

Number of candidates and examination subjects

Participation

This year, 554 schools participated in the HKCEE, presenting a total of 84 565 candidates. The number of private candidates was 25 009. The total candidate entries of 109 574 represented an increase of 4% from last year, and 106 770 candidates eventually sat the examination. School and private candidates, on average, entered for 7 and 2 subjects respectively.

Examination Subjects

Altogether 39 subjects were examined this year. The subjects examined are shown on the Examination Timetable on page 13. Thirty subjects offered both Chinese and English versions. The percentage of subject entries taken in Chinese was 55%.

Registration of entries

Registration

Registration commenced in September 2007. Entry forms were issued to schools in early September. 430 schools submitted the examination entries of their students electronically, using Web-based School Administration System (WebSAMS). Entry forms for private candidates were distributed at the HKEAA offices and through the District Offices of the Home Affairs Department. Registration centres were set up at Duke of Windsor Social Service Centre and the HKEAA office in San Po Kong. Registration by post or through the *ESDlife Web site* was also accepted.

Handbook for Candidates

Each candidate was given a copy of the *Handbook for Candidates* in early December 2007. The Handbook contains the examination regulations and special instructions including warnings against offences which could lead to disqualification or mark penalties.

Examination centres and invigilation staff

Examination Centres

Examination centres were set up in 410 schools, utilizing 403 halls, 2 gymnasiums and 3 764 classrooms. Each school hall was used for 8 to 11 days on average. 226 schools were closed for one to three days during the Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics examinations in order to provide sufficient halls and classrooms to accommodate the large number of candidates for these three subjects. Eight examination centres were also set up on Cheung Chau and Lantau Island for candidates from these two areas.

The Chinese Language (Cantonese) and English Language listening tests were broadcast by RTHK Radio 2. A total of 248 halls and 1 895 classrooms were used as examination centres for English listening test while 220 halls, 1 gymnasium and 1 699 classrooms were used for Chinese (Cantonese) listening test. The Chinese Language (Putonghua) and Putonghua listening tests were, on the other hand, conducted via the PA systems in 4 and 29 school halls respectively.

The English Language oral test was conducted in classroom centres of 32 schools (7 on Hong Kong Island; 9 in Kowloon; 16 in the New Territories). The Chinese Language (Cantonese and Putonghua) oral tests were conducted in 33 schools (8 on Hong Kong Island; 9 in Kowloon; 16 in the New Territories). The Putonghua oral test was conducted in 4 schools.

Centre Supervisors and Invigilators

Centre supervisors were nominated by the participating schools. Each centre supervisor was given a Centre Supervisor's Handbook, which contains details of the examination regulations, special instructions and specimens of examination documents. Separate handbooks were also issued for English Language, Chinese Language, Putonghua, Visual Arts and Word Processing & Business Communication (English) examinations.

Centre Supervisors' Conferences were held on 18 March, 9 April, 10 April and 12 April 2008 to brief centre supervisors and their deputies about the procedures for the conduct of examination.

The number of invigilator-sessions for the written examinations and listening tests was 23 645. Participating schools provided for 89% of the total invigilation requirement. The remaining 11% was filled by external invigilators hired by the HKEAA. Teachers serving as invigilators at examination centres outside their own schools were given a travelling allowance.

Distribution of Question Papers and Collection of Scripts

Question papers were delivered by courier in the morning of each examination day to the examination centres which had opted for this service (407 centre schools or 99.27%). Depot was also operated in San Po Kong to distribute question papers to centre supervisors who had opted for collection by themselves.

Eight collection centres were set up in Heng Fa Chuen, Yau Ma Tei, San Po Kong, Kwai Chung, Shatin, Tai Po, Tuen Mun and Yuen Long for the return of scripts and other examination documents from centres after the examination.

Special arrangements were made for the return of scripts from the centre in Cheung Chau.

Services for Candidates with Special Needs

Same as last year, special examination arrangements were made for candidates with special needs so as to enable them to be equitably assessed under suitable conditions. This year, special examination arrangements such as extra examination time allowance, arrangement of supervised breaks, provision of braille/enlarged question papers and special answer books were made for 538 HKCEE candidates with various special needs including candidates with physical, visual, aural, oral or specific learning disabilities.

Twenty-one special centres (6 for oral and 15 for written examinations) were set up to serve these candidates. Some candidates were exempted from part of an examination such as listening or oral test. An annex was attached to the certificates of these candidates, with information on the exemption given. The reason for the exemption was not listed on the certificate.

In addition, 26 candidates with colour blindness or colour amblyopia problems were provided with black and white question papers for reference during the examinations.

Eight candidates who were hospitalised during the examination period were given permission, with the consent of their doctors, to sit the examination in hospital under the supervision of external invigilators hired by the HKEAA.

Special arrangements were made for 74 candidates who, due to religious reasons, could not take examinations on Saturday mornings. These candidates sat the listening tests of language subjects (English, Chinese and Putonghua) and Principles of Accounts examination after sunset on the examination days at a special centre under the supervision of the HKEAA.

Arrangements were made for 97 candidates serving sentences to take the examinations inside the correctional centres, under the supervision of invigilators provided by the Correctional Services Department and the HKEAA.

Marking and Grading

To enhance reliability and efficiency in the processing of examination scripts, and to pave the way for phase implementation of on-screen marking, the barcode system, introduced in 2006, was adopted in all written examinations (including multiple choice papers). In 2008, on-screen marking was used in Chinese and English Languages, History and Computer & Information Technology.

There were 1 275 000 scripts from the written examinations this year. 4 000 markers, mainly secondary school teachers, were recruited. The same marking scheme and grading standard were used for the English and Chinese versions of subjects with bilingual versions. Marked scripts, except those marked on-screen, were checked by a team of 160 checkers for the detection of unmarked pages, addition errors and score-entering errors. All discrepancies found were rectified before the grading of results. (Scripts marked on-screen needed not be checked by this manual process as the system has built-in function to ensure accuracy of scores.)

Examination Irregularities

All cases of irregularities reported by centres, schools or candidates (or their parents) were processed by the Standing Committee chaired by the Deputy Secretary General of the HKEAA in accordance with the Public Examinations Board's guidelines for handling irregularities. The cases were then presented to the Public Examinations Board for final decisions.

Statistics on candidates who were penalised for offences committed during the examination are given on page 17 Table 1 – Statistics Overview.

Examination results

Release of Results

The examination results were released on Monday, 4 August 2008. Results notices were issued to school candidates through their schools. Private candidates' results notices were sent by post. Schools using the WebSAMS were also given softcopies of their students' results. Participating schools were given analyses of results of their own students as well as the statistics of all day school candidates and the entire candidature.

Private and evening school candidates were able to view their results on the Internet from 8:00 am on 4 August, for a period of three weeks. In addition, those who had registered for the SMS service would receive their results via SMS by 9:30 am on 4 August.

Starting from 2007, standards-referenced reporting (SRR) was used to report the results of Chinese and English Languages. Candidates' levels of performance were reported using levels with reference to a set of defined standards. A set of written descriptors was developed for each level to describe the typical performance of candidates at that level.

An S6 Admission Slip was attached to the CE results notice of each candidate for the purpose of S6 admission. In order to tie in with the Secondary Six Admission Procedures operated by the Education Bureau (EDB), private and evening school candidates who had sat 6 or more subjects in the HKCEE and had not received their results notices by 10:00 am on the day of release of results could come to the HKEAA offices (Southorn Centre or San Po Kong) for re-issue of their results notices immediately. This year, 207 candidates made use of this free service.

Assessed Subject Results of Candidates

School candidates who are unable to take the examination of a subject due to illness or other special circumstances may apply through their schools for assessment of results based on their school internal results. Thirty applications were approved this year. The assessed results of the subjects concerned, either grade C or grade E (limited to the maximum of level 4 for Chinese and English Languages), were listed on a second page to the candidate's certificate. Candidates with assessed results below grade E (or level 2) were not awarded any assessed grade.

Appeals

Candidates with supporting reasons may apply for rechecking of their examination results within one week after the release of results. School candidates apply through their schools while private candidates submit their applications directly to the HKEAA. A candidate may apply for rechecking-only or full appeal (rechecking and remarking) for up to four subjects. A total of 229 and 5 345 applications were received for rechecking-only and full appeals respectively this year. Candidates and schools were notified of the outcome of these appeals on 22 and 29 August 2008 respectively. The Education Bureau and tertiary institutions concerned were informed of the upgraded results of candidates at the same time.

Appeal Review Committee

Candidates who were not satisfied with the decisions of the Public Examinations Board on examination irregularities or had doubt about the process of rechecking / remarking might submit an appeal review application to the independent Appeal Review Committee. A total of 4 and 32 applications for review of examination irregularities and the process of rechecking and remarking were processed respectively.

Certificates

Certificates were distributed to school candidates via schools and sent by registered mail to private candidates in October 2008.

Except for the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and French, the performance of candidates in each subject was recorded in terms of six grades (A to F). Achievements below grade F would be designated as unclassified. For the subjects of Chinese Language and English Language, the performance of candidates was recorded in terms of five levels (Level 1 to 5). Achievements below Level 1 was designated as unclassified. Level 5 candidates with the best performance would have their results annotated with the symbol *. Subjects with unclassified results would not be recorded on the certificate.

Question papers from the UK University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) were used for the subject of French and the grading was done by CIE. Results were indicated by A*(a*), A(a), B(b), C(c), D(d), E(e), F(f), G(g) and UNGD (ungraded). Results below grade F were not recorded on certificates.

For the following subjects, components results in addition to the overall subject results were also provided:

Chinese Language	Home Economics (Dress and Design)
Computer and Information Technology	Home Economics (Food, Home and Family)
Design and Technology	Physical Education
Design and Technology (Alternative Syllabus)	Putonghua
Electronics and Electricity	Science and Technology
English Language	Technological Studies
Graphical Communication	

The language medium in which a subject was taken was not recorded on the certificates.