

7 December 2012

Education Bureau Circular No. 19/2012
Education Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Students
Expanded Examination Subsidy

[Note: This circular should be read by:

- (a) Supervisors and Heads of secondary day schools offering local curriculum leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination for necessary action;
- (b) Supervisors and Heads of primary schools for information; and
- (c) Heads of Divisions/Sections for information.]

Summary

This circular informs schools of the enhanced examination subsidy coverage for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students to participate in other non-local Chinese Language examinations, in addition to the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) (Chinese) Examination¹, administered by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) starting from the 2012/13 school year.

Background

2. The Government is committed to encouraging and supporting early integration of NCS students into the community, including facilitating their adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese Language. As one of the support measures for NCS students, the Education Bureau (EDB) has been providing examination subsidy to NCS

¹ Results of GCSE / International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) / General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS)-Level and Advanced (A)-Level Chinese Examinations are accepted as alternative Chinese qualifications for consideration of admission to the University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded institutions under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System (JUPAS) and for consideration of appointment to basic ranks in the civil service. Reference should be made to relevant guides for the minimum grading to be required of individual examinations concerned.

students starting from 2010². Eligible NCS students³ sitting for the GCSE (Chinese) Examination, irrespective of means, are charged a “subsidised examination fee” on par with that of the defunct Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) (Chinese) or the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSEE) (Chinese). Since the 2011/12 school year, the Examination Fee Remission Scheme has also been extended to enable eligible needy NCS students to be granted full or half fee remission of the “subsidised examination fee” for taking the GCSE (Chinese) Examination if they pass the means test of the Student Financial Assistance Agency (SFAA).

Expanded coverage of examination subsidy

3. Starting from the 2012/13 school year, the prevailing arrangement of “subsidised examination fee” for taking the GCSE (Chinese) Examination will be extended to cover the Chinese Language examinations of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE), the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Advanced Subsidiary (AS)-Level and the GCE Advanced (A)-Level administered by the HKEAA with a view to facilitating NCS students who intend to sit for these Chinese Language examinations to obtain internationally recognised qualifications that reflect more closely their proficiency, encouraging NCS students to set higher targets in the learning of the Chinese Language and facilitating their academic and career advancement.

4. The “subsidised examination fee” for eligible school candidates sitting for any of these non-local Chinese Language examinations concerned in 2013 is \$567, i.e. the examination fee for the 2013 HKDSEE (Chinese). The “subsidised examination fee” level will be revised subject to any adjustment of the examination fees of the HKDSEE (Chinese).

Eligibility

5. Similar to the prevailing arrangement, NCS students studying at Secondary (S) 4 to S6 pursuing the local curriculum will be eligible for the “subsidised examination fee” starting from the 2012/13 school year

² Reference can be drawn to EDB Circular No. 23/2009 dated 18 November 2009 on Reduction of Examination Fee Level of the General Certificate of Secondary Education (Chinese) Examination.

³ Specifically, these NCS students are those who have learnt Chinese Language for either:

- (a) less than six years while receiving primary and secondary education; or
- (b) six years or more in schools, but have been taught an adapted and simpler curriculum not normally applicable to the majority of students in local schools.

provided that they have met either of the specified circumstances of:

- (a) having learned Chinese Language for less than 6 years while receiving primary and secondary education; or
- (b) having learned Chinese Language for 6 years or more in schools, but having been taught an adapted and simpler curriculum not normally applicable to the majority of students in our local schools;

and that they are sitting for the non-local Chinese Language examinations as mentioned in paragraph 3 above as a school candidate.

Arrangements for maximum entries

6. In considering the maximum number of entries⁴ of the non-local Chinese Language examinations for which NCS students should be eligible for the “subsidised examination fee”, we have taken into account the learning needs of NCS students as well as the different designs and relevant requirements on Chinese proficiency of these examinations. We note that normally NCS students would take these examinations at S5 and/or 6. In addition, there is significant diversity among NCS students in their proficiency of the Chinese Language. Some may wish to go for the prudent approach of aiming higher only after having secured a certification at an elementary level. Some may wish to take the same examination twice particularly if they have failed in their first attempt.

7. Of the four types of examinations, the GCSE (Chinese) Examination, the IGCSE (Chinese) Examination and the GCE AS-Level (Chinese) Examination are for students at the elementary/intermediate level of learning the Chinese Language while the GCE A-Level (Chinese) Examination is for students learning Chinese at the more advanced level. Eligible NCS students sitting for these examinations as school candidates will, during their full-time senior secondary school years, be eligible for the “subsidised examination fee” for:

- (a) up to two entries for any of the following three examinations: the GCSE (Chinese) Examination, the IGCSE (Chinese) Examination and the GCE AS-Level (Chinese) Examination; and
- (b) up to two entries for the GCE A-Level (Chinese) Examination.

⁴ Sitting for all papers to obtain the qualification for each of the examinations concerned is considered as one entry. It is not necessary for a candidate to sit for all papers in one sitting to obtain the qualification from each of the examinations concerned. Take for instance, a candidate has to complete 4 papers to obtain an alternative Chinese qualification from the GCSE (Chinese) Examination and different sittings for separate papers will be considered as one entry for the examination. A sitting / sittings for all papers in individual examinations concerned offered by different examination boards will be counted as different entries.

8. NCS students are allowed the choice of taking the above examinations in place of or in addition to the HKDSEE (Chinese), and we encourage them to attempt the Chinese Language paper in the HKDSEE as their local counterparts.

Examination Fee Remission Scheme

9. To ensure that no NCS students will be discouraged from sitting for the examinations concerned because of lack of means, subject to the approval of the Finance Committee of the Legislative Council, the ambit of the Examination Fee Remission Scheme will be extended for an NCS student eligible for the “subsidised examination fee” and passing the means test of the SFAA be eligible to receive full or half fee remission of the “subsidised examination fee”⁵.

Schools’ certification for “subsidised examination fee”

10. In line with the prevailing practice for schools’ certification of school candidates, school heads are requested to certify the student particulars including, among others, the fulfillment of the specified circumstances as mentioned in paragraph 5 above for their NCS students sitting for the Chinese Language examinations concerned on the Entry Form issued by the HKEAA.

11. The EDB will check the maximum number of sittings of each eligible NCS student. As government funds are involved in this scheme, the EDB reserves the right to take action if inaccurate / false information is provided.

Briefing session

12. We will brief schools on details of this circular. A briefing session will be held as follows:

⁵ The HKEAA will proceed with the registration for the non-local Chinese Language examinations concerned to be held in mid-2013 from 10 to 17 December 2012. An alternative arrangement for needy NCS students, taking their needs into consideration, will take place in case the Finance Committee might not be able to consider the proposal before the deadline for the application of the related examinations. Eligible NCS students with full-grant status under SFAA are not required to pay the “subsidised examination fee” and those with half-grant status will pay half the “subsidised examination fee” when registering for the non-local Chinese Language examinations concerned. Detailed arrangements are stipulated in the Entry Form issued by the HKEAA.

Date: 13 December 2012 (Thursday)
Time: 2:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Venue: Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block
EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre
19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

Schools should return the reply slip on or before 12 December 2012 or enrol via the Training Calendar System of the EDB (Course ID: ECP020120060).

Enquiry

13. For enquiries, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officer. On registration for the non-local Chinese Language examinations, please contact the HKEAA at 3628 8761 or visit the HKEAA website [<http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/>].

Mrs CHAN SIU Suk-fan
for Secretary for Education

REPLY SLIP

To: Education Commission Secretariat
Education Bureau
(Fax: 2537 4591)
(To be returned on or before 12 December 2012)

**Briefing Session on Education Support for Non-Chinese Speaking Students
Expanded Examination Subsidy**

I and/or my representative(s)* would like to attend the following briefing session:

Date: 13 December 2012 (Thursday)
Time: 2:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Venue: Lecture Theatre, 4/F, West Block
EDB Kowloon Tong Education Services Centre
19 Suffolk Road, Kowloon Tong, Kowloon

| <u>Name of Participants</u> | <u>Post</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Mr/Ms* _____ | _____ |
| 2. Mr/Ms* _____ | _____ |
| 3. Mr/Ms* _____ | _____ |

** Please delete if not applicable.*

Signature of School Head: _____

Name of School Head: _____

School Name: _____

Contact Person: _____

Contact Tel. No.: _____