

## D. What to Do in Special Circumstances

### 1. Bad Weather or Special Circumstances

- ◆ The announcement of closure of schools due to a tropical cyclone or the issue of the Red Rainstorm Warning does not necessarily imply the postponement of an examination scheduled to be held on that day. In case of a territory-wide special circumstance (e.g. adverse traffic conditions), the HKEAA will adopt contingency measures including delaying the start time of the examination, postponing the examination, etc.
- ◆ All examinations will normally be postponed when a Typhoon Signal No. 8 or above is hoisted, or when a Black Rainstorm Warning is issued. If weather conditions are doubtful, you should listen to the radio, watch the television or check out the HKEAA website ([www.hkeaa.edu.hk](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk)) or HKDSE App about the public examination schedule right up to the time you plan to leave for the examination centre.
- ◆ Unless a specific announcement has been made by the HKEAA that the examination has been postponed due to bad weather conditions or special circumstances, the examination will be conducted as originally scheduled. However, you should consider your personal safety first and if you have genuine difficulties in reaching the designated examination centre, you should contact the HKEAA before the examination begins. Special consideration may be given to individual cases depending on the circumstances.
- ◆ All the dates and times stated in the examination timetable under Section A2 are subject to change. Although the HKEAA will endeavour to ensure that all examinations will be conducted on the dates and at the times as specified, it may at its sole discretion determine how to conduct and deal with the Examination as it considers necessary or advantageous and proper. This includes rescheduling, cancelling or changing the mode of examination and/or assessment for the whole Examination or any part thereof for all candidates or individual candidates, or refusing, restricting or withdrawing participation in the Examination by certain candidates. The HKEAA will also not be liable for any delay, non-performance, claim, complaint or dispute arising from circumstances or causes such as epidemic or pandemic, terrorist attack, demonstrations or riots, social unrest or public disorder.
- ◆ Candidates themselves shall be solely responsible for obtaining all necessary visa, entry permit, etc. to cover the examination period, for fulfilling all the prevailing entry requirements in accordance with the laws of Hong Kong in order to take part in the Examination. The HKEAA shall have no responsibility for any consequences if candidates fail to comply or have any difficulty in doing so.
- ◆ In any of the above events, the HKEAA will not accept any liability in respect of claims for expenses, refunds or other damages. If the whole Examination or any part thereof is cancelled, the HKEAA may at its discretion refund the whole or part of the fees paid after deducting any costs incurred.

### 2. Complaints and Irregularities

- ◆ Candidates may lodge a complaint if they find anything that deviates from the stipulated examination procedures.

#### Important points to note

- ◆ The HKEAA enlists schools' assistance in providing a suitable examination environment for candidates and conducting the examination according to the stipulated procedures. **No special consideration** will be given to candidates who do not report unsatisfactory conditions at the centre but subsequently claim that their performance has been affected by:
  - ◆ **Normal background noise at examination centres** - Candidates should not expect complete silence in the examination centre as they will not be completely shielded from normal background noise (e.g. from outside vehicles, normal school activities, school bells, etc.) during an examination.
  - ◆ **Unsuitable room temperature** - Candidates should refer to their admission form about the provision of air-conditioning at the examination centres. They are advised to **bring a jacket with them to an air-conditioned examination centre**.
  - ◆ **Undesirable centre conditions** - Candidates who find any undesirable conditions at their seat (e.g. insufficient lighting, noise disturbance, dripping water, etc.) should **seek help from an invigilator at once** so that remedial action can be taken promptly. If the need is genuine and a spare seat is available at the centre, the invigilator may arrange a seat change for the candidate. Any complaint about undesirable centre conditions must be lodged at the examination centre.
  - ◆ **Insufficient examination time given** (unless there is substantiating evidence from the examination centre).
  - ◆ **Having no clock or not being able to view the clock in the examination centres.**

For the Listening component of English Language, complaints about poor reception under the following circumstances will **NOT be entertained**:

- ◆ **Reception problem** - Candidates who claim to have encountered reception problems but decide not to go to the Special Room (applicable to centres using radio or IR System only) will not be given any compensation. Candidates who are dissatisfied with the reception of the Listening component in the examination room should request to move to the Special Room. **Mark penalty will not be imposed for going to the Special Room due to reception problems.**
- ◆ **Possible interference by the radios or antennae** of other candidates in the Listening component.
- ◆ **Mode of broadcast** – Complaints about change of the mode of broadcast will **NOT be entertained**. As a contingency measure to address possible reception problems at the examination centre, the HKEAA might consider changing the mode of broadcast of an examination centre. An announcement would normally be made at the examination centre one day before the Listening component of English Language.

For the Speaking examination of English Language, complaints about the following circumstances will **NOT be entertained**:

- ◆ **Mannerisms and facial expressions of oral examiners or other candidates** in a Speaking examination are not regarded as an examination irregularity or deviation from stipulated examination procedures.
- ◆ **Domination/interruption by other candidates in the same group or interruption by the oral examiners in the group interaction when normal procedures are being followed** in a Speaking examination – Examination procedures are in place to allow all candidates a fair chance to participate in the group interaction. In this regard, examiners will take appropriate action if they feel that any candidate is dominating/interrupting the group interaction. The marking of dominating candidates will also be handled appropriately.

Complaints against **the precautionary measures implemented at examination centres** will **NOT be entertained**.


### 3. How to Lodge a Complaint

- ◆ Candidates may lodge a complaint with the Centre Supervisor at the examination centre and request him/her to report it to the HKEAA. The complainants and other candidates concerned will be required to fill in a report after the examination session has ended. Alternatively, they may make use of the **specified electronic form on the HKEAA website** ([www.hkeaa.edu.hk](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk) → HKDSE → Examination Administration → Report on Examination Irregularities) or **write** directly to the Manager (DSE), School Examinations and Assessment Division of the HKEAA by post, fax or email **within 7 calendar days** after the date of the examination, except for complaints about the examination centre environment and reception in the Listening component which must be made on the spot (see the point below). **Complaints lodged beyond the deadline will NOT be accepted.** The HKEAA will inform candidates of the follow-up actions within 5 working days upon receipt of their complaints.
- ◆ Complaints about the **examination centre environment** (e.g. insufficient lighting, loud noise disturbance etc.) and **reception in the Listening component** must be made with the Centre Supervisor/invigilator at the examination centre. Candidates should provide specific information about the undesirable condition(s) encountered (e.g. time and duration of the noise/disturbance) before they leave the examination centre. Subsequent complaints of performance being affected by undesirable centre conditions or reception problems after the examination will **NOT** be entertained.
- ◆ When lodging a complaint, candidates must provide their name, candidate number, examination centre, date of the examination, subject/paper sat for and other specific information relating to the cause of complaint.
- ◆ Anonymous complaints will **NOT** be entertained.

#### Complaint handling procedures

- ◆ All complaints are dealt with by a Standing Committee of the HKEAA which is chaired by the Director – Public Examinations and comprising staff who are experienced in examination procedures and operations. (**Note:** Members of the Committee must not be personally involved in the cases under complaint.)
- ◆ All letters/reports from schools, candidates and examination centres on examination irregularities, such as candidates' complaints, disobeying instructions, falling ill during an examination or noise disturbance, are dealt with by the Standing Committee.
- ◆ The Standing Committee meets on a regular basis during the examination period and investigates cases with substantiated evidence. Depending on the nature and circumstances of individual cases, the Committee will also contact the Centre Supervisors, invigilators, Oral Examiners, Waiting Room Supervisors and/or other candidates present in the same centre (as appropriate) in the process of investigation. The Committee may also check the video recordings of the examination, review the candidates' scripts and perform statistical analyses in relation to the cases as appropriate.

- ◆ Where there is strong evidence that a candidate's performance in an examination is significantly affected by incidents, for example, loud noise, poor lighting or other environmental conditions, inappropriate conduct by centre staff, or sudden illness or injury which could not be resolved on the spot after reporting the case to invigilators, slight upward mark adjustments may be applied.
- ◆ Where a candidate's performance in a Speaking examination is adversely affected by procedural, technical or human errors, or where the unsatisfactory quality of the recording makes it impossible to remark the candidate's performance, the candidate concerned may be offered an option to re-sit the Speaking examination at a rescheduled time in order to provide a replacement mark since mark adjustment is not applicable to Speaking examinations.
- ◆ For straightforward cases, the Committee will take action in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Public Examinations Board (PEB) and inform candidates concerned of the outcome before the release of examination results. Candidates who do not agree with the Committee's conclusion on their cases should provide new/additional evidence and **write to the HKEAA within 5 calendar days** upon the issue of the notification. The Committee will reconsider the cases based on the new/additional evidence provided, as appropriate, and make recommendations on these cases to the PEB for consideration/decision.
- ◆ For more complicated cases involving imposition of sanctions or special consideration, the Committee will compile reports with recommendations for consideration by the PEB. The PEB will examine the reports carefully and make a decision on the cases. The decision of the PEB will be conveyed to the candidates concerned on the date of release of examination results.

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| <br><b>Note</b> | <p>The <b>Public Examinations Board</b> consists of 16 members. Its composition is as follows:</p> <p>(1) Members appointed by the Authority Council (the highest authority in the HKEAA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Deputy Chairman of the HKEAA Council (Chairperson);</li> <li>• 6 tertiary sector members;</li> <li>• 1 EDB member of the Council or his/her representative;</li> <li>• 3 secondary school principals; and</li> <li>• 3 secondary school teachers.</li> </ul> <p>(2) Ex-officio members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Director – Public Examinations of the HKEAA (Deputy Chairman); and</li> <li>• Secretary General of the HKEAA.</li> </ul> |
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### Appeal against the PEB's decision

Candidates who are not satisfied with the PEB's decision and have valid reasons or new/additional evidence to substantiate their claim may apply for appeal review **within 5 calendar days after the release of examination results**. Any requests for appeal review will be dealt with by the independent Appeal Review Committee (see **Section F, Part 4**).

### 4. Illness during an Examination

Except for Speaking examinations in which rescheduling is accepted within 3 working days after the original date of examination, **no supplementary examination** will be arranged for written or practical papers. Help may be given in the case of serious illness. The main categories are as follows:

#### Hospitalised Candidates

- ◆ If a candidate is hospitalised, he/she may apply to take the examination in the hospital, provided that
  - the doctor certifies that the candidate is fit to take the examination;
  - the candidate or his/her representative can submit the application together with the letter of authorisation and other necessary documents at least one working day (Monday to Friday during office hours (excluding Public Holidays)) before the examination. For example, applications for examinations falling on Monday must be submitted no later than the last working day of the preceding week.

- ◆ If a candidate is seriously ill and unable to sit the examination, the HKEAA may consider
  - (1) giving an assessed mark on the part of a subject the candidate was absent from, based on the remaining parts/paper(s) that were sat in the same year (only applicable where a candidate **was able to sit at least one written paper** for the subject concerned); or  
*(Note: For assessment of subject level on medical grounds or due to special circumstances, a limit will be applied to the difference between the subject level before and after assessment, depending on the weighting of the part assessed to the whole subject based on the relevant syllabus/assessment framework.)*
  - (2) giving an assessed subject result if the assessment method in (1) is not possible. The assessed subject levels are based on a comparison between the candidate's academic records in school and those of his/her classmates as well as on his/her classmates' HKDSE results in the subject(s) concerned. Such assessed subject levels are:
    - given only to school candidates whose applications are supported by the school principal, and
    - confined to Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 for HKDSE Category A core subjects\* and Levels 2, 3 and 4 for Category A elective subjects (no assessed subject level will be given if the assessed level is below the above lowest level).*(Note: In view of special circumstances resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Public Examinations Board has approved that the assessed subject result may be awarded to Level 5 in the 2024 HKDSE.)*

\* For Citizenship and Social Development, the assessed result is limited to 'Attained'.

The assessed subject level(s) will be annotated on the certificate of the candidate concerned.
  
- ◆ Application procedures:
  - Candidates concerned must make sure that a **telephone call** is made to the HKEAA (Tel: 3628 8860) **before the examination** takes place. They should immediately consult a registered medical practitioner and be able to produce the original copy of the medical certificates stating explicitly the illness and how long they are unfit to sit an examination.
  - They must submit a written request **within 21 calendar days after the date of the examination** to the Secretary General of the HKEAA (Note: In the case of school candidates, the school concerned should complete an application form and certify that the candidate has completed the Secondary 6 (S6) curriculum). The applications must be accompanied by supporting evidence such as the original copy of the medical certificates.
  - The school must provide the latest school internal examination results (e.g. S6 Mock Examination or S6 First Term Examination) of the subject(s) concerned. If fewer than 10 students took the mock examination or the public examination of the subject(s) concerned or the school has submitted internal examination results other than S6 Mock Examination or S6 First Term Examination, the school should provide a copy of the question papers and the answer scripts of the candidate concerned to the HKEAA for reference.
  - Candidates sitting the Category C subject examinations should refer to the 'Instructions to Candidates' of Category C subjects (Other Languages) for the application procedures.
  
- ◆ If you have contracted a **highly contagious disease** (e.g. Measles, Chickenpox) on the day of examination, you must **NOT** go to the examination centre. If you are eligible for an assessment of your subject result, you may apply to the HKEAA in accordance with the procedures mentioned above.
  
- ◆ If you fall ill in an examination centre and cannot continue with the examination, you should not assume that the Centre Supervisor will handle the matter for you. If you would like the HKEAA to give special consideration to your results, you must follow the abovementioned application procedures. Late applications will **NOT** be accepted.

## Other Categories

- ◆ Assessment may also be given in rare cases where candidates can prove that they were physically unable to be present in the examination centre due to unforeseeable circumstances (e.g. being trapped in a lift, personally involved in an accident or representing Hong Kong in international events) or where they are overtaken by a family tragedy such as the death of an immediate family member.
- ◆ Requests for help from candidates showing symptoms of examination tension or minor illnesses will **NOT** be entertained. Such candidates need not telephone the HKEAA on the examination day.