Share of Sec 3 students taking eight or more subjects falls to 14% as JC L1R4 nears

Description

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The share of Secondary 3 students taking eight or more subjects at G3 level has fallen from **34 per cent** in 2025 to **14 per cent** this year, the Ministry of Education (MOE) said on Sunday (27 September) in response to media queries.

This yearâ??s Sec 3 cohort is the first that will apply to junior colleges under the new L1R4 score. From the 2028 admission exercise, JC eligibility is an L1R4 gross aggregate of **16 or better across five G3 subjects**, replacing the L1R5 cut-off of 20 across six.

Secondary school students in a science lesson. MOE says 14 per cent of Sec 3 students take eight or more G3 subjects in 2026. Photo: Ministry of Education

The fall is 20 percentage points in a single year. Roughly one Sec 3 student in seven now carries eight or more G3 subjects, down from about one in three.

The share taking seven subjects rose from 54 per cent to 57 per cent. The share taking six or fewer more than doubled, from 12 per cent to 29 per cent, and one in five of those taking six or fewer G3 subjects also takes at least one subject at G2 or G1.

In a parliamentary reply on 4 August, Education Minister Desmond Lee said the change is meant to give students â??more autonomy to recalibrate their curriculum loadâ?•, with the freed-up time going to

their holistic development.

The breadth rule stays. L1R4 still requires two languages and three subjects from the mathematics or science and humanities groups, including Social Studies paired with Geography, History or Literature. G3 English needs A1 to C6, one mathematics subject needs D7 or better, and a mother tongue language still needs a qualifying grade. The cap on JC bonus points drops from four to three.

Secondary school students in a design and technology workshop. From 2028, JC admission counts five G3 subjects instead of six. Photo: Ministry of Education

Enrolment in geography, physics and principles of accounts has dipped in the first cohort. MOE said students still meet those disciplines elsewhere in the curriculum, such as physics through combined

science, and that principles of accounts remains a popular elective.

If your child is in Sec 4 this year, L1R4 does not apply: this yearâ??s Sec 4 students sit the GCE O-Level examinations in 2026 and apply under L1R5.

MOE said the rise in students taking six or fewer subjects may also reflect revised polytechnic admission criteria for 2028, which count four G3 subjects and one subject that can be taken at G2, instead of five G3 subjects.

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Author
rachelng

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