

An Introduction to the Sixth Form Curriculum 2010/11

The 2-year sixth form curriculum offered in local secondary schools aims at providing a broadly based and balanced curriculum for students according to their varied needs when they graduate. The students may either pursue further studies or enter the world of work after completion of the sixth form education. The curriculum adopted by schools need to comprise all the essential learning experiences* for students' whole person development and facilitation of lifelong learning. In this regard, a wide choice of subjects of different nature at Advanced Level (A-level) and Advanced Supplementary Level (AS-level) are available for offer. Particular provision is made for language studies in both Chinese and English throughout the sixth form schooling.

* Moral & Civic Education, Intellectual Development, Career-related Experiences (to link studies with career aspirations and job opportunities), Community Service and Physical & Aesthetic Development

A Question-Answer Approach is adopted to highlight the essential features of the sixth form curriculum.

Q

What are the key features of the sixth form curriculum?

A

To achieve the aims of senior secondary education, the following key features are to be embraced in the sixth form curriculum:

- A broad and balanced curriculum comprising all essential learning experiences for lifelong learning
- Provision of diversified options for some specialisation
- Opportunities for students to have more active participation in community services to make personal contributions
- Opportunities for students to involve in career-related activities to develop positive attitude towards work as well as to explore personal career aspirations
- Opportunities for students to pursue various sports and arts activities

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What is the suggested sixth form curriculum pattern?

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The suggested sixth form curriculum could comprise the following:

- specialist subject component (A-level),
- language skill component (AS-level),
- component which seeks to broaden the students' intellectual and cultural horizons (AS-level).

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Why are AS-level subjects offered in addition to A-level subjects?

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AS-level subjects are designed to broaden the studies of sixth form students with a wider choice of subjects. In studying an AS-level subject, students are only required to spend about half the time of an A-level subject. Thus, if a student takes two AS-level subjects instead of one A-level subject, the amount of studying should be about the same.

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Are there compulsory AS-level subjects?

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No. However, local tertiary institutions usually require AS-level Use of English and AS-level Chinese Language & Culture as prerequisites for admission. Students who wish to proceed to tertiary studies should normally study these two subjects.

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How should students select AS-level subjects?

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In selecting AS-level subjects other than Use of English and Chinese Language & Culture, two principles should be borne in mind. The AS-level course should either complement studies being undertaken at A-level or broaden significantly the learning experiences of the students (e.g. a Mathematics subject for Arts students or a Humanities subject for Science students).

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How many A-level subjects and AS-level subjects are required for admission to tertiary institutions?

A

The entrance requirements for admission to tertiary institutions and their faculties vary. Students are advised to refer to the Joint University Programmes Admission System (JUPAS) Guide and prospectuses of tertiary institutions for further details and consult their form teachers and/or career teachers if necessary. Besides, there are a number of faculties in some of the tertiary institutions that require students to study 3 A-level subjects or 6 AS-level subjects in addition to the AS-level Use of English and AS-level Chinese Language & Culture. Recently, it is specified that supplementary weighting may be given in the selection process by some faculties of tertiary institutions to students who get passes in certain AS-level subject like Liberal Studies.

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What A-level and AS-level subjects will be offered to sixth form students for the school year 2010/11?

A

The A-level and AS-level subjects available for offer to sixth form students in **September 2010** are tabulated below:

| A-level Subjects | AS-level Subjects |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Applied Mathematics | Applied Mathematics |
| Biology | Chemistry |
| Business Studies | Chinese History |
| Chemistry | Chinese Language and Culture |
| Chinese History | Computer Applications |
| Chinese Literature | Economics |
| Computer Studies | Electronics |
| Economics | Ethics and Religious Studies |
| Geography | Government and Public Affairs |
| Government and Public Affairs | History |
| History | Liberal Studies |
| Literature in English | Literature in English |
| Physics | Mathematics and Statistics |
| Principles of Accounts | Physics |
| Psychology | Psychology |
| Pure Mathematics | Use of English |
| Visual Arts | Visual Arts |

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What are the special characteristics of AS Liberal Studies?

A

Liberal Studies is an AS-level subject. A profile of the subject is outlined below in the perspective of four major elements of the curriculum:

- [1] **Aim** - The subject is designed to liberate the minds of students by having them study a wide range of issues that have impact on their daily lives and in the process requiring them to take a fresh look at Hong Kong and the world.
- [2] **Contents** - The syllabus of the subject adopts a modular approach. Six modules, namely, (i) Hong Kong Studies (ii) Environmental Studies (iii) The Modern World (iv) China Today (v) Human Relationships and (vi) Science, Technology and Society, have been designed. Students are required to study any two of the modules.
- [3] **Teaching Approach** - The subject emphasises issue-enquiry approach. Each module covers a wide range of issues that have impact on students' daily experiences. The issues of each module are presented in the form of guiding questions indicating the approach required.
- [4] **Learning and Assessment** - The syllabus is presented in the form of questions to facilitate teachers to adopt the **issue-enquiry approach** for student learning. The primary aim of the subject is to help students to develop self-study and thinking skills that are characteristic of a well-educated person. Thus, **in this subject the emphasis is not on accumulating factual knowledge**, but rather on visualizing the complexity of the issues and developing abilities for critical thinking. In teaching this subject, teachers should attempt to plan a variety of learning activities for students to achieve the subject aims and to arouse interest in the learning process. **Project work** forms another feature of this subject. Each student taking this subject is required to submit a project for one module as it is considered that through students' independent work on particular issues out of their own choice, they can achieve a broader outlook and develop self-study skills. In this way, the objectives of the subject can be more effectively achieved.