ applications on a case-by-case basis.

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### **Q12 If students take four elective subjects including an ApL course, will the school be subsidised?**

A12 No. Under the NSS curriculum, students have to take four core subjects (Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies) and two to three elective subjects. As most students will be fully occupied by taking the core and elective subjects and Other Learning Experiences (OLE), they are not encouraged to take more than three elective subjects. The ApL course taken by students will be regarded as the 4th elective subject and will not be subsidised by DLG.

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### **Q13 If students taking four elective subjects (one ApL course and three other non-ApL**

**elective subjects) in S5 drop one non-ApL elective subject in S6, will they be subsidised by Diversity Learning Grant (DLG) for both years?**

A13 The calculation of DLG will be based on the number of elective subjects taken by the students as at September of each school year. Therefore, for the case above, the ApL course taken in S5 will not be subsidised by DLG. DLG will only be provided to the students in S6.

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**Q14 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?**

A14 A headcount will be conducted in September yearly and the DLG for that particular school year will be calculated based on the actual number of enrolments 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.

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#### **Reporting of Student Results, Qualification Recognition and Quality Assurance**

**Q15 How are ApL students assessed?**

A15 Assessment will be conducted by course providers and moderated by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to ensure consistency of assessment standards. Besides, students may need to sit for some professional examinations as required by individual ApL courses in order to acquire relevant professional qualifications in related trades / industries.

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**Q16 How will the performance of students in ApL courses be reported?**

A16 The performance of students in ApL courses will be recorded on the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) transcript. Students who have successfully completed the courses will have their results reported as 'Attained' or 'Attained with Distinction'. Students awarded 'Attained with Distinction' will be deemed to have performed at a level comparable to HKDSE Level 3 or above. Students at the 'Attained' level will be considered by the EDB as having acquired the competencies as those at HKDSE Level 2 for the purposes of further studies and work.

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**Q17 Will the qualification of ApL courses be recognised?**

A17 In general, the tertiary institutions value the learning experiences that students acquire in ApL.

For further studies in sub-degree programmes – Students are eligible to apply for admission to Associate Degree or Higher Diploma programmes if they meet the minimum entrance requirements of Level 2 in five HKDSE subjects (including Chinese Language and English

Language). Each student is allowed to use up to two ApL subjects in the application. For details, please refer to the EDB [Circular Memorandum No. 169/2010](#) or visit the EDB website (<http://www.ipass.gov.hk>) or New Academic Structure Web Bulletin (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas>).

For further studies in bachelor degree programmes – ApL subjects are used as elective subjects, or considered for award of extra bonus or additional information, varying by institutions, faculties or programmes. For details, please refer to the EDB [Circular Memorandum No. 161/2010](#) or visit EDB website at the New Academic Structure Web Bulletin (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas>).

For work – the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) of the HKSAR Government announced on 28 June 2011 that results in the HKDSE (including Applied Learning courses) will be accepted for civil service appointment purposes from 20 July 2012 onwards. For details, please refer to the website of the CSB (<http://www.csb.gov.hk/english/info/2170.html>).

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**Q18 How can the quality of ApL courses be assured?**

A18 A rigorous quality assurance mechanism is established to assure the quality of ApL courses. The ultimate goals of the quality assurance mechanism are to ensure that ApL courses are developed according to the design principles, the curriculum is delivered as planned, and the learning outcomes of students can meet the standards which are set. These learning outcomes should be comparable within and across areas of studies of ApL, and comparable with the learning outcomes of other NSS subjects.

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**Catering for Students' Diverse Learning Needs**

**Q19 Can students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) take ApL courses?**

A19 Similar to the other NSS subjects, non-intellectual disabled students with special educational needs can take ApL courses as other students. Special arrangements and support will be provided by course providers when necessary. For students with intellectual disabilities, adapted ApL courses will be provided as part of the specifically designed curriculum programme. Please refer to EDB website (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/cd/sen>) for details.

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**Course Information**

**Q20 How to get further information on ApL courses?**

A20 Detailed information on ApL courses is provided in the “Prospectus for Applied Learning” published yearly by the EDB. The course synopses (including learning outcomes, content and

organisation, articulation, etc.) and other course information such as course selection criteria, teaching schedules and lesson arrangement etc. will be made available to schools via regular updates on the EDB website (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/apl>). Schools may also contact individual course providers for further details.

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