

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HONG KONG PEOPLE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT TAKING COURSES  
TO GET AHEAD AT WORK OR IN LIFE: SURVEY FINDINGS**

***Language and business courses are most popular as HK Government promotes new framework helping employers to recognise qualifications***

***Wall Street Institute announces new study with University of Cambridge aligning courses with the Common European Framework so students can better predict their BULATS and IELTS examination results***

***Hong Kong, 9 March 2005*** - Hong Kong people are enthusiastic about taking courses to get ahead at work or in life, according to the latest research from Wall Street Institute, the largest international specialist English language education organisation in the world.

Some 22% of people aged 15-64 plan to enrol in a course in the next year, the survey conducted by market researchers Synovate for Wall Street Institute shows. Languages and business-related lessons are the most popular types of courses favoured by Hong Kong people of working age, ahead of computing and practical or leisure-related courses. The most popular languages are English, Mandarin and Japanese. The data suggests that English is a priority for Hong Kong people wanting to take a course.

The groundbreaking research on lifelong learning is being released as the Hong Kong Government prepares to introduce a programme to promote the role of continuing education in the workplace and industry. The Qualifications Framework being introduced in 2006 and 2007 will ensure qualifications obtained by employees taking courses are standardized, so they can be easily recognized by employers. It is designed to enable employers to recruit or promote staff with the right skills and knowledge.

At the same time, Wall Street Institute is announcing a new study in collaboration with University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations that will align Wall Street Institute's assessment levels and course levels with the Common European Framework<sup>1</sup> (CEF). The study aligns Wall Street Institute's learning and assessment systems with the reference scale of the HK Workplace English Benchmarks and the HK Government's Qualifications Framework. For English language learners in Hong Kong, this is an important development because learners can now chart their English language levels against a widely recognized reference standard. Learners may also project probable results in many international English examinations including IELTS and BULATS.

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<sup>1</sup> Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

“We are undertaking a certification process of our teaching and assessment methods which, if successful, will mean we are the first international English learning centre to be aligned with the Common European Framework,” said Peter Forsythe, Chairman of Wall Street Institute Hong Kong.

“This framework is very important in Hong Kong as a number of crucial English language examinations and benchmarks are pegged to it. These exams can affect the future of Hong Kong students wanting to study overseas or employees who want to study English to get ahead at work,” said Wall Street Institute Academic Director Dr Tony Lee.

Commenting on the initiative, Dr Mike Milanovic, CEO, University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations said, “We are delighted to announce that Cambridge ESOL is offering its support to Wall Street Institute (WSI) in its initiative to align WSI courses to the internationally recognized standards of the Common European Framework (CEF). Cambridge ESOL's BULATS English Test is used to provide a reliable and objective measurement of English competency and students taking WSI courses would benefit greatly when WSI's levels were officially aligned with CEF standards. We believe this proposal, the viability of which will be assessed by an initial study, is in the interest of language learners and teachers. We applaud WSI for this initiative and the commitment to professionalism it represents.”

“The popularity of continuing education among Hong Kong people demonstrated by our survey indicates the Government’s Qualifications Framework is well timed to meet the needs of employees seeking to enhance their skill sets and receive recognition for their efforts,” said Dr. Lee.

Among the key findings of the Synovate survey commissioned by Wall Street Institute which examined the views of Hong Kong people towards courses are:

- About one-fifth (22%) of working age Hong Kong people plan to take a course in the next year. Among those, 45%, which represents approximately half a million potential students, when asked if they intended to study English, responded positively
- 26% want to study languages other than English, with 12% planning to study Mandarin and 8% intending to learn Japanese. (These respondents were asked whether they were intending to take courses other than English in the next 12 months)
- Business related courses were also quite popular with 23% of those intending to take a course opting for choices such as accounting (6%), management (4%), business administration (2%) and law (1%)
- Computer related courses held appeal as well, with 14% intending to attend

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Wall Street Institute Hong Kong Chairman Peter Forsythe said, “Lifelong learning is viewed as important by Hong Kong people. Now, in our increasingly competitive job market and tougher economic environment, people need to constantly upgrade their skills if they are to get ahead. This is particularly the case in Hong Kong where our economy is wide open to international competition. But it’s not just about getting ahead at work these days – a large number of people also like to take on further education for self improvement purposes.”

Dr Tony Lee said, “With the introduction of the Government’s new Qualification Framework, the Hong Kong Workplace English Benchmarks (HKWEB) are likely to be used to indicate levels of English language proficiency. Since these benchmarks are linked to the Common European Framework which Wall Street Institute is seeking to align with, the application of the Qualification Framework to Wall Street Institute will be seamless, already placing over 35,000 Wall Street Institute students on a Government recognised lifelong learning pathway to successfully achieving goals in business, career and their personal lives.”

The Qualification Framework consists of a seven-level cross-sector framework with an associated quality assurance mechanism, enabling individuals to draw up their own roadmaps to facilitate lifelong learning. It also provides precise information on progression pathways, as well as the quality and standard of training courses and providers. It aims to clearly define the standards of different qualifications, ensure their quality and indicate the articulation ladders between different levels of qualifications. Phase one of the launch, takes places in 2006 with the full launch in 2007.

The survey results, the new Qualification Framework for Hong Kong and its certification process were discussed at a ceremony to celebrate the opening of a new Wall Street Institute learning centre in the heart of Hong Kong: Causeway Bay. The opening marks Wall Street Institute’s expansion in Hong Kong and is a result of people’s growing demand to improve upon their standard of English in order to achieve more in life.

Wall Street Institute last year unveiled a groundbreaking survey benchmarking confidence and proficiency in using English across Asia. It showed English confidence and proficiency in Hong Kong has deteriorated so badly that it ranks equal or worse than mainland China and Thailand on a number of indicators and lags way behind key regional competitor Singapore. The 2006 results of the survey – the first to compare usage of the language across Asia - will be released later this year.

Committed to opening the door to success for Hong Kong people, Wall Street Institute will organize an innovative Open Day on March 11 (Saturday) at the new Causeway Bay centre to demonstrate the extensive Wall Street Institute English learning system which offers pathways to successful careers and personal lives.

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The name, Wall Street Institute implies “invest in your own future” similar to investing in Wall Street, in which you expect a return. Since its establishment in 1972, Wall Street Institute has grown into the largest specialist English education organisation in the world and currently operates more than 350 centres in 25 countries worldwide. It offers Hong Kong people the most effective English language instruction available using innovation, interactivity and the most sophisticated technology. Since WSI launched in Hong Kong six years ago, the company has opened 7 centres in key business and commercial areas and has already established itself as the market leader in adult English language education. Today, Wall Street Institute has already helped more than 35,000 Hong Kong people learn English successfully so that they can achieve goals in business, career and their personal life. WSI’s international headquarters is in Baltimore, Maryland in the United States; its regional headquarters is in Barcelona, Spain.

WSI Hong Kong website: [www.wsi.edu.hk](http://www.wsi.edu.hk)

WSI International website: [www.wallstreetinstitute.com](http://www.wallstreetinstitute.com)

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