

Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No. 117/2024

From: Permanent Secretary for Education
Ref.: EDB(CD/C&S)/F&A/65/1/1(19)
Date: 31 May 2024

To: Supervisors/Heads of all government, aided (including special schools with senior secondary classes), caput, and Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools

Diversity Learning Grant for Senior Secondary Students – Other Languages and Other Programmes (2024/25 school year)

Summary

This circular memorandum (CM) invites schools offering programmes on Other Languages (OL) and/or Other Programmes (OP) (including Gifted Education (GE) Programmes and Network Programmes (NP))¹ to senior secondary (SS) students to apply for the Diversity Learning Grant (DLG) for the 2024/25 school year. **Schools wishing to apply for the DLG should submit application from 14 to 28 June 2024.**

Details

Other Languages

2. Schools could use the DLG-OL to offer courses of the six designated OL as SS elective subjects for S4-S6 students. Details for the 2024/25 s.y. are as follows:

Level of students	OL subjects
S4	French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Urdu
S5	French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Urdu
S6	French, German, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish

3. Please refer to **Annex I** for details of the ambit for the DLG-OL. For the examination arrangements of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE) Category C (Other Languages) subjects, please refer to the relevant information and documents published on the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) website:

https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/HKDSE/assessment/subject_information/category_c_subjects/

Other Programmes

4. Schools could use the DLG-OP to offer school-based pull-out or off-school support programmes on GE, and/or collaborate with other schools to offer NP of SS subjects. Please refer to **Annex I** for details of the ambit for the DLG-OP. A set of guidelines on the use of the DLG-OP for GE programmes is at **Annex II**. For NP of SS subjects which comprises

¹ For schools applying for the DLG to offer Applied Learning/adapted Applied Learning courses, please refer to the EDBCM No. 95/2024 on Applied Learning Courses (2025-27 Cohort; 2027 HKDSE)/EDBCM No. 6/2024 on Senior Secondary Adapted Applied Learning Courses for Students with Intellectual Disabilities (2024-26 Cohort).

School-based Assessment (SBA) component(s), schools should arrange qualified teachers to conduct the concerned SBA (the assessors should generally be the subject teachers of the students), and the marks awarded will be counted towards the students' public assessment results in the HKDSE. Schools are required also inform the HKEAA of the arrangements for the relevant NP.

Subsidy Rates

5. The subsidy of the DLG-OL is calculated based on the actual number of students studying OL. As to the DLG-OP, schools are advised to make a realistic estimation in their online submission in June (the estimation is capped by the maximum subsidy each school is entitled to) and initially set the number of classes intended for the subsidy so that the subsidy could be optimally utilised to avoid the clawback of any unspent subsidies. Schools should subsequently confirm or make adjustment to the number of classes to apply for the subsidy through the online survey to be conducted in November to finalise the total amount of the subsidy for the DLG-OP for the year. Schools may refer to the example given at **Annex III**.

6. Subsidy rates for the DLG-OL and the DLG-OP are as follows:

DLG category	Subsidy rate for the 2024/25 school year
Other Languages (OL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$4,300 per SS student studying OL per year
Other Programmes (OP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic subsidy rate: \$7,000 per SS class per year • Incentive funding: Additional incentive funding of \$800 per SS class per year for schools with a utilisation rate of the DLG-OP of 80% or above, based on the schools' annual accounts of the most recent year² (i.e. a total of \$7,800 per SS class per year)

Modes of Delivery

7. Schools could deliver programmes for OL or OP in two modes, i.e. either by deploying teachers of the schools or arranging other organisations to teach the subjects. Under any circumstances, schools should ensure that the courses are taught by qualified teachers. For schools offering SS subjects through NP, those deployed to teach in other network schools must be qualified teachers registered under *Education Ordinance*. Schools should make professional judgement in choosing suitable teachers/organisations to teach the various courses, and make reference to **Annex IV** for details related to the hiring of external services and appointment of teaching staff. **Schools must not charge students any fees for taking OL and NP.**

8. For schools planning to invite organisations registered under the *Education Ordinance* to teach OL courses on school campuses, applications from these organisations for

² For aided (including special schools), caput, and Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, the annual accounts are mostly compiled on the basis of school year and the accounts of the most recent year submitted by schools are those of the 2022/23 school year. As for government schools, their accounts are compiled on the basis of financial year which are the accounts of the 2023-24 financial year. Utilisation rate is calculated on the basis of the total expenses and the entitled total provision of the year, i.e. Utilisation rate = Expenditure/(Allocation of the year + Surplus carried forward from the preceding year) x 100%.

extending their premises are required. Schools may contact the EDB for enquiries and refer to paragraph 15 of this CM for the contact telephone number. For staff who are to be deployed by the service contractors to teach on school campuses, schools must ask the service contractors to request the staff concerned to undergo Sexual Conviction Record Check (SCRC) and allow schools to have access to the checking results. For details of the implementation of SCRC scheme, please refer to the EDB webpage (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-sch-staff/appointment/index.html>).

Application Procedure

9. Eligible schools wishing to apply for the DLG-OL and/or the DLG-OP should do so via the EDB online application platform (<https://cd.edb.gov.hk/dlg2024/application/>) from **14 to 28 June 2024**. The application procedures, together with the login name and password, will be sent to schools via the School Messaging Module (SMM) of Fast Information Transmission System (FITS) on or before 14 June 2024. Schools can login the aforementioned online application platform to check the application results on or after 23 September 2024.

10. Schools are required to observe this CM and relevant EDB guidelines when using the DLG and are accountable for its proper use. In line with the principle of school-based management, schools are required to incorporate the relevant programmes into their annual plans and annual reports. The annual plans and annual reports should be endorsed by the School Management Committee (SMC) / Incorporated Management Committee (IMC) and uploaded onto school's website before the end of November each year.

Payment and Accounting Arrangements

11. For **aided (including special schools with SS classes), caput, and DSS secondary schools**, 50% of the yearly provisional DLG will be disbursed in August 2024 according to the information submitted by schools and the approved SS class structure. The remaining adjusted provision, together with the incentive funding (if applicable), will be disbursed in January 2025 according to the information subsequently provided by schools through the online survey in November 2024 and the spending position of the DLG-OP as reflected in schools' annual accounts of the most recent year. Any deficit for each category of the DLG can be covered by the schools' own funds and/or other appropriate grants from the EDB as necessary³.

12. For **government secondary schools**, the DLG will be provided by the EDB in the form of budget allocations in August of each year and April of the next year. Specifically, a provisional amount equivalent to the subsidy for 7 months of the DLG will be disbursed in August 2024 according to the information submitted by schools and the approved SS class structure. The remaining adjusted provision of the DLG-OL and the DLG-OP, together with the incentive funding (if applicable), will be disbursed in April 2025 according to the information provided by schools through the online survey in November 2024 and the spending position of the DLG-OP as reflected in schools' annual accounts of the most recent year. Government schools may deploy the surplus of the Expanded Subject and Curriculum Block Grant to cover the deficit of any categories of the DLG, as necessary.

³ For example, aided schools could deploy the general domain of the Operating Expenses Block Grant/Expanded Operating Expenses Block Grant; DSS schools could deploy the DSS Subsidy; caput schools could deploy the Fee Subsidy to cover the deficit.

13. To allow more flexibility for schools in deploying the subsidies, the DLG-OL and the DLG-OP may be used to support the diverse learning needs of SS students of different cohorts, instead of a specific cohort. That said, **the funding of the DLG is not transferable among different categories**. Schools are required to keep **a separate ledger account** for different categories of the DLG and record all the allocation and expenditure respectively.

14. For **aided (including special schools with SS classes), caput, and DSS secondary schools**, the surplus of each ledger account can be carried forward to the following school year but is capped at the total provision of the respective category of the DLG disbursed in the current school year (“capped amount”). Any unspent balance of each category of the DLG above the “capped amount” in the ledger account as at 31 August each year will be clawed back. For **government schools**, any unspent balance of the allocation will lapse by the end of each financial year and separate allocation for the unspent balance brought forward capped at the total allocation of the preceding financial year will be provided in the years between.

Enquiries

15. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and relevant information are available at the designated webpage of the DLG (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/secondary/learning-teaching-resources/DLG.html>). For enquiries, please contact the following EDB officers:



A. General enquiries	Ms Candice CHAN	Tel. no. 2892 6327
B. Other Languages	-ditto-	-ditto-
C. Other Programmes		
• Network Programmes	-ditto-	-ditto-
• Gifted Education Programmes	Mr Roger CHONG	Tel. no. 3698 3430

Ben HUNG
for Permanent Secretary for Education

c.c. Heads of Sections – for information

Ambit of Diversity Learning Grant – Other Languages and Other Programmes

DLG category	Programme description	Subsidy rate	Remarks	Usage
Other Languages	<p>Other Languages include the six designated languages, namely French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish and Urdu*</p> <p>* Urdu is only applicable to S4-S5 students in 2024/25 s.y.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$4,300 per SS student studying designated OL per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This includes the study of any of the designated Other Languages courses as specified in the programme description. • These language courses should be offered as elective subjects for S4-S6 students. • For the curriculum design of these language courses, reference must be made to the syllabi of the respective language examinations recommended by the HKEAA as published in the HKDSE Examination Regulations for Category C subjects and the subject information provided on the HKEAA website. • Students should enrol themselves in the designated language examinations administered by the official cultural organisations (as the providers of the language examinations). Should students obtain the specified level or above in the language examinations, their results attained will be reported in their HKDSE certificates. <i>(Please refer to the HKDSE Examination Regulations for details)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For hire of services or employment of teachers for running the programmes. • For the purchase of consumables, learning and teaching materials and educational software packages. • For employment of teachers/teaching assistants to share out the additional teaching load arising from offering these programmes directly or indirectly. • For organising related extra-curricular activities conducted in other languages.
Other Programmes	<p>Gifted Education Programmes for gifted students in schools under the SS curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gifted students will be selected through a school-based selection mechanism which may include the use of academic achievement test (internal examination scores), task-based performance test, pupil work scrutiny, behavioural checklist, interview, results in competitions, information from parents and/or peers, etc. <p>Network Programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic rate: \$7,000 per SS class per year • Incentive funding: Additional incentive funding of \$800 per SS class per year for schools with a utilisation rate of the DLG-OP of 80% or above, based on schools' annual accounts of the most recent year (i.e. \$7,800 per SS class per year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programmes for gifted students are meant to provide more structured learning opportunities through school-based pull-out programmes and/or off-school support programmes to further challenge the abilities of gifted students; or • These learning opportunities may include credit-bearing courses specially designed and offered by tertiary education institutions, enhancement programmes (in terms of breadth and extension and/or depth and pace of learning) offered by academic associations or professional bodies targeted for senior secondary students. • Network Programmes refer to SS subjects (e.g. Ethics and Religious Studies, Music, Physical Education and Visual Arts) jointly organised by schools to provide students with more subject choices. • All network schools are entitled to the DLG-OP. • Schools should agree on the sharing of expenses among themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For hire of services or employment of teachers for running the programmes. • For the purchase of consumables, learning and teaching materials and educational software packages. • For employment of teachers/teaching assistants to share out the additional teaching load arising from offering these programmes directly or indirectly. • Schools are free to allot the funding for OP to provide either or both of the Gifted Education Programmes and Network Programmes to their SS students.

Guidelines for the Use of the DLG for Gifted Education Programmes

Programmes Eligible for Consideration:

Gifted Education Programmes under the DLG context include:

- all enhancement programmes specially designed and offered by tertiary education institutions/ non-profit-making non-governmental organisations/ academic associations/ professional bodies targeted at SS students
- all school-based pull-out programmes offered by individual schools at the SS level

Characteristics/Criteria of “Gifted Education Programmes”:

Gifted Education Programmes should be designed with the following characteristics:

- with gifted education elements, i.e. creativity, higher order thinking skills, personal and social competence; which can be categorised into enrichment (breadth), extension (depth) or acceleration (pace) programmes
- with a clearly stated selection mechanism to match the students with the programmes
- with students’ deliverables that demonstrate the intended learning outcomes of the programmes

Ambit of the Grant:

- for payment of programme subscription/registration fees
- for procurement of services from external course providers
- for employment of instructors to run the programmes
- for the purchase of consumables, learning and teaching materials and educational software packages
- for administrative and local transportation costs incurred by schools

Examples of Suggested Use of the DLG for Gifted Education Programmes:

- to subsidise a group of students to enrol in a fee-charging credit-bearing course in computer programming offered by a local tertiary education institution
- to partially subsidise a group of students to enrol in a study tour to the Mainland for the purpose of developing their gifted potential
- to hire services from an external course provider or an individual for organising on-site pull-out gifted development programmes
- to purchase reference books, journals and magazines related to gifted education
- to purchase equipment or consumables that are used for delivering the school-based pull-out gifted development programmes
- to pay for printing costs of teaching materials in relation to the gifted development programmes offered
- to pay for transportation costs incurred by schools for local excursions in relation to the pull-out gifted development programmes
- to subsidise registration fees for overseas learning/exchange programmes
- to hire personal tutor(s) to give extra tuition to students gifted in sports, for example, to make up for the lessons missed because of their heavy involvement in training activities
- to enrol gifted students on related web-based courses offered by local or overseas programme providers

Examples of INAPPROPRIATE Use of the DLG for Gifted Education Programmes:

- to hire services from external service providers for offering examination-oriented cramming classes in relation to the SS subjects
- to pay for food and beverages
- to purchase musical instruments to form an orchestra for the school, rather than for the selected talented SS students
- to subsidise the air passage/accommodation for students to take part in overseas training programmes

**Example of making adjustments on the amount of
the Diversity Learning Grant (DLG) - Other Programmes (OP)**

This is an example of an aided school with 12 approved SS classes which organises both Gifted Education and Network Programmes for S4-S6 students. The school has adjusted the number of classes to apply for the DLG-OP to 8 classes according to the unspent balance of the last school year and the annual plan for the next year to avoid the clawback of any unspent balance above the “capped amount”.

Step 1

Put a “✓” in the appropriate box(es) in **columns 2-3** in the online application to indicate that your school would offer OP for S4 students in the 2024/25 school year. The information of S5 & S6 is drawn from the online survey completed by the school in November 2023. It is not necessary to fill in **columns 4 and 5**. Relevant figures will be generated automatically.

Step 2

In consideration of the expenditure and surplus of the DLG-OP of the previous years, please indicate the intended number of SS classes to apply for the DLG-OP for the 2024/25 school year in **column 6**. After filling in this number, the provisional amount of the DLG-OP to be received by the school will be shown in **column 7** automatically.

2024/25 school year						
Column (1)	Column (2)	Column (3)	Column (4)	Column (5)	Column (6)	Column (7)
Level	Gifted Education Programme(s)	Network Programme(s)	No. of approved classes (maximum number of classes to apply for the DLG-OP assuming 4 classes for each SS level)	Each class is entitled to a subsidy of \$7,000 (excluding incentive funding)	No. of SS classes to apply for the DLG-OP	Amount of the DLG-OP applied for (excluding incentive funding)
S4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="× \$ 7,000"/>	<input type="text" value="8"/>	<input type="text" value="× \$ 7,000"/>
S5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="× \$ 7,000"/>		
S6	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="text" value="4"/>	<input type="text" value="× \$ 7,000"/>		
		Total	<input type="text" value="12"/>		Provisional amount	<input type="text" value="\$56,000"/>

Remarks:

- (i) Schools should ensure an effective use of resources. They should plan an appropriate budget to provide useful information conducive to a more effective cost-benefit analysis that enables the IMC/SMC/School Head to have better control over the school expenditure.
- (ii) Drawing reference from the above example,
- 1. For aided (including special schools with SS classes), caput, and DSS secondary schools:**
 - Schools will receive \$28,000 in August 2024 as the first instalment (50% of the yearly provisional DLG) and \$28,000 together with other adjustments, e.g. incentive funding, if any, as the second instalment in January 2025.
 - If the incentive funding is applicable to the school, the unit rate of the DLG-OP for the school will be adjusted to \$7,800 per class per year. Therefore, the second instalment of \$34,400 ($= \$28,000 + \800×8 (classes)) will be disbursed to the school in January 2025.
 - 2. Government secondary schools:**
 - Schools will receive \$32,667 in August 2024 as the first instalment (a provisional DLG for 7 months) and \$23,333 together with other adjustments, e.g. incentive funding, if any, as the second instalment in April 2025.
 - If the incentive funding is applicable to the school, the unit rate of the DLG-OP for the school will be adjusted to \$7,800 per class per year. Therefore, the second instalment of \$29,733 ($= \$23,333 + \800×8 (classes)) will be disbursed to the school in April 2025.
- (iii) Schools may further adjust the number of classes to apply for the DLG-OP with reference to the budgets of the programmes as approved by the IMC/SMC when completing the online survey in November 2024. However, the adjustment should not exceed the limit of the school's entitlement.

Hiring Outside Services, Purchases and Staff Appointment

1. For hiring outside services and purchases, aided schools, including special schools, should observe the rules and guidelines specified in the EDB Circular No. 4/2013 on Procurement Procedures in Aided Schools. DSS and caput schools are also advised to refer to and observe the above-mentioned circular as well as the relevant guidelines issued by the EDB from time to time in their procurement procedures. DSS schools should read the above-mentioned circular in conjunction with the Circular Letter on Financial Management in Direct Subsidy Scheme Schools dated 21 November 2007 and the EDB Circular No. 17/2012 on Use of Government and Non-government Funds in Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) Schools.
2. When offering appointment to teachers and other staff, schools should pay special attention to the Points to Note in Handling Appointment Matters for schools on the EDB webpage, including but not limited to EDBC No. 9/2023 and No. 14/2023. For appointments funded by the DLG, schools are not required to submit any appointment forms to the EDB. All expenditure related to salaries, leave entitlement and related benefits such as Mandatory Provident Fund and any other statutory benefits conferred by the Employment Ordinance of the staff appointed within the approved ambit should be absorbed by the DLG. Schools will not be provided or reimbursed with extra funding to cover such expenditure.
3. Government schools should comply with the relevant rules and regulations relating to hire of services and appointment of non-civil service contract (NCSC) staff, and follow the procedures set out in the EDB Internal Circular No. 6/2010 on NCSC staff appointment so as to uphold the principles of openness and fairness. In addition, they should note the statutory duties of the EDB as an employer under the Mandatory Provident Fund Schemes Ordinance (Cap 485), and follow the EDB's procedures for enrolment of relevant employees into a Mandatory Provident Fund Scheme. On parity with the arrangement for aided schools, no top-up allocation would be released for payments of employment related expenses which should be absorbed by the DLG.