

EDUCATION BUREAU CIRCULAR MEMORANDUM NO. 106/2009

From : Secretary for Education

To : Heads of secondary and primary schools
(except ESF schools and international
schools)

Ref. : EDB/LPA/SCOLAR/Prog/1

Date : 15 July 2009

- for necessary action

Requirements for Language Teachers

[Note: This circular memorandum should be read by supervisors/heads and teachers in secondary and primary schools.]

SUMMARY

This circular memorandum reminds school heads and teachers of the Language Proficiency Requirement (LPR) and the Recommendations of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR) for language teachers. This circular memorandum should be read in conjunction with (a) EDB Circular Memorandum No. 501/2000 dated 16 October 2000 on Language Proficiency Requirement for English and Putonghua Teachers; and (b) EDB Circular Memorandum No. 54/2004 dated 12 March 2004 on Implementation of Recommendations of Standing Committee on Language Education and Research on Language Teacher Education and Qualifications. Schools are advised to make reference to this circular memorandum when effecting related teacher deployment.

DETAILS

Language Proficiency Requirement (LPR)

2. The LPR Policy was implemented in the 2000/01 school year to ensure that language teachers possess at least basic language proficiency. It is applicable to all English language and Putonghua teachers holding a permanent post in local public sector and private primary and secondary day schools which offer a full curriculum. It is not applicable to those teachers employed under the Native-speaking English Teachers (NET) Scheme and those in ESF schools and international schools.

3. Since the 2006/07 school year, all English language and Putonghua teachers holding a permanent post should have attained the LPR. As such, schools should attend to the progress of LPR attainment by newly appointed/deployed English language and Putonghua teachers. According to the LPR Policy, before newly appointed/deployed English language and Putonghua teachers start to teach the relevant language subject, they have to meet, with the exception of classroom language, the basic language proficiency requirement in all the core language skills (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking for English language teachers; listening and recognition, pinyin and speaking for Putonghua teachers). They will need to attain the language proficiency requirement in classroom language within one year upon taking up their teaching.

4. Teachers or aspiring teachers who hold the qualifications required can apply for full exemption from the LPR (English Language) and partial exemption from the LPR (Putonghua). Applicants with a relevant degree plus relevant teacher training will be granted full exemption from the LPR (English Language). Applicants with the Certificate for the Test of Advanced Proficiency in Putonghua, or Grade B, Level 2 or above in the Certificate for the Test of Proficiency in Putonghua will be granted partial exemption from the LPR (Putonghua). Every year, two calls for application for exemption are made. More information about full/partial exemption from the LPR is available on the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk → Teachers' Development → Training & Qualifications → Language Proficiency Requirement → Exemption).

5. For those without the qualifications required for exemption to meet the LPR, they can sit for the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT) to attain Level 3 or above. The LPAT is conducted by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) and is held once a year. The LPAT (English Language) Handbook and the LPAT (Putonghua) Handbook are available on the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk → Teachers' Development → Training & Qualifications → Language Proficiency Requirement → Syllabus).

6. When planning to deploy teachers to teach English Language or Putonghua, schools are reminded to ensure that only eligible teachers under the LPR Policy are assigned to teach the relevant language subject.

Recommendations by SCOLAR

7. In the 2004/05 school year, SCOLAR recommendations with regard to teacher training and qualification requirements (SCOLAR Requirements) for English and Chinese language teachers were implemented. According to the SCOLAR recommendations, Chinese and English language teachers should possess a relevant Bachelor of Education (BED) degree, or both a relevant degree and relevant teacher training. The SCOLAR Requirements are applicable to new Chinese and English language teachers in or after the 2004/05 school year, holding a permanent post in local public sector and private primary and secondary day schools which offer a full curriculum. Other Chinese and English language teachers serving before the 2004/05 school year are encouraged to meet the SCOLAR Requirements. The SCOLAR Requirements are not applicable to the teachers appointed under the Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) Scheme as well as those in ESF schools and international schools.

8. Information about the list of recognized courses/programmes for meeting the SCOLAR Requirements is available on the EDB website (www.edb.gov.hk → Teachers' Development → Training & Qualifications → Recommendations of Standing Committee on Language Education and Research on Language Teacher Education and Qualifications).

The list of recognized courses/programmes is updated as and when necessary. The next round of updating will be conducted in August 2009, when a number of newly developed full-time block release courses will be added to the list. These courses seek to equip Chinese and English language teachers with subject knowledge or pedagogical training in the relevant language subject to enable them to meet the SCOLAR Requirements. Details will be posted on the Training Calendar System in due course. As for teachers who hold other language-related qualifications through completing courses/programmes not on the above list, they may submit the relevant documents for vetting via the Professional Development and Training Division of EDB to ascertain whether their qualifications meet the SCOLAR Requirements.

9. New Chinese and English language teachers in or after the 2004/05 school year, who do not have the required qualifications, should meet the SCOLAR Requirements within three or five years of their entry into the profession as appropriate. In general,

- (a) new Chinese and English language teachers holding a first degree in the relevant language subject should complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programme majoring in that language subject within three years of taking up the employment;
- (b) new Chinese and English language teachers holding a first degree in a subject not relevant to the language they teach should complete a PGDE programme majoring in the relevant language subject and a recognized postgraduate programme focusing on the subject knowledge (PGSK) of that particular language within five years of taking up the employment. These new Chinese and English language teachers may, however, opt to pursue a first/higher degree majoring in the relevant language subject instead of a PGSK; or
- (c) new Chinese and English language teachers without a first degree should complete a BEd programme majoring in the relevant language subject within five years of taking up the employment.

10. For the benefit of student learning, schools are reminded to give priority to recruiting new Chinese and English language teachers who have acquired the relevant training and qualifications. When offering an appointment to newly recruited Chinese and English language teachers without the required qualifications, schools should set conditions in the employment contract that the teachers concerned must acquire the required qualifications within three or five years as appropriate. Schools are requested to plan for the professional development of these teachers and report progress to their School Management Committee / **Incorporated Management Committee**. To ensure that all English and Chinese language teachers are adequately prepared, the Education Bureau will keep track of the latest attainment of the SCOLAR Requirements by Chinese and English language teachers. Unless schools can provide very strong justifications, they may be

asked to redeploy language teachers who are unable to attain the SCOLAR Requirements within the specified period to teach other subjects.

ENQUIRIES

11. For enquiries, please contact the Language Teacher Qualifications Team:-

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c.c. Heads of Sections – for information