

## **LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

### **Maritime Studies Curriculum Reform of the Hong Kong Sea School**

#### **Purpose**

This paper briefs Members of the Maritime Studies Curriculum Reform (“the Reform”) of the Hong Kong Sea School (“HKSS”), which aspires to prepare its students work-ready on local vessels, in terms of competency and professional qualification, upon graduation.

#### **Background**

2. The HKSS is an aided secondary school for boys and offers full boarding service and academic curriculum leading to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (“DSE”) Examination. Given the capacity of its boarding facilities, the school normally admits a total of 270 students (six forms of 45 each on average). With a mission to nurture the younger generation in pursuing maritime career since its inception in 1946, the school has been providing students with maritime studies curriculum, disciplinary and water sports training.

3. In its early years, the majority of HKSS graduates joined the maritime industry as seafarers. However, despite the fact that over half of the students opted maritime studies as an elective subject, joining the maritime industry has not been graduates’ top preference in recent years due to the fact that completion of the current non-DSE school-based maritime studies curriculum would not lead to an award of academic or vocational qualification and thus would not place the students in an advantageous position in the job market. To obviate these impediments, the HKSS has initiated to reform its maritime studies curriculum based on the recommendations of a review in 2019.

#### **The Reform**

##### Objectives

4. The Reform aims at introducing a new maritime studies training

programme to support the training of students to become local vessel coxswains, thus providing a steady and sustainable supply of competent new blood to alleviate the ageing workforce problem of the local vessel trade.

### Proposals

5. The current maritime studies curriculum run by HKSS is a six-year seamanship training programme comprising mandatory curriculum for junior forms (Secondary 1 to 3) and elective curriculum for senior forms (Secondary 4 to 6). The proposed programme will be a new structured **six-year mandatory** model of training applicable to every student from Secondary 1 to 6 with a more balanced mix of theory lessons and practical training.

6. To make graduates work-ready in the local vessel trade, the new programme will enable students to acquire the necessary seafaring competency and actual shipboard experience, as well as the eligibility to sit for the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination. During Secondary 1 to 3, students will undergo Foundation Training, which covers **basic maritime knowledge and skills** through theory, practical and workshop lessons.

7. As for Secondary 4 to 6 students, they will receive the following Professional Training that comprises theory lessons and practical training –

- (a) Theory lessons covering the syllabus of the **Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination** for fulfilling the requirement of completing a maritime course recognised by the Marine Department (“MD”) for participation in the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination<sup>1</sup>;
- (b) “**Structured Shipboard Practical Training**” for attainment of the prerequisite sea service with in-service training for Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate as required by the MD<sup>2</sup>;
- (c) Theory lessons covering topics that help students develop **awareness, attitudes and values** required for a local vessel seafarer; and

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<sup>1</sup> Training topics and contents to be designed in accordance with the Examination Syllabuses in Paragraph 7.1 of “Examination Rules for Local Certificates of Competency” (October 2019 Edition) and Chapter 3 of the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination Guidebook (March 2019 Edition) of the MD. Currently, there are four maritime courses for Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination organised by the Maritime Services Training Institute, the Hong Kong Seamen’s Union, Small Craft Workers Union or the Institute of Seatransport that are recognised by the MD.

<sup>2</sup> Training topics and contents to be designed in accordance with Annex 2 of the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination Guidebook (March 2019 Edition) of the MD.

- (d) “**Basic Safety Training for Local Craft Ratings**” run by the Maritime Services Training Institute (MSTI), subject to the final agreement by the MD and MSTI.

8. Under the proposed new programme, Secondary 6 students will be arranged to take the **Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination**, in addition to the existing arrangement for elected students to take the **Pleasure Vessel Operator Grade 2 Certificate Examination**, subject to the approval of the MD to accept candidates under the age of 18 years from HKSS. A schematic representation of the proposed new maritime studies curriculum is at **Annex**.

### Implementation Plan

9. The HKSS plans to roll out the new maritime studies training programme progressively. Foundation Training for junior forms will start as a priority as expeditiously as practicably possible. While Secondary 1 students admitted in the commencing academic year of the new programme will undertake the complete six-year programme, special measures will be adopted for Secondary 2 and 3 to facilitate a smooth transition from the current curriculum to the new one.

10. Professional Training for senior forms will be rolled out separately at a later date upon finalization of the training syllabus and curriculum design for the new programme. To make it happen, the HKSS is applying for funding support from the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund for hiring professional services to draw up detailed training plans for the Professional Training. Once the formulation of training details is completed, approval from the MD for the new programme as a recognised preparatory course for the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination and the HKSS as an approved training provider will be sought. Since the provision of maritime training is outside the scope of subvention of the Education Bureau, the HKSS will also need to seek funding for the training resources and professional support required for rolling out the new programme when approval is obtained.

### Expected Benefits

11. During recent three academic years since 2017-18, 71% (i.e. 82 out of 114) of HKSS’ Secondary 6 graduates had opted maritime studies as an elective subject. If maritime studies curriculum becomes a six-year mandatory subject, all Secondary 6 graduates of HKSS will then be maritime-trained.

12. Moreover, completion of the proposed new six-year mandatory training

programme by HKSS students will pave way for them to sit for the Coxswain Grade 3 Certificate Examination. Upon successful passage of the examination, the professional qualification will enable them to pursue a seafaring career in the local vessel trade with clear articulation pathway and to skip the lowest level in the hierarchy in terms of tasks and remunerations. Through enhancement of work-readiness and employability of the students to become local vessel coxswains upon graduation, the new training programme is expected to better motivate graduates to pursue a seafaring career, apart from increasing the number of maritime-trained students.

### **Maritime Manpower Development**

13. The Government attaches importance to the overall manpower supply of the maritime industry and is aware of the ageing workforce and manpower supply problems facing the local vessel trade. Apart from actively exploring further enhancement measures to existing schemes and introducing new schemes for the industry under the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund, the Government also looks forward to collaborating with stakeholders to launch manpower development projects and promotion activities in order to address the manpower issues of the maritime industry.

### **Way Forward**

14. The success of HKSS' Reform also hinges on the support from the local vessel sector, such as assistance in the school's search for training resources and professional support; enhancement of the students' understanding of the trade through collaboration on relevant promotion events; and offering the students befitting career opportunities upon graduation.

15. Members are invited to note and support the above proposals of the Reform of the HKSS.

Manpower Unit  
Transport and Housing Bureau  
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**A Schematic Representation of  
the New Maritime Studies Curriculum**

