

EDB clarification

Regarding a news report alleging that international schools are allowed to flexibly resume classes, a spokesman for the Education Bureau (EDB) said today (February 15) that the allegation is misleading, adding that classes of all schools remain suspended and would not resume before March 16. The exact date of class resumption is subject to further assessment.

The spokesman explained that in view of the situation of the novel coronavirus infection, the EDB has decided that classes of all schools remain suspended but schools should keep their premises open and step up cleansing with a view to taking care of some students in need.

As regards schools offering non-local curriculum, including international schools, most of the international public examinations of the courses concerned will take place later than the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination. Hence, the teaching of some courses for the graduating classes and some coursework for school-based assessments required by these public examinations have not yet been completed. As compared to overseas students sitting for the same public examinations, the EDB understands that the above situation would have great impact on students in Hong Kong. In this regard, if schools have put in place all necessary preventive measures and allow parents to decide whether to let their children return to schools, the EDB has no objection for schools to flexibly arrange the graduating students sitting for the imminent international public examinations to attend the necessary tutorial sessions and assessment activities.

In addition, taking into consideration that graduating students of non-local curriculum have to sit for related international public examinations for further studies or career development, the EDB agreed to allow these schools to serve as examination centres of these examinations. However, these schools should make reference to the preventive measures to be adopted by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) for this year's HKDSE Examination.

The EDB trusts that school management, principals and teachers, as education practitioners, will put the well-being of students as their prime concern and strike a balance between the needs of students for further studies and protection from the epidemic.

The spokesman emphasised that the above-mentioned arrangements apply to the graduating class only, and that students of other grades should study at home, e.g. by means of e-learning, during class suspension. The Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, met with representatives of schools offering non-local curriculum yesterday (February 14), during which he had explained in detail the basic principles and arrangements for class suspension and responded to their queries and concerns.

Regarding the HKDSE Examination, the teaching of the relevant courses

has been completed. Students have also in general completed the coursework for school-based assessment. If there are individual cases of unfinished school-based assessment, the HKEAA has a mechanism to handle them.

The EDB understands that some secondary schools have not conducted internal mock examinations for the HKDSE Examination before classes were suspended, but these examinations are not indispensable and there are other feasible alternatives. Therefore, under the current circumstances, it is not appropriate to hold them on school premises. The same principle applies to schools offering non-local curriculum.