

e-Textbook Writing Guidelines for Ethics and Religious Studies (Secondary 4 – 6)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Senior Secondary Ethics and Religious Studies (ERS) curriculum is in line with the local education reform and the development of learning and teaching of this subject, develops students’ analytical power in ethics and religious issues so that they can benefit from the moral and spiritual life and independent thinking. These qualities enable them to lead a meaningful life in a pluralistic society in Hong Kong. The followings are some guidelines to publishers so that the writing of ERS e-textbooks will be geared to the curriculum and the updated “Seven Learning Goals of Secondary Education” (www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/7-learning-goals/secondary/index.html). For details, please refer to the *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide* (2017) and its Supplementary Notes (2021) (www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/secondary/cg_documents.html).
- 1.2 The *Values Education Curriculum Framework (Pilot Version)* was released in 2021 and ten priority values and attitudes (PVA) were introduced. The PVA have been optimised since 2023 with the PVA “Care for Others” extended to “benevolence” and two PVA (i.e. “Filial Piety” and “Unity”) added. Publishers should incorporate the learning elements of values education in the e-textbooks where appropriate. For details, please refer to the *Values Education Curriculum Framework (Pilot Version)*(2021) (Chinese version only)(www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/4-key-tasks/moral-civic/ve_curriculum_framework2021.html) and the EDBCM No.183/2023 on *Enriching the Values Education Curriculum Framework (Pilot Version) – Optimisation of “Priority Values and Attitudes”* (applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBCM/EDBCM23183E.pdf).
- 1.3 The *Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong* was released in 2021 and updated in 2025. Publishers should incorporate the learning elements of national security education in the e-textbooks where appropriate. They may also refer to the government website “National Security Education Day” for information such as major fields of national security. For details, please refer to the *Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong* (www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/pshe/national-security-education/index.html) and the government website “National Security Education Day” (www.nsed.gov.hk/index.php?l=en).
- 1.4 For the general principles and requirements for writing e-textbooks and the requirements for submission of e-textbooks for review, publishers should refer

to the latest edition of the *Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks and Guidelines on Submission of e-Textbooks for Review* available on the EDB's Textbook Information website (www.edb.gov.hk/textbook).

1.5 The e-textbooks should be written in line with the following CDC curriculum documents:

- *Personal, Social and Humanities Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6) (2017)*
- *Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6) (2024)*

2. Curriculum Aims and Objectives

e-Textbook publishers should refer to the *Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6) (2024)*. The writing of the e-textbooks should be in line with the aims and objectives stated in the *Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6) (2024)*.

2.1 Curriculum Aims

The aims of the ERS curriculum are to enable students to:

- acquire knowledge of the religion they study and of other major religions in Hong Kong;
- make rational and informed judgements about religious and moral issues;
- enhance their spiritual, moral, and social development; and
- develop a positive attitude towards people and respect for their beliefs.

2.2 Curriculum Objectives

(a) Students are expected to develop knowledge and understanding of:

- the significance of morality to individuals and society;
- the history of major ethical systems and why their tenets have survived the ages;
- the origin, precepts, forms and practices of the religion they study;
- the founders of the religion they study and why their influence continues to the present days; and
- contemporary views about religious and ethical issues.

(b) Students are expected to develop skills to enable them to:

- reflect upon their own beliefs, values and experiences;
- discuss ethical and religious issues with people who hold beliefs and values different from theirs;
- understand with empathy why people believe and behave as they do;
- debate issues of religious significance on the basis of evidence and rational argument; and
- apply the results of their religious exploration for the betterment of themselves and of their community.

(c) Students are expected to develop the following values and attitudes:

- respect for others;
- willingness to acknowledge the needs, feelings and aspirations of others and learn from their insights;
- tolerance of ambiguities and paradoxes;
- appreciation of diversity in religions and cultures;
- respect for life; and
- eagerness for meaning and truth.

3. Guiding Principles

3.1 Structure and Organisation

- The arrangement of the content should be in line with the *Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6) (2024)* .
- The structure and organization of content should be appropriate. It should align with the suggested allocation of time in the curriculum guide in order to avoid too heavy contents.
- Publishers should follow the titles of topics in the *Ethics and Religious Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6) (2024)* . However, they could decide on their own the sub-titles of each topic.
- The organisation of e-textbooks should be systematic. The presentation and genre should be diversified to promote students' learning interests.

3.2 Content

- The starting point for writing the e-textbook would be students' levels and interests. Students would be guided to understand the founders, origin, precepts, forms and practices of the religion they study.
- The e-textbooks would facilitate students' balanced development in the aspects of knowledge acquisition, mastering of skills and the development of objective attitudes in issues related to religion and ethics. Students' understanding of religion and ethics as well as their participation in the learning of ERS would be enhanced.
- The e-textbook should give an account of and analyse concepts relating to ethics and religion in a lively way.
- The writing of e-textbooks and the design of related learning activities and homework should be from the perspective of ethics / religion, and student-centred. The promotion of learning interests should also be one of the objectives in writing and designing. Elements of enquiry should be emphasised within the design of learning activities. In turn, students could develop ways of knowledge enquiry and the skills in thinking and evaluating knowledge relating to ethics and religion.
- The content should be accurate and warranted by facts. The organisation should be systematic. The mastering of concepts and skills related to ethics and religion should also be emphasised.
- Overly technical or complicated theories and concepts should be avoided.
- Introductory remarks could be inserted at the beginning of each topic as enquiry questions. There should be two types of fonts to illustrate different types of content in each topic. One type of content is the main content which should be studied and mastered by students. The other is supplementary content which facilitates students' understanding of the main content. Students may read it but it is not a must for students to master it.
- E-textbooks should provide different forms and routes of enquiry questions where appropriate in order to broaden students' thinking horizons. Nonetheless, the introduction of broad questions without the provision of sufficient information and guidelines should also be avoided, so as not to exceed the capability of students in terms of their prior knowledge, and deviate from the curriculum objectives.
- In order to facilitate students' easy understanding of the content, relevant and essential information such as diagrams, maps and data should be introduced where appropriate.

- “Questions for thinking” and “suggestions for learning activities” could be introduced where appropriate. In order to cater for learner diversity, more than one item should be provided for each of “questions for thinking” and “suggestions for learning activities”.
- Describing history of religion and stories of religious figures should be based on objective manners. Stay focused on the main points to highlight the relevance to the topics.
- Facts and views / opinions should be distinguished from each other.
- To avoid extra burdens on students, information on years as well as names of places and people that is not essential should be kept to a minimum. If religious classics are quoted, chapters, sections and the versions adopted should be cited clearly.
- Old names of mountains, rivers and cities related to historical religious events should be used. Modern names should be added as remarks. The interchangeable use of old and modern names should be avoided.
- For students’ reference, overly technical and complicated information could be provided as footnotes if they are deemed to be related to the texts and could facilitate students’ further understanding.
- Chronology tables should match with the contents. Trivial information should be avoided.
- Illustrations:
 - The illustrations should be appropriately positioned to support understanding of the texts.
 - The illustrations should be well grounded and explained if otherwise.
 - Maps should be simple and with legends. Rivers and tributaries should be kept to a minimum. Places on maps should match the texts.
- When using images of the national flag, national emblem, regional flag and regional emblem:
 - **avoid drawing** the national flag, national emblem, regional flag and regional emblem on your own;
 - use real photos to show the national flag, national emblem, regional flag, regional emblem, etc.;
 - use the files of the national flag, national emblem, regional flag and regional emblem downloaded from the Protocol Division Government Secretariat and follow the relevant requirements on the use of these images.

- “Questions for Thinking” / homework:
 - The content of “Questions for thinking” and homework should aim to develop students’ thinking skills, skills in analysis, integration and evaluation and to consolidate the learning outcomes. The forms of homework should be diversified.
 - Homework should be able to enhance the learning effectiveness and extend learning in topics.
 - The design should take into account students’ interests and if possible, link up with students’ daily life.
- Learning activities:
 - The learning activities should match students’ different interests, levels and abilities. Sufficient information and guidelines should be provided.
 - If possible, the learning activities should link up with students’ daily life experiences so that they could have a deeper understanding of the related knowledge.

3.3 Language

- Vernacular language should be used. The level of difficulty of the language used in the textbook should commensurate with the language ability of students. The wordings should be simple and easy to understand.
- Where appropriate, guidance on pronunciation could be provided to facilitate student learning.

3.4 Pedagogical Use of e-Features

- The e-textbooks should meet the technical and functional requirements with appropriate pedagogical use of e-features for learning and teaching activities and assessments.
- Provision of animations to illustrate some exemplary ethical issues, religious stories, teachings, events and figures to students in more interesting and impressive ways.
- Provision of interactive mind maps to illustrate ethical concepts.
- Provision of self-directed learning activities for individuals or groups to cater learner diversity.

- Religious text in different versions may be provided in the form of hyperlinks for students' choice according to their needs and abilities.
- Provision of hyperlinks for easy access and comparison of religious texts when necessary.
- Provision of appropriate hyperlinks to copyright-cleared or copyright-free virtual field trips.
- Interactive assessment tasks could be included in e-textbook to facilitate assessment for learning.

3.5 Learning Elements / Skills Not Replaceable by Digital Means

- Visits and excursions: Students' spiritual development, positive values and empathising skills should be developed through visits to religious premises, attending religious activities, experiential learning such as serving to learn and exposure to the living environment of the under-privileged.

3.6 Technical and Functional Requirements

- Refer to the latest edition of the *Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks* for the relevant requirements.

4. Others

- 4.1 When writing e-textbooks, publishers have to ensure that the content and information provided in the materials should be correct, complete, up-to-date, objective and impartial. The source and the date of the information should be provided as appropriate. The information in the illustrations and images should avoid showing the brand names of commercial items unless they are necessary
- 4.2 All URLs and hyperlinks (including the publisher's self-developed learning materials and the learning and teaching resources developed by the third party) in the e-textbooks should be linked to the publisher's website for the publisher's easy management. For the third party resources, the URLs or hyperlinks should be linked to the websites with high credibility, such as the official websites and the websites of academic institutions, and avoid linking to commercial or social media platforms. In case problems arise from the hyperlinked content (including the third party resources), the publisher should take immediate follow-up actions and bear the relevant liability.

- 4.3 Publishers should avoid putting excessive hyperlinks that provide additional references in the e-textbooks so as not to violate the self-containment principles. Publishers may place the hyperlinks of their self-developed supplementary learning materials or the learning and teaching resources developed by the third party in their website. Publishers may also provide their website's URL in the Teacher's Book for teachers' reference to facilitate lesson preparation or design of learning and teaching activities. Publishers should be accountable for the learning and teaching resources they provide.
- 4.4 The maps included in the textbooks should be accurate and only contain essential information suitable for student learning. Reference should be made to the requirements and standard maps of the Ministry of Natural Resources of the People's Republic of China for all maps of China included in the textbooks, and wherever appropriate, the respective map review numbers and dates of reference should be quoted. Textbook publishers should also follow strictly the provisions in “公開地圖內容表示規範” issued by the Ministry of Natural Resources.
(https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/zhengceku/2023-02/17/content_5741977.htm)
- 4.5 It is mandatory for the publishers to ensure that all proof-reading work, including the e-features, language, punctuation, information, illustration, pagination, etc., is completed and the e-textbooks are error-free before submitting them for review.
- 4.6 Publishers should review the e-textbook content from time to time. When necessary, publishers can make amendments to the e-textbook content with the EDB's consent. The EDB may also require publishers to make amendments when needs arise.
- 4.7 Publishers should clear all copyright issues of the e-textbooks as appropriate.
- 4.8 The suggested time allocation set out in the curriculum documents should be taken into consideration to ensure that the learning content is designed with an appropriate quantity and level.
- 4.9 If publishers submit other versions (such as Chinese version or printed version) of the same textbook title for review at the same time, they should duly check the consistency of the content among all the versions. If another version is to be submitted at a later stage, the suggestions in the e-Textbook Review Reports for the previously submitted version should be duly followed before submission.