

Optimise the curriculum for the future

Foster whole-person development and diverse talents



**Task Force on Review of School Curriculum
Final Report
September 2020**



Executive Summary

This Report sets out the final directional recommendations of the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum (Task Force).

2. The Task Force was set up by the Education Bureau (EDB) in November 2017 to holistically review the primary and secondary curricula. Particularly, it examines how to (i) make the school curricula rigorous and forward-looking in enhancing students' capacity to learn and nurturing in them the values and qualities which are essential for learners of the 21st century; (ii) better cater for students' diverse abilities, interests, needs and aspirations; (iii) optimise the curriculum in creating space and opportunities for students' whole-person development; and (iv) better articulate learning at the primary and secondary levels.

3. With an aim to learn more about the state of play in the implementation of the primary and secondary curricula as well as the current situation of Hong Kong against the backdrop of regional and global developments, the Task Force met with different stakeholder groups and individuals extensively to gather data and solicit their views and suggestions. A 3-month public consultation was conducted between late June and mid-October 2019 on the six initial recommendations developed during the deliberation process.

4. The public consultation drew an active response from the school sector and the public. There was a general consensus that the initial recommendations were conducive to promoting student learning and development, as well as nurturing talents for our society and the nation.

5. Having thoroughly considered the views collected from the school briefing sessions and the public consultation, as well as the impact on learning and teaching and curriculum of “suspending classes without suspending learning” during the outbreak of COVID-19, the Task Force has firmed up its directional recommendations below. The EDB is recommended to –

I. Whole-person Development (WPD)

- enhance the curriculum planning capacity of school leaders (e.g. organising school leaders' workshops);
- delineate the notion of “learning time” vis-à-vis “lesson time” to provide more flexibility for schools in planning curriculum-related activities, and to adopt support measures to facilitate a paradigm shift of learning and teaching and concept transformation;
- facilitate schools to review, reflect on and fine-tune their whole-school

curriculum plans with the provision of exemplars, and to plan the “learning time” of students and foster their WPD in consideration of the new modes of learning beyond the classroom;

- promote professional sharing among teachers on assessment literacy and homework design;
- advise schools to adopt appropriate measures to broaden students’ exposure and cater for their balanced development, with due consideration given to their physical and social developmental needs, as well as the promotion of a healthy lifestyle;
- advise schools to review the formulation and implementation of school-based homework and assessment policy for the purpose of creating space, as well as the transformation of the modes of homework and assessment;
- arrange more sharing sessions on the implementation of life-wide learning activities as well as on life planning during normal school days and school breaks;
- strengthen the interface between different levels at school in planning for WPD;
- consider trimming the curriculum content of subjects where appropriate at the primary level in the long run; and
- step up home-school co-operation and parent education.

II. Values Education (VE) and Life Planning Education (LPE)

VE

- update the *Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework* issued in 2008;
- provide multifarious VE-related learning experiences in the curriculum to broaden students’ perspective;
- provide different modes of professional development activities to enhance teachers’ grasp of the goals and objectives of different facets of VE and deepen their understanding of the professional role of teachers; and
- prepare more “life events” exemplars and resource materials to support teachers in developing the universal core values underpinning Chinese morals and culture.

LPE

- commence LPE (not as career guidance *per se*) early at the upper primary and junior secondary (JS) levels;
- clearly spell out the expectations of student learning in implementing LPE;
- step up professional training of principals and teachers; and
- provide relevant information to parents.

III. Creating Space and Catering for Learner Diversity

- keep the status of the four core subjects at the senior secondary level intact;
- trim and/or differentiate the curricula and assessments of the four core

subjects at the senior secondary level without jeopardising the curriculum integrity; and

- consider, at a later stage, extending curriculum and assessment differentiation arrangements to elective subjects at the senior secondary level.

Chinese Language

- review the modes of assessment, including but not limited to removing/streamlining/combining the present speaking and listening examination papers;
- further cultivate in students early an appreciation of Chinese literature and classics;
- form an expert group to enhance the learning of Chinese literature and classics in the curriculum and the appreciation of classical articles and masterpieces; and
- examine the learning needs of non-Chinese speaking students.

English Language

- further streamline the School-based Assessment arrangement and review how the Elective Part could be better assessed in the Writing Paper of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination;
- offer vocational English as an Applied Learning (ApL) course;
- enrich the existing curriculum, with more emphasis on the academic and creative use of the language; and
- provide more opportunities for students to enhance their language competency through Language across the Curriculum and Reading across the Curriculum.

Mathematics

- better utilise the current demarcation between Foundation Topics and Non-foundation Topics of the Compulsory Part of the curriculum in learning, teaching and assessment; and
- explore the viability of replacing the existing Extended Part of Mathematics with a separate “Advanced Mathematics” subject (name to be confirmed) in the long run.

Liberal Studies (LS)

- trim the content of the subject and review whether the Independent Enquiry Study (IES) could be further improved/streamlined;
- clarify the curriculum coverage with clear delineation of the important concepts;
- conduct regular review of the curriculum content with updated contemporary but mature issues for enquiry;
- allow students to opt out of the IES by turning it into an extended and optional part, and giving separate grades for the written paper and the IES;
- provide professional consultancy service for officially scrutinising

published LS “textbooks” sold on the market and consider vetting of LS “textbooks”;

- organise a new series of teacher professional development programmes upon the revised curriculum framework;
- support the school management to strengthen their school self-evaluation, and internal quality assurance and accountability mechanism so as to maintain the quality of school-based learning and teaching materials and ensure effective implementation of the curriculum;
- enhance mutual understanding and collaboration with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) on examination paper setting, moderation and assessment to ensure good alignment of the curriculum goals and intent and assessment; and
- conduct an impact study at the earliest opportune time after all the improvement measures have been in place.

IV. Applied Learning

- further promote ApL as a valued senior secondary elective subject;
- provide a wider range of ApL courses for students of different abilities, interests and career aspirations;
- broaden teachers’ and principals’ understanding of and exposure to the workplace and strengthen the training for teachers;
- deepen students’ and parents’ understanding of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) with a view to promoting ApL as an important curriculum component in itself and catering for learner diversity;
- start offering ApL as early as at Secondary 4 and allow students to complete the 2-year ApL courses at Secondary 5;
- relax the funding eligibility for students who want to take ApL as the 4th elective subject;
- enhance publicity effort to help dispel the misconception that ApL is only for underachievers;
- review the different modes of operating ApL courses and encourage schools to offer ApL courses on their school campus;
- offer ApL taster programmes at the JS level to provide students with early exposure to different industries/professions and ApL courses; and
- enhance the promotion of VPET through ApL courses at the senior secondary level and step up the engagement of different trades/industries in providing ApL courses.

V. University Admissions

- maintain 3322 as the General Entrance Requirements for first-year first-degree programmes and encourage universities to exercise greater flexibility in student admissions; and
- implement a new school nomination scheme, namely the School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme.

VI. STEM Education

- state clearly the definition of STEM education and clarify the expectations at the primary and secondary levels;
- provide school-based examples of STEM education to illustrate effective implementation strategies as well as learning and teaching practices;
- further enhance STEM-related professional development programmes and equip teachers with necessary knowledge and skills to further promote STEM education in schools;
- advise all schools to appoint a teacher to serve as the STEM co-ordinator at both the primary and secondary levels;
- arrange specific training programmes and workshops for school curriculum leaders to further enhance their capacity in planning STEM education and organising cross-disciplinary STEM learning activities at the school level;
- explore the feasibility of providing additional incentives to pioneer schools to become regional STEM resources centres and of setting up a team of experts to provide on-site support to schools;
- work with the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education to provide more learning opportunities for students gifted in STEM; and
- set up a designated committee to oversee the long-term development of STEM education in primary and secondary schools.

6. This Report is hereby submitted to the Government. If the directional recommendations from I to VI above are accepted, the implementation details will be followed up by the EDB and the relevant advisory and statutory bodies.

7. The Task Force is grateful for all the valuable inputs and suggestions, and hopes that when put together, the recommendations would bring about a cultural change in schools and our society. For the benefit of our students' learning and development, the Task Force appeals to all members of our society to join forces and work together to bring these directional recommendations to fruition.

Abbreviations

ApL	Applied Learning
CDC	Curriculum Development Council
CL	Chinese Language
CP	Compulsory Part
EDB	Education Bureau
EC	Education Commission
EL	English Language
FT	Foundation Topics
FYFD	First-year first-degree
GER	General Entrance Requirements
HKAGE	Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
IES	Independent Enquiry Study
IT	Information Technology
JS	Junior Secondary
JUPAS	Joint University Programmes Admissions System
KGECG	Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide
KLA	Key Learning Area
LaC	Language across the Curriculum
LPE	Life Planning Education
LS	Liberal Studies
LWL	Life-wide Learning
M1	Module 1
M2	Module 2
Maths	Mathematics

MCNE	Moral, Civic, and National Education
MOI	Medium of Instruction
MRE	Major Renewed Emphases
NCS	Non-Chinese Speaking
NFT	Non-foundation Topics
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OLE	Other Learning Experiences
PSHE	Personal, Social & Humanities Education
RaC	Reading across the Curriculum
SBA	School-based Assessment
SECG	Secondary Education Curriculum Guide
SLP	Student Learning Profile
SLW	School Leaders' Workshop
SNDAS	School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme
SPN	School Principal's Nominations
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UGC	University Grants Committee
VE	Values Education
VPET	Vocational and Professional Education and Training
WPD	Whole-person Development

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Chapter 1: Preamble

1.1 The Task Force on Review of School Curriculum (Task Force) was set up by the Education Bureau (EDB) in November 2017 with a clear ambit to holistically review the primary and secondary curricula and to make directional recommendations for optimising the implementation of the school curriculum (see **Annex A** for the Membership List and **Annex B** for the Main Scope of Work of the Task Force).

1.2 The Task Force has to stress that student learning lies at the heart of this review. The Task Force fully recognises students' diverse learning and development needs across different key stages and domains, and hence the recommendations need to be considered in a holistic manner allowing for progressive development from the primary to secondary school levels, with the ultimate aim of enabling students to develop the knowledge, skills, positive values and attitudes as well as qualities essential for the 21st century and beyond so that our students will become informed and responsible citizens who make contributions to our society, the nation, and the world at large. Such expectations are spelt out in the seven learning goals of school education (see **Figure 1** for the seven learning goals of secondary education¹).



Figure 1: Seven Learning Goals of Secondary Education



1.3 According to the main scope of work of the Task Force, its recommendations are directional and the Task Force does not delve into the implementation details of specific policies or individual school subjects.

1.4 After in-depth and thorough discussions among members of the Task Force and its four sub-groups² as well as extensive engagement with key stakeholders

¹ Details of the seven learning goals of primary education are available at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/en/7-learning-goals/primary>.

² The four sub-groups are Whole-person Development, Catering for Learner Diversity, Multiple Pathways and STEM Education (see **Annex C** for the membership).

including school councils, admissions offices of universities, academics, teachers' professional bodies and unions, representatives of student/parent/employer groups for 18 months, the Task Force came up with six initial directional recommendations, in respect of whole-person development (WPD), values education (VE), creating space and catering for learner diversity, Applied Learning (ApL), university admissions and STEM³ education.

1.5 A public consultation to gauge views on these initial recommendations was launched in late June and ended in mid-October 2019. To make this Report more succinct, the background, positioning and rationale of the curriculum review are not repeated herein. The related details are available in the *Consultation Document*⁴ released in June 2019.



1.6 During the public consultation period, the Task Force met with different stakeholders and held a total of six regional school briefing sessions in September 2019 to meet with primary and secondary school principals and teachers to explain the rationales behind and connections among the initial recommendations, etc. as well as to listen to their views.

1.7 Overall, the Task Force received a lot of positive responses during the public consultation period and the initial recommendations had broad support from the school sector. By the close of the public consultation, the Task Force received over 112 000 written submissions. While some submissions provided concrete comments and suggestions, a large number of submissions were made on similar proformas or templates with nearly identical contents expressing support for or against some issues. In Chapter 2 of this Report, more information is provided on the Task Force's engagement work and the public consultation, including the divergent views on the recommendations for Liberal Studies (LS) and Chinese Language (CL) at the senior secondary level.

1.8 The school curriculum has to be continuously reviewed to keep up with the times to prepare our students for the rapid changes that the world has been experiencing and the unanticipated challenges that have yet to come in the future. During the public consultation period (from late June to mid-October 2019), the tumultuous social events that took place in Hong Kong with extensive involvement of students have brought about an urge to strengthen efforts in such areas as VE, understanding of our society and the nation (including the Constitution and the Basic Law, and Chinese history), and information literacy; to help our students understand human rights, democracy, and the rule of law within the local legal framework to make informed and meaningful comparisons with those of other systems; and to overhaul LS.

1.9 The outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in early 2020 also

³ STEM refers to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

⁴ The *Consultation Document* is available at https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/about-edb/press/consultation/TF_CurriculumReview_Consultation_e.pdf.

led to unexpected and prolonged class suspension, and inevitably caused disruptions to learning and teaching. The Task Force noted and appreciated schools' swift responses to the pandemic and their efforts in adopting different unconventional contingency strategies to keep the momentum of student learning at home by leveraging e-learning and promoting self-directed learning, and deploying the EDB's curriculum and support resources. However, students' learning performance and progress at home varied and would be more difficult to be monitored than in the ordinary classroom. Teacher-student and student-student interactions might be limited. Various challenges such as the adoption of e-pedagogies and online assessment, ensuring students' access to technology and learning resources, addressing students' emotional and developmental needs, and nurturing students' positive values and attitudes had to be tackled. Meanwhile, there was widespread circulation of fake news of the disease and social panic due to a shortage of protective gears during the early period of the outbreak of the disease. All these further reinforced the importance of enhancing scientific thinking, VE for cultivating the core values of perseverance, respect for others, responsibility, national identity, commitment, integrity, care for others⁵, citizenship, civic-mindedness, abiding by the law and empathy; encouraging informed and rational judgement; and promoting the ethical use of information technology.

1.10 Against this backdrop of social events and public health hazard as well as the feedback and comments from the concerned public, the Task Force presents its recommendations in this Report, which are premised on students' holistic development being firmly anchored on the Learning to Learn 2+ – The Hong Kong School Curriculum Framework (**Annex D** refers).

1.11 The recommendations are underpinned by our wish to cater for students' diversity in learning pace, attributes, abilities, potential and strengths, and to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to meet challenges in their future endeavours. Six groups of recommendations are made in respect of

- i) creating space for promotion of students' WPD;
- ii) enhancing VE for nurturing the needed attributes for students;
- iii) streamlining the curriculum and assessment content of the four core subjects in the senior secondary curriculum with options for students with different interests, abilities and aspirations;
- iv) strengthening the promotion of ApL and providing more diversified ApL courses to broaden the learning experiences, as well as to cater for the diverse needs of students;
- v) seeking the support from universities to increase admission flexibility by implementing a new school nomination scheme for students with special talents; and
- vi) enhancing the planning and implementation of STEM education for all students.

⁵ The seven priority values as set out in the Learning to Learn 2+ – The Hong Kong School Curriculum Framework.

1.12 The Task Force understands that the public has high expectations for the review. Indeed, formulating the final recommendations has been a very difficult job given the diverse views and requests. Some initial recommendations have been the subject of much debate. The final recommendations presented in this Report could not be perceived as a panacea for all curriculum implementation issues as some of which are linked with realms beyond the scope of the school curriculum (e.g. parent education and teacher education) or even school education *per se*. In this digital era, students learn via different channels and media, and are susceptible to different sources of influence especially from the cyber world. Thus, the education for our young people calls for the concerted efforts of the whole community to care for their future and the well-being of Hong Kong.

1.13 The Task Force understands that on receipt of this Report, the Government will consider the recommendations proposed herein. Upon endorsement by the Government, the recommendations would be followed up by the EDB and the relevant advisory and statutory bodies such as the Curriculum Development Council and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. For recommendations which entail the deployment of internal resources and/or fine-tuning of existing policies and prevailing practices, the EDB is recommended to commence the planning for implementation as soon as practicable.

1.14 As aforementioned, Chapter 2 covers a general account of the Task Force's engagement process and the views collected from the public consultation. Chapter 3 provides full details about the directional recommendations. While the Task Force considers that the initial recommendations do not warrant drastic amendments, refinements to the details of some recommendations are proposed here, in particular, the differentiation arrangements of LS, the strengthening of VE to cover more in-depth issues and practical contemporary challenges, the promotion of e-learning to sustain student learning and the enhancement of student support in the midst of crisis. Chapter 4 is the last chapter in which the Task Force gives an approximate timeframe on implementing each of the six directional recommendations whilst stressing the intricacies and complexities of the implementation. The Task Force appeals to the whole society to work together to bring about WPD and a better future for our students.

Chapter 2: The Task Force's Engagement & Public Consultation Work

2.1 Since its inception in November 2017, the Task Force has embarked on extensive engagement to listen to the views and suggestions from a wide array of stakeholders. The Task Force's engagement and deliberation work could be broadly divided into two phases.

Engagement and meetings

Phase One

2.2 Before the public consultation, the Task Force hosted over 40 engagement sessions with primary and secondary school councils, the Education Commission, Curriculum Development Council (CDC), Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA), representatives from the admissions offices of University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities and self-financing post-secondary institutions, teachers' professional bodies and unions, representatives of employer/student/parent groups, chairpersons/core members of subject-related organisations, as well as veteran education practitioners in different areas, etc. to hear and consider their concerns and proposals.

2.3 In parallel, the Task Force set up four sub-groups to deliberate on issues in four domains, viz. whole-person development (WPD), catering for learner diversity, multiple pathways, and STEM education. These sub-groups held 25 meetings altogether (see **Annex C** for the sub-groups and membership).

2.4 In that phase, the Task Force held 22 meetings to discuss findings from the sub-groups, invited experts and stakeholders to the meetings, and firmed up the initial recommendations under six directions.

Phase Two

2.5 The Task Force released its *Consultation Document*⁶, together with the issue of a press release⁷ to announce the launch of the public consultation and conducted a media briefing to present the initial recommendations. The public consultation was launched on 28 June 2019 to solicit views from the public. The extended public

⁶ The *Consultation Document* is available at https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/about-edb/press/consultation/TF_CurriculumReview_Consultation_e.pdf.

⁷ Press release for the public consultation is available at <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201906/28/P2019062800288.htm>.

consultation⁸ lasted for three months and ended on 16 October 2019.

2.6 Concurrently, the Task Force continued to meet with stakeholders. In particular, the Task Force met with the key personnel of the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) and representatives from the eight UGC-funded universities for clarifying some conceptual and operational issues of the **School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme (SNDAS)**⁹, as well as lobbying for their support.

2.7 Also, the Task Force conducted a total of six regional briefing sessions for primary and secondary school personnel on 16, 19 and 30 September 2019. A total of around 770 participants comprising school heads and teachers from around 200 primary and 200 secondary schools, including special schools, attended the briefing sessions.

Overview of written submissions received

2.8 In general, the majority of key stakeholders who met with the Task Force face-to-face during the public consultation period provided positive comments on and expressed support for the Task Force's initial recommendations.

2.9 As regards the written submissions sent by post, email or fax to the Task Force Secretariat, a total of over 112 000 written submissions were received by the close of the 3-month public consultation. The written submissions were from individuals, teachers, parents, students, organisations, university departments, scholars, educational bodies, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), political groups and other members of the public (see **Annex E** for a summary of written submissions received during the public consultation period).

2.10 Among the written submissions, around 102 000 were proforma submissions expressing nearly identical views on the initial recommendations regarding senior secondary Chinese Language (CL) and Liberal Studies (LS). For CL, the proforma submissions were mainly about opposing the removal of the Listening and Speaking Papers from the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination. For LS, the proforma submissions were mainly about urging the Government to abolish the subject, or alleging that LS was the culprit of unruly and radical youth behaviour seen in the social events in the second half of 2019.

2.11 With regard to the other recommendations, positive and supportive comments were received on the directions for promoting WPD, enhancing values education (VE), promoting Applied Learning (ApL) and strengthening STEM education. However,

⁸ Press release for extension of public consultation is available at <https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201908/28/P2019082800541.htm>.

⁹ Formerly titled as the School Principal's Nominations (SPN) 2.0 Direct Admission Scheme in the *Consultation Document*.

there were concerns about the implementation of these recommendations at the operational level, for example, the provision of guidelines on timetabling.

2.12 For LS, while the respondents generally concurred with the need to create space for promoting WPD and catering for learner diversity, there were diverse views on how to trim its content and carry out curriculum differentiation. Views on allowing students to opt out of the Independent Enquiry Study (IES) were divergent. Some respondents also expressed concerns about the highest attainment level (i.e. Level 4) of the written part for those opting out of the IES. For CL, most stakeholders expressed support for streamlining the number of examination papers and/or School-based Assessment (SBA), and cultivating and enhancing students' appreciation of Chinese literature and classics. There were diverse views on which paper to be trimmed or removed, and the methods of adjusting the SBA.

2.13 As regards university admissions, some opined that the General Entrance Requirements (GER) for university admissions, i.e. a minimum of Level 3 for CL and English Language, and Level 2 for Mathematics and LS (3322), could be further relaxed. On the other hand, the enhancement of the flexibility in university admissions and the proposed SNDAS received widespread support from the school sector.

Clarifications of misunderstandings

2.14 From the large number of submissions expressing similar views about CL and LS as well as the engagement sessions with local universities in which concerns about the modus operandi of the SNDAS were voiced, the Task Force notes misunderstandings of the initial recommendations that warrant the following clarifications.

Creating space and catering for learner diversity: Removing the Listening and Speaking Papers of Chinese Language has nothing to do with replacing Cantonese as the medium of instruction

2.15 One misunderstanding is about the impact of the initial recommendation on the medium of instruction (MOI). One of the initial major recommendations is to trim the curricula of the four core subjects of senior secondary education and/or to render part of the current curricula optional to create space for students' different pursuits and to cater for learner diversity. For the CL subject, it was proposed to modify or trim the listening and speaking parts of the public examination. However, many proforma respondents perceived that removing the Listening and Speaking Papers from the HKDSE CL Examination would lead to the replacement of Cantonese by Putonghua as the MOI. This is an unfounded conjecture. The MOI policy does not fall under the scope of work of the Task Force and thus has not been on its agenda. Furthermore, with or without the Listening and Speaking Papers, teachers and schools are free to choose Cantonese or Putonghua as the MOI for the CL subject. The initial recommendation cannot compel a change of MOI for the CL subject. It should also be noted that at present, candidates have already been given a choice between using Cantonese or Putonghua for

the speaking part of the HKDSE CL Examination. Given that ample opportunities exist in different subjects for students to give presentations and interact with their peers during group discussions in Cantonese, the proposed change in the mode of assessment of the CL subject would hardly lead to deterioration in the oral presentation abilities of senior secondary students in Hong Kong.

2.16 As stated in the *Consultation Document*, whether the listening and/or speaking parts of the public examination and the implementation of SBA can be modified or trimmed to create space can be further explored. How to take forward curriculum and assessment differentiation in individual subjects would be followed up by relevant committees under the CDC and HKEAA.

Creating space and catering for learner diversity: Rendering the Independent Enquiry Study optional would not impair students' development of important skills

2.17 Under the direction of creating space and catering for learner diversity, the curricula of **all four core subjects** of senior secondary education should be trimmed and/or made partly optional. The recommendation of rendering the IES of the LS subject optional stems from this principle. In view of learner diversity and the divergent views on the IES in the school sector, the Task Force proposes allowing students to opt out of the IES in LS so as to cater for learner diversity, reduce the workload of students who opt out and create space for them to take other elective subjects or engage in personal pursuits, as well as provide space for teachers to give more guidance to students who opt for the IES and facilitate students' enquiry of the themes in greater detail and depth.

2.18 The learning benefits of the IES – including helping students develop enquiry skills, self-directed learning, higher-order thinking skills, and the ability to connect, integrate and apply knowledge – are not unique to or found solely in LS. These learning benefits could be found in other subjects and learning experiences in the primary and secondary curricula, e.g. by infusing the learning elements of the IES into the learning activities of Science subjects such as scientific enquiry projects, or even incorporating them into cross-curricular STEM-related learning projects at different key stages of learning. There are also schools incorporating the IES into the learning and teaching of LS by means of mini-projects. Above all, the value of the IES depends much on the time available for students and the efforts expended by them. Thus, when taking a holistic view of student learning within the school curriculum, the opt-out of the IES would not necessarily undermine students' enquiry learning opportunities and development of key skills, including self-directed learning capability.

University admissions: The School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme recognises a diversity of talents and is equally meaningful

2.19 The SNDAS was proposed under the theme of encouraging universities to exercise greater flexibility under the existing mechanism in admitting students who demonstrate talents and competencies which could not be fully assessed by the HKDSE

Examination. The Task Force is pleased to receive positive responses from the public to the recommendation in admitting students of different talents, as well as to receive nearly unanimous support from the school sector for the SNDAS.

2.20 In the course of the engagement, some local universities raised concerns about the modus operandi of the SNDAS, an area beyond the ambit of the Task Force as its recommendations are directional only. Nonetheless, these concerns do reflect the need for clarification of the objective of the SNDAS vis-à-vis the existing School Principal’s Nominations (SPN) Scheme. The Task Force would like to clarify that while the SPN’s objective is to give due recognition to applicants who have contributed to social services or made outstanding achievements in non-academic areas or who have demonstrated leadership abilities, the proposed SNDAS is a “programme-student matching exercise” in essence in recognition of special talents. The difference in their objectives is reflected in the design of the two schemes. A simple comparison is shown in the following table:

Feature	SPN (Existing)	SNDAS (Newly proposed)
1. Number of programmes applied for	Three <i>(Band A programme choices of the candidate)</i>	One <i>(The programme for which the candidate has a real passion and/or definite strength.)</i>
2. Realm of achievements	Non-academic <i>(e.g. sports, music, social services, creative activities, other cultural activities, leadership abilities)</i>	Academic and non-academic <i>(e.g. STEM subjects, languages, sports, arts, service learning)</i>
3. GER	Applicable	Not applicable <i>(Admissions are not subject to the HKDSE Examination results. Each participating university programme should set out and apply its own admissions requirements.)</i>
4. Admissions interview	Interview of the nominees is not mandatory	Required <i>(Since it is a programme-student matching scheme, an interview will provide programme officers with an opportunity to assess the suitability of the candidate for the programme. Likewise, the interview provides an opportunity for the student to clear any doubts on making a binding commitment upon acceptance of the offer.)</i>

Feature	SPN (Existing)	SNDAS (Newly proposed)
5. Firm offer	Not applicable <i>(Some candidates may be given conditional offers or bonus points.)</i>	Applicable <i>(A firm offer will be made before the release of public examination results. Once accepted, it is binding on the student, i.e. the student will not be accepted for other programmes regardless of his/her public examination results.)</i>
6. Route for application	JUPAS	Non-JUPAS <i>(For the pilot stage. Long-term arrangement to be reviewed.)</i>

2.21 The Task Force envisages that the SNDAS would be a win-win solution for our education community as it allows relevant programme directors to identify promising students who have a real passion and/or definite strength for the programmes applied for, provides opportunities for schools, parents, students and the public to broaden their vision on the university admissions criteria, and brings about a positive backwash effect on the primary and secondary curricula. The Task Force therefore appeals to the Education Bureau (EDB), the school sector, universities and the public to support this initiative, which would hopefully bring about a gradual cultural change to recognise the diversity of talents in our society.

Challenges arising from the pandemic

2.22 From January to July 2020, Hong Kong schools were closed for most of the time for fighting COVID-19. Since then, schools have embarked on “suspending classes without suspending learning” via adopting different e-learning strategies and arrangements. Multi-faceted support measures such as curriculum resources relating to COVID-19 and dedicated webpages and online platforms on using e-learning platform/materials, information literacy, e-reading, support for cross-boundary/non-Chinese speaking students and assessment materials were provided by the EDB to schools. Facing these unprecedented challenges in relation to the access to and effective use of technology, students’ emotional and physical well-being, etc., schools have adopted a diversity of e-learning tools, flipped classroom strategies such as videos and learning management systems (LMS), and online learning and teaching resources to sustain learning and teaching. While schools may vary in their coping strategies, opportunities for promoting e-learning and self-directed learning, and innovating learning and teaching paradigms have been created. Good practices such as the forming of a co-ordination team in schools, the close communications with parents and students, the provision of school-based teacher training on the use of information technology, and the adjustment of e-learning strategies based on evaluation data have

been developed. These good practices are worthy of sharing for professional co-learning.

2.23 The Task Force is grateful for all the submissions, which have been carefully read and considered in its meetings. The next Chapter presents the Task Force's final recommendations, which have drawn reference to all the submissions and views collected.

Chapter 3: Recommendations

3.1 The review of the school curriculum has been carried out against the backdrop of the increasing awareness of the need to cater for students' diverse interests, needs and aspirations as well as to nurture talents and prepare our students for the rapid changes and development locally and globally. To address these needs, the Task Force put forward initial recommendations that seek to make changes in six directions in the *Consultation Document* with the aim of better equipping our students for future opportunities and challenges. The six directional recommendations include reinforcing the importance of whole-person development (WPD), according higher priority to values education (VE), creating space and catering for learner diversity, further promoting Applied Learning (ApL), enhancing the flexibility in university admissions, and strengthening STEM education.

3.2 The Task Force is pleased to report that the respondents of the public consultation and key stakeholders were generally supportive of the initial recommendations. During the public consultation period, the Task Force received comments and proposals for fine-tuning or improving individual recommendations, and was grateful for all these valuable inputs. In the course of reviewing the six directions of initial recommendations, while some refinement would be made with respect to views received and new developments arising from COVID-19, no major changes were necessary as there was a general agreement on the proposed recommendations.

3.3 The final recommendations of the Task Force presented in the following paragraphs are premised on the initial recommendations. Where necessary, they are supplemented with further elaborations and details, as well as relevant concerns to note and probe further.


Recommendations

Whole-person Development

3.4 Reinforce the importance of whole-person development and create space for students' balanced development

(para. 3.1.1 of *Consultation Document* relevant)

3.4.1 The Task Force maintains this recommendation as unanimous support was received from the respondents in the public consultation. At the system level, the Education Bureau (EDB) is recommended to:

- **enhance the curriculum planning capacity of school leaders.** The Task Force has learnt that the EDB has been organising territory-wide school leaders’ workshops (SLW)¹⁰ for secondary school personnel from the 2018/19 school year onwards to help schools incorporate the major renewed emphases (MRE)¹¹ alongside the school priorities into their school development plans for the next three to six years, so as to complement the updated seven learning goals in continually developing students’ lifelong and self-directed learning capabilities as well as promoting their WPD. The Task Force recommends the EDB to organise similar SLW for primary school personnel for strengthening the alignment between school curriculum planning and the realisation of the seven learning goals and renewed emphases as put forth in the Learning to Learn 2+ – The Hong Kong School Curriculum Framework¹²; 
- **delineate the notion of “learning time”¹³ vis-à-vis “lesson time”** to provide more flexibility for schools in planning curriculum-related activities. The Task Force notes that the predominant majority of schools still rely on the school timetable and adhere to the allocation of lesson time as recommended in the existing curriculum and subject guides in planning the curriculum and student learning activities. During the public consultation period, there were

¹⁰ In alignment with the *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (SECG)* issued in 2017, the SLW for secondary schools aim to deepen schools’ understanding of the ongoing and future directions of the curriculum renewal (including the updated seven learning goals and MRE), to encourage schools to reflect on the curriculum intent in creating space and opportunities for students’ WPD and lifelong learning. The SLW facilitate strategic planning of the school curriculum with due consideration given to factors such as the school contexts and societal expectations on students.

¹¹ The MRE include strengthening VE (including moral and civic education and Basic Law education), reinforcing the learning of Chinese history and Chinese culture, extending “Reading to Learn” to “Language across the Curriculum (LaC)”, promoting STEM education and Information Technology in Education, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit, diversifying life-wide learning experiences (including those for VPET), stepping up gifted education and enhancing the learning and teaching of Chinese as a second language.

¹² The Curriculum Development Council (CDC) updated the *Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)* in 2014 and used the term “Learning to Learn 2.0” to denote that curriculum development had advanced with times since the Learning to Learn Curriculum Reform in 2001. Upon the issuance of the updated *Kindergarten Education Curriculum Guide* and SECG in 2017, the 15-year central school curriculum framework has also been updated to reflect that “Learning to Learn 2.0” has entered an era of ongoing curriculum renewal, i.e. “Learning to Learn 2+”.

¹³ Learning time refers to not only classroom periods as students can gain learning experiences anywhere and anytime. Learning time includes lesson time (teacher-student contact hours in settings not limited to the classroom), the time outside class at school (such as recess, lunch breaks, after-school time, open days, examination days) as well as the time spent outside school including holidays. Schools should holistically plan and arrange students’ learning time.

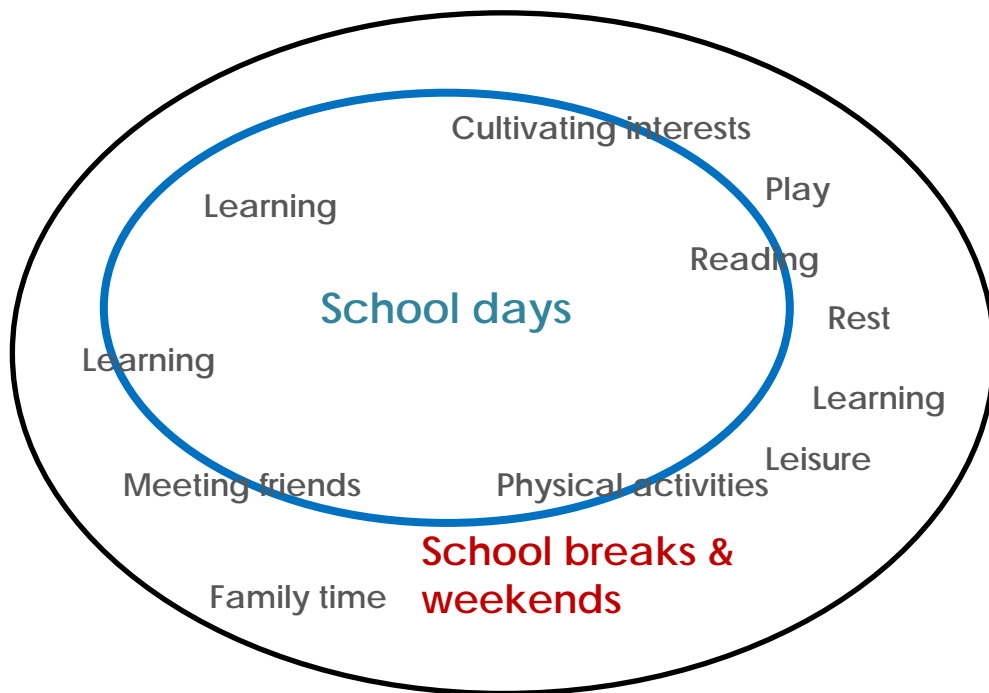
voices urging a rise in the proportion of flexible lesson time for primary schools from 19% to 25% to enable primary schools to have more flexibility in planning learning activities. The Task Force recognises the changing modes of learning beyond the classroom and school hours (e.g. e-learning), the growing diversity in student learning needs and the variations in school contexts, and thus it supports a wider adoption of the notion of “learning time” in planning student learning. The outbreak of COVID-19 and the related class suspension have further highlighted the importance of learning beyond the confines of the classroom, promoting self-directed learning and preparing teachers for making adaption to new pedagogy. In this connection, the Task Force recommends the EDB to adopt support measures to facilitate a paradigm shift of learning and teaching and concept transformation by enabling teachers to blend information technology (IT) into their pedagogy and assessment as part of their everyday teaching, enhance teachers’ understanding and skills of harnessing IT for blending IT into their pedagogy for boosting students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes at various stages of learning, strengthening interaction and learning motivation when face-to-face interaction between teachers and students is not feasible, and addressing students’ diverse needs (e.g. social, emotional) to foster their WPD. While the recommended lesson time allocation in the curriculum documents is still a useful reference, the timely updating of the curriculum guides (e.g. *Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)* (2014)¹⁴) in alignment with the notion of the “learning time”, and the recognition and encouragement of different divisions/sections of the EDB on schools’ efforts in planning “learning time” in accordance with the curriculum, would facilitate the wider application of the notion of “learning time” among schools;

Figure 2a: Components of Learning Time (Extracted from *Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)*)



¹⁴ The *Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)* (2014) can be accessed at <https://cd.edb.gov.hk/becg/english/index-2.html>.

Figure 2b: Notion of Learning Time



- facilitate schools to review, reflect on and fine-tune their **whole-school curriculum plans** for student learning in the moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic domains (and also spiritual domain for some schools) with the provision of exemplars, and to plan the “learning time” of students and foster their WPD in consideration of the new modes of learning beyond the classroom;
- promote **professional sharing** among teachers on assessment literacy and homework design, e.g. diagnosing students’ learning difficulties using different forms of assessment data and devising relevant support measures as appropriate; the design of school-based homework and assessment policy with the aim of making good use of whole-day schooling, releasing space for students to rest, play, cultivate interests and develop good relationships with family and peers; as well as how to cope with “suspending classes without suspending learning”;
- advise schools to adopt appropriate measures to broaden students’ exposure and cater for their **balanced development**, with due consideration given to their physical and social developmental needs, as well as the promotion of a healthy lifestyle;
- advise schools to **review the formulation and implementation of school-based homework and assessment policy** for the purpose of creating space. Since the purpose and quality of assessment/homework are more important than the quantity and the correlation between quantity of assessment/homework and academic achievements is not confirmed, the quantity and frequency of homework and assessment should be reviewed in schools to free up space for promoting WPD. It is also of paramount importance that the modes of

homework and assessment be transformed, in particular regarding how e-learning could be further utilised to promote assessment for learning, assessment as learning and self-directed learning;

- arrange more sharing sessions on the implementation of **life-wide learning (LWL) activities as well as on life planning during normal school days and school breaks**, including the use of the recurrent LWL Grant¹⁵ and the purpose of implementing life planning education (LPE) earlier, to deepen teachers' and parents' understanding of how the different modes of learning can articulate well with the school curriculum and subject learning, as well as to foster WPD;
- **strengthen the interface between different levels at school** in planning for WPD, taking into consideration the progressive learning needs of students at different key stages of learning; and
- **consider trimming the curriculum content of subjects where appropriate at the primary level** in the long run to free up space for WPD, and to accommodate new learning elements and enhance those in relation to STEM education (including coding education), VE, LWL, etc.

3.4.2 **Parental support** is essential for facilitating students' WPD. The EDB and schools need to step up home-school co-operation and parent education on such themes as the importance of LWL, exploration of life goals and aspirations, students' balanced development including the need for physical exercise daily, school assessment policy, self-directed learning, reading, e-safety and even myths about private tutoring (e.g. the more one spends on private tutoring, the greater the academic improvement). Parents are the role models of their children. Good relationships and support among family members have a positive impact on students' character, personal, and social development.

Values Education and Life Planning Education

3.5 Accord higher priority to values education in schools, including strengthening life education, and moral, civic, and national education (MCNE); and start life planning education early at the upper primary and junior secondary levels

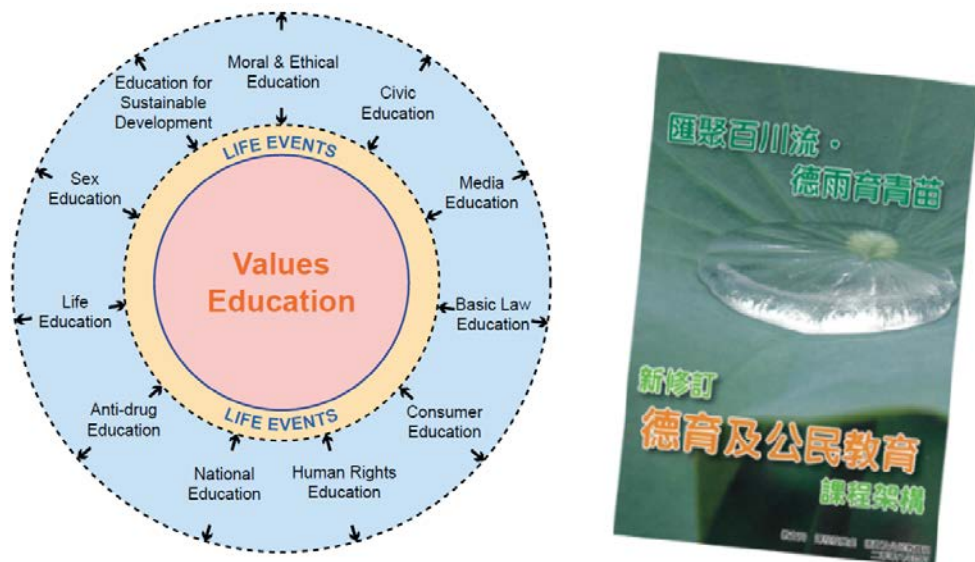
¹⁵ The recurrent LWL Grant has been provided to public sector schools since the 2019/20 school year to support schools in taking forward, on the present foundation, LWL with enhanced efforts. Schools may, in light of their school contexts, flexibly deploy the Grant to organise more out-of-classroom experiential learning activities in different Key Learning Areas (KLAs) and curriculum areas, so as to enliven and enrich the learning experiences of students to broaden their horizons, enhance their learning motivation and interest, and foster their WPD.

(para. 3.2.1-3.2.2 of *Consultation Document* relevant)

3.5.1 Key stakeholders and respondents unanimously agreed that high priority should be attached to VE including life education and MCNE.



3.5.2 Regarding VE, the Task Force considers it necessary to beef up the recommendation to address public expectations. During the public consultation period, there was large-scale social unrest in Hong Kong in which many youngsters were involved, with some having adopted radical means to pursue political ends. The large amount of fake news transmitted via social media and e-platforms for propaganda purposes has been a grave concern. The Task Force notes a strong public demand for enhancing students' information literacy, including raising their awareness of the need for accessing official and reliable sources of information as well as the ethical and prudent use of IT (a key component of "information literacy") in circulating and interpreting information. The respondents are also concerned about how to deepen youngsters' understanding of our nation, instill in them respect for diverse opinions, love for peace, and respect for the rule of law, as well as to teach them to abide by the law, etc. In the ensuing months, Hong Kong was plagued by COVID-19. This public health hazard further intensified the need for life education so as to cultivate in students a care for life, and positive values and qualities for meeting unanticipated crises, as well as helping them develop a strong sense of civic-mindedness and social responsibility.

Figure 3: Existing approach and curriculum document in implementing VE in schools



3.5.3 In view of the fact that positive values are interrelated, the Task Force considers that the current holistic and integrated approach for promoting different facets

of VE¹⁶ is still appropriate. To strengthen VE, the Task Force recommends the EDB to:

- **update the *Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework*¹⁷ issued in 2008** with expected learning outcomes of students in various key stages of learning to strengthen students’ understanding of our nation, respect for diverse opinions, love for peace, and respect for the rule of law; to highlight the importance of abiding by the law, public interest and the common good as well as the need to critically evaluate the truthfulness of information and use IT ethically in circulating and interpreting information; 
- **provide multifarious VE-related learning experiences in the curriculum to broaden students’ perspective.** For example, service learning in school and the community (e.g. uniformed groups, volunteer and/or charity service for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in or outside Hong Kong) can be more widely promoted to help students build resilience, gain a deeper understanding of their roles in relation to others as well as the related rights and responsibilities, and reflect on how to make contribution to society. The “My Pledge to Act” programme¹⁸ can also be promoted more widely for developing positive values, including family values, treasuring what one already possesses, being grateful, optimistic, proactive, and caring for others. More emphasis should also be placed on strategically integrating the development of positive values and attitudes into the curricula of various KLAs¹⁹, and also STEM education.  As the advancement of technology has also brought about many ethical and moral issues, VE should be an integral part of STEM education;

¹⁶ The different “facets” of VE include moral and civic education, Constitution and Basic Law education (including national security education), national education, sex education, life education, education for sustainable development, etc.

¹⁷ The “Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework” (Chinese version only) can be accessed at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/tc/revised-MCE-framework2008>.

¹⁸ The “My Pledge to Act” programme was first launched by the EDB in 2003. The activity aims to promote the development of students’ healthy lifestyle, character and civic awareness through collective commitment and a series of related activities. The theme of “Be grateful and treasure what we have, stay positive and optimistic” has been put in place in the My Pledge to Act 2019-2020.

¹⁹ For the values embedded in the school curriculum and different subjects, schools may refer to the curriculum documents prepared by the CDC, including the *SECG*, *PSHE KLA Curriculum Guide*, *General Studies Curriculum Guide for Primary Schools*, etc.

Figure 4: Theme of My Pledge to Act 2019-2020 by the EDB



- provide different modes of professional development activities, including pre-service teacher education and in-service continuing professional development, to enhance **teachers' grasp of the goals and objectives of different facets of VE and deepen their understanding of the professional role of teachers, including role modelling in respect of VE;** and
- prepare **more "life events" exemplars and resource materials** to support teachers in developing the universal core values underpinning Chinese morals and culture, e.g. care for life, perseverance, resilience, respect for others, empathy, inclusiveness, sense of responsibility, family values, filial piety, benevolence; and handling controversial issues, e.g. bullying, teenage pregnancy, gender issues, cybercrime, with the ultimate aim of cultivating positive values and attitudes which cut across and permeate various facets of VE.

3.5.4 The Task Force also recommends that **LPE commence early at the upper primary and junior secondary (JS) levels.** Some respondents and stakeholders expressed their concern about time allocation, teacher preparation, and whether it is suitable for young students to learn and plan about jobs so early at the primary and JS levels.

3.5.5 The Task Force would like to clarify that its recommendation about LPE should not be misinterpreted as career guidance *per se*. LPE for younger students is meant to help them better understand their own aspirations, needs, interests and abilities, acquire some basic knowledge of work ethics and the dynamics of the work scene, and develop good attitudes such as punctuality, responsibility, honesty and work ethics through role-play and thematic days. Early exposure to LPE could also help students develop a broader view of future pathways and occupations, and refrain from holding gender or social status stereotypes in relation to certain jobs. Through LPE, students would have more exposure to the workplace and its rapidly-evolving nature, including new jobs in the technology-driven economy and new demands arising from novel situations. Given the incessant changes in the nature and demands of jobs, it becomes important to nurture students' soft skills, morals and ethics, and positive attitudes, as well as adaptability and an open attitude towards life planning earlier at the upper primary and JS levels.

3.5.6 While a detailed and concrete career guidance framework is not feasible due to the rapid changes and developments in society, the Task Force recommends relevant divisions of the EDB to:

- **clearly spell out the expectations of student learning in implementing LPE at the primary and JS levels;**
- step up **professional training** to enhance principals' and teachers' understanding of the rapidly changing landscape of work and exposure to the workplace; and
- **provide relevant information to parents** so that they can collaborate with schools on providing support for students when they make choices about further studies and other pursuits.

Creating Space and Catering for Learner Diversity

3.6 Cater for students' diverse interests, abilities and career aspirations through curriculum and assessment differentiation at the senior secondary level in our school system, as well as provide guidance for students to pursue multiple pathways of their choices

(para. 3.3.1-3.3.2 of *Consultation Document* relevant)

3.6.1 For senior secondary education, while the majority of stakeholders generally agreed with the proposal of **keeping intact the status of the core subjects of Chinese Language (CL), English Language (EL), Mathematics (Maths) and Liberal Studies (LS)**, a notable number of respondents did not agree that LS should remain a core subject and proposed abolishing LS or turning it into an elective subject at the senior secondary level.

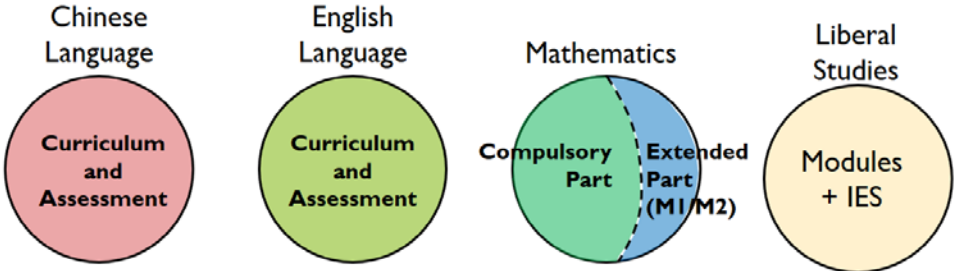
3.6.2 The Task Force maintains the recommendation of keeping intact the status of the four core subjects with a view to developing students' competencies required in the 21st century. CL, EL and Maths develop students' good mastery of language proficiency and mathematical skills, which is essential for further studies and work; and an appreciation of Chinese culture and literature, which is a basic attribute of Chinese nationals. LS aims to help students develop the capacity to approach controversial issues from multiple perspectives, acquire critical-thinking and problem-solving skills on the basis of rational and evidence-based analysis, and cultivate a sense of national identity and a global mindset, all of which are required of students in the 21st century no matter where they live and work. Many of these generic competencies are also espoused by international educational communities and organisations.²⁰ The

²⁰ For 21st century skills, please refer to the *Consultation Document*.

Independent Enquiry Study (IES), if well-mastered, would enable students to develop the capacity for independent learning and apply knowledge across different disciplines. This is the subject platform at the senior secondary level which provides an opportunity for all students to acquire knowledge of the contemporary development of the Mainland, the Constitution and the Basic Law and the rule of law, to develop a greater sense of national identity and responsibility as citizens, as well as to deepen their understanding of other interdisciplinary issues on public health, media literacy, etc.

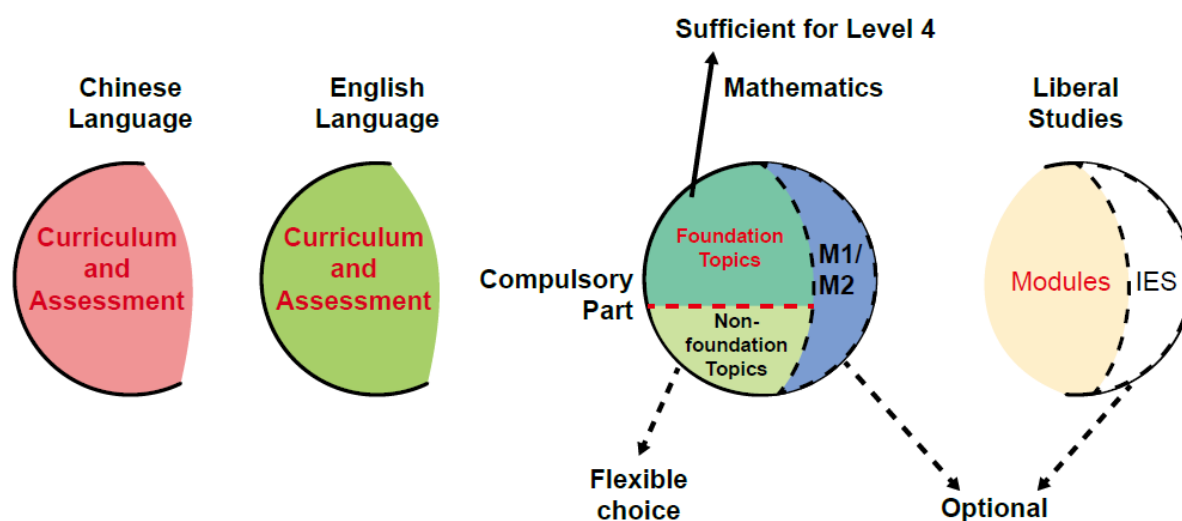
3.6.3 The Task Force agrees that there is room for improvement in the implementation of the four core subjects. Nonetheless, the proposed improvement measures may differ due to the difference in the subject nature.

Figure 5: Current framework of the four core subjects at the senior secondary level



3.6.4 **The Task Force maintains the recommendation of trimming and/or differentiating the curricula and assessments of the four core subjects at the senior secondary level without jeopardising the curriculum integrity.** By doing so, space would be created for ALL students to embark on different initiatives, including learning subjects in greater depths, taking more elective subjects (including ApL), participating in Other Learning Experiences (OLE), LPE and MCNE activities for WPD, developing or delving deeper into areas of interests, and even exploring life and career goals. The **trimming and/or differentiating arrangement** would also facilitate a more in-depth and interactive learning approach and allow teachers to teach core subjects more thoroughly and to provide guidance more readily. The Task Force notes that some respondents proposed the lesson time allocated to the four core subjects be reduced from 50-55% to 35-40%. The Task Force considers that a change in mindset to adopt the concept of “learning time” rather than “lesson time” as set out in paragraph 3.4.1 would help resolve the competing demands for lesson time in the school timetable in the long run. Nonetheless, further deliberation by the EDB and Curriculum Development Council (CDC) on the related guidelines is necessary to encourage greater flexibility in planning student learning in schools.

Figure 6: Proposed scenarios of trimming and differentiating the four core subjects at the senior secondary level



Chinese Language

3.6.5 In the *Consultation Document*, the Task Force recommended that “**whether the listening and/or speaking parts of the public examination and the implementation of the School-based Assessment (SBA) can be modified or trimmed to create space can also be explored**” (para. 3.3.2, *Consultation Document*). During the public consultation period, the Task Force received a vast number of submissions, in the form of proforma, which expressed opposition to the removal of the Speaking and Listening Papers from the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) CL Examination. Chapter 2 of this Report clarifies that the Task Force’s recommendation does not entail any changes in the medium of instruction (MOI) policy for the subject. More specifically, whether to adopt Cantonese or Putonghua as the MOI of the subject is entirely a school-based decision not relevant to the Task Force’s recommendation. In fact, the recommendation of removing, streamlining or combining some examination papers of the subject received strong support from the school sector. Consensus building with the school sector and clarifications with other key stakeholders are necessary.

3.6.6 Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the core skills of the subject to be developed for acquiring knowledge and communicating with others. The Task Force acknowledges their importance to students but also notes that since the Curriculum Reform in 2001, ample opportunities have been provided for students to hone listening and speaking skills in both CL and EL as well as in different subjects and through diversified learning experiences. Thus, removing the listening and/or speaking papers from the public examination will not deprive students of the opportunities to apply the language skills in Cantonese, which is the mother tongue for most students. Different dimensions of language learning, i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking, are interconnected and mutually complementary in authentic contexts or in the classroom setting. Indeed, some opined that students would be easily affected by others in the

existing mode of oral assessment and cannot truly demonstrate their abilities in the public examination. To create space, **the Task Force maintains the recommendation of reviewing the modes of assessment of the subject including but not limited to removing/streamlining/combining the present speaking and listening examination papers**, details of which will be followed up by the EDB, CDC and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) in collaboration under the existing mechanism.

3.6.7 Chinese literature and culture have always been an integral component of the CL curriculum. The Task Force recommends the EDB to:

- further cultivate in students early from the primary level and progressively throughout the secondary level an appreciation of **Chinese literature and classics** that are the valuable heritage of our time-honoured Chinese culture. As students acquire the fundamental knowledge of and develop an interest in Chinese literary works, the learning of literature and classics would be strengthened at the senior secondary level;
- **form an expert group** to enhance the learning of Chinese literature and classics in the curriculum and the appreciation of classical articles and masterpieces for promoting Chinese culture as well as the moral, affective and aesthetic elements contained therein; and
- examine the **learning needs of non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students** of diverse cultural backgrounds and consider whether, and if so, how much of, the literature and classics components of the curriculum should be covered. Whether there could be effective assessment differentiation in the HKDSE Examination to allow NCS students to target more realistic attainment should also be studied.

English Language

3.6.8 The graded approach²¹ currently adopted in the HKDSE EL Examination to cater for learner diversity has been well received by the school sector. Thus, further trimming and modification of the examination papers may not be necessary. Since flexibility has been built into the EL curriculum framework and differentiation arrangement is in place to cater for learner diversity in the HKDSE EL Examination, the Task Force agrees that the scope of further changes is small. Nonetheless, the Task Force recommends:

- further streamlining the SBA arrangement of EL and reviewing how the Elective Part could be better assessed in the Writing Paper of the HKDSE

²¹ A graded approach is used in Paper 1 Reading, and Paper 3 Listening and Integrated Skills of the HKDSE EL Examination.

Examination.

3.6.9 The Task Force understands that the EDB is exploring the feasibility of offering a vocational English course at the senior secondary level to cater for students' diverse learning needs and aspirations. This initiative has been welcomed by the school sector. The Task Force recommends:

- offering vocational English as an ApL course to suit the needs of those students who would prefer to work or pursue vocational studies offered by the vocational and professional education and training (VPET) providers.

3.6.10 To further stretch the ability of advanced learners in the English language, the Task Force also recommends:

- enriching the existing curriculum, with more emphasis on the academic and creative use of the language such as debating and public speaking, to stretch their potential and achievements; and
- providing more opportunities for students to enhance their language competency via LaC²² and Reading across the Curriculum (RaC)²³.

Mathematics

3.6.11 Key stakeholders generally welcomed the proposal of enhanced utilisation of the current demarcation between Foundation Topics (FT) and Non-foundation Topics (NFT) of the Compulsory Part (CP) of Maths curriculum in learning, teaching and assessment to cater for learner diversity and agreed that good mastery of FT of the CP was sufficient for students who performed well in the HKDSE Examination of the subject to attain up to Level 4. **As the existing curriculum has been divided into FT and NFT, the Task Force recommends that this proposal be implemented promptly.**

²² LaC is premised on the notion that language learning can also take place in non-language KLAs, which provide authentic contexts for learners to apply their literacy skills to construct knowledge and to develop into lifelong learners. While English/Chinese Language teachers focus on helping learners to master the accurate use of the language (e.g. vocabulary and grammar) as well as to recognise the importance of coherence, cohesion and appropriacy in texts, teachers of non-language KLAs can facilitate the transfer of such language knowledge and skills by emphasising the use of relevant language features for presenting the subject content and providing opportunities for application of relevant knowledge and skills.

²³ RaC aims to provide opportunities for students to broaden their knowledge base, as well as to apply and consolidate reading skills and strategies developed in language lessons. Non-language KLAs provide authentic contexts for the promotion of RaC. Teachers of non-language KLAs can select appropriate English/Chinese reading materials with related themes/topics to help students connect their learning experiences and raise their awareness of the language features typical in these texts.

3.6.12 Concerning the request for consolidating Module 1 (M1) and Module 2 (M2) into a more advanced subject, the Task Force recommends that the EDB and HKEAA explore with the CDC the viability of replacing the existing Extended Part of Maths with a separate “Advanced Maths” subject (name to be confirmed) for students with a keen interest in Maths in the long run.

3.6.13 The following questions were often raised at meetings and engagement sessions:

- How can schools arrange students to study different combinations of the Compulsory and Extended Parts of Maths, i.e. FT, FT+NFT, FT+NFT+M1/M2 within the school timetable?
- How can schools arrange M1/M2 lessons in the normal school timetable?

The Task Force notes schools’ concerns about the operational aspect, and that some possible scenarios for block-timetabling and groupings in Maths lessons to cater for learner diversity presented by the EDB earlier in the regional school briefing sessions are useful references. The Task Force recommends the EDB to provide more exemplars for schools’ reference.

Liberal Studies

3.6.14 The general response to the recommendation of reducing the content and clarifying the curriculum coverage of LS with a clear delineation of the important concepts was very supportive. Thus, the Task Force maintains the recommendations of:

- trimming the content of the subject whilst also reviewing whether IES could be further improved/streamlined; and
- clarifying the curriculum coverage with clear delineation of the important concepts.

3.6.15 In so doing, it is also advisable to draw reference to the practices in other countries which offer subjects similar to LS to inform the extent of trimming and the scope of concepts.

3.6.16 Furthermore, the curriculum content should be regularly reviewed with updated contemporary but mature issues for enquiry. Newly emerging current issues that are still developing are not suitable for enquiry because when events are still developing, it is difficult for teachers and students to conclude without the benefit of hindsight or verify the objectivity and reliability of the data and information gathered, and to engage in impartial and evidence-based discussions. More often than not, it is hard to make rational judgements on very controversial issues without a solid understanding of the problems from multiple perspectives and an appreciation of the

complexities of different considerations behind, all of which go beyond the maturity of secondary students as minors.

3.6.17 The recommendation of allowing students to opt out of the IES drew mixed responses. Those who supported the recommendation took the view that it could cater for learner diversity, reduce the workload of students and teachers, and thus create space for deeper enquiry of issues. Those who opposed the recommendation reiterated the integral position of the IES (deliberated in Chapter 2 of this Report) in the LS curriculum; some others also proposed that students who do not undertake the IES should be allowed to attain Level 5 or above for the written part in the HKDSE Examination. As there would be two categories of LS students (those who opt for the IES and those who do not), some raised technicality concerns about fairness in assessment for these two groups of students who are subject to the same assessment framework²⁴.

3.6.18 Taking all matters into consideration, and maintaining the importance of providing a choice to cater for learner diversity while allaying the technicality concerns about fairness in assessment, the Task Force recommends:

- allowing students to opt out of the IES which will become an extended and optional part of LS. Separate grades would be given for the written paper and the IES. Only the grade attained in the written paper (up to Level 5 with the top ones achieving 5* or 5**) would be counted towards the General Entrance Requirements (GER), and universities are free to give weight to the attainments in the IES or set this as a requirement for admission to certain programmes as they do for the present M1/M2 of Maths.

3.6.19 In the course of the review and public consultation, the question of whether LS should remain a core subject drew the most divergent opinions. There are also various allegations holding the subject responsible for the violent and radical behaviour of some youngsters in the recent social unrest, and individual teachers for abusing the LS subject as a platform to put forward their own political views. Examples of learning and teaching resources, as well as assessment and public examination materials with alleged biased or strong political stance came to light via the media and other channels. LS has adopted an open and flexible curriculum framework that requires a very high level of professionalism in all aspects of its implementation. In order to alleviate the controversies arising from this subject and to bring its curriculum intent to fruition, its curriculum framework with regularly updated curriculum content has to be revised (recommendations in 3.6.14), quality assurance of resource materials on the market, professional development of teachers and school accountability measures, alignment of examination and assessment with curriculum have to be conducted and strengthened.

3.6.20 Hence, the Task Force:

²⁴ The existing HKDSE LS assessment comprises two components, viz. the written part (80%) and the IES (20%). Candidates are required to do both and their scores would be combined and converted into grades spanning from Level 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. Performance below Level 1 is designated as “unclassified”.

- supports the EDB’s provision of professional consultancy service for officially scrutinising published LS “textbooks” sold on the market. If such service proves successful and is accepted by the education community and the public, the Task Force also supports the EDB to consider vetting of LS “textbooks” in the same way as textbook vetting of other subjects;
- in anticipation of the revised curriculum framework, recommends the EDB to organise a new series of teacher professional development programmes on a territory-wide scale to refresh and develop all LS teachers’ knowledge of the rationale, aims/objectives, and pedagogies of the subject. Different modes such as district-based network activities, sharing of experience in curriculum planning, and Mainland study tours could also be conducted on an ongoing basis to boost teachers’ professional capacity for effectively implementing the curriculum;
- recommends the EDB to support the school management to strengthen their school self-evaluation, and internal quality assurance and accountability mechanism so as to maintain the quality of school-based learning and teaching materials and ensure effective implementation of the curriculum, and to maintain close communication with different stakeholders; and
- recommends the EDB and HKEAA to make greater effort to enhance mutual understanding and collaboration on examination paper setting, moderation and assessment to ensure good alignment of the curriculum goals and intent and assessment.

3.6.21 Finally, the Task Force strongly recommends the EDB to conduct an impact study on LS at the earliest opportune time after all the improvement measures have been in place, the purpose of which is to ascertain whether the adoption of these improvement measures could bring about the desired impact and help achieve the curriculum goals in order to decide on its status as a core subject in the senior secondary curriculum.

Summing Up

3.6.22 Overall, the main recommendation is that the implementation of the curricula and assessments of the four core subjects at the senior secondary level, i.e. CL, EL, Maths and LS, has to be reviewed with a view to reducing the load on students to allow more flexibility and create more space for students. The HKEAA is also recommended to change the format and content of the assessment in line with the changes in the curriculum.

3.6.23 In future, the curricula and assessments of the four core subjects should be under continuous review to better address learner diversity without compromising the basic competencies that students need to master in life. Building on the experience of

the four core subjects, curriculum and assessment differentiation of elective subjects at the senior secondary level can also be considered to cater for learner diversity, to further release space for students, as well as to render the assessment meaningful and worthwhile for students of differing abilities.

3.6.24 The Task Force is aware that in some countries/places such as England, Singapore and New South Wales of Australia, the weighting and number of tasks of SBA have been reduced or SBA removed from the public assessment frameworks in recent years. In countries where SBA is adopted, explicit requirements including its validity, reliability, and control and confidence levels are listed as key principles for assessing the core learning elements of the subjects. The value of SBA in Hong Kong should also be reviewed along these principles.

Applied Learning

3.7 Further promote Applied Learning as a valued senior secondary elective subject

(para. 3.4.1-3.4.2 of *Consultation Document* relevant)

3.7.1 As an integral part of the senior secondary curriculum, ApL should be a valued elective subject and an important component in the articulation of multiple pathways because it places equal emphasis on practice and theory linked to broad professional and vocational fields. The Task Force is pleased to learn that the responses to the recommendations on ApL were very positive and constructive. In this regard, the Task Force recommends the EDB to:



- **provide a wider range of ApL courses** in collaboration with course providers for students of different abilities, interests and career aspirations, in addition to the existing 40-odd ApL courses under the six areas of studies, namely Creative Studies, Media and Communication, Business, Management and Law, Services, Applied Science, and Engineering and Production; as well as ApL Chinese (for NCS students). To cater for learner diversity in English language ability, the provision of an ApL course on vocational English should be duly considered;
- **broaden teachers' and principals' understanding of and exposure to the workplace** and strengthen the training for teachers, particularly career guidance teachers and school management personnel, highlighting the value of ApL and VPET, as well as the new job opportunities in the technology-driven new economy so that early and appropriate guidance can be provided for students and LPE can be introduced at an earlier stage. Where appropriate, the EDB could commission service providers to organise teacher professional development activities;
- **deepen students' and parents' understanding of VPET** with a view to

promoting ApL as an important curriculum component in itself and catering for learner diversity. In particular, the EDB and schools should provide parents with more information on the wide array of existing ApL courses and taster programmes at the JS level to enhance their understanding of ApL;

- **start offering ApL as early as at Secondary 4** and allow students to complete the 2-year ApL courses at Secondary 5 so that students can concentrate on studying other HKDSE subjects or engage in the endeavours that they are keen on at Secondary 6;
- **relax the funding eligibility for students who want to take ApL as the 4th elective subject** to provide an incentive for more able students to broaden their studies and learning experiences;
- **enhance publicity effort** to help dispel the misconception that ApL is only for underachievers. In fact, many ApL courses such as those on STEM, creative arts, and business and law serve well to enrich the learning of more academically-oriented students;
- **review the different modes²⁵ of operating ApL courses** and encourage schools to offer ApL courses on their school campus with the aim of encouraging more students to choose ApL;
- **offer ApL taster programmes at the JS level.** The EDB may encourage more post-secondary institutions to offer short-term taster programmes at the JS level to provide students with early exposure to different industries/professions and ApL courses. This arrangement dovetails with the recommendation for promoting LPE earlier; and
- enhance the **promotion of VPET** through ApL courses at the senior secondary level and step up the engagement of different trades/industries in providing ApL courses.

3.7.2 The Task Force notes that some stakeholders suggested raising the standard of “attained with distinction (II)” in ApL to pitch it at a level higher than Level 4 in the HKDSE Examination as an incentive for choosing ApL courses. There is practical difficulty in accepting the suggestion on fairness grounds. As the modes of learning and assessment of ApL are different from those of Category A subjects of the HKDSE Examination, it is not feasible to adopt uniform reporting of student performance for all HKDSE subjects. Nevertheless, the Task Force encourages tertiary institutions to give due recognition to students’ achievements in ApL when considering them for admission to relevant programmes of study.

²⁵ Presently, there are two modes of ApL courses: Mode 1 and Mode 2. Mode 1 courses are usually conducted on Saturdays at the venues of the course providers, while Mode 2 courses take place mainly in the students’ own schools with timetables arranged by the course providers and schools.

3.7.3 The Task Force also notes that the Task Force on Promotion of VPET has submitted its review report²⁶ to the Government. The Task Force welcomes the recommendation put forward in the review report regarding the promotion of VPET in secondary education and the enhancement of the promotion of VPET through ApL.



University Admissions

3.8 Enhance the flexibility of university admissions for students with different talents

(para. 3.5.1-3.5.2 of *Consultation Document* relevant)

3.8.1 The Task Force recommends maintaining (but not lowering) 3322 as the GER for first-year first-degree (FYFD) programmes. One of the related concerns raised by schools, parents and students is in fact more about the excessive time spent on the four core subjects (i.e. CL, EL, Maths and LS) at the expense of a greater number/breadth of elective subjects and wider participation in OLE, which suit their interests, abilities and potential. This runs counter to the goals of the senior secondary curriculum in broadening student learning experience, promoting WPD, preparing our students for the future, and nurturing talents for our society. To tackle the issues relating to the four core subjects, the Task Force has recommended creating space and catering for learner diversity in para. 3.6.

3.8.2 The Task Force is of the view that maintaining the level of attainment of 3322 as the GER in the four core subjects for FYFD programmes is in line with sustaining the academic rigour of secondary education and abilities of our students. Furthermore, given that the number of FYFD places provided by the eight University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities remains at 15 000 every year and the size of prevailing student population, in most cases students admitted to local universities would have acquired a minimum level of 3322, together with good results in the elective subjects. Thus, a relaxation in the GER would not increase the chance of admission at the system level. In fact, different stakeholders in general showed understanding and support for keeping the GER in the engagement sessions and the public consultation.

3.8.3 On the other hand, universities are strongly recommended to exercise greater flexibility in student admissions on a case by case basis. This recommendation has received very positive feedback from different stakeholders, in particular, the school sector which has expressed almost unanimous support for the new school nomination scheme proposed in the *Consultation Document*. The Scheme aims at providing

²⁶ The Task Force on Promotion of Vocational and Professional Education and Training: <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/other-edu-training/vocational-other-edu-program/promotion-vet.html>.

university education opportunities for talented students who are assessed as suitable for their own preferred programmes based on broad parameters other than HKDSE Examination results. In addition, the proposed Scheme has also gained wide support from the parent representatives that the Task Force met.

3.8.4 While the Task Force maintains the recommendation of implementing the new school nomination scheme, the Task Force considers naming it as **School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme (SNDAS)**²⁷ to set it apart from the existing School Principal's Nominations (SPN) scheme under Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS). The proposed SNDAS has the following features:

- Under the principle of institutional autonomy in admissions, each UGC-funded university will decide which of its FYFD programmes will be designated for this Scheme. The number of programmes and places that a university would designate for the Scheme also rests entirely with the university. The programme officers concerned should state the specific admissions requirements for the programmes in order to facilitate students' selection of programmes and school principals' selection of nominees.
- Each secondary school has a quota of two nominations for nominating students with special talents and interests in a specific discipline (e.g. STEM-related subjects, languages) and/or certain area (e.g. leadership, social service, sports and arts). Each student could be nominated for **one specific designated FYFD programme of one university**. Based on the aforementioned nomination quota, a maximum of about 1 000 students would be nominated under the Scheme every year.
- The Scheme, given its novelty in design and operation, is to be implemented via the **non-JUPAS route** at the pilot stage for ease of monitoring and to avoid the confusion with the existing SPN. This will allay the concern about the unexpected impact on JUPAS. After gaining a few years' experience, the EDB may explore with UGC-funded universities and the JUPAS Office the way forward for the Scheme and the possibility of subsuming it under JUPAS.
- The programme officers have to holistically assess the suitability of the nominees for specific programmes through conducting an interview and making reference to supporting documents such as school report cards and the Student Learning Profile (SLP). A **"firm offer"** will be given to successful nominees in April, i.e. before the release of the HKDSE Examination results (proposed timeline for the SNDAS at **Annex F**). The "firm offer", once accepted, is binding on both the student and the university, regardless of the HKDSE Examination results. The decision on whether or not to make a "firm offer" to the nominee rests entirely with the university. Thus, the proposal of making a

²⁷ The Scheme was titled "School Principal's Nominations (SPN) 2.0 Direct Admission Scheme" in the *Consultation Document* issued in June 2019.

“firm offer” to student nominees would not jeopardise in any way the institutional autonomy of universities in admissions.

- Nominees who are not admitted or do not accept the firm offer at the end would apply for university admission as late applicants under the prevailing practice of JUPAS.
- Details of the operation of the Scheme have to be further worked out with the JUPAS Office and universities.

3.8.5 The Task Force envisages that the SNDAS allows programme officers to identify promising students who have a real passion or definite strengths for the programmes applied for. The Task Force wishes to stress that the Scheme is not meant to change institutions’ overall admissions policy and practice but to provide programmes with the flexibility in selecting students with the desired attributes and abilities that cannot be fully assessed in the public examination. In other words, the Scheme is a **programme-student matching exercise**. Student admission is still “merit-based” though not bound by the HKDSE Examination results. Thus, the successful nominees are special talents rather than “underachievers”.

3.8.6 The Scheme was proposed to cater for our students’ diverse interests, abilities, attributes and aspirations and to nurture a diversity of talents to meet future challenges in our society. We understand that most institutions have already built some flexibility into their admissions process. The proposed Scheme, with the support of the JUPAS Board of Management and all eight UGC-funded universities, will gain impetus and deliver to the whole school sector and the community at large a loud and clear message that we treasure students with different talents and provide them with more chances via expanding the current admission mechanism further. The Task Force considers that the proposed Scheme could help bring about not only a gradual cultural change in the existing examination-oriented culture, but also a positive impact on primary and secondary education, as well as the mindset of parents.

3.8.7 There may be a concern that successful nominees would not take the HKDSE Examination seriously. The Task Force trusts that they would still try their best to sit the Examination as straight admission to university through the Scheme is not guaranteed, and the examinations of most HKDSE subjects will have been conducted by the time the admission results of the Scheme are released in April (tentative). Besides, the HKDSE Examination results form part of the general entry requirements for many civil service posts and jobs in the private sector for which many students may apply in the future. It is unlikely for students to give up the HKDSE Examination altogether.

3.8.8 The Task Force met with the representatives of JUPAS and UGC-funded universities several times. We are grateful that individual universities have already indicated their support and tentatively put forward programmes for the Scheme. The pragmatic and procedural considerations essential to the successful implementation of

the Scheme are beyond the scope of work of the Task Force and will be followed up by the EDB. It is hoped that all UGC-funded universities would participate in this endeavour to bring the Scheme to fruition.

STEM Education

3.9 Strengthen STEM education in primary and secondary schools so as to develop students' capacity to apply knowledge and skills acquired in different STEM-related subjects in an integrated and creative manner to solve daily problems

(para. 3.6.1-3.6.3 of *Consultation Document* relevant)

3.9.1 The recommendations on STEM education were welcomed and supported by most of the respondents. Although many commented that the pace of promotion of STEM education varied among schools, the Task Force considers that it is inevitable due to the differences in school contexts, backgrounds, human resources and development priorities. The Task Force recommends the EDB to clearly define STEM education and clarify the expectations at the primary and secondary levels. The Task Force welcomes the EDB's commencement of the work in developing a Handbook to promote STEM education under the principle of STEM for ALL. The Task Force recommends that the Handbook:



- **state clearly the definition of STEM education** as well as its aims and learning objectives for the primary and secondary levels for schools' reference;
- highlight that STEM education is not to be implemented via co-curricular activities or as a separate subject but through co-ordination among related subjects, and planning for articulation in curricula and activities across the primary and secondary levels to cultivate a school climate conducive to students' development of interest in and acquisition of the essential learning elements of STEM education. At the primary level, STEM education may focus on initial awareness, exploration and experiencing; at the secondary level, it could focus on nurturing students' STEM competencies across disciplines/subjects and increasing their engagement in more challenging projects; and
- provide **school-based examples of STEM education** to illustrate effective implementation strategies as well as learning and teaching practices.

3.9.2 The Task Force agrees that teachers' professional capacity is the key to effectively promoting STEM education and should be enhanced, and thus recommends the EDB to:

- further enhance STEM-related **professional development programmes**. Upon completion of the current intensive training programmes on STEM education that focus on curriculum planning for curriculum leaders of primary and secondary schools, the next phase of training courses should target frontline teachers. Emphasis should be put on enhancing teachers' teaching strategies and technological/pedagogical content knowledge of specific STEM topics or learning activities. There is a need to organise programmes intended for those with little experience in science or technology to enrich their knowledge of STEM topics; and
- keep teachers abreast of the latest development of innovative technology, e.g. AI, and equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills to further promote STEM education in both primary and secondary schools.

3.9.3 As STEM education cuts across Mathematics, Science and Technology subjects, many schools have already assigned school personnel who majored in these related subjects to co-ordinate STEM-related activities. This is a good practice which could be widely disseminated. The Task Force recommends:

- all schools to appoint a teacher to serve as the **STEM co-ordinator at both the primary and secondary levels**. There is also a need for the EDB to provide more comprehensive programmes to nurture a community of STEM leaders who can lead the long-term development of STEM education including formulating school policies in STEM education, co-ordinating curriculum development, and facilitating collaboration across subjects in designing and implementing integrated STEM programmes/activities;
- the EDB to provide more occasions for teacher professional sharing; and
- the EDB to arrange **specific training programmes and workshops for school curriculum leaders** to further enhance their capacity in planning STEM education and organising cross-disciplinary STEM learning activities at the school level.

3.9.4 In the *Consultation Document*, the Task Force recommends the setting up of STEM resources centres in different districts of Hong Kong to provide support and advice on implementing STEM-related activities independently for schools with less experience or fewer resources; and to organise local STEM support networks to foster the exchange of experience among schools or showcase good student projects. The Task Force recommends the EDB to:

- explore the feasibility of providing additional incentives to pioneer schools to become **regional STEM resources centres** to share experience with other schools; and

- explore the feasibility of setting up a team of experts to provide on-site support to schools.

3.9.5 To stretch the potential of students, the EDB could work with the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education²⁸ to provide more learning opportunities for students gifted in STEM.

3.9.6 In the long run, the Task Force recommends that the CDC set up a designated committee with representatives from schools, the EDB, universities, professional bodies and the private sector to oversee the long-term development of STEM education in primary and secondary schools.

²⁸ The Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education (HKAGE) is an NGO providing research-based information and support to all gifted students aged 10-18, teachers and their parents across Hong Kong. The HKAGE works with all schools and universities in Hong Kong, and experts from around the world, to provide learning opportunities for each of these stakeholder groups.

Chapter 4: The Way Forward

4.1 The advances in technology in the 21st century have brought in a new era in which human beings need to be adaptive, open-minded and able to tackle problems by integrating knowledge from different subject disciplines and working with people possessing different areas of expertise. Facing an explosion of information on social media and in the cyber world, our students have to hold firm positive values and ethical standards for making sound judgement and rational decisions amidst unanticipated changes and crises. It is more important than ever before that our school education should enable students to nurture a positive attitude towards life, and become socially responsible citizens who have a sense of national identity, love for Hong Kong and an international perspective. The Task Force launched the curriculum review exercise with these educational goals in mind and with reference to the achievements made since the Curriculum Reform in 2001 and the educational trends around the world.

4.2 During the review, the Task Force revisited the learning goals and objectives of the school curriculum and its framework in place and drew reference to other countries, held thorough discussions via extensive engagement sessions and the extended public consultation. In the course of finalising the recommendations, the Task Force also took into consideration the fundamental changes and challenges in student learning and development brought about by the severe disruptions to school education due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The details of the six final directional recommendations can be found in Chapter 3.

4.3 When these curriculum-related recommendations are successfully and effectively implemented at the primary and secondary levels, it is envisaged that they would further enhance students' capacity to learn, better cater for learner diversity, and create space to foster students' balanced development and develop in them positive attitudes and mindset to meet future challenges.

4.4 However, the implementation of the recommendations hinges on the efforts of the school management and teachers, as well as the support from parents and our society at large. Strong school leadership and teachers' professionalism are pivotal to enhancing the impact of curriculum initiatives in schools. Thus, the Task Force urges the Education Bureau (EDB) to organise at both the primary and secondary levels school leaders' workshops (SLW) for improving school curriculum leadership, enhancing the spirit of accountability, and strengthening teacher professional development in areas including the promotion of life planning education (LPE) and STEM education. In the context of values education (VE), teachers' role modelling is the key to student learning and growth, and should be accentuated in the professional development of both in-service and pre-service teachers. Promoting VE for our students is a territory-wide and long-term endeavour requiring the continued commitment of school sponsoring bodies, school principals and teachers, parents, businesses, industries, the media, social workers, and leaders of our society to instill in our students positive values and attitudes in every

aspect.

4.5 Due to the prime importance of students' learning experiences at the primary and secondary levels, recommendations on whole-person development (WPD), VE, LPE, and STEM education were made. It is important to factor students' learning progression (at the primary level in particular) into the fostering of WPD, VE, LPE, and STEM education. The progressive development of knowledge, skills and attitudes at Key Stages 1 and 2 lays a solid foundation for students' continued learning and development at the secondary level. It is proposed that the VE curriculum framework (i.e. the "Moral and Civic Education Curriculum Framework") promulgated by the EDB in 2008 be updated to provide reference on the learning elements from Key Stages 1 to 4 with consideration given to the learning progression. Similarly, a handbook to promote STEM education will be compiled by the EDB to spell out the expectations about students' learning at different key stages. It is anticipated that schools would give due attention to the interface between key stages in respect of learning and teaching with a view to providing holistic and progressive learning experiences for students.

4.6 Overall, the six recommendations are inextricably related, aiming to usher in a cultural change and paradigm shift in schools and in society at large. This would improve student learning and enhance students' capacity for facing the rapidly changing world imbued with opportunities and challenges.

Follow-up on recommendations

4.7 As defined by the scope of work, the Task Force would only make directional recommendations. Should this Report be accepted by the Government, the implementation of individual recommendations would be followed up by the EDB and the relevant advisory and statutory bodies such as the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA).

4.8 Although working out the implementation details of each recommendation is outside the ambit of the Task Force, the Task Force has been consulted on those issues and apprised by the EDB of the preparation processes, necessary groundwork and rough timelines for implementing each recommendation should they be accepted by the Government. To take forward the recommendations through the established mechanism and procedures involving relevant official bodies, further consultation and engagement with the education community are necessary. The timeframe described below is at best a rough estimate based on the prevailing information that can be gathered and the timelines for implementing each recommendation vary according to the degree of complexity.

4.9 For WPD, the recommendations regarding the organisation of SLW for primary schools and professional sharing sessions as well as the provision of exemplars at the system level could be delivered within a short period of time. At the school level, the school management of both primary and secondary schools should stand ready

to embark on the review of whole-school curriculum planning as well as homework and assessment policy to better cater for students' diverse learning needs and promote self-directed learning, and to provide more diversified activities to facilitate students' balanced development and broaden their exposure. However, the updating of the *Basic Education Curriculum Guide (Primary 1-6)* (2014) for delineating the notion of "learning time" and strengthening the interface between different levels would take a longer span of around two to three years.

4.10 With regard to VE, the provision of more life-wide learning activities, teacher professional development activities and "life events" exemplars is already in the pipeline, whereas liaison with various teacher education institutions to step up pre-service teacher education would take more time.

4.11 For LPE, the professional training for principals and teachers and the provision of information to parents could be stepped up as an ongoing task of the EDB. As the recommendation on spelling out the expectations of implementing LPE at the primary and secondary levels would require consultation with relevant partners and stakeholders, the relevant guidelines would take a longer time to complete.

4.12 As regards the trimming and differentiation of the curricula and assessments of the four core subjects at the senior secondary level, the recommendation related to Chinese Language for enhancing the learning and teaching of Chinese literature and classics from the primary level could be delivered through the setting up of an expert group and provision of a wider array of learning opportunities and student activities. Given the consensus about trimming/streamlining the assessment of the subject in the school sector, deliberation on the related details would be undertaken in the near future through the CDC mechanism which involves consultation with stakeholders, including the families of non-Chinese speaking students.

4.13 For English Language, as some degree of curriculum and assessment differentiation is already in place, the scope for change is small and further streamlining and review of the assessment of the Elective Part can be undertaken sooner. Enrichment courses for advanced learners could also be offered within a short timeframe as the EDB could promptly engage the Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education, tertiary institutions and language experts to offer more learning opportunities. On the other hand, the recommendation of offering vocational English as an Applied Learning (ApL) course, which is a brand-new subject, requires working through the mechanism of the CDC and HKEAA, soliciting course providers' support, as well as seeking the provision of resources. All these preparatory tasks would probably take around two to three years.

4.14 For Mathematics, the change could be effected sooner with the EDB and HKEAA working in collaboration as the existing curriculum has already been divided into Foundation Topics and Non-Foundation Topics. As for the way forward of Module 1/Module 2 of the Extended Part, the CDC and HKEAA would need more time to consult stakeholders.

4.15 With respect to Liberal Studies (LS), it would probably take three to four years for the revised curriculum to be implemented at S4. While the Ad Hoc Committee has commenced deliberation, it is anticipated that the EDB would have to put forth relevant proposals for consultation, revise the related curriculum documents, develop learning and teaching materials and organise a new series of professional development programmes. If LS “textbooks” are covered under the EDB’s current mechanism of textbook submission for review, publishers would be allowed two to three years to make preparation. The recommendation of turning the Independent Enquiry Study (IES) into an extended and optional part of LS can be readily implemented. Impact studies and a review of the revised LS curriculum would be conducted after the implementation of the revised curriculum to gather more evidence for confirming the value of the subject and deciding whether it would remain as a core subject in the senior secondary curriculum in the long run.

4.16 As regards ApL, the recommendations that could be delivered in the short term include the running of professional development activities for principals and teachers, provision of more information to parents and students, and requesting ApL course providers to engage trades/industries in their programmes. The arrangement for students to commence ApL at S4 could also be made as soon as possible given the full support from both the school sector and HKEAA. The recommendations on offering more taster programmes and ApL courses, reviewing the different modes of operating ApL courses and support to schools, and providing subsidies for students taking ApL as the 4th elective subject hinge on additional resources and the support from course providers and schools. Efforts should be made to speed up the process of bidding for funding and to establish early liaisons with course providers and schools.

4.17 For university admissions, the Task Force has already received concrete replies from individual universities expressing an interest in joining the proposed School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme (SNDAS) (a non-JUPAS route to admission to universities) and believes that the Scheme could be tried out in phases. The EDB will continue to liaise with University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities and the JUPAS Office to see how the Scheme and its implementation can be further improved to bring all universities on board in the end.

4.18 For STEM education, the recommendations of appointing a STEM co-ordinator in every school and organising more teacher professional development activities could be implemented in the near future. The compilation of a handbook for school planning, the setting up of regional STEM centres and an expert team, and the formation of a designated committee overseeing the long-term development of STEM education in primary and secondary schools are more complex tasks which require a longer timeframe.

4.19 The recommendations have an impact not only on the four core subjects at the senior secondary level, ApL and STEM-related subjects, but also other Key Learning Area/subject curricula, e.g. General Studies and Computer Awareness Programme

(CAP) at the primary level, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at the secondary level. The Task Force believes that the review of those curricula is necessary. Besides, the arrangements for trimming/differentiating curricula and assessments could be extended to elective subjects at the senior secondary level in the long run to cater for learner diversity and to further release space for students.

Concluding remarks

4.20 Against a backdrop of dynamic societal and educational change, this curriculum review is a challenging mission that the Task Force has been committed to from the outset. Since the introduction of the Education Reform in 2000, we have seen how the culture of learning and teaching has been changed through the broadening and diversification of student learning, teachers' continued professional development and the promotion of cross-disciplinary and cross-sector collaboration. As we celebrate the adoption of a more student-centred pedagogy, the use of more varied modes of assessment and the provision of more opportunities for students to realise their potential, we see it opportune to reflect on what strengths we can build on and what improvement measures to further enhance our students' learning capacities.

4.21 With the rapid and unprecedented changes/advances in the technological, social and political landscape of our society and the world at large, we have to review our curriculum with the aim to providing our students with new opportunities to develop the needed moral and personal attributes to meet with the challenges ahead. It is with this goal of strengthening the foundation that the Education Reform has laid and against the backdrop of the prevailing societal and educational trends that the Task Force has conducted this curriculum review. As such, this review should be viewed as an important milestone in the ongoing curriculum renewal in our education system.

4.22 With the contributions of the different stakeholders involved in this review, the Task Force has come up with a list of recommendations, which are set out in this Report. Despite the general support gained, the Task Force understands the complexities and challenges involved in the implementation of the recommendations as it requires a shared understanding and close collaboration among stakeholders on different levels and from different sectors. We need to engage parents, school leaders and teachers, public bodies such as the HKEAA, the CDC and the JUPAS Office, universities, the business and industry sectors, and non-governmental organisations as our partners in working closely with the EDB to take the recommendations forward.

4.23 Lastly, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to all who have provided valuable input and suggestions during the course of the review spanning more than two years. Without their support, we would not have completed the review. Now that the mission has been accomplished, we look forward to seeing the EDB and various parties working closely together to bring the recommendations to fruition.

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Mr Sheridan LEE Sha-lun, Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development) (till 18.7.2018)

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Dr Gloria CHAN Pik-wa, Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)
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Task Force on Review of School Curriculum

Main Scope of Work

The main scope of work of the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum is to holistically review the primary and secondary curricula and to make directional recommendations on –

- How our school curricula at primary and secondary levels can be rigorous and forward-looking in enhancing students' capacity to learn and instill in them the values and qualities desired for students of the 21st century to meet future challenges as well as the needs of society;
- How to better cater for students' diverse abilities, interests, needs and aspirations;
- How to optimise the curriculum in creating space and opportunities for students' whole-person development; and
- How to better articulate the learning at the primary and secondary levels.

Task Force on Review of School Curriculum

Sub-groups Membership

1. Sub-group on Whole-person Development

Mr Antony IP Sing-piu [Convener]

Dr Anissa CHAN WONG Lai-kuen

Mr CHAN Shiu-choy

Professor LEE Wing-on

Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)

2. Sub-group on Catering for Learner Diversity

Mr KWOK Wing-keung [Convener]

Dr Anissa CHAN WONG Lai-kuen

Mr CHAN Shiu-choy

Professor NG Tai-kai

Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)

3. Sub-group on Multiple Pathways

Professor LUI Tai-lok [Convener]

Dr Anissa CHAN WONG Lai-kuen

Mr KWOK Wing-keung

Mr Joseph NGAI

Mr Addy WONG Wai-hung

Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)

4. Sub-group on STEM Education

Professor NG Tai-kai [Convener]

Dr Anissa CHAN WONG Lai-kuen

Mr KWOK Wing-keung

Mr Antony IP Sing-piu

Ms Joanne LAU Tit-mui

Mr Simon TSO Siu-man

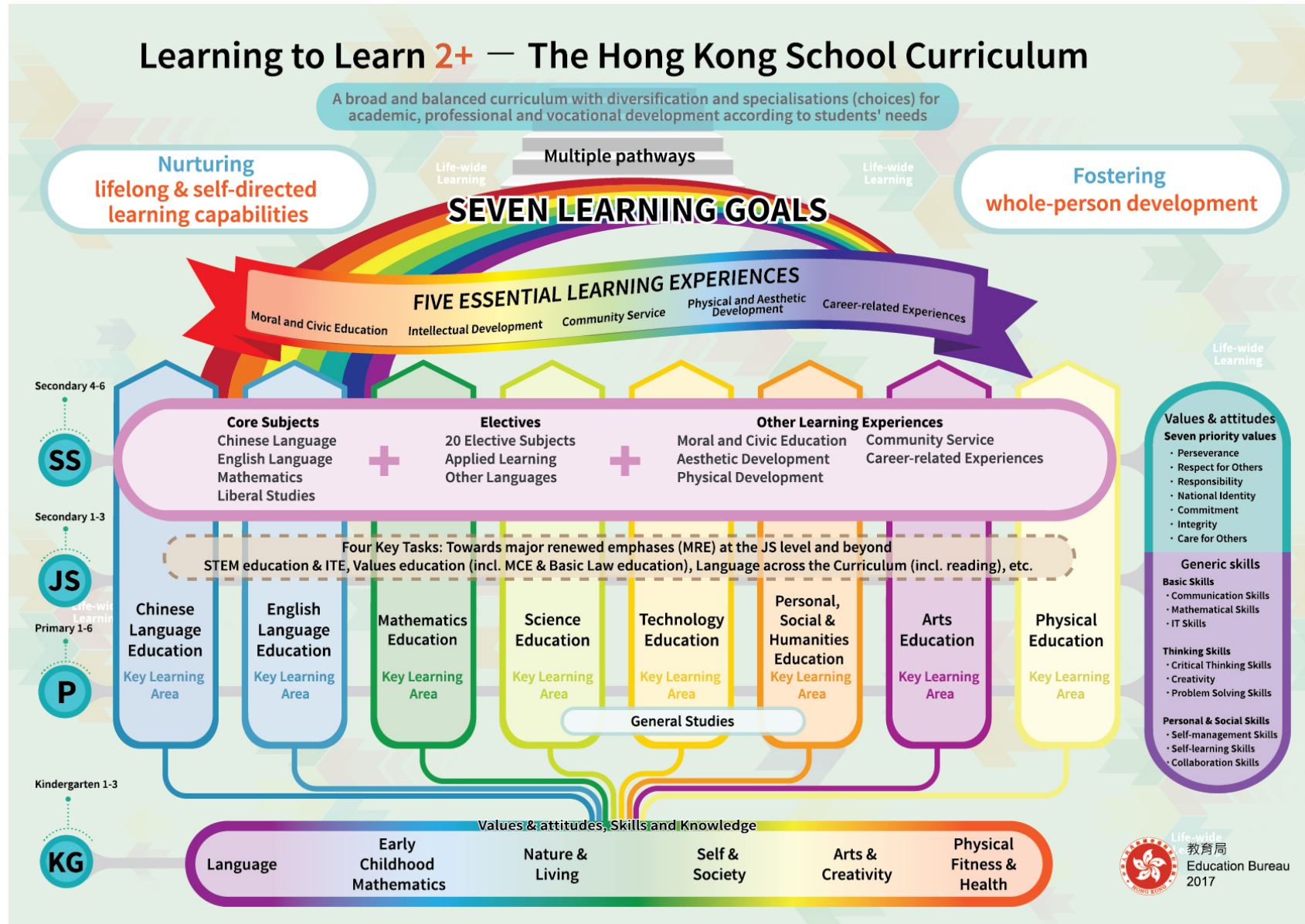
Dr LEE Yeung-chung

Dr Tim WOO Kam-tim

Deputy Secretary for Education (5)

Principal Assistant Secretary (Curriculum Development)

Hong Kong School Curriculum Framework



**A summary of submissions received during
the public consultation period**

Stakeholder Group	Number of submissions	Direction of initial recommendation covered in the submissions					
		Whole-person Development	Values Education	Creating Space and Catering for Learner Diversity	Applied Learning	University Admissions	STEM Education
School Sector	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Academic Organisations	8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Political Parties (including individual members of the Legislative Council)	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other NGOs / Associations	17	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Proforma related to Liberal Studies (<i>Note 1</i>)	Around 14 000			✓			
Proforma related to Chinese Language (<i>Note 1</i>)	Around 88 000			✓			

Stakeholder Group	Number of submissions	Direction of initial recommendation covered in the submissions					
		Whole-person Development	Values Education	Creating Space and Catering for Learner Diversity	Applied Learning	University Admissions	STEM Education
Others (<i>Note 2</i>)	Around 10 000	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note 1:

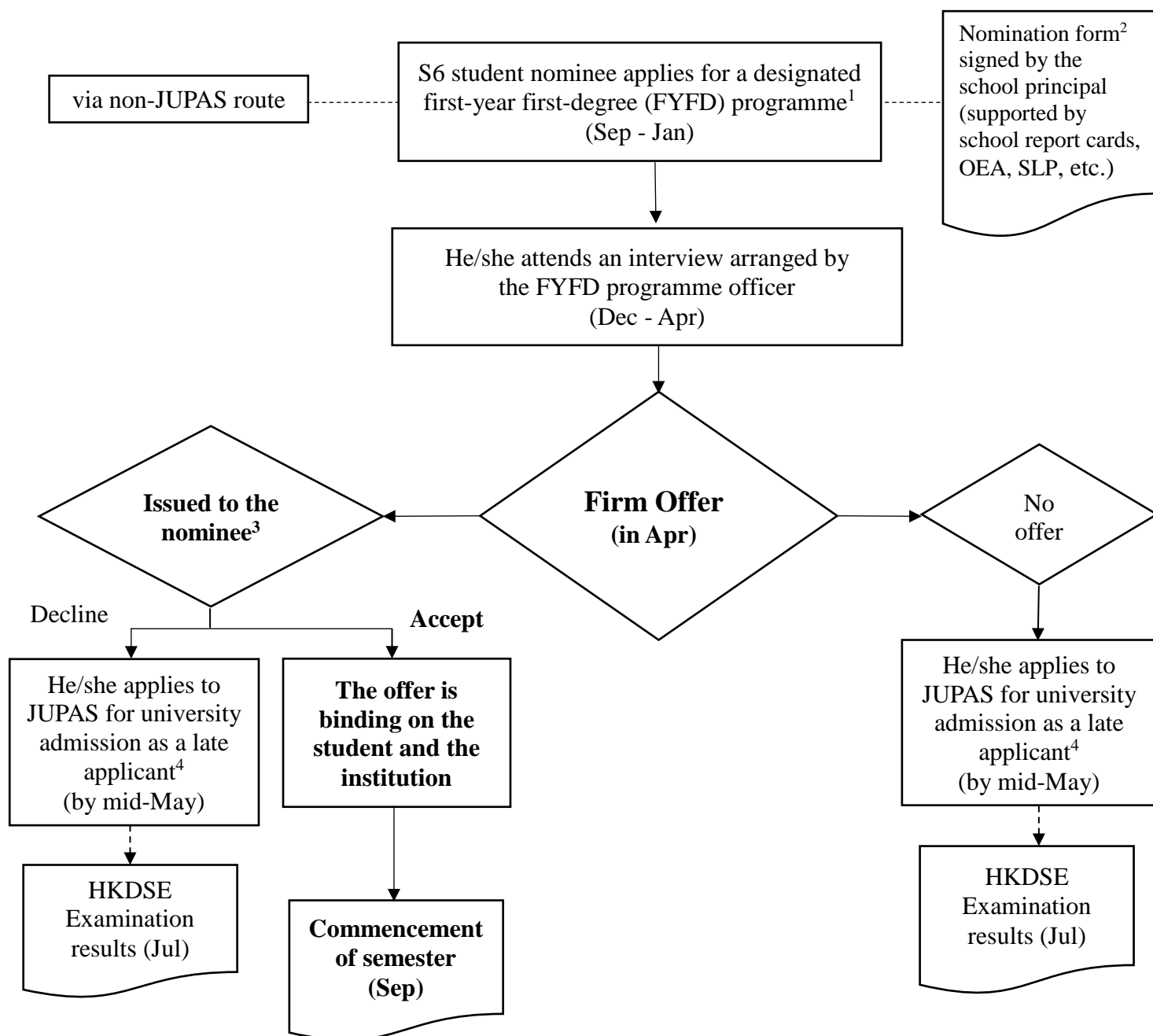
The Task Force Secretariat received a total of over 112 000 written submissions by the close of the three-month public consultation. Around 50 of these submissions were from groups/organisations representing a number of stakeholders, and around 100 000 proforma submissions presented almost the same views on the initial recommendations related to Chinese Language and Liberal Studies at the senior secondary level.

Note 2:

The Task Force Secretariat received written submissions from individuals presenting views on the six directions of initial recommendations, and on issues beyond the ambit of the Task Force.

School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme (SNDAS)

Application Procedures & Timeline (tentative)



Remarks:

- ¹ Each nominee may apply for only one specific FYFD programme offered by a university.
- ² Each local secondary school has a quota of two nominations for the Scheme per cohort.
- ³ The “firm offer” given by a university is not subject to the nominee’s HKDSE Examination results.
- ⁴ There is a surcharge for late applications to JUPAS.

