

Special arrangements for HKDSE candidates subject to compulsory quarantine or compulsory testing

In view of the volatile development of the epidemic in which candidates for the 2021 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) may have to undergo compulsory quarantine for 14 days during the examination period, or have to stay on their premises pending the test results, thus affecting their participation in the HKDSE Examination, the Education Bureau (EDB) together with the Food and Health Bureau, the Home Affairs Department, the Centre for Health Protection (CHP) of the Department of Health (DH), the Civil Aid Service and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), have made special arrangements for the candidates in light of the relevant measures.

The 2021 HKDSE will be held from April 23 to May 22. The EDB, the HKEAA and the CHP have earlier announced the arrangements and precautionary measures for the HKDSE. To stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community, the Government has adopted various control measures to counter the epidemic, including requiring close contacts of confirmed cases to undergo compulsory quarantine in quarantine centres, and designate a specified area on a need basis, to arrange compulsory testings and carry out law enforcement actions for buildings or constructions located at the specified area with one or more confirmed cases or there have been sewage samples tested positive.

A spokesman for the EDB said today (April 1), "To assist candidates who may be affected by the compulsory quarantine or compulsory testing arrangements to sit for the HKDSE as scheduled, the EDB co-ordinates with various government departments and the HKEAA to make special arrangements for candidates to meet their contingency needs."

At present, under the Prevention and Control of Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599), the Government is empowered to issue quarantine orders to put close contacts of confirmed cases under compulsory quarantine at quarantine centres.

In addition, the Government can, according to the needs of infection control, exercise the power under the Prevention and Control of Disease (Compulsory Testing for Certain Persons) Regulation (Cap. 599J), to make a "restriction-testing declaration" (declaration), under which people within the specified "restricted area" (hereafter referred to as "persons subject to compulsory testing"), are required to stay on their premises and undergo compulsory testing. Persons subject to compulsory testing are required to wait on their premises and may only leave the premises until all such persons identified in the area have undergone testing and the relevant test results are mostly ascertained.

Special arrangements for HKDSE candidates who may be affected by

compulsory quarantine or compulsory testing arrangements are as follows:

(1) Candidates who are required to stay in a quarantine centre to undergo 14-day compulsory quarantine

Starting from April 9, if a candidate is notified that he/she is subject to compulsory quarantine, he/she may advise clearly that he/she is a 2021 HKDSE candidate and submit supporting documents (including admission forms), and indicate his/her wish to take the examination at a quarantine centre. Candidates concerned will be arranged to undergo compulsory quarantine at the Penny's Bay Quarantine Centre, and be arranged to sit for the HKDSE in the quarantine centre during the quarantine period. Candidates are required to inform the HKEAA of their wish to take the examination in the quarantine centre so that the HKEAA can make arrangements accordingly. If a candidate does not wish to take the examination in a quarantine centre, he/she may apply to the HKEAA for assessment of his/her results in accordance with the established mechanism, and may be assigned to another quarantine centre without examination arrangements for compulsory quarantine. As advised by the CHP, candidates will sit for the examination in individual rooms which have been cleaned. To minimise the contact with candidates, invigilators will supervise the examination outside the rooms. Training on infection control will be provided to invigilators, including donning and doffing of personal protective equipment. The HKEAA will later announce the related details of recruiting the invigilators. The EDB calls on schools to support this arrangement by actively sending invigilators to receive training on infection control to assist candidates in need. Retired teachers are also welcomed to apply to serve as invigilators.

(2) Candidates who are required to remain on their premises and undergo compulsory testing

Starting from April 22, if a candidate is required to remain on his or her premises and undergo compulsory testing under the relevant declaration made by the Government, the EDB advises candidates to go to the temporary specimen collection stations at the "restricted area" as soon as possible and identify themselves as 2021 HKDSE candidates and submit relevant documents (including admission forms) to prove that they need to sit the HKDSE the following day. The candidates will be given priority testing with a view to enabling them to obtain test results as early as possible. In general, the Government will make a declaration in the evening, set up temporary specimen collection stations in the "restricted area" and require persons subject to compulsory testing to undergo testing as instructed by the prescribed officers. It is the candidate's responsibility to follow the testing process and go to the temporary specimen collection stations as soon as possible for the test. Otherwise, the officers will not be able to prioritise the testing of samples collected late. Candidates are required to inform the HKEAA that they have undergone compulsory testing and may request to sit for the examination at a nearby exam centre if their premises are far away from the exam centres. If a candidate needs to leave the "restricted area" for the exam centre before the declaration is revoked, he/she can make a request to the prescribed officers in the "restricted area", regardless of whether the test result has been obtained or not. The prescribed officer may allow the

candidate to leave the "restricted area" after verifying that the candidate has undergone testing as required and recording the relevant information of the candidate. Candidates who receive a negative test result on their way to the exam centres will be allowed to sit the exam as scheduled. For the safety of all candidates, only those candidates who have obtained negative results in the nucleic acid test will be allowed to enter the examination hall. For other details, please pay attention to the announcement of the HKEAA.

The EDB expresses appreciation to different departments and the HKEAA for their collaboration in the special arrangements, as well as the understanding of the school sector and the community, and reminds candidates to adopt precautionary measures and observe personal hygiene, and hope the HKDSE can be smoothly conducted.