

Response regarding Utilisation of the HKEAA Fortress Hill Assessment Centre

To ensure the smooth implementation of Onscreen Marking (OSM) and to facilitate teachers' participation in the marking process, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) has set up five regular assessment centres in various districts. The Fortress Hill Assessment Centre (FHAC) on Hong Kong Island, which provides around 400 workstations, is the only centre located in commercial premises.

The FHAC occupies two floors in the building, with a total floor area of approximately 20,600 square feet. The monthly rent is around \$517,000. The average rent per square foot is \$25, which is lower than the average rental rate of private offices in the same district. Monthly expenditure on management fees, rates and air-conditioning is around \$100,000.

The major considerations when selecting the site for setting up an assessment centre are the rent, security, accessibility, suitability of the floor area and infrastructure for OSM, and the length of the rent-free period offered. The HKEAA has been seeking vacant school premises for conversion into assessment centres with the assistance of the Education Bureau. In fact, the assessment centres in Tsuen Wan and Lai King, and the Tai Hing Assessment Centre set up in Tuen Mun last year have all been converted from vacant school buildings. In 2012, a temporary assessment centre was also set up in a vacant school in Tai Wai to meet the demand of the double-cohort year. However, we have not been able to identify any suitable vacant school buildings on Hong Kong Island so far.

The utilisation rate of the assessment centre varies according to the examination cycle and the availability of the markers who are mainly school teachers. During the marking period from March to mid-August, the HKEAA assessment centres are open daily from 9:00 am to 10:30 pm (including Saturday, Sunday and public holidays).

In addition to the marking of public examination scripts, the assessment centres are also used as marking centres for the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA) and the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (LPAT). They also serve as examination centres for various international and professional examinations, and provide venues for the training sessions and meetings of teachers, markers and other examination personnel.

From September 2012 to August 2013, the FHAC was open for 269 days for marking, training and conducting assessments, and 70 days for internal preparations for OSM. In terms of operation hours, the FHAC was open for around 2,200 hours per year, which is very similar to the annual utilisation rate of 2,000 hours for most offices. During the peak marking period for the public examinations, the workstations at the Assessment Centre are fully occupied and overbooked during certain marking sessions.

In 2013, the HKEAA set up two short-term, small-scale assessment centres at Hong Kong Education City in Shatin and a secondary school in Tseung Kwan O for the marking of the HKDSE Examination scripts. Taking into consideration the operational needs, the conditions of the available premises (including the location, size and relevant facilities, etc.) and the capital expenditure involved, we will explore the feasibility of setting up more short-term, small-scale assessment centres in schools. We are now negotiating the mode of cooperation with a number of schools and will continue to search for suitable school premises on Hong Kong Island. We have also started exploring different ways to conduct OSM in a more flexible and cost effective manner.

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