

**Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination
Practice Paper
English Language**

Report on Student Performance

Paper 1

Paper 1 tests candidate's reading skills, and consists of three parts: Part A, Part B1 and Part B2. Candidates have 1.5 hours to complete Part A, which is compulsory, and either Part B1 (consisting of items with a level of difficulty that is easier than Part A) or Part B2 (consisting of items with a level of difficulty that is higher than Part A). The weighting for Part A and Part B is 50% per part.

The item types used in Paper 1 included the use of multiple-choice items, True/False/Not Given statements, sequencing, matching, gap-filling, short answer, open-ended questions and a summary cloze.

Summary of results

A statistical analysis of Paper 1 was carried out based on a pilot study where 2,839 students attempted Part A, 1,431 students attempted Part B1 and 1,419 students attempted Part B2. The sample was made up of students from 20 different schools across Hong Kong. The mean scores for individual items can be found in the Appendix for Paper 1 of this report.

The overall results for Paper 1 can be seen in Table 1 below:

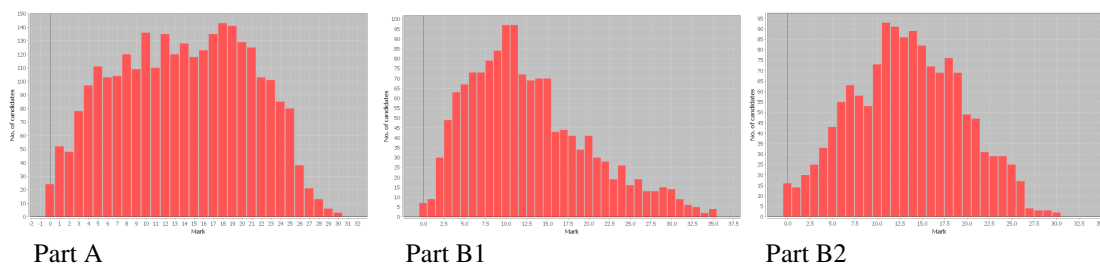
Table 1: Paper 1 overall results

Part	Full Mark	Mean (%)	SD (%)*	Reliability*
A	40	47.61	22.34	0.90
B1	43	35.37	20.10	0.89
B2	46	41.92	18.04	0.86

* SD and Reliability figures are calculated for OSM marked items only.

Paper 1 was successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates, spread of scores across the mark range and in its own internal reliability. Figure 1 shows the score distribution for Parts A, B1 and B2 for items marked onscreen (all items except for multiple-choice items).

Figure 1: Paper 1 score distribution (for OSM marked questions)



Part A

Part A comprised one reading passage about whether animals in zoos/amusement parks promote social benefits, such as education and conservation, or whether such facilities are unethical. Both sides of the argument were presented through the viewpoint of two writers. The items in this part of the paper were pitched at Levels 2-5 of the HKDSE Reading Descriptors.

A high proportion of candidates scored marks for items which required scanning for explicitly stated information, either by copying out relevant information from the text (Q.4) or by answering a True, False, Not Given type question (Q.6).

For textual referencing, almost half the number of candidates were able to correctly identify a simple reference (Q.10). However, for less explicit textual references, only one-third of candidates were able to answer correctly (Q.19), and for items which required some interpretation before identifying the reference e.g. 'The ambassadors refers to..' (Q.12), only a very small portion of candidates were able to answer the item correctly.

For Part A, there were a total of three open-ended questions (Q.8, Q.22 and Q.23) where candidates had to formulate their own response based on information in the text. For question 8, worth 1 mark, about two-thirds of candidates were able to communicate their views on whether they agreed with a statement extracted from the reading passage. For questions 22 and 23, worth two marks each, candidates were expected to provide two examples/ideas from the text to support their opinion. However, less than 25% of candidates were able to earn full marks for these items.

For question 21, candidates were required to complete a gap-filling cloze based on ideas presented by the second writer. Candidates had to scan four paragraphs to find an appropriate word that could be inserted into a separate article summarizing some of the same ideas. To receive full marks for this task, answers were required to have correct spelling and grammar. The average mean score for this cloze exercise was 25%.

Part B1

There were three reading texts for Part B1: one text was a newspaper article about a pit bull attack on two dogs; the other two texts were taken from a restaurant guide to waste reduction and recycling.

On the whole, the majority of candidates attempting Part B1 found this part to be quite challenging. The topic of the first text (a pit bull attack) and complexity of language in the second and third texts may have contributed to the lower-than-expected mean score, despite the relatively shorter length of the texts. The items in this part of the paper were pitched at Levels 1-4 of the HKDSE Reading Descriptors.

Around half of the candidates were able to answer True, False, Not Given statements (Q.35) correctly. For sequencing events (Q.40) or matching paragraphs to a set of sub-headings (Q.41, Q.50), about one-third of candidates were able to answer these questions correctly.

For intertextual referencing, almost half the candidates were able to identify a reference within the same sentence (Q.32). However, when making less straight-forward references, only a small percentage of candidates were able to answer the question correctly (Q.43).

Candidates' performance on items which tested their ability to infer the meaning of words within the context of the passage varied. When asked to find a word in the passage that meant the same as 'save' and 'shouted' about two-thirds of candidates were able to match them to 'rescue' and 'yelled' respectively. However, when asked to find a word in the passage that meant the same as 'on the mend', a very small percentage of candidates were able to match it with 'recovering'.

There was one open-ended question (Q.29) for this part. Candidates had to use their own language to express their answer, as the information was not directly mentioned in the text. About a quarter of the candidates were able to provide a correct answer.

Part B2

Part B2 comprised two texts: one was a newspaper article about recyclers who collect rubbish off the streets in Shanghai; the second text was a short excerpt from the novel, 'The Call of the Wild', by Jack London. The excerpt depicts a husky dog's encounter with a wolf in the arctic. The items in this part of the paper were pitched at Levels 3-5 of the HKDSE Reading Descriptors.

More than half the candidates were able to complete a table about information for three people interviewed in the article, which included identifying their jobs and matching their opinions to given statements. Other items which almost half of the candidates were able to score correctly involved identify main ideas from the text from the text (Q.64, Q.65) and identifying unfamiliar words in context (Q.57, Q.74).

For items which tested candidates' ability to explain words with figurative meaning, a small number of candidates were able to explain the meaning of 'rubbish entrepreneurs' (Q.65bi), but almost none could explain the idea of a 'rubbish brigade' (Q.65bii), a relatively more abstract concept.

Textual referencing questions which required an understanding of the wider context of the passage proved to be challenging for a majority of candidates (Q.58, Q.60 and Q.73). For example, in question 73, 'What is Buck's determination?', candidates would have had to first process the actions of Buck in the two previous paragraphs before paraphrasing the idea of 'befriending the wolf'.

For question 59 which tested irony, almost half the candidates were able to identify the World Expo and of green cities had something to do with the irony in paragraph 7, which earned them one out of two. However, only a very small percentage of students were able to link that idea up to the recyclers being forced to leave town, which would have given them full marks.

Less than 25% of candidates were able to complete the final three short answer questions (Q.75, Q.76, Q.77) on the last page of Part B2. It is likely many candidates ran out of time and were unable to finish the paper.

Recommendations

Candidates are advised to decide, before the day of the exam, which Part B (Part B1 or Part B2) they will attempt during the live examination as there will be no extra time given to candidates to study the question papers before the start of the examination. They should ask their teacher for advice in choosing which part would be more appropriate for their ability level.

Candidates should look at the reading descriptors and samples of performance in the SRR information package and from the briefing session and compare them to their own work to see if it is comparable to the Level 5 samples. If not, it may be better for them to attempt Part B1. Candidates can also attempt both Parts B1 and B2 of the Practice Papers, and ask their teacher to help them use the conversion factor to compare which of the two scores on the B2 scale is higher.

Items in Part B1 are pitched at Levels 1-4 of HKDSE Reading Descriptors and Levels 3-5 for Part B2. Candidates taking Part B2 can expect to demonstrate a higher level of language proficiency in their reading skills. They may be required to show an understanding of the main theme of a text, the relationship of ideas across paragraphs, the ability to make inferences from implicit ideas and information, to deduce the meaning of words in unfamiliar contexts and to evaluate the views, attitudes and arguments presented in a text. Candidates taking Part B1 will be tested on their ability to identify main ideas and specific information, make simple inferences, recognize basic stylistic features of a text, match a heading to a corresponding paragraph, to number a set of the events in chronological order.

For short answer and open-ended questions which require candidates to respond with a lengthy answer (answers that are usually longer than one sentence), answers will not be judged on spelling or grammatical accuracy, but on whether the message has been communicated clearly and appropriately. If the meaning is clear enough to understand and answers the questions in an acceptable way according to the marking scheme, despite there being grammatical or spelling errors, marks will be awarded. If the problems with language are such that the meaning cannot be deciphered, then no marks will be given.

Regardless of whether a candidate chooses Part B1 or B2, they should evenly divide their time in completing Part A and Part B and to answer as many questions as possible correctly. However, anyone attempting to complete Part B1 should keep in mind that there is a ceiling set at a Level 4 when grading the score for this component.

Paper 1 Appendix:

Mean percentage correct for Part A (Compulsory section)

Total no. of students: 2,839

Question	Mean
Q1	67%
Q2	31%
Q3	71%
Q4a	52%
Q4b	85%
Q4c	79%
Q5	60%
Q6a	69%
Q6b	81%
Q6c	71%
Q7	62%
Q8	66%
Q9	58%
Q10	55%
Q11a.i.	73%
Q11a.ii.	67%
Q11b	61%
Q12	7%
Q13	57%
Q14	59%
Q15a	55%
Q15b	29%
Q16	51%
Q17a	67%
Q17b	70%
Q18	53%
Q19	34%
Q20	33%
Q21a	43%
Q21b	19%
Q21c	5%
Q21d	35%
Q21e	29%
Q21f	14%
Q21g	20%
Q21h	32%
Q22	48%
Q23	36%

Mean percentage correct for Part B1 (Easier section)

Total no. of students: 1,431

Question	Mean
Q24	29%
Q25	47%
Q26	25%
Q27	76%
Q28	38%
Q29	26%
Q30	41%
Q31	22%
Q32	47%
Q33a	62%
Q33b	58%
Q33c	35%
Q34	23%
Q35a	53%
Q35b	69%
Q35c	57%
Q35d	42%
Q35e	43%
Q36	13%
Q37	56%
Q38	20%
Q39	46%
Q40	36%
Q41 (Para 1-2)	33%
Q41 (Para 3-4)	42%
Q41 (Para 7)	27%
Q41 (Para 8)	35%
Q42	34%
Q43	15%
Q44	42%
Q45	16%
Q46a	36%
Q46b	34%
Q46c	35%
Q47	19%
Q48a	11%
Q48b	33%
Q49a	7%
Q49b	5%
Q50 (Tip 5)	39%
Q50 (Tip 6)	41%
Q50 (Tip 7)	30%
Q50 (Tip 8)	30%

Mean percentage correct for Part B2 (More difficult section)

Total no. of students: 1,419

Question	Mean
Q51	60%
Q52	59%
Q53	55%
Q54	55%
Q55	45%
Q56	17%
Q57a	59%
Q57b	53%
Q58a	15%
Q58b	19%
Q59a	43%
Q59b	17%
Q60	17%
Q61	56%
Q62	32%
Q63a	35%
Q63b	15%
Q64a	65%
Q64b	44%
Q65ai	45%
Q65aia	44%
Q65bi	21%
Q65bii	0.85%
Q66(Fu-Job)	88%
Q66(Adam-Job)	84%
Q66(Cai-Job)	55%
Q66(Fu-Opinion)	51%
Q66(Adam-Opinion)	56%
Q66(Cai-Opinion)	48%
Q66(Fu-SB)	67%
Q66(Adam-SB)	65%
Q66(Cai-SB)	58%
Q67	51%
Q68	7%
Q69	61%
Q70	40%
Q71a	48%
Q71b	51%
Q72	56%
Q73	18%
Q74	43%
Q75	22%
Q76	15%
Q77a	23%
Q77b	15%
Q78	34%

Paper 2 Part A

Paper 2 Part A consisted of a short, guided writing task which asked candidates to complete three sections of an information poster. The purpose of the information poster was to promote the school's Annual Walkathon, and to raise money for the charity, *Walk to Build*. Candidates were expected to produce a piece of persuasive writing, of about 200 words, to encourage students and their families to take part in the Walkathon.

Based on 21 as the full mark per marker (as the task is double-marked, which makes the overall total 42), the mean score of Part A was 8.8 (42%), and the standard deviation was 4.5 (21%). Candidates' overall performance was fair. The mean percentage was lower than expected for Part A, which was intended to be the easier question of the two questions attempted by candidates in Paper 2. The marking reliability co-efficient was 0.79, and the third marking rate 11%, which indicated that markers were very consistent in giving scores.

After reviewing a sample of candidates' performances, the following features were used to define task fulfillment and organisation:

- key information presented in the first two sections and a more in depth account for the third section (see supplementary notes in the marking scheme);
- each section would be independent and that information from one section should not be repeated in another section;
- the information in the poster should be informative but concise and persuasive;
- due to the nature of the task, with some paragraphing already given, organization should be scored according to the correct allocation of content under each heading and the use of cohesive ties to link ideas within the paragraph.

Most candidates were able to use the information given in the rubric to complete at least two out of three sections of the information poster. However, some problems were observed:

- some candidates found it difficult to distinguish the content for Sections 1 and 3, i.e. candidates did not understand that 'The work of *Walk to Build*' was referring to the general activities of the charity organization *Walk to Build* and not to its specific involvement in the school's Annual Walkathon;
- some candidates did not know what the word 'route' meant and therefore did not mention it, or wrote information that was relevant for Sections 1 or 3 in Section 2;
- some scripts were written in the form of an essay rather than as a piece of persuasive writing, which showed a lack of awareness of the audience.

General comments

The following comments are organized according to candidates' performance at the Writing Descriptors for Levels 2, 3 and 5.

Level 2

Typical Level 2 scripts generally just about satisfied the task requirements. Candidates included some relevant ideas but without any or much development of those ideas, or gave isolated examples of relevant points, e.g. '*If students and their families take part together, that can improve their relationship*'. Level 2 scripts may show occasional awareness of the audience, e.g. '*...hope you can attend our activity*'. The level of audience awareness, for the most part, was very limited.

Level 2 scripts for language generally used simple sentences which were accurate but mostly copied from the rubric. These scripts may show scattered attempts at more complex sentences, but grammatical errors affected meaning, e.g. '*And (activity) called, 'Walkathon for Walk to Build' and it will held on Sunday, 18 of March 2012...*'

For organization, candidates were generally able to use simple cohesive ties such as connectives and sequencers, e.g. '*because*', '*and*', '*also*'. Candidates who wrote content that was relevant but under the wrong section generally were given a score of 3 or less for organization.

Level 3

Level 3 scripts were able to address the requirements adequately and provide ideas which were totally relevant. Usually, some ideas were developed in detail with occasional examples of creativity or imagination, e.g. '*After the walk, our school won't provide transportation so we have go back home ourselve.*' Level 3 scripts were more likely to maintain the readers' interest and demonstrate some audience awareness.

Level 3 scripts used simple sentences accurately with occasional attempts at more complex sentences. Grammar errors affected meaning, but to a lesser extent as the kind of errors made at this level were more consistent. There were occasional wrong use of word forms, for example, when attempting to use more sophisticated vocabulary, such as *'participates'* instead of *'participants'*, or the wrong preposition used with place names.

Level 3 scripts typically structure their writing through the use of an introduction, e.g. *'In Western China,..'* and a conclusion, e.g. *'After this activity, we expect to build about 4 schools..'* Typically, organization for Level 3 scripts tended to be quite logical within each section, with the use of simple connectives and sequencers, but some information may have been repeated among the sections.

Level 5

The content of Level 5 scripts was typically very extensive and totally relevant. Candidates may have placed the poster into a wider context, e.g. *'This year, to match with out charity organization's partner's work...'*, and provided a lot of relevant ideas which were well developed, e.g. the name of a donating organization, the amount of money donated, additional uses of donations, etc. Examples of creativity and imagination were almost always found, with a strong awareness of the audience and purpose of writing.

Level 5 scripts typically showed a very wide range of accurate sentence structures with a good grasp of more complex structures, e.g. *'Founded in 2006, Walk to Build has...'* Grammar was mostly accurate with only minor slips, e.g. *'with a little bit of challenging tracks'*. Vocabulary was often well chosen, expressing subtleties of meaning, e.g. *'duration'*, *'bumpy road'*, and register, tone and style were entirely appropriate, e.g. *'So what are you waiting for?'*.

Organization was usually characterized by logical development of ideas and strong cohesive ties linking supporting details, e.g. *'Apart from...'*, *'This year...'*, *'yet another'*. These scripts generally have a clear and well planned direction for their writing and the text as a whole is coherent and well structured.

Recommendations

Candidates are recommended to spend sufficient time planning, reviewing and revising their writing before it is considered finalized. They should include some original ideas in their writing and avoid redundancy or repetition of ideas. Candidates are also encouraged to write longer clauses, with subordinators, and a wide variety of vocabulary, appropriate to the text-type and genre. They should carefully read the rubric of the task to ensure they have a clear understanding of the task requirements, and to write with a particular audience in mind so as to write using an appropriate register, tone and style.

Paper 2 Part B

This part comprises eight questions (Q2-9), which are based on the modules in the Elective Part of the third senior secondary English Language curriculum (S4-6). Candidates were required to choose one question and write about 400 words.

A total of 2843 candidates attempted Paper 2 Part B. Their work was assessed according to three domains: Content, Language and Organization. The mean score achieved out of a total score of 21 for each question, as well as the percentage of candidature attempting each question, are provided in the table below.

Question	Topic	Popularity (%)	Mean (out of 21)
2	Drama	7.39	6.93
3	Short Stories	7.35	6.33
4	Poems and Songs	3.55	10.77
5	Popular Culture	6.12	7.29
6	Sports Communication	16.85	11.02
7	Debating	11.75	12.05
8	Workplace Communication	29.97	9.47
9	Social Issues	17.05	10.91

The following is a summary of candidates' general performance in each of the areas of Content, Language and Organization.

Content

Question	Comments
2 (Drama)	Candidates who attempted this question were generally able to do what they were asked, i.e. describe what happened at the play rehearsal. Stronger candidates were able to better address the question by taking into account the role of director they were supposed to play and giving more comprehensive responses on how the actors and actresses performed as well as other technical aspects such as props, lighting and sound. More average work tended to lack such levels of detail, often focusing on more banal mishaps such as the performers' negative attitudes towards rehearsing, their being rude to each other, or their refusal to co-operate. A few candidates did not seem to understand the question and produced irrelevant responses such as what happened to the cast on their way to the rehearsal venue and how drama could help improve one's language proficiency.
3 (Short Stories)	Candidates' work varied in terms of quality of content. There were some fluent, balanced pieces that substantially fulfilled the requirements of the question. Apart from relating what the authors at the Hong Kong Book Fair said about what made a good short story with sound, feasible criteria (e.g. the presentation of a theme or an experience that the reader could identify with, the effective use of technique such as characterization and plot twist), they also explained why the event was so interesting as well as what could be learnt from it. The average answers tended to focus more on the author's perceptions and less on the event's appeal. The yardsticks that weaker candidates cited for gauging the effectiveness of a short story were often flimsy and less convincing, e.g. a good short story has to be funny, it has to be short, it needs to have a beginning, a middle and an end.

4 (Poems and Songs)	The letters to the editor which candidates produced were mostly me... quality. Some made a few relevant points in defending the use of foul language in songs (e.g. it arouses the audience's attention, adds interest to the work, serves as a means to express feelings about political and social problems) but they fell short of bringing greater depth and insight into the discussion by substantiating these ideas with specific examples or details. In arguing for the use of foul language as a means of free expression, one or two candidates undercut their position by recommending that the government should educate the public not to mis-use or over-use foul language. In the work of some weaker candidates, foul language and informal language were treated as synonymous.
5 (Popular Culture)	Quite a number of candidates did not address the question adequately as they seemed to have problem understanding the term 'reality TV show'. They mistook it to mean the same as television show in general and this greatly detracted from the overall effect of their writings. The better candidates demonstrated some awareness of the features of reality TV, made largely considered plans as to what type of show would be appropriate, discussed the rationale behind them and explained how to make the first episode appealing to students.
6 (Sports Communication)	This was a question that elicited a number of effective responses. While the stronger candidates argued with conviction for the need to retain the subject of P.E. in the curriculum by providing a range of valid reasons such as its capacity for enhancing students' physical health, relieving stress, developing team spirit, and building leadership skills and perseverance, the weaker candidates also had some fair points to make about the subject.
7 (Debating)	Overall, candidates clearly presented their stance on whether 'Nuclear Power is the best source of energy for the future', but the majority held back from discussing their perspective in depth. Many chose to argue against the motion by contending that nuclear power is expensive, hazardous and pollutes the environment. Although these were valid points, few efforts were evident to develop them into a convincing argument with appropriate supporting details or examples. Despite their smallness in number, the impressive responses demonstrated a firm grasp of the topic and the critical ability to manipulate details to bear on the question. The outstanding candidates did not only manage to provide solid justifications as to why nuclear power is not the best source of energy for the future, but demonstrated their ability to rebutt possible counter-arguments. For example, in response to the suggestion that nuclear power provides a cleaner alternative to fossil fuels, candidates contended that it nonetheless poses a serious health risk compared to other more eco-friendly options such as wind and solar power.
8 (Workplace Communication)	Candidates were in general able to address the requirements of the question competently. The stronger responses showed familiarity with the topic and offered a variety of suggestions on how to prepare for the job interview (e.g. research the company, prepare possible interview questions and answers, conduct a mock-interview with friends) as well as how to make a good impression during the group interview and steer it to one's advantage (e.g. be confident, respectful and maintain good interaction with other interviewees). Some of the weaker responses, however, overlooked a key aspect of the question, i.e. that the friend is going for a <u>group</u> interview, and thus produced advice that was more general and pertinent to individual job interviews.

9 (Social Issues)	The question allowed candidates ample scope to discuss what they do and do not see as the joys of being a teenager in Hong Kong. The richer responses approached the topic from not only a local point of view (e.g. there are a lot of educational opportunities as well as entertainment and recreational facilities that teenagers in Hong Kong can enjoy) but also a global perspective (e.g. teenagers in Hong Kong can enjoy different freedoms and hold different beliefs as a result of its relative political and social stability). The insubstantial responses, however, consisted of little more than cursory discussion combined with lists of entertainment and leisure activities for young people in Hong Kong. Some also missed the question by discussing the joys of being a teenager in general (as opposed to being a teenager in Hong Kong), the problems confronting young people in the 21 st century, and how they should prepare themselves for employment.
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Language

For most candidates, this was definitely an area where there was considerable room for improvement. A good number of grammatical and stylistic flaws could be found in the majority of scripts, regardless of the question they sought to address. Examples of common errors include:

Tenses

'She thoughted that'; 'They haven't get other interests'; 'Until now, the place is still being ruin', 'There is much radiation that was released because of it', 'Nuclear power is a new power for future. It didn't have harmful gases'

Verb forms and Subject-verb agreement

'I am disagree'; 'Broadcasting reality TV shows is not only improve our understanding of English'; 'You is very nervous', 'The environment are being destroyed', 'All the props was absent'

Pronoun agreement with antecedent

*'As a teenager, it has many joys to share with you'
'...each classmate can choose one lessons to be a PE lesson. The PE teacher can teach any kind of sports, but they need to have a good result'
'Radiation will affect a very big area and it will stay with very long time. It will keep damage our health and environment.
It said that nuclear power is very clean power...'*

Sentence structure and fragment

*'Not only can they apply the skills learnt from PE lessons to daily life, but also enhance their confidence, which is very useful to their personal growth'
'As the hazards of nuclear power and its negative effects, in my opinion, the nuclear power isn't the best source of energy for the future'
'In the film area such as avatar, spiderman, Iron man and Hancock'
'Since a clean and tidy appearance can make you look smarter and brighter'
'After removing PE lessons from the curriculum so students can concentrate more on academic subject'*

Word-choice

'...to give an engraved image to your interviewer'; 'dislodge an impasse'; 'dispose chairs for rehearsal'; 'people...gradually turning into a swarm', 'they...will not be easily frustrated due their adequate and unwavering volition'; '...but we cannot stop the right of other people'

Wrong or missing article

'I am senior form student'; 'He always gets a full marks'; 'a in-depth idea'; 'sport is a entertainment'; 'four times higher than a people who sports regularly'

Spelling

'arguement' (argument); 'assuge' (assuage); 'attatching' (attaching); 'benifical' (beneficial); 'confendience' (confidence); 'destoryed' (destroyed); 'empolyee' (employee); 'experion' (experience); 'furture' (future); 'healt' (health); 'hungury' (hungry); 'losts' (loss); 'neet' (need); 'selp' (help); 'spiking' (speaking); 'sucesful' (successful); 'surprisize' (surprise); 'tack' (talk)

The stronger scripts, however, were marked by a clearer and more effective use of language than the weaker ones. They demonstrated the ability to use a wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence structures with appropriateness and accuracy. The following are a few examples:

'Peter wasn't reliable at all. He gave them the wrong scripts. Later on, I found out that I had two devils when I only needed one, three soldiers when I needed four, and a vampire when I didn't need one at all!'

'I have been looking for ideas ever since the end of Clicker, but unfortunately I haven't gotten one yet but me and my wife, Alice, are about to take a vacation in Bright Falls, where I hope to get my creative juices flowing again and write a new book.'

'Foul language is just a tool and songs are just channels for composers to express their feelings such as anger, discontent and hopelessness.'

'Devastating consequences ascribed to global warming such as sudden changes of climate, rise in sea level, increase in the number of natural disasters, are undoubtedly the last thing we want to see.'

'To start with, you need to be polite in the interview. Put on your signature heart-warming smile to melt the heart of the interviewers.'

Another aspect of language which markers looked out for was whether students could present the appropriate register and tone in their response. In general, more work on the part of the candidates in this area would be advisable. This was particularly borne out in the answers to questions 3, 5 and 7.

Q3

For this question, candidates were asked to write a magazine article about a talk at the Hong Kong Book Fair, explaining why they found it interesting and what they had learnt. To handle this task well, a demonstration of an understanding of its audience and purpose as well as the integrated ability to inform, entertain and persuade was essential. However, candidates in general were not fully sensitive to these requirements. Many gave a plain recount of what happened, while others were too keen for an opening attention grabber and got carried away with rather lengthy anecdotes or descriptions of incidents that preceded the event, thus blurring the overall focus and causing the work to suffer as whole. There were also scripts which did not even provide a title, and the weaker ones gave the impression that a speech was being presented (e.g. '...and now I want to share it with you').

Q5

To effectively address this question, candidates would need to be clear, concise and, above all, persuasive with the reality TV show proposal that they were to write to their principal, regardless of the format they chose, be it a letter or a report. However, quite a number of the scripts were far from succinct. They tended to adopt an overly didactic tone, offering rather long-winded justifications for the theme and content of their recommended reality TV programme. This was particularly the case with proposals that elected to disseminate the message of anti-drug abuse. Some works appeared unnecessarily tentative, as a result of over-use of expressions such as 'I think' and 'we suggest'.

Q7

A number of candidates did not demonstrate the awareness that they were required to write a debate speech. They also seemed little conscious of the characteristic features peculiar to this text type. That is, because of time constraints, debaters often need to be concise with their expressions and get straight to the point right from the start. Thus, the impersonal tone and long introductions, which found their way into quite a few scripts, were inapposite and would seem more justifiable in argumentative essays.

Organization

As one could expect, stronger scripts distinguished themselves from the weaker ones by demonstrating an overall logical structure with clear paragraphing. Also, the main ideas were generally well-developed and links between sentences were maintained with appropriate use of cohesive devices. The following two extracts, the first from a response to Q3 (Short Stories) and the second from one to Q4 (Poems and Songs), illustrate this:

The panel began with Alan Wake who said, 'It's not what you write, or how long you write it out to be. It's about capturing your readers' attention during the first few pages by placing them in a unique but relatable world.' He also commented on how most writers should set a goal before proceeding to write a manuscript as it defines what you want to do and in the long run will make writing easier.

I am writing in response to a letter printed on the Hong Kong Express which disapproves the use of foul language in songs. The writer deems that these songs containing foul language have a negative influence on society. However, I am afraid to say the writer has misunderstood these songs.

Less well-organized pieces were often found guilty of being repetitive and/or bunching too many ideas into the same paragraph. For example:

Confident is really important, the purpose of interviewing you is actually seeing how confident you are. Therefore, good preparation is important. If you are well-prepared for the interview, you will definitely have confident to handle the interview well. First, you should have good manner and appearance as you are interviewing to be a promoter. You have to prepare a formal set of clothing for example skirt instead of casual jeans. Second, as you are interviewing for the mobile company, you should have well understanding about that company, some basic information about different types of mobile phone and the current trend in the society. You should suit yourself into any quality that a promoter should have. Thirdly, prepare for a few common questions, for example "the introduction of yourself", remember to show to show your strengths and effort you will pay to be a good promoter...(extracted from a response to Q8 (Workplace Communication))

The weak scripts were even more inferior in organization. There were many 'flow' problems as a result of the lack of logical connection between parts of the text. Some pieces even gravitated towards confusion or formlessness.

It was mentioned in the previous section, 'Language', that some candidates were not thoroughly aware of the audience, purpose and context of their written task. The work of these candidates suffered not only in terms of language but organization as well. The overall structure of their texts was generally found to be inappropriate to the genre or text type they were expected to produce.

Many markers noted the frequent use of adverbials such as 'firstly' 'secondly' and 'thirdly' across the scripts and would like candidates to seriously consider using a greater variety of connectives rather than adopting such a formulaic or simplistic approach when organizing their work.

General Recommendations

While the majority of scripts were able to meet the basic requirements of the questions, they could have been rendered more substantive had candidates been able to develop or elaborate their ideas more thoroughly. To do this, it is advisable for candidates to read as widely as possible, a point which frequently surfaced in previous examiner's reports and which merits reiterating here. A good general knowledge, coupled with their teachers' guidance and critical feedback, would greatly assist them in generating and developing ideas for effective writing, as evident in the excellent responses referred to in the section on Content above.

It has been noted that the quality of a number of candidates' responses was hampered due to their insufficient grasp of the structure and language features of the text type they attempted. Candidates obviously needed to make an effort to expose themselves to a wide range of genres and text types. With a broadened understanding of the purpose, features and format of the text type they are meant to produce, candidates would be better able to make informed decisions about the tone and register to adopt as well as how to organize their work.

It is also important that candidates read the questions carefully. Overlooking a certain detail or requirement in the question could prove costly, as in the case of the some of the weaker answers to Q8 (Workplace Communication), which focused on individual rather than group interviews, as well as some of the irrelevant responses to Q9 (Social Issues), which took no account of the key words 'teenagers in Hong Kong'.

Paper 3 Part A

A theme-based approach was adopted for Paper 3. The chosen theme was that of healthy eating, which was expected to be of interest to candidates and within their experience. Part 3A comprised four tasks for which there were 50 test items worth a total of 50 marks. Each test item was awarded one mark.

Task 1 (14 test items) was based on a dialogue between two students planning a school project. Task 2 (14 test items) was based on a podcast interview between a radio interviewer and a doctor. Task 3 (11 test items) was based on a dialogue between three students, one of whom was relaying information that he'd read. Task 4 (11 test items) was based on the end of a presentation and the subsequent question-answer session with the audience.

This part of the paper consisted of a variety of item types including: the completion of a table, notes and a flow chart with one word or short phrases; multiple choice items; summary cloze and summary writing items.

A statistical analysis of the questions was carried out based on a pilot study of 2,845 candidates from 20 different schools in Hong Kong. The mean scores for individual items can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

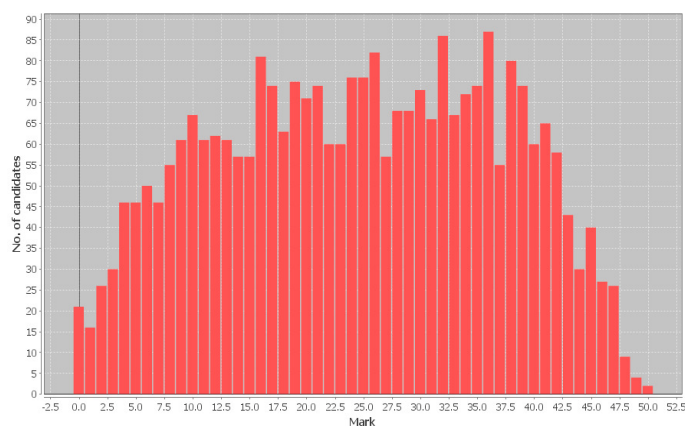
The overall results for Paper 3 Part A can be seen in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Paper 3 Part A overall results

Full Mark	Mean (%)	SD (%)	Reliability
50	49.04	24.53	0.95

Part A proved to be successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates and in terms of its own internal reliability. It should be noted, as can be seen in Figure 1, that the marks achieved by candidates covered the full range of possible marks with a small number of candidates scoring 0 and a small number gaining maximum points:

Figure 1: Paper 3A score distribution



Task 1

In this task, candidates were required to complete an information sheet for a project which the speakers were about to begin. As expected, this task proved to be the easiest of the four tasks with an average mean of 64.57% for these items. Some of the easiest items in the paper featuring in this task (e.g. items 2, 6 and 8). These easier items were related to the understanding of clearly signalled basic information such as understanding 'Hong Kong websites' and the spelling of a surname.

Task 2

In this task, candidates were required to complete a note sheet related to a podcast about obesity. The items in this task were generally more challenging than those in Task 1, often requiring candidates to write a phrase to complete the notes. The average mean for the items in this task was 54.62%. Some of the easier items in this task were those related to the understanding of information including numbers (e.g. items 16, 17 and 27). The more challenging items required candidates to complete a more complex message, such as item 25 or to understand more sophisticated lexis related to the topic (e.g. items 22 and 24).

Task 3

In this task, candidates were required to complete a flowchart. Items in this task included more demanding items when compared to the previous two tasks, often requiring candidates to write some quite specific information to complete the flowchart. The average mean for the items in this task was 44.30%. As candidates were asked to complete a flowchart of steps, several of the items required the associated verb in order to express the step clearly (e.g. *distinguish, assess, reduce, reassess*). Items which required such a verb (Items 29, 33, 34, 35 and 36) were generally found to be some of the most challenging in this task.

Task 4

In this task, candidates were required to complete several different item types: multiple choice box ticking items, completion of a summary cloze and also to write their own summary. In these items candidates were expected to deal with more sophisticated language than the other tasks; to glean attitudes of the various speakers; and to follow extended arguments. It was designed to be the most demanding of the four tasks. The average mean for the items in this task was 30.61 %.

Candidates fared relatively well in items 40-44 but less well in items 45-50. Items 45-47, in which candidates were expected to complete a summary by using some quite high-level lexical items proved to be particularly demanding. In items 48-50 candidates were expected not only to understand the tapescript but also to make a generalized statement in order to provide a summary of what was said. Not surprisingly these items proved to be demanding, candidates scoring a mean of 15.61%; 20.49% and 21.44% for items 48, 49 and 50 respectively.

General comments and recommendations

Paper 3 Part A proved to be a highly successful paper in its ability to discriminate candidates and also to provide items which were demanding for the full range of abilities. These items will inevitably vary in format to cater for the differing demands of the items. In order to prepare for such a variety of items, candidates should make good use of the time provided before Task 1 by:

- reading the situation and thinking about who the speakers are and their roles in the recording;
- looking at the theme of each task and thinking about the type of vocabulary that may appear in the recording;
- looking at individual questions and trying to predict the type of answers that will appear;
- thinking about what they know about the subject from their experience of the world.

Paper 3 Part B

A graded approach was adopted for Paper 3. Candidates therefore were required to choose between an easier (3B Part 1) or more difficult Part B (3B Part 2). In the practice paper, 1,332 candidates (46.74%) chose to do 3B Part 1 and 1,513 candidates (53.26%) chose to do 3B Part 2.

In both Parts B1 and B2, candidates were asked to assume the role of someone working at the Campus Services department at a university in Hong Kong and to carry out a series of tasks. Task 5 in Part B1 and Task 8 in Part B2 both related to the same food poisoning incident at a coffee shop, although the tasks candidates were asked to carry out were different. The other tasks (i.e. Tasks 6 and 7 in Part B1 and Tasks 9 and 10 in Part B2) were not related.

Paper 3 Part B1

Part B1 consisted of three tasks:

- Task 5: the completion of an incident report form
- Task 6: an email to all university students about a week of events
- Task 7: a letter to the editor refuting points made in a newspaper article.

In Task 5 candidates were judged on the criteria of Task Fulfillment and Language. In Tasks 6 and 7 candidates were judged on the criteria of Task Fulfillment; Language; Coherence and Organization; and Appropriacy. The marking guidelines for the Language mark for Task 5 was different from that for Tasks 6 and 7 in that the required levels of performance were less demanding than Tasks 6 and 7. In addition, in giving the Language mark, markers were instructed in Tasks 6 and 7 to consider the candidates' own original language as well as how well the candidates have manipulated the language from the Data File to create their own grammatically correct text.

The text types in the Data File included: a workplace email; a formal letter; an article from a student newspaper; the minutes of a meeting; an email exchange; a newspaper article; and a menu.

In order to complete these tasks candidates were required to employ a range of skills. These included:

- Note taking from a meeting
- Locating of specific information
- Transference of information from a variety of sources to a form
- Summarizing skills
- Inferencing skills in finding examples on a menu

The candidates' performance can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2: Paper 3 Part B1 results

<i>Task</i>	<i>Full Mark</i>	<i>Mean (%)</i>	<i>SD (%)</i>	<i>Reliability</i>
5	12	40.25	24.83	0.83
6	18	34.13	24.38	0.89
7	18	29.22	24.84	0.87

From the table it can be seen that the test proved to be successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates and in terms of its own internal reliability. However, it should be noted that Tasks 6 and 7, with means of 34.13% and 29.22% respectively, proved to be challenging for the majority of candidates. These low mean figures were, for the most part, due to the fact that a significant number of candidates scored 0 marks for these two tasks with a number either leaving the script blank or copying random parts of the Data File instead of genuinely attempting the task.

Amongst those who attempted the tasks, stronger candidates were characterized by the inclusion of most required information and of clear organization. Characteristics of such candidates can be seen in the following example from Task 7:

Firstly, there are not only two places than students can go. Besides the Student Canteen and the coffee shop, there will be a new restaurant start from February. It is because there will be a new restaurant opening in February. For more detail , the owner of that restaurant will be Antonia Zacha.

Secondly, we have got many different choices in the Student Canteen. Besides the rice, meat and vegetables, we have got different kinds of sandwiches, salads and drinks

Weaker candidates were characterized by having difficulties in incorporating the language from the Data File into their own texts. For example:

Next, the article write that our menu is not many food can choose. But it's not ture too.

Paper 3 Part B2

Part B2 consisted of three tasks:

- Task 8: a letter of reprimand for the manager of a university food outlet
- Task 9: an email to all university students about an event
- Task 10: a feature article for a university newsletter

In all three tasks in Part B2, candidates were judged on the criteria of Task Fulfillment; Language; Coherence and Organization; and Appropriacy. The marking guidelines for the Language for the tasks in Part B2 were pitched at a slightly higher level of performance compared to those employed in Tasks 6 and 7 in Part B1.

Just as in Tasks 6 and 7, markers for these tasks were instructed to consider the candidates' own originality as well as how well the candidates have manipulated the language from the Data File to create grammatically correct text in awarding the Language mark.

The text types in the Data File included: workplace emails; a formal letter; a webpage entry for an online encyclopedia; an email exchange; webpages from a celebrity chef's webpage; and a university canteen webpage. In addition, within the celebrity chef's webpages there were a variety of genres, text types and authors present including an article from a popular science website; a recipe; and webpage updates.

The candidates' performance can be seen in Table 3:

Table 3: Paper 3 Part B2 results

Task	Full Mark	Mean (%)	SD (%)	Reliability
8	18	54.71	18.93	0.81
9	18	53.9	14.83	0.69
10	18	44.87	20.31	0.81

From the table it can be seen that the test proved to be successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates and in terms of its own internal reliability. With mean scores between slightly below 45 and 55% it can also be seen that the level of difficulty for this part of the paper would seem to be appropriate for the candidature. In contrast to Part B1, there were very few candidates who achieved 0 marks in the three tasks.

Task 8

In this task candidates were asked to write a letter of reprimand to a coffee shop owner. This task proved to be quite demanding for most candidates, particularly at the crucial juncture of telling the manager that he needed to improve. As the writer is obliged to maintain a cordial working relationship with the manager after this, it demanded some degree of finesse and diplomacy. An example of a stronger candidate's work in this regard is:

If immediate actions can not be observed, we are afraid that your contract of the coffee shop cannot be renewed. It is important for your coffee shop to provide customers with clean and safe food. I hope you agree.

This candidate succeeded in being diplomatic by employing a softening phrase of 'we are afraid' before delivering the order to improve. He/she also provides a brief explanation of the action and seeks the coffee shop manager's agreement.

Most candidates, however, remained abrupt at this point in the letter, settling instead to simply use the over-abrupt bare imperative:

Improvements need to be made. If there is no improvement shown, we will not renewing the contract.

Task 9

From Table 3, it can be seen that this task seems to have functioned slightly worse than the other two in terms of its standard deviation and reliability although it is still within the acceptable ranges. This was mainly due to the fact that candidates typically did well in including the points for the Task Fulfillment but, as a whole, did less well in adapting the language from the Data File or in addressing the students in an appropriate manner. Typical of these is the following example¹:

We have pleased to invite Ho Chun Yu, a presenter of his own cookery programme on Hong Kong TV to be our Super Chef competition. To answer his question, you will be a chef and one of the contestants. Besides, the other contestant is Antonia Zacha from 'Restaurant at the End of the Outback'.

¹ Shaded areas in this and subsequent examples indicate parts copied *verbatim* from the Data File

In this paragraph the candidate includes several relevant pieces of information. However, it should be noted that many of the shaded words are taken verbatim from the Data File. Although this is done reasonably on the merits of the terms forming grammatically correct sentences, there is very little of the candidate's own language to be seen. This would not award a 4 or a 5 for language. By copying from the Data File the candidate is therefore missing the opportunity to demonstrate his/her language proficiency. Neither is the candidate demonstrating an ability to create a text which enthusiastically encourages students to attend the Super Chef competition.

Task 10

This proved to be the most challenging task of the three. Skills for this task included:

- Extrapolating relevant information from a popular science text
- Choosing an illustrative point from a detailed recipe
- Inferring the link between a slogan and the concept of the restaurant
- Adapting the style of original texts to include in a feature article
- Creating a coherent and appropriate title

Better candidates demonstrated an awareness of the type of text they were asked to write, i.e. a feature article, by creating a text which was informative but also one which encouraged students to go to the restaurant. This can be seen, for example, in the choice of an appropriate title to set the scene. Better candidates' headlines included:

Miso2 the new restaurant – place of healthy 'junk food'
The restaurant with healthy junk food is finally here!
A new eating style at HK Metro U

These titles are informative, congruent with the subject matter of the rest of the text and set the appropriate tone by making the restaurant sound appealing.

Examples of weaker candidates' titles were:

Memorable meal at Miso2
'Eat Yourself Fitter Week' and opening of new restaurant
The Second Restaurant of Antonia Zacha

Stronger candidates showed an ability to not only integrate Data File information in a grammatically correct fashion but also to paraphrase and use their own language to create their own sentences. For example:

Miso2 is named after Miso opened by the same Australian chef Antonia Zacha in Singapore. Ms. Zacha discovered that the Japanese delicacy Miso soup, which is a kind of soya-rich food can help cut women's risk of developing breast cancer.

This can be contrasted with a weaker candidate's attempts to create grammatically correct sentences from the Data File:

The reason why the restaurant will be called Miso, it is came from the Japanese delicacy Miso soup, which its function is to cut women's risk of developing breast cancer.

Recommendations

In Part B the candidates should make use of the time given before the recording to familiarize themselves with the situation and the Data File. To do so they should ask themselves such questions as:

- Who am I and what is my role?
- What is the situation?
- What tasks am I being asked to do?
- What kind of information should I include in my texts?
- Where in the Data File or the recording am I likely to find such information?

To prepare for listening to the recording, candidates should look at the note sheet and ask themselves:

- What type of information is likely to appear under each heading?
- How is this information relevant to each task?

When they start writing their text candidates should ask themselves:

- Who is the intended audience of the text?
- Will this affect the type of information I am to include?
- Will it affect the style of language that I should use?
- How should I organize what I have to write?
- Is what I've written understandable for someone who has not read the Data File?

To achieve a good mark for Language a candidate is expected to be able to take certain phrases from the Data File and make necessary changes in grammar, register, etc. so that it fits into their text. Candidates who simply copy large chunks from the Data File and ignore issues relating to style and grammar will score a low score in this aspect. If the candidate copies almost everything from the Data File the marker will not be able to award many marks here as there will be little or no language produced by the candidate to make any sort of judgment. The candidates should therefore take the opportunity, just as in the writing paper, to demonstrate the level of English that they have.

Candidates should also pay particular attention to the Appropriacy mark. To do this they should think about the relationship that they, the writer, have with the audience and the effect that they want to create with their text.

For example, in Tasks 6 and 9, candidates were expected to make the event they were describing interesting and appealing to their readers. Simply repeating factual information from the Data File was not enough in this case to 'sell' the event. They were expected to do more to encourage the reader attend and to do this throughout the text.

Candidates should also divide up the time that they have based on how demanding they think the tasks are. A word guide will normally be provided in the instructions to help them judge this.

Paper 3 Appendix: Candidate Performance in Paper 3 Part A

Task	Item	Mean percentage correct (%)
Task 1	1	60.32
	2	93.36
	3	65.27
	4	75.85
	5	27.38
	6	87.98
	7	74.13
	8	80.00
	9	48.47
	10	72.27
	11	54.17
	12	48.26
	13	53.67
	14	62.78
Task 2	15	56.06
	16	81.09
	17	85.98
	18	61.62
	19	38.63
	20	52.2
	21	65.38
	22	25.03
	23	36.45
	24	32.65
	25	28.93
	26	59.72
	27	82.11
	28	58.8
Task 3	29	21.27
	30	68.65
	31	63.3
	32	51.28
	33	13.46
	34	26.33
	35	34.66
	36	13.53
	37	66.29
	38	69.74
	39	18.45
Task 4	40	32.58
	41	76.94
	42	55.61
	43	33.95
	44	44.29
	45	16.59
	46	5.17
	47	13.99
	48	15.61
	49	20.49
	50	21.44