

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**Updated: 10 April, 2017**

### **The Jesuits denied the possibility of joining DSS years ago, why have you changed your mind?**

When the Jesuits studied DSS back in 2007, we decided against joining it because based on the small number of examples available then, we had concerns that the school might exclude students from less well-off families. The elitist perception had prevented us from further exploring possibilities for the school. In fact some of our stakeholders and members of the public have reservations about the proposal of joining DSS now due to similar popular impressions or even misconceptions as we had then that all DSS schools are the same.

As Wah Yan College Hong Kong (WYHK) is approaching its centenary, The Jesuit Education Board (JEB) commissioned a Taskforce in September 2015, consisting of 6 teachers, 2 parents, 2 alumni and the Principal, to explore the future development of the school.

After one and a half years, JEB reviewed the options analysed by the Taskforce and made the decision to proceed with formal consultation on the possibility of joining the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS).

Through the research and analysis, JEB noted that times have changed and WYHK is facing some unique challenges. The time is ripe for the school to seriously consider the possibility of joining DSS, which can offer optimal solutions to make Jesuit education available to students from a greater variety of districts and socioeconomic backgrounds. It can also address challenges of learner diversity that are made more serious as a result of admission constraints, provide a sustainable learning environment for the school to continue and further enhance the Jesuit approach to whole-person development, nurture men for and with others inspired towards pursuit of

human excellence (compassion, conscience, competence, commitment), and improve staffing and school facilities.

**What is the socioeconomic background of students of WYHK, which is currently run under the Aided Mode?**

In the year 2015/16, less than 1% of our students came from families receiving Comprehensive Social Security Assistance and only 4% of the students were entitled to full grant under the School Textbook Assistance Scheme.

A survey on students' family income in 2016 also showed that 86% of our students came from families above the Hong Kong median household income of \$25,000.

This raises the concern that the constraints of the Aided System placed on our admission policy have limited us from reaching out to more less well-off groups and districts in our F.1 admission. For more details, please refer to the question "Doesn't the DSS model contradict the principle of 'Education for all'?"

(We understand that some people are still skeptical about our intention to admit more less-well-off students. For this, please refer to the questions: "How much school fee will you charge? Will charging a school fee deny less well-off students the chance to study at WYHK?" and "How will you prevent the school from becoming one exclusively for the rich and privileged?")

**Besides WYHK turning DSS, what other options did the Exploration Taskforce study? Are these other options now being ruled out?**

The other options studied are:

- (a) Stay as an aided school and continue the feeder arrangement with PUWY;
- (b) Stay as an aided school but terminate the feeder arrangement with PUWY.

JEB decided that the school should go further and wider to consult on WYHK turning DSS. The Taskforce Report noted that one of the benefits of WYHK turning DSS is its flexibility to continue with our relationship with PUWY in a way that can avoid the hard choice between (a) and (b). However, JEB has not ruled out these other options, especially if WYHK turning DSS is found to be infeasible.

### **How will consultation be done?**

The exploration started when JEB appointed an Exploration Taskforce in September 2015 to analyse how the school can better implement the JEB education vision.

After about one and a half years, JEB made a decision to proceed with consultation on 25 January 2017.

We have started to meet with and collect input from the core members of stakeholder groups in March. We will also contact EDB to clarify on some fine points on joining and running DSS.

We will start formal consultation in the latter half of April. We expect the process to take more than half a year during which we will arrange public forums with stakeholder groups to discuss the consultation paper which will be available before the consultation forums.

We will draft the proposal based on feedbacks received on the consultation paper for a second round of consultation. After consultation, we plan to conduct surveys of our teachers and staff, students, alumni and parents as well as those stakeholder groups requested by the EDB, such as PUAWYSPS parents.

During the consultation period, we encourage our stakeholders to send their comments and questions to us via email ([wylk-dss@wahyan.edu.hk](mailto:wylk-dss@wahyan.edu.hk)) or post. We will incorporate the questions we have collected through the different platforms into this FAQ document from time to time.

**Does Father Deignan's statement on February 11 mean that JEB has already made a decision to join DSS?**

Fr Deignan's statement on February 11 explains his current thinking towards DSS after seeing the reference both internally and externally to the remarks he made when he was WYHK's Supervisor. The letter is NOT about his decision of WYHK going DSS. What he has expressed is his favorable disposition towards WYHK consulting for DSS.

We will start formal consultation in the latter half of April. Consultation being a consultation, the decision has not been made. We welcome stakeholders to express their views.

**How will the decision be made? Do you have a timeline?**

It had taken JEB one and a half years to decide on proceeding with consultation. Starting from the latter half of April, we will spend more than half a year to conduct two rounds of consultation.

The proposal and a consultation report will be presented to JEB for a decision on whether to submit a DSS application to EDB or not. The proposal should have incorporated inputs and addressed concerns from our stakeholders. If JEB decides to submit an application, it will be for EDB to approve within 6 months.

We do not have a definite timeline. We will take as long as it requires for consultation to ensure we have adequately listened to stakeholders' inputs and addressed their concerns.

**How much school fee will you charge? Will charging a school fee deny less well-off students the chance to study at WYHK?**

The school fee level has to be determined after careful consideration of a range of factors. We are now looking at no more than \$20,000. Actually, no matter which level of school fee we charge, no students will be prevented from studying at WYHK solely because his family cannot afford his school fee

as we shall budget sufficient financial support for the needy. But this is not all. We also want to make sure that the less well-off will not be deterred from applying in the first place, fearing that it is a school solely for the rich and privileged – an image which does not represent our true nature. A clearly low school fee as compared to schools of similar standing will help us send out the right signal to potential applicants and avoid the said image.

So we want the fee level to be able to balance the need to attract applications from the less well-off on the one hand and financial viability and stability on the other. We are mindful that the unique whole-person approach of the Jesuits will require more personal care, and therefore more resources. There are also other areas of the school that need additional resources. A sustainable funding model will provide teachers, staff, parents and alumni with confidence in the long term stable development of the school.

During consultation, we will share 2-3 scenarios calculating how the DSS model will differ for the different annual school fees we may charge.

### **How can you be financially viable with a significantly lower fee compared to most other DSS schools?**

We need to plan our resources with clear priorities on what we find most important and where we should spend our money.

As long as we admit enough students, we should be financially stronger in the future. However, while we need to spend more on teaching & learning, personal care and other aspects of the school to fulfill the Jesuit vision of education, we will also be financially prudent. We do not aim to provide a lavish and luxurious environment for our students. In fact, we think that ‘over provision’ may be counter-productive in our effort to nurture tough young men who know the true meaning of humility, appreciation and gratitude.

### **How do you prevent the school from becoming a commercial organisation?**

The Jesuit vision and school mission will continue to define the core principles of our approach of 'Men for and with Others' and whole-person development.

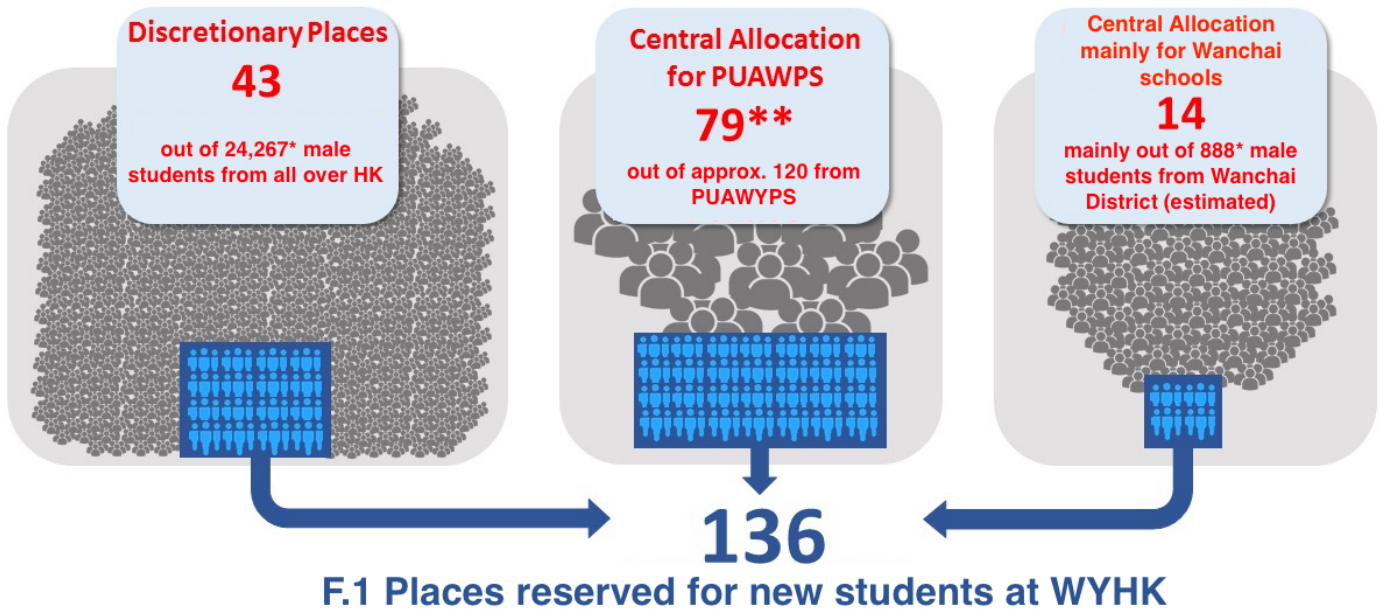
We will continue to promote to the community and primary schools in Hong Kong Jesuit values, our fine heritage and unique approach to education, with the aim of letting them know the kind of school they are applying for.

Students and parents would rather we do that than treat them as 'customers'.

### **Doesn't the DSS model contradict the principle of 'Education for all'?**

The current admission system at WYHK under the aided system is actually far from the ideal of 'Education for all'. It puts applicants into three allotments – Central Allocation places for PUAWYPS, Central Allocation for non-PUAWYPS and Discretionary Places. Students in each of these allotments differ greatly in their chance of being admitted – “three different queues with different lengths”. It is far from offering equal opportunities to all, the essence of 'Education for all'.

## How F.1 places at WYHK Are Currently Being Allocated



\* Student Enrolment Statistics, 2015/16. Hong Kong, HK: Education Bureau

\*\*Number of places for Net Band 1 & 2 students. Unfilled quotas will be added to the rest of central allocation places.

On the contrary, students will enjoy more equal opportunities if the flexibility of the DSS model can be used to reduce or eliminate some of the constraints of the current admission system.

### How will you prevent the school from becoming one exclusively for the rich and privileged?

With flexibility of the DSS, we can actually reduce or eliminate some of the constraints of the current system which has resulted in rather unequal chances of admission from different categories of applicants. (Please refer to the Question “Doesn’t the DSS model contradict the principle of ‘Education for all’?”)

We are looking at no more than \$20,000 of school fee per year. Actually, no matter which level of school fee we charge, no students will be prevented from studying at WYHK solely because his family cannot afford his school fee as we shall budget sufficient financial support for the needy. But this is not

all. We also want to make sure that the less well-off will not be deterred from applying in the first place, fearing that it is a school solely for the rich and privileged. A clearly low school fee as compared to schools of similar standing will help us send out the right signal – a warm invitation – to potential applicants, including less well-off students.

But even with these measures, we understand that some people will still be skeptical about our intention to admit more less-off students. To encourage students from different districts and social economic backgrounds to apply, we plan to organize information sessions in different districts/primary schools. We shall invite primary school principals to recommend their students to us. We will clearly explain the availability of financial support and the inclusive, respectful school environment so that no interested student is deterred due to misunderstanding about our model of DSS. Applicants will be able to estimate the financial assistance they will have and/or the actual school fee they need to pay through an online calculator even before they decide to apply.

The government requires DSS schools to allocate 10% of the school fee income for fee remission for the needy. WYHK plans to lock an additional percentage (e.g. additional 15%) as funding for the needy. This will also subsidise extra-curricular activities and learning-related assistance, e.g. purchase of reference books and personal computers.

All these are financial support, not scholarships. They will be granted on a need basis instead of as recognition of outstanding academic performance. As long as the financial status of a grantee remains unchanged, he will be entitled to such financial support throughout the six years he is at WYHK.

We understand that there are concerns that the poor may feel inferior and the rich may feel conceited. However, dealing with these (perhaps natural yet) totally unwarranted attitudes are exactly why we are here – to educate and nurture students with the right mindsets and values – humility, gratitude, respect, self-confidence, brotherhood, unity in diversity, etc.



### **Will WYHK "delink" with PUAWYPS?**

PUAWYPS is our important partner though the two schools are run by different sponsoring bodies. Together, we have nurtured numerous students with Jesuit values, making them better persons for a better Hong Kong.

If WYHK finally decides to submit a DSS application and it gets approved by EDB, for PUAWYPS students who are already studying in as well as those having applied for admission to PUAWYPS at the time of announcement of DSS approval, their chance for being admitted to WYHK will not be affected. This will imply a transitional period of 6-7 years.

As for the admission arrangement after this transitional period, further discussions with PUAWYPS will be required. WYHK's initial intention is that the two schools will continue to maintain a special relationship and that at least a certain number of PUAWYPS graduates can continue their studies at WYHK. WYHK will discuss the details with PUAWYPS.

This has been our initial intention before we got the news that PUAWYPS is consulting on switching to DSS. As for how PUAWYPS's DSS bid will affect the said relationship, we will need to have more details and further analysis before commenting.

### **How will DSS affect Wah Yan One Family Foundation (WYOFF) and the use of its donation on WYHK?**

WYOFF is a party we will consult. The objective of WYOFF is to assist both Wah Yah schools in bringing quality education to Wahyanites. According to a statement from WYOFF, the Foundation will continue its commitment and no alumnus has informed them that they will discontinue their support if WYHK joins DSS.

WYOFF has confidence that Jesuit education under the supervision of the school management will continue to nurture the future generations of Wahyanites.

**Will existing WYHK students be affected? Will they need to pay the school fee once the school joins DSS?**

There will be a transitional period for our DSS implementation. WYHK students who are already studying in as well as those having applied for admission to WYHK at the time of announcement of DSS approval will not be required to pay the school fee.