Chapter 12

Education

Hong Kong is an international education hub, with several world-renowned universities and outstanding research talent. It boasts an international and highly diversified post-secondary education sector, with five universities in the world's top 100. The school curriculum stays current through ongoing renewal.

The total government expenditure on education is $112.4 billion in the 2025-26 estimates (a 36 per cent increase over 10 years from 2016-17), with $102.9 billion being recurrent expenditure, accounting for 17.5 per cent of the total recurrent government expenditure.

The Education Bureau formulates, develops and reviews education policies, and oversees the implementation of education programmes, nurturing young people into lifelong learners who are able and virtuous, with a sense of responsibility, vision and love for the country and the city, ready for future challenges and opportunities.

The Post Secondary Colleges (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 was passed in June to enhance the regulatory and quality assurance mechanisms of self-financing post-secondary institutions for the healthy and sustainable development of the self-financing post-secondary education sector.

The 2025 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination marked the second year of implementation of the optimised curriculums and assessment frameworks of the core subjects (Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics, and Citizenship and Social Development), which created space for students and catered for learner diversity. The increase in the number of students opting for three elective subjects and taking Applied Learning was sustained.

The bureau launched initiatives to enhance the quality of education including implementing the junior secondary Citizenship, Economics and Society curriculum and the Primary Humanities curriculum to strengthen students' knowledge foundation and nurture students' proper values, attitudes and behaviour to cultivate values for the leaders of tomorrow.

The bureau also launched the Biliteracy and Trilingualism Campaign to enhance public awareness of the importance of being biliterate and trilingual in Hong Kong. Two one-off grants were provided to each publicly funded primary and secondary school to enhance students' learning of English Language and Putonghua respectively through enriching the language environment.

Education in Hong Kong

The government provides 12 years' free primary and secondary education through public sector schools. In the 2023-24 school year, around 80 per cent of the relevant age group participated in post-secondary education, including about 55 per cent at degree level.

The education sector is characterised by diversity and quality. Public sector schools form the majority, comprising government schools operated directly by the government as well as aided schools and caput schools that are fully subsidised by the government and mostly run by religious, charitable or clan organisations. There are Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) schools, which enjoy greater flexibility in charging school fees, while receiving government subsidies mainly based on enrolment. There are also private primary and secondary day schools offering local and non-local formal curriculums.

Number of Schools and Student Enrolment in 2025-26[1]

School Type	Secondary		Primary	
	No of Schools	Enrolment	No of Schools	Enrolment
Public Sector	389	265,000	453	246,849
Government	*30*	*18,985*	*33*	*17,643*
Aided	*357*	*244,646*	*420*	*229,206*
Caput	*2*	*1,369*	-	-
DSS	57	49,773	21	16,211
Private	67	33,047	117	54,173

There are 53 international schools in Hong Kong, including 15 run by the English Schools Foundation, which cater mainly to the demand of non-local families living in Hong Kong for work and investment. Generally operated on a self-financing basis, these schools offer different non-local curriculums, including those of Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the International Baccalaureate programme.

At the post-secondary level, secondary school graduates have access to various publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary programmes at sub-degree, undergraduate and higher levels with multiple entry and exit points, offered by 22 degree-awarding institutions, including 12 universities.

Kindergarten Education

Kindergarten education in Hong Kong is optional, but virtually all children aged three to five attend kindergartens. Since the 2017-18 school year, a subsidy sufficient for the provision of good quality half-day kindergarten education to all eligible children aged three to six is provided to local non-profit-making kindergartens joining the Kindergarten Education Scheme. The quality of kindergarten education is enhanced through a series of support measures.

Number of Kindergartens and Student Enrolment in 2025-26[2]

Kindergarten Type	No of Kindergartens	Enrolment
Non-profit-making	790	95,316
Joining the scheme	*722*	*83,464*
Not joining the scheme	*68*	*11,852*
Private Independent	168	17,888

1 Figures on enrolment (as of September 2025) and number of schools (as of December 2025) include ordinary primary and secondary day schools, but not special schools and secondary day courses operated by private schools offering tutorial, vocational and adult education courses.

2 Figures on enrolment (as of September 2025) and number of kindergartens (as of December 2025) also include kindergarten-cum-child care centres (nursery, lower and upper classes).

Primary Education

Public sector primary schools offer six years' free education. A child starts primary education at about age six.

Admissions to Primary 1 in public sector schools are administered through the centralised Primary One Admission System, divided into two stages: Discretionary Places Admission and Central Allocation. Each school will first earmark about half of its Primary 1 places as discretionary places for parents to directly apply to one public sector school in any school catchment area, or 'school net'. The remaining half are for central allocation, of which 10 per cent are for students from any school net while 90 per cent are for students in the school net of their residence in order of parental preference.

Secondary Education

Public sector secondary schools provide six years' free education. Secondary education comprises three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary education leading to the HKDSE Examination.

Subsidised Secondary 1 places are allocated through the Secondary School Places Allocation System, divided into two stages: Discretionary Places and Central Allocation. Schools participating in the system reserve not more than 30 per cent of their Secondary 1 places as discretionary places for parents to directly apply to not more than two participating schools in any district. The remaining places are for central allocation, of which 10 per cent are for students from any school net while 90 per cent are for students from their respective school nets.

Students completing junior secondary education normally remain in the same school for their senior secondary education while some attend full-time, fully subsidised vocational training courses run by the Vocational Training Council (VTC).

Local Curriculum and Learning and Teaching Initiatives

The Hong Kong school curriculum features a broad and balanced curriculum with an open and flexible framework, highlighting seven learning goals and five essential learning experiences[3]. It comprises the three interconnected components of knowledge (subjects from Key Learning Areas[4]), generic skills, and values and attitudes. A 15-year school curriculum framework from kindergarten to Secondary 6 helps students progress through the different stages of learning to achieve whole-person development and lifelong learning.

Kindergarten, Primary and Secondary Curriculum

The kindergarten education curriculum promotes balanced development in children covering five developmental objectives, namely moral development, cognitive and language

3 The five essential learning experiences are values education, intellectual development, community service, physical and aesthetic development, and career-related experiences.

4 Key Learning Areas are Chinese language education; English language education; mathematics education; science education; technology education; personal, social and humanities education; arts education; and physical education.

development, physical development, affective and social development, and aesthetic development. The integrated curriculum promotes the use of real-life themes to provide children with comprehensive learning experiences.

Primary education continues to develop students' learning capabilities and interests, and lays a solid foundation for them to proceed to secondary education. The Primary Education Curriculum Guide (2024) recommends that schools provide students with diversified learning experiences to help them achieve whole-person development and lifelong learning.

The junior secondary curriculum extends from primary education and further develops students' knowledge, generic skills, and values and attitudes to nurture them into self-directed learners. The senior secondary curriculum is flexible, coherent and diversified. It aims to cater for students' varied interests, needs, aptitudes and abilities. Students take four core subjects (Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics, and Citizenship and Social Development) and two or three elective subjects, and participate in Other Learning Experiences.

Applied Learning courses are elective subjects at the senior secondary level, with dual emphasis on practice and theory linked to broad vocational and professional fields. Applied Learning covers six areas of studies: creative studies; media and communication; business, management and law; services; applied science; and engineering and production. In addition, Applied Learning Chinese for non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students is provided.

On completion of their studies at Secondary 6, students take the HKDSE Examination. This qualification is recognised internationally and more than 1,100 non-local tertiary institutions have published their admission requirements for HKDSE holders on the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority website or their official websites.

In 2025, about 94 per cent of Secondary 6 graduates pursued further full-time studies, among whom about 7 per cent studied outside Hong Kong.

Values Education

To align with initiatives outlined in the Chief Executive's 2025 Policy Address on strengthening students' affection for and sense of belonging to the country, the Values Education Curriculum Framework will be announced in April 2026 for implementation in all primary and secondary schools in the 2026-27 school year. The curriculum framework, which continues to emphasise Chinese culture as its backbone, will provide schools with clear guidance for developing school-based values education curriculum, nurturing students' proper values and attitudes towards life, and strengthening their sense of national identity and belonging to the country from an early age, both within and beyond the classroom.

The Curriculum Framework of National Security Education in Hong Kong and the curriculum frameworks of national security education for subjects have been updated, providing teachers with clearer and more comprehensive guidelines, and helping schools advance national security education. Enrichment seminars have also been held to deepen teachers' understanding of the implementation of national security education.

Diversified activities to promote national education were also organised, including the Constitution and Basic Law Territory-wide Inter-school Competition and Infographic Design Competition for Constitution Day.

Chinese History Education

Chinese history is an integral part of the curriculum for all kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Relevant learning content has been included in the kindergarten education curriculum and General Studies/Primary Humanities at the primary level. At the junior secondary level, Chinese History has been an independent compulsory subject since the 2018-19 school year, and the revised Chinese History curriculum implemented from Secondary 1 since September 2020. At the senior secondary level, Chinese History is an elective subject, and the optimised curriculum framework was released in October.

Digital Education and STEAM Education

The government promotes digital education in schools. The Steering Committee on Strategic Development of Digital Education, set up in January, guides the promotion of digital education, including enhancing students' digital literacy (including artificial intelligence (AI) literacy) strengthening teachers' professional training, optimising supporting infrastructure and fostering collaboration across sectors.

The Education Bureau launched the AI for Empowering Learning and Teaching Funding Programme in December, supported by the Quality Education Fund (QEF). Successful school applicants can utilise the one-off funding of $500,000 to initiate and implement relevant school-based programmes. The bureau will continue to identify good practices in using AI for learning and teaching and related school-based curriculum planning, as well as organise a series of courses on digital and AI education, to cultivate students' AI literacy.

The bureau will also continue the ongoing curriculum renewal of the science, technology and mathematics education, to enable students to have a strong learning foundation in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics)-related areas.

To support the e-learning of students in need, the government has extended the QEF e-Learning Funding Programme into the 2026-27 school year. Also, starting from mid-2025, the new e-learning tools and facilities (including those that use AI and big data) that were developed under the QEF e-Learning Ancillary Facilities Programme have been made progressively available to schools, further strengthening digital education and STEAM education.

Life-wide Learning

Life-wide learning helps students pursue whole-person development and develop lifelong learning capabilities. Schools can deploy appropriate resources to organise activities, such as visits to exhibitions, field trips, service learning, uniformed group activities and study tours. Mainland Exchange Programmes, commissioned by the bureau, provide more than 100,000 quotas annually, which are sufficient for all students to join at least one subsidised Mainland Exchange Programme each in the primary and secondary stages.

Language Education

The government's language education policy is to train the younger generation to become biliterate in written Chinese and English and trilingual in Cantonese, Putonghua and spoken English.

At the same time, the government believes students should undertake their general education in a language that is not itself a barrier to learning. The policy on the medium of instruction is therefore to uphold mother-tongue teaching while enhancing students' proficiency in both Chinese and English. Public sector primary schools generally teach in Chinese. Public sector secondary schools can increase junior secondary students' opportunities for exposure to, and use of, English, taking into account their ability and desire to learn in English, teachers' capability and readiness to teach in English, and support measures to facilitate learning in English.

At senior secondary level, schools can select either Chinese or English as the medium of instruction on a subject basis.

Schools are encouraged to formulate a whole-school language policy in line with the policy on the medium of instruction, sustain good practices and enhance students' language learning through cross-curricular learning within and beyond the classroom. Classical and literary texts in Chinese and English, in print and multimodal forms, are used to promote students' interest in Chinese culture and appreciation for the creative and academic use of English, thereby enriching their language learning experiences and broadening their knowledge base.

The Standing Committee on Language Education and Research advises the government on language education issues in general and on the use of the Language Fund. The fund supports initiatives to improve the community's proficiency in Chinese, including Putonghua, and English.

Support for Students

The bureau has implemented measures to support students' learning, social and emotional needs. Professional services such as the school social work service, School-based Educational Psychology Service and School-based Speech Therapy Service are provided to schools. The one-stop information website, Mental Health@School, provides information on promoting mental health among students. Schools are encouraged to provide appropriate activities directed at three levels – universal, selective and indicated – to promote mental health among students and strengthen support for students with mental health needs.

Professional Support

The bureau provides comprehensive student guidance and support services in primary and secondary schools through the implementation of Whole School Approach and multi-disciplinary collaboration. Around 90 per cent of public sector primary schools are served by school-based registered graduate social workers.

The School-based Educational Psychology Service assists public sector primary and secondary schools in catering for students' diverse educational needs through remedial, preventive and

developmental support. To further support schools with a comparatively large number of students with special educational needs (SEN), more than 60 per cent of schools (525 schools) have received an enhanced service for the 2025-26 school year.

The Enhanced School-based Speech Therapy Service has been fully implemented in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools since 2023-24 to assist schools, teachers and parents in supporting students with speech and language impairment, covering the domains of prevention, intervention and enhancement. About 410 school-based speech therapist posts have been created.

After-school Programmes, Activities and Grants

School-based after-school learning and support programmes subsidise activities that help eligible students improve their learning effectiveness, broaden their learning experiences outside the classroom and raise their understanding of the community and sense of belonging. In the 2025-26 school year, 912 schools and 138 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) received the subsidies, benefiting about 132,000 students.

The Student Activities Support Grant helps students with financial needs participate in activities organised or recognised by schools. It benefited about 131,900 students from 930 schools in 2025-26.

Life Planning Education

An additional teaching post is provided to public sector and DSS schools providing senior secondary education to help prepare students for the transition from school to post-secondary education, including vocational and professional education and training (VPET), or the workplace. The bureau also assists schools to begin life planning education at upper primary and junior secondary levels.

The bureau strengthens collaboration between schools and various sectors in organising activities for secondary students to enhance their exposure to the corporate world and provide first-hand experience in different industries and careers through the Business-School Partnership Programme 2.0. Around 220 business partners conducted 2,200 activities benefiting more than 160,000 student participants in 2024-25 school year.

The bureau implemented the 'Greater Bay Area Career Exploration Tours' Programme for the 2023-24 to 2025-26 school years, under which public sector and DSS schools offering the local senior secondary curriculum can arrange study activities, such as career exploration activities and enterprise visits, in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) for senior secondary students.

Catering for Diverse Learning Needs

Non-Chinese-speaking Students

The government encourages and supports the integration of NCS students into the community through facilitating their early adaptation to the local education system and mastery of the Chinese language. The Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language

Learning Framework helps primary and secondary NCS students learn Chinese progressively. Support measures include professional training for teachers, learning and teaching resources, after-school Chinese language courses and funding for schools to enhance support for NCS students in learning Chinese and create an inclusive learning environment.

The bureau has also promulgated the Adapted Framework of the Revised Chinese History (Secondary 1-3) Curriculum for Non-Chinese Speaking Students for reference and adoption by schools admitting NCS students. Applied Learning Chinese (for NCS students) is offered at the senior secondary level as an additional channel to help NCS students obtain an alternative Chinese language qualification and prepare them for further studies and career pursuits. In addition to the HKDSE qualification, it is also pegged at Hong Kong Qualifications Framework (QF) levels 1 to 3. It is accepted for admission to University Grants Committee (UGC)-funded universities and most post-secondary institutions as well as appointments to the civil service.

UGC-funded universities accept various Chinese language qualifications under specified circumstances as alternatives to the HKDSE so that applicants may meet the general entrance requirements under the Joint University Programmes Admissions System. These qualifications include the General Certificate of Secondary Education, International General Certificate of Secondary Education, and General Certificate of Education AS-Level and A-Level. Similar arrangements are available for admission to sub-degree programmes. Eligible NCS students taking these Chinese language examinations are subsidised so the fees they pay are the same as the HKDSE Chinese Language examination fee. Those with financial needs may also receive half or full remission of the subsidised examination fees.

Through the Language Fund, the government provides funding to NGOs for holding district-based programmes to motivate NCS children to learn Chinese. Funding is also provided to tertiary institutions to run vocational Chinese language courses pegged at QF level 1 or 2 for NCS school-leavers.

Students with Special Educational Needs

The government adopts a dual-track mode in providing special education. Students with more severe or multiple disabilities are placed in special schools for intensive support, subject to the assessment and recommendation of specialists and parents' consent. Others with SEN attend ordinary schools. As of September, there were 62 aided special schools, 24 of which had boarding facilities, providing about 10,100 school places and 1,300 boarding places. About 71,740 students with SEN were enrolled in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools. The government provides these schools with additional resources, professional support and teacher training. Professional officers from the bureau visit these schools regularly to advise on policies and support measures in implementing integrated education.

All public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools are provided with an SEN coordinator post and the Learning Support Grant, as well as additional regular teaching posts offered as appropriate, to support the implementation of integrated education. At the beginning of the 2024-25 school year, about 58 per cent of teachers in public sector ordinary schools completed structured training programmes of 30 hours or more to help them cater for students with SEN.

The Endeavour Merit Award and Endeavour Scholarship recognise excellence in post-secondary students with SEN at publicly funded and self-financing institutions respectively.

Gifted Education

The government attaches great importance to supporting gifted students in developing their potential and offering challenging learning opportunities both within and outside school. Effective use of the school-based student talent pools is being promoted to identify and nurture students with special talents. Professional development programmes, together with learning and teaching resources, are provided to equip teachers with knowledge and skills in gifted education. Territory-wide competitions in different disciplines enable students to demonstrate their strengths and widen their horizons. Outstanding students thus identified are given further training and nominated to take part in national and international competitions.

The government-subvented Hong Kong Academy for Gifted Education provides gifted students with out-of-school learning through advanced learning programmes, competitions, conferences and mentoring. For parents of gifted children, it offers the Parent Education Programme, outreach, assessment and consultation services.

The Gifted Education Fund supports the academy and finances a variety of advanced learning programmes outside school for gifted students.

Professional Development of Educators

Teachers

The Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals advises the bureau on policies and measures relating to the professional development of the teaching profession at different career stages and provides a platform for professional sharing, collaboration and networking.

The Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence, organised by the bureau, recognises accomplished teachers and fosters a culture of excellence in the teaching profession.

To implement the Professional Ladder for Teachers, the bureau provides teachers with opportunities for more systematic and focused professional development and strengthens the contents on their professional roles and conduct, as well as on the Constitution, Basic Law and national security education.

In the 2024-25 school year, the bureau organised 38 Chinese Mainland study tours for newly joined teachers and promoted teachers.

Principals

Professional development requirements are in place to help aspiring, newly appointed and serving principals enhance their leadership knowledge and address their development needs at different career stages. Since the 2004-05 school year, around 2,350 aspiring principals have attained the Certification for Principalship.

School-based Support Services

School-based support services foster leadership in schools and disseminate informed practices to enhance the professional capacity of teachers. In the 2024-25 school year, the bureau provided school-based support services to 190 secondary schools, 350 primary schools, 15 special schools, and 208 kindergartens and kindergarten-cum-child care centres.

Regional Education Offices offer school-based support services in response to the needs of students, teachers, schools and other stakeholders.

Management of Schools

The Education Ordinance regulates school education services. Schools must comply with its provisions, including subsidiary legislation on the registration of schools, teachers and managers, health and safety requirements, fees and charges, and teacher qualifications.

To implement school-based management, aided schools are devolved with considerable autonomy and funding flexibility. In return, they have to be more transparent and accountable in their operation and include all key stakeholders in their governance structure, including representatives of the school sponsoring body, the principal, elected teachers, parents and alumni, and independent members.

The enhanced School Development and Accountability framework bolsters the accountability of staff in schools in providing quality education by strengthening school-based management through self-evaluation, complemented by school inspections.

Post-secondary Education

The government supports the parallel and complementary development of publicly funded and self-financing post-secondary education. Hong Kong has 22 local degree-awarding institutions, namely eight UGC-funded universities[5], the publicly funded Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the self-financing Hong Kong Metropolitan University, the VTC's Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, and 11 post-secondary colleges[6].

All UGC-funded universities, the Hong Kong Metropolitan University and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts are governed by their own ordinances. The post-secondary colleges are registered under and governed by the Post Secondary Colleges Ordinance. Each post-secondary institution has its own structure of governance, normally including a governing body, called the council or board of governors, and a body to regulate academic affairs, called the senate or academic board.

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5 The eight UGC-funded universities are City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Lingnan University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the Education University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the University of Hong Kong.

6 The 11 post-secondary colleges are Centennial College, Gratia Christian College, Hong Kong Chu Hai College, Hong Kong College of Technology Institute of Higher Education, Hong Kong Nang Yan College of Higher Education, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, Saint Francis University, the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong, Tung Wah College, University of Wollongong College Hong Kong and Yew Chung College of Early Childhood Education.

In terms of full-time studies in the 2025-26 academic year, the UGC-funded universities and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts together provided around 15,200 publicly funded, first-year-first-degree intake places, while self-financing undergraduate programmes offered about 8,100 places. The UGC-funded universities and the self-financing, degree-awarding institutions also provided around 5,000 senior-year undergraduate intake places and 8,400 top-up degree places respectively, mainly for sub-degree graduates. At sub-degree level, about 18,200 self-financing and 9,200 publicly funded intake places were available.

The School Nominations Direct Admission Scheme provides opportunities for students with special and diversified talents that cannot be fully assessed by the HKDSE to be considered for direct admission to local universities. In the 2025-26 academic year, more than 810 valid nominations were received with over 330 successful nominees.

At postgraduate level, about 3,300 and 7,200 UGC-funded taught and research places were available in 2025-26 respectively. As regards self-financing places, taught and research programmes registered actual enrolments of 69,900 and 8,800 respectively in 2024-25.

Under the Ministry of Education's Scheme for Admission of Hong Kong Students to Mainland Higher Education Institutions, Chinese Mainland higher education institutions admit Hong Kong students on the basis of their HKDSE Examination results and exempt them from taking the Joint Entrance Examination for Mainland Institutions. In the 2025-26 academic year, the number of participating institutions increased from 138 to 145 across 21 Mainland provinces and municipalities and one autonomous region. In 2024-25, more than 4,500 Hong Kong students applied and about 2,300 were offered places.

Publicly Funded Institutions

The government allocates funding for the eight UGC-funded universities through recurrent grants and capital grants. The former support universities' academic work and related administrative activities, while the latter finance major works projects and minor campus improvement works.

The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts is also a publicly funded institution.

Self-financing Post-secondary Education Sector

The government promotes the sustainable development of the self-financing post-secondary sector by providing land and premises at nominal premium and rent, interest-free start-up loans, the $3.52 billion Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund, the $1.26 billion Enhancement and Start-up Grant Scheme for Self-financing Post-secondary Education, financial assistance for students and quality assurance subsidies.

The Study Subsidy Scheme for Designated Professions/Sectors subsidises students who pursue designated full-time locally accredited self-financing undergraduate, including top-up degree, and sub-degree programmes in selected disciplines. It currently benefits about 4,000 undergraduate students and 2,000 sub-degree students per cohort.

The government also provides means-tested and non-means-tested financial assistance to eligible students pursuing full-time, locally accredited local and non-local self-financing undergraduate programmes, including top-up degree programmes, offered in Hong Kong by eligible institutions. In 2025-26, about 13,800 students received assistance under the Non-means-tested Subsidy Scheme for Self-financing Undergraduate Studies in Hong Kong.

Research

The government supports research conducted by the higher education sector. The Research Endowment Fund provides funding support for competitive research grants and fellowships, while the $3 billion debut round of the Research Matching Grant Scheme, completed in 2024, encouraged support for research from non-public sectors and diversified research funding sources. A new round of the scheme, totalling $1.5 billion, was launched in May for four years to attract more organisations to further support research endeavours of institutions.

The award places for the Hong Kong PhD Fellowship Scheme have been increased to 400 per academic year.

Vocational and Professional Education and Training

The government fosters industry-institution collaboration and diversified development to promote VPET as a pathway parallel to conventional academic education, providing a range of learning and employment opportunities for young people.

Universities of Applied Sciences

The government promotes the development of universities of applied sciences to raise the status of VPET at degree level and provide an alternative pathway for young people to pursue a career in professional skills sectors. The universities nurture students with applied skills and knowledge through providing applied degree programmes with an applied focus blending theory and practice, and closely working with professional skills sectors and incorporating substantial internship and work-based learning opportunities in their programmes.

VPET in Secondary Education

At junior secondary level, students are provided with career-related experiences and exposure through life-wide learning activities. At the senior secondary level, students' understanding of VPET is further enhanced through Applied Learning courses, the career-related experiences embedded in Other Learning Experiences activities, and other subjects in Key Learning Areas such as science and technology education.

Vocational Training Council

The VTC is a statutory body that offers VPET for school-leavers and adult learners. It provided more than 200,000 full-time and part-time places in 2024-25.

Quality-assured, internationally recognised full-time and part-time courses up to master's degree level are available for students who have completed Secondary 3 education or above, covering business, childcare, elderly and community services, design, engineering, health and life sciences, hospitality and IT. The courses are offered through the VTC's 14 member

institutions, including the Chinese Culinary Institute, Hong Kong Design Institute, Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education, Hotel and Tourism Institute, Institute of Professional Education and Knowledge, International Culinary Institute, Technological and Higher Education Institute of Hong Kong, Youth College and the Hong Kong Institute of Information Technology. The VTC also administers an apprenticeship scheme and provides trade testing and certification.

The VTC's government-funded Training and Support Scheme offers 1,200 training places per year under an 'earn and learn' model to help trainees join industries which require specialised skills. The VTC also receives recurrent funding to provide industrial attachment for about 9,000 students every year.

Diploma of Applied Education Programme

The Diploma of Applied Education Programme provides an alternative pathway for Secondary 6 school-leavers and adult learners to obtain a formal qualification for the purposes of employment and further study. It is run by seven self-financing institutions and may be taken either full-time or part-time. The 2025-26 enrolment is over 4,100 students.

Qualifications and Quality Assurance

Qualifications Framework

The Hong Kong QF provides a transparent and accessible platform to promote lifelong learning and enhance workforce competitiveness. The QF covers academic, VPET and continuing education qualifications. It is underpinned by a robust quality assurance mechanism. All qualifications recognised under the framework are locally accredited by the Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications or by local self-accrediting institutions. The government maintains a web-based Qualifications Register, which lists the qualifications and associated learning programmes recognised under the framework.

The Vocational Qualifications Pathway acts as a learning and career progression roadmap along which learners and practitioners can showcase competency skills and progress at various levels through attainment or acquisition of the required occupation-based qualifications.

The pathway outlines the QF level, scope of learning, Specification of Competency Standards requirements, learning outcomes, and assessment criteria of the required occupation-based qualifications for each job role. Developed in consultation with the Industry Training and Advisory Committees, the pathway ensures that occupation-based qualifications meet industries' needs, thus enhancing the connection between education and employment. The target is for at least 18 industries to adopt the pathway by the end of 2027, with 14 having already done so as of end-2025.

In 2025, a pilot project was launched to develop the pathway for a non-Industry Training and Advisory Committees industry – construction – to serve as a reference model for other such industries and professions to leverage the QF to support their human resource development.

Quality Assurance of Post-secondary Education

Two quality assurance bodies monitor the quality of the post-secondary education sector. The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications is the statutory body responsible for the quality assurance of all operators and programmes except the UGC-funded universities, which are self-accredited. The Quality Assurance Council, a semi-autonomous non-statutory body under the UGC's aegis, conducts quality audits of the UGC-funded universities to assure that the quality of educational experience in all their programmes at the levels of sub-degree, first degree and above, however funded, is sustained, improved and internationally competitive.

Non-local Courses of Higher and Professional Education

The Non-local Higher and Professional Education (Regulation) Ordinance regulates non-local courses of higher and professional education conducted in Hong Kong through a system of registration to ensure the standards of the courses and qualifications are comparable with those in their home countries. It protects consumers from non-local courses which do not fulfil the registration criteria. As at end-December, 761 non-local courses were registered or exempted from registration under the ordinance.

Student Achievements

Hong Kong students excel in international competitions, with notable 2025 achievements highlighted below.

Academic Competitions

- International Mathematical Olympiad, International Physics Olympiad, International Biology Olympiad, International Olympiad in Informatics and Asian Physics Olympiad: Six gold, 11 silver and seven bronze medals, one merit and two honourable mentions

Music

- Australian International Music Festival 2025: one gold award
- The 12th Florence International Choir & Orchestra Festival: overall champion, one gold medal and two honourable mentions
- The International Anton Rubinstein Piano Competition: one second prize
- The International Fryderyk Chopin Piano Competition for Children and Young People: one first prize and one honourable mention
- The 16th International Zheng Contest: one gold prize
- Llangollen International Eisteddfod Competition: one first prize and one third prize
- The 12th Steinway China Children and Youth Piano Competition: one grand prize, one first prize, one third prize and one merit award

- 2025 Young Euregio Piano Award – International Youth Piano Competition: one second prize

Visual Arts

- The 23rd Kanagawa Biennial World Children's Art Exhibition: one President of the Japan International Cooperation Agency Award, one President of the United Nations Association of Japan Award, one National Council of YMCAs of Japan Award and 19 Kanagawa prizes
- 2025 International Children and Youth Drawing Competition: 36 gold prizes and 63 silver prizes
- 2025 International Youth Art Competition 'Per Le Venezie': five gold prizes and four silver prizes
- Picasso International Youth Art Competition 2025: five gold prizes and one silver prize

Sports

- The 15th National Games of the People's Republic of China: one champion and two second runner-up prizes in swimming and tennis events
- Bahrain 2025 Asian Youth Games: 12 champions, 13 first runner-up and 10 second runner-up prizes in athletics, badminton, cycling, swimming, table tennis and triathlon events
- 2025 World Pool Association U19 Heyball World Championship: one champion
- World Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships 2025: two second runner-up prizes
- Rhine-Ruhr 2025 International University Sports Federation World University Games: two champions, one first runner-up and four second runner-up prizes in table tennis, fencing and swimming events

Student Finance Schemes

To ensure no student is denied access to education because of a lack of means, the Student Finance Office of the Working Family and Student Financial Assistance Agency provides means-tested and non-means-tested financial assistance at various study levels. The office also administers a number of scholarship schemes.

In the 2024-25 school year, the following financial assistance was provided to eligible students:

- Pre-primary education: About 25,500 students received $348 million means-tested fee remission and grants for kindergarten-related expenses.
- Primary and secondary education: With means-tested assistance, 174,000 students received $800 million for textbooks and various school-related expenses,

129,700 students were granted $370 million in travel subsidies, and $163 million was allocated to 121,800 families for internet access.

- Post-secondary education: Means-tested grants and low-interest loans ($1,296 million in grants and $269 million in loans for 24,700 students), non-means-tested loans ($1.8 billion for 31,300 students), and means-tested travel subsidies ($94 million for around 20,700 students) are provided to full-time students pursuing eligible publicly funded or locally accredited self-financing post-secondary programmes.

- Diploma of Applied Education/Evening secondary courses programmes: Eligible students may receive a 30 per cent tuition fee reimbursement, with higher percentages for those passing a means test.

- Grants for programmes below sub-degree level: Eligible students may receive half or full fee reimbursement, along with full or partial flat-rate academic expenses grants.

- Mainland University Study Subsidy: $55 million was granted to 4,137 students under the means-tested and non-means-tested subsidy schemes for local students pursuing undergraduate studies in designated Mainland institutions.

Scholarships

- The Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme: Supports up to 100 local students per cohort to pursue undergraduate or postgraduate studies at world-renowned universities outside Hong Kong, with $695 million awarded to 1,070 students since 2015-16.

- The HKSAR Government Scholarship Fund: Provides scholarships and awards to outstanding local and non-local students studying full-time publicly funded programmes at sub-degree or above levels in the eight UGC-funded universities, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the VTC, with $151 million granted to 5,735 awardees in 2024-25.

- Self-financing Post-secondary Education Fund: Provides scholarships and awards to outstanding local and non-local students pursuing full-time, locally accredited self-financing sub-degree or undergraduate programmes, with $80 million granted to 4,399 awardees in 2024-25.

- The Hong Kong Future Talents Scholarship Scheme for Advanced Studies: Provides scholarships to up to 1,200 eligible students pursuing the designated taught postgraduate programmes each year starting from the 2025-26 academic year, with the maximum amount of scholarship being $100,000 per eligible student for the entire programme.

- Scholarship for Prospective English Teachers: Aims to attract people proficient in English to pursue relevant local bachelor's degree programmes and/or teacher training programmes which will qualify them to become English teachers on graduation.

Community Participation in Education

Advisory Committees

The Education Commission, which is a non-statutory body appointed by the Chief Executive, advises the Secretary for Education on overall educational objectives and policies and the priorities in implementing its recommendations. The commission includes in its membership the chairpersons of nine key committees: the Committee on Home-School Co-operation, Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals, Committee on Self-financing Post-secondary Education, Curriculum Development Council, Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority Council, Quality Education Fund Steering Committee, Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, UGC and VTC.

The UGC is a non-statutory body appointed by the Chief Executive. It offers impartial and expert advice to the government on the funding and development of higher education, and provides assurance to the government and the community on the standards and cost-effectiveness of the operations of the eight UGC-funded universities.

Under the UGC's aegis are the Research Grants Council, which advises on the research needs of the academic sector and the distribution of research funding, and the Quality Assurance Council, which helps assure the quality of educational experiences in all programmes of the UGC-funded universities.

UGC members are appointed by the Chief Executive. They comprise accomplished academics and higher education administrators from outside Hong Kong, eminent community leaders and academics of high standing locally. The UGC Secretariat, a government department, provides administrative support.

The Curriculum Development Council advises the Education Bureau on all matters relating to curriculum development for the school system from kindergarten to senior secondary levels.

Home-School Cooperation and Parent Education

There are more than 1,400 parent-teacher associations. The bureau funded more than 3,770 school-based and district-based home-school cooperation activities in the 2024-25 school year.

Collaboration with Mainland and International Education Sector

The bureau has signed memorandums of understanding with 16 Mainland provinces, cities and regions, as well as 12 countries. Schools and universities have closer collaboration with their Chinese Mainland and overseas counterparts. In 2025, about 970 publicly funded schools in Hong Kong formed over 3,800 sister school pairs with their Mainland counterparts.

The Mainland-Hong Kong Teachers Exchange and Collaboration Programme, co-organised by the Ministry of Education and the bureau, aims to foster professional exchange between Mainland expert teachers and local teachers. In the 2025-26 school year, 40 Mainland expert teachers were nominated by the ministry to provide school-based support services to around 100 local schools, as well as to participate in territory-wide professional sharing activities.

The Belt and Road Scholarship is offered to outstanding students from countries or regions along the Belt and Road pursuing full-time publicly funded university studies in Hong Kong. Since the 2016-17 academic year, more than 830 students have been awarded the scholarship.

The government supports Hong Kong post-secondary institutions to offer education services in the Mainland cities of the GBA and to give full play to the strengths of Hong Kong's higher education sector in terms of high-quality teaching and research, as well as internationalisation.

The VTC works with its Mainland and international partners, including academic institutions and professional bodies, to nurture young talent with a global perspective for society. They work in major areas and cities on the Chinese Mainland, including the GBA, Beijing and Shanghai, and other countries, including Germany, the UK, Australia and Japan.

The government has been exploring with the relevant Mainland authorities the mutual recognition of sub-degree level qualifications.

Employment of Non-local Graduates

Non-local students who have obtained an undergraduate or higher qualification in a full-time and locally accredited programme in Hong Kong may apply to stay or return and work in the city under the Immigration Arrangements for Non-local Graduates. To further attract talent and enhance Hong Kong's competitiveness, the limit of stay under the arrangements has been increased to 24 months. A pilot scheme was launched in 2022 to extend the arrangements to cover graduates from Hong Kong universities' campuses in the Mainland cities of the GBA.

Website

Education Bureau: www.edb.gov.hk