

Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation

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Education and Manpower Bureau

Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation - Future Arrangements -

With the interest of students as the primary concern, the future arrangements for the medium of instruction (MOI) for secondary schools and the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) mechanism aim at providing students with a conducive learning environment for promoting their whole-person development, independent learning, creativity and innovation, active participation and development of positive attitudes and values.

- ✦ The Education Commission (EC) set up a Working Group in July 2003 to take forward the review of the MOI arrangements for secondary schools and the SSPA mechanism.
- ✦ The Working Group published the *Review of Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools and Secondary School Places Allocation – Consultation Document* in early February 2005 and launched the public consultation which ended in July 2005. After careful consideration of the public views, the EC submitted a report in December 2005 to the Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) which has accepted the report. This booklet gives a brief account of the major recommendations.

- **The revised SSPA mechanism will apply to students proceeding to Secondary (S) 1 in September 2007 and thereafter. Students studying in Primary (P) 5 in the 2005/06 school year will be allocated S1 places under the revised SSPA mechanism.**
- **The revised MOI arrangements for secondary schools will be implemented with effect from September 2010. Any changes in the MOI of a school will start with S1 classes and progress each year to a higher grade level.**
- **The various measures to enhance English proficiency of students can be implemented from the 2006/07 school year.**

Medium of Instruction for Secondary Schools – Upholding Mother-tongue Teaching and Enhancing English Proficiency

- We continue to **uphold the mother tongue as the principal MOI**.
- We have no objection to some schools **choosing to adopt English as the MOI (EMI), provided that they fulfill the prescribed criteria**. The choice of EMI for these schools should also be subject to **a review every six years** for quality assurance.
- We **maintain the existing between-school streaming arrangement¹** at junior secondary levels. A school should adopt the same MOI in all junior secondary classes.
- **Irrespective of the MOI chosen, schools should endeavour to nurture talents proficient in both Chinese and English.**

Secondary Schools Adopting Chinese as the MOI (CMI)

Strategies to Enhance Students' English Proficiency

Being an international city and part of China, students in Hong Kong must possess a good standard of Chinese and English. Since students in Hong Kong are already exposed to plenty of Chinese in daily life, secondary schools adopting CMI need to enhance students' English proficiency through different strategies. To this end, the Government will also invest more resources to help the schools concerned.

Conducting English-medium Extended Learning Activities – For more exposure and smooth transition

- **On the condition that students' learning of content subjects would not be adversely affected**, schools may **allocate**, on top of English Language lessons, **not more than 15%, 20% and 25% of the total lesson time** at S1, S2 and S3 respectively in a progressive manner **for extended learning activities conducted in English** in non-language subjects, with a view to increasing students' exposure to English.
- The teacher capability requirement for EMI teachers will also apply to teachers conducting English-medium extended learning activities.

¹ The majority of secondary schools adopt mother-tongue teaching at junior secondary levels, while secondary schools which have fulfilled the prescribed criteria may choose to adopt EMI teaching.

Investing Additional Resources – For results and accountability

- We intend to **allocate funding for setting up an English enhancement scheme** open to application by schools adopting CMI teaching. Additional grant will be provided under the scheme for schools to further strengthen the teaching and learning of English.
- Schools are required to work out an implementation plan to attain agreed performance targets on teaching quality and students' academic performance.

Creating English-rich Environment – For motivating students to learn and practise English in context

- Schools should endeavour to **create an English-rich environment** outside the classroom while practising mother-tongue teaching. Measures may include:
 - Promoting a culture of using English for day-to-day communication.
 - Making effective use of Native-speaking English Teachers.
 - Developing students' reading habit.
 - Conducting multifarious English activities.
 - Encouraging teachers and students to make good use of learning materials written in English.

MOI Arrangement at Senior Secondary Levels – Maintaining flexibility

- By the time they have completed junior secondary education, students should have a solid foundation in the learning of content subjects and in language proficiency. Some students may be able to learn through English at senior secondary levels. At senior secondary levels, schools tend to offer a diversified curriculum so as to better prepare students for further study and future career development. It is therefore appropriate for **schools to have more flexibility in the MOI arrangement at senior secondary levels in consideration of their student ability and curriculum needs**.
- Schools may choose to adopt EMI teaching for certain subjects in some classes. In making this choice, they are required to:
 - put in place well designed bridging and support programmes systematically and strategically so as to help students adapt to the changes in MOI.
 - meet the prescribed criteria on teacher capability and support measures as those for EMI teaching at junior secondary levels. They should also ensure that their students are able to learn through EMI.

Secondary Schools Adopting English as the MOI

Learning through a second language (i.e. English for the majority of students in Hong Kong) inevitably creates language barriers. If a secondary school chooses to adopt EMI teaching starting from the junior secondary levels, it has to meet the three prescribed criteria of student ability, teacher capability and support measures so as to minimize the language barriers of learning and to assure quality.

Student Ability

- Students need to have strong learning motivation and ability to overcome the language barriers of learning through a second language. Research studies indicate that currently, **at most 40% of S1 students in Hong Kong are able to learn through English**².
- **Schools** adopting English as the MOI **must have at least 85% of its S1 intake being able to learn through English.**
- **“Through-train” secondary schools** have to admit all students proceeding to S1 from the linked primary schools. Since they have a better understanding of their students and are better placed to cater for student diversity, **the threshold can be flexibly lowered to 75%** (only applicable to S1 intake admitted from the linked primary schools).
- **The deadline for feeder/nominated schools to decide whether or not to form “through-trains” is deferred to 31 May 2012**³ so as to allow schools to have a better grasp of their student ability profile under the revised SSPA mechanism.

² Assessment of students' ability to learn through English is based on their primary schools' internal assessment (IA) results. Due to the disparity in the assessment standards among schools, the IA results will be scaled by using the existing pre-Secondary 1 Hong Kong Attainment Test (pre-S1 HKAT). Samples of the pre-S1 HKAT results will be collected biennially, and the average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs will be used to scale the primary schools' IA results of the coming cohort of P6 students proceeding to S1. As the pre-S1 HKAT results will not have any direct bearing on students taking the test, it helps lower the stake.

³ Originally, feeder/nominated schools complying with the “through-train” principles had to decide whether or not to form “through-trains” by 31 May 2006.

Teacher Capability

- Non-language subject teachers teaching through English should at least be **“able to communicate intelligibly and their use of English should have no adverse impact on students' acquisition of the English language”**.
- The specific requirements are:
 - **Grade C or above in English Language (Syllabus B) of the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE)** or other recognized qualifications (including Band 6 or above in the International English Language Testing System (academic domain), Grade D or above in Use of English of the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination, etc.).
 - For serving EMI teachers who have not attained the necessary qualifications, they can opt for classroom observation by subject and language experts.
 - Teachers should attend a minimum of 15 hours of EMI-related professional development activities every three years.

Support Measures

- Schools must **purposefully and strategically put in place well designed bridging and support programmes for the students to learn in English.**
- **Schools must provide a language environment conducive to learning in EMI**, including strengthening the learning of English through language-across-the-curriculum and creating an English immersion environment, etc.
- Schools are required to **set out** the support measures **in their school development plans and annual reports.**

Support from the Government

- We intend to **earmark funding** for schools adopting EMI teaching to **provide them with additional resources**, so as to encourage these schools to strengthen their efforts in promoting the learning of English across the curriculum and further enhance the EMI teaching quality.

Secondary School Places Allocation

Revised SSPA Mechanism

- Provide parents/students with more choices, and promote diversified development of schools and students.
- Contain the within-school student diversity at a level currently manageable by secondary schools and teachers so as to give them space to consolidate their experience in trying out “remedial and enhancement” measures and to ensure teaching effectiveness.
- Avoid increasing the pressure of public examinations on students.

	Existing Mechanism	Revised Mechanism
Discretionary Places (DP)		
DP quota	20%	30%
Number of secondary schools to apply for	1	2 (Parents are only required to indicate their order of preference to the EMB)
Central Allocation (CA)		
Allocation not restricted by school nets	Not available	10% of the CA places in each school
Allocation bands	3	Maintained at 3
Scaling of students' IA results	Using the Academic Aptitude Test results of primary schools in the 1997/98, 1998/99 and 1999/2000 school years	Using the results of the existing pre-S1 HKAT taken by students proceeding to S1. Samples of the pre-S1 HKAT results are collected biennially and the average of the results of the two most recently sampled pre-S1 HKATs is used to scale the primary schools' IA results of the coming cohort of P6 students proceeding to S1

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why do we uphold mother-tongue teaching?

- Studies, classroom observation, quality assurance inspections, focus inspections, etc. all indicate that students learn best in their mother tongue.
- Schools adopting mother-tongue teaching have demonstrated sustained improvement in the HKCEE results.
- It is easier for students learning in their mother tongue to develop a sense of achievement. Hence, they have greater confidence, interest and motivation in learning.
- Most countries use their mother tongues as the MOI. Learning through a second language inevitably creates language barriers, the extent of which may vary from student to student. For most students, such barriers may reduce their interest and effectiveness in learning.

2. Why do we maintain the between-school streaming arrangement?

- To provide secondary schools with a stable environment so that they may better realize their education vision.
- To avoid multiple labelling arising from the within-school streaming approach (i.e. adopting CMI or EMI by class). This helps foster a school culture marked by unity and harmony and reduces the possible pressure on students.
- To give teachers more room to cater for the needs of students, pursue professional development and enhance teaching effectiveness.

3. Will mother-tongue teaching affect the English proficiency of students?

- * Using English as the MOI and learning English are two different issues. We should not mix up the two issues. Nor should English proficiency be enhanced at the cost of undermining the effectiveness and interest in learning other content subjects.
- * English proficiency can be enhanced through frequent listening, speaking, reading and writing. The focus should be on enhancing the strategies of teaching and learning of English and creating an English-rich environment so that students can extend English to real-life application. With the right measures in place, students should be able to learn the language well irrespective of the MOI.
- * Apart from providing the existing additional resources (including around 2-3 additional English Language teachers per school) for schools adopting mother-tongue teaching, we seek to provide further additional resources for these schools to enhance the English proficiency of their students.

4. Will mother-tongue teaching affect the transition to EMI teaching at the university level?

- * The key admission criterion of non-language departments of a university is students' performance in content subjects, irrespective of whether they learn through Chinese or English.
- * The edge of using the mother tongue to master content subject knowledge helps make the students more competitive in seeking admission to universities.
- * The introduction of English-medium extended learning activities will enhance students' exposure to subject-related English and help smoothen the transition to EMI learning.
- * With a solid foundation in content subjects as well as English, students would be able to adapt to EMI teaching at the university level without much difficulty.

5. Why are the pre-S1 HKAT results of the current cohort of students not used to scale their IA results under the SSPA scaling mechanism?

- * The scaling mechanism is to statistically adjust the diversity in assessment standards among primary schools. As the performance of a school is usually quite stable between years, the pre-S1 HKAT results of the previous cohorts of students can reliably be used as a valid tool for scaling purpose.
- * Since the results of the pre-S1 HKAT are often used by secondary schools as reference for streaming their S1 intake, students should be serious about the test.
- * Since the pre-S1 HKAT is a well-established test administered by secondary schools every year, it is not necessary to introduce a new assessment.
- * Since students' pre-S1 HKAT results have no bearing on their allocation results, it helps minimize the stake of the assessment and the incentive for drilling.
- * Students' own efforts will still be duly recognized as the admission during the DP stage would be based on the performance of individual students while their banding at the CA stage will still be determined by their IA results.

Please visit the EMB website at <http://www.emb.gov.hk> for further information on the future MOI arrangements for secondary schools and SSPA mechanism.