



# Irregularities in Public Examinations

## Introduction

The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) currently administers a large scale public examination, namely the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE). Despite our best efforts, it is not always possible to ensure that public examinations are conducted absolutely smoothly and without incident. When unexpected incidents occur, we have a range of measures to adjust for any consequent unfair advantage or disadvantage that might apply to individual candidates. The purpose of this leaflet is to share information about the general nature of such irregularities, the way in which they are dealt with and the kinds of treatments made in response to them.

## Types of irregularity

There is a wide range of types of incident that can occur and have an impact on candidates' performance in a public examination. For example, candidates may feel that the correct procedures for a particular examination paper were not followed, or that the conditions under which an examination was conducted were not satisfactory. We encourage candidates to raise any concerns on such matters (e.g. poor examination centre environment, excessive external noise) with the invigilation staff immediately so that the concerns can be addressed straightaway, possibly by a change of seating for the candidate. There may also be cases of examination centre staff assisting candidates who are unwell, or finding candidates who have broken the examination regulations or not followed invigilator instructions. Again, we ask examination centre staff to deal with such matters immediately with the candidates involved, hopefully resolving them as quickly and smoothly as possible.

## How to report irregularities?

It may not be possible to satisfactorily resolve all such matters on the spot. In such cases, reports should be made, preferably immediately after the examination, and submitted to the HKEAA for consideration. Candidates may lodge complaints with the centre supervisor at the examination centre, or use an electronic form on the HKEAA website, following procedures given in the Handbook for Candidates. Where examination centre staff have concerns about the conduct of candidates, these will also be reported to the HKEAA by centre supervisors, using a report form that is signed by the candidate(s) involved.

## Irregularities handling procedures

Cases brought to the HKEAA's attention with substantiated evidence will be thoroughly investigated and considered. HKEAA staff will revert to the individuals involved, to invigilation staff and sometimes also to other candidates who may have relevant information to share, or review the video recordings of the examination as appropriate, in order to gain as much background as possible in relation to the event. All this information is considered in detail by a Standing Committee of the HKEAA. This Standing Committee comprises a range of HKEAA's senior assessment staff. It refers to a set of guidelines which describe normal practices, and makes recommendations to the Public Examinations Board on what action to take for each case. After the Public Examinations Board has approved such actions, candidates are informed of the outcomes at the time of release of examination results.

## Processing of irregularities

A wide range of possible measures, each judged appropriate to the particular circumstances of each case, are employed. Cases of special consideration, where an unfair disadvantage to candidates in terms of impact on their performance is established, may lead to an upward mark adjustment, generally by a small percentage of the maximum mark for the examination paper involved in written examinations. Since mark adjustment is not applicable to speaking examinations, the candidate may only be offered the option to re-sit the examination, and the re-sit score will replace the original score as the final score. In cases where candidates have not followed examination regulations, or have not met examination requirements, a range of penalties from small mark deductions, through downgrading, to possible disqualification, are applied.

### Further information

The handling of irregularities in public examinations involves complex details and procedures. For further information, you may refer to the publication *'The Equitable Treatment of Examination Irregularities'*, which is available on the HKEAA website [www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/Irregularities\\_Leaflet\\_E.pdf](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/Irregularities_Leaflet_E.pdf).

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