

LCQ2: Promoting Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination programme

Following is a question by the Hon Tang Fei and a reply by the Acting Secretary for Education, Mr Sze Chun-fai, in the Legislative Council today (January 24):

Question:

The latest Policy Address has proposed to develop Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education. There are views that while building for the future, the Government also needs to review the present, such as how to promote the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) programme. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the strategies and measures which it has adopted or plans to adopt to promote the HKDSE programme to places outside the territory, so as to enable the HKDSE programme to “go global”;

(2) given that for talents coming to Hong Kong through the various schemes to compete for talents, their children may study in Hong Kong in the capacity as dependants, of the strategies and measures which the Government has adopted or plans to adopt to publicise the HKDSE programme to talents coming to Hong Kong and attract their children to enrol in such programme; and

(3) as it has been reported that the number of medical students admitted to the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Hong Kong through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System only accounts for 45 per cent of the number of places of its medical programmes in the current school year, which has fallen short of the pledged target of 75 per cent for eight consecutive years, and there are views that local tertiary institutions do not see the HKDSE programme as a superior programme, of the strategies and measures which the Government has adopted or plans to adopt to improve the HKDSE programme, so as to enhance the recognition of the HKDSE programme by local and even overseas universities?

Reply:

President,

As announced in the Chief Executive's Policy Address 2023, we will make use of the advantages of the internationalisation and diversification of education in Hong Kong to develop Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education. To this end, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government has endeavoured to plan the development of education in the

light of the macro perspective and long-term needs to cultivate and attract multicultural talents for not only creating strong impetus for the growth of Hong Kong, strengthening people-to-people bond, but also proactively integrating into the country's development, seizing the opportunities brought about by the latest development of the country, with a view to implementing the development of the "eight centres" in Hong Kong under the 14th Five-Year Plan and contributing to the development of the country.

The wide recognition of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination as an academic qualification in Hong Kong and abroad reflects that the Hong Kong's brand of quality education is widely recognised and acknowledged locally and internationally. Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Tang Fei is as follows:

(1) The implementation of the New Senior Secondary curriculum reform and the successful organisation of the first HKDSE Examination in 2012 was a new milestone of the secondary education in Hong Kong. We have been proactively promoting the senior secondary curriculum of Hong Kong and the HKDSE Examination in Hong Kong and abroad. The result is encouraging. The qualification of the HKDSE, apart from being recognised by the tertiary institutions in Hong Kong and the employers for further studies and employment, is also recognised by about 600 tertiary institutions abroad. Besides, nearly 140 Mainland higher education institutions enrolled HKDSE students to their degree programmes through the Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions.

As a matter of fact, the HKDSE Examination has many advantages. First, it gives full play to Hong Kong's characteristics of being biliterate, trilingual and inclusive. The HKDSE Examination is an examination which can be taken in Chinese or English and its qualification is widely and internationally recognised. For candidates taking examinations in Chinese, they can also choose to answer in writing in traditional or simplified Chinese characters, or use Cantonese or Putonghua to answer in oral examinations. Besides, the curriculum focuses on a broad and balanced knowledge base; values the contemporary issues that may impact on daily lives at personal, community, national or global levels; and cultivates informed and responsible citizens with a sense of national identity and global vision. Third, the curriculum, being flexible and diversified, offers not only traditional academic subjects but also applied learning subjects for selection, which demonstrates the concept of "convergence of vocational and general education" and helps students plan their careers. Specifically, the HKDSE offers a wide choice of subjects, including some 50 Applied Learning subjects and six other language subjects, being capable of catering for the different needs and interests of candidates, including Non-Chinese Speaking (NCS) and non-local candidates. Fourth, the HKDSE Examination is fair, objective and reliable. Its adoption of the standards-referenced reporting system to report candidates' examination results is in line with the international standards and widely recognised locally and abroad. The advantages and characteristics of the HKDSE Examination as mentioned above are rather attractive to students on the Mainland and from other places.

The HKDSE Examination has all along been moving with the times and making refinements in response to the latest developments in the education sector and the community. For example, the Korean Language examination will be offered in 2025, and six Applied Learning subjects, such as "Introduction to Fintech" and "Digital Construction", will also be introduced in 2025. Given the many Hong Kong people heading to the Mainland cities of the Greater Bay Area for development, to assist the children of Hong Kong people to study the Hong Kong curriculum on the Mainland and register for the HKDSE Examination and pursue further studies, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) accepted two schools for Hong Kong children or Hong Kong and Macao children recognised by the relevant education authorities on the Mainland and in Hong Kong to offer the senior secondary curriculum of Hong Kong as the "Participating Schools" of the 2024 HKDSE Examination in September 2023. This will enable the schools concerned to recommend their bona fide Secondary six students to register for the HKDSE Examination as school candidates. On the other hand, to cater for the learning needs of NCS students, the HKDSE Examination also offers the examination of Applied Learning Chinese for them.

To further promote the international recognition of the HKDSE Examination, the HKEAA introduces its latest development through various events such as education fairs, physical and online seminars and meetings in Hong Kong, on the Mainland or overseas, including the promotion to the admission staff of the overseas tertiary institutions through online seminars with a view to enhancing the recognition of the HKDSE Examination. In addition, the HKEAA attended the Mainland Higher Education Expo 2024/25, jointly organised by the Ministry of Education and the Education Bureau in December 2023 to introduce the HKDSE Examination qualification to representatives of over 100 Mainland universities and institutions. On the other hand, the 2023 Policy Address proposed to develop Hong Kong into an international hub for post-secondary education. We will vigorously take forward the relevant work, including the promotion of international recognition of the HKDSE Examination.

(2) The Education Bureau proactively supports the Government in recruiting talents from all over the world. We have introduced a number of measures in collaboration with other government departments and the school sector to assist the incoming talents to understand the diversified education system in Hong Kong and apply for the appropriate schools and programmes for their children. The children of the incoming talents may study in local schools, including public sector schools, Direct Subsidy Scheme schools or private schools, or they can also choose to study in international schools. We also explain to the talents who are planning to come to Hong Kong for development on matters relating to local admission and further studies through webpages, online seminars and question-and-answer videos to help them and their children to understand the operation of different types of schools in Hong Kong, the characteristics of Hong Kong's curricula as well as the advantages of local further studies.

(3) In the past few years, the proportion of students successfully admitted to the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded first-year-first-degree

undergraduate programmes through the Joint University Programmes Admissions System with HKDSE Examination results has consistently accounted for about 80 per cent of the total number of local students, whereas the proportion of students admitted with sub-degree qualifications and those of other qualifications have each accounted for about 10 per cent. We believe that HKDSE candidates will continue to be the major source of new students to be admitted to the UGC-funded undergraduate programmes.

The optimising measures for the HKDSE Examination core subjects, including the gradual implementation of the optimising work for the Category A Elective subjects, ongoing introduction of more Category B (Applied Learning) subjects which are recognised by the tertiary institutions, and the introduction of a new arrangement for Category C (Other Languages) subjects, had been implemented starting from the 2024 HKDSE Examination to broaden the knowledge base of students, enhance the recognition of the curriculum by local and even universities abroad, and provide more diversified and flexible choices for candidates in pursuing further education or employment.

In the 2024 HKDSE Examination, more than 40 per cent of school candidates took three elective subjects in addition to the four core subjects, which is a significant increase as compared with the 2023 HKDSE Examination, where only about 20 per cent of school candidates took three elective subjects, reflecting that the enhancement measures can assist more schools to release lesson time and increase the flexibility of the senior secondary curriculum.

Thank you, President.