

Position Paper on Stepping Up Progress Path and Support for Secondary School Students in Response to NSS

By Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters, 2010

HONG KONG ASSOCIATION OF CAREERS MASTERS AND GUIDANCE MASTERS

2010/1/1

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Analysis of Students' Needs

For the last non-NSS cohort: 2010 S5 Graduates

- The Education Bureau has announced that no additional S6 classes will be offered for the 2011 S5 CE-takers. This creates a dilemma for 2010 S5 graduates who could not secure S6 places but still want to move up the academic ladder through the "traditional" post-secondary study path -- according to the following summary of statistics¹, the number of 2009 S5 graduates meeting the S6 requirement nearly doubles that of S6 places, among which over 8000 of them (those obtaining 8-12 points in HKCEE) will pursue repeat vacancies for a second attempt in HKCEE. For their counterparts from 2010 S5 cohort, they need to make a difficult decision on whether they take the 2011 HKCEE, or join the 2012 NSS cohort to take the HKDSE examination – but in practice, it is doubtful how many vacancies, irrespective of being 2011 or 2012 exit points, are available. According to our informal survey, not many secondary schools are willing to offer repeat vacancies to the 2010 graduates. Though senior officials from the EDB have re-stated the increased vacancies from alternative pathways for these students, including programs/courses from VTC,² demand from several thousand of 2010 S5 graduates for S5 places should never be underestimated.

¹ Compiled by executive committee member of HKACMGM, for sharing session on "Further study pathways for the last cohort of HKCEE students", organized by the Career Guidance Team, Education Bureau, on 17 November, 2009.

Additional remarks on progress path statistics: the Year 1 JUPAS degree intake quota for S7 HKAL-takers is only around 12,000 for the past 3 years! (source: http://www.jupas.edu.hk/jupas/content_stat_mainround.htm)

² From EDB website, at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/index.aspx?nodeID=7760&langno=2>

會考成績小統計		HKACMGM		香港考試及評核局	
年份	2006	2007	2008	2009	
會考應考人數	118,317	105,226	109,574	119,007	
首次報考人數	69,093 (58.4%)	69,668 (66.2%)	70,943 (64.7%)	82,016 (71%)	
重讀生 (包括學校考生及自修生)	48,733	34,519	32,317	39,742	
會考中獲6科14分或以上的考生人數	23,525	23,523	24,959	26,601	
會考中獲6科13分或以上的考生人數	27,223	26,901	28,982	30,878	
會考中符合升讀中六課程最低要求	48,616 (41.1%)	41,357 (39.3%)	55,260 (68.9%)	58,270 (69.1%)	
中六學位總數量					約33000
入大學學位					約15000

For the NSS students:

- There are about 82000 S4 students in 2009. As this is the first NSS cohort, the challenge from curriculum structure and changes in progression path parents and students face are unprecedented. It is with regret that what currently available, in terms of INFORMATION about the “main-stream” (progression to UGC funded degree programs offered by local universities) and other pathways (government-funded or self-financed tertiary education opportunities, including professional training courses offered by VTC and associate courses) or AVAILABILITY OF ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS for early NSS leavers, have been so fragmentary, disorganized, “tentative”, and deficient. We couldn’t assume that the EDB should bear all the responsibility, yet the surfacing problems could not wait.
- According to our understanding, the majority of schools start to be aware of the fact that some of the NSS S4 students, especially those with lower academic calibre or lacking the motivation to learn, have become increasingly reluctant to stay in school because they have lost the hope to sustain their learning – understanding that only 18% of the cohort would secure UGC-funded university degree vacancies, the 82% feel very confused about their future. They are desperately waiting for centralized announcement related to alternative pathways for S4, 5 or 6 dropouts from the HKDSE study and the academic baseline required for every non-university progress path they can explore after graduation from the secondary education. Once again, all stakeholders CANNOT wait – students losing their hope for the future would definitely result in a disaster for the Hong Kong society; immediate action has to be taken to break the vicious circle.

Our Stands

The HKACMGM believes that EDB should assume the key and pivotal role in actualizing the ideals of NSS, which must include the *immediate* provision of:

- An effective and efficient PLATFORM on INFORMATION on potential progress paths offered by all local and overseas institutes which is one-stop organized, frequently updated, coherent, comprehensive, easily accessible to teachers, parents and students;
- A clear administrative guideline for secondary schools and relevant education institutes on special arrangements of S5 places (non-NSS and NSS) that meets the needs of 2010 S5 graduates;
- A practical and clear policy on career guidance and support for secondary school students which helps the young generation get better prepared for their career and future through appropriate coaching and developmental strategies.

Based on the above standpoints, the following recommendations are formulated.

Recommendations

On Fair Provision of Study Opportunities for 2010 S5 Graduates

- Liaising with schools/institutes that provide senior secondary education, such as the P.L.K. Vicwood K.T. Chong Sixth Form College, to offer an appropriate number of additional S.5 classes for students who aim at retaking the 2011 HKCEE. These classes only work for one year and will not cause a long-term surge in public expenses.
- Setting clear and stronger administrative guidelines for government and aided secondary schools to reserve NSS S5 places (released from S4 dropouts or repeaters after completion of 2009/2010; should not exceed 5% of the total no. of S.5 places) for transfer of 2010 S5 graduates who want to join the NSS stream.
- Expanding the S6 vacancies in government and aided schools by 2 to 3 per class in order to accommodate the 2010 S5 graduates, especially those at the borderline with 12 or 13 points.

On Multiple Exits for NSS Students

- Within the first quarter of 2010, there should be a centralized and concerted announcement platform on various multiple pathways, which includes the following:
 - Most up-to-date (but not frequently and discretionarily revised) local university entrance requirements
 - Roadmap of multiple pathways for NSS graduates, including associate degree programs, pre-associate degree programs, professional training programs (certificate, diploma and higher diploma courses offered by VTC), revamped Yi-Jin programs, employment training programs, etc., and most importantly, the HKDSE or school-based qualifications/baselines required by each of these pathways

- Alternative pathways, including professional/occupational training programs, revamped Yi-Jin programs, employment training programs, etc. for dropouts of NSS students after S4, S5 or before their completion of the HKDSE
- Recognition and accreditation of HKDSE by overseas tertiary education systems and mechanisms of grade transfer or comparison
- Transferability and compatibility between Qualifications Framework and various qualifications awarded from the wide array of pathways or education opportunities
- Information available through the platform can be updated but not to be changed extensively and frequently because all of them are influential in the decision making process of parents and students, as well as school educators, i.e., the establishment of the foundation for making “informed choices”.
- Information should be one-stop organized, frequently updated, coherent, comprehensive, easily accessible to teachers, parents and students; school teachers, especially career teachers, could be included in a mail-alert system to keep them abreast of the latest developments and changes for guidance purposes.

On Revitalization of Career Guidance Policy for Betterment of Student Support and Development

- The HKACMGM believes that career guidance is one of the cornerstones of students’ holistic development; students, especially those in secondary education, have the need and rights to engage in career development which prepares the young generation for exploration of their life goals, roles in the workplace and society, and actualization of their potential – all these echo with the ideals of the NSS reforms. Based on this belief, we boldly propose the following:
 - *Building our “anchorage”*: A theory-driven yet practical framework on career guidance (for instance, the Comprehensive Guidance Program) is to be adopted in secondary schools to guide and re-focus the currently diversified quality of career guidance services in schools. Formulation of this framework requires collaborative and concerted efforts of various departments involved in school career guidance services, academics, professional teacher organizations, front-line career teachers and school administrators.
 - *Systemic reform*: To tackle the problems arising from the “loosely-coupled” model,³ restructuring of the organization system, or definition and delineation of roles and responsibilities of various sections/divisions/teams involved, is necessary. Restructuring may be too demanding at the moment, but immediate action has to be taken to strengthen collaboration and consensus. A liaison or advisory group to handle NSS-related career guidance issues would definitely benefit students, parents and teachers.
 - *Stepping up support for career guidance in schools for improvement of services*: development in career guidance requires aligned support given to career teachers, among which professional training and school administrators’ support are major concerns.

³ Refer to articles in the HKACMGM Newsletter October 2007 & June 2009.