

LCQ10: Sampled results of Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test

Following is a question by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (February 12):

Question:

At present, the Government collects sampled results of the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-S1 HKAT) biennially in even-numbered years as the scaling tool in the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System to scale the internal assessment results of the coming cohorts of Primary Six students proceeding to Secondary One (S1). However, in light of the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, the Government cancelled the sampling arrangements for the Pre-S1 HKAT 2020 and 2022, which were not resumed until 2024. As a result, the SSPA System 2023/2025 Cycle (SSPA 2023/2025) can only use the average of the sampled results collected in 2018 and 2024 as the scaling tool. There are views that the aforesaid two sets of sampled results, collected six years apart, cannot objectively and effectively reflect the actual performance of primary schools whose students are proceeding to S1 under SSPA 2023/2025, thus affecting the proportions of the students' allocation bands. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider adjusting the arrangements for the use of sampled results under SSPA 2023/2025 as appropriate, including adjusting upwards the weighting of the sampled results collected in 2024; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(2) whether it will consider reviewing in the long run the arrangements for the use of sampled results under the SSPA System, and adjusting the calculation of sampled results based on the principle of giving more weight to recent results than to more distant results; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

In order to compare the academic performance of students from different primary schools more objectively and fairly, a scaling mechanism is set up under the Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA) System to measure and adjust students' internal assessments of all primary schools participating in the SSPA for the purpose of determining students' allocation bands. The Government has adopted the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (Pre-

S1 HKAT) as the scaling tool with effect from SSPA 2005/2007 cycle, so as to reduce the incentive for drilling and alleviate students' pressure.

Our reply to the question raised by the Hon Chu Kwok-keung is as follows:

The past data on the Pre-S1 HKAT demonstrate that test results between two adjacent cohorts of the same school are generally stable and could effectively and reliably reflect the overall performance of a school without the need to collect samples every year. Therefore, under the prevailing SSPA mechanism, samples of the Pre-S1 HKAT are collected by the Education Bureau (EDB) biennially and the average of the two recently sampled results is used as the scaling tool.

Owing to the COVID-19 epidemic, the EDB cancelled the sampling arrangements for the Pre-S1 HKAT 2020 and 2022 after consultation with the school sector and announced the details to schools. After the epidemic, the sampling arrangement for the Pre-S1 HKAT 2024 has resumed, hence the sampled results of the Pre-S1 HKAT in the two most recent sampling years (i.e. 2018 and 2024) will be used as the scaling tool for SSPA 2025 and 2026. As for SSPA 2027 and 2028, reinstating the pre-epidemic scaling arrangements, the sampled results in 2024 and 2026 will be used as the scaling tool. It is evident that the time gap in sampling before the Pre-S1 HKAT 2024 is only transient due to the epidemic. The existing arrangements are objective, fair, proven effective, and in line with the aim of minimising the examination pressure of students. The school sector is well aware of the transient situation, and schools' overall performance between two adjacent cohorts was generally stable. Having considered the above factors, the EDB currently has no plan to change the arrangements.