

COS 2019

Supporting Our Students Through the Years — Evolution of Streaming in Secondary Schools

Streaming was introduced in 1980 to help students learn at their own pace. This has evolved into Subject-Based Banding (SBB), to meet students' learning needs.



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

What did students experience?

1981

A Sec 1 student, based on his/her PSLE results, would be streamed into 3 courses:

- Special Course
- Express Course
- Normal Course



1994

The Normal course was differentiated into Normal (Academic) [N(A)] and Normal (Technical) [N(T)] courses.



Why did this take place?

In the 70s, a large number of students were having difficulty finishing primary school and dropping out. Streaming was introduced to cater to the different learning paces of students. This reduced the drop-out rate significantly.

The N(T) course allowed 15-20% of the cohort, who had previously dropped out of formal education after primary school, to progress to secondary school and benefit from 10 years of formal education.

1995

Students in the Express course could now take Higher Mother Tongue Language (HMTL) as a subject, and the Special course was merged with the Express course.



This gave more students the option to study MTL at higher levels, if they demonstrated the ability to do so.

2002 - 2006

In 2002, students in the upper secondary N(A) course were allowed to sit for 1 or 2 subjects at a higher level at the national examinations. In 2006, the same flexibility was extended to students in the upper secondary N(T) course. This limit was altered to 3 in 2009.



This recognised that students in different streams could have subject-specific strengths, and be given greater flexibility to take subjects at more demanding levels, should they wish to do so.

2014

Subject-based banding in secondary schools, SBB(Sec) was prototyped — Sec 1 and 2 students in the N(A) and N(T) courses could take English, MTL, Mathematics and Science at a more demanding level. SBB(Sec) was rolled out to secondary schools in 2018.



This allowed students more flexibility in their learning and better developed their strengths and interests from lower secondary onwards.

What will students experience?

2020 - 2023

Secondary students in Full SBB pilot schools may benefit from:

- being able to study the Humanities at a more demanding level from Sec 2.
- being a part of new form class systems, where students are not necessarily grouped according to Express, N(A), N(T) courses.



2021 - 2023

Schools will progressively adopt aspects of Full SBB.



FULL SBB IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

2024

From this point, Sec 1 students will be able to study subjects at three levels, G1/G2/G3 (G stands for General). Express, N(A) and N(T) labels will be removed.



Why is this taking place?

With encouraging results from students taking SBB(Sec) in the 2017 and 2018 O- and N-Level exams, as well as positive feedback from students, parents and teachers, MOE has now decided to expand SBB(Sec) to Full SBB.

Full SBB will give greater flexibility to the general secondary education system, with students studying different subjects at different levels. This way, our secondary education system can continue to adapt to students' learning needs, while mitigating the labelling and stigmatisation that is associated with streaming.

2024

Students will continue to be posted to secondary schools using 3 PSLE scoring bands. This is to ensure that when students enter Sec 1, they start out by taking subjects at a level suited to their pace of learning.



PSLE still serves as a useful gauge of the subject levels that each student is most suited for at the beginning of Sec 1. Thereafter, they can take subjects at a more demanding level, depending on their abilities.

2027

At the end of secondary school, students will sit for the common national examination and receive a new national certification with subjects at G1/G2/G3 levels. Students will use the new certification in the following year to enter JC, Polytechnic or ITE in 2028.



The common national examination better recognises the unique strengths and abilities of each student. A revised admissions framework will also provide greater support to allow our students to enter a post-secondary course that can best develop their aptitudes and passions.