

Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct



Education Bureau

Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

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Chapter 1 Foreword

Teaching and nurturing people is a noble and sacred profession. Teachers have the mission of imparting knowledge and skills, enlightening students, nurturing their character, passing on cultural traditions and grooming talents for the country and society.

The core mission of education is cultivating values and nurturing people. Teachers are role models for students. Their words and deeds, conduct and values have a profound impact on students. The society's trust and respect for teachers comes from their high moral standards and noble virtues, solid knowledge and professional teaching competencies, as well as their commitment to protecting students' well-being and dedication towards their profession. The pursuit of professionalism and commitment to upholding high moral standards of teachers should be well integrated such that students can be nurtured with correct moral values.

A professional and conscientious teaching force is the key to the success of education in Hong Kong. The Education Bureau (EDB) has formulated the Guidelines on Teachers' Professional Conduct ("the Guidelines") with the aim of clearly stipulating the professional conduct and norms of behaviour required of teachers so that they could have self-awareness and self-discipline in upholding professionalism, and remind each other to abide by the Guidelines together, so as to protect students' well-being, ensure the quality of education, safeguard the education profession and build public trust. By so doing, the social status of the education profession and teachers could be enhanced and the culture of respecting teachers be promoted.

All along, there has been consensus among teachers in respect of their personal behaviour and professional conduct. Thus, when formulating the Guidelines, the EDB has not only carefully taken into account the actual situation of the Hong Kong education system and the existing legislation, but also made reference to documents related to teachers' professional development, including "The Teacher Competencies Framework" (Appendix 1), "T-standard⁺" (Appendix 2), "The Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong" and the standards of teachers' professionalism in different countries and regions, etc. As a result, a list of principles and codes of professional conduct required of teachers is compiled. Examples of the "dos" and "don'ts" of behaviour are set out respectively for

teachers' observance and compliance. School sponsoring bodies may make reference to the Guidelines and give directives to the school governance authorities (including incorporated management committees/management committees/school management committees) under their sponsorship. School governance authorities may make reference to the Guidelines when devising measures on staff management and professional development plans.

According to the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279), a teacher must be registered as either a "registered teacher" or a "permitted teacher". As the teacher registration authority, the EDB has the responsibility to monitor the professional qualifications and professional conduct of teachers. According to the Education Ordinance, the Permanent Secretary for Education may register or refuse to register an applicant as a teacher on the grounds as specified in Section 46, or cancel the registration of a teacher on the grounds as specified in Section 47 (the relevant provisions are at Appendix 3). When considering whether or not the teacher concerned is a fit and proper person, is incompetent, has behaved in any manner which constitutes professional misconduct or is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school in which the teacher teaches, the Permanent Secretary may take into account relevant references including but not limited to the contents set out in the Guidelines and take action in accordance with the circumstances. For serious cases, the registration of misconducted teachers may be cancelled.

There are four chapters in the Guidelines. This chapter outlines the objectives and background of the Guidelines; Chapter 2 introduces the codes of teachers' professional conduct and behaviour; Chapter 3 sets out the "dos" and "don'ts" of teachers' behaviour¹; Chapter 4 explains the application of the Guidelines. There are also appendices setting out the mechanism for handling suspected professional misconduct of teachers and some case examples, illustrating the underpinning considerations and the follow-up actions taken by the EDB in the past.

The Guidelines are applicable to all registered teachers in Hong Kong (including principals, vice-principals and teachers of different ranks). As for non-teaching staff (including the specialists, student teachers and personnel of different grades in special schools), school governance authorities may stipulate requirements of staff conduct with reference to the Guidelines. The education profession

¹ The "dos" and "don'ts" of teachers' behaviour set out in the Guidelines are by no means exhaustive.

embodies both science and art. Teachers should pursue moral standards to the highest excellence. The EDB will update the Guidelines in a timely manner as necessary.

Chapter 2 Professional Conduct and Behaviour of Teachers: The Codes

This chapter sets out the codes of professional conduct and behaviour of teachers. It elucidates that, in order to be “a fit and proper person” to be a teacher, one must possess professional knowledge and skills, as well as moral values and virtues. The Guidelines mainly focus on the professionalism as well as personal ethics and conduct required of teachers. The eight codes are summarised as follows:

- 1. Uphold professional belief:** Uphold the mission of cultivating values and nurturing people; commit to nurturing students’ moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetical development. Set teaching and educating students as the primary goal; endeavour to make contributions towards cultivating the younger generation with virtues and talents, an affection for their country and their home, and with a global perspective.
- 2. Honour the rule of law:** Be law-abiding, observe rules and regulations. Respect the lawful authority of the Government and the school. Acquire a correct understanding of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (the Constitution), the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China (the Basic Law), and the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (the Hong Kong National Security Law); consciously safeguard national security, social order and public interest; fulfil social responsibility and civic obligations; support and promote national education actively; cultivate in students a sense of belonging towards the country.
- 3. Be a role model:** Exercise self-discipline assiduously, uphold one’s virtues and pursue high moral standards. Be upright and proper in words and deeds; be a role model for students with regard to their studies, work and attitude towards life; guide students in their whole-person development.
- 4. Uphold probity and integrity:** Uphold the values and virtues of probity, integrity and honesty. Discharge duties in an unbiased and impartial manner; never neglect one’s duties out of self-interest. Always act in the best interest of students; live up to the trust of the society and schools in the teaching profession.

5. **Be committed and responsible:** Discharge responsibilities earnestly; strive to achieve the goals of education and school policies. Perform teaching duties conscientiously and rigorously; try one's best to accomplish professional duties, and be responsible for teaching quality.
6. **Care for students:** Care for students, love them, adapt pedagogies and teaching materials to cater for learners' different abilities; respect diversity in them. Create a harmonious, rational, healthy and safe learning environment. Guard against risks and incidents; prevent and stop activities in breach of law and regulations from infiltration into the school.
7. **Respect privacy:** Abide by rules of confidentiality. Respect the privacy of individuals (including students, parents and colleagues).
8. **Safeguard professionalism:** Fulfil the training requirements at different stages of the profession. Constantly reflect and strive for improvements, enhance professional capacity. Maintain sincere cooperation with stakeholders; foster team work and collaborative culture with peers; enhance the overall quality of teaching with concerted efforts; promote school continuous development. Endeavour to safeguard the image and dignity of the education profession.

Chapter 3 Professional Conduct and Behaviour of Teachers: Codes Explained

This chapter explains the “dos” and “don’ts” of teachers’ behaviour based on the codes listed in the previous chapter.

1. Uphold professional belief: Uphold the mission of cultivating values and nurturing people; commit to nurturing students’ moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetical development. Set teaching and educating students as the primary goal; endeavour to make contributions towards cultivating the younger generation with virtues and talents, an affection for their country and their home, and with a global perspective.

Dos:

- Uphold professional attitude and endeavour to cultivate students’ values to fulfil one’s aspirations in education.
- Foster students’ whole-person and balanced development; nurture in them positive values and attitudes; equip them with the knowledge and skills required to have a foothold in Hong Kong, an affection for the country and a global perspective.
- Keep abreast of the development of education policies; support the school’s vision and mission; implement school policies, guidelines and measures conducive to education; perform the professional roles² of teachers.
- Keep pace with the times; continuously enhance teaching pedagogies. Pursue excellence; manifest teachers’ professional ethics.

² T-standard⁺: The three professional roles are “Caring Cultivators”, “Inspirational Co-constructors” and “Committed Role Models” as stated in Professional Standards for Teachers of Hong Kong. Please refer to Appendix 3 and webpage <https://www.cotap.hk/index.php/en/t-standard/t-standard-pst>

Don'ts:

- Violate the philosophy of education, inculcate in students undesirable notions that would harm their physical and mental growth, hindering students' development of positive values and attitudes.
- Make malicious or ungrounded accusations on the education profession, tarnish the image of the education profession and undermine the public's confidence in the teaching force.
- Violate the goals of education policies, school's vision and mission as well as development direction; refuse to implement school policies, guidelines and measures conducive to education.

2. Honour the rule of law: Be law-abiding, observe rules and regulations. Respect the lawful authority of the Government and the school. Acquire a correct understanding of the Constitution, the Basic Law and the Hong Kong National Security Law; consciously safeguard national security, social order and public interest; fulfil social responsibility and civic obligations; support and promote national education actively; cultivate in students a sense of belonging towards the country.

Dos:

- Uphold the spirit of the rule of law, observe laws and relevant regulations; consciously safeguard national security, social order and public interest; fulfil social responsibility and civic obligations.
- Grasp the basic knowledge of national history and development; acquire a correct understanding of the Constitution, the Basic Law, the Hong Kong National Security Law and relevant legislation; respect the fundamental regime of the nation.
- Acquire a correct understanding of the National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance, the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance, as well as the National Anthem Ordinance³; respect the symbols and signs representing the country and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region; develop in students a sense of belonging to the country, a sense of national identity and an affection for the nation.
- Comply with the rules, guidelines and circulars laid down by the Government, the EDB, school sponsoring bodies and schools.
- In the event of receiving information on matters that involve a breach of laws and regulations or deviation from the moral standards generally acceptable to society, or identifying any potential illegalities or irregularities on campus, handle the matters and report to the school management, police and/or the departments concerned as appropriate according to the law, relevant regulations and guidelines as well as actual circumstances.

³ This includes the National Flag and National Emblem Ordinance, the Regional Flag and Regional Emblem Ordinance, as well as the National Anthem Ordinance. For “Getting to Know the National Flag, the National Emblem, the National Anthem and the Regional Flag”, please refer to the EDB webpage: www.edb.gov.hk/en/nationalsymbols

- Report immediately, or as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter, to the school upon being charged with or convicted of any offence in Hong Kong or elsewhere, or any known personal involvement in ongoing criminal proceedings or investigation, including but not limited to arrest by the police or other law enforcement agencies.
- Respect intellectual property. Comply with relevant laws related to copyright⁴ and intellectual property protection in the production of teaching materials or organisation of student activities, and respect the intellectual property right of school-based learning and teaching materials and examination questions of the school.

Don'ts:

- Organise, plan, commit or participate in any acts that violate the Basic Law, the Hong Kong National Security Law or any Hong Kong legislation.
- Advocate the disruption of social order.
- Disseminate to students and promote messages that breach laws and regulations and disrupt social order; directly or indirectly encourage them to engage in activities that violate laws and regulations and disrupt social order.
- Condone any potentially illegal activities on campus.

⁴ For copyright issues related to education, please refer to the circulars on the EDB's webpage: <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/sch-admin/admin/about-teaching/copyright/index.html>

3. Be a role model: Exercise self-discipline assiduously, uphold one's virtues, and pursue high moral standards. Be upright and proper in words and deeds; be a role model for students with regard to their studies, work and attitude towards life; guide students in their whole-person development.

Dos:

- Set strict standards for personal conduct, keep good attendance records and commit to strengthening virtues and professional ethics in oneself in pursuit of high moral standards.
- Be upright in words and deeds, decent in demeanour, punctual and trustworthy; demonstrate the personal qualities and character expected of teachers to act as a role model for students.
- Use and manage social media platforms carefully and properly, and be responsible for the messages that one disseminated and forwarded on social media platforms.

Don'ts:

- Behave in a way that is detrimental to the professional image of teachers.
- Promote or express hatred and violence, use foul language, curse, insult or rebuke others.
- Disseminate or forward indecent, untrue or inappropriate messages or information, tarnishing the professional image of teachers, and undermining parents' and the public's confidence in teachers.

4. Uphold probity and integrity: Uphold the values and virtues of probity, integrity and honesty. Discharge duties in an unbiased and impartial manner; never neglect one's duties out of self-interest. Always act in the best interest of students; live up to the trust of the society and schools in the teaching profession.

Dos:

- Uphold probity⁵ and fairness; discharge teaching duties in a righteous, unbiased and impartial manner; assess student performance objectively and truthfully.
- Make decisions based on objective facts; handle colleagues' appraisal and complaints in a fair and just manner.
- Adhere to all relevant guidelines and circulars issued by the EDB when handling duties such as student admission, recruitment, assessment and procurement, etc.
- Ensure that there is no actual or potential conflict of interest between one's duties and personal interest; should any situation arise, proactively declare interest or refrain from participating in the relevant matters as soon as possible.
- Declare to schools participation in any activities or work involving external parties or organisations according to the school policies and requirements.
- Comply with the terms of the employment contract.

⁵ For details of acts of integrity and conflicts of interests, please refer to the brief introduction on the Prevention of Bribery Ordinance (Cap. 201) on the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC)'s webpage https://cpas.icac.hk/EN/Info/CP_Detail?id=76 and relevant guidelines of the EDB (e.g. Education Bureau Circular No. 3/2022).

Don'ts:

- Deviate from relevant guidelines or rules, or handle duties such as student admission, recruitment, assessment and procurement, etc. in breach of the principles of objectivity and impartiality.
- Directly or indirectly solicit or accept any benefits or gifts⁶ from others such as students, parents, colleagues, alumni or service providers, etc.
- Take advantage of the position of teacher in any way for personal benefits.
- Engage in part-time work outside school without the school's permission.
- Engage in deceitful or dishonest acts.

⁶ Interpretation of advantages is set out at Appendix 1 to Education Bureau Circular No. 3/2022.

5. Be committed and responsible: Discharge responsibilities earnestly; strive to achieve the goals of education and school policies. Perform teaching duties conscientiously and rigorously; try one's best to accomplish professional duties, and be responsible for teaching quality.

Dos:

- Strive to achieve the goals of education and school policies in a serious and professional manner; discharge teaching-related duties and professional responsibilities earnestly; be responsible for one's quality of teaching. Teachers who are responsible for school management and leadership should set a good example for others; earnestly discharge their responsibilities of leadership, coordination and monitoring, etc.
- Commit to nurturing students' good conduct, virtues, positive values and attitudes⁷ (including a sense of national identity and an affection for the nation), developing students with a sense of belonging to the country, an affection for Hong Kong and with a global perspective. Help students develop critical thinking skills and lifelong learning capabilities.
- Formulate appropriate teaching plans and contents in accordance with the curriculum aims and objectives set by the Curriculum Development Council (or, in the case of non-local curriculum, the approved aims and objectives of the relevant curriculum) and with reference to students' learning needs, interests and abilities; ensure that the selected or designed teaching contents and information are accurate.
- Adopt a responsible and rigorous attitude in preparing lessons, teaching, or conducting assessments; give students effective and positive guidance; set reasonable expectations for students; and arouse students' learning motivation, so that they can understand that they have to be responsible for their own learning.
- Ensure the facilities and resources of the school are used for job-related or approved purposes only.

⁷ For values education, please refer to the EDB's webpage: <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/4-key-tasks/moral-civic/index.html>

Don'ts:

- Neglect one's duty; attend to one's private business during lesson time, or delegate teaching duties, including the monitoring of the content, quality and effectiveness of teaching materials provided by external professional service providers, to others.
- Select teaching materials that are not in alignment with the EDB's relevant guidelines due to personal stance; instil in students one's personal biased beliefs, hampering students' development of positive values.

6. Care for students: Care for students, love them, adapt pedagogies and teaching materials to cater for learners' different abilities; respect diversity in them. Create a harmonious, rational, healthy and safe learning environment. Guard against risks and incidents; prevent and stop activities in breach of laws and regulations from infiltration into the school.

Dos:

- Love and care for every student, catering for learners' diversity; respect students' different personalities, abilities and backgrounds, and treat all students equally and positively.
- Consider students' diversity and special educational needs, and create a harmonious and mutually supportive learning environment to help them unleash their potential and guide them to develop positive values.
- Adopt positive means when guiding and counselling students; give consideration to students' self-esteem, rights to education, individual differences and health conditions when handling students' disciplinary issues.
- Be alert to safety; prevent and suppress activities that are in breach of laws and regulations from infiltration into the school.
- Always stay vigilant and report immediately any suspected cases of child abuse⁸, bullying at school, suicide attempts or situations involving personal safety to the school management and/or relevant departments, and take appropriate follow-up measures.
- Respect the role and identity of teachers and students, maintain an appropriate teacher-student relationship, and communicate with students with appropriate means and manner; avoid intimate contact; keep a proper physical distance.

⁸ Teachers should report immediately possible cases of child abuse to the school. Schools should take appropriate measures to protect the students concerned in accordance with the "Protecting Children from Maltreatment – Procedural Guide for Multi-disciplinary Co-operation" (revised in 2020) jointly drawn up by the Social Welfare Department and related professionals. In addition, the Government is taking forward the legislative work on the mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse cases. The existing requirements and guidelines will be updated in a timely manner upon completion of the legislative process.

Don'ts:

- Discriminate against⁹, ridicule or insult students irrespective of any ground or in any form that embarrasses students.
- Administer corporal punishment to students¹⁰.
- Arrange off-campus activities for students without prior approval of the school and notification to parents.
- Go on dates with individual students, or stay with them in an obscured place alone.
- Behave in any way that goes beyond normal teacher-student relationship.
- Commit acts involving sexual harassment¹¹ to students; engage in any sexual activities or have sexual contacts with students with or without the consent of students.

⁹ For details of the discrimination laws, please refer to the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC)'s webpage: <https://www.eoc.org.hk/en/discrimination-laws/sex-discrimination-laws>

¹⁰ As stipulated in Section 58 of the Education Regulations (Cap. 279A), "No teacher shall administer corporal punishment to a pupil". Any teacher who contravenes the stipulation commits an offence.

¹¹ For information of sexual harassment, please visit the EOC Anti-Sexual Harassment Resource Platform on the EOC's webpage: <https://www.eoc.org.hk/compass/en>

7. Respect privacy: Abide by rules of confidentiality. Respect the privacy of individuals (including students, parents and colleagues).

Dos:

- Abide by rules of confidentiality; use the information obtained during the course of performing duties for approved purposes only. Ensure the confidentiality of examination questions and fairness when conducting learning assessments.
- Respect the privacy of students and parents; strictly adhere to Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance¹² and school policies on confidentiality when collecting, storing, using and transmitting personal data; maintain and handle students' and parents' personal data with care.
- Under any circumstances (including referring cases to professionals for emotional or learning support for students, etc.), obtain prior authorisation or consent from parents before providing students' and parents' personal data to relevant parties, unless otherwise permitted by law.
- Share with parents information and insight conducive to students' growth, and truthfully relay to parents their children's academic performance and behaviour.

¹² For more information on the Personal Data (Privacy) Ordinance (Cap. 486), please refer to the webpage of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data:
https://www.pcpd.org.hk/english/data_privacy_law/ordinance_at_a_Glance/ordinance.html

Don'ts:

- Disclose documents, information or messages obtained from third parties under confidential access without legitimate reasons.
- Disclose school's confidential information to third parties without the school's approval and without legitimate reasons.
- Collect, store, use or transmit students' or parents' personal data, works or photos in situations unrelated to the performance of teaching duties, and without legitimate reasons and consent of the school or the parents of students.
- Discuss student cases in public casually in violation of privacy.

8. Safeguard professionalism: Fulfil the training requirements at different stages of the profession. Constantly reflect and strive for improvements, enhance professional capacity. Maintain sincere cooperation with stakeholders; foster team work and collaborative culture with peers; enhance the overall quality of teaching with concerted efforts; promote school continuous development. Endeavour to safeguard the image and dignity of the education profession.

Dos:

- Foster a friendly and cooperative relationship with parents; respect the reasonable requests of parents in relation to the education of their children, and respond reasonably from the perspective of education profession, so as to provide appropriate support for students' growth together.
- Appropriately introduce and make use of external resources and collaborate actively with other professional sectors to promote effective learning and healthy growth of students.
- Share experience and professional knowledge with peers in a proactive manner; respect different views; be objective and foster a collaborative culture and team spirit to enhance the overall quality of teaching and learning; promote school continuous development with concerted efforts.
- Participate actively in continuous professional development activities (including relevant training programmes, peer sharing and exchange, etc.) to enhance the professional competence of oneself and meet the training requirements at different stages of the profession in accordance with the guidelines of the EDB and the school.
- Reflect constantly on one's teaching effectiveness and set high professional standards for oneself in pursuit of improvement and excellence; enhance one's professional capabilities and strive to protect the image and dignity of the education profession.

Don'ts:

- Spoil the collaborative culture among peers and hinder the professional development of the teaching force.
- Discriminate against¹³, ostracize, maliciously attack or insult colleagues in any form; lodge unreasonable complaints against colleagues.
- Disseminate inaccurate or ungrounded information, tarnishing the reputation of schools, school sponsoring bodies, education organisations and the education profession.
- Intentionally refuse or evade training, hence not meeting the specified training requirements.
- Maliciously criticise schools, school sponsoring bodies or education organisations, undermining the public's trust in schools and the education profession.

¹³ See Footnote 7.

In short, as teachers' scope of work involves a wide range of duties and daily contact with different stakeholders, their behaviour both inside and outside school should be in alignment with the professional image of teachers.

The examples of “dos” and “don'ts” in this chapter are by no means exhaustive. Teachers should exercise professional judgement as well as consideration of the moral norms on what they should and should not do, based on the principles of protecting the well-being of students, upholding education professionalism, and safeguarding national security and social order, so as to serve as a role model for students and set an example for peers.

As a matter of fact, the diligence, commitment and professionalism of Hong Kong teachers are well recognised locally and internationally. Every year, the Government and education bodies in the community organise teacher commendation activities to show respect for teachers¹⁴. To encourage teachers to pursue excellence, the Government and education bodies in the community have set up various education awards to commend teachers with outstanding performance and to promote the culture of respecting teachers. To safeguard the education profession, in addition to teachers' self-awareness and self-discipline, they also have to remind each other to abide by the Guidelines together. More importantly, the black sheep in the teaching profession should be promptly identified. Case examples of teachers' professional misconduct are provided in Appendix 5 for alert and reference.

The EDB will review and revise the explanations of the codes as appropriate.

¹⁴ The teacher commendation schemes organised by the EDB and Committee on Respect Our Teachers Campaign include The Chief Executive's Award for Teaching Excellence (<https://www.ate.gov.hk/tchinese/index.html>) and Teacher Commendation Scheme (<https://www.crotc.org.hk/nomination.html>). The videos in respect of outstanding performance of teachers prepared by The Committee on Professional Development of Teachers and Principals can be found at (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXwCXhpfQNIhkLI4GdX_13Q/videos)

Chapter 4 Professional Conduct and Behaviour of Teachers: Codes in Practice

This chapter mainly explains the application of the Guidelines. The Guidelines clearly set out the professional conduct and behaviour required of teachers. Teachers should comply with the Guidelines consciously. Schools may make reference to the Guidelines to devise measures on staff management and professional development plans, and recognise teachers with distinguished virtues and excellent performance in teaching profession, so as to promote teachers' professional ethics and encourage teachers to pursue excellence. On the contrary, if there are teachers involved in professional misconduct or unlawful acts, schools can make reference to the Guidelines to follow up with the cases. The EDB will also make reference to the Guidelines and, based on the information collected, review the registration of teachers and take appropriate actions, including issuance of advisory, warning or reprimand letters, or cancellation of teachers' registration, depending on the gravity of the cases. The Guidelines should be applied as follows:

1. At personal level, teachers should study the Guidelines for the following purposes:

- Familiarise themselves with the requirements for their professional and personal behaviour, have conscious duty to abide by laws and regulations.
- Work out their own professional development plans; strive to enhance professionalism in accordance with the codes and teachers' professional roles portrayed in T-standard⁺, and pursue excellence.
- Reflect on their own professional conduct to ensure that their professional knowledge, skills, values and attitudes meet the professional conduct of teachers and the expectations of parents and the community to safeguard the education profession.

2. At school level, school sponsoring bodies may make reference to the Guidelines and give directives to school governance authorities under their sponsorship. School governance authorities may use the Guidelines for the following purposes:

- For gatekeeping in appointment of teachers, require prospective candidates to study the Guidelines to make themselves aware of the expectations of the EDB, schools and the community on teachers' professional conduct, and to perform their teaching and educating responsibilities in accordance with the Guidelines.
- Enhance staff management including circulating the Guidelines to teachers or reminding them in staff meetings of the importance of upholding professional conduct and the dire consequences of violating professional conduct.
- Improve the teachers' appraisal system with a view to objectively assessing their performance in teaching and professional ethics, thereby maintaining the professional standard and image of the teaching force.
- Enrich the school-based guidelines on staff conduct by integrating the vision, mission and requirements on staff of the school sponsoring bodies with the Guidelines for the reference and compliance of teachers.
- Handle teachers' professional misconduct in a serious manner. Where cases are substantiated after investigation, appropriate disciplinary actions should be taken with reference to the codes set out in the Guidelines and in accordance with the Employment Ordinance, Codes of Aid¹⁵ and the terms set out in the employment contract signed with the teachers concerned.
- Plan school-based teachers' professional development activities. With reference to the teachers' professional roles portrayed in T-standard⁺ and the relevant codes set out in the Guidelines, conduct discussions on the "dos" and "don'ts" of teachers in the form of case studies to enhance teachers' professional sensitivity and awareness so they could play their part as a role model for students at all times.

¹⁵ In staff management, aided schools, subject to the relevant provisions in the Employment Ordinance and the Codes of Aid, should take appropriate disciplinary action as the circumstances may require, including verbal or written warning, withholding annual increment, suspending the teacher from normal duties, reduction in rank, dismissal and summary dismissal.

- Recognise teachers with distinguished virtues and excellent performance in teaching profession, so as to promote teachers' professional ethics and encourage teachers to pursue excellence.
- Explain to parents the requirements of teaching profession, gain parents' trust in the school and teachers, develop a close home-school partnership so as to provide support for students' growth together.

3. At system level, the EDB will make reference to the Guidelines for the following purposes:

- In exercising the statutory powers of Section 46 (refusal to register an applicant as a teacher) and Section 47 (cancellation of registration of teacher) of the Education Ordinance, the Permanent Secretary for Education may take into account all relevant considerations including but not limited to the contents set out in the Guidelines. For teachers suspected of professional misconduct, the EDB will examine the seriousness of their misconduct, the impact on students and the education profession, etc., and decide on the follow-up actions and penalties according to the established mechanism (Appendix 4).
- Enhance the professional conduct and quality of the teaching force through organising professional development and training activities for teachers.
- Recognise teachers with distinguished virtues and excellent performance in teaching profession, so as to promote teachers' professional ethics and build a teaching force with virtues and talents.
- Recommend teacher education universities to make reference to the Guidelines and enrich relevant contents in pre-service teacher training.
- Update the Guidelines in a timely manner as necessary to keep in pace with the development of society and education.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE GENERIC TEACHER COMPETENCIES FRAMEWORK

| TEACHING AND LEARNING DOMAIN | STUDENT DEVELOPMENT DOMAIN | SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DOMAIN | PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SERVICES DOMAIN |
|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Subject Matter Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - command of subject matter knowledge - updating of subject matter knowledge and search for new subject knowledge - sharing and exchange of subject teaching practice ★ Curriculum and Pedagogical Content Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - command and application of pedagogical content knowledge - curriculum design, implementation and improvement - updating and sharing of pedagogical content knowledge ★ Teaching Strategies and Skills, Use of Language and Multi-Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge and application of teaching strategies and skills - language proficiency - motivation of student learning through different teaching methods and multi-media - research and dissemination on teaching strategies and skills ★ Assessment and Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - student assessment methods and procedures - use of student assessment results - evaluation and review of teaching and learning programmes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Students' Diverse Needs in School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understanding students' diverse needs - identifying and supporting students' diverse needs - collegial collaboration in identifying and supporting students' diverse needs ★ Rapport with Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - awareness of the importance of establishing rapport with students - building trust and rapport with students ★ Pastoral Care for Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - providing pastoral care for students - collegial collaboration in providing pastoral care ★ Students' Different Learning Experiences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - participation and implementation - planning and organization - whole person development of students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ School Vision and Mission, Culture and Ethos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adaptation to the school vision and mission, culture and ethos - actualisation of school beliefs, vision and mission - cultivation of a caring and inviting school climate - contribution to reviewing the school vision and mission, as well as promoting the school culture and school image ★ Policies, Procedures and Practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understanding school goals and policies - implementation of school policies, procedures and practices - formulation of school policies, review of procedures and practices for continuous school development ★ Home-School Collaboration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understanding students' family backgrounds - communication with parents - involvement in parent-related activities - building trust with parents for further school development ★ Responsiveness to Societal Values and Changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - awareness and knowledge of societal changes in relation to their impact on school - responsiveness to societal changes and issues related to social values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Collaborative Relationships within the School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working relationships with individuals - working relationships with groups - working relationships within formal structures ★ Teachers' Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sharing of knowledge and good practices with others - contributions to teachers' professional development ★ Involvement in Policies Related to Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - awareness and knowledge of policies related to education - responsiveness to policies related to education - contributions to policies related to education ★ Education-related Community Services and Voluntary Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interaction with the broader community - participation in education-related community services and voluntary work |

SIX CORE VALUES THAT UNDERPIN THE WHOLE FRAMEWORK

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|--|
| belief that all students can learn | love and care for students | respect for diversity | commitment and dedication to the profession | collaboration, sharing and team spirit | passion for continuous learning and excellence |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|--|

BASIC PREMISE: THE PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS

The Generic Teacher Competencies Framework, built on the six core values, was devised by the former Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualifications in 2003 with the aim of supporting teachers to plan for continuous professional development based on the premise of professional ethics and self-improvement.

T-standard⁺: Professional Standards for Teachers of Hong Kong

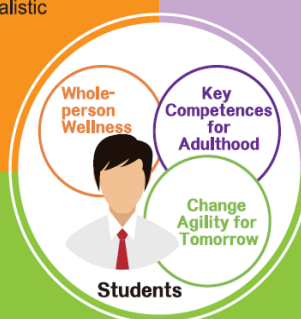
The Three Professional Roles of Teachers and Stage Descriptors

Caring Cultivators of All-round Growth

- Nurture students holistically through character building and serving as a role model of all-round personal development with moral virtues, positive values and attitudes⁷, and local, national and global awareness.
- Chaperon students in the journey of understanding self and unfolding potential to stand up to changes and challenges, and enhance their capacity for self-management, self-regulation and lifelong learning.
- Create a harmonious, inviting and supportive environment conducive to students' motivation to learn and rapport-building with peers, teachers, parents and the community.
- Accommodate students' diverse and special educational needs to enable them to advance their potential, and mutually affirm and respect each other in a pluralistic society.

Inspirational Co-Constructors of Knowledge

- Develop students' generic skills¹ and entrepreneurial spirit², and enable them to embrace the East-meets-West culture of the territory and cutting-edge technology in order to innovate and thrive amid the uncertainties, complexities and dynamics in Hong Kong as a global city.
- Engage students in deep learning¹² through inspiring them to construct knowledge individually and collaboratively, and ensure their mastery of key competences³ in and across learning areas for increased competitiveness in the knowledge-based society.
- Design and implement instructional strategies appropriate to students' needs and abilities to maximise learning effectiveness in the era of knowledge and digitalisation.



Committed Role Models of Professionalism

- Pursue continuing professional development individually and through sharing and collaboration with the professional learning communities, parents, school sponsoring bodies and the community in order to enhance change readiness and contribute to the sustainable development and transformation of the school.
- Uphold ethical practices and abide by the Code for the Education Profession of Hong Kong⁴; understand the principles of the Basic Law⁵ and respect the rule of law as a core value of Hong Kong.
- Epitomise a quest for equity⁶, excellence and collegial harmony in the teaching profession with professional commitment in school and society.

Each professional role of teachers is supported by three stage descriptors portraying teachers' visions and missions in their professional growth. These stages, however, do not necessarily correspond to the teaching experience of a teacher. A teacher can be at different stages of their professional growth in different professional roles.



T-standard⁺: Professional Standards for Principals of Hong Kong

The Three Professional Roles of Principals and Stage Descriptors

Ethical Enablers

of All-round Growth and Balanced Advancement

- Exemplify ethical understanding and actualise educational values to foster growth and balanced advancement of teachers and students.

Versatile Architects

of Vibrant Learning Organisations

- Generate organisational culture and conditions to foster schools as vibrant learning organisations with professional excellence and collegiality that develop teachers as co-constructors of knowledge, proactive agents of change and cultivators of multiple talents and future leaders.

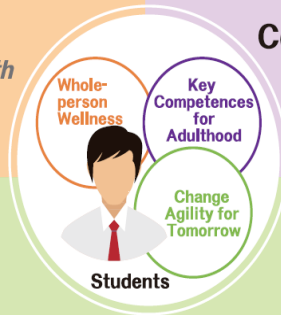
Caring Cultivators

of All-round Growth

Teachers

Inspirational Co-Constructors

of Knowledge



Committed Role Models

of Professionalism

Visionary Edupreneurs

of Educational Transformation and Continuous School Improvement

- Embody a global mindset and envision the future when actualising the school vision, mission and values, and embrace transformational changes and adversity with entrepreneurial spirit when promoting continuous school improvement for the future development of Hong Kong.

Each professional role of principals is supported by three stage descriptors, portraying principals' visions and missions in their professional growth. These stages, however, do not necessarily correspond to the professional experience of a principal. A principal can be at different stages of their professional growth in different professional roles.

Competent

Accomplished

Distinguished

Education Ordinance (Cap. 279 of the Laws of Hong Kong): S46 and 47

46. Grounds for refusal to register teacher

The Permanent Secretary may refuse to register an applicant as a teacher if it appears to him that the applicant – *(Amended 3 of 2003 s. 11)*

- (a) is not a fit and proper person to be a teacher;
- (b) has been convicted of an offence punishable with imprisonment;
- (c) is a person in respect of whom a permit to teach has previously been cancelled;
- (d) is medically unfit;
- (e) does not possess the prescribed qualifications;
- (f) has attained the age of 70 years; or
- (g) in making or in connexion with any application –
 - (i) *(Repealed 42 of 1993 s. 17)*
 - (ii) for registration as a manager or a teacher; or
 - (iii) to employ a person as a permitted teacher in a school, has made any statement or furnished any information which is false in any material particular or by reason of the omission of any material particular.

47. Grounds for cancellation of registration of teacher

The Permanent Secretary may cancel the registration of a teacher – *(Amended 3 of 2003 s. 11)*

- (a) on any ground specified in section 46 which applies to the teacher, whether or not such ground existed at the time when he was registered as a teacher;
- (b) if it appears to the Permanent Secretary that the teacher is incompetent;
- (c) if the teacher has contravened any provision of this Ordinance;
- (d) if it appears to the Permanent Secretary that the teacher has behaved in any manner which, in the opinion of the Permanent Secretary, constitutes professional misconduct; or
- (e) if it appears to the Permanent Secretary that the teacher has behaved in any manner which, in the opinion of the Permanent Secretary, is prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school in which the teacher teaches.

(Amended 3 of 2003 s. 11)

Mechanism of Handling Suspected Professional Misconduct of Teachers

The EDB is responsible for statutory registration of teachers and monitoring of their professional qualifications and conduct. The EDB has been handling cases concerning teachers' professional conduct prudently and in accordance with the established mechanism and procedures in a fair, just, impartial and objective manner.

1. Enforcement of powers conferred by the law

The Education Ordinance empowers the Permanent Secretary to approve or refuse the applications for “registered teachers” or “permitted teachers”, and cancel teachers' registration pertaining to professional misconduct taking into account the gravity of the cases, to ensure that all teachers allowed to teach in schools are fit and proper persons. The EDB has been prudent in fulfilling its obligations in exercising its powers conferred by the law to ensure that teachers who are not fit and proper, are incompetent, have behaved in any manner which constitutes professional misconduct or are prejudicial to the maintenance of good order and discipline in the school cannot continue to teach, so as to safeguard the well-being of students, uphold the professionalism of teachers and maintain public's confidence in education in Hong Kong.

2. Case handling mechanism

School's investigation

Upon receiving a complaint against a teacher, the EDB will request the school concerned to conduct an investigation. The school will look into the matters in accordance with the school-based mechanism and let the teacher concerned give explanations on the case. The school will also take appropriate school-based follow-up actions, and submit a report to the EDB.

Case review by the Task Force

The EDB has set up an internal Task Force comprising the EDB's directorate officers to comprehensively review cases involving teachers' professional misconduct and take different levels of follow-up actions against the teachers concerned in light of the nature and gravity of the cases. The Task Force will fully consider all the information collected and all relevant factors, including the school reports, the teachers' representations, the existing legislation, the Guidelines and other relevant EDB guidelines, etc., to examine whether the cases reveal any situations as stipulated in Section 47 of the Education Ordinance, so as to determine the follow-up actions to be taken.

Teachers' representations

For cases that are likely to be substantiated in the EDB's initial assessment, the teachers concerned will be informed of the initial views and be invited to submit written representations within a reasonable time. For cases that may warrant cancellation of registration, the teachers concerned will be informed of the possible cancellation of registration and be invited to submit representations within 14 days with full understanding of the severity of the cases.

Follow-up actions and penalties

Upon receipt of the teachers' representations, the Task Force will fully consider the information and decide on the follow-up actions and penalties before making recommendations to the Permanent Secretary.

For mild misconduct cases, the EDB will issue advisory letters to remind the teachers concerned to refrain from activities that are detrimental to the image of the teaching profession and show respect for the norms of behaviour generally acceptable to society. For more serious and very serious cases, the EDB will issue warning and reprimand letters respectively, specifying that if the teachers concerned misconduct themselves again, the EDB will consider cancelling their teachers' registration pursuant to the Education Ordinance.

For extremely serious cases, the EDB will cancel the teachers' registration pursuant to the Education Ordinance. For serious cases that do not warrant cancellation of teacher registration for life, the EDB will stipulate in the

cancellation notices that the application for re-registration of the teachers will not be considered within a specified period of time (say, three years). As for teachers with serious misconduct, the practice of “disqualification for life” will be adhered to and re-registration will not be allowed in order to ensure the safety of students.

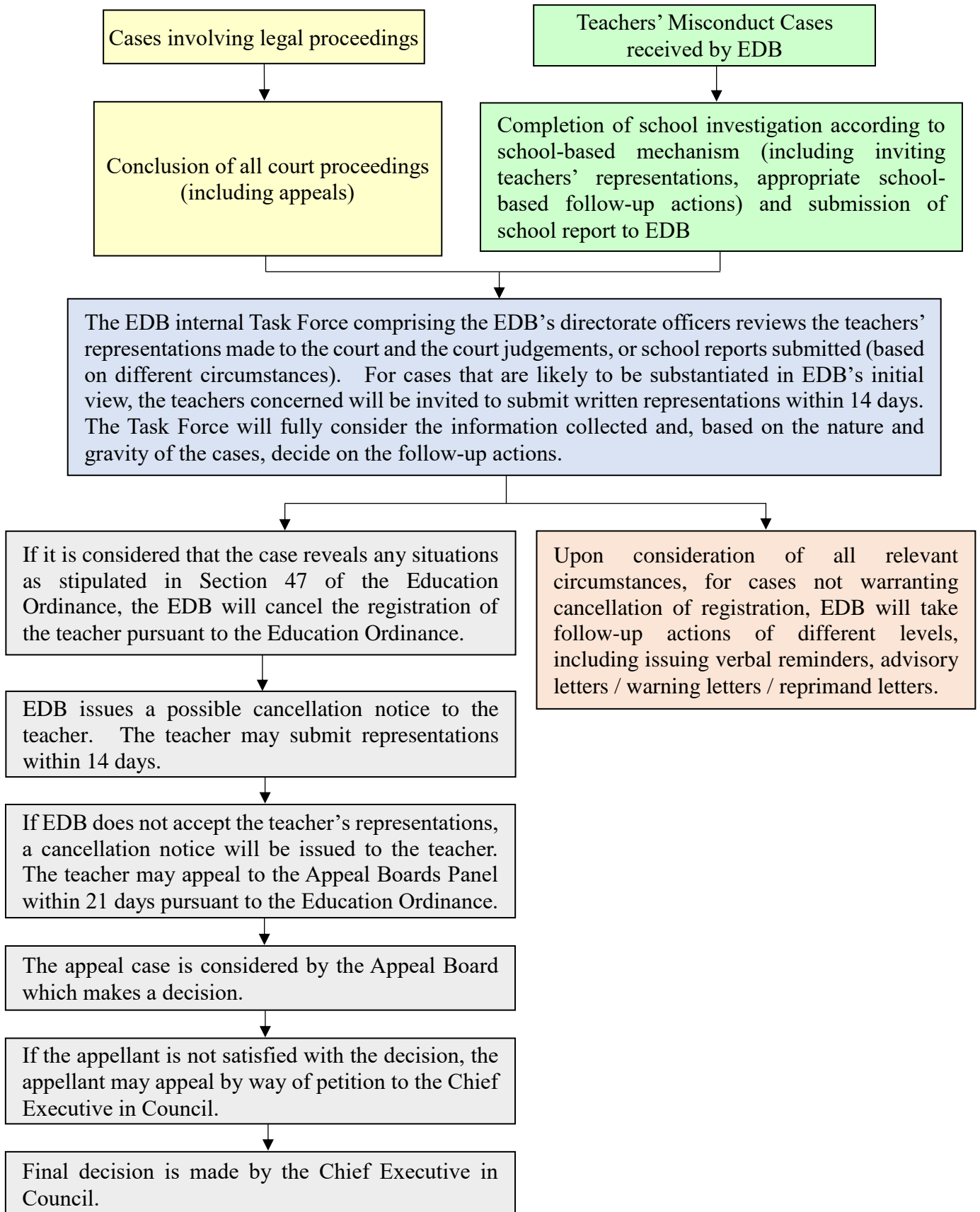
Appeal mechanism

During the process, the teachers concerned have full and fair opportunities for making representations and self-defence. If a teacher is not satisfied with the decision of cancelling his/her teacher registration, he/she may appeal to the Appeal Boards Panel within 21 days. As regards the Appeal Boards Panel, the members are appointed by the Chief Executive in accordance with Section 59 of the Education Ordinance. An Appeal Board is appointed in accordance with Section 62(1B) of the Education Ordinance to hear or determine any appeal concerning the registration of a teacher or the cancellation of the registration of a teacher. The Appeal Board shall consist of 5 members of the Appeal Boards Panel and at least 3 of its members must be registered teachers.

Handling of law-breaking cases

For law-breaking cases, the EDB will scrutinise in detail all relevant information, including the teachers’ representations made to the court and the court judgements, and prudently review the teachers’ registration upon completion of the proceedings. However, the judgement made by the court is not the only reference. Even the teachers are not convicted for various reasons, if their acts are not accepted from the perspective of teaching profession or students’ well-being, the EDB will take appropriate actions in respect of their teachers’ registration.

Workflow of Handling Suspected Professional Misconduct of Teachers



Case Examples of Teachers' Professional Misconduct

1. Child abuse
2. Possession of instrument fit for unlawful purposes
3. Theft
4. Engaging in outside work without permission
5. Disclosing admission interview questions
6. Improper words and deeds on social media platforms
7. Using biased and incorrect teaching materials
8. Teaching untrue contents persistently
9. Mishandling student discipline
10. Conducting unethical behaviour towards a student
11. Conducting off-campus activities with a student alone inappropriately

Case examples

This Appendix sets out some selected substantiated cases handled by the EDB to illustrate the professional conduct and behaviour required of teachers as well as EDB's follow-up actions and penalties against the teachers involved. It is worth noting that follow-up actions on these cases have been taken prior to the promulgation of this Guidelines and are for reference only.

In fact, teachers should be law-abiding, observe rules and regulations. In principle, if a teacher has been convicted of an offence, in which the offence involves dishonesty, breaching of integrity or other serious situations, the EDB will seriously consider cancellation of his/ her registration.

Nevertheless, the specific circumstances, details and gravity of each case, impact on students, the teaching profession, schools and society as well as representations and reflections of teachers concerned are all different. Even the cases may be similar in nature, the follow-up actions taken by the EDB and the penalties imposed on the teachers involved may vary given the uniqueness of each case. Hence, it is not appropriate to make simple and direct comparison of different cases, nor to take them as precedents.

1. Child abuse

Case 1

A teacher who worked in a children's residential home was found slapping the young children thereat. After the incident was revealed, the teacher was charged with and convicted of ill-treatment or neglect by those in charge of child or young person. He/she was sentenced to imprisonment.

The offence committed by the teacher in this case seriously endangered the safety of the children. Such act fell short of society's expectation and damaged the professional image of the teaching profession. The EDB cancelled the registration of the teacher for not being fit and proper in accordance with the Education Ordinance.

2. Possession of instrument fit for unlawful purposes

Case 2

A teacher was convicted of possession of instrument fit for unlawful purposes with intent to use the same for any unlawful purpose, and was sentenced to imprisonment.

The illegal acts committed by the teacher in this case might endanger the safety of other people, had a serious negative impact on students, damaged the reputation of the teaching profession and fell short of society's expectations of teachers. The EDB cancelled the registration of the teacher for not being fit and proper in accordance with the Education Ordinance.

3. Theft

Case 3

A teacher in charge of a Mainland exchange tour paid off his/her own debts with the tour fees collected from students. The teacher was convicted of theft and sentenced to imprisonment after trial.

Theft is a criminal offence. The teacher in this case abused his/her authority by embezzling the tour fees paid by the students for his/her personal use. This was a serious breach of integrity and professional conduct required of teachers. The EDB cancelled the registration of the teacher for not being fit and proper in accordance with the Education Ordinance.

4. Engaging in outside work without permission

Case 4

A teacher was engaged in paid outside work at a tutorial centre including teaching and preparing assessment papers without approval of the school.

In this case, the teacher failed to declare to school the work that involved a conflict of interest. In the course of the school's investigation, the teacher not only denied the allegation, he/she even tried to conceal the facts which was in violation of integrity. The EDB issued a warning letter to the teacher.

5. Disclosing admission interview questions

Case 5

A teacher disclosed the school's Primary 1 admission interview questions to an outsider without the school's approval.

In this case, the teacher's behaviour undermined the fairness and impartiality of the school's Primary 1 admission interview. The EDB issued a reprimand letter to the teacher for serious professional misconduct.

6. Improper words and deeds on social media platforms

Case 6

A teacher posted a lot of vulgar language and comments which insulted other people on social media platforms. Although the teacher's social media platforms were defaulted to be shared among friends only, the posts concerned were leaked to outsiders including parents and students.

In this case, the teacher's behaviour of using vulgar language in expressing hatred or insulting others seriously undermined the image of the profession as well as the confidence of parents and the public in teachers. The EDB issued a reprimand letter to the teacher.

7. Using biased and incorrect teaching materials

Case 7

A teacher persistently used a large quantity of biased materials for teaching the senior secondary subject Liberal Studies. These teaching materials illustrated viewpoints from a single-sided angle, lacked justification or evidence, and even distorted the facts. In addition, the materials contained untrue remarks about others, spread hatred and radical views and presented a defamatory stance against the nation, which easily aroused readers' hostility towards the nation and its people.

The teacher in this case used biased, negative and incorrect teaching materials that deviated from the goals of the curriculum, in large quantities and over an extensive period of time. Such teaching posed a negative and profound impact on students' learning and values development, constituting professional misconduct and falling short of society's expectations of teachers. The EDB cancelled the registration of the teacher for not being fit and proper in accordance with the Education Ordinance.

8. Teaching untrue contents persistently

Case 8

A teacher of General Studies repeatedly presented untrue information about Chinese historical events in junior primary classes. The panel head was also held responsible for not having properly reviewed the teaching materials prepared by the teacher.

In this case, the teacher neither fulfilled his/her primary duty of lesson preparation nor had a correct understanding of the teaching contents. He/she made personal wild guesses with his/her casual thoughts when teaching history and failed to teach students correct historical facts, which seriously affected students' learning and hindered their development of a sense of national identity. Such incompetent and irresponsible attitude constituted serious professional misconduct and fell short of parents' and society's expectations of teachers. The EDB cancelled the registration of the teacher for not being fit and proper in

accordance with the Education Ordinance. The panel head was issued a reprimand letter for not having discharged his/her monitoring duties to review relevant teaching materials in a serious manner.

9. Mishandling student discipline

Case 9

When dealing with a student's disciplinary problem, a secondary school teacher failed to control his/her emotions and went into a verbal argument with the student. He/she then pulled the student by the collar and asked the student to leave the classroom.

In this case, the teacher came into conflict with his/her student, acted violently and even asked the student to leave the classroom. Such an act did not only deprive the student of the right to learn, it might also cause emotional disturbance and danger to the student when left alone. The teacher failed to take cognisance of students' self-esteem and safety when managing student discipline. The EDB issued a warning letter to the teacher for professional misconduct.

10. Conducting unethical behaviour towards a student

Case 10

A male teacher was found to have exchanges with a female junior secondary student in a social messaging application, which involved an enormous amount of sexually explicit topics and contained messages that seduced the student into engaging in an intimate behaviour with him.

Although the teacher in this case did not have a sexual relationship with the student, he had abused his status or authority out of which his obscenity already constituted serious professional misconduct. The EDB cancelled the registration of the teacher for not being fit and proper in accordance with the Education Ordinance.

11. Conducting off-campus activities with a student alone inappropriately

Case 11

Without obtaining the parents' consent, a teacher arranged after-school sports training for a student of the same gender, repeatedly engaged in off-campus activities with the student alone, and even stayed overnight at the student's home while no other family members of the student were there.

The teacher in this case arranged off-campus activities for an individual student alone without the school's and parents' consent out of no justifiable reasons, and visited and stayed overnight at the student's home without reasonable cause. The EDB issued a warning letter to the teacher for professional misconduct.