Introduction

Applied Learning (ApL) is an integral part of the new senior secondary curriculum, offering studies with elements of practical learning linked to broad professional and vocational fields. ApL courses are approved by the Education Bureau (EDB) and developed and delivered by the respective course providers (CPs).

The duration of each ApL course is 180 contact hours, extending over two school years in Secondary 5 (Year 1) and Secondary 6 (Year 2).

There are six areas of studies:
- Creative Studies
- Media and Communication
- Business, Management and Law
- Services
- Applied Science
- Engineering and Production

Details about the ApL courses on offer can be found at the EDB website www.edb.gov.hk/apl

Assessment for ApL Subjects

ApL subjects aim at evaluating students' knowledge, understanding and skills related to a particular profession or trade, and their generic skills in authentic contexts. There is no public examination for ApL subjects. ApL assessments are undertaken by the respective CPs while the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) is responsible for the monitoring and quality assurance of the assessments conducted by CPs.

The assessments of each ApL subject comprise 6 to 10 tasks undertaken over the two years of study. These are stipulated in the form of an Assessment Scheme which includes a brief description of each task, the assessment method, the approximate assessment date as well as its contribution to the subject score. Assessment information regarding ApL subjects is available at the HKEAA website www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/Subject_Information/apl/

Reporting of Results

In the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination, ApL subjects are classified as Category B subjects. After moderation by the HKEAA, the final ApL assessment results of students are reported on the HKDSE certificate. The certificate provides a common end-of-school credential that gives access to work and further education and training.

ApL subjects are reported at two levels: “Attained” and “Attained with Distinction”. Performance below “Attained” will be designated as “Unattained” and will not be reported on the HKDSE certificate.

Attainment Requirements

For the level of “Attained”, students will be graded with reference to the subject-specific attainment requirements stated in the form of performance descriptors covering knowledge, skills, as well as career-related values and attitudes. These performance descriptors, together with the samples of students’ work, illustrate the standards expected.

The award of “Attained with Distinction” is deemed comparable to level 3 or above for HKDSE Category A subjects. It is linked to the overall academic ability level of the students taking the ApL subject concerned. Their performances in the HKDSE core subjects (Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics Compulsory Part and Liberal Studies) are analysed statistically to ascertain their overall academic ability.
Determining the Levels of Performance

Apl students are assessed by individual CPs based on defined standards. The HKEAA is responsible for the moderation of assessment results submitted by CPs. While CPs are accountable for the judgments made in the assessments, the HKEAA is responsible for ensuring the overall appropriateness of the assessment results.

Standards of “Attained” are initially determined by CPs and moderated by panels of judges with reference to the performance descriptors of individual subjects. A holistic approach is used to judge if the proposed cut score is appropriate, by reviewing the assessment results and samples of students’ work. If the assessment judgments are considered appropriate, the assessment results will be validated. If not, a different cut score will be recommended for the subject, with students’ rank order in the subject remaining unchanged.

The reward percentage of “Attained with Distinction” is determined statistically based on the Group Ability Index (GAI) for level 3 or above in the HKDSE core subjects. Further details about GAI computation can be found in Appendix 1 of the booklet Grading Procedures and Standards-referenced Reporting in the HKDSE Examination www.hkeaa.edu.gov.hk/DocLibrary/Leaflets/HKDSE_SRR_A4_Booklet_Jun2011.pdf

Samples of Students’ Work

Authentic exemplars of students’ work, together with the performance descriptors, serve to illustrate the expected performance standards of the subjects. The expected standards are made explicit to facilitate learning and teaching and to help communicate to various stakeholders, such as employers and tertiary institutions, the meaning of the performance levels. Examples of respective subjects are available on the HKEAA website www.hkeaa.edu.gov.hk/en/hkdse/SubjectInformation/apl/

Arrangements for Students with Special Educational Needs

When conducting assessment tasks, CPs have the autonomy to provide special arrangements to students with special educational needs (SEN) depending on the nature and severity of their disabilities. The provision of special assessment arrangements aims to allow these students to be equitably assessed without having an unfair advantage or disadvantage over other students. Examples of SEN arrangements include:

- Extension of preparation time
- Extension of assessment time
- Provision of special assistance during the conduct of the assessment
- Provision of equitable, alternative assessments
- Provision of ancillary aids

Queries regarding Assessment Decisions

Proper procedures in handling queries regarding Apl assessment decisions should be stipulated by CPs. They are required to keep a complete record of all cases and should resolve students’ queries regarding assessment results before submitting Apl marks to the HKEAA.

After the release of results, students may submit an application to the HKEAA for rechecking of marks, but not for the re-assessment of their performance in the Apl subjects.

Enquiries

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