

LCQ14: Evening secondary courses

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Mr Kevin Yeung, in the Legislative Council today (September 8):

Question:

The Government currently provides, through the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses (the Scheme), financial assistance for adult students taking evening secondary courses offered by approved course providers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of students taking the courses at various grades offered by the evening secondary schools participating in the Scheme in each of the past five school years;

(2) of the number of evening secondary students taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination in each of the past five school years and, among them, (i) the respective numbers of those whose examination results met the general entrance requirements for self-financing sub-degree programmes and subsidised undergraduate degree programmes, as well as (ii) the number of those who applied for admission to such programmes;

(3) given that the financial support received by evening secondary schools and their students is less than that received by secondary day schools and their students (for instance, evening secondary schools being not provided with the "one-off grant for supporting the implementation of the senior secondary subject Citizenship and Social Development", and evening secondary students being ineligible for the "student grant"), whether the Education Bureau (EDB) will consider raising the financial support provided for evening secondary schools and their students to a level on a par with that provided for secondary day schools and their students; if not, of the justifications for that, and whether the EDB will enhance the Scheme to provide a higher amount of financial assistance for evening secondary students; and

(4) as a school sponsoring body announced in June this year that it would discontinue its evening secondary courses from the 2021-2022 school year onwards, whether the EDB will provide support for the affected students to help them complete their evening secondary courses?

Reply:

President,

In the 2005/06 school year, the Government launched the Financial Assistance Scheme for Designated Evening Adult Education Courses (FAEAEC) to provide an affordable pathway for adult learners to pursue evening secondary courses. Under the FAEAEC, eligible adult learners may be reimbursed 30 per

cent of the tuition fees paid. In addition, adult learners with financial difficulties may receive full or half reimbursement of the tuition fees under the FAEAEC, and may apply for loans under the Extended Non-means-tested Loan Scheme to pay the tuition fees. The Government subsequently started offering 12-year free education from the 2008/09 school year onwards, and launched the Qualifications Framework in 2008, providing multiple pathways for adults who aspire to continue education to attain recognised academic and vocational qualifications. The Government is also committed to providing quality, flexible and diversified study pathways with multiple entry and exit points (including the Diploma Yi Jin Programme) for secondary school leavers and adult learners. In this way, adult learners are offered with more learning choices apart from evening secondary courses.

My reply to the question raised by Dr the Hon Priscilla Leung is as follows:

(1) The respective numbers of learners at various grades taking courses offered by the evening secondary schools participating in the FAEAEC from the 2016/17 to 2020/21 school years are as follows:

School year	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
2016/17	56	54	103	338	428	423
2017/18	41	46	108	362	429	440
2018/19	46	47	114	353	434	465
2019/20	26	37	76	264	349	402
2020/21	27	37	88	256	280	439

Note: The figures refer to the numbers of learners as at June 30 of the school years concerned, including those who have withdrawn from the courses within the school years.

(2) According to the information provided by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, the number of evening secondary students taking the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (DSE), the respective numbers of those whose examination results met the entrance requirements for sub-degree programmes, and those whose examination results met the general entrance requirements for local undergraduate degree programmes from the 2016/17 to 2020/21 school years are tabulated below:

School year	Number of evening secondary students taking the DSE	Number of students who met the entrance requirements for sub-degree programmes (Note 1)	Number of students who met the general entrance requirements for undergraduate degree programmes (Note 2)

2016/17	303	33	14
2017/18	323	35	8
2018/19	400	38	15
2019/20	313	38	21
2020/21	357	45	13

Note 1: Level 2 or above obtained in five subjects in Category A/ "Attained" in Category B subjects, including Chinese Language and English Language

Note 2: Have obtained "3322" in core subjects

The EDB has not maintained any statistics on those students of evening secondary courses who had applied for admission to such programmes after completing secondary courses.

(3) Evening secondary courses are provided by private schools, in which the mode of study and scale of operation are different from those of day schools. These courses target adult learners who usually study on a part-time basis. Private schools operate the courses on self-financing and market-driven principles.

All along, various subsidies for public secondary schools and Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools provided by the EDB do not cover private schools. To uphold the principle of financial prudence, the one-off grant for supporting the implementation of the senior secondary subject Citizenship and Social Development provided by the EDB for schools is not applicable to private schools. Moreover, a student grant has been provided by the EDB starting from the 2019/20 school year for full-time students of secondary day-schools, primary schools, special schools and kindergartens with the primary aim of alleviating parents' financial burden in defraying education expenses. As evening school students are taking evening secondary courses on a part-time basis, they are not eligible for the grant.

As mentioned above, the FAEAEC is set up to provide an affordable pathway for adult learners to pursue secondary courses. Different measures are also implemented to assist learners with financial difficulties. We shall review the supporting measures under the FAEAEC in a timely manner to ensure that it will continue to render appropriate financial support for needy students.

(4) Under the FAEAEC, the EDB appoints non-profit-making organisations as Approved Course Providers (ACPs) to operate evening secondary courses under a five-year cycle. The EDB earlier appointed three ACPs in accordance with the established procedures for the operation of evening secondary courses under the FAEAEC for the cycle from the 2021/22 to 2025/26 school years. As an institution operating courses in the previous cycle announced earlier that it would cease operating evening secondary courses, the EDB, after announcing the selection results in mid-July this year, immediately liaised with the ACPs in the new cycle and asked them to provide suitable assistance to the affected learners, including offering the same elective subjects of the

senior secondary curriculum offered in the previous school year to help learners with the transition and minimise the impact on them. Two institutions have arranged briefings for the learners concerned on the relevant arrangements and support measures. An individual institution has also organised free summer courses for registered learners to assist them with the transition in their learning. The arrangements have so far progressed well.