

	I. Pronunciation & delivery	II. Communication strategies	III. Vocabulary & language patterns	IV. Ideas & organization
3	Poor voice projection may cause difficulties for the listener. Pronounces simple sounds clearly but may have some problems with sound clusters. Less common words may be misunderstood unless supported by contextual meaning. Uses intonation and pacing sufficiently well to be understood by a supportive listener.	Uses some features of body language to support communication. Uses some simple strategies to participate in, and occasionally initiate, interaction mainly by using formulaic expressions.	Usually makes appropriate use of simple vocabulary. Sometimes uses simple language patterns accurately and appropriately. Errors do not usually impede communication. May show some ability to self correct but done inconsistently or only partially successfully.	Expresses some relevant ideas clearly. These may be linked. Responds to some simple questions and may expand on these if asked directly.
2	PRODUCTION MAY BE TOO LIMITED TO ALLOW ACCURATE AWARDING OF HIGHER MARKS Poor voice projection may cause difficulties for listener. Pronounces simple sounds and some sound clusters well enough to be understood most of the time. Produces familiar stretches of language with sufficiently appropriate intonation and pacing to be understood.	Uses restricted features of body language when prompted to respond. Uses some simple formulaic expressions, generally in response to others. Participates briefly in conversation, generally when prompted, but tends to use formulaic expressions to do so.	Makes appropriate use of vocabulary from limited and familiar range, often derived from context. May use some very basic language patterns accurately in brief exchanges. Errors may impede communication. May be unable to self correct.	Attempts to express simple relevant ideas, sometimes successfully. Attempts to expand on some responses briefly. Makes some contribution when prompted.
1	Poor voice projection is likely to be a problem. Pronounces some simple and common words accurately enough to be understood. Uses intonation appropriately in the most familiar of words and phrases. Hesitant speech is likely to be a problem.	Uses restricted features of body language when prompted to respond. Can use only simple and narrowly-restricted formulaic expressions, and only to respond to others.	Makes use of a narrow range of simple vocabulary, sometimes appropriately. Uses a narrow range of language patterns, usually in short and rehearsed utterances. Errors often impede communication.	Occasionally produces brief ideas relevant to the topic. Makes some brief responses when prompted.
0	Does not produce any comprehensible English speech.	Does not use any interactional strategies.	Does not produce recognizable words or sequences.	Does not produce relevant material.

Candidates' Performance

Paper 1

Paper 1 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 easiest section, while Part B2 was designed to be the most difficult section. Around 65.08% of candidates chose to do Part B1 while around 34.92% chose to do Part B2 (see Appendix 1 for the conversion table between Part B1 and Part B2).

Overall results

A statistical analysis of Paper 1 was carried out¹. The overall results are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Paper 1 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	S.D. (%)
Part A	47	55.4	18.7
Part B1	45	40.9	18.9
Part B2	46	60.6	17.7

Part A

There was one reading passage for Part A, a newspaper article about a café in Thailand that offers board games for patrons to play rather than computer-based games. The questions were designed to include a range of difficulty covering all levels, 1 – 5, of the HKDSE Reading Descriptors. The percentage of candidates correctly answering individual items ranged from 7% to 89%.

Some of the easiest questions were True/False/Not Given type questions when the specific information required was explicitly given in the text (e.g. Q8). The cloze passage, which has traditionally been one of the more difficult tasks to complete, included some questions which could be easily answered by finding straightforward facts in the reading text (e.g. Q18.1, 18.10, 18.11 and 18.12). Some short answer questions (e.g. Q12), which required scanning the text for explicitly stated information also proved to be quite easy.

On the surface, question 13 may appear to be quite easy, requiring candidates to match pictures to names of games given in the text. However, this task required quite sophisticated interpretation of the descriptions of the games given in the text, in addition to working out which of the four games was not mentioned in the text. These four items (Q13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4) were answered correctly by 52%, 50%, 30% and 48% of candidates, respectively.

Some of the multiple-choice questions were among the most difficult. For example, question 2 required candidates to infer and interpret the meaning of 'a huge sigh of relief'. Around 26% of candidates were able to answer this question correctly. For question 3, candidates had to infer what the main purpose of paragraph 2 was. This item proved challenging because the paragraph only consisted of three short sentences written in a highly journalistic style. Around 51% of candidates were able to answer this question correctly. Question 17 tested overall comprehension of the passage by asking candidates to choose the best subtitle for the article. Around 45% of candidates were able to identify the correct subtitle. All three of these multiple-choice questions discriminated well between strong and weak candidates.

The open-ended response type questions required a mix of specific information from the text and some inferencing and interpretation, (e.g. Q16, Q19, Q20). Marks were given for answers if the correct message was conveyed, regardless of grammatical errors. However, candidates were not given a mark for copying whole sentences that did not directly answer the question. For question 19, candidates were required to provide an explanation of why board games were making a comeback. Answers had to be supported by information given from the text, e.g. people wanted to slow down the pace of life, people were utterly bored of playing computer games, etc. Understanding the meaning of 'comeback' was critical to providing a relevant and correct response. To earn a mark, answers had to justify why board games were regaining popularity. An answer such as, 'They improve children's vocabulary' would not be considered correct because it does not address the idea of making a comeback. For question 20, candidates had to give one reason for and against the argument that board games can compete with computer games.

¹ Figures provided for test items in these reports are taken from the on screen marking system. There may be slight variations between these figures and the actual final scores.

Answers had to give a clear advantage of how board games are more superior than computer games, and vice versa. For example, a correct answer would be 'board games are more interactive or social than playing computer games'; 'computer games are more exciting than board games because they have special effects/animation'. However, if candidates wrote, 'There is a wide selection of board games; computer games are more exciting than board games', it would not be considered to be correct because no justification is given.

Overall

Weaker candidates were able to gain some marks by answering questions that required finding clearly stated information in the text. Other questions required understanding of the whole text and interpretation of the information given. It is therefore recommended that candidates read the whole text to understand the overall gist in addition to scanning the text for specific information. In open-ended questions, candidates who gave direct answers tended to perform better than candidates who indiscriminately copied whole chunks of text from the passage. It is therefore recommended that when answering open-ended questions, candidates use their own words to convey the message as best as they can, even though they take the risk of making grammar errors.

Part B1

The mean score of 40.9% can be accounted for by the ability level of the cohort attempting this section, and the fact that some of the items perhaps proved too challenging for even the better candidates.

The text was taken from a webpage about volunteers making a patchwork quilt as a campaign to raise awareness of environmental issues. Although the concept of campaigns to raise awareness is familiar for most students, making a patchwork quilt was less so.

The question types for this section included sequencing, True/False/Not Given, multiple-choice, referencing, cloze, short-response and different kinds of matching, e.g. matching sub-headings to sections of the text.

Some of the most difficult questions involved identifying the main theme of the text. Question 23 was a short response type question which required candidates to define a 'pledge patch' – with both the meaning of 'pledge' and 'patch' included in the answer. This information was not stated in one sentence and therefore candidates had to read the whole of paragraph 2 and select the relevant pieces of information to construct a response. Direct copying of chunks of text from paragraph 2 was not possible without rephrasing the information to answer the question correctly. Only 14% of candidates were given a mark for this question.

Question 36, sequencing events, required candidates to find information from different parts of the text and to put them in order. This task was quite challenging as it required a close reading of the text. Some candidates confused the order of steps 3 and 4. Only 23% of candidates were able to answer this question correctly.

Question 34, True/False/Not Given, required relatively straightforward inferencing, with 59% to 68% of candidates scoring a mark for questions 34.1 to 34.4.

The multiple-choice questions included questions on the main theme of the text, the main idea of a paragraph, vocabulary, the writer's tone, and some specific information. Question 39, choosing the best alternative title for the text, was answered correctly by 52% of candidates. Question 28, choosing the best adjective to describe the speaker's attitude was answered correctly by 37% of candidates. The vocabulary question (Q25) asking for the best synonym for 'intrigue' was answered correctly by only 25% of candidates. All of the multiple-choice questions discriminated well.

Question 30 required candidates to match five statements to the children taking part in the campaign. This required candidates to make straightforward inferences based on the statements the children made on their 'pledge patches'. A total of five marks was given for this question and the mean score ranged from 42% to 73%.

Question 37 required candidates to match five sub-headings to sections of the text. There was a total of five marks for this question. The percentage of candidates getting these items correct ranged from 40% to 54%.

Question 32 was a short-response type question for which the information was quite explicitly stated. There were four marks for this question, with a mean score ranging between 57% and 73%.

Overall

Overall, many of the questions in this section seemed to be challenging for the majority of candidates. Questions requiring explicitly stated information for the answers were generally well answered while questions which required more inferencing were found to be rather difficult. A very small number of candidates who attempted Part B1 scored very high marks.

Part B2

There were two reading passages in this part, with the first text serving as an introduction to the second. The topic of both passages was about the theme of parenting as presented in the book *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* by Amy Chua. The first text was a short book review, which introduced the main ideas of the book and the controversy caused by it. The second text was a magazine article arguing that the 'Tiger Mom' parenting style, which originated from the East, is in fact, not common among the (middle-class) mainland Chinese today.

This section contained more short-response or open-ended questions than Part A or Part B1. Approximately half of the questions were of this type. Other question types included multiple-choice, True/False/Not Given, sequencing, vocabulary, referencing and cloze. The objective items in this section (multiple-choice, True/False/Not Given, reference and vocabulary questions) generally had higher mean scores (50% – 85%).

Most of the short-response and open-ended questions required inferencing and strictly copying sections of the text did not guarantee that candidates answered the question correctly. Many questions were also about the main theme of the passage. Sometimes answers could only be found by reading through a series of sentences. Candidates' ability to understand the whole passage and make inferences was therefore very important in achieving success. The mean scores of these question types were quite varied, ranging from about 30% to about 70%. For example, question 70: *According to the passage, Why is there no 'Bill Gates of China'?* directed candidates to this part of the reading passage: 'Many young Chinese lament there is no Bill Gates of China'. However, to find the answer to question 70, candidates would have to read back to the previous paragraph to infer that this is because 'creativity is stifled' rather than reading the sentences which follow on in the same paragraph. Only 30% of candidates were given a mark for this question. By contrast, the answer to question 71: *According to the passage, why do many Chinese-born scientists go to work in the West?* was more explicitly stated in the text, and the mean score for this question was 68%.

Open-ended questions which required students to give their own opinions, still required candidates to use the information given in the text. An example of this is question 73: *Do you agree that the key to success is a 'hybrid of East and West'? Explain.* Candidates, of course, could agree or disagree. However, the reasons given had to be taken from the text, making reference to the pressure and guidance given by parents in the 'Eastern system' and the promotion of creativity in the 'Western system'. Less specific answers like 'compromise is best' were not given a mark. Only 33% of candidates were given a mark for this question.

Overall

Overall, this section showed that candidates did less well on the short-response and open-ended questions than other question types and less well when the information was not explicitly stated. This is to be expected, but for higher levels of 4 and 5, better inferencing skills and directly answering the question with little copying of the text is required.

Recommendations

As recommended above, candidates should gain an understanding of the whole text before answering individual questions. They should attempt to answer the open-ended questions in their own words and make sure they directly answer the question without adding extraneous irrelevant information. Marks will be awarded if the correct meaning is given clearly enough, despite grammatical or spelling errors. If the answer to a short-response question is explicitly stated in the text, candidates should try to copy only what is relevant to answering the question.

At the higher levels, candidates will be expected to make inferences and to put together pieces of information from different parts of the text. Candidates may be required to make inferences about attitudes and arguments in the text and interpret figurative language. To prepare for vocabulary questions, candidates should practise deducing meaning from context.

Candidates should choose carefully which Part B (Part B1 or Part B2) they will attempt in the exam. Anyone hoping to achieve a Level 5 must attempt Part B2. Candidates attempting Part B1 will be capped at Level 4 for the grading of this component.

Paper 2

Part A

Paper 2 Part A consisted of a short guided writing task which asked candidates to complete four sections of a feature article. They were to imagine they were a famous news reporter asked by their old secondary school to write about their life as a news reporter for the school magazine. Candidates were given three sub-headings to guide their writing while the fourth section was left open for students to create their own sub-heading and response. Candidates were expected to produce a piece of writing of about 200 words in a style and format appropriate to a feature article read by readers of the school magazine.

The mean score was 11.40 (based on a full mark of 21), i.e. 54.3%, and the standard deviation was 21.3%. Candidates' overall performance was fair. The marking reliability coefficient was 0.84 and the third marking rate 11.9%, which indicated markers were generally consistent in giving scores.

To score well in this part of the paper, the following features were felt to be important:

- relevant information should be presented in the first three sections where a sub-heading was already given;
- information from one section should not be repeated in another section;
- the information in the feature article should be concise and informative;
- the register, tone, style and overall structure should be appropriate for a feature article.

Most candidates were able to use the information given in the rubric to complete the feature article. However, the following problems were observed:

- some candidates did not write the feature article as if they were news reporters and instead imagined themselves as students, teachers or celebrities;
- some candidates did not include a sub-heading for the fourth section of the feature article;
- some candidates wrote too much, producing texts which read more like an essay rather than a feature article. This demonstrated a weakness in audience awareness.

General comments

Content

For content to be totally relevant, candidates had to provide a response which accurately answered the sub-heading. In the first sub-heading, candidates had to identify *one* aspect of the job they liked best and elaborate on why this was the best part of the job. For example, *'I think the best part of my job is that I can travel around the world'*. The same principle applied for the second sub-heading – candidates had to identify *one* event or situation which represented the biggest challenge they had ever faced on the job, e.g. reporting on a major event or disaster, such as a typhoon, SARS, etc. Candidates who wrote about what they liked about their job in general (e.g. *'reporting the news is very important'*) or general challenges/difficulties faced by reporters (e.g. *'reporters have to work long hours'*) did not achieve full marks for content.

Candidates generally performed best in the third section, 'My school days'. Typical answers included talking about a favourite teacher, memorable school activities and *'What I was like as a student'*. Some candidates gave a description of the school or wrote about the school's Open Day without making any links to the context of the question. Such answers were not considered entirely relevant. For example, *'My school's name is Hong Kong Secondary School. It was built in 1999.'*

For the final sub-heading, common content points included giving general life advice (e.g. *'Follow your dreams...'*) or discussing future career goals (e.g. *'I hope to become an international reporter one day'*). Scores were awarded on the appropriateness and creativity of the sub-heading, and the relevancy of the response to the sub-heading.

Weaker scripts only partially satisfied the requirements of the question, perhaps missing out a section of the article, or using the final section to merely restate what had already been said elsewhere. Stronger scripts were able to show creativity and imagination, particularly in the section on the biggest challenge the news reporter had ever faced, where students wrote about challenging interviewees and working conditions.

Language

Different tenses could be elicited from the sub-headings. For the first sub-heading, candidates should have used the present tense to discuss the best part of the job. For the second and third sub-heading, the past tense should have been used. Some candidates provided correct content but used the wrong tense, e.g. *'When I study at secondary school, I loves chatting with classmates and teachers'*.

Lower level scripts displayed problems with spelling and grammatical errors in simple sentence structures with few, if any, examples of complex sentence structures. More complex language was often restricted to inappropriate clichés such as *'work hard, play hard'*. Strong scripts and the top-scoring scripts were differentiated by the appropriacy of their sentence structure, the vocabulary chosen and the register and style of the text. For example, *'I love doing interviews as they give me opportunities to chat with different people and find out more about their personal lives'* demonstrated accurate grammar, well-chosen vocabulary and appropriate register.

Organization

As this was a guided writing task, some of the paragraphing had already been given in the form of sub-headings. Sophisticated organization, therefore, was demonstrated by candidates who linked ideas within paragraphs and used appropriate devices to achieve cohesion and coherence. Sophisticated cohesion and overall coherence could be achieved without recourse to linking words through the use of lexical substitution, e.g. *The best part of my job is the travelling. Not many people get paid to go somewhere strange.'* Another example of sophisticated use of cohesive ties was the use of an ellipsis, e.g. *'When I was offered a place to study journalism at HKBU, I said yes. Who wouldn't?'* (study journalism at HKBU). However, use of these forms of cohesion were not frequently observed. More commonly-used forms of cohesion were formal conjunctions or linking words such as *'Furthermore, I had fruitful school days'*, *'Moreover, I have faced a huge challenge in my job'*. These were inappropriate for a feature article. Weaker scripts also contained many examples of fuzzy cohesion where it was unclear what words like *'it'* and *'that'* were referring to.

Recommendations

The short writing task tests candidates' ability to write concisely and appropriately to specific text-types. Candidates are recommended to read many different kinds of texts so that they can become more aware of how text types differ and better approximate the kind of language that should be used for each text-type.

Candidates are also recommended to plan their work carefully to avoid repetition and redundancy and to ensure that they use an appropriate register, tone and style. The use of grammar and vocabulary appropriate for the task separates the best candidates from those that write to impress examiners. The best examples of writing which entirely fulfilled the task requirements were scripts that were totally relevant but developed concisely. Candidates who needed to write much longer texts to achieve the same purpose should work towards expressing their ideas in fewer words without compromising the sophistication of their expression.

Part B

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

Candidates' work was assessed according to three domains: Content, Language and Organization. The mean score was 10.77 (based on a full mark of 21), i.e. 51.3%, and the standard deviation was 23.2%. The mean score achieved out of a full mark of 21 for each question is provided in the table below.

Question	Topic	Mean
2	Sports Communication	9.65
3	Drama	9.57
4	Poems and Songs	8.15
5	Debating	12.28
6	Popular Culture	13.14
7	Short Stories	8.95
8	Workplace Communication	10.25
9	Social Issues	12.42

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

Paper 1B		Paper 3B	
1B1 (easier)	1B2 (more difficult)	3B1 (easier)	3B2 (more difficult)
0	0	0	0
1	1	1	0
2	2	2	1
3	2	3	1
4	3	4	1
5	4	5	1
6	4	6	2
7	5	7	2
8	5	8	2
9	6	9	2
10	6	10	3
11	7	11	3
12	8	12	3
13	8	13	4
14	9	14	4
15	10	15	4
16	11	16	4
17	12	17	5
18	13	18	5
19	14	19	5
20	15	20	6
21	16	21	6
22	18	22	7
23	19	23	8
24	20	24	8
25	21	25	9
26	22	26	10
27	24	27	11
28	25	28	12
29	26	29	14
30	27	30	15
31	29	31	16
32	30	32	18
33	31	33	19
34	32	34	21
35	34	35	22
36	35	36	23
37	36	37	25
38	38	38	26
39	39	39	28
40	40	40	29
41	42	41	31
42	43	42	32
43	45	43	34
		44	36
		45	39
		46	42

Acknowledgements

Material from the following publications has been used in question papers in this volume:

Asiaone.com 'Doctors say more men are embracing plastic surgery' by Amanda Yong and Rennie Whang (24 Oct 2011)
<http://www.asiaone.com/print/Health/Health%2BMatters/Story/A1Story20111024-306821.html>

BBC.co.uk 'Toy town: Hong Kong's toy makers seek wider recognition' by Katie Hunt (22 Dec 2011)
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-16243728>

Blacklove and Marriage.com <http://www.blackloveandmarriage.com/2011/04/the-resurrection-of-the-black-family/>

Blogspot.hk <http://anodhyneforlife.blogspot.com/>

Booklist on Amazon.com A Book review of 'Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother' by Colleen Mondor
http://www.amazon.com/Battle-Hymn-Tiger-Mother-Chua/dp/product-description/1594202842/ref=dp_proddesc_0?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books

Booklore <http://www.booklore.co.uk/>

China Daily 'Clockenflap, ticking toward the future' by Doug Meigs (30 Dec 2011)
<http://www.chinadailyapac.com/article/clockenflap-ticking-toward-future>

China Daily (US Edition) 'Packaging reflects changing tastes' by Gan Tian (22 Sept 2010)
http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/2010-09/22/content_11337369.htm

Chua Chu Kang Secondary School http://www.chuachukangsec.moe.edu.sg/wbn/slot/u1359/cca/band/Photo_for_NBC.jpg

Costumeplays.net 'Cosplay in Chinese Culture' (25 Feb 2012)
<http://www.costumeplays.net/2011/05/cosplay-in-chinese-culture.html>

Ehomeupgrade.com <http://www.ehomeupgrade.com/2009/11/20/second-generation-pogoplug-unveiled/>

Ewhoknow.com <http://www.ewhoknow.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/luxury-cars.jpg>

Flickr.com http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3548/3313734620_23a4295734.jpg

Flickrriver.com <http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/rawbeanladen/sets/>

Fortune STAR Media Limited 'Stephen Chow'
http://www.fortunestarentertainment.com/stephen_chow.htm

Friends of the Earth 'Take a Break Low Carbon Action Scheme'
http://www.foe.org.hk/welcome/geten.asp?language=en&id_path=1,7,26,2453,4437

Garryduff Primary School 'Principal's Welcome' (Accessed in Nov 2011)
<http://garryduffps.org/Principal%27s%20welcome.html>

Globetrotterdiaries.com <http://globetrotterdiaries.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/japanese-food-presentation.jpg>

Hiew's Boardgame Blog <http://hiewandboardgames.blogspot.com/2010/09/dixit.html>

HK Magazine 'Restaurant Reviews (La Bodega)' (30 Sept 2011)

Homeexchange.com 'My place or yours' by Michelle Fei (21 Dec 2010)
<http://www.homeexchange.com/web/1/pdf/chinadaily.pdf>

Learn4good.com http://static.learn4good.com/schools/frontend/img/contact_form_img/0/contact_form_66.jpg

Newsweek 'The "Chinese Mom" Backlash' by Melinda Liu (January 2011)
<http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2011/01/18/the-chinese-mom-backlash.html>

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Paper 2

Part A

Paper 2 Part A consisted of a short guided writing task which asked candidates to complete four sections of a feature article. They were to imagine they were a famous news reporter asked by their old secondary school to write about their life as a news reporter for the school magazine. Candidates were given three sub-headings to guide their writing while the fourth section was left open for students to create their own sub-heading and response. Candidates were expected to produce a piece of writing of about 200 words in a style and format appropriate to a feature article read by readers of the school magazine.

The mean score was 11.40 (based on a full mark of 21), i.e. 54.3%, and the standard deviation was 21.3%. Candidates' overall performance was fair. The marking reliability coefficient was 0.84 and the third marking rate 11.9%, which indicated markers were generally consistent in giving scores.

To score well in this part of the paper, the following features were felt to be important:

- relevant information should be presented in the first three sections where a sub-heading was already given;
- information from one section should not be repeated in another section;
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- the register, tone, style and overall structure should be appropriate for a feature article.

Most candidates were able to use the information given in the rubric to complete the feature article. However, the following problems were observed:

- some candidates did not write the feature article as if they were news reporters and instead imagined themselves as students, teachers or celebrities;
- some candidates did not include a sub-heading for the fourth section of the feature article;
- some candidates wrote too much, producing texts which read more like an essay rather than a feature article. This demonstrated a weakness in audience awareness.

General comments

Content

For content to be totally relevant, candidates had to provide a response which accurately answered the sub-heading. In the first sub-heading, candidates had to identify *one* aspect of the job they liked best and elaborate on why this was the best part of the job. For example, *'I think the best part of my job is that I can travel around the world'*. The same principle applied for the second sub-heading – candidates had to identify *one* event or situation which represented the biggest challenge they had ever faced on the job, e.g. reporting on a major event or disaster, such as a typhoon, SARS, etc. Candidates who wrote about what they liked about their job in general (e.g. *'reporting the news is very important'*) or general challenges/difficulties faced by reporters (e.g. *'reporters have to work long hours'*) did not achieve full marks for content.

Candidates generally performed best in the third section, 'My school days'. Typical answers included talking about a favourite teacher, memorable school activities and *'What I was like as a student'*. Some candidates gave a description of the school or wrote about the school's Open Day without making any links to the context of the question. Such answers were not considered entirely relevant. For example, *'My school's name is Hong Kong Secondary School. It was built in 1999.'*

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Content

For content to be totally relevant, candidates had to provide a response which accurately answered the sub-heading. In the first sub-heading, candidates had to identify *one* aspect of the job they liked best and elaborate on why this was the best part of the job. For example, 'I think the best part of my job is that I can travel around the world'. The same principle applied for the second sub-heading – candidates had to identify *one* event or situation which represented the biggest challenge they had ever faced on the job, e.g. reporting on a major event or disaster, such as a typhoon, SARS, etc. Candidates who wrote about what they liked about their job in general (e.g. 'reporting the news is very important') or general challenges/difficulties faced by reporters (e.g. 'reporters have to work long hours') did not achieve full marks for content.

Candidates generally performed best in the third section, 'My school days'. Typical answers included talking about a favourite teacher, memorable school activities and 'What I was like as a student'. Some candidates gave a description of the school or wrote about the school's Open Day without making any links to the context of the question. Such answers were not considered entirely relevant. For example, 'My school's name is Hong Kong Secondary School. It was built in 1999.'

For the final sub-heading, common content points included giving general life advice (e.g. 'Follow your dreams...') or discussing future career goals (e.g. 'I hope to become an international reporter one day'). Scores were awarded on the appropriateness and creativity of the sub-heading, and the relevancy of the response to the sub-heading.

Weaker scripts only partially satisfied the requirements of the question, perhaps missing out a section of the article, or using the final section to merely restate what had already been said elsewhere. Stronger scripts were able to show creativity and imagination, particularly in the section on the biggest challenge the news reporter had ever faced, where students wrote about challenging interviewees and working conditions.

Language

Different tenses could be elicited from the sub-headings. For the first sub-heading, candidates should have used the present tense to discuss the best part of the job. For the second and third sub-heading, the past tense should have been used. Some candidates provided correct content but used the wrong tense, e.g. 'When I study at secondary school, I loves chatting with classmates and teachers'.

Lower level scripts displayed problems with spelling and grammatical errors in simple sentence structures with few, if any, examples of complex sentence structures. More complex language was often restricted to inappropriate clichés such as 'work hard, play hard'. Strong scripts and the top-scoring scripts were differentiated by the appropriacy of their sentence structure, the vocabulary chosen and the register and style of the text. For example, 'I love doing interviews as they give me opportunities to chat with different people and find out more about their personal lives' demonstrated accurate grammar, well-chosen vocabulary and appropriate register.

Organization

As this was a guided writing task, some of the paragraphing had already been given in the form of sub-headings. Sophisticated organization, therefore, was demonstrated by candidates who linked ideas within paragraphs and used appropriate devices to achieve cohesion and coherence. Sophisticated cohesion and overall coherence could be achieved without recourse to linking words through the use of lexical substitution, e.g. 'The best part of my job is the travelling. Not many people get paid to go somewhere strange.' Another example of sophisticated use of cohesive ties was the use of an ellipsis, e.g. 'When I was offered a place to study journalism at HKBU, I said yes. Who wouldn't?' (study journalism at HKBU). However, use of these forms of cohesion were not frequently observed. More commonly-used forms of cohesion were formal conjunctions or linking words such as 'Furthermore, I had fruitful school days', 'Moreover, I have faced a huge challenge in my job'. These were inappropriate for a feature article. Weaker scripts also contained many examples of fuzzy cohesion where it was unclear what words like 'it' and 'that' were referring to.

Recommendations

The short writing task tests candidates' ability to write concisely and appropriately to specific text-types. Candidates are recommended to read many different kinds of texts so that they can become more aware of how text types differ and better approximate the kind of language that should be used for each text-type.

Candidates are also recommended to plan their work carefully to avoid repetition and redundancy and to ensure that they use an appropriate register, tone and style. The use of grammar and vocabulary appropriate for the task separates the best candidates from those that write to impress examiners. The best examples of writing which entirely fulfilled the task requirements were scripts that were totally relevant but developed concisely. Candidates who needed to write much longer texts to achieve the same purpose should work towards expressing their ideas in fewer words without compromising the sophistication of their expression.

Part B

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

Candidates' work was assessed according to three domains: Content, Language and Organization. The mean score was 10.77 (based on a full mark of 21), i.e. 51.3%, and the standard deviation was 23.2%. The mean score achieved out of a full mark of 21 for each question is provided in the table below.

Question	Topic	Mean
2	Sports Communication	9.65
3	Drama	9.57
4	Poems and Songs	8.15
5	Debating	12.28
6	Popular Culture	13.14
7	Short Stories	8.95
8	Workplace Communication	10.25
9	Social Issues	12.42

It should be noted that a large number of candidates wrote the wrong question number, probably because they were unaware that the first question of this Part was numbered 2, the second 3, and so forth. Despite such an oversight, their scores remained unaffected.

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

Content

Question	Popularity (%)	Comments
2 (Sports Communication)	14.1	Responses to this question generally demonstrated attempts to assess the value of both virtual sports and real sports before formulating a conclusion. What distinguished the better from the less effective pieces was the level of discernment and validity of their evaluation. For example, online forum entries peppered with tenuous claims like virtual sports are more dangerous than real sports because one could easily sprain his/her wrist working the remote control did not score highly. A number of weak scripts also made the mistake of misconstruing <i>Health and Fitness eMag</i> and 'virtual sports versus real sports' as some kind of online sports game.
3 (Drama)	7.8	Most candidates found the question accessible and addressed it adequately. Answers comprising a broad coverage of arguments for the educational value of drama drawn from personal experiences were received with much greater favour than mere lists or a fusion of formal and nonchalant statements about its benefits as a pedagogical tool.
4 (Poems and Songs)	8.8	There were quite a number of insipid portrayals of the band's first performance as well as uneven accounts emphasizing one or two instead of all aspects of the question, i.e. describing how the blogger as lead singer felt, the atmosphere of the occasion or the things that could be improved. Though by far in the minority, the most successful pieces showed the candidates' ability to marshal their knowledge of pop music, language skills and creativity to generate highly engaging and lively writing.
5 (Debating)	8.5	Most candidates coped adequately with the question and wrote speeches that took into full account what the question asked, i.e. explaining the activities of the debating club, the benefits of being a member and the importance of debating in life. Some responses were less balanced, often treating either one or two of these aspects in a cursory way, while deficient scripts were mostly off-topic or contained few valid points. The best answers combined a rich content with a persuasive pitch.
6 (Popular Culture)	7.3	This question was generally well-tackled and successful at getting candidates to express their views on the increasing popularity of cosmetic surgery and obsession with physical beauty. Most were inclined to argue against these trends, but there was no lack of supporters defending them. In either case, the strong candidates were able to justify their position with sound reasons and examples (often based on real-life experiences), demonstrating their knowledge of social and current affairs. Some average scripts tended to be less well-developed in content; others were less critical, merely opting to outline reasons for the growing obsession with physical beauty in society. Sweeping generalizations, stereotypes and flawed logic (e.g. people in Hong Kong still 'criticize the ugly and applaud the beauty', Asians tend to have small eyes, genetically modified foods are made to achieve 'perfection in physical beauty') were also evident, and reliance on these invariably confined candidates to lower achievement levels.
7 (Short Stories)	10.9	A substantial number of the stories candidates produced were pedestrian and somewhat disappointing. Predictable storylines (of, for example, the brother who was driving an expensive sports car turning out to be just a chauffeur or running errands in it for his boss) abounded, as did plodding, dull work with little or no dramatic tension or climax. There was, however, a small but impressive collection of stories that bore out students' creative talents, showing their capacity to construct a clearly-defined plot and employ dialogue, twists and other techniques to suitably add interest or create suspense.

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8 (Workplace Communication)	11.1	Overall, candidates had little problem writing about the benefits of <i>Second Chance</i> as a campaign to encourage employers to recruit reformed criminals or drug addicts and persuading them to join the scheme. Nonetheless, they seemed less assured when outlining the project in their letter. Many tended to gloss over this part of the question by providing the aim(s) and rationale of the programme without detailing what it comprised. This lapse was, to some degree, responsible for the scores of middling, ordinary or even marginal answers. As one might expect, scripts that managed to provide a clearer picture about the scheme, e.g. what it offered and how it operated, were often those at the higher end of the scale. Some sub-standard responses were characterized by vapid moralizing about why employers should not view reformed criminals negatively; others completely missed the question by producing a letter targeted at drug addicts.
9 (Social Issues)	31.4	This was the most popular question and elicited writing that varied in fluency, scope and depth. Most candidates showed a clear understanding of the topic of depression and had plenty to say about it. However, some tended to skew towards addressing a certain part of the question at the expense of the others. For example, they produced lengthy paragraphs providing general advice on how to fight depression and describing their friend's mental problems, but only sketchy coverage of how s/he overcame them. Other responses suffered from a lack of focus in allowing points on how the friend overcame depression to fuse or overlap with those on how to cope with depression in general. These points merged without sufficient demarcation or proper signposting. These inadequacies somewhat limited the answers. The top candidates, however, produced rich, polished articles which thoroughly fulfilled the question requirements. There were quite a few irrelevant responses on obesity, possibly as a result of students' misinterpretation of the question or their attempt to regurgitate prepared essays without querying their validity.

Language

Limitations or flaws in the use of English often prevented candidates from achieving higher levels of performance and, in some cases, seriously marred their work. Even the writing of the top candidates was not completely error-free, despite their higher proficiency. Language and style thus remains an area where students need to improve considerably. By no means exhaustive, the list below provides examples of the common mistakes found in this year's Paper 2, Part B.

Agreement Issues

Subject-verb	Pronoun-antecedent
'...because no one want to lose'	'They also very expensive, so...not anyone can pay for it.'
'...the first sign that things wasn't quite right...'	'They used to be a bad people or a drug addict, but it would not affect their works.'
'But the music were still playing'	'Many people like to listen to music during exercise, doing exercise that way you can enjoy the music...'

Awkward or Inappropriate Word Choice

'ride out this trap'; 'become rich and mighty enough to buy a sports car'; '...one who have injected botox will have shockingly intense face'; 'joining our club will explore your social networks'; 'doing make-up to enlighten his or her face'; 'if your mouth skill is very good...'; 'the courses will...grant you eloquence'; 'they must catch the chance'; 'vent their strain'

Erroneous or Inconsistent Use of Tenses/Modals

'What spring to your mind right away, if I said the word 'Depression'?'
'Drama...can has various educational benefits.'
'But after three weeks, he lost his job because his working performance are not well.'
'His eyes looked dull and his face is pale.'

Faulty Sentence Structures

Comma Splices/Run-ons

'I was shocked, the last time I saw him, he told me that he was finding a job, it was just weeks ago.'

'We are living in an era of science, advanced technology leads to new lifestyle.'

'It's because you were first time to do the lead of band so you did not get a good lead but I think in next time you can get a good show.'

Fragments

'Needless to say, if there is no actor or actress'

'To let the society become friendly, and let jail person have a wish to get renew their life'

Problematic Main Clauses

'People live in Hong Kong have a busy life.'

'There are many companies claim that they are using the most cutting-edge technology for the surgery.'

'After finishing a challenging Marathon held by Standard Chartered or winning a champion can really make us feel satisfied and successful.'

Inappropriate Tone, Style and Register

Relatively few problems in this area were observed in Q7, the short story question as it allowed for a broad range of tone, style and register. However, the other questions all had their fair share of problems as summarized below.

Qs 2, 3 & 4

Here candidates were asked to express their views or feelings about a certain issue or event on an online forum or a blog. Both these types of communication allow for a more informal and personal style of writing. Many candidates recognized this, but some got carried away and employed language that was at times awkward (*'I am so proud of them, they are my best groupmates: which one you like it?'*), inappropriate (*'First, I will talk about the Pros and Cons of virtual sports'*) and even disrespectful (e.g. *'some of you are still fooled by the plausible benefits [of virtual sports], which are ridiculous'*).

Qs 5, 6 & 9

These questions required candidates to attempt the text types of a school assembly speech, a letter to the editor and a school magazine article respectively. Despite the recognition that a relatively more formal style was called for, flippant or over-friendly expressions occasionally crept into their writing. This jarred with the overall tone or the gravitas of the subject (e.g. *'I bet all of you now have a better idea of the debating club'*, *'Silly as I will not risk my life for a more...attractive appearance'*, *'...the consequences of mental problem can be much more serious than you think!'*).

Q8

To fully address this question, candidates were required to write an official letter that was clear, concise, informative and persuasive. However, instead of being direct and getting straight to its objective (i.e. to encourage employers to join the scheme, *Second Chance*, aimed at recruiting reformed criminals), some awkwardly began by introducing themselves as an intern at the Hong Kong Correctional Services. Little 'sermons' on why society should not discriminate against reformed criminals also found their way into the pieces. This rendered them tiresome rather than convincing. Some candidates even obscured the purpose and meaning of their letters by repeating phrases such as *'the government has...'* and *'the government said...'* throughout the text when explaining what the project offered, as though they were an outsider detached from the Hong Kong Correctional Services.

Clichés, Platitudes and Pompous Language

Clichés and/or platitudes (*'every cloud has a silver lining'*, *'when one door closes, another door opens'*, *'nothing is impossible to a willing heart'*, *'butterflies in the stomach'*, *'practice makes perfect'* etc.) featured prominently in a good number of responses. Candidates are strongly advised to avoid using such worn-out expressions.

Some scripts eschewed clear, precise communication in favour of circumlocution. Often their style was pompous and convoluted, and their meaning was vague if not incomprehensible, as evident in this passage:

Having the desire for better appearances is an instinct of human, no matter it is in pursuit of high profile of another half, or it is for better job offer. But once the search for more skinny looks goes to the extreme, the corollary can be devastating.

Again, candidates are urged to steer clear of such verbiage and affected language.

Faulty Sentence Structures

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Again, candidates are urged to steer clear of such verbiage and affected language.

Unnecessary Insertion of Auxiliary Verb

'Last week our school was joined a music festival...'; *'I am pass the test'*; *'She was teach me how to help my friend'*; *'I am believe that our students need to...'*; *'Mary ...was suffered from depression two years ago'*; *'She failed to be concentrated in the exam'*

Wrong or Missing Articles

'...the place to hold activity'; *'It is a excellent opportunity'*; *'Our school was a first band to sing in the music festival'*; *'win a award'*; *'...driving expensive sports car'*

Wrong or Missing Prepositions

'advantages being in the club'; *'listen music'*; *'share my view to my fans'*; *'apart for the benefits'*; *'took a look of the menu'*; *'on an expensive car'*; *'skillful on singing'*; *'be careful my feeling'*; *'...discussion will be held at the afternoon in second day'*

Examples of Effective Use of Language

It is pleasing to note that there was clear evidence of crafted work among the stronger scripts. These scripts demonstrated candidates' ability to use a wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence structures with imagination, appropriateness and accuracy. A few examples are listed below:

'In these modern days, the use of a remote control is no longer confined to these functions. People perceive it as a racket, or even a basketball!' (Q2)

'Performing on the stage boosts my confidence to speak in front of the public, and I know how to speak 'naturally' with suitable eye contact and facial expressions.' (Q3)

'Last night's experience was like in paradise. I loved it, just like Peter loves sleeping. It felt like Phuket – warm and welcoming – in the middle of Hong Kong's cold, damp and showery winter.' (Q4)

'Through debating you will learn the manners of speaking: you have to respect other's opinion, speak with dignity, disagree without mocking, and win with elegance.' (Q5)

'Would you feel ridiculous if you are reproached when you are merely flipping through your clothes to see which one makes you look the best? It is equally ludicrous when people inflict barbarous accusations on the cosmetic surgery takers, who are just attempting to make themselves more beautiful.' (Q6)

'Me and my brother exchanged glances, and with a deep breath, we ducked into the tacky silver car and started the engine. My mind was empty as pictures soared by the windows...' (Q7)

'On the contrary, as the reformed criminals and drug addicts have experienced adversity, they know that the key to success is to persevere when facing difficulties.' (Q8)

'The tragic and traumatic death of her sister in a minibus crash saddened her deeply. Without adequate support and counselling, she could not handle the pain.' (Q9)

Organization

As one might expect, the stronger scripts displayed a marked level of competence in terms of organization. One could recognize in them a coherent overall structure, logically sequenced paragraphs and well-developed ideas evolving out of careful planning and effective use of cohesive devices, as reflected in the following examples:

What are the benefits of being in the club? I think most importantly, you will come to make friends with schoolmates from different forms and classes that love debating as much as you do. So far, the debating club has more than 30 members that contain excellent debaters from F.2 to F.5. They are all proud to be in the group and are growing a sense of belonging. We will be thrilled if we have more newcomers joining our big family as we believe they will bring fresh new ideas that will stimulate our group and get us moving. If you join our club, you will be moved by our infectious passion on debating. (Q5)

It was impossible for me to react fast enough to catch his attention. All I did was standing still, with my numbed legs and lost voice. Every step I took towards the expensive sports car was a leaden step, every breath I took was piercing through my nostrils and throat like a sharp blade, and the heart within sank like an anchor with questions and doubts swirling in my head. How could one with only secondary school education qualification find a job that might afford an expensive car as this? Had he indulged in some dirty business? Had he...? The voice in my mind trailed off, as the car droned away with its powerful engine. (Q7)

By contrast, average and weaker scripts were generally characterized by some, if not all, of the following deficiencies:

Inadequate Supporting Details or Examples

As seen in the example below, the arguments presented in some candidates' work were circular and made up of assertions with no attempt at elaboration:

I think doing real sports is better than doing virtual sports. Why I think that? It is because when you doing real sports, it can help you to train your body to become more healthy. Also, if you are overweight, real sports can help you keep fit. However, virtual sports cannot help you train your body. (Q.2)

Illogical or Tenuous Connections between Ideas

The following text, in which the opening question does not link with the succeeding points, is illustrative of the problems in coherence of a number of scripts:

Hong Kong is called as cultural desert, so do you know the reason behind? Parents always misunderstand the effect of different activities related to art such as Drama. They only think that drama is something let people dancing, singing and acting and cannot see the edge of teaching through drama (Q.3)

This is an extreme case:

Nowadays, the most striking feature of Hong Kong is that the number of female is more than the number of male, they are not balance. It brings out a message that the age of female is higher than the age of male. It is no longer rare that male is die easily. We should keep an eye on mental health now. (Q.9)

Repetitiveness

This surfaced in a good number of candidates' responses, a limitation often caused by a lack of referencing and substitution, or just clumsiness of ideas as seen in the following:

If you do not want to be monster, do not want to do drug addicts, come and join us. We can help you. When you join us, you life will be change. You can have a new life to do anythings. You can do the happy people, have a beautiful life. (Q.8)

Unnecessarily Long Paragraphs

Some candidates had a tendency to produce drawn-out, cluttered paragraphs which were hard to read and follow. Often, they contained contradictions, dubious logic and/or other organizational defects such as those discussed above, as this example reveals:

Secondly, doing cosmetic surgery would have a bad effect on your social. Some people may question about my point but it actually unjustifiable. I can't deny that having a beautiful appearance will help you to get more attraction from others and beneficial to you in making friends and this is where the problem lies on – people make friends with you because of your appearance. It makes people uneasy to get a true-hearted friend in daily life. All relations are built on the basis of appearances, such friendship is not at all invaluable. On the other hand, what would your old friends think of you? A creep? Or a weidow? They may not receptive to your look or even feel disgraceful on it as your appearance are no longer look like their 'friend'. So, having cosmetic surgery is not definitely benefits to making friends, everything have two sides. (Q.6)

Issues Regarding Genre/Text Type Requirements

Some candidates were obviously not familiar with the format and features of the text type they were supposed to produce, and this impacted somewhat negatively on the overall structure of their writing.

For example, in Qs 2, 3 and 4, some candidates began their online forum post or blog entry with an opening salutation (e.g. 'Dear Blog', 'Dear editor'), as if they were writing a letter. In one particular case, the candidate presented the pros and cons of virtual sports and real sports in the form of a list. This severely restricted the scope and depth of his or her discussion.

Likewise, candidates seemed ill at ease with writing an official letter. Many of their answers to Q8 were given an unsuitable opening salutation (e.g. 'Dear all Hong Kong businesses', 'Dear honorable employers') and/or closing (e.g. 'Yours faithfully, Hong Kong Correctional Services Intern, Chris Wong', 'Best Wishes, Hong Kong Correctional Services'). Such slips somewhat dulled the positive 'corporate' image that candidates sought to create in their letter.

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Unnecessarily Long Paragraphs

Some candidates had a tendency to produce drawn-out, cluttered paragraphs which were hard to read and follow. Often, they contained contradictions, dubious logic and/or other organizational defects such as those discussed above, as this example reveals:

Secondly, doing cosmetic surgery would have a bad effect on your social. Some people may question about my point but it actually unjustifiable. I can't deny that having a beautiful appearance will help you to get more attraction from others and beneficial to you in making friends and this is where the problem lies on – people make friends with you because of your appearance. It makes people uneasy to get a true-hearted friend in daily life. All relations are built on the basis of appearances, such friendship is not at all invaluable. On the other hand, what would your old friends think of you? A creep? Or a weidow? They may not receptive to your look or even feel disgraceful on it as your appearance are no longer look like their 'friend'. So, having cosmetic surgery is not definitely benefits to making friends, everything have two sides. (Q.6)

Issues Regarding Genre/Text Type Requirements

Some candidates were obviously not familiar with the format and features of the text type they were supposed to produce, and this impacted somewhat negatively on the overall structure of their writing.

For example, in Qs 2, 3 and 4, some candidates began their online forum post or blog entry with an opening salutation (e.g. 'Dear Blog', 'Dear editor'), as if they were writing a letter. In one particular case, the candidate presented the pros and cons of virtual sports and real sports in the form of a list. This severely restricted the scope and depth of his or her discussion.

Likewise, candidates seemed ill at ease with writing an official letter. Many of their answers to Q8 were given an unsuitable opening salutation (e.g. 'Dear all Hong Kong businesses', 'Dear honorable employers') and/or closing (e.g. 'Yours faithfully, Hong Kong Correctional Services Intern, Chris Wong', 'Best Wishes, Hong Kong Correctional Services'). Such slips somewhat dulled the positive 'corporate' image that candidates sought to create in their letter.

Some unnatural openings were also manifest in the weak responses to Q9 (e.g. 'In this artical, I want to share a story to...my reader', 'Dear Sir or Madam, My name is Peter...'), suggesting candidates' lack of awareness of audience, purpose and the form of a magazine article.

General Recommendations

It is important that candidates read the questions carefully, as this will help them to address the questions fully; particularly those that comprise different components.

Reading widely and critically would help address a substantial number of the flaws or imperfections identified in the content, language and organization of candidates' work. Increased world knowledge as a result of such an undertaking would help enhance their ability to manage different topics, enrich their responses, and free them from facile assumptions, sweeping generalizations and stereotypes. An active engagement and interaction with a variety of text-types and genres would familiarize students with their forms and conventions, and allow them insight into how language works to represent ideas in the texts and the way they are organized. Such a critical approach would also enable them to distinguish and thus avoid biased or flawed arguments as well as inappropriate, evasive and hackneyed language.

It is equally crucial for candidates to put what they have learnt into practice by writing and attempting different text types during their revision. With determined and steadfast effort, along with their teachers' guidance and constructive feedback, they will gain experience and confidence, enhance their linguistic skills and creativity, and become better writers.

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 easiest section, while Part B2 was designed to be the most difficult section. Around 50.1% of candidates chose to do Part B1 while around 49.9% chose to do Part B2 (see Appendix 1 for the conversion table between Part B1 and Part B2).

Overall results

A statistical analysis of Paper 3 was carried out. The overall results are given in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Paper 3 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	S.D. (%)
Part A	53	52.5	25.5
Part B1	48	49.8	22.9
Part B2	54	53.5	15.3

Part A

Section A of Paper 3 Listening and Integrated Skills required candidates to listen to four recordings about the redevelopment of the online services at a local educational institution called Aberdeen College. The overall mean for this part was 52.5% with a standard deviation of 25.5%.

For Task 1, the candidates had to complete a note sheet while listening to a discussion at a meeting about the college online systems. There were 13 items in all, mostly requiring one or two word answers focusing on names, days of the week, dates, titles, lexical items to do with computer systems, and two adjectives. Candidates generally did well on this task, scoring a mean percentage correct of 73% with an SD of 35.3%. One of the more challenging items proved to be item (6), which required the answer 'safe/secure/protected/firewall'. There were other alternative acceptable answers, but popular ones which were not accepted included 'saved' and 'protect the file(s)'. Also the separation of 'fire' and 'wall' was not given a mark, as it was considered to be potentially ambiguous.

For Task 2, the candidate had to fill in details on the college website pages while listening to a presentation on some of the website's features. The task involved labelling, listing services on a menu and sentence completion. Candidates also had to listen carefully to the speaker's instructions about where to write down the details on the

DSE 2012 English Language Paper 2

PART A

1. *Situation:*

You are a famous reporter for Hong Kong News. Your old secondary school has asked you to write a feature article about yourself for the next edition of the school magazine. Write the article with three given headings and one on your own.

The best part of my job

The best part of my job is no day is the same. During my time as a news reporter, I have had the opportunity to report on the 911 Terrorist Attack, 2003 Invasion of Iraq and 2011 Fukushima Nuclear Disaster, and serve as a sideline reporter for numerous grand sporting events; including the World Cup and the Olympic Games. The days fly by because I'm so busy.

The biggest challenge I have ever faced in my job

The biggest challenge I have ever faced in my job was the breaking news report of the "Century Great Fire Hong Kong". I remembered I saw many people screaming for help in the building. Many of dead and burnt bodies were hanging by the windows. It seemed that everything was beyond control. I was really shocking at the moment. I just managed to stand there and could speak nothing. But I told myself reporters are professionals and should be able to control their emotion for whatever happens. With this faith, I stayed calm and finished the reporting.

My school days

I liked to ask why-questions, how-questions and what-questions since I was a child. Curiosity drove me to view things in many angles. That's why I actively involved in the publishing work of the school newsletter during my school days. Apart from editing the information gathered, I was also responsible for reporting the news happening in our school. This experience surely contributed a lot to my present career as a reporter.

A stressful job

The job comes with a lot of stress. It isn't something you can do eight hours a day and then not think about later. In fact, I tell people that it's not a job — it's a lifestyle. You have to always be alert on the things around us and thinking about how something affects something else.

PART B

2. Situation:

You have been following an on-line debate in Health and Fitness Mag. Express your view on the value of doing virtual sports versus real sports.

Nowadays there is a new way to do physical activity which is becoming more and more popular: doing virtual sports with games, such as those played on Wii.

Many people think that doing virtual sports is better. One of the biggest advantages is that it is much more convenient. Let say if the ground is not empty to play, we can play some video games instead. One more advantage is that we can play at any time, let it be 7 o'clock in the morning or 12 o'clock at night.

In virtual sports, you can also get exercise. You can play sports which you can sometimes not play in real life. People with physical disabilities can play virtual sports and you can also play them at any age.

There are also many disadvantages of playing virtual sports. Some of them are that they spoil your eyes and that they promote violence in many games. In the current situation, this entertainment is individual, or anyway it is not organised as a common activity in which people can meet and challenge among themselves. In other words, there are no real opponents, not to mention human interaction.

As modern society develops, people nowadays are confronting more and more stress in their learning environment, their workplace and their family, etc., which have inevitably shed great impact on people's physiological and mental health. To remedy the situation, real/physical sports have played an increasingly important role in people's daily life.

People are likely to drop in the habit of doing virtual sports for a long time without even moving a little. Or being more often, they are trapped in some meaningless social activities, and thus they fail to spare any time to do sports regularly. As a result, their health condition is deteriorating. There is no doubt that the unhealthy life style and a lack of regular exercising habit, one will unavoidable be attacked by some diseases like obesity or heart attack.

Anyway, people can definitely find out that only by doing virtual exercise can we obtain more comforts and relaxation, and only through this method can we completely avoid dangerous situation which may occur in real sporting activities and ensure the safety for ourselves.

Everyone understands the saying, which says that life is a movement, until we move we are alive, and real sport is that really thing which offers us an opportunity to move. Playing virtual sports surely do not have that advantage. However, it is no need for us to resist this new technology of playing sports. The key question is how we allocate our time for both kinds of sports!

3. Situation:

You have been surfing a website on the use of drama skills in education. In an on-line forum, you have seen the following issues:

Many teachers incorporate drama into their lessons as they feel it has various educational benefits. With respect to this argument, some parents are against this as they feel that learning cannot take place through drama.

You are required to share your experience of learning through drama, and express your views on the above issues.

Many teachers incorporate drama into their lessons as they feel it has various educational benefits. However, some parents are against this as they feel that learning cannot take place through drama.

Using drama in the classroom is generally considered to be a positive thing, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have its disadvantages. Let me share my experience of learning through drama, and express my views on the above issues.

I have been involved in drama for 3 years. At times, I find the use of drama as a teaching methodology is a bit time consuming. It is evidently clear that it takes dramatists valuable studying time to rehearse. However, good students can always make good use of their times. So that is not an excuse of escaping from drama! Some students may feel inadequate or self-conscious compared to those who are naturally good at drama. In real life, we have to face similar situations and what we have to do is to face it but not go away with it!

In my experience, drama provides an opportunity for me to express myself through verbal expressions and gestures using my imagination and memory, and thus makes learning more realistic and meaningful. Drama activities normally take the form of group work and I cannot afford to stay passive for too long. There is a need to belong to the group and to complete the task. Drama fosters

a sense of responsibility and co-operation among the students. Through the drama activities, I got the opportunities to understand the thoughts and feelings of my classmates as they express themselves in the drama activities. From the constant feedback provided by the activities, the teacher can plan better strategies for more effective learning and teaching. Drama activities can be used as a means of reinforcement of language learnt. It helps me to extend, retain and reinforce vocabulary and sentence structure through role-play and communication games. Drama improves my oral communication. As a form of communication methodology, drama provides the opportunity for me to use language meaningfully and appropriately. Learning a second language can be enjoyable, stimulating and meaningful when combined with drama activities.

The problem of mixed ability is reduced when drama activities are used. In my opinion, students who are more fluent can take the main roles which require more oral communication, while the weaker students compensate for their lack of linguistic ability.

With the dramatic techniques, we will become more imaginative, creative and sensitive as we become more self-confident in the process of learning English as a Second Language.

4. *Situation:*

You are a lead singer in a band, and you held your first performance at a music festival in Victoria Park.

Write, on your blog, the following:

(i) the performance

(ii) your feeling

(iii) the atmosphere

(iv) the things you could have done better

Last weekend, about 3000 people congregated in Victoria Park for the 31st Music Festival, which was organised annually by the Hong Kong Music Department. The festival aims to provide a friendly and supportive platform for amateur musicians to share in the excitement of making music.

I performed it with my band with me as the lead singer and John as guitarist, Martin as lead guitarist and Gordon as drummer. This was my first time performing in front of so many people. The noise there was deafening. I was excited and scared at the same time. Before the first song, I kept asking myself, "What if I messed up the songs? What if my throat tightened up? What if I forgot the lyrics?" But one thing was for sure I practised my songs a lot in the band room for the last few months, I knew them very well that I should be able to play them well no matter where I performed.

I couldn't forget a fun-moment in this performed. I forgot the song lyric in the middle performance. I was panic, but it didn't decrease my confidence. I just said "na, na, ... na, na, ..." to fill the missing lyric. Thanks God for the solution and thanks God for my smart-brain!

Towards the end of my performance it started to rain, but the audiences were so absorbed with the music that they continued to raise their hands in the air and sing along with us regardless of the weather.

Wow. What an incredible experience! I got a very good reaction after the show from many people, and I thought I made a more or less successful debut. However, there are two things that I noticed that I can improve on. I need to keep the inner smile from the soft palate when I sing. That is what helps give presence and resonance to my tone. Moreover, I need to develop more vibrato to support my tone.

Asked me what I got most out of this performance, I would say I can learn from other participants, and the festival provides me a chance to perform confidently in public.

Lastly, I need to mention how supportive John has been of me throughout the past few days. He has made a point of telling me that I am doing a good job many times, which really means a lot. It was really encouraging and kind for a first-time performer.

5. *Situation:*

You are to recruit more people to join the school debating club.

Write a speech to give at the assembly to explain

(i) the activities of the club

(ii) the benefits of joining the club

(iii) the importance of being a good debater in life

Dear Principal, teachers and fellow students

Good morning. I'm Chris Wong, a F6S student. Today I have the honour to be here to represent the school debating club, explaining to all of you all about us.

To begin with, I'd like to tell you the various activities organized throughout the academic year. In October, "Introduction to Debate" comes first. It tells about debate format and basic debate. In November, "Practice giving debate speech" comes next. It concentrates on reading debate speech aloud, and applying dynamism to delivery: volume, tone, speed, gestures, face, movement, etc. In February, we introduce "Development of debate skills Part 1", which shows critical thinking skills. In March, we go further to "Development of debated skills Part 2", which focuses on organizing and presenting ideas. In May, we come to our last activity "Trial debate". Here we listen to key words of opponent. That is, finding weakest points of opponent and avoiding argue strongest points of opponent.

Debate is a challenging and highly rewarding activity for most who become involved in it. There are a full range of benefits associated with being in the debate club. First, the debaters get to improve on their speaking. They learn to use words that are more technical, but are not jargon. They learn how to use proper grammar, or else they will be criticized by their adjudicators. They learn how to expand the points they have to fit a time frame. Another important advantage of debate is that they learn how to think outside the box. In a debate, failure to anticipate what the opposition's points will be is a sign of narrow mindedness. Debate also teaches them how to research better, as they need this to make points and arguments. At the same time, it raises their awareness of current and global issues and the world around them. It also enhances teamwork, and friendly competition. Also, it teaches them how to act cool under pressure.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the importance of being a good debater in life. Many studies show marked improvement in a wide variety of academic skills as a result of participation in competitive debate. Debate students excel in written and oral communication. Most people naturally avoid public speaking. Debate provides a non-threatening environment to practise speaking skills. This increases your chances of doing well in important interviews for jobs or scholarships. The ability to critically analyze a problem and propose workable solutions is invaluable. This is a skill that debate best teaches and high-level business people and professionals possess.

Seeing the various benefits of being in the club, may I take this opportunity to urge my fellow students, grasp the chance to join us! I look forward to seeing you in our 1st meeting next Wednesday. Thank you.

6. *Situation:*

The human desire to look attractive is universal and because of this, cosmetic surgery is now a multi-million dollar industry.

Write a letter to the editor of the Hong Kong Express about the obsession with physical beauty.

Dear editor,

The human desire to look attractive is universal and because of this, cosmetic surgery is now a multi-million dollar industry. However, there are evidences to show that the surgeries are sometimes fatal, and such disastrous surgeries are often or even unlikely to come with legal consequences.

Here is a true story of where cosmetic surgeries become the nightmare: a 28-year-old former dancer from Shanghai, had a toxic substance (claimed to be non-toxic) injected into both her breasts and chin and says she is now in constant pain. The self-confessed cosmetic surgery addict has also had over 100 other procedures, including three facelifts, laser skin whitening and implants in her heels in an attempt to add stature. "I've lost everything, my youth and my career," she said in a TV interview. "No man wants to be with me, and sometimes I look so frightening that I don't even want to leave the house," she added.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with working to improve appearances, but it has to be done in a healthy way. To avoid the obsession with physical beauty, let's rebuild our concept of beauty. Roughly speaking, there are two types of beauty, physical (outer/external) and inner. Physical beauty could refer to someone's outer attributes such as elegance, complexion or figure, while inner beauty is more concerned with someone's traits such as character or good general behaviour, kind heart, empathy, always helping nature, a sense of humour. An undeniably truth is that physical beauty as time goes by churns out differently, that means what we see physically will fade away over time, while inner beauty will not. Moreover, physical beauty is mostly given naturally through birth, one can however work towards attaining inner beauty by simply changing their characters to match what is attractive to the people around them. The demand for physical attractiveness is also short-lived as compared to the quest for inner beauty. People that are thought to be physically attractive could later seem not so appealing to them if they start to behave in an unpleasant manner. However, if someone is always well mannered and has a love and kindness to people, they will forever be perceived to possess inner beauty that cannot be taken away from them.

In conclusion, we can say that inner beauty has a higher meaning on how we look at what is attractive. We should be more interested in the inner beauty first before seeking what is on the outside. Think of people we admire and why we respect them. Most likely, it's not because of their physical beauty!

7. **Situation:**

You are walking by the Peninsula Hotel in Tsim Sha Tsui when you spotted your brother driving an expensive sports car. The last time you spoke to your brother, he was looking for a job. Write a short story about how you get the truth for this.

Chris, my brother, was a fresh university graduate in business studies. As he doesn't have good interpersonal skills, he always finds himself difficult to deal with his colleagues, especially with the management level. Most likely for this reason, he was laid off by the company three months ago. The last time I spoke to him, he told me he was still looking for a job. I have a little worry about him.

Last Saturday, Jenny invited me for a tea in Tsim Sha Tsui. As I was walking by the Peninsula Hotel, a loud car horn from behind was heard. I looked back to see what was going on. To my surprise, I spotted a familiar face sitting in a 'Porsche', claimed to be one of the most famous sports cars in motoring history. He was on the driver's seat, and was alone as well! I was confused at the moment, questions like "how come an unemployed becomes the owner of the car?", "did he steal the car?", "did he engage in some triad activities?" came to my mind. "No, no, no, ... all the answers to these questions are negative, there must be some reasons behind".

Chris came out of the car with a parcel in his hand. He told me he was currently hired by a company as a driver, and was instructed by his new boss to hand in the parcel to a client from Paris who was staying in the Peninsula Hotel. Meanwhile, he took out a stack of cash from his pocket, and asked me to give it to mum. "Where is the money from?" I asked promptly. "It's my weekly salary!" Chris replied. "Here I roughly got more than 10 thousand, how can you get such a high-paying job, what's the job nature actually? ..." I asked a series of questions eagerly.

Here is what Chris told me about his job-hunting:

Last week, I received a phone call from a company I had never heard of informing me that I'd been selected for a job interview based on the qualifications they'd reviewed on my Career Builder profile. I was told that the job interview would take place later and all questions I had would be answered in an email.

The answered email stated that they are looking for a driver whose main duty is to give some important documents to their foreign clients by hand. And I will be able to make \$15000 for a week. To show that they are a prestigious company, I will be given a famous car for the "transport". Wow! Fabulous job! Who wouldn't jump at the chance to work for a company that paid such excellent wages for so little and easy work? I accepted the job without any hesitation.

I told Chris I found the work strange, and suggested that we called the anti-fraud telephone line to report the case. In 15 minutes, a police officer arrived and took us back to the police for questioning. The "parcel" was opened, and it was discovered it contained 2 kg of heroin with an estimated market price of \$500000. The police officer told me Chris was probably falling in a job-hunting trap.

Chris's case was then taken to the court. After investigation, Chris was proven innocent of doing the "job" unknowingly, and was released from the court straight away.

After the event, Chris told me he has learnt a "big" lesson, and promised me not to risk big loss for a little gain and accidentally become a partner in scam in the future job-hunting anymore.

8. **Situation:**

You are an intern at Hong Kong Correctional Services. The government launched a campaign called Second Chance to encourage employers to recruit the reformed criminals and drug addicts.

- You are required to write a letter to all Hong Kong businesses*
- (i) introducing the project*
 - (ii) explaining the benefits*
 - (iii) persuading them to join*

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing on behalf of the Hong Kong Correctional Services to introduce you a newly launched campaign called Second Chance, which encourages Hong Kong businesses to recruit the reformed criminals and drug addicts. This campaign is meaningful to the society, as well as businesses. Here, I will explain more about the campaign of Second Chance for your consideration.

There is a significant initiative considering the fact that most people view reformed criminals and drug addicts with suspicion, and do not trust with them any work. Providing them with a second chance in terms of employment can help bring down the numbers of repeat offenders to provide more social safety. This is because when ex-convicts are not given an equal chance in employment, they will fall back into the vicious cycle of crime and imprisonment.

Being an intern at Hong Kong Correctional Services, I got the chance to contact and even work with the prisoners. Unexpectedly, I find most of them are showing positive qualities of value-adding and self-discipline under the rehabilitation programme run by the Hong Kong Correctional Services. Moreover, the programme makes them feel worthwhile, not worthless. All these make me change the impression on them.

As a matter of fact, the reformed criminals and drug addicts have a higher state of motivation than others because they are being given the second chance that is their platform to change their life for the better and new successful life. That's why it is not strange that they outperform the normal employees. Besides, they can help in increasing the economy when they are hired and reduce the unemployment rate.

By recruiting them, your company actually helps create a "re-entry" network for them. On top of this, your company has shown the concern over social affairs, which makes the company's image become very positive.

To relieve the company's hesitation to employ the reformed criminals and drug addicts, we will offer counsellors to coordinate with your company from time to time to ensure them do not get into any trouble.

All in all, we are human beings. We are all flawed. So, everyone deserves a second chance. We should look beyond their criminal past, concentrating instead on the skills they had picked up while they had been working. By giving those reformed criminals and drug addicts jobs, your company is supporting their integration into society. It is now in your hand to help them get their lives back under control.

Yours faithfully,

Chris Wong

9. *Situation:*

Recently, one of your friends was suffering from depression.

Write an article for the school magazine about his/her case and how he/she overcame it. Also, give advice on fighting depression.

Fight against depression

Mary is a very good friend of mine. Recently, everybody noticed her strange behaviours. She often went out to nowhere and got home very late at night. During our telephone conversations or msg, a series of hopeless messages is conveyed: "I'm not good for anything", "I'm hopeless.", "Life is unfair.", "Death would be a relief." Moreover, she told me she felt anxious all the time. As for sleep, she has not slept through the night 4 months ago. Seeing the severity of her present condition, I suggested that she should go to the doctor. The doctor told her she was suffering from depression. And this was most likely due to the heavy pressure on the coming open exam.

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In the following weeks, she took antidepressants as the doctor's instruction. A little improvement was seen. She can sleep for around 5 consecutive hours each night. Some people suggested that exercise can help patients with depression. She then started doing moderate intensity activity, like 30-minute walk, every day, as she hasn't exercised for a while. Later, she took part in team sports, went to classes at a sports centre. She said exercise helped to clear the mind and inducing relaxation. Apart from taking the medication, the doctor also told her to stay positive as far as possible. To accomplish this, she told me she always kept reminding herself, "Yes, will-power!", "Yes, positive thinking!" With her faith and the support of her friends and family, she recovered from depression months later.

Depression is the world's most common mental illness. However, depression is highly treatable - even in its most severe forms. The sooner a person is treated the more effective that treatment will be.

Psychotherapy, also known as 'talk therapy', has been shown to help people with many forms of depression. It is carried out by a trained psychotherapist. The psychotherapist aims to improve the mental health of the patient by employing a range of techniques based on relationship building, dialogue and communications. All these may help the patient alter his/her negative way of thinking and behaving. These negative styles may be contributing to the depression. Experts say that for a patient with mild to moderate depression psychotherapy may be all that is needed. However, for those with major depression, a combination of medication and psychotherapy is usually more effective.

In the majority of cases, the patient will not notice any significant benefit from an antidepressant until he/she has been taking it for a few weeks. Make sure you take them according to your doctor's instructions. Even if you feel better, do not stop the medication unless your doctor tells you to. Not only do antidepressants help to make you feel better, they also significantly reduce significantly the likelihood of recurrence.

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the text they are creating. Candidates who simply copy large chunks from the Data File and ignore issues relating to style and grammar will receive a low score in these aspects. To work on this aspect, candidates should be exposed to a wide variety of source texts. When practising, they should learn also to identify the tone adopted and the language used for different purposes so that they can apply the same skills in their own writing. They need to appreciate that, depending on the purpose of a writing task, the tone of a text can range from very chatty to very formal with many possibilities in between including informal, polite and informative without being over-informal, and reasonably formal but not academic or journalistic in tone. To be able to manipulate the source texts effectively, candidates should work on their paraphrasing skills.

Having learnt English till Secondary 6, candidates' writing should be characterised by a wide range of sentence structures, complex noun phrases and accurate constructions in order to present their ideas precisely and effectively. Basic errors like spelling, subject-verb agreement, verb tense and word form are not acceptable. Candidates are encouraged to practise writing in English to improve the accuracy and the complexity of their language use.

Paper 4

A total of 24 versions of the question paper were used over the eight-day examination period. In addition, three further versions were employed in the SEN candidate session, which this year was extended to three sessions for the first time. As well as being the first year of a new examination, this year signalled the extension of the use of the Oral Recording System (ORS) to being used in HKDSE Speaking examinations, having been used for the first time in the 2011 Use of English AS level examination. Despite such innovations, the administration of the examination was reported as having generally proceeded smoothly.

The examination itself comprised two parts: Group Interaction and Individual Response. Candidates were given ten minutes for preparation for the Group Interaction discussion task based on a given short text. These texts included a restaurant review, internet articles, letters, short news reports and so on. During the preparation time, candidates were allowed to make notes which they could refer to during the discussion on a small notecard. Depending on the task assigned, candidates were required to make suggestions, give advice, make and explain a choice, argue for and/or against a position, or discuss the pros and cons of a proposal.

The candidates' performance was judged against four domains; Pronunciation & delivery; Communication strategies; Vocabulary & language patterns; and Ideas & organization, as detailed in the accompanying Paper 4 (Speaking) Assessment Guidelines. The mean scores achieved in each of the domains out of a total of 7 were: 3.60; 3.54; 3.46 and 3.70 respectively (based on a sample of around 60,000 candidates).

Group Interaction

As stated in the Curriculum and Assessment Guide, candidates are expected in this part of the examination to present information, ideas, intended meanings, views, attitudes and feelings clearly, coherently and appropriately in a variety of contexts with suitable reasoning, suggestions and strategies; describe details that support a main idea; use a variety of vocabulary appropriately; use language appropriate to the role or situation at different levels of formality; and use persuasive devices effectively. As had been anticipated, a very wide range in candidates' abilities was evident with all eight levels of the Assessment Guidelines in each domain, including level 7, being used extensively by examiners.

One area which examiners commented on which it was felt affected performance was the candidates' use of notecards and more broadly how they had approached the use of the preparation time before entering the examination room. It was found that many candidates had made copious notes on their notecards, some having even written whole speeches. Others had dedicated their preparation time to copying out parts of the given text. Such tactics, it was felt, often had a negative effect on the performance of candidates as it led candidates to treat the group interaction as an opportunity to present a pre-prepared speech or series of speeches from their notecard rather than genuinely interacting with the other candidates. This often resulted in candidates who were apparently strong in Pronunciation & delivery and Vocabulary & language patterns scoring less well in Communication strategies, as the amount of actual interaction with the other candidates was severely limited by such a strategy. Such candidates also scored less in Ideas & organization than they may have if they had tried to build on the ideas presented by their fellow group members.

Another area related to preparation time which examiners commented on was the use of the given text and candidates' ability to read and integrate the information from the text into the discussion. It was felt that stronger candidates were able to identify relevant points and ideas from the text, interpret them and expand on them. Disappointingly, many candidates limited themselves to simply reading out loud what was written in the passage without identifying key ideas in accordance with the prompts given. Only the better candidates were able to

genuinely add their own personal contribution to the discussion to provide an original and relevant contribution to the group interaction. Those candidates who succeeded in using the text as a springboard from which they developed and relayed their own original ideas were those who were awarded top marks in Domain IV. Such candidates also tended to be those who actively engaged in listening to others contributions to adapt and modify what they had planned to say in order to attempt to produce a coherent discussion.

In contrast, weaker candidates very often did little in terms of genuine interaction with the others in their group. Instead, they satisfied themselves with some pre-planned formulaic phrases such as 'Okay, let's start the discussion' and 'the time is running out, that is the end of the discussion' to open and close a discussion respectively. It should also be noted that some stronger candidates neither opened nor closed the discussion but were still awarded the top marks in Domain IV.

Individual Response

In this part of the examination, stronger candidates were able to develop their ideas in their responses quite systematically, often using examples to support their main points, while weaker candidates' inability to produce even a limited piece of coherent spoken language was evident.

Some weaker candidates employed an apparently pre-planned strategy to ask for another question if they had somehow felt the initial question to be unsatisfactory in some way. Candidates should be discouraged from employing such a strategy as a means of gaining higher marks. Any interaction depends on both parties willingly entering into an exchange, in this case a question requires a response to complete the interaction. A refusal to provide a response therefore constitutes a refusal to communicate. Examiners were instructed to take this refusal into account in giving their final marks. It should also be noted that by the time the examiner has chosen and read out a second question the candidate is left with little time to demonstrate his/her best level of English. Overall, such a strategy proved, more often than not, to be detrimental to the candidate's performance rather than gaining an advantage.

General recommendations

The new DSE examination format, with the inclusion of a text in the preparation for the Group Interaction and Individual Response, allows the examiners to judge candidates' performance in a wide variety of aspects of spoken communication. These include the ability to:

- open and close an interaction appropriately;
- verbalise, if necessary, an inability to understand;
- ask for repetition and clarification when necessary;
- maintain an interaction by active listening;
- take turns at the right moment;
- make judgments and suggestions;
- support and develop the views of others;
- disagree and offer alternatives;
- ask relevant questions including soliciting of views, attitudes and values;
- use appropriate interaction skills and conversational strategies;

Such a multi-faceted examination paper requires willingness on the part of the candidates to genuinely enter into real interactions and communication with their fellow candidates and examiners. Unfortunately, a number of candidates treated Part A as an individual performance which they prepared in the preparation time. This was not helped by candidates often taking very detailed notes on their notecards and reading from them. Candidates should make simple and judicious notes in the preparation time to use if necessary. Their main focus should always be on listening to others and genuinely reacting and elaborating on what others have just said.

Related to this, candidates should also spend time during the preparation period considering what their own opinion is on the subject matter at hand and whether they disagree with anything that is stated in the text or if they have any experiences which may be relevant to the discussion. A relevant anecdote may enliven the group interaction and help the candidate in making his/her point.

Acquiring the ability to do well in this examination can only be achieved if candidates find and make adequate use of opportunities to use the language with others. Candidates need to be committed to use the English language in the many subject areas and situations they have at school and outside the confines of the school. Oral practice can range from individual practice to cooperative sessions where interaction skills need to come into play. Candidates