

## **Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 21/2025**

From: Permanent Secretary for Education    To: Supervisors/ Heads of all government, aided, caput secondary schools, special schools and secondary schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme

Ref.: EDB(CD/C&S)/F&A/65/2/1(1)

Date: 22 January 2025

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### **Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students**

#### **Summary**

This circular memorandum (CM) informs schools of the details of the “Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students” (the Pilot Scheme) supported by the Quality Education Fund (QEF) and invites all publicly-funded secondary schools (including government, aided, caput, special schools, and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS)) that offer local junior secondary (JS) curriculum to apply for the funding.

#### **Background**

2.           The Government endeavours to nurture a new generation of global-minded and multilingual professionals to fully harness Hong Kong’s distinctive advantages of having strong support from our Motherland and close connections to the world. The Education Bureau (EDB) has been providing other languages (OL) as one of the elective subjects at the senior secondary (SS) level (The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination Category C subjects). SS Students can choose to study one out of the six designated OL, including French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Urdu, as one of their elective subjects.

3.           The Chief Executive has announced in the 2024 Policy Address that EDB will launch the Pilot Scheme to encourage schools to apply for additional resources to provide opportunities for JS students to learn OL, developing their learning interests and capabilities, as well as enriching their learning experiences and heightening their global competitiveness.

## Details

### *Eligibility for Application and Student Beneficiaries*

4. All publicly-funded secondary schools (including government, aided, caput, special, and DSS schools) that offer the local JS curriculum are eligible to apply for a one-off \$250,000 funding for offering OL courses to their JS students.

### *Principles on the Use of the Funding*

5. The Pilot Scheme is supported by QEF and the funding is allowed to be used only for expenditure items covered by the Pilot Scheme. Schools should observe the rules and guidelines on procurement procedures promulgated by EDB and QEF, and can flexibly deploy the funding for:

- **hiring suitable external services** to provide JS students face-to-face or online OL courses. In order to facilitate a stronger articulation in students' learning of OL between the JS and SS levels, schools should give priority to providing courses on the six designated OL which are offered as elective subjects at the SS level, including **French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Urdu**. If there is a need and conditions permit, schools may also consider offering courses of **Arabic and Russian**. Schools should make professional judgement in hiring suitable external services; and
- **purchasing learning and teaching materials** such as textbooks and workbooks to support the delivery of the OL courses.

6. Schools must not charge students any fees for taking the OL courses under the Pilot Scheme and should refer to **Annex I** for further details on the use of the funding.

### *Application*

7. The Pilot Scheme will entail two rounds of applications, allowing successful applicant schools to deploy the funding over two school years. Each eligible school can only submit one application throughout the entire duration of the Pilot Scheme. The arrangements are as follows:

|   | <b>First round</b>                     | <b>Second round</b>                    |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Application</b>                                  | 2024/25 s.y.<br>(January – April 2025) | 2025/26 s.y.<br>(January – April 2026) |
| <b>Implementation period<br/>(Two school years)</b> | 2025/26 – 2026/27 s.y.                 | 2026/27 – 2027/28 s.y.                 |

8. Schools intending to join the first round of the Pilot Scheme (2025/26 – 2026/27 school years) should complete the application form in **Annex II and return it to EDB by post or in person on or before 30 April 2025**. The application form will be sent to all eligible schools via the Fast Information Transmission System (FITS) – School Messaging Module (SMM). It can also be downloaded from the designated EDB website (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/JSOL>). Each applicant school will normally receive the application result on or before 30 June 2025. Details of the second round application will be announced in due course.

## **Arrangements for the First Round of Application**

### *Payment and Accounting Arrangements*

9. All successful applicant schools will normally receive the one-off funding on or before 31 August 2025. For aided schools (including special schools), caput schools and DSS schools, the funding will be credited directly into the schools' bank accounts for receiving grants from EDB. For government schools, the funding will be provided in the form of budget allocation under a designated user code (to be notified separately).

10. Schools are required to observe the established principles and requirements on the use of public funds promulgated by EDB and QEF when using the funding. All schools receiving the funding are required to keep a separate ledger account to properly record all income and expenditure related to the funding. Schools should keep all books of accounts, receipts, payment vouchers and invoices, financial records and relevant documents for at least 7 years for accounting and auditing purposes. Aided (including special schools), caput and DSS schools should adhere to EDB's requirements on submission of annual audited accounts as stipulated in the relevant EDBCMs / letters as well as their appendices in preparing for ledger accounts and annual accounts. EDB may request schools to provide relevant documents for auditing the use of the funding when necessary. In accordance with the principles of the use of the funding stated in this EDBCM, schools should ensure the effective use of the funding, all of which should be spent on expenditure items related to providing JS students courses on the designated OL. School failing to provide relevant documents for auditing or not spending the funding according to the ambit stated in this EDBCM will be required to return the disbursed amounts of those items not subvented by this funding to QEF via EDB.

11. Funding of the Pilot Scheme is one-off in nature and not provided on a regular basis. Schools should manage their financial expenditure in a prudent manner. In the case where the funding is insufficient to cover all the expenses entailed to the Pilot Scheme, for aided schools (including special schools), may deploy the Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant / surplus under the General Domain of Operating Expenses Block Grant as appropriate. Any outstanding deficit thereafter should then be borne by the school's own fund/non-government funds. DSS and caput schools can deploy government funds or non-government funds to cover such deficit. For government schools, the expenditure must not exceed the one-off funding already allocated to the school. Transfer of funding and/or its

unspent balance to any other accounts is not allowed in all schools.

12. All successful applicant schools in the first round of application may use the funding across two school years from the 2025/26 school year until the end of the 2026/27 school year, i.e. until 31 August 2027. Schools are required to use the template provided in **Annex III** to draw up the progress report and final report for the Pilot Scheme, and return the completed reports to EDB and upload them onto schools' websites on or before 30 September 2026 and 30 September 2027 respectively. If schools fail to submit the reports on time, EDB reserves the right to claw back funding in full. Based on the final report on the use of the funding submitted by schools, EDB will claw back any unspent balance of the funding as at 31 August 2027 from aided schools (including special schools), caput schools and DSS schools. The schools should return the unspent funding to QEF via EDB in the form of a crossed cheque (payable to "The HKSAR Government"). As for government schools, the period for using the funding is the same as that of aided schools, any unspent balance as at 31 August 2027 should be returned to QEF according to the records of the designated user code. While schools are not required to submit copies of invoices and receipts of the expenditure items to EDB, they should properly use the funding and file related financial records and documents such as receipts for auditing and inspection when necessary.

### *Monitoring and Accountability*

13. Schools are accountable for the use of the funding and subject to the monitoring by EDB. Schools should refer to the template provided in **Annex IV** to draw up implementation plans for the use of the funding. According to the principle of school-based management, the plans should be incorporated into the Annual School Plan and endorsed by the School Management Committee (SMC) / Incorporated Management Committee (IMC). Schools should then submit the endorsed plans to EDB and upload them onto schools' websites before the end of November 2025. Schools should also evaluate the use of the funding on a regular basis and include reports mentioned in paragraph 12 into their School Report for submission to the SMC/IMC for endorsement. For the sake of greater transparency and in accordance with the established arrangements, the Annual School Plan and School Report (with the implementation plans and reports on the use of the funding incorporated) endorsed by their SMC/IMC should be uploaded to the school website.

14. EDB will conduct school visits to review the implementation of the Pilot Scheme and provide advice to schools when necessary.

## **Briefing Session**

15. A briefing session will be organised on 27 February 2025. Interested schools are invited to nominate representatives to attend the briefing session. Details of the briefing session will be announced in due course through the Training Calendar System (<https://tcs.edb.gov.hk>).



## **Enquiry**

16. Schools can visit the designated webpage on the Pilot Scheme (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/JSOL>) or contact Ms Pauline PANG of the Council and Secondary Section 1, Curriculum Development Institute on 2892 6448.



Ms HO Yin-ping, Anita  
for Permanent Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections – for information

## **Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students Guidelines on the Use of Funding**

### **1. Principles**

- Schools should formulate appropriate objectives and strategies according to their needs in terms of school development and student learning, and review and evaluate the use of the funding based on the objectives set.
- Adhering to the principles of fiscal prudence and avoiding extravagance, schools should ensure that all expenditures are incurred to serve the purposes of the funding and keep in view the cost-effectiveness in order to benefit as many students as possible.
- Schools should strictly observe the relevant circulars and guidelines issued by EDB on the use of public funds as well as the relevant guidelines from QEF, and deploy the funding in a fair and transparent manner in accordance with established principles and requirements.
- Schools should establish clear criteria for selecting students to ensure fair and equitable access to the OL courses offered under the Pilot Scheme.

### **2. Ambit**

The funding may only be deployed to:

- hire service providers to conduct OL courses, which can be delivered either through face-to-face instruction or online sessions, enabling instructors to interact with students and provide timely feedback; and
- purchase learning and teaching materials, such as textbooks and workbooks, specifically designed for the OL courses covered under the Pilot Scheme. The expenditure on learning and teaching materials must not equal to or exceed the total amount spent on hiring service providers to conduct OL courses.

### **3. Examples of improper use of the funding**

- Hiring individual tutors or teaching or administrative staff directly.
- Subscribing to self-paced online courses that feature pre-recorded content and structured online materials, but do not provide instructor support or opportunities for real-time interaction with and feedback to students.
- Procuring external services or hiring professionals to organise professional development programmes or activities for teaching staff.
- Purchasing mobile computing devices, audio-visual aids or software for general purposes.

- Covering expenses incurred in language activities beyond the OL courses, e.g. visits, talks, social gathering, networking programmes, food and beverages, etc.
- Funding overseas language learning trips.

#### **4. Points to note**

- The examples above are by no means exhaustive. SMC/IMC should prudently deploy the funding and properly allocate the resources. SMC/IMC should also ensure that the resources are utilised in a cost-effective manner, and each item of expenditure incurred is used appropriately and in line with the principles and ambit of the funding.
- For hiring outside services and purchases, schools should strictly observe the relevant circulars and guidelines issued by EDB and QEF. Aided schools (including special schools) and caput schools should observe the rules and guidelines specified in the EDB Circular No. 4/2013 on “Procurement Procedures in Aided Schools” and its appended “Guidelines on Procurement Procedures in Aided Schools” and refer to Section 6.4 of the School Administration Guide for procurement. Government schools should adhere to the stores and procurement guidelines promulgated in relevant EDB Internal Circulars. DSS schools should follow the guidelines on procurement procedures of aided schools, or the school-based procurement policies formulated upon the endorsement of their SMC/IMC.

**Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students**  
**Application Form for the First Round**  
**(2025/26 to 2026/27 School Years)**

To: Council and Secondary Section 1  
Curriculum Development Institute, EDB  
Rm 1301, 13/F  
Wu Chung House  
213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai

*Please read EDBCM No. 21/2025 before filling in this form. **The completed form should be submitted to EDB by post or in person on or before 30 April 2025 (Wednesday).** Late submission will not be considered.*

**Part A: School Information**

**School name:** (Chinese) \_\_\_\_\_  
(English) \_\_\_\_\_

**School type:**  Government  Aided  Special  
 Caput  Schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme

**Contact person:** (Chinese) \_\_\_\_\_ (English) \_\_\_\_\_  
Post: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B: Details of Other Languages Course(s) to be provided in the 2025/26 and 2026/27 School Years**

**1. Number of participating students:**

Secondary 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Students' preference of the other languages:**

*Please write down the number of students who expressed their preferences for each language.*

Arabic \_\_\_\_\_ French \_\_\_\_\_ German \_\_\_\_\_ Japanese \_\_\_\_\_  
Korean \_\_\_\_\_ Russian \_\_\_\_\_ Spanish \_\_\_\_\_ Urdu \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Delivery mode (check all that apply):**

Online  On school campus  Off school campus

Please ✓ the box as appropriate.



**Part C: Declaration**

Our school hereby declares that:

- This application was endorsed by the School Management Committee/Incorporated Management Committee in the meeting/by circulation on \_\_\_\_\_(Date) and was supported by teachers.
- All the information given in this application is true and accurate. Our school understands that if we willfully give any false information or withhold any material information, the application will become void. Any funding approved will be withheld and any payment made must be refunded to the Quality Education Fund via the Education Bureau. Our school will also, as a result of such, bear the ultimate responsibility.
- Our school consents the use of the information provided in this application proposal by the Education Bureau for processing the application, conducting research and evaluative studies, and organising training and sharing sessions.
- Should this application be approved with funding support, our school undertakes that:
  - (i) Our school will optimise the use of approved funding, and take responsibility on our own for any recurrent expenditure arising from offering other languages (OL) courses under the “Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students” (the Pilot Scheme), including maintenance costs, daily operating costs, etc., as well as the operation and budget arrangement of the related OL courses after the Pilot Scheme completion.
  - (ii) Our school will involve highly credible external service providers with abundant knowledge and professional qualifications as well as substantial experience in the related fields to ensure the quality of the OL courses.
  - (iii) When engaging external service providers to provide services to facilitate the delivery of OL courses, our school will state the required qualification and experience of the service providers clearly when handling the related procurement to ensure that the services to be provided meet our school’s and students’ needs. Our school will also make appropriate arrangements in accordance with the requirements as promulgated in circulars, instructions and guidelines issued by the Education Bureau from time to time, including relevant recommendations in the Education Bureau Circular No. 14/2023 on Sexual Conviction Record Check Scheme for external service providers providing services to safeguard the well-being of students.
  - (iv) Our school will, after completion of the delivery of OL courses, submit the contents of the related OL courses including but not limited to all texts, graphics, drawings, diagrams, photographs, audio and video recordings and compilation of data or other materials to the Education Bureau for reference and retention purposes upon request, consent the use of the contents by the Education Bureau and the government departments and/or relevant organisations entrusted for promotion and dissemination purposes. Our school will ensure that the contents submitted are protected by intellectual property rights and that the external service providers are informed of and agree to the above arrangement prior to commencement of the delivery of OL courses.
  - (v) Our school will also comply with the monitoring requirements set forth by the Education Bureau.
  - (vi) Our school will be responsible for the safety of the participants of the Pilot Scheme and take all possible measures, as well as observing related safety guidelines issued by the Education Bureau to ensure the Pilot Scheme are conducted safely.
  - (vii) Our school will observe relevant guidelines of the Education Bureau and the Quality Education Fund to conduct quotation/tendering exercises to ensure the fair, open and competitive procurement procedures have been put in place.
  - (viii) Our school will participate actively in all the promotion, dissemination and publicity activities in respect of the Pilot Scheme.



Signature of Supervisor/Principal\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor/Principal\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please delete as appropriate.*

**Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students**  
**Progress/Final Report (Template)**

This progress/final report is part of the monitoring requirements on the usage of funds allocated for offering other languages (OL) courses to the junior secondary students under the Pilot Scheme. Successful applicant schools in the first round application should submit the completed reports to the Education Bureau (EDB) and upload them onto schools' websites on or before 30 September 2026 and 30 September 2027 respectively. Details of the second round application will be announced in due course. The form of the reports will be sent to successful applicant schools via the Fast Information Transmission System (FITS) – School Messaging Module (SMM) in due course.

**Part A: School Information**

**School number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School name:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Chinese)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (English)

**Contact person:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Chinese) \_\_\_\_\_ (English)

Post: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

**Part B: Implementation details of the OL course(s) offered in the [2025/26] school year**

| <i>1. Details and expenditure of OL course(s)</i> |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| Language  | Number of junior secondary students at each level | <i>Please enter A, B or C<br/>(You may enter more than one option.)</i> |   | Course fee per course per student (\$) |
|   |   | Class schedule<br>A: Within timetable<br>B: After school<br>C: Weekend  | Delivery mode<br>A: Online<br>B: On school campus<br>C: Off school campus |  |
| (i) Arabic  |   |   |   |  |
| (ii) French                                       |   |   |   |  |
| (iii) German                                      |   |   |   |  |
| (iv) Japanese                                     |   |   |   |  |
| (v) Korean  |   |   |   |  |
| (vi) Russian                                      |   |   |   |  |
| (vii) Spanish                                     |   |   |   |  |
| (viii) Urdu                                       |   |   |   |  |
| <b>Total number of students</b>                   |   | <b>(I) Total amount of course fee (\$)</b>                              |   |  |

**2. \*Other expenditures on purchasing learning and teaching materials**

\*The expenditures on purchasing learning and teaching materials specifically designed for the OL course(s) covered under this Pilot Scheme **MUST NOT** equal to or exceed the total amount spent on hiring service provider(s) to conduct OL course(s).

| Item  | Quantity | Amount (\$)       |
|---|----------|-------------------|
| (i) Textbook  |          |                   |
| (ii) Workbook   |          |                   |
| <b>(II) Total amount of other expenditures (\$)</b>   |          |                   |
| <b>3. Total amount of expenditures (\$)</b>           |          |                   |
|   |          | <b>(I) + (II)</b> |
| <b>4. Unspent balance as at 31 August [2026] (\$)</b> |          |                   |

**Part C: Students' Learning Benefits**

After participating in the Pilot Scheme, the performance of our junior secondary students shows:

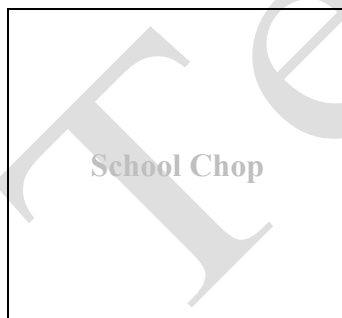
- increased interest in learning OL
- enhanced multilingual capabilities
- better understanding of different languages and their cultures
- higher willingness to study OL at the senior secondary level
- Others : \_\_\_\_\_

Please ✓ all the boxes that apply.

**Part D: Declaration**

By returning this form to EDB, it is certified that:

- our school has observed the principles and ambit set out in EDBCM No. 21/2025, as well as the requirements of relevant guidelines, circulars and letters issued by EDB and the Quality Education Fund (QEF) from time to time when using the relevant funding. All expenditures are incurred in line with the principles and purposes of using the relevant funding, and in compliance with the financial management guidelines as well as circulars and guidelines on procurement procedures applicable to our school type;
- our school has kept a separate ledger account to properly record all the income and expenditure of the “Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students”. All expenditure items are supported with documentary proof. All the financial records and receipts have been handled in accordance with the accounting procedures and properly filed for auditing and inspection purposes by EDB;
- our school will submit the annual audited accounts (if applicable) to EDB within the prescribed period after the end of each school year, in which the total income and expenditure of the funding will be recorded. In case of any discrepancy between the actual unspent balance as stated in the annual audited accounts and the aforesaid balance, we will notify EDB as soon as possible for follow-up actions;
- the information provided in this report is true and accurate. We understand that EDB reserves the right to request documentary proof of the expenditure from schools for auditing and inspection purposes. We also understand our school is required to return any disbursed amounts that are not associated with the subsidised items of the “Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students” to QEF via EDB; and
- our school will incorporate this report into the School Report for submission to the School Management Committee / Incorporated Management Committee for endorsement. The endorsed report will be uploaded onto our school’s website by 30 September [2026].



Signature of Supervisor/Principal\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor/Principal\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please delete as appropriate.*

## Pilot Scheme on Other Languages for Junior Secondary Students Implementation Plan (Template)

This implementation plan is part of the monitoring requirements on the usage of funds allocated for offering other languages (OL) courses to the junior secondary students under the Pilot Scheme. Successful applicant schools in the first round application should submit the completed implementation plan to the Education Bureau and upload it onto schools' websites before the end of November 2025. Details of the second round application will be announced in due course. The form of the implementation plan will be sent to successful applicant schools via the Fast Information Transmission System (FITS) – School Messaging Module (SMM) in due course.

### Part A: School Information

**School number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**School name:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Chinese)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (English)

**Contact person:** \_\_\_\_\_ (Chinese) \_\_\_\_\_ (English)

Post: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part B: Details of the OL course(s) to be offered in the [2025/26] school year

| <i>1. Estimates of OL course(s)</i> |   |  |   |  |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Language                            | Number of junior secondary students at each level | Please enter A, B or C<br>(You may enter more than one option.)        |   | Course fee per course per student (\$) |
|                                     |   | Class schedule<br>A: Within timetable<br>B: After school<br>C: Weekend | Delivery mode<br>A: Online<br>B: On school campus<br>C: Off school campus |  |
| (i) Arabic                          |   |  |   |  |
| (ii) French                         |   |  |   |  |
| (iii) German                        |   |  |   |  |
| (iv) Japanese                       |   |  |   |  |
| (v) Korean                          |   |  |   |  |
| (vi) Russian                        |   |  |   |  |
| (vii) Spanish                       |   |  |   |  |
| (viii) Urdu                         |   |  |   |  |
| <b>Total number of students</b>     |   | <b>Estimates of the total amount of course fee (\$)</b>                |   |  |

**2. \*Estimates of other expenditures on purchasing learning and teaching materials**

\*The expenditures on purchasing learning and teaching materials specifically designed for the OL course(s) covered under this Pilot Scheme **MUST NOT** equal to or exceed the total amount spent on hiring service provider(s) to conduct OL course(s).

| Item  | Quantity | Amount (\$) |
|---|----------|-------------|
| (i) Textbook  |          |             |
| (ii) Workbook   |          |             |
| <b>Estimates of the total amount of other expenditures (\$)</b> |          |             |

Our school has incorporated this Implementation Plan into our Annual School Plan which has been endorsed by the School Management Committee / Incorporated Management Committee and uploaded onto our school's website.

School website: \_\_\_\_\_

Please ✓ the box as appropriate.



Signature of Supervisor/Principal\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor/Principal\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Please delete as appropriate.*