

Survey on Senior Secondary Subject Information 2018/19 School Year

Main Findings

A. Background

1. The Education Bureau (EDB) conducted the “*Survey on Senior Secondary Subject Information: 2018/19 School Year*” from October to November 2018 on 446¹ 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 2018/19 school year. These included all government and aided secondary schools, caput schools, and secondary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme offering the local senior secondary 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 2018, as a proxy for S6 student subject enrolment. The S6 figures for all years quoted in this document are HKDSE Examination registration figures, as mentioned, 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, 445 and 446 schools operating S4, S5 and S6 classes respectively in the 2018/19 school year.

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 popular² elective subjects include “Biology”, “Physics”, “Chemistry”, “Economics”, “Geography”, “Information and Communication Technology”, “Business, Accounting and Financial Studies”, “Chinese History” and “Visual Arts”. Relatively fewer² schools 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 91% 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. Students’ choices of elective subjects were observed to be diversified and not limited to one Key Learning Area (KLA). About 68% of S4 students, 67% of 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 39 elective subject combinations at S5 and S6 respectively (including Applied Learning courses³) (Table 4 of the Annex). The top 30 combinations of elective subjects taken by S4, S5 and S6 students are tabulated at Table 5 of the Annex for reference.

² More popular elective subjects refer to subjects offered by over 70% of schools at each of the three class levels of S4, S5 and S6. Subjects offered by relatively fewer schools refer to subjects offered by less than 10% of schools at each of the three class levels of S4, S5 and S6.

³ Applied Learning Chinese (for non-Chinese speaking students) is not included.

8. Relatively more⁴ students took “Biology”, “Chemistry”, “Economics”, “Physics”, “Business, Accounting and Financial Studies”, “Geography”, “Chinese History”, “Information and Communication Technology” and “History”. Relatively fewer⁴ students 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.

More schools offered and more students took Applied Learning

9. Over 70% of secondary schools offered Applied Learning courses; about 9% of S5 students studied in a total of 33 Applied Learning courses³, and 8% of S6 students registered for a total of 33 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 students taking Applied Learning courses has also shown an increasing trend in recent years.

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⁴ Elective subjects taken by relatively more students refer to subjects taken by over 10% of students at each of the three class levels of S4, S5 and S6. Elective subjects taken by relatively fewer students refer to subjects taken by less than 1% of students at each of the three class levels of S4, S5 and S6.

2018/19 School Year Survey Results**Table 1: Number and percentage of (a) schools' offering; and (b) students' taking of senior secondary subjects in 2018/19**

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	443	99.6	47,744	96.9	442	99.3	46,432	97.3	444	99.6	46,249	97.5
English Language	445	100.0	49,284	100.0	445	100.0	47,700	100.0	446	100.0	47,309	99.7
Liberal Studies	445	100.0	49,200	99.8	445	100.0	47,700	100.0	446	100.0	47,272	99.6
Mathematics	445	100.0	49,284	100.0	445	100.0	47,700	100.0	446	100.0	47,299	99.7
Compulsory Part only	117	26.3	40,537	82.3	46	10.3	39,015	81.8	44	9.9	40,464	85.3
Compulsory Part + Module 1	166	37.3	3,000	6.1	214	48.1	3,131	6.6	220	49.3	2,466	5.2
Compulsory Part + Module 2	255	57.3	5,493	11.1	311	69.9	5,554	11.6	315	70.6	4,369	9.2
Compulsory Part + not-yet-specified Extended Part	7	1.6	254	0.5	0	--	0	--	--	--	--	--
Chinese Literature	131	29.4	1,644	3.3	129	29.0	1,479	3.1	139	31.2	1,533	3.2
Literature in English	29	6.5	453	0.9	26	5.8	308	0.6	31	7.0	285	0.6
Chinese History	400	89.9	7,185	14.6	392	88.1	6,256	13.1	394	88.3	5,929	12.5
Economics	418	93.9	14,217	28.8	417	93.7	13,144	27.6	418	93.7	12,182	25.7
Ethics and Religious Studies	80	18.0	1,183	2.4	76	17.1	817	1.7	76	17.0	727	1.5
Geography	407	91.5	9,971	20.2	408	91.7	9,424	19.8	410	91.9	8,571	18.1
History	304	68.3	6,274	12.7	300	67.4	5,445	11.4	301	67.5	5,019	10.6
Tourism and Hospitality Studies	195	43.8	4,026	8.2	196	44.0	3,710	7.8	192	43.0	3,565	7.5
Biology	431	96.9	15,081	30.6	430	96.6	13,899	29.1	431	96.6	12,859	27.1
Chemistry	419	94.2	14,772	30.0	424	95.3	13,653	28.6	422	94.6	12,420	26.2
Physics	427	96.0	11,929	24.2	425	95.5	11,002	23.1	429	96.2	10,264	21.6
Science: Combined Science	29	6.5	387	0.8	38	8.5	497	1.0	48	10.8	620	1.3
Biology + Chemistry	20	4.5	227	0.5	26	5.8	242	0.5	34	7.6	354	0.7
Chemistry + Physics	10	2.2	123	0.2	17	3.8	227	0.5	23	5.2	244	0.5
Physics + Biology	4	0.9	37	0.1	4	0.9	28	0.1	4	0.9	22	0.05
Science: Integrated Science	8	1.8	127	0.3	9	2.0	114	0.2	10	2.2	81	0.2
Business, Accounting and Financial Studies	404	90.8	11,662	23.7	406	91.2	10,818	22.7	407	91.3	9,676	20.4
Design and Applied Technology	50	11.2	824	1.7	56	12.6	676	1.4	57	12.8	620	1.3
Health Management and Social Care	46	10.3	891	1.8	46	10.3	837	1.8	46	10.3	788	1.7
Information and Communication Technology	406	91.2	7,023	14.3	403	90.6	6,219	13.0	412	92.4	5,694	12.0
Technology and Living	22	4.9	284	0.6	19	4.3	220	0.5	23	5.2	218	0.5
Food Science & Technology	16	3.6	236	0.5	14	3.1	179	0.4	17	3.8	178	0.4
Fashion, Clothing & Textiles	6	1.3	48	0.1	5	1.1	41	0.1	6	1.3	40	0.1
Music	70	15.7	234	0.5	82	18.4	204	0.4	71	15.9	170	0.4
Visual Arts	354	79.6	4,638	9.4	359	80.7	3,819	8.0	358	80.3	3,536	7.5
Physical Education	109	24.5	1,321	2.7	107	24.0	1,149	2.4	98	22.0	984	2.1
Applied Learning (no. of students) ³	--	--	--	--	338	76.0	4,381	9.2	324	72.6	3,619	7.6
Applied Learning (no. of enrolments) ³	--	--	--	--	338	76.0	4,468	--	324	72.6	3,666	--

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 two participating schools did not offer the local Chinese Language curriculum (leading to the HKDSE Examination) for S4 and S6 students, and three participating schools did not offer the local Chinese Language curriculum (leading to the HKDSE Examination) for S5 students in the 2018/19 school year.
- 3: Information as at 16 October 2018. There are 33 Applied Learning courses offered to S5 (2018–20 cohort) and S6 (2017–19 cohort) students respectively in the 2018/19 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 2018/19

No. of elective subjects taken	S4 ⁴	S5	S6 (HKDSE registration data)
	% of students	% of students	% of students
< 2	0.83%	2.26%	8.97%
2	67.08%	68.19%	71.70%
3	30.83%	29.06%	19.14%
> 3	1.27%	0.48%	0.19%
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 2018/19

No. of KLA(s)	S4	S5	S6 (HKDSE registration data)
	% of students	% of students	% of students
≤ 1	32.25%	33.32%	39.96%
2	60.66%	58.72%	55.58%
3	6.78%	7.87%	4.43%
> 3	0.32%	0.09%	0.03%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 4: Number of elective subject combinations in 2018/19

No. of elective subjects taken ⁵	S4		S5		S6 (HKDSE registration data)	
	Subject combination		Subject combination		Subject combination	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	19	1.68%	20	1.92%	24	2.68%
2	198	17.55%	221	21.19%	232	25.89%
3	633	56.12%	668	64.05%	581	64.84%
> 3	278	24.65%	134	12.85%	59	6.58%
Total	1,128	100%	1,043	100%	896	100%
Average no. of combinations per school	34.25		38.94		39.28	

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 2018/19

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	2,673	5.42%	BIO CHEM	2,728	5.72%	BIO CHEM	2,892	6.10%
2	BAFS ECON	2,601	5.28%	BAFS ECON	2,720	5.70%	BAFS ECON	2,844	5.99%
3	CHEM PHY	2,306	4.68%	CHEM PHY	2,357	4.94%	CHEM PHY	2,468	5.20%
4	BIO CHEM PHY	2,202	4.47%	BIO CHEM PHY	1,975	4.14%	BIO CHEM PHY	1,563	3.29%
5	BIO CHEM ECON	1,100	2.23%	ICT PHY	961	2.01%	ECON GEOG	1,110	2.34%
6	ICT PHY	1,057	2.14%	BIO CHEM ECON	953	2.00%	ICT PHY	1,035	2.18%
7	CHI_HIST HIST	1,039	2.11%	CHI_HIST HIST	938	1.97%	BIO GEOG	979	2.06%
8	BIO GEOG	847	1.72%	BIO GEOG	899	1.88%	CHI_HIST HIST	914	1.93%
9	ECON GEOG	814	1.65%	ECON GEOG	899	1.88%	BIO ECON	829	1.75%
10	CHI_HIST GEOG	762	1.55%	GEOG HIST	710	1.49%	BIO CHEM ECON	754	1.59%
11	CHEM ECON PHY	710	1.44%	CHI_HIST GEOG	686	1.44%	GEOG HIST	748	1.58%
12	GEOG HIST	679	1.38%	BIO ECON	645	1.35%	CHI_HIST GEOG	665	1.40%
13	GEOG THS	656	1.33%	CHEM ECON PHY	621	1.30%	ECON PHY	665	1.40%
14	BAFS ICT	652	1.32%	BAFS ICT	601	1.26%	CHI_HIST ECON	600	1.26%
15	BIO ECON	647	1.31%	BAFS BIO	573	1.20%	BAFS BIO	576	1.21%
16	BAFS THS	605	1.23%	CHI_HIST ECON	567	1.19%	BIO PHY	562	1.18%
17	BAFS BIO	573	1.16%	ECON PHY	562	1.18%	BAFS ICT	538	1.13%
18	ECON PHY	551	1.12%	GEOG THS	553	1.16%	BAFS PHY	511	1.08%
19	BIO CHEM GEOG	535	1.09%	BAFS GEOG	535	1.12%	BAFS GEOG	506	1.07%
20	BAFS GEOG	517	1.05%	BAFS PHY	485	1.02%	CHEM ECON PHY	502	1.06%
21	CHI_HIST ECON	510	1.03%	BIO CHEM GEOG	462	0.97%	BAFS THS	500	1.05%
22	BAFS ECON GEOG	494	1.00%	BIO PHY	461	0.97%	ECON HIST	468	0.99%
23	BAFS BIO CHEM	490	0.99%	BAFS THS	450	0.94%	GEOG THS	463	0.98%
24	ECON ICT	468	0.95%	ECON ICT	433	0.91%	BAFS CHI_HIST	461	0.97%
25	ICT VA	468	0.95%	GEOG PHY	412	0.86%	CHEM ECON	461	0.97%
26	BIO ICT	442	0.90%	CHI_HIST CHI_LIT	390	0.82%	CHI_HIST CHI_LIT	449	0.95%
27	GEOG PHY	442	0.90%	ECON HIST	381	0.80%	GEOG PHY	444	0.94%
28	CHEM ICT PHY	431	0.87%	GEOG ICT	378	0.79%	ECON ICT	443	0.93%
29	BAFS CHI_HIST	414	0.84%	BAFS BIO CHEM	377	0.79%	ICT	442	0.93%
30	BIO PHY	412	0.84%	CHEM ECON	376	0.79%	BAFS	381	0.80%
	TOTAL:	26,097	52.95%	TOTAL:	25,088	52.60%	TOTAL:	25,773	54.32%

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:

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| BAFS | - Business, Accounting and Financial Studies | GEOG | - Geography |
| BIO | - Biology | HIST | - History |
| CHEM | - Chemistry | ICT | - Information and Communication Technology |
| CHI_HIST | - Chinese History | PHY | - Physics |
| CHI_LIT | - Chinese Literature | THS | - Tourism and Hospitality Studies |
| ECON | - Economics | VA | - Visual Arts |