

Survey on Senior Secondary Subject Information 2017/18 School Year

Main Findings

A. Background

1. The Education Bureau (EDB) conducted the “*Survey on Senior Secondary Subject Information: 2017/18 School Year*” from October to November 2017 on 447¹ secondary schools in Hong Kong offering the local senior secondary curriculum, to collect information on the senior secondary subjects they offered at Secondary 4 (S4), Secondary 5 (S5) and Secondary 6 (S6) in the 2017/18 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 2017, 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. 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.

¹ There are 445, 446 and 447 schools operating S4, S5 and S6 classes in the 2017/18 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”, “Business, Accounting and Financial Studies”, “Information and Communication Technology”, “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). Findings from the survey suggest that the pattern of elective subjects offered by schools was similar to those of previous years.

Students’ choices of elective subjects remained diversified

5. About 98% of S4 students, 97% of S5 students and 90% of S6 students took two or three elective subjects (Table 2 of the Annex). Findings from the survey suggest that the percentage of students taking three elective subjects has been stable in recent years.
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). About 67% of S4 and S5 students, and 60% of S6 students took elective subjects from two or more KLAs (Table 3 of the Annex).
7. There were over 1 000 elective subject combinations each for S4 and S5; and around 900 elective subject combinations for S6. There were on average 34 elective subject combinations in each school at S4, and 40 elective subject combinations at S5 and S6 respectively (including Applied Learning courses²) (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”, “Business, Accounting and Financial Studies”, “Physics”, “Geography”, “Information and Communication Technology”, “Chinese History” and “History”. Relatively fewer students (less than 1%) took “Integrated Science”, “Music”, “Technology and Living” and “Literature in English” (Table 1 of the Annex). In general, the pattern of student enrolment was similar in S4, S5 and S6.

² 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 33 Applied Learning courses², and 7% of S6 students registered for 34 Applied Learning courses under the HKDSE (Table 1 of the Annex). A continuous increase has been observed in the percentage of schools offering Applied Learning and the percentage of S5 students taking Applied Learning courses has also shown an increasing trend in recent years.

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2017/18 School Year Survey Results**Table 1: Number and percentage of (a) schools' offering; and (b) students' taking of senior secondary subjects in 2017/18**

Senior secondary subject	S4				S5				S6			
	Schools offered		Students enrolled		Schools offered		Students enrolled		Schools offered		Students registered HKDSE ¹	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Chinese Language ²	442	99.3	49,977	97.3	444	99.6	49,283	97.7	445	99.6	49,485	97.5
English Language	445	100.0	51,356	100.0	446	100.0	50,468	100.0	447	100.0	50,635	99.7
Liberal Studies	445	100.0	51,356	100.0	446	100.0	50,467	99.998	447	100.0	50,617	99.7
Mathematics	445	100.0	51,356	100.0	446	100.0	50,468	100.0	447	100.0	50,643	99.8
Compulsory Part only	127	28.5	42,262	82.3	44	9.9	41,674	82.6	44	9.8	43,490	85.7
Compulsory Part + Module 1	161	36.2	3,116	6.1	220	49.3	3,251	6.4	235	52.6	2,615	5.2
Compulsory Part + Module 2	244	54.8	5,518	10.7	313	70.2	5,543	11.0	311	69.6	4,538	8.9
Compulsory Part + not-yet-specified Extended Part	9	2.0	460	0.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	--	--	--	--
Chinese Literature	129	29.0	1,743	3.4	139	31.2	1,737	3.4	148	33.1	1,656	3.3
Literature in English	26	5.8	430	0.8	31	7.0	336	0.7	34	7.6	366	0.7
Chinese History	392	88.1	7,248	14.1	394	88.3	6,685	13.2	385	86.1	5,825	11.5
Economics	418	93.9	14,832	28.9	418	93.7	13,804	27.4	421	94.2	13,382	26.4
Ethics and Religious Studies	74	16.6	1,179	2.3	78	17.5	838	1.7	79	17.7	777	1.5
Geography	408	91.7	10,726	20.9	410	91.9	9,721	19.3	407	91.1	9,394	18.5
History	299	67.2	6,337	12.3	301	67.5	5,701	11.3	312	69.8	5,509	10.9
Tourism and Hospitality Studies	196	44.0	4,243	8.3	192	43.0	3,999	7.9	190	42.5	3,568	7.0
Biology	430	96.6	15,605	30.4	431	96.6	14,319	28.4	432	96.6	13,537	26.7
Chemistry	423	95.1	15,272	29.7	422	94.6	14,271	28.3	422	94.4	13,137	25.9
Physics	423	95.1	12,368	24.1	429	96.2	11,610	23.0	427	95.5	10,821	21.3
Science: Combined Science	37	8.3	575	1.1	48	10.8	718	1.4	54	12.1	774	1.5
Biology + Chemistry	25	5.6	295	0.6	34	7.6	399	0.8	36	8.1	385	0.8
Chemistry + Physics	16	3.6	244	0.5	23	5.2	287	0.6	27	6.0	357	0.7
Physics + Biology	4	0.9	36	0.1	4	0.9	32	0.1	3	0.7	32	0.1
Science: Integrated Science	9	2.0	144	0.3	10	2.2	104	0.2	10	2.2	101	0.2
Business, Accounting and Financial Studies	406	91.2	12,388	24.1	407	91.3	11,259	22.3	408	91.3	10,710	21.1
Design and Applied Technology	57	12.8	891	1.7	59	13.2	768	1.5	56	12.5	626	1.2
Health Management and Social Care	46	10.3	942	1.8	46	10.3	907	1.8	48	10.7	856	1.7
Information and Communication Technology	404	90.8	7,352	14.3	412	92.4	6,562	13.0	403	90.2	5,728	11.3
Technology and Living	19	4.3	260	0.5	23	5.2	241	0.5	23	5.1	232	0.5
Food Science & Technology	14	3.1	222	0.4	17	3.8	196	0.4	17	3.8	189	0.4
Fashion, Clothing & Textiles	5	1.1	38	0.1	6	1.3	45	0.1	6	1.3	43	0.1
Music	87	19.6	243	0.5	86	19.3	221	0.4	85	19.0	209	0.4
Visual Arts	356	80.0	4,732	9.2	360	80.7	4,174	8.3	352	78.7	3,624	7.1
Physical Education	106	23.8	1,293	2.5	100	22.4	1,092	2.2	96	21.5	1,021	2.0
Applied Learning (no. of students) ³	--	--	--	--	335	75.1	4,603	9.1	315	70.5	3,776	7.4
Applied Learning (no. of enrolments) ³	--	--	--	--	335	75.1	4,665	--	315	70.5	3,823	--

Notes

1: S6 student data was not collected from schools direct in this Survey but extracted from the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination registration data provided by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (data extracted only for schools included in this Survey).

- 2: Information on other Chinese language curricula (e.g. adapted Chinese Language curriculum for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included. Note that three participating schools did not offer the local Chinese Language curriculum (leading to the HKDSE Examination) for S4 students and two participating schools did not offer the local Chinese Language curriculum (leading to the HKDSE Examination) for S5 and S6 students in the 2017/18 school year.
- 3: Information as at 30 October 2017. There are 33 and 34 Applied Learning courses offering to S5 (2017–19 cohort) and S6 (2016–18 cohort) students respectively in the 2017/18 school year; Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included.

Table 2: Number of elective subjects taken by senior secondary students in 2017/18

No. of elective subjects taken	S4 ⁴	S5	S6 (HKDSE registration data)
	% of students	% of students	% of students
< 2	0.86%	2.90%	9.30%
2	67.17%	68.19%	72.41%
3	30.78%	28.55%	18.04%
> 3	1.19%	0.35%	0.24%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Note 4: 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-Key Learning Area (KLA) elective subject-taking by senior secondary students in 2017/18

No. of KLA(s)	S4	S5	S6 (HKDSE registration data)
	% of students	% of students	% of students
≤ 1	32.74%	33.13%	40.47%
2	60.23%	59.31%	54.94%
3	6.68%	7.51%	4.55%
> 3	0.35%	0.06%	0.04%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 4: Number of elective subject combinations in 2017/18

No. of elective subjects taken ⁵	S4		S5		S6 (HKDSE registration data)	
	Subject combination		Subject combination		Subject combination	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	18	1.65%	22	2.04%	24	2.63%
2	214	19.56%	237	21.99%	234	25.63%
3	613	56.03%	700	64.94%	584	63.96%
> 3	249	22.76%	119	11.04%	71	7.78%
Total	1,094	100%	1,078	100%	913	100%
Average no. of combinations per school	34.44		40.44		40.14	

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.

Table 5: Top 30 elective subject combinations taken by senior secondary students in 2017/18

Order	S4			S5			S6 (HKDSE registration data)		
	Subject combination ⁶	Students enrolled		Subject combination ⁶	Students enrolled		Subject combination ⁶	Students enrolled	
		No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
1	BIO CHEM	2,790	5.43%	BIO CHEM	2,756	5.46%	BIO CHEM	3,278	6.46%
2	BAFS ECON	2,751	5.36%	BAFS ECON	2,741	5.43%	BAFS ECON	3,144	6.19%
3	BIO CHEM PHY	2,363	4.60%	CHEM PHY	2,429	4.81%	CHEM PHY	2,645	5.21%
4	CHEM PHY	2,332	4.54%	BIO CHEM PHY	1,998	3.96%	BIO CHEM PHY	1,563	3.08%
5	BIO CHEM ECON	1,109	2.16%	ECON GEOG	1,062	2.10%	ECON GEOG	1,311	2.58%
6	CHI_HIST HIST	1,090	2.12%	BIO CHEM ECON	1,047	2.07%	BIO GEOG	1,055	2.08%
7	ICT PHY	1,047	2.04%	ICT PHY	1,044	2.07%	ICT PHY	978	1.93%
8	BIO GEOG	925	1.80%	CHI_HIST HIST	921	1.82%	CHI_HIST HIST	939	1.85%
9	ECON GEOG	893	1.74%	BIO GEOG	907	1.80%	BIO ECON	899	1.77%
10	CHI_HIST GEOG	777	1.51%	GEOG HIST	739	1.46%	GEOG HIST	844	1.66%
11	GEOG HIST	763	1.49%	BIO ECON	688	1.36%	ECON PHY	786	1.55%
12	GEOG THS	743	1.45%	CHEM ECON PHY	687	1.36%	BIO CHEM ECON	683	1.35%
13	BAFS ICT	736	1.43%	CHI_HIST GEOG	667	1.32%	CHI_HIST GEOG	673	1.33%
14	CHEM ECON PHY	734	1.43%	ECON PHY	596	1.18%	BAFS PHY	622	1.23%
15	BIO ECON	651	1.27%	BAFS ICT	591	1.17%	BAFS GEOG	619	1.22%
16	BAFS BIO	622	1.21%	CHI_HIST ECON	566	1.12%	BAFS BIO	613	1.21%
17	BAFS THS	594	1.16%	BAFS BIO	565	1.12%	BIO PHY	595	1.17%
18	BIO CHEM GEOG	582	1.13%	BAFS THS	541	1.07%	CHI_HIST ECON	595	1.17%
19	CHI_HIST ECON	568	1.11%	BAFS GEOG	517	1.02%	CHEM ECON PHY	568	1.12%
20	BAFS GEOG	543	1.06%	GEOG THS	515	1.02%	ECON HIST	565	1.11%
21	ECON PHY	534	1.04%	BAFS PHY	506	1.00%	CHEM ECON	553	1.09%
22	BAFS PHY	517	1.01%	BIO PHY	477	0.95%	BAFS ICT	522	1.03%
23	BAFS ECON GEOG	497	0.97%	BAFS CHI_HIST	461	0.91%	BAFS THS	495	0.98%
24	ICT VA	478	0.93%	ECON ICT	455	0.90%	CHI_HIST CHI_LIT	487	0.96%
25	BAFS BIO CHEM	476	0.93%	GEOG PHY	452	0.90%	ICT	485	0.96%
26	GEOG PHY	472	0.92%	CHI_HIST CHI_LIT	415	0.82%	GEOG PHY	469	0.92%
27	ECON ICT	463	0.90%	BIO CHEM GEOG	415	0.82%	GEOG THS	456	0.90%
28	GEOG ICT	461	0.90%	GEOG ICT	393	0.78%	GEOG	448	0.88%
29	BIO ICT	435	0.85%	ECON HIST	384	0.76%	ECON ICT	441	0.87%
30	BIO PHY	421	0.82%	BAFS BIO CHEM	378	0.75%	BAFS CHI_HIST	436	0.86%
	TOTAL:	27,367	53.29%	TOTAL:	25,913	51.35%	TOTAL:	27,767	54.70%

Note 6: 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
 VA - Visual Arts