

# Liberal Studies

It benefits you for life







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To cope with the challenges of the 21st century and the demands of our rapidly developing knowledge-based society, we need to effectively prepare our future generations. We are developing a new senior secondary and university system of international standard, which will give every student access to three years of senior secondary education. According to the "Reforming the Academic Structure for Senior Secondary Education and Higher Education" Consultation Document published by the Education and Manpower Bureau, under the new system, all senior secondary students will take four core subjects, namely, Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics and Liberal Studies.



# Why is Liberal Studies included in the New Senior Secondary School Curriculum?

In a rapidly changing society, students need to be equipped with a broad base of knowledge, high adaptability, independent thinking skills and an ability to engage in life-long learning. Liberal Studies enables students to prepare themselves for various challenges in the future.

The proposed Liberal Studies is not a new subject, but a modification and extension of the existing ASL Liberal Studies. The ASL Liberal Studies implemented in 1992 as well as Integrated Humanities (S4-5) and Science and Technology (S4-5) introduced recently into our school curriculum have enriched the resources and pedagogical knowledge relevant to the implementation of Liberal Studies in the new senior secondary curriculum. The widely adopted practice of project learning in primary and secondary schools in the past few years has also helped students learn and analyse problems actively. Such learning experiences provide long-term benefits for students' whole-person development, cultivation of values, further learning and future employment.

## The ABC of Liberal Studies

There are three aims for including Liberal Studies as a core subject in the New Senior Secondary School Curriculum:

- Enhancing students' **A**wareness of contemporary issues;
- B**roadening the knowledge base and expanding the perspectives of students;
- Strengthening students' **C**ritical thinking skills.

## Areas of Study

Liberal Studies provides students with a balanced knowledge base. Its three main Areas of Study represent broad areas of concerns about the human condition and important issues of the contemporary world.

The three Areas of Study should not be taken as independent fields of knowledge or self-contained disciplines; rather, they are interconnected. Students can apply the perspectives developed in one area in the study of the others.

Science,  
Technology  
& the  
Environment

Self  
& Personal  
Development

Society  
& Culture

The learning and teaching approach for Liberal Studies is structured around enquiry into a range of life and social issues. Teachers will guide students to appreciate the changing, complex and controversial nature of the issues and encourage them to ask questions and find answers actively.

Enquiry into issues requires students to analyse things from multi-perspectives before making any judgments.

Students need to develop a range of thinking skills and information-handling skills so as to make informed choices and sound decisions.

## Learning and Teaching

# Teaching Exemplars of Liberal Studies

# 1

Discussing the relationship between sports and various other domains in class helps students think from different perspectives.

The word "sports" is most likely associated with health, but "sports" also relates closely to other domains such as modes of living, community, culture, economy, politics and science and technology. Through multi-perspective thinking, students will have a better and deeper understanding of "sports".

## Teachers

- Take "sports" as the theme. Let students raise questions they would like to explore, then discuss which of the questions are worth further enquiry. During the process, let students deliberate over the criteria for evaluating the worth of the suggestions.

- Organise students to collect and collate relevant information on the selected topic; inspire discussion and interflow of ideas; analyse and process the information.

- Help students think about the theme of "sports" in different domains and from different perspectives. Encourage students to apply the knowledge of different academic subjects to study the questions in order to develop multi-perspective thinking skills.



## Students

Participate in class discussion and think about questions relating to "sports", such as:

- 1 How and why do Hong Kong people participate in physical activities?
- 2 How do sports reflect the characteristics of social culture and economic development of some countries/regions?
- 3 Why do many countries/regions strive to organise the Olympic Games and various major sports events?
- 4 What is the relationship between a country's technological development and its sports achievement?

Collect, collate and analyse relevant information; discuss and listen to the opinions of others; express ideas and construct personal knowledge.

Learn to understand that "sports" can involve personal, social, national and international domains. Learn to analyse social phenomena, including economy, culture, politics, science and technology, from different perspectives.

# Teaching Exemplars of Liberal Studies

## 2

Discussing genetically modified food in class helps students to develop critical thinking skills.

Genetically modified food is a modern technological product. Through discussion and analysis, students can understand the technological development, and the pros and cons, of genetically modified food. They can then discuss how to strike a balance between technology and nature.

### Teachers

- Briefly introduce the technique of genetic modification and its development to enable students to collect related information.
- Guide students to conduct group discussions on the information collected. Each group needs to report on the pros and cons of producing genetically modified food. Teachers then conclude by establishing the various criteria for evaluating whether genetically modified food should be produced.
- Help students elect representatives to debate on topics such as "Mankind need to produce genetically modified food to solve the problem of food shortage". Other students can act as adjudicators and floor speakers in the debate.
- Analyse students' performance in the debate and comment on the voting results. Finally point out that one of the main points in critical thinking is to make use of evidence to support one's own viewpoint.





## Students

- Understand the development of genetic modification. Collect and collate information related to genetically modified food and the concerns raised in the literature.
- Understand and compare the views of people from different backgrounds on the production of genetically modified food through group discussions and presentations.
- Conduct an in-depth analysis of the arguments, identify relevant viewpoints and develop thinking and debating skills. Then discuss the relationship between technological development and the ecological environment as well as the relationship between the human situation and allocation of resources.
- Elect the winner of the debate according to the strengths and weaknesses and credibility of the arguments put forward by the Proposition and Opposition .

# Assessment

During the three years of senior secondary education, schools will assess students formatively in order to collect information on learning processes, what students have learned and where they need to improve. Internal assessment should take into account factors such as learning objectives, student abilities, school contexts as well as teaching and learning processes etc. Project assignments are assessed on various aspects such as content, presentation, creativity and initiative. Students are required to demonstrate their analytical and critical power and their ability to use relevant information to substantiate their arguments.

## Public Assessment

The public assessment of Liberal Studies will adopt the standards-referenced approach to grading and reporting student performance. The purpose is to recognize the achievement of each student in Liberal Studies at the end of the three-year new senior secondary education. The public assessment will comprise two parts: External Written Examination and School-based Assessment (SBA). SBA may include Independent Enquiry Study, coursework, performance in class activities, and internal tests and examinations. As some of the learning outcomes may not be readily assessed by means of the written examination, diversified modes of assessment are necessary.

## Internal Assessment

Mr Leung Chung-wan,  
Chairman of the Hong Kong Parents Association

"In facing the rapidly developing society, it is important for parents to develop the all-round ability of their children. Our younger generation should actively acquire knowledge in different areas or academic subjects, and master such skills as adaptability, analytical power, creativity, and problem-solving and self-learning abilities. Liberal Studies develops the all-round ability of our next generation for the future of our society."



Ms Yuen Kit-yan,  
A secondary teacher of Liberal Studies

"Teachers play the role of a stimulator in Liberal Studies. Teachers motivate students to think by asking questions, observe their responses and provide guidelines for analysis.

They help students analyse current issues from different perspectives and give relevant comments to students' viewpoints."



Mr Vincent Cheng Hoi-chuen  
Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive  
of Hang Seng Bank

"As the Chief Executive of the bank, I would like to see my staff adopt an international outlook and have a creative mind. Liberal Studies allows students to keep an eye on the world and see things from different perspectives, and to think more and analyse more so as to make their own judgments."



# Inclusion of Liberal Studies in the university admission criteria

Globally, Liberal Studies has been gaining increasing importance. Universities have advocated for years to avoid premature streaming in secondary education in order not to narrow the knowledge base of students. Under the new academic structure, the duration of undergraduate programmes will extend from three to four years and students can decide their field of specialization after entering universities. Apart from a broad knowledge base, universities also expect secondary students to possess a self-learning attitude and critical thinking abilities. In addition to the introduction of Liberal Studies in their own curriculum, universities fully support the inclusion of Liberal Studies as a core subject in the secondary school curriculum. They will include the subject as one of their admission criteria.

S7 students taking Liberal Studies

Ms Wong Mei-lin (left)

"By taking Liberal Studies, we learn how to evaluate different matters and this broadens our horizons."

Ms Ko Hiu-kwan (right)

"Liberal Studies provides me with the opportunity to express my views. I can also learn more through discussion with my classmates."



"Liberal Studies nurtures multi-perspective thinking so that students can learn how to reflect on a problem and find evidence to support their arguments. This is very helpful to their work in the future."



Mr Dick Lee Ming-kwai  
Commissioner of Police



# Liberal Studies

## It benefits you for life

A number of surveys have indicated that local employers expect their employees to possess the following qualities: communication abilities, adaptability, team spirit, sense of commitment, problem-solving abilities, analytical power, critical thinking, creativity etc. The curriculum of Liberal Studies will enable students to learn how to learn. Students can thus prepare themselves for further studies or future employment.

Proposed Curriculum and Assessment Guide:  
Liberal Studies (for Consultation)  
can be downloaded from the Education and  
Manpower Bureau website at  
<http://emb.gov.hk>