

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) – FOR PARENTS

Eligibility Criteria

1. What are the criteria for a student to be offered to take a subject at a higher level based on their PSLE results?

Students in the N(A) and N(T) courses who scored A* or A in a Standard subject in PSLE can take the corresponding subject at the Express level; students in the N(T) course who scored at least B or C in a PSLE Standard subject or 1 in a PSLE Foundation subject can take the corresponding subject at the N(A) level. This ensures that students take subjects at a higher level only if they are clearly able to cope with, and benefit from, this flexibility.

2. If students did not qualify for other higher level subjects based on their PSLE results, do they still have a chance to take up those higher-level subjects in Secondary 1 or 2?

Beyond the start of Sec 1, students who do well in school-based exams may also take higher-level subjects if found suitable to do so by their schools on a case-by-case basis. Schools will provide support through bridging programmes for these new SBB (Sec) students. Students are advised to take up to a maximum of 3 higher-level subjects so that they would still be able to cope well with the workload.

3. Do students have the option not to offer a subject at a higher level, even if they meet the criteria?

Yes.

4. Should I delay the decision wait until mid-year/end-year before taking up the higher level subject?

Taking the higher level subject from the start of Secondary 1 will allow your child more time to adjust to the greater academic demand. Students who would like to take up the higher level subjects after the mid-year and year-end school examinations need to satisfy the school-based criteria.

5. Why are students with a B grade at PSLE not allowed to offer the subject at the Express level?

We are mindful of the need to ensure that students are able to cope with the demands of a subject at the higher level. While enabling students to build on their strengths, we want to build their confidence and optimise their potential. We have therefore set the criteria such that it will ensure that our students will benefit from taking the higher-level subject.

6. What will be the eligibility criteria for SBB (Sec) based on the revised PSLE scoring?

We will release the eligibility criteria for SBB (Sec) under the revised PSLE scoring at a later date.

Subjects Offered under SBB (Sec)

7. What are the subjects that students can offer under SBB (Sec)?

8. Is SBB (Sec) limited to English, Mathematics, Mother Tongue Language and Science? If so, are there plans to expand SBB (Sec) to other related subjects, e.g. humanities?

Under SBB (Sec), students will be allowed to offer the PSLE subjects, namely, English Language, Mother Tongue Language, Science and Mathematics at a higher level, starting from Secondary 1 if they score well for the subject at the PSLE. SBB (Sec) will only cover the four PSLE subjects because PSLE results are used as an indicator of a student's readiness to cope with a more demanding curriculum in those subjects at lower secondary.

9. Is there a maximum number of subjects that students can offer at a higher level?

At lower secondary, students can offer a maximum of 3 subjects at a higher level. At upper secondary, students can likewise offer a maximum of 3 subjects at a higher level.

10. Will N(A) and N(T) students be allowed to take Higher Mother Tongue Language (HMTL)? Are there already schools where N(A) and N(T) students are allowed to take HMTL?

Yes. In fact, N(A) students are already allowed to offer HMTL. N(A) students take the O-level Mother Tongue Language (MTL) examination when they are in Secondary 4 and the O-level Higher Mother Tongue Language (HMTL) examination in Secondary 5.

Taking Higher-Level Subjects

11. Would students taking subjects at higher level (i.e. Express or N(A), use the same syllabus as other Express or N(A) students, or will they use an easier or customised syllabus?

Students taking higher-level subjects under SBB (Sec) will be taught the same syllabus as other students in the more demanding course. However, the teaching methods, resources employed and support given may differ, depending on the schools' assessment of their students' needs.

12. Will my child, who is taking a subject at higher level automatically qualify to take the corresponding out-of-stream subject at upper secondary?

Your child may continue with the corresponding out-of-stream subject at upper secondary if he/she met the school's criteria at the end of Secondary 2.

13. Will there be bridging classes for students who take a subject at a higher level?

Bridging classes may be conducted for students who take higher-level subjects should the school assess that there is a need to do so.

Benefits of Taking Higher-Level Subjects

14. What are the outcomes of SBB (Sec) so far? How have the students benefitted?

From the prototyping experience in the 12 schools, students who have participated in SBB (Sec) were generally happy to take higher-level subjects and to continue doing so. Their knowledge of the subject deepened; and their confidence and motivation increased. Their classmates viewed them positively, and were also motivated to work harder upon seeing them take higher-level subjects.

15. How will students benefit from taking subjects at a higher level in lower secondary?

SBB (Sec) allows for greater flexibility in subject offerings at lower secondary levels, to better cater to the strengths of N(A) and N(T) students in English Language, Mathematics, Science and Mother Tongue Languages. Students who had performed well in these subjects at the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) may offer the subjects at a higher level starting from Secondary 1. SBB (Sec) allows students to stretch themselves and acquire deeper competencies in areas they are strong in.

16. Since there is already existing flexibility for students at upper secondary to take subjects at a higher level, how is SBB (Sec) advantageous?

SBB (Sec) allows students to take the higher-level subjects anytime they qualify - whether through PSLE or school-based examinations in Secondary 1. It allows for tailoring of learning based on the development of the students. In this way, students are more engaged in learning.

17. Does taking higher level subjects increase a student's chance of laterally transferring to a more demanding course (i.e. from N(T) to N(A), and N(A) to Express)?

Students may progress to a more academically demanding course based on their performance and the school's assessment on whether they are deemed able to cope with the rigour of the course.

For students who do laterally transfer, those who have taken higher-level subjects say that this better prepares them to handle the increased academic demand of the course they transfer to.

18. How will my child be compared to the other students from his/ her course at the end of the year, for lateral transfers, promotion and Edusave awards, given that the higher level subject is more demanding?

For the purposes of determining eligibility for promotion, lateral transfers and Edusave awards, your child will be considered alongside those in his course. To ensure that students who stretch themselves by taking up higher-level subjects are not disadvantaged in terms of promotion to the next level, eligibility for lateral transfer, and Edusave awards, schools will adjust the marks obtained in the higher-level subject *at the backend*. For example, E.g. schools could add marks to the Math score obtained by an N(A) student taking Math at Express level. Even after this adjustment, schools have the flexibility to promote or laterally transfer students who are borderline cases

19. How will schools decide on the mark adjustment?

MOE has provided schools with guidelines on adjusting the marks and pitching the exams at the appropriate difficulty levels.

Student Well-Being

[for schools adopting combined class approach]

20. If my child, who is currently in the N(A) course, has to take a higher-level subject in an Express class, would he experience difficulties interacting with his Express classmates?

Our teachers are mindful of students' socio-emotional needs and will monitor the class dynamics, taking steps to ensure a learning environment that is conducive for all. Students from different courses currently have opportunities to interact through PE, CCA and other school activities.

21. Will taking higher level subjects give my child more stress as he/ she has to compete with others in the higher course?

22. If my child is currently taking a higher level subject at a higher level, would interacting with classmates of a different course affect his or her learning?

There may be initial challenges but these will be monitored and mitigated as far as possible. Our schools are mindful of students' socio-emotional and academic needs and will endeavour to provide the necessary support to students to help them cope.

23. If my child is taking a subject at a higher level, will he be on par with the students from the other course?

24. Will taking subjects at a higher level put my child at a disadvantage?

Your child would have been offered the chance to take a subject at a higher level based on his or her strength in the subject. Our schools will adopt a variety of pedagogical approaches to cater to the different learning needs of students.

Dropping of Higher-Level Subjects

25. Can a student withdraw from taking higher-level subjects if he or she finds it unsuitable after a semester?

Students and parents can make the final decision to continue or drop the subject. Nevertheless, students are encouraged to give themselves time to adjust to the greater demands of the higher-level subject. Before a decision is made to drop the subject, advice from subject teachers should be sought on the students' academic progress. The school will also advise on the possible impact on admission to post-secondary courses.

26. Will a student be made to give up the higher-level subject if he or she fails the examination?

Students are encouraged to continue with the higher-level subjects until the end of Secondary 2, as students do need time to adjust to the greater academic demands. Schools will endeavour to provide the necessary support for them to cope better with the higher-level subjects.

Operational Issues

27. Will those from N(A) taking the subject at Express level join the Express class or will a separate class be formed to cater to N(A) students taking the subject at Express level? How will it affect class size? How will MOE ensure that it does not compromise learning? Would students face difficulty in integrating with classmates from the other levels?

A variety of approaches may be adopted by schools to best meet the learning needs of their students, and ensure that learning is not compromised as a result of SBB (Sec). Schools are also mindful of students' socio-emotional needs and will endeavour to provide the necessary support to create a conducive learning environment.

28. How will MOE equip teachers with a larger repertoire of instructional strategies to cater to a broader range of learning needs within each classroom? Will teachers be undergoing more professional training to prepare for the implementation of the SBB (Sec)?

MOE has been organising relevant PD courses and networking sessions to support and guide the SBB (Sec) teachers.

29. Will more teachers or allied educators be employed? Will school hours be longer?

MOE will work with schools to manage their more complex timetabling needs, including manpower deployment and additional teachers to support SBB (Sec).

Others

30. What will happen to the O-, N(A)- and N(T)-level examinations?

There will be no changes to the O-, N(A)- and N(T)-level examinations arising from the implementation of the SBB (Sec).