

Introduction to New Academic Structure Review

Curriculum Development Council (CDC)

**Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
(HKEAA)**

Education Bureau (EDB)

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Contents

	Page
1. Policy Context of NAS	1
2. Objectives of NAS Review	2
3. Review Questions	3
4. Approaches of the Review	4
5. Recommendations, Reporting and Dissemination	6
6. Schedule, Information and Contacts	6
References	10
Appendix	12

1. Policy Context of NAS

1.1 The 2000 Education Commission (EC) Report recommended the introduction of a New Academic Structure (NAS) comprising a 3-year senior secondary curriculum and a 4-year undergraduate programme with a view to promoting whole-person and life-long learning capabilities of students, expanding learning opportunities and providing multiple progression pathways. In May 2003, the EC's Working Group on the Review of the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Interface with Higher Education (RASIH) made further recommendations on the development of a new curriculum, assessment and examination, and on university admissions, which was accepted by the Chief Executive in his 2004 Policy Address. The Education Bureau (EDB)'s 2005 Report "New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong" recommended a new curriculum framework, building on curriculum reform entitled "Learning to Learn" in basic education (Primary 1 to Secondary 3), and the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) to replace the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination and Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination. In 2006, the report "Action for the Future --- Career-oriented Studies (COS, renamed Applied Learning) and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools" was published to chart the way forward for the implementation of COS and the NSS curriculum for special schools.

1.2 The senior secondary academic structure is supported by a flexible, coherent and diversified senior secondary curriculum to cater for students' varied interests, needs and abilities. In addition to the 4 core subjects, schools have been providing students with elective subjects to help them develop their full potentials. The Curriculum and Assessment (C&A) Guides, to be read in conjunction with the Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide (2009) issued by Curriculum Development Council (CDC), are prepared jointly by the CDC and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA). They were provided to schools in 2007 and 2009 to help them understand the rationale and aims of the subject

curriculum, curriculum framework, curriculum planning, pedagogy, assessment and use of learning and teaching resources, etc. A list of the relevant policy documents and websites are given on p.10 & 11.

2. Objectives of the NAS Review

2.1 The delivery of the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum, the inaugural HKDSE Examination and the provision of flexible progression pathways are generally smooth. Students have gained fruitful learning experiences and encouraging results in the HKDSE. Given the scale of the reform, it takes time for experiences to be consolidated. However, we have taken the practical concerns of schools and students to our heart and have gathered feedback continuously. In view of the concerns and issues that have already emerged, such as workload and lesson time, EDB, the CDC and HKEAA have joined hands to review the first cycle of curriculum implementation, the HKDSE Examination, and their impact. We would engage relevant stakeholders, including schools, parents, students, professional associations, post-secondary institutions and employers in the process of collecting feedback and making recommendations.

2.2 The broad objectives of the review are to:

- 1) analyse the implementation of the NAS with special reference to the NSS curriculum and assessment and its impact on students and schools; the articulation of NSS and HKDSE to local and overseas study pathways and to workplaces; and the achievement of learning goals (see p.3) and policy intentions of NAS;
- 2) identify the strengths, good practices and challenges of NSS curriculum and assessment, and make viable recommendations with a view to ensuring the smooth implementation of NSS (e.g. in lesson time, curriculum design, School-based Assessment (SBA)), improving student learning (e.g. support measures), and achieving the learning goals and policy intentions of NAS.

*Seven Learning Goals
of the School Curriculum in Senior Secondary Education*

1. Be biliterate and trilingual with adequate proficiency
2. Acquire a broad knowledge base, and be able to understand contemporary issues that may impact on their daily life at personal, community, national and global levels
3. Be an informed and responsible citizen with a sense of global and national identity
4. Respect pluralism of cultures and views, and be a critical, reflective and independent thinker
5. Acquire information technology & other skills as necessary for being a lifelong learner
6. Understand their own career/academic aspirations and develop positive attitudes towards work and learning
7. Lead a healthy life style with active participation in aesthetic and physical activities

“Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide: The future is Now: from Vision to Realisation (Secondary 4 - 6)” (2009) prepared by the Curriculum Development Council

3. Review Questions

3.1 Drawing from the 3-year experience, data and concerns expressed by different stakeholders including those collected from teacher forums conducted in August 2012, ten review questions are developed with a view to capturing ideas of the review, identifying good practices and making recommendations for improvements as appropriate. *(As the NAS reform is dynamic and on a large scale, they are by no means exhaustive. Proposed detailed contents of each review question are given in the Appendix.)*

- 1) How are schools preparing and implementing the NSS? Is the

- aim of broadening and diversification achieved?
- 2) What are the on-going/ changing needs and concerns of schools (teachers, middle managers, principals, students, parents)?
 - 3) How is NAS delivered at systemic level? How are the support measures (e.g. government, partnership projects, HKEAA) received by schools? How could they be adjusted to serve schools better?
 - 4) How is SBA delivered (at systemic, school, teacher, student levels)?
 - 5) How are the HKDSE and Student Learning Profile (SLP) recognised at the system level and accepted by other stakeholders?
 - 6) How are the NAS deliverables (e.g. HKDSE, SLP) administered in the interface between schools and institutions/employers under the NAS multiple pathways?
 - 7) What are the impacts of the HKDSE and SLP on different sectors (e.g. universities, post-secondary institutions, students, employers, parents)?
 - 8) **What is the impact of NSS on secondary school students with reference to the expected learning outcomes and achievement of policy intentions?**
 - 9) What is the impact of the NAS on post-secondary education and students/ trainees?
 - 10) How to improve the NAS (with special reference to NSS curriculum and assessment, interfaces in the short term) and other dimensions in response to the feedback and other new needs?

4. Approaches of the Review

4.1 *Stakeholder participation/ engagement*

An engagement and communication plan for each stakeholder group has been drawn up by EDB, CDC and HKEAA to collect feedback and opinions extensively from all education stakeholders, including principals, middle managers, career and guidance teachers, subject teachers and teacher librarians from the school sector, the post-secondary sector, parents, students, employers,

non-government organizations as well as key professional bodies, through various channels from August to February/March 2013. These include the regular meetings of Liaison Group on 334 Interface Issues, Principals' Liaison Meeting (PLM), Task Force on 334 Communication Strategies and Employers' Working Group to discuss relevant issues and recommendations.

A series of seminars, liaison meetings and focus group meetings have started to solicit feedback. HKEAA, CDC and joint meetings are conducted concurrently to consider the feedback and make appropriate proposals. A **holistic and principled approach** based on the 2005 Report is adopted to ensure that the considerations and recommendations are professional, centering on the interest of students, addressing the concerns of teachers and schools, and practicable. A major survey for school leaders and teachers on the proposals is scheduled to be conducted in late November 2012. Regular reports to the Education Commission are being made and advice sought.

4.2 *Evidence-based*

The review would build on relevant quantitative data and qualitative information collected in meetings, in the November survey, submission by different organizations as well as those received during the 1st cycle of implementation. In addition, reference will also be made to local and international studies. Advice from local and international experts would also be sought.

4.3 *Strategic with multiple stages*

As the NAS has involved large scale systemic changes, the scope of the review is wide and it takes time to consolidate its experiences before new or fundamental changes are hastily made. Hence, the review would be conducted in strategic stages:

- The short-term stage (from now to March 2013) would aim at addressing the more practical concerns of schools and fine-tuning and enhancing the implementation of the curriculum and assessment so as to facilitate student

learning, and collecting information that helps advise future study or career planning. Early recommendations would include, for example, streamlining the SBA arrangements, reducing the total lesson time while increasing the flexibility, further clarifying the breadth and depth of the curriculum and assessment, adjusting the curriculum contents as well as consulting the tertiary institutions and universities on the public examination timetable and results release schedule, etc., to facilitate the implementation in Secondary 4 in the 2013/14 school year.

- At the medium/long term stages, matters requiring more data collection and deliberation would be discussed subject to the feedback received.

5. Recommendations, Reporting and Dissemination

5.1 A report on the findings and recommendations of the short-term stage of the review would be released in April 2013. It would be disseminated widely to the school sector, tertiary institutions, parents and stakeholders concerned so that the fullest support could be given to schools and students.

5.2 In the meantime, good practices, lessons learned and useful findings would be continuously disseminated through relevant professional development programmes and sharing networks for teachers, middle managers, principals; meetings with stakeholders; publications, e-resource platforms, and the media, etc.

6. Schedule, Information and Contacts

6.1 A schedule of the review and engagement process for the short-term stage is outlined below. These will include forums for the 24 NSS subjects, Applied Learning and OLE; seminars for school curriculum leaders; surveys and studies; focus group meetings; as well as liaison meetings with principals, education bodies and professional organisations. The NAS website

(<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas>) would continue to provide update information and events related to the review and further development.

Proposed NSS Review Schedule and Stakeholder Engagement Plan for Short-term Phase

Time Line	CDC/HKEAA, EC meetings	Engagement of the school sector	Engagement of other key stakeholders – post-secondary institutions, parents, employers, LegCo etc.
Jun - Aug 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st round - One Committees – on implementation data and other factors affecting curriculum design • Working groups formed on subject basis, on need basis and whenever necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 subject focus groups • Subject Forums (for the 24 NSS subjects) • Meetings with school representatives and professional bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous collection of views from liaison meetings (see p. 5) and stakeholder groups • Seminars/focus groups/meetings with parents, students, NGO
Sep - Oct 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sept – EC meeting • 2nd round - Joint meetings between One Committees and Subject Committees on exam feedback and impact on curriculum matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public announcement of the review • EDB/HKEAA joint letter to every stakeholder group to invite comments and collect feedback • Meetings with school representatives and professional bodies (e.g. PLM) • Seminars for teachers, principals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with higher education sector, teacher education institutions and relevant academic departments • Seminars/focus groups/meetings with parents, students, NGO, overseas strategic partners • Liaison meetings (p.5)

Time Line	CDC/HKEAA, EC meetings	Engagement of the school sector	Engagement of other key stakeholders – post-secondary institutions, parents, employers, LegCo etc.
Oct - Nov 2012	3 rd round - One Committees, Subject Committees, CDCC, and working groups to deliberate on the <i>recommendations and propose changes for soliciting feedback from schools and other concerned groups / educational bodies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires consulting schools on initial recommendations • Focus group interviews with each subject group, principal / middle managers, etc • School leader seminars/workshop on whole-school issues • Seminars for middle managers and teachers on subject basis • PLM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous collection of views from different stakeholders • Meetings with higher education sector, teacher education institutions, and relevant academic departments • Seminars/focus groups/meetings with parents, students, NGO, overseas strategic partners • Liaison meetings (p.5)
Dec 2012 – Jan 2013	4 th round Joint One Committee and Subject Committee and CDCC meetings to discuss recommendations based on feedback & in consultation with stakeholder groups	Discuss findings and recommendations with liaison meetings with school principals (e.g. via PLM), career and guidance teachers, professional associations,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with higher education sector • Focus groups and seminars with parents and students
Feb – April 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submission of finalised proposals for endorsement in Joint CDC–PEB meeting • Report to EC • Release of 1st report on review and recommendations for CDC and HKEAA 	Disseminate recommendations to schools, teachers, professional associations	Disseminate recommendations to liaison meetings (p.5), stakeholder groups, overseas strategic partners

6.2 A schedule for the medium or long term review of NAS would also be provided when the report is released in 2013.

6.3 Schools, teachers and all sectors of society are welcome to give

opinions and suggestions so that viable plans can be made to continually enhance the quality of education in Hong Kong.

Please feel free to send your comments and suggestions on the review to:

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References

1) Policy Documents

- Education Commission (2000) *Education Blueprint for the 21st Century: Learning for Life, Learning Through Life – Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Education Commission.
- Education Commission (2003) *Review of the Academic Structure of Senior Secondary Education*, Hong Kong: Education Commission.
- Education and Manpower Bureau (2005) *The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – Action Plan for Investing in the Future of Hong Kong*, Hong Kong: Education and Manpower Bureau.
- Education and Manpower Bureau (2006) *Action for the Future --- Career-oriented Studies and the New Senior Secondary Academic Structure for Special Schools*, Hong Kong: Education and Manpower Bureau.

2) Curriculum and Assessment Documents

- Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2007) *Curriculum and Assessment Guides (Secondary 4-6) for the 24 NSS Subjects*, Hong Kong: Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.
- Curriculum Development Council (2009) *Senior Secondary Curriculum Guide – The Future is Now: from Vision to Realisation (Secondary 4-6)*, Hong Kong: Curriculum Development Council.
- Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2009) *Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination: School-based Assessment Teachers' Handbooks for the 24 NSS*

Subjects, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.

- Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2009) *HKDSE Examination - Information on School-based Assessment*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.
- Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2009) *Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination: Handbook for School Leaders on School-based Assessment*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.
- Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2011) *Grading Procedures and Standards-referenced Reporting in the HKDSE Examination*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.
- Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2011) *HKDSE Examination Quality Assurance Framework*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.
- Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2011) *Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination: Regulations and Assessment Frameworks*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

3) Websites

- The New Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education – NAS Web Bulletin, Hong Kong: Education Bureau. (<http://www.edb.gov.hk/nas>)
- Website for the HKDSE, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. (<http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/tc/hkdse/>)

Appendix

Proposed detailed contents of each review question:

Q1: How are schools preparing for and implementing the NSS? Is the aim of broadening and diversification achieved?
1.1 Implementation of the NSS <u>whole-school</u> curriculum: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Curriculum planning (e.g. 3-year planning, interface, impact on junior secondary (JS) curriculum)- Resource deployment (e.g. human and financial)- Non-subject specific learning and teaching (L&T) (e.g. catering for learner diversity for special educational needs (SEN) (in mainstream & special schools), gifted education, non-Chinese speaking students; school internal assessment; gender issues; assessment for learning (AfL); OLE)
1.2 Implementation of the NSS <u>Key Learning Area / subject</u> curricula: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Curriculum planning (e.g. 3-year planning, interface, impact on JS curriculum)- Classroom L&T (e.g. catering for learner diversity, school internal assessment, AfL)- SBA (see Q4 below)- Use of L&T resources, textbooks
1.3 Is diversification and broadening achieved over time? <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Changes in subject choices- Provision & choice of elective subjects (e.g. marginalisation of some subjects, effect of HKDSE & JUPAS results (see Q7.1&7.2), medium of instruction (MOI) fine-tuning, network schools)
1.4 How should the NSS curriculum and assessment design be revised/improved in response to feedback, e.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concerns of schools, e.g. catering for learning diversity- Achieving policy intentions- Maintaining international recognition
Q2: What are the ongoing/ changing needs and concerns of schools?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Concerns (workload, resources, lesson time, new public assessment, post-HKDSE concerns)- Needs (teacher professional development (PD), including in-service training for teaching students with different types of SEN)- Impact from education policies (e.g. MOI fine-tuning, external school review) & other factors (e.g. declining student population)

Q3: How is NAS delivered at systemic level? How are the support measures received by schools? How could they be adjusted to serve schools better?

- How is NSS co-ordinated among stakeholders? How are NSS messages communicated to different stakeholders?
- How is the release of HKDSE results managed?
- Achievement of the objectives of the professional learning of teachers (e.g. pedagogical content skills) in first cycle of implementation
- Understanding PD needs from teachers in upcoming cycles of implementation (see 2.2)
- Effective measures for teacher learning/ professional capacity building (see 2.2)
- Availability of accredited/ post-graduate programmes for in-service teachers in preparing for NSS subjects (e.g. Liberal Studies (LS), Technology Education)
- Availability and adequacy of L&T resources
- Harnessing IT for teacher support
- Impact of school-based support (including support by seconded teachers) (see 2.2)

Q4: How is SBA delivered (at systemic, school, teacher, student levels)?

- School planning and support strategies
- Classroom L&T (subject-based)
- Teachers' development of assessment literacy
- Workload (teacher & student)
- Design and coordination of SBA across subjects
- Interface with junior secondary curriculum (6-year planning)
- Administration procedures of SBA
- Plagiarism and forgery

Q5: How are the HKDSE and SLP recognised at the system level and accepted by other stakeholders?

5.1 International recognition of the HKDSE qualification

5.2 Local recognition of the HKDSE qualification - further studies

- Changes in admissions requirements in local institutions
- Recognition of Applied Learning (ApL) & SLP
- How the OLE & SLP are used (e.g. in further studies and employment)
- How ApL helps students in post-secondary/ university

programmes
5.3 Local recognition of the HKDSE by professional bodies/ employers
5.4 Perceptions and understanding of the NAS by the public
5.5 Acceptance/ support of the NAS by different stakeholders (e.g. employers, parents)
Q6: How are the NAS deliverables (e.g. HKDSE, SLP) administered in the interface between schools and institutions/employers under the NAS multiple pathways?
6.1 Understanding of level descriptors by different stakeholders
6.2 Assessment coverage of the 24 NSS subjects
6.3 Feedback on HKDSE administration
6.4 SLP submission
6.5 Promotion of the concept of multiple pathways
Q7: What are the impacts of the HKDSE and SLP on different sectors (e.g. universities and post-secondary institutions, students, employers, parents) ?
7.1 How are the HKDSE Exam results/SLP used by universities and tertiary institutions
7.2 Washback effect of HKDSE Exam results/SLP/ JUPAS & Federation for Self-financing Tertiary Education (FSTE) admissions/Employers/others on schools and students (including impacts on the junior and senior secondary curriculum)
7.3 Impacts of NSS education on further studies
Q8: What is the impact of NSS on secondary school students with reference to the expected learning outcomes and achievement of policy goals?
8.1 Expansion of learning opportunities and flexibility of progression pathways
8.2 Whole-person development & lifelong learning capabilities, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 7 learning goals (language proficiency, knowledge base, thinking skills & global perspectives, values & citizenship, IT, physical & aesthetic experiences, aspirations for future study and career) - generic skills - values & attitudes - non-academic developments
8.3 Academic performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General attainments - Attainment in meeting requirements of civil service recruitment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attainment in meeting requirements of sub-degree courses - Attainment in meeting requirements for university study - Attainment in meeting requirements for study in overseas institutions - gender differences in performance - subject differences (e.g. improvement in Math and LS while stable for the two languages) - school differences (e.g. why some schools improved more than others) - any evidence of dilution of HKDSE standard (e.g. stretching of potential of middle range students)
<p>8.4 Meeting students' interests, aptitudes and abilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How ApL helps students in exploring their career pathways
<p>8.5 Students' non-academic performance (including gender differences)</p>
<p>8.6 Multiple pathways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Effect of results, schools, district, socio-economic status, etc. - How the OLE/ SLP could be improved to help students to learn in future, facilitate institutions/ organisations to recruit students
<p>8.7 Impacts on junior secondary students</p>
<p>Q9: What is the impact of the NAS on post-secondary education and students/ trainees?</p>
<p>9.1 Preparation for the curriculum reform in post-secondary education</p>
<p>9.2 Curriculum reform & quality assurance in post-secondary education</p>
<p>9.3 General opinions of 1st cohort students in <u>local/overseas/ mainland</u> institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interview - First-year experience - What feedback is useful for schools, government, and parents
<p>9.4 Employee's (NSS graduates) performance</p>
<p>9.5 Employee's (post-secondary graduates) performance</p>
<p>Q10: How to improve the NAS/NSS and other dimensions in response to the feedback and other new needs?</p>
<p>What are the good practices in (e.g.):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementation of curriculum and assessment, OLE, ApL - Support to schools/professional learning of teachers - SBA implementation - Interface under the multiple pathways - Impact on students with reference to the expected learning

outcomes

- Impact of the NAS on post-secondary education and students/trainees

What are the recommendations to improve the above?

- Curriculum and assessment, OLE, ApL
- Delivery of HKDSE
- SBA
- Lesson time
- Specific issues in Chinese Language; LS; Business, Accounting and Financial and Studies (BAFS)
- Release of HKDSE results
- Others