

# Survey on Senior Secondary Subject Information 2016/17 School Year

## Main Findings

### A. Background

1. The Education Bureau (EDB) conducted the “*Survey on Senior Secondary Subject Information: 2016/17 School Year*” from October to November 2016 on 448<sup>1</sup> secondary schools in Hong Kong offering the local senior secondary (SS) curriculum, to collect information on the SS subjects they offered at Secondary 4 (S4), Secondary 5 (S5) and Secondary 6 (S6) in the 2016/17 school year. These included all government and aided secondary schools, caput schools, and secondary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme offering the local curriculum.
2. This Survey collected both school level (subject-offer) and student level (subject-taking) data. It should be noted that the student level data on S6 was taken from the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination registration information on the schools participating in this Survey, provided by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority in December 2016, as a proxy for S6 student subject enrolment. The S6 figures for all years quoted in the remainder of this document are HKDSE Examination registration figures of the respective years.
3. Information collected from this Survey has been informing the planning and implementation of the SS curriculum and assessment. Survey results over time have indicated that subject-offer and subject-taking patterns are becoming more stabilised. The EDB will continue to observe these patterns to optimise students’ learning experiences according to their abilities and interests, for example, through encouraging students to take three elective subjects (including Applied Learning and Other Languages) if ability permits, to participate in Other Learning Experiences to broaden their horizons, to explore and choose subjects and pathways that suit their interests and future development, so that they can build on their strengths and stretch their potential to achieve the aims of whole-person development and lifelong learning.

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<sup>1</sup> There are 446, 447 and 448 schools operating S4, S5 and S6 classes in the 2016/17 school year respectively.

## **B. Main Findings**

### **Schools continued to offer adequate elective subject choices for students**

4. Schools on average offered about 11 elective subjects at each of S4, S5 and S6. The more popular elective subjects (offered by over 70% of the schools) include “Biology”, “Physics”, “Chemistry”, “Economics”, “Geography”, “Information and Communication Technology”, “Business, Accounting and Financial Studies”, “Chinese History” and “Visual Arts”. Relatively fewer schools (less than 10%) offered “Integrated Science”, “Technology and Living” and “Literature in English” (Table 1 of the Annex). The pattern of elective subjects offered is similar to those of the last seven school years.

### **Students’ choices of elective subjects remained diversified**

5. About 98% of S4 students, 97% of S5 students and 89% of S6 students took two or three elective subjects (Table 2 of the Annex). From the main findings of the surveys in the past few years, a continual decrease had been observed on the proportion of students taking three elective subjects; this proportion stabilised in the 2016/17 school year.
6. Schools no longer streamed students into the conventional arts, science and commerce classes, and students’ choices of elective subjects were observed to be diversified and not limited to one Key Learning Area (KLA). 68% of S4 students, 67% of S5 students, and 58% of S6 students took elective subjects from two or more KLAs (Table 3 of the Annex).
7. There were over 1 000 subject combinations each for S4 and S5; and around 900 subject combinations for S6. There were on average 36, 41 and 39 combinations in schools at S4, S5 and S6 respectively (these include Applied Learning<sup>2</sup> courses for S5 and S6) (Table 4 of the Annex). The top 30 combinations of elective subjects taken by students are tabulated for S4, S5 and S6 students (Table 5 of the Annex).
8. Relatively more students (over 10%) took “Biology”, “Chemistry”, “Economics”, “Physics”, “Business, Accounting and Financial Studies”, “Geography”, “Chinese History”, “Information and Communication Technology” and “History”. Relatively fewer students (less than 1%) took “Integrated Science”, “Technology and Living”, “Music” and “Literature in English” (Table 1 of the Annex). In general, the pattern of student enrolment was similar in S4, S5 and S6.

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<sup>2</sup> Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included.

## **More schools offered and more students took Applied Learning**

9. About 9% of S5 students studied in 34 Applied Learning courses<sup>2</sup>, and 7% of S6 students registered for 38 Applied Learning courses under the HKDSE (Table 1 of the Annex). Compared with last year, increases were observed in the proportion of schools offering Applied Learning (from 70% to 73%) and the proportion of S5 students taking Applied Learning courses (from 8% to 9%).

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## 2016/17 School Year Survey Results

**Table 1: Number and proportion of (a) schools' offering; and (b) students' taking of SS subjects in 2016/17**

SS subject	S4				S5				S6			
	Schools offered		Students enrolled		Schools offered		Students enrolled		Schools offered		Students registered HKDSE	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Chinese Language <sup>1</sup>	445	99.8	52,904	97.7	446	99.8	53,155	97.9	448	100.0	49,992	97.8
English Language	446	100.0	54,141	100.0	447	100.0	54,302	100.0	448	100.0	50,998	99.8
Liberal Studies	446	100.0	54,141	100.0	447	100.0	54,302	100.0	448	100.0	50,974	99.7
Mathematics	446	100.0	54,141	100.0	447	100.0	54,302	100.0	448	100.0	51,007	99.8
Compulsory Part only	135	30.3	45,315	83.7	44	9.8	44,859	82.6	43	9.6	43,973	86.0
Compulsory Part + Module 1	163	36.5	3,152	5.8	238	53.2	3,663	6.7	246	54.9	2,732	5.3
Compulsory Part + Module 2	240	53.8	5,352	9.9	309	69.1	5,780	10.6	314	70.1	4,302	8.4
Compulsory Part + not-yet-specified Extended Part	7	1.6	322	0.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	--	--	--	--
Chinese Literature	138	30.9	2,050	3.8	148	33.1	1,909	3.5	146	32.6	1,620	3.2
Literature in English	31	7.0	490	0.9	34	7.6	443	0.8	29	6.5	302	0.6
Chinese History	394	88.3	7,777	14.4	385	86.1	6,642	12.2	387	86.4	5,790	11.3
Economics	418	93.7	15,459	28.6	421	94.2	15,240	28.1	423	94.4	13,454	26.3
Ethics and Religious Studies	78	17.5	1,186	2.2	82	18.3	917	1.7	80	17.9	730	1.4
Geography	410	91.9	11,093	20.5	407	91.1	10,615	19.5	414	92.4	9,514	18.6
History	300	67.3	6,687	12.4	311	69.6	6,274	11.6	300	67.0	5,282	10.3
Tourism and Hospitality Studies	192	43.0	4,539	8.4	189	42.3	4,018	7.4	190	42.4	3,867	7.6
Biology	431	96.6	15,987	29.5	432	96.6	15,167	27.9	427	95.3	13,584	26.6
Chemistry	421	94.4	15,919	29.4	422	94.4	15,263	28.1	418	93.3	12,942	25.3
Physics	428	96.0	13,067	24.1	427	95.5	12,399	22.8	424	94.6	10,540	20.6
Science: Combined Science	47	10.5	869	1.6	54	12.1	922	1.7	63	14.1	916	1.8
Biology + Chemistry	33	7.4	493	0.9	36	8.1	477	0.9	42	9.4	483	0.9
Chemistry + Physics	22	4.9	335	0.6	27	6.0	404	0.7	31	6.9	366	0.7
Physics + Biology	4	0.9	41	0.1	3	0.7	41	0.1	6	1.3	67	0.1
Science: Integrated Science	10	2.2	144	0.3	10	2.2	119	0.2	12	2.7	132	0.3
Business, Accounting and Financial Studies	407	91.3	12,863	23.8	408	91.3	12,510	23.0	408	91.1	10,691	20.9
Design and Applied Technology	60	13.5	995	1.8	58	13.0	817	1.5	60	13.4	762	1.5
Health Management and Social Care	46	10.3	1,028	1.9	48	10.7	969	1.8	51	11.4	844	1.7
Information and Communication Technology	410	91.9	7,716	14.3	404	90.4	6,643	12.2	402	89.7	5,668	11.1
Technology and Living	23	5.2	280	0.5	23	5.1	260	0.5	28	6.3	236	0.5
Food Science & Technology	17	3.8	233	0.4	17	3.8	210	0.4	21	4.7	169	0.3
Fashion, Clothing & Textiles	6	1.3	47	0.1	6	1.3	50	0.1	7	1.6	67	0.1
Music	93	20.9	282	0.5	88	19.7	252	0.5	69	15.4	155	0.3
Visual Arts	360	80.7	5,026	9.3	355	79.4	4,391	8.1	355	79.2	3,647	7.1
Physical Education	103	23.1	1,269	2.3	97	21.7	1,150	2.1	92	20.5	953	1.9
Applied Learning (no. of students) <sup>2</sup>	--	--	--	--	327	73.2	4,814	8.9	307	68.5	3,492	6.8
Applied Learning (no. of enrolments) <sup>2</sup>	--	--	--	--	327	73.2	4,875	--	307	68.5	3,556	--

### Notes

1: Information on other Chinese language curricula (e.g. adapted Chinese Language curriculum for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included. Note that one participating school did not offer the local Chinese Language curriculum (leading to the HKDSE Examination) for S4 and S5 students.

2: Information as at 18 October 2016. Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included.

**Table 2: Number of elective subjects taken by SS students in 2016/17**

No. of elective subjects taken	S4 <sup>3</sup>	S5	S6 (HKDSE registration data)
	% of students	% of students	% of students
< 2	0.88%	3.07%	11.00%
2	68.06%	68.98%	71.50%
3	30.01%	27.56%	17.35%
> 3	1.04%	0.39%	0.14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Note 3: The EDB encourages schools to offer more SS elective subjects to S4 students to explore their interest, so as to decide on the subjects to be taken in S5 or S6.*

**Table 3: Cross-KLA subject-taking by SS students in 2016/17**

No. of KLA(s)	S4	S5	S6 (HKDSE registration data)
	% of students	% of students	% of students
≤ 1	32.37%	33.47%	42.27%
2	60.62%	58.90%	53.65%
3	6.77%	7.56%	4.05%
> 3	0.24%	0.06%	0.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4: Number of subject combinations in 2016/17**

No. of elective subjects taken <sup>4</sup>	S4		S5		S6 (HKDSE registration data)	
	Subject combination		Subject combination		Subject combination	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	18	1.58%	21	1.95%	25	2.85%
2	209	18.37%	241	22.36%	230	26.26%
3	639	56.15%	701	65.03%	566	64.61%
> 3	272	23.90%	115	10.67%	55	6.28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,138</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,078</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>876</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Average no. of combinations per school</b>	36		41		39	

*Note 4: All Applied Learning courses are grouped as a single subject in calculating the subject combination. Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included.*

**Table 5: Top 30 subject combinations taken by SS students in 2016/17**

Order	S4			S5			S6 (HKDSE registration data)		
	Subject combination <sup>5</sup>	Students enrolled		Subject combination <sup>5</sup>	Students enrolled		Subject combination <sup>5</sup>	Students enrolled	
		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
1	BIO CHEM	2,870	5.30%	BAFS ECON	3,149	5.80%	BIO CHEM	3,224	6.31%
2	BAFS ECON	2,808	5.19%	BIO CHEM	3,112	5.73%	BAFS ECON	3,136	6.13%
3	CHEM PHY	2,499	4.62%	CHEM PHY	2,580	4.75%	CHEM PHY	2,695	5.27%
4	BIO CHEM PHY	2,331	4.31%	BIO CHEM PHY	2,101	3.87%	BIO CHEM PHY	1,585	3.10%
5	BIO CHEM ECON	1,181	2.18%	ECON GEOG	1,260	2.32%	ECON GEOG	1,288	2.52%
6	ICT PHY	1,170	2.16%	BIO GEOG	1,033	1.90%	BIO GEOG	1,047	2.05%
7	ECON GEOG	1,086	2.01%	ICT PHY	1,005	1.85%	BIO ECON	934	1.83%
8	CHI_HIST HIST	1,081	2.00%	CHI_HIST HIST	994	1.83%	CHI_HIST HIST	898	1.76%
9	BIO GEOG	953	1.76%	BIO CHEM ECON	983	1.81%	ICT PHY	843	1.65%
10	CHEM ECON PHY	816	1.51%	GEOG HIST	848	1.56%	GEOG HIST	838	1.64%
11	GEOG HIST	809	1.49%	CHEM ECON PHY	809	1.49%	ECON PHY	749	1.47%
12	CHI_HIST GEOG	759	1.40%	BIO ECON	746	1.37%	BIO CHEM ECON	699	1.37%
13	BAFS ICT	712	1.32%	CHI_HIST GEOG	695	1.28%	CHI_HIST GEOG	697	1.36%
14	GEOG THS	711	1.31%	ECON PHY	683	1.26%	BAFS GEOG	684	1.34%
15	BIO ECON	669	1.24%	BAFS GEOG	623	1.15%	BAFS BIO	680	1.33%
16	BAFS THS	658	1.22%	BAFS PHY	617	1.14%	GEOG THS	640	1.25%
17	BAFS BIO	597	1.10%	BAFS BIO	593	1.09%	CHI_HIST ECON	608	1.19%
18	CHI_HIST ECON	585	1.08%	BAFS ICT	590	1.09%	ECON HIST	594	1.16%
19	ECON PHY	577	1.07%	BAFS THS	572	1.05%	BAFS PHY	593	1.16%
20	BAFS GEOG	555	1.03%	CHI_HIST ECON	549	1.01%	ICT	577	1.13%
21	BAFS PHY	534	0.99%	GEOG THS	529	0.97%	BIO PHY	569	1.11%
22	ECON ICT	534	0.99%	ECON HIST	508	0.94%	CHEM ECON	557	1.09%
23	BIO CHEM GEOG	529	0.98%	BIO PHY	488	0.90%	BAFS ICT	546	1.07%
24	GEOG PHY	527	0.97%	GEOG PHY	474	0.87%	GEOG	534	1.04%
25	BAFS ECON GEOG	503	0.93%	CHEM ECON	469	0.86%	CHEM ECON PHY	522	1.02%
26	BAFS CHI_HIST	472	0.87%	CHI_HIST CHI_LIT	464	0.85%	BIO	508	0.99%
27	GEOG ICT	471	0.87%	ECON ICT	463	0.85%	BAFS THS	508	0.99%
28	BAFS BIO CHEM	459	0.85%	GEOG ICT	438	0.81%	ECON	502	0.98%
29	CHEM ICT PHY	453	0.84%	BAFS BIO CHEM	437	0.80%	ECON ICT	493	0.96%
30	BIO PHY	452	0.83%	BAFS CHI_HIST	432	0.80%	THS	468	0.92%
	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>28,361</b>	<b>52.38%</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>28,244</b>	<b>52.01%</b>	<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>28,216</b>	<b>55.20%</b>

*Note 5: All Applied Learning courses are grouped as a single subject in calculating the subject combination. Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included.*

**Remarks:**

- BAFS - Business, Accounting and Financial Studies
- BIO - Biology
- CHEM - Chemistry
- CHI\_HIST - Chinese History
- CHI\_LIT - Chinese Literature
- ECON - Economics
- GEOG - Geography
- HIST - History
- ICT - Information and Communication Technology
- PHY - Physics
- THS - Tourism and Hospitality Studies