

Candidates' Performance

Paper 1

Paper 1 tests candidates' 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 of a lower level of difficulty than Part A) or Part B2 (consisting of items of a higher level of difficulty than Part A). The weighting for Part A and Part B is 50% per part. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 1 was 45,507 of whom around 44% chose B1 and around 56% chose B2. Candidates who attempt Parts A and B2 can attain the full range of levels, while Level 4 is the highest level attainable for candidates who attempt Parts A and B1.

Overall Results

A statistical analysis of Paper 1 was carried out. The overall results are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Paper 1 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	42	51.4	24.7
Part B1	42	48.2	21.8
Part B2	42	46.7	20.3

Part A (Compulsory section)

Part A consisted of two reading passages on the theme of flash fiction. The first passage was a how-to guide on writing flash fiction taken from a website. The second passage was an example of flash fiction. A range of items such as multiple choice, short responses, cloze passages and proof-reading were included. Candidates were also required to identify and match the views of characters from the example of flash fiction.

The items in Part A that were successfully answered by 70% or more of candidates were: Q.2, Q.5ii, Q.9, Q.11, Q.16iv and Q.22i. These represented a range of questions identifying relatively simple factual information, identifying and analysing simple vocabulary and understanding character attitudes and opinions. These suggest that the majority of candidates possessed a good range of fundamental reading skills in English. Indeed, in Part A most items were answered correctly by at least 50% of candidates, suggesting solid reading skills.

Many examiners and markers noted that some candidates did not follow task instructions such as using a word taken from a certain paragraph or from the text. For example, many candidates responded to Q.7iii with 'ending', 'last' or 'final' and Q.14i with 'lessons' or 'lesson'. These did not appear in the stated paragraphs and so candidates were not awarded a point for such answers. Similarly, some candidates did not follow instructions regarding the number of words required in the answer. When asked to find 'a word' in the text in Q.5iii, some candidates answered with 'a lot of'. Again, these candidates were not awarded a point for such an answer.

Examiners and markers also noted that candidates at the lower range seemed to struggle with the proof-reading question. Many candidates' responses were ungrammatical. For instance, in Q.6i some candidates responded with 'oppose', 'opposition', 'opposite' or chose vocabulary they seemingly did not fully understand, e.g. Q.6v 'realm'. However, over 60% of candidates successfully identified Q.6ii as the line of the summary with no mistakes.

As in previous years, a number of candidates produced answers with spelling errors when copying words from the text into their Question-Answer Book. For example, when completing gap-fill items some candidates wrote the following: Q.7iv 'sens' or 'scense' and Q.14ii 'mubled', 'numbled' or 'munbled' leading to a loss of marks. In addition, it was apparent that some candidates did not read the questions with care, e.g. for Q.19, a number of candidates responded with the incorrect focus. This question asked

'what' Professor Snookhorn was proud of rather than 'who' he was proud of. However, it was pleasing to note that in Q.20 and Q.22, very few of candidates' responses used repeated letters. They therefore avoided the loss of marks that this would have entailed.

Finally, examiners and markers felt that the more open questions helped discriminate candidates in the higher range. For instance, in Q.10, weaker candidates were unable to express the meaning accurately with only 40% of candidates answering this item correctly.

Part B1 (Easier section)

Part B1 comprised two reading passages linked by the theme of guide dogs for the visually impaired with a theme and discourse considered to be accessible for most readers. The first passage was a collection of three brief biographies of guide dogs and their owners. The second text was an online news article outlining the issues and challenges of training guide dogs in Hong Kong. Candidates were required to identify factual information in a range of item types such as gap-fills, True/False/Not given, multiple choice and short responses.

Q.24i-iii, Q.28, Q.33i and iii were all answered correctly by at least 70% of candidates. These items were all related to the short simple biographies of the first text demonstrating a similar range of skills as the Part A items mentioned above. Success in these items further strengthened the impression of a satisfactory level of fundamental reading skills amongst candidates. The eight items in Q.44 and Q.45 tested more global understanding and were moderately well answered with between 31% and 63% of candidates answering them correctly.

Many candidates had difficulty with Q.39, being a sentence completion item requiring textual manipulation, rather than just copying from the passage. In this item, candidates were required to change the verb 'familiarise', which appeared in the text, to the adjective + preposition 'familiar with' in their answer. Q.43 also appeared challenging to candidates, with only 4% of candidates answering this question correctly. This reference question demanded that candidates understand that the reference stretched back several paragraphs from paragraph 10 to paragraph 3 rather than a much closer reference within the passage. When asked to identify a phrase used in the passages (e.g. Q.31) or select evidence from the passages (e.g. Q.42), many candidates again copied indiscriminately. Such over-copying resulted in an answer with a lack of focus or which incorporated inaccurate or irrelevant content. In Q.42, some candidates selected evidence from paragraph 10 rather than from paragraph 9, as instructed in the question.

Part B2 (More difficult section)

Part B2 comprised one text of two parts linked by the theme of the impact of some of the significant women in Michelle Obama's life. The first part was an essay written by Michelle Obama reflecting on her memories of her mother and her mother's parenting style. The second part was an excerpt from Michelle Obama's memoir focusing on her relationship with her great-aunt. Candidates were required to respond to a range of items including identifying the implied meaning of phrases and the conflicting ideas in the writer's childhood as well as sentence and table / summary completion using their own words.

In Part B2, candidates were more successful in answering items asking for specific detail / information from the text with between 50% and 90% of candidates responding successfully. This included Q.47-Q.52, Q.57 and Q.62. Candidates were also relatively successful when answering questions on global understanding. For example, in Q.68i-v, in which candidates were asked to match the summary headings to the different paragraphs of the text, between 53% and 80% of candidates answered correctly.

Examiners and markers felt that Q.65i-v was a good test of the higher range candidates as it required candidates to complete the gaps with one word of their own rather than lifting a word from the passage. This meant candidates were required to produce a response which was both grammatically accurate and which conveyed the correct meaning as well as demonstrating an understanding of connotation and collocation. Between 4% and 43% of candidates answered these items correctly.

As could be expected, items where candidates struggled were often testing inferencing skills and more detailed understanding including Q.54, Q.56, Q.60, Q.61 and Q.64, which were answered correctly by between 13% and 29% of candidates. These questions tested some of the higher-order reading skills

interpreting the meaning behind Michelle Obama's words that we would expect to see in the stronger readers choosing to take Part B2.

A final point to make is that a significant number of candidates copied extensively from the text, often leading to a range of problems in their responses. This was particularly seen in Q.53iv, Q.54 and Q.55, Such problems included a resultant lack of logic in their answers, the incorporation of irrelevant or inaccurate content, and a failure to demonstrate their ability to distinguish between specific examples and broader conclusions.

The complex ideas tested in all these items were at the heart of Part B2's text, and the questions successfully probed understanding of the very highest-order elements of the paper.

Recommendations

The instructions provided to candidates for answering exam questions are crucial in ensuring that the requirements of the questions are clearly delivered. It is important for candidates to read and understand the instructions carefully, especially with regard to specific requirements such as the use of certain words or phrases from particular paragraphs in the passages. This can be a determining factor in scoring marks for certain questions and neglecting such instructions can lead to a loss of marks.

Additionally, when candidates are required to lift language from the passages, they should ensure that they spell the words correctly. In cases where a question calls for a longer and more open answer, candidates should be careful not to copy excessively, as seen in Q.42 and Q.53iv. The danger of copying excessively is that the candidate may fail to demonstrate their understanding of the ideas tested and may lose marks as a result.

In some questions, grammatical prompts may be given, such as at the beginning of sentence-completion items (e.g. Q.18, Q.30, Q.39, Q.46) and candidates should pay close attention to such prompts. They should also take note of plurality, as in Q.13 where the question required the identification of 'whose faces'.

Candidates need to be mindful of the use of figurative and metaphorical language in the texts. In such cases, it is advisable to select more focused and shorter chunks of language, as seen in Q.12. If candidates lift overlong stretches of text, it becomes difficult for them to clearly demonstrate that they have identified the pertinent part of the text.

Candidates may also need further practice in understanding referencing within a text and the relationships between ideas, especially when references are made over longer stretches of a text. This is important in ensuring that candidates can demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic and how the ideas presented in the text relate to each other.

As demonstrated again this year, this paper's purpose is to test candidates' ability to deal with a range of genres and text types, from a variety of authors and contexts in which they are written. This year's reading passages were taken from both fiction and non-fiction, from personal memoirs and news reports. These were sourced both locally and from abroad. Candidates are encouraged to embrace the opportunities available to them to read as widely as possible in order to increase exposure to genres and text-types, to enhance their reading skills as well as to build up their knowledge of lexis, syntax, connotation and so on.

Paper 2

Paper 2 tests candidates' writing skills and consists of two parts: Part A and Part B. Candidates have 2 hours to complete both parts of the paper. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 2 was 45,362.

Overall Results

Parts A and B were assessed in three domains: content, language and organisation on a scale between 0 and 7 for each domain. A statistical analysis of Paper 2 was carried out. The overall results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Paper 2 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	42	54.4	21.6
Part B	42	51.5	20.3

Part A

Part A is a short writing task. This year, candidates assumed the role of a worker for Planet Smart, a company that sells eco-friendly products. The company wanted to set up a pop-up shop inside a shopping centre for three months to promote their products to new customers. Candidates were asked to complete an application form divided into three sections: a Company Profile, their Best-selling Product and an In-store Event. It was expected that readers of the form would be the management of the shopping centre and therefore the tone and style was expected to be persuasive.

Most candidates were able to develop their own ideas under the three headings, including first the company profile. Candidates generally wrote about how their company was set up to sell environmentally-friendly products and these ranged from toys to clothes and cooking utensils. There was a lot of imagination shown. The best-selling product was quite well described and candidates were able to provide descriptions and reasons as to why the product was popular. Such products were often simple like reusable drinking bottles and so on. The in-store event was usually some kind of open day in which products were displayed, games organised and discounts given.

Some candidates were able to make use of descriptive language to promote their company and persuade the management of the shopping centre to accept their proposal. This included the use of adjectives ('adorable', 'captivating', 'tailor-made', 'fascinating', etc.) and vocabulary such as 'recyclable', 'going green', 'environmentally-friendly', 'reusable' and 'conservation'. Higher performing candidates were able to use such language and to make accurate use of appropriate sentence structures and tenses.

The task prompt guided candidates to write about 70 words for each section of the proposal. Most candidates did this and many made use of the supplementary pages to write more. This sometimes was to the detriment of the candidates' work as in some cases it meant that it was less succinct than that of candidates who followed the word guide. Many weaker candidates wrote one or two sentences only under each heading and struggled for ideas.

In general, however, most candidates were able to make use of the headings to write a persuasive proposal in an appropriate tone.

Part B

Part B comprises eight questions (Q.2-Q.9) based on the elective modules in the senior secondary English Language curriculum (S.4-S.6). In this part of the examination, candidates were required to choose one question and write about 400 words.

The mean score achieved for each elective is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Paper 2 Part B statistics

Question	Elective	Mean (%)	Popularity (%)
2	Sports Communication	48.1	16
3	Popular Culture	48.9	21
4	Debating	58.2	23
5	Short Stories	39.0	3
6	Drama	47.2	3
7	Social Issues	58.2	15
8	Poems and Songs	56.1	9
9	Workplace Communication	56.6	10

The most popular question was attempted by around 23% of the candidature followed by around 21%. The spread of popularity amongst the eight questions was relatively even compared to previous years.

The following is a summary of candidates' general performance in each question.

Question 2: Learning English through Sports Communication

Candidates were required to write an article for a travel magazine explaining the benefits of tai chi. The article was meant to appeal to tourists. This question was quite a popular choice among candidates.

Most candidates wrote about how tai chi can improve health, create a mindful state, calm one down and relieve stress. They were able to describe the popularity of tai chi in Hong Kong and provide information via interviews with tai chi masters, participants and tourists. This included descriptions of where to find people practising tai chi (e.g. Victoria Park) and how it is a part of Chinese culture.

Candidates showed an ability to use a range of linguistic forms to describe the practice of tai chi and what it involves. This included using different tenses and aspects, mainly active forms, modal verbs and appropriate adjectives to describe experiences, feelings and emotions. Stronger articles were marked by greater grammatical accuracy, more varied vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. Candidates were able to adapt their writing to suit the genre of an article written in the first person (I/me/my), making it engaging and meaningful to an audience of potential visitors.

Question 3: Learning English through Popular Culture

This question required candidates to assume the role of a reporter for the school magazine and write an article about Anime Expo, Hong Kong's biggest anime, manga and video game exhibition. They attended the exhibition and interviewed some people dressed in cosplay. This question was a very popular choice among candidates.

Candidates had few problems understanding the requirements of the task. They were expected to inform and engage the readers and provide a snapshot of what was happening, a report on their interview with participants (some people dressed in cosplay) and possibly a review or feelings about attending the event. It was expected that some candidates would focus on concepts, or what they had learned from the interviews by incorporating the interviews, or summaries of them. There was a lot of scope for imagination and creativity to be demonstrated in the descriptions of the booths, activities and atmosphere of the exhibition.

Candidates showed an ability to engage the reader with an imaginative use of descriptive language such as adjectives and adverbs to describe the costumes and activities. Candidates were generally able to structure the article appropriately with an engaging introduction followed by descriptions of the

exhibition, interviews with cosplay participants and other facets of the exhibition. The tone used by candidates was generally appropriate, as the audience was expected to be their peers.

Question 4: Learning English through Debating

The question required candidates to write an essay about the pros and cons of monitoring employees in the workplace. They were asked to address the question of how monitoring affects productivity and job satisfaction. The question proved to be the most popular choice among candidates and on average they scored relatively highly.

Most candidates understood the purpose of the task and were able to write the essay according to the standard structure of a discursive essay, i.e. introduction, points in favour (pros), points against (cons) and conclusion. Candidates were able to elaborate on the main arguments of whether monitoring is intrusive and impinging on employees' rights or whether it is within the rights of the employers to ensure that their employees were on task while being paid to be in work. Better candidates were able to bring in ideas related to the modern working environment including the flexibility of employees to work from home.

In general candidates had a good grasp of the tone and style for an essay and the topic was accessible. They were able to use appropriate language including: nouns such as 'surveillance', 'monitoring', 'privacy', 'policy', 'efficiency', 'productivity', 'security', 'trust' and '(dis)satisfaction'; adjectives such as 'invasive', 'intrusive', 'untrustworthy', 'productive' and 'satisfactory'; and verbs like 'spy', 'monitor' and '(mis)trust'.

Weaker candidates showed a lack of ideas and ability to construct persuasive arguments. They tended to state only the most obvious of pros and cons without going into more detail about the effects of such monitoring on all parties, including employees and their families, employers, society and so on.

Question 5: Learning English through Short Stories

This question required candidates to write an essay to describe how reading fairy tales and fables has taught them important lessons about life. The question was not a popular choice among candidates and scored the lowest mean.

The question was quite challenging in that to answer the question well, candidates had to demonstrate a knowledge of such kinds of stories and be able to draw on that knowledge to extract meanings and moral messages that may have affected them personally and then explain how. Some candidates were able to do this and to take examples from popular tales or fables and apply them to their own life. Many candidates were unable to do this and wrote quite generally about how reading stories has improved them as a person, without being specific enough on how and in what ways.

Some candidates were able to construct an expository essay of this type and to use appropriate nouns (e.g. 'plot', 'character', 'meaning'), adjectives (e.g. 'determined', 'resourceful', 'reflective') and verbs (e.g. 'learn', 'understand', 'relate to'). Better candidates were also able to use cohesive devices to show the relationships between ideas and actions in the stories they described and in their own lives. Other candidates struggled to express their ideas in a meaningful way.

Question 6: Learning English through Drama

This question required candidates to write a diary entry describing their experience in a drama class, in which they had to perform an improvised 10-minute comedy sketch with their classmates. This question was the least popular option with candidates.

Most candidates understood the basic requirements of the question, to write about the comedy sketch that they did with their classmates and describe what happened, including classmates' funny actions or speech, their own feelings about the sketch and the class as a whole and what they learned from it. The style expected was one more intimate and personal than an essay or an article and most candidates understood this, beginning the entry with the date and time and/or 'Dear diary'. Many ended the entry with a positive reflection on the day.

In terms of language use, better candidates' scripts demonstrated the appropriate use of tenses, for example, past tense to describe what had happened in the class and their emotions at the time, and present tense to describe their reflections about it. Stronger candidates were able to use a range of lexis to be quite candid about the emotions they felt. Weaker candidates were unable to describe the comedy sketch in much detail or relate their feelings about it.

Question 7: Learning English through Social Issues

In this question, candidates were required to write a news article about differing views on retirement. They were given the information that most people in their 60s would like to have the option to work past 65, while a growing number of young people would like to retire in their 30s or 40s. The question was not particularly popular, though those who did do it scored relatively highly.

As it was a news article, examiners were looking for candidates to discuss the issues perhaps by including interviews with various people of different age groups or including evidentiary support (e.g. factual or anecdotal) to illustrate their points. Unfortunately, too many candidates wrote a piece more akin to a discursive essay. Candidates were not expected to draw any conclusions about whether earlier or later retirement was preferable. Better candidates were able to describe how different groups of people of different ages think about retirement and why they would opt for the choice to retire (or not).

The language used could vary with different tenses used when describing feelings and when describing events. On the whole, stronger candidates were able to use a range of lexis such as 'job satisfaction', 'financial burden', 'work-life balance' and 'livelihood'. Overall, the tone expected was neutral and objective, though not as academic as that of an essay.

Question 8: Learning English through Poems and Songs

Candidates were asked to write a letter to the editor on whether computer-generated songs should be allowed to compete in song-writing competitions. The question was not one of the more popular choices but those who did answer it scored quite highly.

In the prompt for this question, candidates were told that contestants in a competition had complained when an AI-generated song had won first prize. From this, examiners expected candidates to write about the use of AI in songwriting, rather than more generally and most candidates were able to do this. One possible approach was to write a piece in which arguments (for or against) were one-sided and this was an approach many candidates adopted. Better candidates were able to introduce arguments counter to their position and then refute them so as to strengthen their own stance.

Most candidates were able to include descriptions of what AI is and how it could be used to write songs. They successfully argued the points about originality, creativity and fairness as well as describing aspects of songwriting, such as melodies, rhythm and lyrics. As with all letters to the editor, the audience is assumed to be the general public and it was not expected that candidates would use more technical vocabulary when describing AI use.

Effective organisation was seen in some scripts through the use of a range of grammatical and lexical cohesion in order to keep the text flowing logically. Where this broke down, arguments and the writer's position became incoherent and unclear.

Question 9: Learning English through Workplace Communication

In this question, candidates had to write a feature article for a magazine called Restaurant Business relating the experiences of a restaurant owner during the COVID-19 pandemic. Candidates were expected to base the article on an interview carried out with a restaurant owner. The question was not one of the most popular options though candidates who answered this question scored quite highly on average. Most candidates drew on their personal experiences during the pandemic. Some, though, did write too much and their answers became less relevant to the topic (i.e. running a restaurant) and more of a set of personal reflections.

Candidates were expected to report on the interview with the restaurant owner. Many did this and produced engaging and interesting articles that an audience who had lived through the pandemic could

relate to. However, they had to remember that they were writing for a specific audience, i.e. people working in the restaurant business, so examiners were looking for candidates to write from that perspective. Typical vocabulary that was used in this respect included nouns such as ‘chefs’, ‘restrictions’, ‘online ordering’, ‘takeaway’ or ‘delivery service’; adjectives such as ‘challenging’, ‘dispiriting’, ‘innovative’ and ‘convenient’; and verbs such as ‘make staff redundant’, ‘survive’ and ‘operate’. The style was meant to be engaging and informative.

Candidates generally followed one of two approaches to writing this text. Some wrote a chronological account of what happened during the pandemic and how the restaurant owners dealt with the situation. Others described the problems faced one by one, perhaps in order of seriousness. Both approaches were acceptable. Where candidates scored lower marks, it was generally because their article lacked cohesion or they were unable to identify problems specific to the restaurant business.

Recommendations

Candidates need to demonstrate their writing ability by making their writing appropriate to the particular text type they are asked to write and addressing the topic specified. Writing succinctly and concisely may be conducive to writing a successful text in some tasks. Other tasks may require more in-depth and elaborated arguments with more complex language. It is essential for candidates to read a wide range of authentic texts and text types to become familiar with what is appropriate for particular purposes and audiences.

As with language choice, coherence can be achieved in different ways depending on the text type. Candidates would be advised to examine authentic texts to see what and how grammatical and lexical cohesive devices are used to enhance cohesion in different text types to raise their awareness as to how different types of texts are organised effectively.

Part B tasks can be completed in around 400 words. Longer responses will not necessarily gain higher marks simply by virtue of length. If writing beyond the word guide, the length should not impede the communicative effectiveness.

Paper 3

Paper 3 consisted of three parts: Part A, Part B1 and Part B2. All candidates were required to complete Part A and then choose either Part B1 or Part B2. Part B1 was designed to be the easier section, while Part B2 was designed to be the more difficult section. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 3 was 44,982, of whom around 28% chose B1 and around 72% chose B2.

Overall Results

A statistical analysis of Paper 3 was carried out. The overall results are given in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Paper 3 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	53	44.8	29.0
Part B1	53	41.2	26.1
Part B2	53	49.8	19.0

Part A (Compulsory section)

In Part A, candidates had to listen to four recordings related to the theme of a YouTube Channel about people who have made an impact on the world in unusual ways. All four tasks were related to the YouTube Channel called *Extraordinary Hong Kong People*. Unless otherwise stated, synonyms or similar wordings were accepted as correct answers to those stated here.

Task 1 (Mean = 60.9%)

Candidates were required to listen to a conversation between two sisters who were interviewing a guest (their mother) about her life story.

Items 1-3 asked candidates to write short phrases regarding details of the guest and when she and her family moved to Hong Kong. For item 4, candidates had to complete a multiple-choice question regarding the profession of the guest's father. These items proved to be straightforward for the majority of candidates.

For items 5-7, candidates were required to write short phrases related to the guest's profession. These items seemed straightforward for the majority of candidates except for item 5 (41% correct), in which candidates had to provide the answer 'helicopter'.

For items 8-13, candidates were required to write short phrases related to the story of how the guest met her husband. Item 13 proved to be the most challenging for candidates (34% correct), as they were required to provide specific information related to the location: 'at the top of a cliff'.

Task 2 (Mean = 47.1%)

For Task 2, candidates were required to listen to an interview with Ranbir Singh, in which Ranbir talked about the hobby of marble racing.

For items 14-18, candidates were required to complete a table with short answers relating to the history of the creator of marble racing and how he created and developed it. Some of these items were straightforward for the majority of candidates (69% and 70% correct for items 16 and 17 respectively) while other items proved to be more challenging. For item 15 (41% correct), some candidates wrote 'recording YouTube video' (singular form and factually incorrect) rather than the plural form 'videos' (correct answer).

For items 19-24, candidates were required to complete a table with short answers relating to events in the Marble Olympics – the marble equivalent of the relay race, high jump, and outdoor marathon. Some of these items proved to be challenging for candidates (37%, 32%, and 25% correct for items 20, 22 and 24 respectively). Many candidates did not write an answer for these items.

For items 25 and 26, candidates were required to fill in the gaps with a phrase relating to the future of marble racing. These items proved to be challenging for some candidates (47% and 31% correct respectively). For item 26, candidates were required to write the comparative form 'more advanced'. Some candidates wrote 'advance' (incorrect answer) rather than 'advanced' (correct answer).

Task 3 (Mean = 43.7%)

For Task 3, candidates were required to listen to a discussion between the host, the owner of a celebrity Internet cat influencer and the chair of the Hong Kong Cat Shelter. The items in Task 3 all related to the cat – Mr Suess.

For items 30-32, candidates were required to write short phrases regarding things Mr Suess is famous for. Item 30 proved to be extremely challenging for candidates (14% correct). For this item, candidates were required to write the phrase 'dress up like superheroes'. Many candidates wrote the singular form 'superhero', which is factually inaccurate.

For items 33-35, candidates were required to write short phrases regarding the methods used by Estella to train Mr Suess. For item 33 (45% correct), some candidates incorrectly wrote answers such as 'wants to go' rather than 'wants him / Mr Suess to go'. For item 34 (38% correct), some candidates incorrectly wrote 'section' rather than 'session'.

For items 36 and 37, candidates were required to write short phrases regarding a reason why cat videos are more popular than dog videos on YouTube. Item 37, in particular, proved to be challenging for candidates with only 31% of candidates gaining a point. For this item, candidates were required to use the comparative form 'less predictable / more surprising'.

Finally, candidates were required to write short phrases regarding benefits of Internet cat influencers (items 38 and 39), and a concern about Internet cat influencers (item 40). These proved to be relatively difficult for candidates (48%, 28%, and 36% correct respectively). For item 38, candidates needed to include the idea of creating positive feelings in people / viewers. Some candidates failed to include who the positive feelings were created for. For item 39, candidates needed to include the idea of adopting cats, specifically stray cats – some candidates did not include the idea of adoption or failed to include ‘stray’. For item 40, candidates needed to include the idea that cats were abandoned by their owners and a reason for this – when the cats are no longer popular or make money. Some candidates did not appear to know the word ‘abandon’ while other candidates failed to include a reason for the owners abandoning their cats.

Task 4 (Mean = 27.5%)

For Task 4, candidates were required to listen to a documentary about the history of emojis as the new language of the Internet.

For items 41-44, candidates were required to write short phrases related to the history and background of emojis. Item 41 proved to be challenging for candidates (33% correct). Many candidates misspelt ‘brackets’ or did not appear to know this word. Other candidates failed to include how brackets were used ‘to show he was happy’. For item 42 (25% correct), candidates had to include the concept of creating a collection or set of emojis. For item 43 (27% correct), candidates needed to include two concepts – (1) a picture or drawing and (2) how this is used, i.e. to convey an emotion. Some candidates wrote ‘picture’ but failed to include how the picture is used.

For items 45 and 46 (42% and 32% correct respectively), candidates were required to write short phrases regarding how teenagers and married couples use the ‘kissing’ emoji. For item 46, candidates were required to use the verb ‘show’ in addition to the noun ‘affection’.

For items 47 and 48, candidates were required to write short phrases relating to the two main functions of The World Committee for Emojis. Candidates found these items challenging (24% and 23% correct respectively). For item 47, candidates needed to include the verb ‘decide’ in their answer, i.e. ‘to decide which emojis will be created’. Candidates needed to capture the concept that particular emojis do not yet exist and have to be created by the Committee to convey a particular emotion or idea. Some candidates mistakenly wrote ‘will be used’. For item 48, some candidates wrote answers such as ‘the codes for the emojis’ but failed to include the idea of standardising or setting these codes.

For items 49-53 candidates were required to complete a table with short phrases. The table related to concerns about The World Committee for Emojis. Candidates had to write a short phrase regarding either a concern or the consequence of a concern. Item 49 was the most straightforward item in this section (56% correct) while the other items proved to be more challenging. For item 50 (20% correct), there were two possible answers. For the first possible answer, candidates had to include the concept of their being a ‘limit on how people express themselves emotionally’. Many candidates who answered this question tended to write incomplete answers such as ‘limits people expressing themselves’. Items 52 and 53 (15% and 16% correct respectively) proved to be extremely challenging for most candidates. For item 52, candidates had to include the concept that it was the work of the committee that is not made public enough rather than the committee itself. Candidates who wrote an answer for this question tended to write incorrect answers such as ‘the committee is not public enough’. For item 53 candidates needed to include the concept that the public are suspicious (of the committee). Those candidates who wrote an answer for item 53 tended to provide incorrect answers such as ‘suspicious to the committee’ – incorrectly conveying the idea that the committee is suspicious of the general public.

Recommendations for Part A

Candidates should spend the preparation time familiarising themselves with the tasks. With the help of the given instructions/headings/prompts/choices, they may be able to predict the likely development of the texts. They may also predict the vocabulary they will hear in the recording and make guesses about possible answers. Candidates should read the prompts and stems carefully to predict the required form of the answer, i.e. whether it should be a single noun, noun phrase or a clause or sentence conveying a more complete meaning. Candidates should appreciate that such issues of grammar are not simply an

added extra. Rather, they play an essential role in conveying the precise meaning needed to gain points in such items.

For some tasks, it is important to gain an understanding of the whole section of conversation and so candidates may consider jotting down notes first before coming back to complete their answers during the tidy-up time. Candidates should also be prepared to compose answers in their own words rather than relying on repeating the words they hear in the recording as certain items may require them to infer answers not explicitly stated in the text. Before moving on to Part B, candidates should take the time to check whether their answers make sense and are clear within the context of the section of the Question-Answer Book in which they appear.

Part B

In both Parts B1 and B2, candidates took the role of Nico Lin, an employee of *Teen NetChef TV*, an Internet TV company that makes streaming TV shows in Hong Kong, and had to complete three tasks.

A recording of a company's online staff meeting was common to both parts. An identical note-taking sheet with headings was also provided to both sets of candidates. A separate Data File was provided for the two parts, containing texts in a variety of genres that held the instructions and information necessary – in combination with the recording – to complete the assigned tasks. Candidates would be judged on their ability to complete the tasks by identifying and extracting key information from the texts and the recording and then integrating that into the texts they wrote, as well as their attention to the needs of the tasks, the genre features of their written texts, organisation and suitability for the intended audience.

The performance of the candidates in each Part and Task will be discussed below.

Part B1 (Easier section)

In Part B1, candidates were required to write three texts for the company, consisting of updating a fact file for the *Live, Study, Cook* talent competition, and drafting two emails: a reply to the complaints raised by the owner of Golden Sun Tower Private Kitchen; and to a celebrity chef, about suggested changes to his Best Baked Potato Fries recipe. Information on which candidates were asked to base their answers was provided in the Data File including an email from Archie Li to Nico Lin, a notice from the company's Finance Department, a memo from the Project Team, an email from the private kitchen owner detailing her complaints, chats from the competition's Prize Fund group and Filming Team, the original Best Baked Potato Fries recipe, with a text detailing the online comments about the recipe, an email from Chef Christine reporting on her team's findings about the online recommendations as well as the recording. Candidates were expected to identify the relevant information for each task in each of these sources and adapt that information for inclusion in the three texts that they constructed.

The candidates' performance is summarised in Table 5:

Table 5: Paper 3 Part B1 results

Task	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
5	16	49.4	31.3
6	18	33.9	25.7
7	19	41.2	29.0

From Table 5, it can be seen that candidates' strongest performance was on Task 5, whereas Task 6 proved to be the most challenging for this year's B1 candidates. The overall mean was 41.2% for all of Part B1. The paper proved to be successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates and in terms of its own internal reliability.

Task 5

In Task 5, candidates were required to update the fact file for the *Live, Study, Cook* talent competition website. This was to be achieved with the help of the listening notes from the online staff meeting as well as information from the Project Team memo, the Finance Department notice, and the group chat exchanges. With a mean of 49.4%, this task saw the strongest performance among candidates attempting Part B1. Items 5.1, 5.2, 5.6 and 5.10, containing numerical data from either the recording or the Data File, proved to be achievable for candidates, with means of 60% or above for each item. For other items, stronger candidates were able to successfully adapt the relevant information from the listening input and the Data File, whereas less able candidates seemed to have problems in extracting specific information from the recording in particular. For example, they seemed to miss the cue on the recording as to the ‘types of food’ contestants had to cook (items 5.3 and 5.4), noting down the examples of dishes rather than the ‘kinds of food’ mentioned. Weaker candidates also tended to omit the brand names of the prizes for items 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9, despite their importance being specified in the Prize Fund group chat. Only around a fifth of candidates mentioned that the voucher was from *Supersave HK* (item 5.9).

Items 5.13 and 5.14 presented an extra challenge to the B1 candidates in that as well as locating the information, candidates were required to rephrase the two questions given in the Project Team memo into statements for the video guidelines. The majority of candidates identified the relevant information, but many were unable to reformulate the questions into grammatically correct statements, impacting their mark for language accuracy.

Task 6

In Task 6, candidates had to respond to an email from the owner of Golden Sun Tower Private Kitchen, Ms Betty Ma. Nico’s employer, the Internet TV company *Teen Netchef TV*, had filmed a cookery show at the private kitchen before and would now like to film a show in the kitchen again. Upon receiving the request from the TV company, the owner wrote back to report the problems they had caused previously. She would like them to address the problems before she could consider letting them use the kitchen for filming.

This task involved the careful reading of Ms Ma’s email and understanding the nature of her complaints. Candidates needed to identify the main element of each complaint and adopt a polite and reassuring tone in writing the reply. Candidates were required to refer to Ms Ma’s email, the Filming Team group chat and the listening notes from the online staff meeting to complete the task.

Most candidates demonstrated good understanding of the genre, including how to open and close the email respectfully, state the purpose of writing the email in the opening paragraph, and use an apologetic tone. Many candidates also showed some skill in structuring the text to integrate their description of the problems and corresponding solutions. The first problem was related to the TV company causing inconvenience to the people in the building when they used the elevators to transport heavy cameras. The most able candidates were able to rephrase the problem and locate the relevant information for the solution. The second problem was about a fire that had apparently occurred in the kitchen, and that the staff of the filming team did not know how to respond to this incident. Stronger candidates were able to combine the information to explain the cause of the fire and assure Ms Ma that the company would offer fire safety training to their staff in future. Weaker candidates tended not to specify where and why the fire occurred. They missed the points from the recording that the fire was caused by a piece of burnt toast (item 6.5) and that the owner was disappointed that the staff did not know what to do during the fire (item 6.4).

Apart from addressing the problems, the owner of the private kitchen requested the company to pay an additional sum of \$10,000 to cover their costs as they would not be doing business on the day of filming (item 6.8). Candidates were instructed to counter-propose a sum of \$5,000 instead. Only around 28% of candidates expressed this idea clearly. For example, some candidates erroneously presented this as being a form of compensation to the kitchen for the damage caused by the fire.

With a mean of 33.9%, this task proved to be the most challenging among the three tasks in Part B1. The more capable candidates demonstrated a good understanding of their role and successfully employed information from the listening input and the group chat to complete the task. Weaker candidates tended to have difficulties with items which involved information from the recording.

Task 7

In Task 7, candidates were asked to write an email to *Teen NetChef TV*'s star chef, William Puddle to tell him about the changes he should make to his Best Baked Potato Fries recipe before re-uploading it to the company's website. Candidates were given texts including a copy of William's recipe, online comments and suggestions about the recipe, and an email from the Head Chef containing her input.

Stronger candidates were able to restructure the writing into a concise and well-organised text in their own words, with opening and closing paragraphs that were appropriate for the genre, while maintaining an appropriate tone. Many candidates introduced the text by referring to the reason for writing; some were even able to use an encouraging tone in recommending the changes, ending the email by complimenting William's work. Weaker candidates tended to neglect to mention the purpose of writing, ended the email abruptly and mostly relied heavily on only one source of information. Their work mostly discussed the changes that William had to make and did not explain why he had to do so, a requirement stated in the Head Chef's email. For example, in item 7.4, they instructed William to dry the potatoes after washing them but failed to tell him that this was because water could make his fries soggy.

For the most challenging items in this task, candidates had to recommend and explain changing the chili sauce of the original recipe (item 7.10) to smoky BBQ sauce (item 7.9). Only 26% (item 7.9) and 18% (item 7.10) of candidates answered these items correctly, many not even mentioning the two sauces in their text.

Part B2 (More difficult section)

In Part B2, candidates were required to write three texts for the Internet TV company: an announcement for its website, an email to its staff, and a script for a promotional video for a new cookery show. In addition to identifying relevant information from the texts provided, candidates were required to produce organised and coherent texts that were appropriate to the indicated genre and audience, with concise and precise English. Information on which to base their answers was provided in a Data File with a variety of texts, including emails, a magazine article, a draft storyboard, a chat dialogue, an intranet page, a selection of reviews of training courses as well as the recording.

The candidates' performance is summarised in Table 6:

Table 6: Paper 3 Part B2 results

Task	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
8	19	61.2	19.7
9	17	44.3	22.4
10	17	42.5	25.5

From Table 6 above, with an overall mean of 49.8%, Part B2 proved to be slightly more attainable for this year's candidates than last year. Task 8 was more successfully attempted by candidates, whereas Tasks 9 and 10 were of about the same level of difficulty. The paper proved to be successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates and in terms of its own internal reliability.

Task 8

Candidates' performance on Task 8 was statistically the best among the three tasks, with a mean of 61.2%. In the task, candidates were required to write a website announcement to show the company's support for its chef, William Puddle, after his cooking video had gone viral. Candidates needed to acknowledge and explain a mistake William had made and then explain the three misunderstandings that people had about the events in the video. The task required candidates to synthesise information from a range of sources, including information from the listening input, the Big Cheese Celebrity Food Gossip article and the chat between William Puddle and Archie Li.

Stronger candidates were able to clearly identify and explain the mistake and misunderstandings using concise and precise language. Weaker candidates tended to copy large chunks of exhaustive detail about what happened in the video from the article, often including the subjective language used to criticise William Puddle in that text. This affected the coherence and organisation of ideas and the overall tone of the candidates' texts.

The text needed to have an empathetic, supportive and understanding tone in support of William, as some stronger candidates were able to skilfully establish:

'Recently, our star chef William Puddle has received some criticisms on his recent cooking video. In this short announcement, we would like to show our support to him and clear up some misunderstandings regarding the content of the video.'

Weaker candidates were unable to understand the purpose of the writing and made apologies or even criticised William for the mistake and misunderstandings:

'We are very sorry for the drama and the negative feeling caused by our star chef William Puddle's latest cooking video. He made several unforgivable mistakes. We sincerely apologise for his mistakes, and he has promised he will not make the mistakes again.'

Items 8.4 and 8.6 were the least-well answered as many candidates struggled to extract the relevant information from the article and phrase the misunderstandings using precise and concise language.

Task 9

In Task 9, candidates were required to write an email to all staff to recommend training courses for the coming year. They had to select three training courses based on the requirements mentioned in the listening input and the information from the Data File. The mean score of this task, i.e. 44.3%, showed that candidates found it challenging.

Many candidates were able to give an appropriate subject line which contained the purpose of writing. Stronger candidates started the email with a clear statement of the purpose of the text, which was to recommend three training courses to staff members, and ended it by encouraging the staff to participate in the courses. Weaker candidates produced content limited to only information about the courses without demonstrating the appropriate contextual awareness.

Quite a number of candidates fared worse on selecting the suitable courses for fire safety and food hygiene training (items 9.1 and 9.3). They chose '*The Fire Chef's Manual*' and '*Food Hygiene Basics*' without realising that the former is about '*how to light a campfire*', which is irrelevant to their work, and the latter is not approved by the '*Health Advisory Board (HAB)*', a criterion for choosing the course on food hygiene.

Item 9.7, which was related to each training course counting towards a credit, was one of the most challenging items: many candidates failed to include this in their texts. Better candidates were able to include the other overall benefit, item 9.8 (*'the first ten people who complete all three courses will get an extra day of leave'*) from the recording, whereas weaker candidates tended to include only parts of the item or use clumsy and ungrammatical structures, sometimes inadvertently changing the original meaning of the idea.

Weaker candidates did not end their emails with an appropriate closing statement to encourage the staff to take the three courses, which affected the overall coherence and appropriacy. Stronger candidates were able to achieve this successfully in their own words. For example,

'We highly encourage all of you to take the courses to equip yourself with the skills and knowledge for your work.'

Task 10

Task 10 posed the biggest challenge of the three tasks in Part B2, with a mean score of 42.5%. Candidates were instructed to write a script for a promotional video for the company's new cookery show *Viewer's*

Choice, based on the draft storyboard with comments, the listening input, the chat between William Puddle and Archie Li, and the all staff weekly email from Dante Cruz.

Stronger candidates were able to achieve the goal of creating interest in the show among the viewers by adopting a promotional tone (e.g. *'The long-awaited ground-breaking cooking show, "Viewer's Choice", will be on Teen NetChef TV soon. Are you excited about it?'*). Some even wrote their scripts in the form of a dialogue, adding an extra layer of authenticity. On the other hand, weaker candidates tended to put together the information using formal language as if they were writing an essay.

One of the skills that candidates needed to display in this task was incorporating the short phrases and the ideas from the recording using their own language in their scripts, so as to communicate the target message. Weaker candidates tended to make mistakes at basic levels, making their ideas sometimes incoherent or even unintelligible.

Regarding content, item 10.1, which was from the listening input, was one of the most challenging items for candidates as it contained two parts: the name of the show, '*Viewer's Choice*', plus the reasons for being ground-breaking '*interactive and live*'. Most candidates were able to perform well on the other items stated in the draft storyboard. However, without reading the Data File thoroughly, weaker candidates did not include some of the updates to the storyboard ideas, such as item 10.3 concerning the new co-star, and item 10.6 about voting via the app. Some candidates who seemingly did not understand the purpose of the text even included both the original ideas on the draft storyboard and the updates in their scripts, making the whole text very confusing and difficult to follow.

Recommendations for Part B

To successfully complete the tasks, candidates should study the situation and the given instructions thoroughly to identify the purpose of writing, target audience and task requirements. Having done so, they should draft an outline to guide the flow of the writing. As the information for each task is extracted from sources in the Data File, they should remember that such information was written for a different purpose, and hence they should not just copy from the sources verbatim. Instead, they should identify the relevant ideas and assemble them using their own language in an appropriate text type and tone. It is further recommended for candidates to set aside time to proofread their work to reduce avoidable language and content errors.

It is noted that some candidates had difficulty in jotting down complete notes from the listening input and incorporating them with the information in the Data File to create their own work. Before the recording is played, candidates should orient themselves with the overall context of the tasks and read the given headings on the note-taking sheet to help anticipate what kinds of information they will be presented with. They should also spend some time tidying up their notes immediately after the recording to check if they have taken down the correct information while their memory is still fresh.

Paper 4

Paper 4 resumed this year after a three-year suspension due to COVID-19 restrictions. The number of candidates who attended this paper was 44,428. The examination period lasted eight days and a total of 24 versions of the question papers were used.

The examination was divided into Part A Group Interaction and Part B Individual Response. Candidates were given ten minutes for preparation, eight minutes for the group interaction (six minutes for a group of three candidates) and each candidate was given one minute for the individual response. The discussion tasks for the group interaction were based on short texts of different genres. Candidates were required to perform a variety of functional tasks, such as discussing the pros and cons of a certain topic or issue, making suggestions or choices and solving problems. At the end of the group interaction, each candidate was given one minute to respond to a question asked by the examiner.

Candidates were assessed in four domains: Pronunciation & Delivery; Communication Strategies; Vocabulary & Language Patterns and Ideas & Organisation. This year, the mean scores for each domain (out of a total of 14) were 7.8, 7.7, 7.4 and 7.9 respectively. The percentage mean score was 54.8% and the standard deviation was 17.7%.

Part A Group Interaction

Candidates' performance in terms of the four domains of assessment is discussed below:

Pronunciation and delivery

Strong candidates spoke audibly and fluently with appropriate intonation and stress to enhance their communication. Some candidates spoke too quickly, seemingly in an attempt to appear more fluent. However, this made their speech unnatural and often difficult to follow. Other candidates had difficulty with voice projection, speaking so softly that others struggled to understand and interact with them. Weaker candidates too often read from their note cards, thus negatively affecting the naturalness of their delivery and their ability to effectively interact with others.

Communication strategies

Most candidates showed enthusiasm during the group discussion and many of them were actively engaged. Very few candidates were reported to be completely silent and inactive.

When starting the discussion, it was not uncommon to see candidates speaking at the same time and not giving way when others were trying to speak. Although it is understandable that candidates want to take the initiative and display their English abilities from the outset, being part of a successful discussion in this part of the paper requires candidates to show a willingness to cede when appropriate and to cooperate with the others in the group.

Several examiners commented that a number of candidates did not use appropriate body language to maintain effective interaction, for example, directing their attention towards the examiners instead of towards the other candidates. This resulted in unnatural and less effective interaction. Some candidates spoke too fast or asked questions which were too challenging for other candidates. Candidates should note that being aware of communication breakdown and being able to adapt their language to the situation and to the other candidates in the group are all considered to be essential communication strategies that strong candidates should be able to demonstrate if the situation arises.

Some candidates over-relied on formulaic turn-taking skills, such as the phrase 'I agree with you', without expressing or elaborating on what they agreed with. Other stronger candidates demonstrated that they were actively engaged in the interaction with other candidates by acknowledging what had been said and adding their own personal take on the discussion thus far.

Vocabulary and language patterns

Strong candidates were able to use a range of relevant language patterns, such as relative clauses to further elaborate an idea or give more information; passive voice to stress the receivers of the actions; semi-fixed expressions and so on. Such candidates were also able to use relevant vocabulary to discuss the issue at hand in depth, like 'pandemic', 'global outbreak', 'jab', 'vaccination', 'flu' and 'lockdown'. Likewise, some candidates demonstrated self-correction and reformulation skills naturally in the group interaction. Weaker candidates often resorted to using literal translations from Chinese, e.g. 'open the air-con'. Other typical errors included those related to countable/uncountable nouns (e.g. 'many information', 'vocabularies'); modal verbs (e.g. 'I will watching') and morphology (e.g. 'theft' vs. 'thief'; 'emphasis' vs. 'emphasise'; and 'hardly' vs. 'hard').

Ideas and organisation

Most candidates performed best in this domain. Strong candidates were able to bring in additional relevant ideas from their own knowledge, relating their own experiences to the topic so as to support their views. Such candidates showed an ability to structure their contributions and communicate their ideas effectively. They were also able to substantiate their own ideas and incorporate and adapt ideas from other candidates. Weaker candidates, in contrast, tended to have less originality and relied only on the information given in the text. They were also less likely to add to the responses of others or expand on their initially expressed ideas.

Part B Individual Response

Each candidate was given one minute to respond to an examiner's question, which was based on the group interaction task. Most candidates spoke audibly in this part and were able to give a comprehensible response. Stronger candidates managed the time effectively and were able to respond in a more structured way, often referring to their own personal experience to make their response persuasive. Weaker candidates often repeated the ideas discussed in Part A. A small number of candidates misinterpreted the questions and therefore gave irrelevant responses.

Recommendations

To improve oral skills, candidates should practise both in and outside of the classroom. Candidates should gain more exposure to authentic English and keep themselves up-to-date with current affairs and international issues.

In addition to cultivating a habit of reading and listening to authentic materials, candidates should pay more attention to their delivery and fluency. By speaking audibly and clearly at a natural pace, with appropriate pausing, the listener can receive their message and respond in an appropriate way.

In Part A, candidates do not need to reach an agreement in their discussion but the group interaction must be relevant to the task assigned. The quality of the interaction that takes place, the contribution that each candidate makes, and how each candidate establishes and maintains a good interaction is critical for scoring well. If candidates want to be part of a successful discussion in Part A, they should show a genuine interest in what others have said and not be tied to their notes.

In Part B, candidates can make use of the information derived from the group interaction but may also seek to express new ideas and opinions. They should try to organise their thoughts to the best of their ability and make full use of the time given.

School-based Assessment (SBA)

The requirements for the School-based Assessment remained similar to those of last year. Schools had to submit only one mark from either Part A or Part B and the assessment could be in the form of either an individual presentation or a group interaction.

The total number of students taking part in the SBA this year was 42,531 and the mean of the moderated SBA marks was 66.1% with a standard deviation of 17.7%. According to data provided by the statistical moderation of the marks submitted by participating schools, 81.9% of schools submitted marks that were 'within the expected range', with only 7.2% in the 'slightly higher than expected range' and 8.3% in the 'slightly lower than expected range' categories. A very small percentage of schools gave scores which were 'higher than expected' (1.5%) or 'much higher than expected' (0.5%). With reference to the moderation statistics, the figures for schools who fell 'within the expected range' have remained relatively constant which indicates that the SBA component is a reliable and accurate mode of assessment and that teacher-assessors are able to assess their students appropriately, with only less than 10% being either too lenient or too strict respectively.

General Comments

As face-to-face teaching resumed this school year, slightly more schools chose to use group interaction as the mode of assessment for SBA. Nonetheless, the majority of the schools still opted to use individual presentations. There was a slight improvement in the overall performance of the students and the majority of the students were able to complete the set tasks.

Students who scored the top marks gave clear, fluent and well-organised individual presentations with good ideas and appropriate use of vocabulary and language patterns. They had accurate pronunciation and used appropriate intonation to enhance their presentations. They were confident and used appropriate body language to display audience awareness and to engage the audience's interest. Some of them gave appropriate responses when follow-up questions were asked by the audience or the teacher-assessors but in a few cases, it seemed that the presenters expected the questions and had prepared the answers

beforehand. Most of the students were able to complete their presentations within the given time limit of 3 to 5 minutes while a small proportion gave presentations of over 7 minutes.

Nearly all of the students in the lower range gave individual presentations. These students had more difficulty in expressing their ideas clearly, fluently and accurately. Endings of words and some sound clusters were either mispronounced or omitted and they were unable to make use of appropriate intonation. They also had limited vocabulary and made frequent mistakes in the usage of personal pronouns, agreement and sentence structures. A few of the common mistakes made were 'when he back home'; 'I am going to talking about'; and 'In my opinion, I think'. All of these problems made it difficult for the listeners to understand what was being said, thus resulting in lower scores. A few of the presentations were very short, being only about one to one and a half minutes, much shorter than the required time limit of 3 to 5 minutes.

Group interactions were chosen as the mode of assessment by a limited number of schools and the students were mainly in the middle and high range of the spectrum. The more proficient students were able to take an active part in the group interactions and were able to make use of appropriate communication strategies to ensure that the interactions were carried out effectively and smoothly. They listened to other members and were able to elaborate and build on what the other members were saying accurately and fluently so that the group interactions were coherent and easy to follow. Slightly weaker students tended to read from their note cards and did not always listen to the other members. As a result, the group interactions were less coherent. In some extreme cases, instead of actually responding to and interacting with each other, each member of the group simply read out their written scripts regardless of what had been said by the other members so the group interaction was made up of four disconnected individual presentations.

Reading aloud from note cards and memorisation were still common in individual presentations and even in some group interactions. In fact, there was a slight increase in such cases compared to those of last year despite the fact that it had been mentioned in nearly all of the previous reports that such cases should not be allowed. It should be remembered that the aim of the SBA is to assess students' oral proficiency and not their ability to read aloud or memorise.

Recommendations

In order to achieve higher scores in the SBA, students should *not* resort to reading aloud or reciting a written script. They should also pay attention to the time limit for individual presentations and adhere to it strictly.

Students with a high standard of English can make further improvement by developing a wider range of vocabulary and language patterns, and using them accurately and appropriately whenever possible so that they can use them naturally and fluently during assessments. They could also pay attention to accurate pronunciation, pacing and the use of intonation to enhance their speeches, and find ways to make them more interesting in order to engage the audience more. Finally, they could check that the ideas that they wish to convey are clear and logical with appropriate elaboration and examples to make them more convincing and interesting.

Students in the mid and low range of the spectrum can pay more attention to their pronunciation and language patterns. They should make use of familiar vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to their English standard so that their speeches are clear and easy to understand. They could pay attention to the common types of mistakes that they often make and focus on one or two types at a time and work on eliminating them. As for pronunciation, they can again make a list of the words they commonly use and check their correct pronunciation using online dictionaries. They could practise pronouncing these words until they are able to say and use them accurately and naturally. One other thing that they can do to improve their presentation skills is to work on organisation skills. A clear introduction, body and conclusion are always beneficial and aid the audience in understanding the overall organisation of the presentation. Students should keep their ideas simple and straightforward and make sure that each main idea is developed with the use of further details and examples. The most important thing is that lower ability students should not give up easily. If they are willing to make an effort, they will make improvements and their scores will improve.

Finally, in order to achieve higher scores in group interactions, every member has to do their part. Students need to take an active part and contribute to the discussion by listening to what other members are saying and building on each other's ideas so that the discussion can become a coherent whole. Higher ability students may need to speak a bit slower if there are less capable students in the group, and encourage them to contribute by giving them opportunities to speak, asking them direct questions and helping them out when necessary. Lower ability students need to help to sustain the interaction by expressing their ideas, asking and answering questions whenever possible.

Appendix 1: Conversion tables between the easier section and more difficult section of Papers 1B and 3B

There were two parts in Papers 1 and 3. Candidates were required to answer ALL questions in Part A. In Part B, candidates could choose EITHER Part B1 (easier section) OR Part B2 (more difficult section). In the grading process, the marks for Part B1 were converted to the marks on the scale for Part B2 using the tables on the next page. For example, if we refer to the conversion table for Paper 1B, a score of 20 marks scored by a candidate taking Part 1B1 would be converted to 7 marks on the 1B2 scale.

These tables were generated using the percentile-equating method as described in the booklet ‘Grading Procedures and Standards-referenced Reporting in the HKDSE Examination’, which can be found on the HKEAA website (https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/Media/Leaflets/HKDSE_SRR_A4booklet_Mar2018.pdf).

Conversion tables between the easier section and more difficult section of Papers 1B and 3B.

Paper 1B

1B1 (easier)	1B2 (more difficult)
0	0
1	0
2	1
3	1
4	2
5	2
6	3
7	3
8	3
9	4
10	4
11	4
12	4
13	5
14	5
15	5
16	6
17	6
18	6
19	7
20	7
21	7
22	8
23	8
24	9
25	9
26	10
27	10
28	11
29	12
30	13
31	14
32	15
33	17
34	19
35	21
36	23
37	25
38	27
39	30
40	33
41	36
42	39

Paper 3B

3B1 (easier)	3B2 (more difficult)
0	0
1	1
2	2
3	2
4	2
5	3
6	3
7	3
8	4
9	4
10	4
11	5
12	5
13	5
14	6
15	6
16	6
17	7
18	7
19	7
20	8
21	8
22	9
23	9
24	10
25	10
26	11
27	12
28	12
29	13
30	14
31	14
32	15
33	16
34	16
35	17
36	18
37	19
38	20
39	21
40	22
41	23
42	25

Paper 3B

3B1 (easier)	3B2 (more difficult)
43	26
44	28
45	29
46	31
47	32
48	34
49	36
50	38
51	40
52	43
53	46