

## LIBERAL STUDIES

### ADVANCED SUPPLEMENTARY LEVEL

#### Introduction

The name 'Liberal Studies' is meant to suggest that this subject is designed to help liberate the minds of our students by having them study a wide range of issues that impact on their daily lives, and in the process requiring them to take a fresh look at Hong Kong and the wider world, without the constraints that typify many of the other academic A-level subjects which they will be studying.

The subject's primary aim is to help students develop the skills that are characteristic of a well-educated person. The topics in the various modules are, in one sense, just a means to this all-important end. In Hong Kong Studies, for example, it would not be difficult to devise an alternative syllabus covering matters of great importance to Hong Kong but with entirely different topics to those actually chosen.

The question format used in Liberal Studies differs from that normally found in local examination syllabuses. The use of this format is intended to emphasise the need for an inquiry approach in teaching and studying the subject. Each module spells out a number of issues and the approach required is indicated by the questions that are listed under each topic area. It is not intended that each topic should be covered exhaustively.

The question format is not meant to imply that all students should aim to identify certain correct answers. On the contrary, the approach used should stress that most issues are much too complex to allow of simplistic solutions. In this connection, students should be helped to appreciate the naivety of much of what they are exposed to in the public media and elsewhere.

In order to understand an issue to the point where judgements can be made about it, it is, of course, necessary to have knowledge of a body of relevant facts. However, **in this subject the emphasis is not intended to be on accumulating factual knowledge and great care will be taken in the examination papers to avoid questions which call for detailed factual recall. Instead, the emphasis will be on understanding and assessing the extent to which the candidate can demonstrate possession of the skills listed in the subject objectives.**

The modules which make up this subject are meant to be equally accessible to all students without regard both to the subjects they are currently studying and to those they studied previously for the HKCEE. Teachers and students reading the details of the syllabus for the first time need to bear this in mind and carefully study the aims and objectives both of the subject and the individual modules.

It would be a mistake, for example, to conclude that because a topic resembles one to be found in an Economics syllabus that it should be taught in the same way. In Liberal Studies, topics of this sort should be taught from the point of view of the impact on our lives, on Hong Kong and on the wider world. Such topics do not, therefore, require the teacher to have knowledge beyond that possessed by a well-read individual and the student should not aim to acquire knowledge of the underlying economic concepts which might be appropriate if the topics were being studied as part of the A-Level Economics syllabus.

In the same way, it is not intended that students studying Environmental Studies should have a knowledge of the complex chemistry, physics and biology which underlie the issues discussed in this module — one can have knowledge of what comes out of the exhaust of a motor vehicle and appreciate the problems that such exhaust gases cause, without understanding the processes involved in the working of the internal combustion engine.

### **Subject Aims**

The subject aims to broaden the horizons and skills of Secondary 6 and 7 students by having them study areas outside the traditional A-level syllabuses, to increase students' awareness of themselves, and to engender a critical awareness of the society in which they live, and the way that society relates to an ever-changing world.

The subject also aims to provide the means by which students may learn to harmonise the different approaches found in the sciences and humanities. In addition, the format also allows schools to choose from the list of modules in such a way that at least one module can provide a contrast to the students' main course of study.

### **Subject Objectives**

The subject aims to provide a framework within which students are encouraged ....

1. to become better informed, interested in and concerned for Hong Kong and the wider world;
2. to achieve greater self-reliance in learning through the development of self-study skills, independent use of resources and self-discipline in the organisation of study time and other priorities, which would ultimately lead students to the point where they can learn to satisfy their intellectual curiosity;

3. to develop the ability to analyse complex wholes into their component parts and to evaluate the adequacy of evidence to support conclusions and the validity of arguments in terms of their objectivity and freedom from bias or prejudice;
4. to think more independently so that they are willing to seek alternatives, to assess and evaluate opinions put forward by others and to be open-minded enough to accept the views of others; or, where there are good grounds for doing so, to maintain their own views;
5. to be more creative in the sense that they learn to identify problems and their solutions through the application of their skills, their intellectual resources, and what they have experienced, in ways that are new to them.

### **Assessment Objectives**

The following assessment objectives spell out specifically what the subject objectives, given above, imply. Not one of them is unique to this subject since they are meant to exemplify what is meant by a well-informed and well-educated person who is both open-minded and able to communicate effectively.

### **In the Liberal Studies examination and project work, candidates will need to be able ....**

- to understand sufficiently the basic terminology central to the issues being studied to follow *non-technical* articles on these issues,
- to scan documents rapidly to locate relevant information,
- to skim through a document so that its gist is understood,
- to read for detailed information,
- to categorise and classify information,
- to extract information relevant to a specific issue from a variety of sources.

### **They will be rewarded for their ability to show that they can ....**

- identify central ideas,
- decide what inferences or predictions might be made on the basis of given accounts,
- understand the purposes, biases and assumptions which may underlie a particular view,
- differentiate between what is less important and more important when evaluating a case,
- test the validity of arguments by relating cause to effect and evidence to conclusions,
- interpret and use data whether in written text, tables, charts, graphs, or other forms,
- differentiate among facts, opinions and value judgements,
- provide evidence, usually in the form of specific examples, for a particular conclusion,
- validly draw conclusions from given evidence,
- discriminate between various sources, to evaluate information coming from these sources with an open mind, and to appreciate the differences between first-hand and second-hand information,

- be critically aware of the underlying concepts involved when faced with two or more apparently authoritative views on an issue,
- organise and present ideas in a clear, and logical form and in a variety of formats in order to make a convincing judgement,
- argue for and against when examining a particular issue,
- make a reasoned argument when choosing between alternatives,
- support their own value judgements with sound argument,
- show evidence of original and creative thinking,
- draw critically upon their own experience and their encounters within the community,
- appreciate the moral, ethical and social implications involved in the issues raised in the syllabus.

[**Note** : The CDC teaching syllabus adds to the above list since there are other objectives which the classroom teacher needs to take into account.]

### **The Examination**

The subject consists of six modules :

- *Hong Kong Studies*
- *Environmental Studies*
- *Human Relationships*
- *The Modern World*
- *Science, Technology & Society*
- *China Today*

Candidates will have to offer two modules, and complete a project in one of the two chosen modules. Each module paper will contribute 40% towards the subject marks and the project the remaining 20%. Candidates will be required to submit details of module choice and project work at the time of registration.

Candidates will be required to sit a 2½-hour paper in each of their chosen modules.

Each module paper will consist of two sections :

**Section 1 (75%)**

This section will consist of data-response questions, all of which will have to be answered.

**Section 2 (25%)**

This section will consist of four questions, which may be in conventional or data-response format. Candidates will be required to answer one question only.

**Note 1: Data-Response Questions**

In this syllabus the term ‘data’ is to be interpreted in the broadest possible sense to mean any type of information. Hence when the syllabus says that ‘Section 1 will consist of data-response questions’, this implies that candidates will have to respond to information which may be in many different formats including, for example,

- articles, news items, reports, memos, letters, advertisements;
- written dialogue;
- tables, charts, graphs, maps;
- cartoons, pictures, illustrations.

**Note 2: Optional Issues/Items**

In each module, some issues/items are designated as ‘optional’. (Please refer to the **ANNEX** at the end of the syllabus for this subject.) Section 1 of the question paper, which comprises compulsory questions, will **not** contain any questions related to the optional issues/items. In Section 2, where candidates are given a choice of one out of four questions, **at least three** questions will fall within the non-optional issues/items (i.e. at most one question will concern the optional issues/items but it will be possible **not** to set any question at all on these issues/items).

## **Project**

Every candidate is required to prepare a project report on one of the two modules he/she has chosen. The regulations, guidelines and methods of assessment issued by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to schools will apply.

Schools entering candidates for the subject examination **for the first time** should inform the following in writing **before 1st August 2010**:

General Manager, School Examinations & Assessment Division  
Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority  
Southorn Centre, 12th Floor,  
130 Hennessy Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong.

This is intended to ensure that staff of the Authority could contact the new participating schools for the matters of the project work.

Private candidates will, at the time they apply to sit the examination, receive a document detailing the requirements of the project work and the related working schedule.

Relevant documents for the project work such as the project guidelines, title form and log sheet etc. are available on the Website (<http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk>) of the Authority.

## **Results Profile**

The results for Liberal Studies will be reported in the form of a three-part profile. As well as a grade for the whole subject, there will be sub-grades for each of the two chosen modules and the project. The names of the two chosen modules will appear on the certificate. The project module will also be indicated.

## **The Syllabus**

*The Liberal Studies syllabus in this handbook provides a basic framework for teaching and learning. The order in which the various issues are arranged is not necessarily the order in which they should be covered in teaching.*

## HONG KONG STUDIES

### Module Aims

To enable students ....

- (a) to have a sound understanding of their own society, its strengths and weaknesses, and by learning to look critically at a number of important issues, to better equip themselves to take their places in it;
- (b) to have a clear perspective of the respective roles of the government, public and private organisations, as well as the individual in making Hong Kong (H.K.) a better place in which to live.

## ISSUE 1

How can H.K. provide a sound education for its young people, and at the same time match the needs of the community with aspirations of parents and students?

- <sup>1</sup> How do the values of stakeholders in education differ? Could these differences be reconciled? To what extent can the aims of education stated by the government accommodate the aspirations of parents, students, teachers and employers?
- <sup>2</sup> What has prompted the government to undertake measures to improve the quality of education? How desirable and effective are these measures? Are there better alternatives?
- <sup>3</sup> What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Chinese/English as the medium of instruction in H.K.'s secondary schools and tertiary institutions? What are the implications of the use of 'a language mix' in the classroom? Given the existing language preference of schools, parents and students, how could a language policy be designed and implemented to satisfy their demands?
- <sup>4</sup> What are the roles of English, Putonghua and Cantonese in the H.K. community? Are these roles changing? How does the current situation with respect to language standards match the needs of H.K., and what can be done to improve these standards?
- <sup>5</sup> How has the assessment trend been changing recently? What have prompted these changes? Are there better alternatives?
- <sup>6</sup> Does the government spend enough on education and does it spend this money wisely? What would be the implications for other sectors, if government were to increase or decrease the percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) it currently spends on education?
- <sup>7</sup> What are the current trends with respect to H.K.'s young people receiving education outside H.K. and students from the mainland coming to study in H.K.? What are the implications for the H.K. community, for its education system and for its economy?

## ISSUE 2

What is the basis on which H.K.'s prosperity has been built and what is its future viability?

- <sup>8</sup> What is the importance of free trade to H.K.? Why has H.K.'s status as a free port not saved it from protectionist measures?



- 9 Why do so many of H.K.'s trading partners erect barriers against its exports? Why can H.K. not retaliate? What is the impact of international organisations/agreements like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on H.K.? What are the current challenges that H.K. faces in this area?
- 10 Why is it that in recent years the value of H.K.'s re-exports has exceeded that of its domestic exports? What is the current trend? What have been the implications of this phenomenon for the secondary and tertiary sectors, and how has it affected local employment patterns?
- 11 What pattern has emerged in H.K. in respect of investments from overseas and the mainland? What are the current trends? What benefit does H.K. gain from these investments? What can be done to attract more investments from overseas and the mainland?
- 12 What accounts for the spectacular rise of H.K. as a major financial centre? Why is this role important to the H.K. economy as a whole? What are the current problems in this area, and the prospects for the future?
- 13 Is there currently an appropriate reliance on secondary sector and tertiary sector in H.K.? What are the possible ways forward?

### **ISSUE 3**

How does the implementation of the Basic Law affect the development of H.K.?

- 14 Why is the principle of 'one country, two systems' central to the Basic Law? What factors facilitate or hinder the implementation of the Basic Law?
- 15 How do H.K. people currently view the Basic Law? How has its implementation affected the political process of H.K. and people's concept of the nature of democracy? How has it affected the lives of ordinary people? How has it affected the concept of nationhood?

#### **ISSUE 4**

How adequate are H.K.'s legal and law enforcement systems to perform the role of underpinning a democratic society so that it remains prosperous, law-abiding and a place in which human rights and values are fully respected?

- 16 An ideal society has been described as 'a society in which every citizen is allowed the utmost liberty without causing harm to his/her neighbour or adversely affecting the welfare of the community as a whole'. What is the role of the law in preserving the balance which this particular description implies? How closely does H.K. approximate to such a society?
- 17 In a democracy what is the importance of the following concepts:  
- the rule of law,  
- equality before the law, and  
- the independence of the judiciary?  
To what extent has H.K. been successful in implementing these concepts?
- 18 To what extent do the Basic Law and laws in H.K. protect human rights?
- 19 How important are the roles played by law-enforcement bodies in ensuring that H.K. is a safe, prosperous and stable society? How are these roles exercised? What prevents these bodies from abusing their powers? Does H.K. have the potential to become a 'police state'?

#### **ISSUE 5**

How critical is the role of the media in H.K. society?

- 20 To what extent do the H.K. media make rather than report the news? To what extent do they lead rather than reflect public opinion and values? What should our personal attitude be to the media?
- 21 How important is the freedom of the press/media? To what extent is there true freedom of the press/media in H.K.?
- 22 How important is the role of the media in the life of H.K.? To what extent is this role positive?

## ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

### Module Aims

To enable students....

- (a) to better understand the interdependence of all living things and the delicate nature of the balance between them;
- (b) to understand how humans interact with the environment and their dependence upon it, the specific problems that they cause, the effects of overpopulation, and the future implications of all these factors;
- (c) to appreciate the limited nature of the world's resources, and the dangers that humans face if they continue with their uncontrolled exploitation;
- (d) to understand how the concept of sustainable development can be used as a basis for resolving environmental issues;
- (e) to be aware of alternative ways of using environmental resources to avoid existing problems, and the constraints in successfully implementing such alternatives;
- (f) to understand the H.K. environment and the problems that are specific to the territory; what is currently being done, and what might be done in future, to preserve and improve our environment so that H.K. can become a pleasanter and healthier place in which to live;
- (g) to appreciate, in general terms, the cost involved in improving and protecting the local and world environment; and, in personal terms, to appreciate the contribution they can make both through their own lifestyle and through promoting worthwhile environmental causes.

## ISSUE 1

What are the implications for the future as humans continue to disrupt the world environment?

- <sup>1</sup> Why is the greenhouse effect causing so much international concern? What are the different views about the threat posed to the global environment by increases in the concentrations of the greenhouse gases, and what are the possible remedies? What remedial steps have been taken to date? Why is it so difficult to tackle a problem of this nature?
- <sup>2</sup> Why, in recent years, has the ozone layer become the object of so much international concern? Is this concern really justified? What factors are known to contribute to the depletion of the layer? To date, what concrete steps have been taken internationally to deal with the problem? How has H.K. been affected and what are the implications for the future? How can the individual make a contribution to the solution of this problem?
- <sup>3</sup> What are the consequences of acid rain for the environment? In what ways is H.K. currently affected? What steps have been taken locally and internationally to counter the threat?
- <sup>4</sup> How much of the world's arable land has been lost in the 20th century? Where are these problems most acute and what is the current trend? What are the factors responsible for this loss of arable land? What examples are there of successful remedial action?
- <sup>5</sup> What is the capacity of the sea to absorb the different kinds of pollutants that it currently receives? Which sources of pollution are considered to be the greatest threat to the world's oceans? What are the implications of any decision to stop using the sea as a dumping ground for unwanted wastes? What are the long-term dangers if current trends are not reversed?
- <sup>6</sup> Is it possible for the government to ensure that when H.K. people eat vegetables and fruit they are not adversely affected by pesticides? What are the difficulties in the way of preventing such contamination?
- <sup>7</sup> What local and international examples have there been where pesticides and chemical fertilizers have entered food webs with serious consequences to animals and/or humans? How did the contamination of the food webs come about in these cases and what steps are possible to limit such damage? How can crops be protected and the fertility of the soil maintained by methods which do not harm the environment? What are the difficulties in the way of implementing such alternative technologies?

- <sup>8</sup> On what scale have plant and animal species become extinct during the 20th century? What is the current trend? What have been the chief factors responsible for the loss of these species? What steps have been taken in H.K. and internationally to save endangered species? Why has it proved so difficult to reverse the current trend? What can the individual do to help? What are the consequences of failure to prevent the continued loss of plant and animal species?
- <sup>9</sup> What are the effects of the propagation of the idea of sustainability upon the developed and developing countries? To what extent has the idea of sustainability been implemented in the development of H.K.? What are the factors that may hinder the implementation of sustainable development in H.K.? In what ways could the hindrances be removed?

## ISSUE 2

How are humans to cope with the fact that the world's energy and natural resources are strictly limited and in danger of being exhausted?

- <sup>10</sup> What proportion of the world's energy needs are currently supplied by coal, oil, wood, and hydroelectric power? What is the pattern of their use in H.K.? What are the environmental problems associated with each of these energy sources both in H.K. (in the case of oil and coal) and internationally? What are the long-term prospects for the use of these sources at present or increased rates of consumption?
- <sup>11</sup> What countries currently make use of nuclear energy and to what extent does this source meet their energy requirements? What is its importance to H.K.? What are its advantages and disadvantages? What is the current trend with regard to the building of new plants? What special hazards does radioactivity pose to the environment? How does the environmental impact of nuclear plants compare with coal and oil fueled plants?
- <sup>12</sup> What use is currently made of alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, wave, tidal, OTEC (ocean thermal energy conversion) and geothermal energy? How are these energy sources utilised?
- <sup>13</sup> What use is being made of alternative fuels which are organic in origin? How are these fuels produced?
- <sup>14</sup> What are the problems associated with the use of these alternative energy sources and organic fuels? What advantages do they have? What factors have prevented their rapid development?

- 15 What are the principal minerals in current use? On what scale are they found naturally? On what scale are they currently being mined? What environmental problems are associated with mining? What are the long-term prospects for the availability of these minerals?
- 16 What is the scope for recycling metals and glass? What are the reasons for giving this a high priority? How is it possible to ensure that recycling is economically viable?
- 17 How useful are plastics? What are their advantages and disadvantages? What environmental problems arise when they are improperly disposed of? What scope is there for recycling them? What contribution can biodegradable plastics make to the preservation of the environment?
- 18 To what extent are the world's living resources such as timber and fish endangered by over-exploitation? What is currently being done to address this problem internationally and in H.K.? What are the areas that are currently causing the most concern? Is the large-scale recycling of paper a practicable proposition? What can the individual do to help?
- 19 What is meant by the conservation of gene pools? Why is this so important to future generations?

### ISSUE 3

What can be done to improve the H.K. environment in the face of population change and industrial growth in the Pearl River Delta?

- 20 What is the scope and nature of the problem for air/noise pollution? Are current remedial plans/legislation adequate?
- 21 How has the pattern of use by the various kinds of vehicle found on H.K. roads changed in recent years? How has this changing pattern related to population and GDP growth? What have been the factors limiting/encouraging the ownership of private vehicles during this period? How significant is the contribution of different types of motor vehicles to H.K.'s air pollution problems? What are the health implications? Should further steps be taken to limit the number of vehicles on H.K.'s roads and, if so, how is this best done?
- 22 How serious is the problem of water pollution in H.K.'s coastal waters? Are current remedial plans/legislation adequate? What are the consequences of doing too little or moving too slowly? What are the factors that impede progress? What is the cost for all those involved to maintain a high quality environment? What can individuals do to improve matters?
- 23 What is the link between 'red tides' and water pollution? To what extent is it true to say that the incidence of red tides is a barometer of the level of H.K.'s concern for its marine environment?

- <sup>24</sup> How does H.K. dispose of its refuse? What environmental problems have these methods posed in the past? What is the nature of the present problems and what solutions are proposed for the future? Are there alternatives other than those currently in use?
- <sup>25</sup> How extensive are H.K.'s litter problems? What are the consequences of such littering for the environment? Why are these problems so intractable? What can be done to change the way people think and behave in this area? Is it necessary to look beyond the immediate problem?
- <sup>26</sup> Is there a problem in H.K. with the 'indoor environment' in, for example, multistorey office buildings and the MTR? To what extent should people be allowed to smoke in public buildings and the work environment? Do smokers as well as non-smokers have rights?
- <sup>27</sup> How does H.K.'s current shoreline compare with the original coastline? What has been the impact of reclamations on the H.K. environment? What reclamations are currently under way or in the pipe-line? What factors have to be taken into account when a reclamation is being planned? What is the scope for future reclamation work in H.K.?
- <sup>28</sup> How important is town planning in the older urban areas and in the new towns? To what extent is it now possible to improve the urban environment? How can this be done?
- <sup>29</sup> How has the pattern of land use in the New Territories changed in recent years? What is the current trend? What government controls are in place, or planned, to regulate the use of the land? As the population continues to grow, what are the factors that will determine whether the overall situation with respect to the New Territories environment improves or deteriorates?
- <sup>30</sup> How extensive is H.K.'s system of country parks and protected areas? How important are they in protecting the H.K. environment and in providing recreational and educational facilities?
- <sup>31</sup> To what extent are the functions of country parks and protected areas (conservation, recreation and education) in conflict?

## **HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

### **Module Aims**

To enable students ....

- (a) to better understand themselves as teenagers about to enter the adult world, and to assist them in the acquisition of the skills they will need as mature adults in H.K. society;
- (b) to better understand the way they relate to their siblings, parents, peers, employers, marriage partner and to the community at large, and to appreciate the factors that can make such relationships stable or unstable, rewarding or difficult;
- (c) to appreciate and understand the pressures that H.K. teenagers face as they grow up, and to make their own judgments about how to deal with those pressures and with the consequences that flow from the breakdown of normal relationships;
- (d) to appreciate what is involved in being a mature, responsible and caring member of the H.K. community.



## **ISSUE 1**

How can a person develop the kind of self-awareness and self-esteem that will lead to greater maturity and lay the foundations for stable relationships with other people?

- <sup>1</sup> How can young people ....
  - get to know themselves and see themselves as others see them?
  - learn how to accept and benefit from feedback about themselves?
  - learn to take stock of their lives?
  - discover their values and beliefs?
  - discover their interests?
  - appreciate and deal with their physical and emotional needs?
  - discover what makes them do the things they do?
  - learn to be positive about themselves to the point where they can accept their limitations and the things in their lives that they cannot change, without losing the will to improve themselves?

## **ISSUE 2**

How do young people about to enter the adult world learn the skills that they will need to function as mature adults in H.K. society?

- <sup>2</sup> How can young people ....
  - learn to set achievable goals, and achieve them by motivating and disciplining themselves?
  - learn to solve problems constructively and become effective decision-makers?
  - learn to manage their emotions?
  - learn to cope with stress and failure, and to achieve and maintain emotional and physical well-being?
  - learn to manage their sexuality?
  - develop strategies to cope with the major changes (planned and unplanned) that occur in their lives and learn from these experiences?
  - learn to communicate effectively?
  - identify their creative potential and develop it?
  - learn to manage their time effectively?
  - learn to make the most of the present?
  - learn to manage their finances?

### ISSUE 3

What is involved in the kind of mature relationship between parents and their teenage children which leads to a smooth transition to the independence of adulthood?

- 3 How have changes in family patterns in H.K. affected the way that parents relate to their teenage children and the expectations that each has of the other? What is the current trend?
- 4 What factors underlie the phenomenon usually referred to as 'the generation gap'? To what extent do H.K. parents underestimate the extent of the generation gap between themselves and their teenage children, while their children overestimate it?
- 5 What are the main causes of conflict between parents and their teenage children in H.K.? How are these conflicts typically 'resolved'? When conflicts occur, which strategies, on the part of both parents and teenagers, appear to be the most effective?
- 6 How are children usually affected when they grow up in a home where the parents are in open conflict? In H.K., what are the consequences for the children when their parents separate or divorce? What is the impact on children when they grow up with only one parent?
- 7 Can H.K. parents better prepare their children to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood?

### ISSUE 4

How can young people take advantage of all the positive features of group membership and at the same time learn to avoid the pitfalls which may be involved?

- 8 What is expected of H.K. sixth formers and young adults by their peers if they are to be popular as group members? What is the relative importance of the factors involved? What are the prevailing criteria which lead to classification as an undesirable group member?
- 9 What is it that makes some groups worth belonging to and others not? What skills can individuals develop to enable them to influence a group positively? What strategies can be used to survive in a group which the individual would prefer to leave but cannot?

- 10 How can young people cultivate those behaviours which will make them more acceptable and effective as group members, and at the same time modify those behaviours which alienate them from the group and diminish the contribution they can make?
- 11 What kind of pressures are there on adolescents to conform in H.K. society? What strategies can be used to resist undesirable peer group pressures? What is the cost likely to be? Will H.K. teenagers moving into the adult world find things significantly different?
- 12 What is the significance of peer group pressures in behaviours such as experimentation with premarital sex, smoking, drugs, drinking and gambling? Are the efforts made by various groups in H.K., who believe that young people should avoid such activities, effective?

## ISSUE 5

What are the factors that contribute to good sibling, employment and marriage relationships?

- 13 How do siblings typically relate to one another in H.K. society? What are the good and bad features of sibling rivalry, and how does it typically manifest itself in H.K.? How should parents handle such rivalries? How can a teenager best contribute to the growth and well-being of brothers and sisters?
- 14 What are the consequences of growing up as an 'only child' in H.K. and the mainland? What are the implications for parents if they have only one child?
- 15 What are the factors that determine job choice in H.K.? When are job decisions usually taken, and what are the typical consequences of these local practices? Where employment is entered into without due thought or conviction, what are the consequences likely to be in terms of self-esteem and relationships with superiors and colleagues?
- 16 What are the keys to good relationships with one's colleagues and superiors in the workplace?
- 17 How is promotion typically gained in H.K.? Should one strive to get on at any price?
- 18 What are the factors that need to be considered in choosing a marriage partner? What is their relative importance? Why do arranged marriages take place and what is their impact on human relationships?

- 19 How do courting couples normally conduct themselves in H.K.? Are attitudes towards courting and marriage changing, and what is influencing these changes? Are these changes desirable? What understandings need to be reached prior to making a full commitment to each other?
- 20 Why do some marriages prosper and others fail?

## ISSUE 6

How should responsible individuals relate to the society in which they live?

- 21 How easy is it for H.K. people to participate formally in community affairs? What is the impact of dense urban setting on community participation?
- 22 What typically motivates people to participate or discourages them from doing so? Has the pattern of participation changed significantly in the past two decades?
- 23 What are the forces that bind people together in the H.K. community? Compared with other major urban centres, how civic-minded are H.K. people in matters such as:
- willingness to participate in political activities, as well as to register as voters and to exercise the right to vote?
  - the willingness of the victims of crime to report to the police?
  - willingness to report crimes involving other people and to make citizens' arrests?
  - helping people involved in street accidents?
  - willingness to accept/assist people who are trying to reintegrate themselves into society such as former drug addicts, mental patients or discharged prisoners?
  - willingness to accept/assist minority groups?
  - consideration to others on crowded streets and when using lifts, public transport?
  - giving time/money to support charities or donating blood/organs?
  - properly disposing of litter in public places?
  - assisting tourists?

What explains the wide range of attitudes and responses among H.K. people in these areas? Do such public attitudes really matter? How can more positive attitudes and participation be encouraged?

- 24 What is the impact of the development of information technology upon human relationships in the local as well as global context?

## **THE MODERN WORLD**

### **Module Aims**

To enable students ....

- (a) to understand how the modern world is changing, the forces that are responsible for such changes, and the implications for the future;
- (b) to widen their horizons and, by broadening their understanding of the increasing interdependence of people and countries in our time, help them to see themselves as citizens of the world as well as of a particular country;
- (c) to appreciate the role played by the major powers, international organisations and the world's major economic and political alliances, and how they may help or hinder efforts to deal with world problems;
- (d) to sensitise themselves to the plight of those in the developing countries, to appreciate the difficulties that stand in the way of their advancement.

## **ISSUE 1**

What are the forces at work in the modern world that tend to break down national boundaries, increasing the interdependence of states, and what are the factors that constrain this process? How do these forces affect the modern world?

- <sup>1</sup> To what extent is the world 'a global village'? To what extent have modern communications and transport been responsible for this development?
- <sup>2</sup> How significant is the role played by sport, popular music, and the fine arts in promoting international understanding?
- <sup>3</sup> To what extent are religious and political beliefs a unifying and/or a divisive force in the modern world? Do such forces sharpen or blur national boundaries?
- <sup>4</sup> What are the principles and assumptions that underlie racism? Is the trend towards more or less racism in the modern world? What are the factors fuelling modern racism? Is anyone completely free of racist sentiments?
- <sup>5</sup> To what extent is economic interdependence a blessing or a curse?
- <sup>6</sup> What are the implications of the emergence of the 'global village' in matters such as human rights, health, education, language, lifestyles? Is there a conflict between being a citizen of a particular country and being 'a citizen of the world'?

## **ISSUE 2**

What are the roles of different military, political and economic groupings and non-governmental organisations in the development of the modern world?

- <sup>7</sup> To what extent does the development of military, political and economic groupings blur national boundaries? What are their constraints in promoting interdependence among different political entities?
- <sup>8</sup> To what extent does the work of the United Nations and non-governmental organisations enhance mutual understanding among different political entities? Have they been dominated by the aspirations and interests of the developed countries?

### **ISSUE 3**

What is the current distribution of power in global politics? Is a multi-polar world order emerging?

- 9 To what extent can the United States of America (U.S.A.) exercise its influence globally? What factors have prompted the U.S.A. to exercise a global influence, and what factors have deterred it from exercising such an influence?
- 10 What other political entities are emerging as 'great powers'? What are their roles in the world and in their respective regions?
- 11 Will a multi-polar world order emerge? How desirable is such a world order in terms of promoting/maintaining peace and development in the modern world?

### **ISSUE 4**

What is the present status of the developing countries and what are their future prospects?

- 12 What are the characteristic features of the developing countries? What are the main problems they now face? What retards their development? What are their long-term prospects?
- 13 How do these countries relate to the developed countries? What are the causes of the tensions between the two groupings? What relevance do these relationships have to the understanding of current events?
- 14 What kind of 'strings' are attached by the developed countries to the giving of overseas aid? Has the best use been made of overseas aid by the receiving countries? What kind of aid has proved most beneficial? Apart from the giving of aid, how else do/might the developed countries assist?

### **ISSUE 5**

What are the forces at work in the modern world which cause political entities to engage in conflicts that involve so much human sacrifice and misery?

- 15 What current situations involving conflicts between or within political entities are on a scale major enough to be of serious concern to the international community?

- 16 Why and how have these situations arisen?
- 17 What efforts have been made to resolve them, and have these efforts succeeded?
- 18 What are the consequences of these conflicts, and what lessons can be learnt by humankind?



## **SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & SOCIETY**

### **General Aim**

To enable students to see in perspective the impact of science and technology on the world environment and on every aspect of our lives.

### **Particular Aims**

To help students ....

- (a) to understand how science and technology interact with and influence each other and society, as well as how they are influenced by the needs of society;
- (b) to understand the contribution that science and the processes of technology can make to the process of wealth creation and in improving the quality of life but, at the same time, appreciate the limitations of this contribution;
- (c) to appreciate the ethical issues involved in the application of scientific and technological knowledge and the role of scientists in society at large;
- (d) to understand H.K.'s place in scientific and technological revolution and to be able to appreciate the particular problems and challenges that H.K. faces.

## ISSUE 1

- 1 What constitutes a scientific theory and what distinguishes it from other forms of knowledge and belief? To what extent does a scientist look at the world in a special way?
- 2 To what extent is technology dependent upon, yet different from, basic scientific activity?

## ISSUE 2

How can modern societies capitalise on the opportunities presented by current technologies and how can they successfully meet the challenges involved, so that life is enriched and the world becomes a better place to live in?

- 3 Why has information technology developed so rapidly? What impact have the latest developments in information technology had on human lives?
- 4 What impact has information technology had on H.K.'s schools and tertiary institutions? Is there scope for greater use of such technology in this area?
- 5 How have these developments changed our lifestyles? Have H.K. people embraced some of these technologies more enthusiastically than many developed countries? How can the negative aspects of this kind of progress be countered?
- 6 How is modern technology helping in the diagnosis and treatment of diseases such as cancer, heart disease and kidney disease and, through biotechnology, in the production of pharmaceutical products such as vaccines, antibiotics and proprietary drugs?
- 7 In terms of the number of people benefiting, what kinds of transplant surgery seem to have been the most valuable? What difficulties have prevented more such surgery from being carried out in H.K. and how can these difficulties be overcome? What priority should the use of very sophisticated technology have when the government is determining the best use of the resources it is able to make available for health care?
- 8 To what extent can the body's functions be performed by machines? What use is currently made of such technology? What are the problems involved when the use of such machines is essential to maintaining life but the patient does not respond to treatment? Should governments legislate in this area?

- 9 What has been the impact of medical technology related to human reproduction in areas such as contraception, artificial insemination by donor, in vitro fertilisation, genetic manipulation, embryology and abortion? What are the moral implications of these technologies? How have they influenced H.K. lifestyles? To what extent should governments exercise control in these areas?
- 10 What impact have advances in medical technology had on the developing countries and what determines the use that is made of such technology in these countries? Can existing technologies solve the main problems?
- 11 How can science and technology (including biotechnology) contribute to the feeding of a hungry world? What stands in the way of putting existing technologies to work to solve the problems of world hunger?
- 12 How has the use of science and technology aimed at increasing food production sometimes proved to be counterproductive? What are the lessons to be learnt from these experiences?
- 13 How near is the world's population to the point where it cannot be sustained by existing resources? What implications does this have for the future?
- 14 What has motivated the human desire to push ahead with space exploration?
- 15 What is the importance of satellite technology and space exploration to ...  
(a) the advancement of scientific knowledge?  
(b) improving worldwide communications?  
(c) improving weather forecasting?  
(d) exploring for oil and minerals, monitoring plant growth, etc.?
- 16 What have been the unexpected benefits of space exploration?
- 17 Is the expenditure of huge sums of money and effort on space exploration (such as sending humans/machines to the moon and planets) a responsible use of a country's resources?
- 18 Why are industrialists and their employees sometimes at odds over the adoption of new technologies? Is it reasonable to aim for a society in which all menial and repetitive tasks are performed by machines? Should the wholesale adoption of automation in society be resisted?
- 19 What are the factors that spur on and hold back the application of new technologies to industry? What is the role played by patents? How important is it that the major industries should be willing to invest in research and development and how does H.K. compare with other countries in this respect?

- 20 How does H.K. compare with the developed countries and the other NIEs (newly industrialised economies) in the extent to which it uses modern technology in its manufacturing industries? Is H.K. doing enough research in the area of biotechnology? Compared with its trading competitors, is it easier or more difficult for H.K. to make advances in technology? To what extent is the H.K. government involved in the process of technological transfer and training? To what extent should responsibility for progress in this area be shared between government and industry?
- 21 To what extent does public transport throughout the world depend on modern technology?
- 22 Why is H.K. one of the very few cities in the world which still have a traditional tram service?
- 23 What impact has the development of the transport infrastructure had on H.K.'s living and work patterns?
- 24 Has the enormous amount of government money provided for the building of our transport infrastructure in recent decades been a good use of H.K.'s resources?
- 25 To what extent has war been a stimulus to scientific and technological advances? Is this still the case today?
- 26 What have been the consequences of the application of science and technology to warfare? To what extent is scientific progress bridled by the need to preserve secrecy because of the fear that new discoveries may have military applications?
- 27 What role does technology have in helping to keep the peace?
- 28 Does progress in science and technology hold the key to the world's future? Are there limitations in the ability of science and technology to make a better world?

## CHINA TODAY

### Module Aims

To enable students ....

- (a) to have a basic understanding of how contemporary China\* operates in terms of the economy and politics;
- (b) to appreciate what it is like to grow up and to live in China today, and to gain an insight into the changes that are taking place in Chinese society;
- (c) to appraise the future development of China and its changing role in the international arena;
- (d) to draw comparisons, **wherever applicable**, between life on the mainland and life in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and to appreciate the underlying reasons for the similarities and differences that may exist.

*[Note: \*Throughout this syllabus, 'China' is used as a convenient shorthand for the People's Republic of China.]*

## **ISSUE 1**

What are the philosophies and principles that underlie the political structure and the modernisation drive of China since 1978?

- <sup>1</sup> What was the background to the modernisation drive of China since 1978?
- <sup>2</sup> What is the meaning of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'? How does this ideology affect the present political structure?
- <sup>3</sup> What are the latest developments in the philosophies and principles which underlie the political structure and the modernisation drive of China since 1978?

## **ISSUE 2**

What are the latest developments in economic restructuring and economic development strategy? What are the aspirations and reactions of the people? What is the impact of the latest developments upon the lives of the people?

- <sup>4</sup> What was the background to the implementation of economic restructuring? What are the latest propositions related to economic development strategy?
- <sup>5</sup> What are the main emphases in the latest economic policies? What considerations have prompted the government to adopt such policies?
- <sup>6</sup> How do the latest developments in economic restructuring and economic development strategy impact upon the lives of people? What are the people's reactions?
- <sup>7</sup> What should be the future direction and strategy of economic development in China?

### **ISSUE 3**

What are the latest developments in political and legal reforms? What are the aspirations and reactions of the people? What is the impact of the latest developments upon the lives of the people?

- 8 What was the background to the implementation of political and legal reforms? To what extent are government initiatives a decisive factor leading to these reforms?
- 9 What are the current emphases of such reforms? To what extent do these reforms help to broaden political participation?
- 10 What is the major impact of these political and legal reforms? What are the people's reactions?
- 11 What should be the future direction and strategy of political and legal reforms?

### **ISSUE 4**

What are the issues arising from the population size of China? How does the government address these issues? What role can education play in resolving these issues and in improving people's quality of life?

- 12 What is the current trend of population growth? What issues has it created? What are the major features of policies adopted by the government to address these issues?
- 13 How does the government attempt to resolve these issues by means of education and how far has it succeeded?
- 14 To what extent have education reforms contributed to enhancing people's quality of life?

## **ISSUE 5**

What is the way forward for China in terms of national reunification and ethnic harmony?

- 15 What are the latest developments in the process of national reunification? What are the aspirations and reactions of the authorities and the people? How should it proceed in the future?
- 16 To what extent are the relationships among different ethnic groups harmonious? What are the aspirations of different ethnic groups? How could the relationship be further improved?

## **ISSUE 6**

How do the current developments in China affect its participation in the international arena?

- 17 To what extent does the modernisation drive of China facilitate its participation in international affairs?
- 18 What are the major obstacles hindering China's participation in international affairs? How could China ameliorate the effects of those obstacles?
- 19 What would be the prospect of China's participation in international affairs?



## ANNEX

### AS Liberal Studies Examination

#### Optional Issues/Items

1. In the examination, the following issues/items will be classified as 'optional'. No questions will be set on these issues/items in Section 1 of the question paper which comprises compulsory questions.

##### *Hong Kong Studies*

The whole of Issue 2 : including Items 8-13 (Trade, Industry and Finance)

##### *Environmental Studies*

Issue 3 : Items 26-31 (indoor environment; reclamation; town planning and urban environment; land use in the New Territories; country parks and protected areas)

##### *Human Relationships*

Issue 5 : Items 13-14 (siblings and growing up as an 'only child')

##### *The Modern World*

The whole of Issue 2 : including Items 7-8 (military, political and economic groupings; non-governmental organisations)

##### *Science, Technology & Society*

The whole of Issue 1 : including Items 1-2 (the nature of science and technology)

##### *China Today*

The whole of Issue 1 : including Items 1-3 (philosophies and principles that underlie the political structure and the modernisation drive of China since 1978)

2. In Section 2, where candidates are required to answer one out of four questions, at least three questions will fall within the compulsory issues/items.