

Reading

1. Will marks be deducted if candidates provide very long answers in open-ended questions?

For each question, candidates need to take a look at the requirements, consider what the question is asking, and think about what information from the text is required to answer that question. If a question requires a longer answer, it may be indicated in the wording of the question or by the number of marks allocated. It could be that the question is asking for a specific phrase or quotation from the text, or it could be that the question is asking for a response in the candidate's own words. If candidates write an excessive amount of text for a question that is asking for something shorter or something very simple, then it may be unclear to the markers as to what the candidate's answer is. Therefore, it is very important to read the questions carefully first and decide on what information needs to be present in the answer before deciding how long the answer should be.

2. How many articles will be included in Paper 1?

In the Assessment Framework, it is stated that Part A, Part B1, and Part B2 will each have at least one text, so they could each include one text, two, three, four or even more. For each section, we try to have a variety of different questions and item types. To get a good idea of different item types and the types of questions that candidates can prepare for, a good strategy would be to go through and look at past papers and sample papers to see the type of questions that we asked previously.

3. If candidates make a grammatical mistake in a long question, but they get the key ideas correct according to the marking scheme, how will this affect their score?

Each particular case depends on the marking scheme, the question concerned and the judgment of the Chief Examiner. A general principle is that candidates have to communicate the appropriate meaning in their answer. If there is a grammatical mistake or in spelling, punctuation, capitalization et cetera, it may be judged to affect the meaning of the candidate's answer.

Writing

4. What are the text types tested in Paper 2 after optimisation?

We try to test a range of different text types in the writing exam. Candidates preparing for Paper 2 generally have teachers who will expose them to different text types and get them familiar with writing in a variety of genres. To help candidates prepare for Paper 2, we have a [sample paper](#) of the new format, including four questions in Part B, on the HKEAA website. Have a look at the text types covered in the sample paper, but be aware that the text types tested can vary from year to year.

5. Will there be any penalty if a candidate writes on alternate lines?

There is no penalty for writing on alternate lines. The reason that we highlight this issue is because we became aware that some candidates felt that they were required to write on alternate lines, so we would like to make it clear that this is not a requirement. Your marks will be judged by the content of your writing. If you do write on alternate lines, then you may have to use supplementary answer sheets, which may mean that you waste time and lose concentration. It also complicates our processing as well. So, the message is you do not need to write on alternate lines: you can write on every line on the Question-Answer Book.

6. If candidates write more than the word limit, will marks be deducted?

We don't deduct marks in Paper 2 or any English Language papers: we mark positively based on what the candidate has written and based on the marking criteria. Some candidates may write a text that is much longer than the word guidance. Be aware, though, that the flow of ideas and the coherence of the text may start to break down in a much longer piece of writing. A well-planned, well-organised shorter text is likely to impress the markers more than a very long rambling text, during the writing of which the candidate may not have had enough time for proofreading and may not be able to display their planning or organization well. In terms of achieving higher marks, candidates are encouraged to look seriously at the word guidance given. They should not feel they have to write an especially long text to get high marks.

7. In Paper 2, what will happen if a candidate forgets to put the 'X' on the answer sheet to indicate which question they choose? Will marks be deducted?

Do try to remember to put an 'X' to indicate the question that you have answered. There will be no mark deduction, but it will cause a complication for us, as we have to try to work out which question you have answered. It will be easier for us if you mark an 'X' in the correct box for the question number.

8. Any advice for preparing for Paper 2 as the optional question choices have reduced from 8 to 4 now?

In previous years, there were 8 questions in Paper 2 Part B because they were linked to the electives in learning English. Now there are only 4 questions, and they are not linked to the electives in English. The best way to prepare for Paper 2 is to look at a variety of different topics and genres to practise those in your preparation for the exam.

Speaking

9. Are candidates required to wear a face mask during the speaking examination this year?

Face masks will be optional for both candidates and examiners this year.

10. In the individual response, can a candidate use the points mentioned by other candidates in the same group during the discussion?

They can, but generally the question will ask them to come up with a new idea, some kind of personal reflection or something which is a little bit removed from what was talked about in the group discussion, although on the same topic. It is unlikely that candidates will get a question that will ask them to repeat something that another candidate has said.

11. Can candidates take notes during the group discussion?

No. Candidates are not allowed to write during the group interaction. Candidates will have ten minutes preparation time. During this, they can write notes on their notecard. Candidates can then take the notecard with them into the exam room. The question paper will be on the table in the exam room, and candidates will be invited to turn over the question paper when the exam begins. Candidates can refer to their notecards in front of them, but they are not allowed to write anything during the exam, including during the group interaction and the one-minute individual response.

12. Will candidates get a harder or easier question based on their performance in the group discussion?

We have a variety of questions that the examiner can choose from.

School-based Assessment (SBA)

13. What is the SBA?

For the SBA, two marks need to be submitted. One mark needs to be based on the student's performance in an individual presentation and one mark needs to be based on the student's performance during a group discussion / group interaction. One of those should be based on at least one written text and the other should be based on at least one non-print text. The assessment is entirely based on spoken English.

General Advice

14. Do you have any advice for candidates preparing for this year's public examination?

Teachers in Hong Kong are very familiar with the HKDSE English Language subject, and the ways to help candidates to prepare. Candidates can try to expose themselves to as much authentic English as they can, including English language radio, TV, and movies. Reading is very important as well. Reading is a core element in the English syllabus in Hong Kong and a core element in our examinations. Candidates have to read a wide range of materials to expose themselves to lots of different language uses and vocabulary. If the material being read is interesting to the candidate, they will be motivated to learn. So, aside from the work that candidates do in school or with their teacher, candidates exposing themselves to lots of different types of English materials outside class is a really good way to prepare for the examination.