

How should schools treat the TSA data?

Schools should handle the assessment data in a positive and professional manner, i.e.:

- treat how assessment results reflect students' BC level with professional team spirit;
- value the importance of attaining the basic competencies in learning;
- understand that the basic competencies are only part of the curriculum requirements;
- make use of the TSA item analysis reports as well as other assessment information in the school for objective review of students' strengths and weaknesses and the effectiveness of the school-based curriculum, so as to understand students' abilities and learning needs; and
- implement *Assessment for Learning* according to individual schools' needs, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

Support and Resources



- Every year the EDB and the HKEAA hold various seminars to present analyses of students' overall performance, their strengths and weaknesses with student exemplars. The aim is to facilitate the use of objective data by teachers to inform learning and teaching in implementing Assessment for Learning.
- The EDB provides a range of school-based support services to build capacity in analysing assessment data, developing school-based curriculum and assessment strategies. These include consultancy services, professional development networks and collaborative development programmes.

- The EDB also analyses the BCA data, conducts case studies and develops an online resource named 'Web-based Learning and Teaching Support' (WLTS) which provides follow-up suggestions and interactive tasks for teachers to use in addressing different learning needs.

Web-based Learning and Teaching Support

<http://wlts.edb.hkedcity.net/en/home/index.html>

Frequently Asked Questions

Q : Do other countries conduct similar assessments?

A : Yes. Assessments of similar nature are conducted in a number of countries, e.g. Australia, Canada and the U.S. These countries make use of the assessment data to gain a good understanding of their students' overall standards and learning performance so as to inform education policies and to narrow gaps in learning.

Q : Will the results of the TSA affect students' advancement? Are the TSA results related to the allocation of the secondary school places?

A : No. Individual students' results are not presented in the TSA school report. The TSA results **do not affect the advancement of students** and are not related to Secondary School Places Allocation (SSPA).

Q : Is it necessary for schools to arrange extra practice for students in preparing for the TSA?

A : No. The basic competencies represent just part of the curriculum requirements. **Schools should not change their teaching and assessment methods because of the TSA.** Over-drilling not only wears out students' interest in learning but also affects the rest time of teachers and students, resulting in unnecessary pressure. In the long run, over-drilling may demotivate students to learn and affect their next stage of learning.

Q : Does the difficulty level of items in different sub-papers affect students' attainment rates?

A : No. Several sub-papers are set to cover the full BC scope and each student is only required to attempt one of the sub-papers. With overlapping items among sub-papers for equating purposes, psychometric methods are used to estimate the item difficulty indices and the students' ability indices according to their performance and the item difficulty. Thus, **a student's ability index is ultimately not affected by the difficulty level of the sub-paper he/she attempts.**

Q : Will the BC standard be changed if there is a change in the performance of students?

A : No. The HKEAA makes use of a secure research test to link and equate students' performance across years so that the item difficulty indices in different years can be calibrated on the same scale. Hence, once **the BC standard was set, it remains unchanged across the years.**

Q : How do schools help parents understand the significance of the TSA?

A : Schools can make use of notices, parents' day, parent-teacher association, school activities and seminars to promote better understanding of the TSA. Key messages may include:

- students' individual results are not disclosed and so the TSA will definitely not affect the advancement of students or allocation of secondary school places;
- the coverage of the TSA is confined to the basic competencies which are only part of the curriculum requirements;
- the TSA helps teachers identify overall students' learning difficulties thereby improving teaching; and
- excessive and mechanical drilling only wears out students' interest in learning.

Enquiries

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Assessment for Learning

Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) For Schools

Introduction



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April 2014

- In its 2000 report entitled 'Learning for Life, Learning through Life', the Education Commission set out proposals for the Basic Competency Assessments (BCA) in Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics. The BCA serves to provide feedback for learning and teaching so as to facilitate *Assessment for Learning* and to enhance teaching effectiveness.

What is 'Assessment for Learning'?

Assessment is used to collect evidence of student learning. It is an integral part of the learning and teaching cycle. Assessment results can provide information for students to enhance their learning and enable teachers to review and improve their teaching.

- The Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA), a component of the BCA, was introduced to P.3 in 2004, P.6 in 2005, and has been fully implemented at P.3, P.6 and S.3 since 2006.

- To alleviate the pressure on P.6 students, P.6 TSA has been implemented only in odd-numbered years since 2012. Schools can participate on a voluntary basis in even-numbered years according to the needs of individual schools. Schools may request question papers from the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) for reference or use to facilitate teaching.



Enhancement Measures

In 2014, the Government announced the results of the TSA review and decided:

- not to disclose BC attainment rates to individual primary schools;
- to remove the TSA from the Key Performance Measures (KPM) for primary schools;
- to continue with the P.6 TSA altherrnate-year arrangement from 2015 onwards, i.e. conducting the P.6 TSA in odd-numbered years and the pre-S1 HKAT in even-numbered years. The arrangement for administering P.3 and S.3 TSA remains unchanged; and
- to enhance the TSA reporting functions by providing a more interactive platform.

Implementation

Subjects	Reading, Writing and Listening assessments for Chinese and English; Chinese audio-visual (CAV) assessment at secondary level; Mathematics (pen-and-paper mode) Oral assessments for the two languages; CAV assessments at primary levels (conducted on a sampling basis)
Coverage	The basic competencies of Chinese, English and Mathematics are the basic requirements; they are only part of the curriculum
Participants	P.3, P.6 and S.3 students
Assessment Dates	Sampling assessment: April / May Written assessment: mid and late June
Marking	Oral assessments are rated by two oral examiners Teachers are recruited to mark written assessments through a central system in assessment centres
Reporting	Quantitative analysis (assessment data) - School level reports (each dimension) - Item analysis reports (sorted by sub-papers) - Item analysis reports (sorted by Basic Competency Descriptors) Qualitative analysis (written reports) - Summary of territory-wide level students' performance (with student exemplars)
Functions	For the Government: to gauge students' overall attainment of basic competencies For Schools: to identify students' strengths and weaknesses to inform learning and teaching, thereby enhancing learning



What is Basic Competency (BC)?

- 'BC' refers to a minimally acceptable level from which a student should be able to continue to the next key stage of learning without extra learning support.
- For the first year of TSA implementation at each level (i.e. P.3 in 2004, P.6 in 2005 and S.3 in 2006), independent panels of judges, providing professional judgment alongside with psychometric methods, set the BC standards which were then benchmarked against international standards.
- The BC standard set in the first year remains unchanged across the years. Like the qualifying height for high jump, a student jumping over the bar of qualifying height means that the student has achieved basic competency.



Item Design and Workflow

- The TSA items for each subject level are moderated by the respective TSA Moderation Committee (MC). Each MC is chaired by a Chief Examiner who is an academic from the tertiary sector, with experienced teachers and school heads from different strata of schools, curriculum officers from the Education Bureau (EDB), subject managers and senior officers from the HKEAA as members.



- To ensure that the items meet the BC requirements, the MCs draw up test blueprints based on the BC Descriptors and provide their professional views on the content of each sub-paper, the arrangement of item types, the descriptions of item stems and the spread of options.

