

Candidates' Performance

Paper 1

Paper 1 tests candidates' reading skills, and consists of three parts: Part A, Part B1 and Part B2. Candidates have 1.5 hours to complete Part A, which is compulsory, and either Part B1 (consisting of items of a lower level of difficulty than Part A) or Part B2 (consisting of items of a higher level of difficulty than Part A). The weighting for Part A and Part B is 50% per part. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 1 was 45,029. A total of 20,392 candidates chose to do Part B1 (about 45.3%) while 24,637 (about 54.7%) chose to do Part B2. Candidates who attempt Parts A and B2 are able to attain the full range of levels, while Level 4 is the highest level attainable for candidates who attempt Parts A and B1.

Overall Results

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

Table 1: Paper 1 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	42	49.4	22.3
Part B1	42	47.4	18.1
Part B2	42	41.3	19.7

Part A (Compulsory section)

Part A was an article about the Hong Kong comic industry and its future prospects. The text outlined the status of the comic industry in Hong Kong from the perspective of both industry creatives such as comic artists as well as industry executives. Both presented their opinions regarding the outlook for the industry. A range of items such as cloze passage, table completion and proof-reading tasks were included.

The questions in Part A answered correctly by the highest numbers of candidates were Q.1 (multiple choice gap fill), answered correctly by between 67% and 83% of candidates; Q.2 (finding an item of vocabulary with specific meaning) with 80% of candidates answering correctly; Q.4 (identifying evidence from the text to support a statement) with between 71% and 79% of candidates answering correctly; and Q.10 (True-False-Not Given, testing detailed understanding of the passage) between 77% and 87% of candidates answering correctly. These represented a range of questions asking for relatively simple factual information to be identified, or for simple vocabulary to be analysed or identified.

Vocabulary questions, albeit multiple choice questions such as Q.3 and Q.8 or more open-ended vocabulary questions such as Q.6 and Q.9, were successfully answered by between 54% and 71% of candidates.

Question 11 was a proofreading task. Markers found this to be a good question as it tested paragraph-level understanding of meaning. Less success was noted in Q.11i-ii. Candidates often lost marks with simple errors in parts of speech (e.g. Q.11i 'loss' vs 'lose').

Just over half of the candidates answered Q.12 correctly, with two key issues in their response. First, some candidates did not follow the task instructions and failed to state their position (i.e. stating a 'Yes' or 'No') before providing evidence to support this position. The other issue was with candidates who expressed either a negative or positive position but provided evidence to the contrary.

Some of the more challenging items were found in Q.22. Candidates answered more successfully when only a short response or single word response was expected. For example, around 63% of candidates answered Q.22iv correctly. Where candidates were expected to provide longer responses to complete the sentences in the table, candidates were less successful (e.g. Q.22ii with only 19% of candidates responding successfully). This was often a result of grammatical errors such as tense (e.g. Q.22ii 'do not')

instead of 'have not'), subject-verb agreement (e.g. Q.22i 'in this evolving times' instead of 'in these evolving times').

In general, sentence completion questions proved to be more challenging for candidates (e.g. Q.7, Q.14, Q.18 and Q.22). Candidates should be aware of the grammar and contextual clues in the parts of the sentence provided. For example, in Q.14(i), the sentence for completion begins with 'Comic book publishers need a...' and hence requires a noun phrase starting with a consonant sound to be successfully completed.

Candidates should be mindful when considering answering reference questions. For instance, only 25% of candidates answered Q.15 successfully. Many candidates' answers included: word form errors e.g. 'convenient' vs 'convenience'; singular / plural errors e.g. 'chain' vs 'chains'; or errors related to determiners such as 'some' or 'the'. All of these were sufficient to render the candidate's response incorrect. Other questions that appeared more challenging were those which tested the use of metaphors, such as Q.13, where only 38% of candidates answered correctly.

Part B1 (Easier section)

Part B1 comprised two reading passages linked by the theme of job seeking. These were considered to be accessible for most readers. The first passage was a collection of four classified ads for job vacancies. The second text was an online article introducing the concept of the 'slasher'. This second text introduced opinions from a variety of stakeholders related to the employment options for graduates and graduate recruitment. In addition to the article, a readers' comments section was also included.

The items in Part B1 answered correctly by the highest numbers of candidates were Q.25i and Q.25iii (matching a job ad to a statement about the job vacancies), which were both answered correctly by over 81% of candidates; Q.26 (Job B) (Job C) (matching the skills required to each job vacancy) with between 78% and 87% of candidates answering correctly; Q.38i (identifying whether statements are mentioned in the text) with 68% of candidates answering correctly; and Q.42 (identifying if the readers agree/disagree with a statement) with approximately 68% of candidates answering correctly.

With somewhat simpler texts in this part, candidates were able to tackle a wider range of item types successfully. Success in these items further strengthened the impression of a satisfactory level of fundamental reading skills amongst candidates.

A number of candidates, however, were not mindful of the task instructions. For example, in Q.26, candidates were informed that they 'may tick more than one box for each job'. For Job A and Job D, two ticks were required. This led to a loss of marks when candidates responded with only one tick.

Many candidates copied excessively for Q.32, Q.34 and Q.36, often leading to a loss of marks. Candidates should remember that large chunks of copied material are unlikely to be judged as correct answers. In Q.32 and Q.36, some kind of textual manipulation from the passage was required, not just straight copying. For instance, the pronouns needed to be changed in these items in order to gain marks.

Questions testing referencing skills appeared to be more challenging for candidates with Q.31, Q.34, Q.37 and Q.41 only being answered correctly by between 13% and 23% of candidates. Markers considered Q.41 to be a particularly effective question as 'they' referred back to the ideas expressed in the main part of the article, thus testing the candidates' understanding of the overall text.

When candidates are asked to use a word or phrase taken from specific parts of the text, they should ensure that the word is correctly lifted from the text and that it has not been changed in relation to grammar, for example, Q.35i 'risk' vs 'risks'; or spelling, for example, Q.42v where some candidates wrote 'partonised' instead of 'patronised'.

Part B2 (More difficult section)

Part B2 comprised one text evaluating the ethical concerns of adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI) in business operations. Challenges in this part included understanding a theme which was less familiar, and understanding the conflicting ideas and opinions expressed by the various stakeholders represented in the text. Candidates were required to respond to a range of items including identifying the implied

meaning of phrases, matching comments to the people mentioned in the text as well as sentence and table/summary completion using candidates' own words.

In this part of the paper, candidates were more successful in answering items asking for key information from the text such as Q.43iii, Q.57 and Q.64v-vi, which were answered correctly by over 70% of candidates. Items asking about the tone and intention of the writer including vocabulary/idiomatic expressions (e.g. Q.47, Q.59, Q.65) were answered correctly by at least 60% of candidates, suggesting that candidates dealt well in general with higher-order skills when tested through structured questions.

Candidates faced challenges in dealing with Part B2's more complex text, especially in questions which tested inference and detailed understanding of the text. For example, Q.53, Q.56 and Q.61 were answered correctly by between 21% and 55% of candidates. These all required candidates to use a word or phrase taken from the text. Candidates were less successful when the questions asked them to use their own words. Items such as Q.49i-iii required answers that typically could not be copied from the text (which many candidates tried to do). These questions needed at least some grammatical manipulation to arrive at the correct answer. Such questions required a complex set of skills, which the strongest candidates were able to employ. Q.50 indicated that some candidates were able to understand the overall ethical concerns that were being discussed in the text (e.g. Q.50ii and iv were answered correctly by 90% and 66% of candidates respectively). However, when explaining in more detail the debates that the use of AI raised, the candidates' use of language resulted in between only 18% and 32% of candidates answering Q.50i, iii and v correctly.

Candidates commonly made mistakes when attempting to express the relationship between two related but conflicting ideas such as in Q.52 (the expectation that AI brings greater objectivity yet with it there can be embedded biases) and Q.62 (companies and organisations refusing to take responsibility while also fighting external oversight of their actions). Such candidates missed the complexity of the issues described in the text and hence were not awarded a point for these items.

A final point to make is that a significant number of candidates copied from the text in such items as Q.54, and Q.61, often leading to a lack of logic in their answers. Sentence completion questions inevitably entail the testing of language. In such items, linguistic contextual clues were often overlooked by candidates and thus marks were often lost because of incorrect grammar, inappropriate collocations or illogical answers. For example, only 22% of candidates answered Q.51 correctly with a complete clause and only 8% of candidates used an appropriate collocation following the verb 'address' when answering Q.63.

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

Recommendations

Candidates should copy words and phrases carefully when answering items requiring a single word or phrase taken straight from the text, and hence avoid spelling mistakes or making any unnecessary amendments to the word or phrase, such as changing between singular and plural or changing the word form.

Candidates also need to recognise when a question calls for a longer, more open answer, and avoid copying excessively (e.g. Q.13, Q.43).

Candidates are also reminded to pay attention to grammatical prompts at the beginning of sentence-completion questions (e.g. Q.14, Q.22, Q.35, Q.42); plurality (e.g. Q.37 'them' and Q.41 'they' referring to more than one item or a person requiring a plural countable noun in the answer); as well as the page layout and spaces provided for their answers (e.g. Q.4 provides two numbered lines (i) and (ii) indicating the requirement of two separate responses).

Candidates should be mindful when identifying figurative or metaphorical language used in the texts to select more focused chunks of language (e.g. in Q.5, Q.13, Q.44, candidates often lifted chunks of language that were too long to identify which part of the chunk was actually the relevant and accurate part for the answer).

Paper 2

Paper 2 tests candidates' writing skills and consists of two parts: Part A and Part B. Candidates have 2 hours to complete both parts of the paper. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 2 was 44,946.

Overall Results

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

Table 2: Paper 2 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	42	54.9	18.9
Part B	42	52.2	20.1

Part A

Part A is a short writing task. This year, candidates assumed the role of a worker at the Visitor Centre of the Hong Kong Adventure Farm. They were asked to write a guide for first-time visitors to the Farm using a map as a prompt which showed the attractions of the Farm. The guide was divided into two parts: the first part serving as a general introduction to the Farm and the second part recommending the top three things to see and do. It was expected that readers of the guide would be looking for guidance as to what to do and therefore the tone and style would be persuasive.

Most candidates were able to develop their own ideas drawing on the information given in the map. In the first part of the guide, some candidates chose to write about concrete facts about the Farm, (e.g. its location, when it opened, directions on how to get there). Other candidates chose to write about more abstract ideas, such as the history or mission of the Farm. Stronger candidates were able to write a summary or provide an overview of the highlights of the Farm. In the second part of the guide, candidates described how visitors could enjoy themselves and what could be seen or done at different locations in the Farm. Typical content included a description of scenery, emotional responses and practical advice, especially for families with children.

Some candidates were able to make use of more expressive and invitational language to appeal to the sense of adventure of the target audience. When describing the attractions of the Farm, a more informal tone was appropriate. Higher performing candidates were able to draw on a range of descriptive vocabulary that described the features of the Farm and what visitors could do there.

The task prompt guided candidates to write a paragraph (of around 50 words) about the Farm and then write about three attractions in three paragraphs (around 150 words). Most candidates did this. In the descriptions of attractions, some candidates were able to introduce the attraction first and then develop ideas about it, including how to get there, what to do there and why it was attractive. Stronger candidates were able to use linking adverbials and other cohesive devices within and across paragraphs to enhance the cohesion of the text. The examiners were looking for clear and concise descriptions that would grab the readers' attention, though some candidates did tend to write too much, thereby including repetition and irrelevance.

In general, most candidates were able to make use of the prompt to develop their ideas and describe its attractions in a way that would encourage visitors to visit the Farm. Some candidates could have shown more awareness of the audience by appealing to the readers' senses and improving on the richness and persuasiveness of the text.

Part B

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

The mean score for each question is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Paper 2 Part B results

Question	Elective	Mean (%)	Popularity (%)
2	Popular Culture	52.6	25
3	Workplace Communication	53.1	19
4	Sports Communication	45.6	13
5	Social Issues	55.1	17
6	Poems and Songs	45.3	1
7	Drama	37.4	2
8	Short Stories	48.4	4
9	Debating	57.9	19

Question 2 (Popular Culture) was the most popular question with around one quarter of the candidature choosing to attempt it. The popularity of the other questions ranged between just over 1% and 19% of the candidature.

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

Question 2: Learning English through Popular Culture

This question proved to be a favourite and was attempted by around 25% of candidates. Candidates were required to write an article for a magazine explaining why they had started a YouTube channel for teenagers and what they had learned in the process.

Most candidates wrote long answers and described in detail why they started the channel and what they had learned from doing it. The reasons provided by candidates for starting the channel included certain topics not being discussed elsewhere, the chance to inform/entertain/inspire others, and the medium being most suitable for teenagers in isolation during the pandemic. In terms of what they had learned, candidates wrote about it being a rewarding experience, having the chance to interview celebrities and earning supplementary income.

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

Question 3: Learning English through Workplace Communication

The question required candidates to assume that they write an advice column for a job recruitment magazine. They had to reply to a request for advice from a reader who had to decide between following his/her dream of opening a café and taking a job promotion in a company they were not too keen on.

In general, candidates understood the requirements of the task. They were expected to offer advice and describe the advantages and disadvantages of both quitting their job and opening a café (e.g. follow your

dream, be passionate about what you do, may be difficult to quit job later, don't live with regrets) or accepting the promotion (e.g. save money for later, not a good time due to the pandemic, do some market research first). Stronger candidates were able to do this while weaker candidates tended to write the text as though it were a discursive essay and not an advice letter, thereby lacking empathy or personal connection with the addressee.

Candidates showed an ability to use a range of linguistic forms to provide advice in a sympathetic but pragmatic tone. This included using different tenses and aspects, passive and active forms. The use of conditional sentences to give opinions and advice were also common.

Question 4: Learning English through Sports Communication

The question required candidates to write a speech to be delivered by the captain of the school's basketball team at their end-of-season dinner celebration. The team had reached the final of the inter-school championship but had finished second.

Most candidates understood the purpose of the task and were able to write the speech by thanking the audience for coming, reflecting on the past season, thanking the team mates/coach/school, and closing the speech by looking forward to the next season. Those scoring highly on this task were able to provide details of incidents during the season and anecdotes to make the audience laugh. They were able to reflect on the fact that they had lost in the final but had a great deal to be proud of.

Some candidates had a good grasp of the tone and style needed for a speech of this nature and were able to use language accordingly, making good use of vocabulary specific to basketball and sports in general. They were also able to use the correct tenses to describe events during the season, feelings and emotions and aspirations for the next season. However, a small number of candidates did not adopt an appropriate structure for the speech and wrote it more like a description of the season, without considering the audience and the need to make the speech entertaining.

Question 5: Learning English through Social Issues

This question required candidates to assume the role of the chairperson of the school's Heritage Club and write a letter to the editor in response to a comment in the newspaper that young people today lack interest in traditional art forms. The question was a relatively popular choice among candidates, and candidates performed well on this question on average.

Most candidates provided the reasons for the phenomenon although most of the reasons were very general, such as the pressure from academic study, distractions from IT gadgets, lack of promotion from the government and parents' general attitude towards arts. It would have been more persuasive if the specific qualities of traditional art forms had been pinpointed and contrasted with current social trends. Most candidates made a number of good suggestions regarding how to rectify the problem.

Stronger candidates were able to show their knowledge of the expected tone and style of a letter by getting to the point directly and being concise in their arguments. Most candidates were able to make use of emotive words to engage the readers and most employed the format of a formal letter appropriately.

Question 6: Learning English through Poems and Songs

This question required candidates to write a promotional bio for the website of a musical group. The bio had to include background information about the group, their style of music and their future plans. The question proved to be the least popular among candidates.

Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the basic requirements of the question, addressing the three required parts adequately with details. Some candidates demonstrated imagination and creativity in the description of the band, for example, naming important childhood influences, awards and achievements and describing the band's distinct music style. Weaker candidates limited themselves to providing general information, such as the instruments played and a list of upcoming activities. This type of content was reasonably informative but not particularly engaging.

As for the use of language, stronger scripts used sophisticated vocabulary and vivid descriptions to capture the artists and their music style. Appropriate tenses were used to outline the history, current events and future plans. Some candidates organised their ideas through the use of sub-headings to enhance cohesion. As this text-type is promotional in nature, candidates were expected to think about engaging the readers' interest through memorable tidbits while also providing facts and important information.

Question 7: Learning English through Drama

In this question, candidates were required to write a journal entry. They were given the scenario of having played the roles of a hero and a villain in different plays and they had to write an entry in their journal reflecting on which role they preferred playing and why.

Stronger scripts showed some insights about playing a hero or villain by describing the typical features of the role and the reasons or intentions behind the character's behaviour. Some scripts went beyond the superficial definition of 'hero' and 'villain' by questioning stereotypes, redefining what is 'good' or 'bad' and explaining why villains are needed for plays. Another example of how candidates demonstrated their creativity and critical thinking was by pointing out how different people (e.g. directors and actors) may interpret heroes and villains differently. Candidates who only described the plot of a play without evaluating the role of a hero or a villain did not fulfil the requirements of the question.

Some candidates were able to make good use of vocabulary related to drama in their reflections and to draw on personal experience and self-awareness as would be typical of a journal entry.

Question 8: Learning English through Short Stories

Candidates were asked to write a short story for a competition on the theme of *Nature: friend or enemy*. They had to write a story about a hiker who gets caught in a storm while hiking in the mountains. The question was less popular compared to short story questions in previous years.

Most candidates were able to write a story that was relevant to the theme and included expected elements such as the characters, settings and events in the story, the feelings and emotions of the characters, and how the story reflects our relationship with nature. Some wrote very imaginatively and included elements in the story such as animals and spirits, while retaining a relationship to the intended theme. Other candidates wrote a story related to hiking in the mountains but did not make the link to the theme of nature or did not make the link clearly enough.

In terms of the use of language, stronger scripts used vivid imagery and descriptions to engage the reader and included such features as dialogue and reference to locations in Hong Kong. Appropriate tenses were used to describe the events, emotions and to convey some kind of message. Effective organisation was seen in some scripts through the use of discourse markers, linking adverbials as well as other cohesive devices to keep the story flowing logically. Where this broke down, stories became incoherent and the reader struggled to follow the plot. Candidates looking to write a story should spend some initial time thinking of the plot and planning what they are going to write before starting.

Question 9: Learning English through Debating

In this question, candidates were required to assume the role of a member of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and to write a letter to the President of the PTA outlining their views on a proposal by the school management to change the school operations from a five-day to a four-day week. This question was the second most popular question in Part B and candidates achieved the highest score on average of all questions on the paper.

Candidates were expected to include a salutation (Dear President, etc.), an opening providing background/reference to the proposal, an elaborated explanation of their view and a closing. Most candidates who answered this question were able to do this and most provide credible reasons to support their view, such as students needing more time to rest or more self-study. Candidates who explored the limitations of potential counter arguments were able to produce a stronger overall argument. For instance, some candidates who were arguing against the proposal conceded that a four-day week would create more free time. However, they argued that one potential consequence would be an increase in teaching

hours per day to compensate for the loss of one day's teaching. This, such candidates, argued, would lead to students feeling overly tired, thus reducing their ability to concentrate and the effectiveness of teaching time.

Candidates were familiar with the language structures needed for this kind of text, such as complex sentences to describe different perspectives and the varied use of tenses for description, exemplification and prediction of outcomes should the proposal be accepted. Appropriate use of linking adverbials and other cohesive devices allowed candidates to make a series of points in a cohesive fashion. Where candidates scored lower marks, it was generally because their letter lacked cohesion and a coherent discussion of the issues.

Recommendations

Candidates can best demonstrate their writing ability by making their writing appropriate to the particular text type they are asked to write. Writing simple sentences accurately might be enough in some tasks but might be too limited for others requiring more linguistic flexibility. It is a good idea for candidates to read different text types and to become familiar with what is appropriate for particular purposes and audiences.

As with language choice, coherence can be achieved in different ways depending on the text type. Candidates are usually quite good at connecting ideas explicitly in persuasive or argumentative essays, though this is often done excessively and mechanically. In some text types (e.g. speech or story), more creative approaches are required. Again, familiarity with different text types is key to raising awareness of how these texts are organised effectively.

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

Paper 3

Paper 3 consisted of three parts: Part A, Part B1 and Part B2. All candidates were required to complete Part A and then choose either Part B1 or Part B2. Part B1 was designed to be the easier section, while Part B2 was designed to be the more difficult section. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 3 was 44,687 of whom around 27.8% chose B1 and around 72.2% chose B2.

Overall Results

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

Table 4: Paper 3 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	52	46.9	26.7
Part B1	53	39.1	25.1
Part B2	53	43.4	18.8

Part A (Compulsory section)

In Part A, candidates had to listen to four recordings related to the theme of factory tourism in Hong Kong. All the recordings included members of a tour company for tourists in Hong Kong called Hidden Hong Kong Tours. Unless otherwise stated, synonyms or similar wordings were accepted as correct answers to those stated here.

Task 1 (Mean = 61.7%)

Candidates were required to fill in a summary sheet while listening to a conversation between two people (Charlie and Fatima) who were having a meeting to finalise the details for a tour of Henry's Umbrella Store.

Items 1-5 asked candidates to write short phrases regarding details of the tour. For item 6, candidates had to look at a map and choose the location of Henry's Umbrella Store. Items 7-9 asked candidates to write short phrases for activities during the tour.

These items seemed straightforward for the majority of candidates except item 5 (37% correct), in which some candidates misspelt the address or wrote the wrong number for the address, and item 9 (18% correct), in which some candidates misspelt 'Instagram' or wrote 'section' instead of 'session'.

Item 10 asked candidates to add ticks to a table and items 11-13 asked candidates to complete a table with short answers. Of these items, item 11 and item 13 proved to be the most challenging for candidates. For item 11 (50% correct), candidates were required to write 'most popular way'. Some candidates wrote 'popular way' – omitting 'most' – hence providing an inadequate answer or 'most popular ways' (plural form and incorrect meaning). For item 13 (34% correct), some candidates wrote 'promote' but omitted the location 'in/to schools.' Other candidates included the location but wrote 'at school' (incorrect meaning).

Task 2 (Mean = 48.3%)

For Task 2, candidates were required to listen to an interview between Keaton – a member of Hidden Hong Kong Tours – and TY Chow, the owner of a porcelain factory in Hong Kong. The questions for this task mainly related to the history of the porcelain factory and the reasons for its decline.

For items 16-19, candidates were required to complete a table with short answers. These items proved to be challenging for some candidates (60%, 44% and 43% correct for items 16, 17 and 18 respectively). For item 17, candidates were required to write the plural form 'six branches/six factories'. Some candidates incorrectly wrote the singular form. Item 19 (28% correct) proved to be very challenging with many candidates writing incomplete and inadequate answers.

For items 20-22, candidates were required to complete another table with short answers. These also proved to be challenging for some candidates. For item 20 (29% correct), candidates were required to write 'lower wages and rent.' Some candidates wrote 'low' – omitting the comparative form. For item 21 (38% correct), candidates were required to write 'no young workers in Hong Kong' – some candidates omitted 'Hong Kong'. From the context of the table, it was unclear if such an answer referred to young workers in the Mainland or in Hong Kong.

For items 23-24, candidates were required to write short phrases and for item 25, candidates were required to tick two of the five pictures related to popular design patterns on porcelain. These proved to be challenging for some candidates (52%, 42% and 39% correct for items 23, 24 and 25 respectively).

Task 3 (Mean = 44.3%)

For Task 3, candidates were required to listen to a conversation between two members of Hidden Hong Kong Tours – Charlie and Greta – about making a YouTube video at an exhibition at Bolin Medicine's factory in Hong Kong. The items in Task 3 were related to background information about Bolin Medicine (items 26-28) and the four manufacturing stages for the medicine (items 29-39).

For item 27, candidates had to tick 2 out of 4 choices, and for item 28 (multiple choice), candidates had to select one option from four. Of these items, item 27 proved to be more challenging (48% correct), possibly because candidates were required to understand that 'had a high temperature' in the tapescript was synonymous with 'Fever' in the Question-Answer Book.

For item 29, candidates had to write a short phrase and for item 30 (multiple choice), they had to select one option from five. Of these two items, item 29 proved to be challenging for some candidates (35%

correct). For this item, candidates were required to write 'quality local suppliers' and some candidates wrote 'supplier' (singular form and inaccurate in terms of meaning).

For items 31-36, candidates were required to complete a table with short phrases. They had to write a condition during the preparation process (items 31, 33 and 35) and a reason for maintaining the condition (items 32, 34 and 36). The most challenging items for candidates were the items for which candidates had to provide the reason – item 32 (29% correct), item 34 (17% correct) and item 36 (25% correct). In item 34, relatively few candidates appeared to know the word 'mould'.

For items 37-38, candidates were required to write a short phrase. Both items proved challenging for candidates (19% correct for both). Item 37 required candidates to apply language they may have been familiar within the context of making coffee or tea to that of medicine, i.e. cold brew. Item 38 required candidates to provide all of the components of the relevant information from the recording, i.e. to maintain freshness and flavour.

For item 39 (multiple choice), candidates were required to tick two choices from four. In order to do this, they were required to infer the answers as they were not explicitly stated in the tapescript. From 'not using tin boxes' and 'environmentally friendly' in the tapescript, candidates had to infer 'Biodegradable'; from 'feelings of family...comfort and warmth' in the tapescript, candidates had to infer 'Homely'. Around 67% of candidates were able to do this.

Task 4 (Mean = 33.7%)

For Task 4, candidates were required to listen to a conversation between two members of Hidden Hong Kong Tours – Fatima and Charlie – about an interview that Fatima had had with Albert Wan, a retired toy factory worker in Hong Kong. This task consisted of questions about Albert Wan's recruitment from Shanghai to work in a toy factory in Hong Kong. It was designed to be more challenging for candidates in terms of the content as well as the fact that it required a greater amount of interpretation and inference to answer the questions.

For items 40-41, candidates were required to write short phrases. Item 41 proved to be extremely challenging for candidates (16% correct). There were two possible answers for this item. The first possible answer related to Albert Wan being recruited in Shanghai by representatives/the factory and the second possible answer related to the factory/owners/representatives paying the ship fare/transportation/tickets. Many candidates omitted some of these key concepts from their answer.

For items 42-46, candidates were required to complete a table with short phrases which related to Albert's salary and benefits. Candidates found item 43 (7% correct) and item 45 (19% correct) extremely challenging. For item 43, few candidates apparently knew the word 'dorm/dormitory.' For item 45, candidates were required to write 'comfortable' salary and provide the reason. Some candidates wrote 'high' or 'higher' perhaps making a guess that this answer was the opposite of item 42 – 'small amount/low'. Many failed to provide the correct reason that he had become a manager. For item 46, candidates needed to capture the concept that the accommodation was free/ provided (by the factory or owners) for free/was built by the factory (for the families). Some candidates wrote 'provided free flat' or 'built free flat', which would seem to imply that Albert provided or built the flat himself, which is factually incorrect. Candidates should be considerate of whether their answers are clear within the context of the Question-Answer Book and should not simply write down phrases they hear from the recording.

For items 47-50, candidates were required to complete a short table which related to the positive and negative aspects of working in the toy factory. Candidates performed moderately well in item 47 (51% correct), item 48 (36% correct) and item 49 (43% correct). Item 50 (25% correct) was more challenging. For this item, there were two possible answers. For the first possible answer, candidates had to capture the concept of extreme heat in summer. For the second possible answer, candidates had to capture the concept of no windows or air conditioning in summer.

For item 51, candidates had to listen carefully to decide which of the three theories Charlie and Fatima believed to be the correct one. To do this, candidates had to listen to an extended part of the conversation and infer the speakers' attitude towards each theory from their explanations, reactions and tone. Around 39% of candidates were able to do this and express it as a clear proposition in their answer.

In item 52, candidates were required to understand the gist of the part of the story that described the factory closing down, to infer how the character Albert would have felt about it and then express it in terms of an adjective and a reason. This proved to be challenging for many candidates, with only 28% of candidates receiving a point for this item.

Recommendations for Part A

Candidates should spend the preparation time familiarising themselves with the tasks. With the help of the given instructions/headings/prompts/choices, they may be able to predict the likely development of a text. They may also predict the vocabulary they will hear in the recording and make guesses about possible answers. Candidates should read the prompts and stems carefully to predict the required form of the answer, i.e. whether it should be a single noun, noun phrase or a clause or sentence conveying a more complete meaning. For some tasks, it is important to gain an understanding of the whole section of conversation and so candidates may consider jotting down notes first before coming back to complete their answers during the tidy-up time. Candidates should also be prepared to compose answers in their own words rather than relying on repeating the words they hear in the recording as certain items may require them to infer the answers though not explicitly stated in the text. Before moving on to Part B, candidates should take the time to check whether their answers make sense and are clear within the context of the section of the Question-Answer Book in which they appear.

Part B

In both Parts B1 and B2, candidates took the role of Nico Lin, who works at Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited, a company that designs, makes and sells neon lighting products and services. In both parts, Nico is assigned to write texts for company use. In Part B1, candidates were required to write an email to the students at the Hong Kong Design School to encourage them to apply to join Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited as trainees; to draft a leaflet on how neon signs are made for customers who visit the neon light factory; and to complete a webpage detailing the company's products. In Part B2, candidates were required to write three texts for the company: a short history of the company for its website, an email reply to Wan Yuen Estate Residents' Association, and a short speech to be delivered by the founder of the company, Pris Fong, at the opening of an exhibition.

A recording of a podcast interview with Pris Fong, the owner of Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited, and Rick Lai, the chief designer and a 'neon artist', was common to both parts. An identical note-taking sheet with headings was also provided to both sets of candidates. A separate Data File was provided for the two parts, containing texts in a variety of genres that held the instructions and information necessary – in combination with the recording – to complete the assigned tasks. Candidates would be judged on their ability to complete the tasks by identifying and extracting key information from the texts and the recording and then integrating that into the texts they wrote, as well as their attention to the needs of the tasks, the genre features of their written texts, organisation and suitability for the intended audience.

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

Part B1 (Easier section)

In Part B1, candidates took the role of Nico Lin, an employee of Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited, a company that designs, makes and sells neon lighting products and services. Part B1 consisted of three tasks: writing an email to the students at the Hong Kong Design School to encourage them to join Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited as trainees; writing a leaflet on how neon signs are made for customers who visit the neon light factory; and completing a webpage detailing the company's products.

The Part B1 Data File included an instruction email, messages from the Shiny Diamond Management WhatsApp group, customer comments on the company website, extracts from the company handbook, a magazine article of an interview with the company's chief designer, and the inventory notes from the company's previous stock take. A note sheet was also included to enable candidates to jot down information from a podcast recording. Candidates needed to identify and adapt relevant content points from the provided texts and present them as required in the instructions.

The candidates' performance is summarised in Table 5:

Table 5: Paper 3 Part B1 results

Task	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
5	18	35.6	26.5
6	18	36.0	27.2
7	17	46.2	28.1

From Table 5, it can be seen that Task 5 proved to be the most challenging for this year's B1 candidates, whereas Task 7 was much more manageable. The overall mean was 39.1% for all of Part B1. It proved to be successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates and in terms of its own internal reliability.

Task 5

Task 5 was the most challenging task in Part 3B1, with a mean of 35.6%. In this task, candidates were required to write a recruitment email to students at the Hong Kong Design School to encourage them to join Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited as trainees. They needed to use their notes from the podcast recording, as well as information from the company handbook, the interview and the messages from the WhatsApp group to complete the task.

More than half of the candidates were able to state the purpose of writing the email in their opening paragraph (item 5.2). However, around two thirds of the candidates missed the instruction in the WhatsApp group that they had to begin the email with the question 'Do you enjoy making things with your hands?' (item 5.1). Another challenging part for some candidates was adapting the notes from the company handbook. Most candidates successfully located the notes and informed the potential applicants that they needed to have experience in sculpturing and to send the company some photos as evidence of previous work (items 5.3 and 5.7). However, when it came to the interview arrangement, weaker candidates misinterpreted the word 'shortlisted' (item 5.8): many stated that all applicants would be invited for an interview, which would be misleading.

Stronger candidates were able to logically sequence the ideas in the email, beginning with an engaging introduction, then providing details of the training from the recording (items 5.4-5.6). Presentation of the content points in this or a similar order would fulfil the stylistic requirement of getting 'their interest'. To end the email, candidates needed to inform interested students to simply reply to the recruitment email if they would like to apply for the position (item 5.9). Less than a quarter of the candidates successfully located this point from the WhatsApp messages. Most candidates instead wrote a closing urging students to look out for the recruitment email which would be sent out later. It appears that they did not realise that the task they were doing was the same recruitment email.

Task 6

In Task 6, candidates had to write a leaflet detailing how a neon sign is made using the three headings provided – 'Planning the sign', 'Making the sign' and 'Displaying the sign' – to organise their ideas. The company handbook in the Data File also lists these headings to help candidates identify the relevant information for the task. The how-to leaflet they wrote was for customers who visited the neon light factory. The performance in this task was comparable to that of Task 5, with a mean of 36.0%.

To do the task well, candidates had to integrate and elaborate on the information given in point form in the company handbook and the ideas in the interview in the *Hong Kong Arts and Crafts Magazine*, as the purpose of the leaflet was to give customers a better understanding of how a neon sign is made. Stronger candidates were able to produce a concise, relevant text to explain the process clearly, with an appropriate use of cohesive devices. Weaker candidates had problems in understanding the headings and so tended to put the information in the wrong sections and include irrelevant details. Some did not explain each step in appropriate detail: for example, they failed to mention why a grid was used (item 6.2) or explain the uses of the machines mentioned (items 6.3 and 6.4). Weaker candidates also struggled to

identify and include the information about handling the glass tubes (item 6.5) and testing the glass tubes (item 6.6), which may indicate a lack of appreciation for the details that readers would find relevant and interesting.

Stronger candidates had better overall reader awareness. They were thus capable of identifying the relevant points in the production process and concluding the leaflet with reference to the end user; i.e. by providing information on what to do with the sign after its manufacture. Whereas stronger candidates were able to identify and relay that the sign could be hung on a wall or placed on a table (items 6.8 and 6.9), weaker candidates tended to end the text abruptly, unable to locate and reproduce the appropriate display information from the Data File.

Task 7

In Task 7, candidates were asked to update the company webpage, specifically information about the company's products and services, as well as responses to frequently asked questions.

With a mean of 46.2%, this proved to be the most manageable task for the candidates attempting Part B1. The more capable candidates were able to complete the task well as many of the content points were discrete items. In addition, the headings and images provided were a useful guide for candidates in selecting the correct information from the Data File and the recording. Having said that, some of the items which involved information from the recording were more difficult for the candidates to answer.

The section 'We can make YOUR design' (items 7.9 to 7.11) required candidates to complete sentences to explain certain products that could be tailored for customers. This section seemed to be more challenging to candidates as it required them to understand the prompts, summarise the information from the Data File and recording, and form grammatically correct sentences. Many candidates left at least one of these items blank. Most candidates who did attempt the items either wrote irrelevant information or failed to demonstrate an ability to manipulate the language from the texts to complete the sentences. Many candidates, for example, seemed to be unaware that the webpage was for promoting the company's products and the information needed was related to the kinds of signs that the company could make to suit the customers' liking.

In general, however, many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of their role and successfully employed information from the listening notes, notes from the inventory of the previous stock take and from the customer comments to complete the task well.

Part B2 (More difficult section)

In Part B2, candidates adopted the role of Nico Lin, an employee of Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited, and were required to write three texts for the company: a short history of the company for its website, an email reply to Wan Yuen Estate Residents' Association, and a short speech to be delivered by the founder of the company, Pris Fong, at the opening of an exhibition. In addition to identifying relevant information from the texts provided, candidates were required to produce organised and coherent texts that were appropriate to the indicated genre and audience, with concise and precise English. Information on which to base their answers was provided in a Data File of texts, including emails, a newspaper clipping, a travel blog, extracts from a diary, extracts from the company's performance report, customer survey results, a product brochure and minutes of the company's management committee meeting. The Data File also included a note-taking sheet with headings, where candidates could record information from a podcast recording.

The candidates' performance is summarised in Table 6:

Table 6: Paper 3 Part B2 results

Task	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
8	18	47.2	20.8
9	17	46.9	22.6
10	18	36.2	21.2

From Table 6 above, it can be seen that with a mean score of 43.4%, Part B2 proved to be slightly more difficult for this year's candidates than Part B2 last year, with Task 10 being the most difficult (36.2%). The paper proved to be successful in discriminating weaker from stronger candidates and in terms of its own internal reliability.

Task 8

Overall, Task 8 proved to be the best-performed task in Part B2, with candidates scoring a mean of 47.2%. Candidates were required to write a text introducing the history of Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited to be published on its website. They needed to first explain what inspired Pris Fong to found the company and give the company its name, and how she finally achieved this. Then, they had to give an overview of the company's growth and recognition since 1990. The task required candidates to synthesise information from a range of sources, including information from the podcast recording.

The text could have been written as either a more formal piece in the style of a company publication, or a more 'interactive' and less formal text to fit the genre of a website which directly addresses the reader. For example,

'Our company, Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited, was founded in 1981 by Ms Pris Fong, who had an unusual experience during her climb on Manaslu mountain.'

'Welcome to our website. How much do you know about our history? If you are interested in knowing more about it, read on!'

The section on what had inspired Pris Fong to found and name the company was quite challenging for many candidates. Stronger candidates were able to select the relevant information from the Data File and their notes from the podcast recording to organise their writing with an appropriate tone and style throughout. In contrast, weaker candidates tended to copy large chunks of trivial and irrelevant details of the incident Pris Fong experienced, producing a text which was too long and lacked focus. Indiscriminate copying from the Data File had a negative impact on candidates' coherence and organisation, and appropriacy marks.

Items 8.2 (Pris Fong's decision to start a neon light company) and 8.8 (the company being awarded the 2021 Neon Award) proved particularly challenging. Item 8.2 came from two pieces of information, the newspaper clipping and Pris Fong's diary. Weaker candidates were unable to combine the information to clearly express the idea that Pris Fong decided to start a neon light company because of her accident on the mountain. Some of these candidates also did not include item 8.8, one of the company's successes mentioned on the podcast recording.

Items 8.6 and 8.7, which required candidates to present graphical information in their own words, proved to be more manageable. Most candidates were able to state the relevant trends using generally simple sentence structures.

Stronger candidates were able to adopt an appropriate tone, often using first-person pronouns ('we' and 'our') to connect the reader and the company. Weaker candidates tended to use third-person pronouns such as 'it' and 'they', which often gave the reader a sense that the text was written by a third party.

Task 9

In Task 9, candidates were required to write an email response to a complaint by the Wan Yuen Estate Residents' Association. They had to identify the two concerns raised by the Association and then address each of them by locating and organising the relevant information from the Data File. It was also important for candidates to start and end the email appropriately and to write the letter in a polite, diplomatic and informative manner. The mean score of this task, 46.9%, was comparable to Task 8.

Most candidates began their text with a reference to the email from the Association and identified the two concerns (light pollution and safety of the rotating cube). Based on the evidence available in the Data File, candidates should have realised that the Association was raising concerns and Shiny Diamond Lighting Limited had not yet done anything wrong. Stronger candidates were able to avoid potentially confrontational language such as 'fault' and 'blame', as stated in the minutes of the management committee meeting. Some weaker candidates started their reply with an apology, giving the reader a sense that the company was at fault.

The minutes of the management committee meeting in the Data File gave clear guidance on how to approach the response, i.e. items 9.1 and 9.8. Many candidates did not include these in their response, though. Items 9.5 and 9.6, where candidates were required to highlight the context of the 2015 lighting incident, similarly proved to be challenging items. Some weaker candidates simply copied indiscriminately that 'the early theory about the accident was that it was due to poor maintenance' without realising that the cause of the accident, 'poor maintenance', was 'confirmed' by the leader of an independent team of engineers in the next paragraph of the source. They were also unable to quote the source of information of item 9.6 ('the leader of an independent team of engineers') to make their argument more convincing to the reader when stating that 'the original installation had passed all safety checks'.

Stronger candidates were able to manipulate the language of the Data File and successfully incorporated relevant content into their own writing. Beyond difficulties in understanding the texts in the Data File, weaker candidates tended to have problems with organisation of ideas, reader awareness, grammatical accuracy and register.

Task 10

In this task, candidates were instructed to write a speech for Pris Fong to deliver at the opening of an exhibition on the future of lighting displays at the Hong Kong Art Museum. The introduction for the speech had already been written and for the remainder of the speech, candidates were instructed to discuss three topic areas, namely 3D projection technology, drone displays and the lasting appeal of neon lights. Candidates were required to incorporate ideas from three different texts in the Data File and information from the podcast with an appropriate tone and register. At a mean score of 36.2%, this task proved to be the most difficult in this section of the paper.

Most candidates were able to organise their ideas into three main body paragraphs, each discussing one of the topics. In terms of content, items 10.1, 10.2, 10.8 and 10.9, which were from the podcast recording, proved to be the most challenging. Many candidates were either unable to note down the information while listening to the recording or to phrase the relevant ideas clearly and completely.

For items 10.3 and 10.7, most candidates were successful in presenting the ideas from the product brochure page and the survey results using generally simple language. However, some weaker candidates included irrelevant information such as neon lights 'are old-fashioned', which was the result of inadequate understanding of the Data File texts and indiscriminate copying.

Stronger candidates were able to end their speeches by emphasising the lasting appeal of neon lights and referencing the exhibition that the audience would watch after the opening ceremony, which showed that they had a thorough understanding of the purpose of writing and an awareness of the context of this speech. For instance:

'I'm positive and confident that neon lights will continue to shine. After listening to my speech, I hope you now have a better understanding of different kinds of lighting displays. Enjoy the exhibition on the future of light displays here today. Thank you.'

In terms of appropriacy, there was generally a good awareness of audience. Stronger candidates were able to connect with the audience using the second-person pronoun 'you' and other public speaking features, such as contractions and signposting. Weaker candidates, however, tended to copy indiscriminately from the Data File and write their work like a formal article.

Recommendations for Part B

As in previous years, weaker candidates tended not to understand the entirety of what was required in each task, which made extracting only relevant information from the Data File texts very challenging. Candidates should take time to read all the instructions given in the Data File, pay particular attention to what is required in each task and only then locate the relevant information by reading the Data File texts carefully. Whenever necessary, they should adapt the language of the Data File to suit the purpose of the task they are working on and be wary of copying large amounts of text indiscriminately.

Another challenge for candidates is jotting down useful notes from the listening input and incorporating these with the information in the Data File to create their own work. Candidates should first read the given headings on the note-taking sheet and anticipate what kinds of information will be presented in the recording. After listening to the recording, they should spend some time tidying up their notes, so that they can familiarise themselves with the information that will be useful for the tasks they will attempt.

School-based Assessment (SBA)

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the SBA requirements were again streamlined to facilitate schools to complete SBA in time. Like last year, schools were only required to submit one mark from either Part A or Part B and the mode of assessment could be either in the form of an individual presentation or group interaction.

This year, a total of 42,528 students took part in the SBA. The mean of the moderated SBA marks was 65.6% and the standard deviation was 17.7%. Based on the statistical moderation results and the district coordinators' reports, 81% of the schools were within the 'as expected' range, 10.5% were 'slightly higher than expected' and 0.6% were in the 'higher than expected and much higher than expected' categories. At the other end of the spectrum, 7.7% of the schools were in the 'slightly lower than expected' category and 0.2% in the 'lower than expected' category. As for the mark spread, 98.7% of the schools were within the 'as expected' category. These figures were comparable to results in previous years.

Individual Presentation

Most of the schools chose to do individual presentations and it was apparent that most of the students were given a lot of time to prepare for their presentations beforehand. Students at the top end of the spectrum were able to give fluent presentations with good and clear articulation with the use of appropriate intonation to enhance their speech. They had good communication strategies with good eye contact and the use of natural hand gestures and body language. They made use of varied and accurate vocabulary and language patterns with practically no grammatical errors. Their ideas were well organised and they were able to elaborate on the main points which they had made. Some of the presentations, however, were too long and exceeded the expected time range by as much as six minutes.

There were some cases, in which it was quite noticeable that the speech had been written out beforehand and then memorised. This affected the fluency and naturalness of the presentations as very often pauses occurred in inappropriate places and the overall intonation was less natural. Body language was often stilted and there was little audience awareness. As the whole speech was written out and then memorised, the language used seemed more like written text spoken aloud. These presentations were not awarded the top marks.

Students who were in the mid and low range of the scale were usually more dependent on their note-cards with some simply reading aloud everything they had written on them. Those in the mid-range were able to pronounce most words quite accurately but usually insufficient intonation was used to convey meaning. They were also able to use most vocabulary and language patterns appropriately. Some cases of memorisation were also noticed among students in this range and these cases were usually more obvious.

Those in the low range had difficulty in pronouncing even simple words accurately, resulting in a hesitant speech which affected the listeners' understanding. They also had difficulty with simple language patterns and made errors which impeded understanding. Those students who received the lowest scores gave very short presentations between one minute to one and a half minutes, which made it difficult to accurately assess their real speaking ability.

Group Interaction

Relatively fewer schools opted to do group interactions this year. From the limited samples received, it was found that nearly all the discussion topics were quite generic and a number of bullet points were usually given to students to help them organise their discussion. This resulted in all the groups following in the order of the bullet points and discussing each point one by one. When going on to the next point, in many cases, one of the group members would abruptly say something like 'Let's go on to the next point', read out the given prompt and then continue the discussion. Little attention was given to making sure the transition was smooth and coherent.

Just as in the individual presentations, more capable students were able to express their ideas clearly and fluently with the use of appropriate vocabulary and highly accurate language patterns. They only occasionally referred to their note-cards and made use of a variety of communication strategies like turn-taking, responding appropriately to others and sustaining and extending the conversational exchange. They also used appropriate body language to display interest and made sure that everyone in the group had an opportunity to speak.

Less capable students were more dependent on their note-cards and instead of listening when other group members were speaking, they usually looked at their own note-cards and did not display interest in the interaction. When they took their turn to speak, they mostly started with some formulaic expressions like 'I agree.' or 'That's a good point.' and then read directly what was written on their note-cards without considering whether what they were saying was consistent with what had just been said or not. Their ideas were sometimes unclear and lacked elaboration. Such candidates also made frequent errors that impeded understanding.

Recommendations

The following are some recommendations to help students perform better in SBA.

This year, there were more memorised presentations than in former years, especially among the more capable students. Students need to be reminded that the purpose of SBA is to assess their speaking ability, not their memorisation skills, so presenting a memorised script or reading from a written script will result in a lower mark in some, if not all, of the four domains. It would be more effective to use the preparation time to think about the ideas that they would like to present and then put these ideas in point form on a note-card. As a rule of thumb, three main points with some elaboration would normally suffice for the Individual Presentation. Colour coding could be used to distinguish the main points from the supporting details to make it easier for students to refer to during the actual presentation. Students should rehearse their presentations a few times using vocabulary and language patterns that they are familiar with to express their ideas. They should also check that they are able to present all their points within the expected time. In this way, when they do their SBA, they will be able to perform confidently and naturally.

During the group interaction, it is important that students display interest and pay attention to the discussion so that they can link what they want to say with what has just been said. Instead of only using formulaic expressions like 'I agree', students could practise using other ways of linking their ideas coherently with what has just been said. They could also learn to use more discussion strategies like rephrasing, summarising, encouraging contributions, requesting repetition and clarifications. Most importantly, students need to take an active part and help to sustain and extend the group interaction.

Students at the lower end of the scale need to spend more time on learning the pronunciation of common words on the topic that they are required to speak on. This is facilitated nowadays by the availability of online dictionaries, which provide the actual pronunciation of words. When students are able to pronounce most of the words in their speech accurately, listeners will be able to understand more clearly what they are saying. They also need to learn more vocabulary and some simple language patterns and practise using them whenever there is an opportunity. In this way, students can make use of them

naturally and confidently when they are giving a presentation. Not only will this help the students get higher marks in SBA, they can also use these language patterns and vocabulary in their written papers during the DSE examination.

The final recommendation is constant practice. If students are willing to speak some English every day, their English will become more natural and fluent. Students can speak more English both in and outside the classroom when talking to their English teachers and classmates. They can form small groups with their classmates and take turns giving presentations or have a group interaction to discuss any interesting topics. They can give feedback to each other for further improvement.

If students really want to do well in SBA, they need to take the initiative and make an effort to improve their speaking ability. Any effort made will result in an improvement in both their spoken and written English.

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

There were two parts in Papers 1 and 3. Candidates were required to answer ALL questions in Part A. In Part B, candidates could choose EITHER Part B1 (easier section) OR Part B2 (more difficult section). In the grading process, the marks for Part B1 were converted to the marks on the scale for Part B2 using the tables on the next page. For example, if we refer to the conversion table for Paper 1B, a score of 20 marks scored by a candidate taking Part 1B1 would be converted to 5 marks on the 1B2 scale.

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

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

Paper 1B

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

Paper 3B

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

Paper 3B

3B1 (easier)	3B2 (more difficult)
43	22
44	23
45	24
46	26
47	28
48	30
49	33
50	36
51	39
52	42
53	45