

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM No. 172/2015

From : Secretary for Education

To : Heads of all Secondary Schools,
Primary schools and Kindergartens
(excluding ESF schools and
international schools)

Ref. : EDB(CDI/TR)/300-1/1/12 (1)

Date : 28 October 2015

(Note : This circular memorandum should be read by heads and teachers of all secondary schools, primary schools and kindergartens.)

The Implementation of the Policy of Debundling Textbooks and Teaching/Learning Materials for Pricing

Summary

This circular memorandum aims to remind schools the salient points to note under the “Policy of Debundling Textbooks and Teaching/Learning Materials for Pricing” (hereafter “Debundling Policy”) in order to facilitate the implementation of the Debundling Policy.

Background

2. The Debundling Policy has been implemented by phases since the 2011/12 school year to rationalise the practice of bundling the sale of textbooks with teaching materials. The policy has been fully implemented since the 2014/15 school year. At present, all the textbooks listed on the Recommended Textbook List (RTL) and the Recommended e-Textbook List (eRTL) have been debundled.

Details

3. After the implementation of the Debundling Policy, the practice of bundling the sale of textbooks with teaching/learning materials is not allowed. Publishers should provide separate pricing for textbooks and the debundled teaching/learning materials. Except for free inspection copies of textbooks for textbook selection purpose and on conditions free teacher’s handbooks, publishers are not allowed to provide schools with free teaching resources, or provide those resources to schools on free loan. For details, please refer to “Specifications of Free Teacher’s Handbook” (*Annex 1*).

4. If publishers provide an option for consumers to purchase the textbooks together with its accompanying learning resources, such as summer holiday workbooks, supplementary exercises and online learning resources in the form of a “package”, the price of the “package” should not be the same as the price of the textbook alone so as to avoid bundling the sale of textbooks with learning resources. Those learning resources should also be separately priced so that consumers can choose whether to buy the textbooks, the learning resources or the “package” according to their needs.

5. In line with the implementation of the Debundling Policy, schools' attention is particularly drawn to the following:

- **Schools can make use of the grants provided to purchase teaching/learning materials on a need basis. Under the Debundling Policy, schools are not allowed to accept or solicit from textbook publishers complimentary learning and teaching materials** (except for free inspection copies of textbooks and on conditions free teacher's handbooks).
- **Schools are not allowed to accept any donations, or any form of benefits from textbook publishers or textbook retailers**, including free or on loan teaching and learning materials (except for free inspection copies of textbooks and on conditions free teacher's handbooks) such as equipment on free loan, free teaching aids and supplementary teaching resources (e.g. projectors, television sets, tablet computers, computer software, apps, multimedia materials for enrichment purposes, assessment banks), free on-site services to schools (except for essential after-sale technical support for e-textbooks), cash grants for purchase of equipment or teaching aids, advertisements placed in school publications, funding for school functions, floral baskets, scholarships, prizes, etc. so as not to increase the cost of textbooks or allow the choice of textbooks to be in any way influenced.
- To avoid public criticism and hence adversely affecting the reputation of the school and the image of teachers, teachers should not accept advantages or luxurious entertainments offered during the marketing activities of textbooks. For further details in connection with the acceptance of advantages and donations by schools and their staff, please refer to [EDB Circular No. 14/2003](#) or any updated version to be issued in future.
- The EDB's Recommended Textbook List (RTL) and Recommended e-Textbook List (eRTL) provide the prices of individual textbooks and publisher-provided hyperlinks which show the pricing information of teaching and learning materials debundled from textbooks (if applicable) for the reference of schools and parents. When selecting textbooks, schools should ensure that the textbooks are debundled from the related teaching/learning materials for sale. If in doubt, schools can contact the EDB for follow-up action.
- Before a school decides whether to participate in a publisher's e-textbook pilot scheme, it should ensure that the pilot scheme does not come with any promise of purchase or other unreasonable requests so as to safeguard against criticism in future e-textbook selection exercises. In addition, if a school participates in such a pilot scheme, it can only accept the sample e-textbooks provided by the publisher but not donations of or loan arrangements for any equipment such as tablet computers, electronic whiteboards, or other unnecessary on-site support services or teacher training.
- Due consideration should be given to the choice and use of teaching and learning materials that accompany the textbooks to avoid excessive drilling, and to reduce the financial pressure on schools and parents. After deciding on the teaching materials to be adopted, schools should liaise with the publishers concerned regarding the payment arrangements and settle the payment within

a reasonable period. To avoid unnecessary misunderstanding, schools should, as far as possible, use the teaching materials concerned only after the transaction has been completed. Should the publishers still fail to issue the invoice within a reasonable period even after repeated reminders, schools can contact the EDB for assistance.

- Schools may, at their discretion, purchase teaching materials developed by different publishers instead of just using those materials that accompany the textbooks. We also encourage teachers to exercise their professional judgement in compiling and/or choosing other teaching materials, such as the free learning and teaching resources provided by the EDB at the “**EDB One-stop Portal for Learning and Teaching Resources**” (www.hkedcity.net/edbosp) and other everyday authentic materials to suit their students’ needs and reduce the reliance on textbooks.

6. This circular memorandum should be read in conjunction with the EDB Circular Memorandum No. 52/2015. **Heads of schools should circulate this circular memorandum to all teachers for information.** The successful implementation of the Debundling Policy requires the concerted efforts of all stakeholders. In this regard, we urge the SMC / IMC and the school principal/teaching staff to ensure compliance with the provisions in this document to lighten the financial burden on parents and reduce unnecessary waste.

Enquiries

7. The “Selection of Textbooks and Curriculum Resources for Use in Schools – Q&As” is available from the EDB’s “Textbook Information” webpage (www.edb.gov.hk/textbook). For further enquiries, schools may send emails to textbook@edb.gov.hk or contact the following staff members of the Curriculum Resources Section, Curriculum Development Institute –

For printed textbooks:	Mr KAN Ming-chung	(Tel: 3698 4030)
	Mr CHAN Hong	(Tel: 3698 3946)
For e-textbooks:	Ms Lowetta CHAN	(Tel: 3698 4086)
	Mr Michael LAU	(Tel: 3698 3962)

Stephen YW YIP
for Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections - *for information*

Specifications of Free Teacher's Handbook

A free teacher's handbook is defined as a "user manual" that accompanies a set of textbooks. It provides explanations and suggestions on the learning and teaching strategies adopted for delivering the content of the textbooks to achieve the curriculum aims and learning objectives as stated in a specific curriculum document.

The features of a free teacher's handbook:

- It provides an overview of how teachers could effectively use the textbooks to facilitate students' learning and adapt the content so that the curriculum aims and learning objectives as stated in the specific curriculum document can be achieved.
- A teacher's handbook is to provide teaching suggestions to teachers but not to take over their role in planning and designing their lessons. It should therefore contain only the information that is critical for effective use of the textbooks and should not contain excessive learning and teaching resources other than for illustration purposes. In line with the Policy of Debundling Textbooks and Teaching / Learning Materials for Pricing, additional supplementary learning and teaching materials developed by textbook publishers should be debundled from the textbooks and sold separately to schools, teachers and students.
- A teacher's handbook (e.g. in the form of a teacher's textbook edition or a textbook concise guide) may provide suggestions on the following aspects to facilitate effective use of the relevant textbooks. However, it must adhere to the principles of the Debundling Policy and the content included should not lead to an increase in the prices of textbooks. **A teacher's handbook may include:**
 - ✓ clear and concise suggestions on the sequence of topics and organisation of content, as well as ideas on adaptation of content to cater for various learning situations and needs, such as learner diversity, assessment for learning, safety precautions and recommendations on teaching content adaptation;
 - ✓ keys and suggested solutions to exercises;
 - ✓ transcripts of materials for listening activities;
 - ✓ sample contents for "Print on Demand" (for e-textbooks) ; and
 - ✓ user guide / manual for e-textbook's inbuilt e-learning tools (for e-textbooks).

However, it should not include:

- ✗ learning and teaching resources in the form of supplementary exercises, assessment banks, audio-visual and multimedia materials for enrichment purposes, electronic presentation slides, apps and education software packages, etc;
- ✗ master of worksheets for making copies;
- ✗ teaching aids e.g. wall charts, posters, large song sheets and magnets;
- ✗ data files for project learning;
- ✗ non-publicly accessible websites for additional learning and teaching resources or other forms of web-based materials;
- ✗ learning management system for monitoring students' use of e-textbooks in class (for e-textbooks); and
- ✗ file management system for recording individual students' learning progress.