



Public Examination Policy of Bhutan

2017

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BACKGROUND

Schools in Bhutan had some form of written examinations as a dominant feature since the early days of our modern education in the 1960s.

The first National Examination system was started with the All Bhutan Class V Common Examination in 1972 followed by the All Bhutan Class VIII Examination in 1975. Since an examining body had not been created at that time, the Department of Education conducted the All Bhutan Common Examinations.

In 1975, an Examination Cell was established as a separate unit headed by a Controller of Examinations under the Directorate of Education to co-ordinate and conducts the All Bhutan Common Examinations. The nomenclature was changed to Bhutan Board of Examinations (BBE) in 1986. The Primary Certificate Examination (PSCE) for Class VI that replaced the All Bhutan Common Examination for Class V was started in the same year.

From 1972 to 1981, the question papers for All Bhutan Common Examinations were set and evaluated outside the country. In 1982 and 1983, question papers were still set outside Bhutan but the evaluation was done within Bhutan with the assistance of expatriate chief examiners. From 1984 onwards, both the setting of question papers and evaluation of answer scripts were done within the country.

All the high schools in the country were affiliated to the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) New Delhi since 1974. Since then, the CISCE conducted the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE - X) and the Indian School Certificate Examination (ISC - XII) examinations.

From 2001 BBE took over the complete conduct of the class X examination now called Bhutan Certificate for Secondary Education (BCSE) and XII examination now called Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate Examination (BHSEC) in 2006.

The syllabi for BCSE and BHSEC are prepared by the Department of Curriculum Research and Development (DCRD), Ministry of Education in consultation with BCSEA on subject-wise content weightings, modes of assessment and examination rules and regulations.

In order to keep pace with the educational developments across the world where the range and scope of public examinations expand, an autonomous national assessment body was felt absolutely necessary.

Concurrently, BBE was professionally and technically prepared to handle the Classes X and XII high-stakes examinations leading to formally taking over the responsibility from the Indian Council for School Examinations, thus signalling the readiness of BBE to assume autonomy and independence.

Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Education initiated the idea of an autonomous BBE during the organizational restructuring exercise in 2007. Further, under Charter 7 of Accelerating Bhutan's Socio-Economic Development (ABSD) in 2010, it was proposed that an independent education quality assurance agency be established. In pursuant to the above, the Lhengye Zhungtshog (Cabinet), on May 26, 2011,

issued an Executive Order to establish Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment (BCSEA) as an autonomous body replacing the erstwhile BBE with effect from July 1, 2011.

The Lhengye Zhungtshog envisaged BCSEA as an internationally recognized educational assessment and monitoring agency providing quality services to build the integrity and profile of the education system as a whole.

As BCSEA is mandated to drive quality and standard of student learning, it will play a pivotal role in promoting quality and standard in curricula, teaching and learning through advocacy, policy advice and support, specialist knowledge and skills, and services. It will be the watchdog of the education system in the country.

Vision

Internationally recognized centre of excellence in educational assessment that provides quality services to build the integrity and profile of the education system leading to an improvement in the quality of student learning in Bhutan.

Mission

1. BCSEA shall guide the Bhutanese education system in its progressive shift in policy focus and support the education ministry in bringing about improvements in schooling so that students not only fulfil their potentials and meet the international learning standards, but are also better prepared for the world of work.
2. BCSEA as a highly professional evaluation and assessment agency shall carry out periodic national examinations, assessments, monitoring and research activities to set new standards in schooling system that will lead to positive educational reforms and student learning outcomes.

Mandates

1. Creating research capability and assessment practices of international quality;
2. Improving the standard of public examinations and assessment practices in schools;
3. Monitoring through feedback and input regarding levels of student's learning;
4. Providing professional development to principals, teachers and other personnel in the field of examinations and assessment;
5. Conducting research into policies and programmes to improve the quality of student learning and teaching;
6. Providing insight and support to study existing school-based assessment practices and strengthen the same;
7. Developing and publishing research-based support materials to strengthen school based process and practices;
8. Promoting examples of best practices;

9. Conducting national and international conferences, seminars, symposia etc. in areas of assessment; and
10. Facilitating exchange programmes with other international institutes of repute.

Objectives

1. Develop appropriate test, assessment and examinations standards.
2. Conduct empirical studies that provide diagnostic information on examinations and assessment.
3. Develop an institutional framework for researching and communicating to stakeholders the critical issues of examinations and assessment.
4. Enhance the organization's institutional capacity to effectively and efficiently discharge the core functions.

Rationale for Examination Policy

It is becoming increasingly difficult for BCSEA to discharge the sensitive and challenging responsibility of conducting and certifying the national level high-stakes examinations especially for Classes X and XII in a fair and credible manner in the absence of a legal document in the form of an act or a policy.

These examinations which inevitably determine the future careers of over 20,000 students each year, are becoming more and more complex and challenging in terms of potential threats to their fairness and credibility, and the ever increasing public expectations.

In the face of such challenges, the need for a legal tool and backing to protect the fairness and integrity of its examinations and certification is strongly desired.

The Examination Policy shall be a legal document to protect the integrity of the examinations and certification. Such a document, which may be called, "**the Public Examination Policy of Bhutan 2017**", shall fulfil the purposes of:

1. Having effective provisions for the fair, smooth and efficient conduct of public examinations in Bhutan;
2. Prevent and or manage potential risks and offences committed in connection with all matters related therewith or related thereto public examinations; and
3. Have a legal basis for all system, procedures, processes and products of or matters related therewith or related thereto all public examinations conducted by Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment.

CHAPTER 1 THE PRELIMINARY

1.1. Long Title

A POLICY TO MAKE EFFECTIVE PROVISIONS FOR THE FAIR, SMOOTH AND EFFICIENT CONDUCT OF PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS IN BHUTAN, AND FOR PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF RISKS AND OFFENCES COMMITTED IN CONNECTION WITH SUCH PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS AND FOR ALL MATTERS RELATED THEREWITH OR RELATED THERETO.

This policy, in short, may be cited as the **Public Examinations Policy 2017**.

1.2. Interpretation and Definition

- 1.2.1. Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment, hereafter termed as BCSEA, means a body, agency, authority or institution, by whatever name called, established in accordance with the executive order or constituted by or under any law for the time being in force for the organisation, regulation, supervision, control or development of the public examination and certification of any level of school education;
- 1.2.2. “**Council**” as appeared in Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment, means the board, or authority, by whatever name called, established or constituted by the government for guiding BCSEA as an agency to organize, regulate, supervise, control and conduct examinations, and to certify any level of school education;
- 1.2.3. “**examination centre**” means a school, place or premises recognized by BCSEA for a national level school examination to be held;
- 1.2.4. “**candidate**” means an examinee or a person who has been rightfully registered or in whose name a written authority, by whatever name called, for admission to a public examination at a particular centre has been issued by BCSEA;
- 1.2.5. “**public examination**” means any national level examination that is, or may be, organized, held, conducted, regulated or certified by BCSEA; and
- 1.2.6. “**school**” means an institution of learning established and approved by the Ministry of Education and duly affiliated with BCSEA.

1.3. Commencement

The Public Examinations Policy 2017 shall be enforced commencing from the date of its endorsement by the Royal Government of Bhutan.

1.4. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- 1.4.1. Have effective provisions for the fair, smooth and efficient conduct of public examinations in Bhutan;
- 1.4.2. Prevent and or manage potential risks and offences committed in connection with all matters related to public examinations; and
- 1.4.3. Have legal basis for all system, procedures, processes and products of or matters related to all public examinations conducted by BCSEA.

1.5. Extent and Scope

This policy shall apply to all system, procedures, processes and products of or matters related to public examinations conducted by BCSEA.

CHAPTER 2 ADMINISTRATION OF THIS POLICY

2.1. The Permanent Secretariat

- 2.1.1. Bhutan Council for School Examinations and Assessment, hereafter termed as BCSEA, shall be the permanent Secretariat that directly administers this policy.
- 2.1.2. The permanent Secretariat of BCSEA with a clearly defined organizational structure shall be headed by a permanent Secretary appointed by the Royal Civil Service Commission.
- 2.1.3. In particular, the School Examination Division, hereafter termed as SED, headed by the Controller of Examinations, hereafter termed as **“the Controller”**, who shall report to the Secretary, shall be directly responsible for all matters pertaining to public examinations.
- 2.1.4. In general, the Secretariat shall have professional and administrative divisions headed by Chiefs who shall report to the Secretary.

2.2. The Board of Directors

- 2.2.1. BCSEA shall have a Board of Directors constituted by the government as the apex authority that shall guide the permanent Secretariat of BCSEA in its major decision making process.
- 2.2.2. The Chairperson of the Council shall be an eminent figure appointed by the government and the membership shall be ex-officio from relevant organizations. The Chairperson shall exercise his power and function as per the Terms of Reference in the BCSEA Operational Framework.
- 2.2.3. The Vice Chairperson shall be appointed from among the existing members of Board of Directors.
- 2.2.4. The powers of the Board of Directors shall be exercised within the provisions of this policy and, if any, from the Government Executive Order and function in accordance with the directives therein.
- 2.2.5. The Secretary of the Secretariat who shall be the Member Secretary of the Board shall derive its authority from the policy, the directives of the government and the Board on policy matters pertaining to examinations and assessment.

2.3. School Examination Division

- 2.3.1. School Examination Division headed by the Controller of Examinations shall be responsible for all examinations conducted by BCSEA.
- 2.3.2. The primary mandate of the SED shall be to prepare, conduct, evaluate and certify the national level school examinations.
- 2.3.3. The public examinations conducted by SED shall be credible, effective

and efficient, and must protect the integrity of all activities related to examinations and assessment.

2.4. Powers of the Secretary

- 2.4.1. The Secretary shall have the power to delegate to the Controller or to any Assistant Controller or to any competent officer of the School Examination Division, the full responsibility to organize and conduct:
 - 2.4.1.1. *High-stakes School Examinations namely Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate (BHSEC-XII) examination; Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education (BCSE-X) examination; Language and Culture Studies Certificate Examination (LCSCCE - X and XII) and any other national level school examinations as may be deemed necessary from time to time, and*
 - 2.4.1.2. *Any other examinations as may be required by the Government or the Ministry of Education or by Government-sponsored bodies.*
- 2.4.2. The Secretary shall have the power to issue certificates or awards to candidates who are successful at any examination.
- 2.4.3. The examinations shall be conducted based on the mode of assessment of the curricula, syllabuses and text books prescribed, in the case of:
 - 2.4.3.1. *high-stakes school examinations, by the Royal Education Council (REC);*
 - 2.4.3.2. *any other national level examinations by the Ministry of Education in consultation with any relevant technical examinations advisory committee;*
 - 2.4.3.3. *examinations by the Government departments or the Government-sponsored body concerned, in consultation with the Ministry of Education.*

2.5. Subsidiary Policy Documents

This Policy shall be the basis for all examination policy documents such as Assessment frameworks, Examination Rules and Regulations, Procedure and Criteria for Selection of Examination Conducting Officials and other policy documents that are or shall be framed for proper administration and implementation of this Policy.

CHAPTER 3 THE PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

3.1. Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate Examination

- 3.1.1. Bhutan Higher Secondary Education Certificate Examination, which in short may be termed as BHSEC (Class-XII) examination, shall be referred to the examination conducted by BCSEA for the registered candidates from the affiliated higher secondary schools after having completed a two year course and having been awarded pass certificates in BCSE (Class X) Examination or its equivalence with a minimum attendance prescribed in the syllabus.
- 3.1.2. The BHSEC Examination and its certification is recognized by all government and private functionaries in the country including the Department of Adult and Higher Education (DAHE), the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) and Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences (KGUMSB); and by the outside examination systems, such as the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), the Council of Boards of School Education (COBSE), the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in India and other countries.
- 3.1.3. Except for Dzongkha subjects which shall be done in Dzongkha, the national language, BHSEC examination in all subjects offered for the course, as per the curriculum standards of the Royal Education Council, shall be written in English medium. The non-Bhutanese students shall be facilitated to have the option of taking any other second language examination based on their choice subject to fulfilling criteria.

3.2. Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education Examination

- 3.2.1. Bhutan Certificate of Secondary Education Examination, which in short may be termed as BCSE (Class X) examination, shall be referred to the examination conducted by BCSEA for the registered candidates from the affiliated secondary schools after having completed a two year course after Class VIII or its equivalence with a minimum attendance prescribed in the syllabus.
- 3.2.2. The BCSE Examination and its certification shall be recognized by all government and private functionaries in the country including the Department of Adult and Higher Education (DAHE), the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) and Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences (KGUMS); and by the outside examination systems, such as the Association of Indian Universities (AIU), the Council of Boards of School Education (COBSE), the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE), and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in India and other countries.
- 3.2.3. Except for Dzongkha subjects which shall be done in Dzongkha, the national language, BCSE examination in all subjects offered for the course,

as per the curriculum standards of the REC, shall be written in English medium. The non-Bhutanese students shall be facilitated to have the option of taking any other second language examination based on their choice subject to fulfilling criteria.

3.3. Language and Culture Studies Certificate Examinations

- 3.3.1. Language and Culture Studies Certificate Examination, which in short may be termed as LCSC (Class X) and LCSC (Class XII) examination, shall be referred to the examinations conducted by BCSEA for the registered candidates from the affiliated Schools/Institutes for a two-year Language and Culture Studies course subject to fulfilling admission criteria.
- 3.3.2. The LCSC (Class X and XII) Examinations and their certification shall be recognized by all government and private functionaries including the Royal University of Bhutan.
- 3.3.3. Except for English language subjects which shall be done in English, LCSC examinations in all subjects offered for the courses, as per the curriculum standards of the REC shall be written in Dzongkha and Chhoedkaed.

3.4. Other National Examinations

Clauses for this section, similar to the provisions above, shall be framed as and when BCSEA receives the requirements to organize and conduct other such examinations.

CHAPTER 4 PREPARATION, CONDUCT AND CERTIFICATION

4.1. Affiliation of Schools

All schools/institutes seeking to register their candidates for BHSEC (Class XII), BCSE (Class X) and LCSC (Class X and XII) examinations shall be required to affiliate themselves with BCSEA as per the affiliation guidelines provided in the Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Public Examinations in Bhutan.

4.2. Registration of Candidates

Schools affiliated to BCSEA shall be required to register their candidates for any of the examinations as per the Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Public Examinations in Bhutan.

4.3. Test Development

Test development for any of the public examinations shall be carried out based on the curriculum, syllabus and mode of assessment prescribed by REC and assessment framework for each of the subjects.

4.4. Conduct of Examinations

- 4.4.1. The BHSEC, BCSE and LCSC examinations shall be conducted at the end of every academic year in schools or institutions affiliated and recognized by BCSEA as examination centres as per Chapter 2 of the Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Public Examinations in Bhutan.
- 4.4.2. The selection of the examination conducting officials is based on the Comprehensive Procedures and Criteria for Selection of Officials for Board Examination Duties.

4.5. Evaluation of Examination Papers

The papers shall be evaluated through a central marking system involving various examination officials carefully selected as per the Comprehensive Procedures and Criteria for Selection of Officials for Board Examination Duties.

4.6. Declaration of Examination Results

- 4.6.1. Examination results shall be processed in full confidentiality, security, accuracy and integrity and declared after due process of finalization and endorsement within the shortest stipulated time.
- 4.6.2. BCSEA shall reserve the right not to declare at all or withhold a part or whole of the results of an individual candidate, school or all schools if

BCSEA is fully convinced of not declaring or withholding.

- 4.6.3. BCSEA shall also have the right not to be influenced by any external factors in making its professional decisions on examination results and certification.

4.7. Award of Statement of Marks and Certificates

- 4.7.1. Pass certificates and statement of marks shall be awarded to the candidates who at one and the same examination obtain a minimum required marks as per the criteria set for the examinations.
- 4.7.2. The Statement of Marks shall be issued to all candidates who appeared at the examination irrespective of their pass or fail results.

4.8. Protection of Integrity, Credibility and Confidentiality of Public Examinations

BCSEA shall promote and protect the integrity, credibility and confidentiality of the conduct and certification of the public examinations by having adequate security system; committed professionals; directly awarding the printing works of question papers and examination documents to a security printer.

CHAPTER 5 OFFENCES, PROSECUTION AND PENALTIES

5.1. Examination Offences

Malpractice, maladministration and dishonesty as provided in the Chapter 3 of the Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Public Examinations in Bhutan, 2015 that threaten the integrity of BCSEA examinations are referred to as examination offences.

5.2. Punishment for offences under this policy

Any examination offence committed shall be dealt as per Chapter 3 of the Rules and Regulations for the Conduct of Public Examinations in Bhutan, 2015 and trial-able summarily in the court of law and any person who is convicted of such an offence shall be liable to a legal punishment based on the degree of offence and penalty prescribed by the Penal Code of Bhutan.

5.3. Procedure for Dealing with Examination Offences and Final Decision

- 5.3.1. All cases of offences that are administrative in nature shall be dealt with and appropriate actions taken by BCSEA Sub-Committee of Malpractice (SCoM) and Committee of Malpractice (CoM) as per the standard procedure.
- 5.3.2. All cases of offences that are legal and criminal in nature shall be referred to the Royal Bhutan Police and relevant authorities for further investigations and prosecutions as per the Penal Code of Bhutan.

5.4. Prosecution only with consent of Secretary,

No prosecution under this policy shall be entered in respect of an offence under this policy except with the written sanction of the Secretary.

5.5. Powers of the Secretary with regard to disciplinary control

The Secretary shall have the power or delegate the power to the Controller:

- 5.5.1. to set out the conditions, rules, and restrictions to which persons who offer themselves as candidates for public examinations shall be subject;
- 5.5.2. of disciplinary control, in his/her absolute discretion, over examiners, invigilators, candidates and all persons engaged by him/ her for the purpose of the conduct of public examinations at any stage;
- 5.5.3. to impose, in his/her absolute discretion, after such inquiry as may be made in that behalf, any restrictions or disabilities in regard to sitting for

public examinations by candidates or to cancel or impound any certificates issued to any candidate, where such candidate has violated any rule, condition or restriction referred to in paragraph (1) or been convicted of an offence under this policy or any regulation made thereunder.

5.6. Regulations

- 5.6.1. The BCSEA shall frame and implement appropriate regulations and frameworks for the purpose of carrying out or giving effect to the principles and provisions of this policy.
- 5.6.2. In particular and without prejudice to the generality of the powers conferred, BCSEA shall make regulations for or in respect of any of the following matters:
 - 5.6.2.1. *all matters in respect of which regulations are required or authorized to be made;*
 - 5.6.2.2. *the nature and scope of public examinations and the certificates, duplicates of such certificates or awards, which may be given to successful candidates;*
 - 5.6.2.3. *the criteria and procedures for appointment, the duties and emoluments of examination conducting officials and the payment and other conditions subject to which officials may be appointed;*
 - 5.6.2.4. *all matters relating to the standard of public examinations and the mode of conduct of such examinations;*
 - 5.6.2.5. *the constitution, powers, duties and functions of -*
 - the School Examinations Division;
 - the BCSEA Committee of Malpractice; and
 - any other committee which the BCSEA may set up in relation to any specified public examination or group of public examinations.
- 5.6.3. This policy or any regulation made under this policy shall have effect from the time the policy is approved by the Government and notification of such approval is published or announced in the national media.

CHAPTER 6 REFERENCES

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4. Final Examination Policy Guidance, Department for Education and National College for Teaching and Leadership UK, 2014.
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