

Number of candidates and examination subjects

Participation

This year, 532 schools participated in the first HKDSE Examination, presenting a total of 71 745 school candidates. The number of private candidates was 1 329. 72 620 candidates out of the total candidate entry figure of 73 074 eventually sat the examination. School and private candidates, on average, entered for 6 and 3 subjects respectively.

Examination Subjects

Three categories of subjects were offered in the HKDSE Examination: Category A New Senior Secondary subjects, Category B Applied Learning subjects and Category C Other Language subjects (including November 2011 and June 2012 Series). Altogether 24 Category A subjects were examined this year. 19 subjects offered both Chinese and English versions. The percentage of subject entries taken in Chinese was 61%. There were 30 subjects offered in Category B and 6 subjects in Category C. There was no public assessment for Category B subjects and a list of the subjects is given in page 14. Category C subjects were examined using the Advanced Subsidiary level question papers from Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The Categories A and C subjects examined are shown on the Examination Timetable on page 13.

Registration of entries

Registration

Registration was conducted in two phases. The June registration covered the 6 Category C – November 2011 subject examinations while the September registration covered Category A, Category B and 2 Category C – June 2012 subject examinations. Schools submitted the examination entries of their students electronically via the HKDSE Examination Registration System at the HKDSE Examination Online Services. Private candidates registered for the examination through the same Registration System.

Handbook for Candidates

Each candidate was given a copy of the *Handbook for Candidates* in mid December 2011. 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 398 schools, utilising 395 halls and 2 141 classrooms. Each school hall was used for 4 to 9 days on average. 148 schools were closed for 1 to 3 days during the Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics (Compulsory Part) and Liberal Studies examinations in order to provide sufficient halls and classrooms to accommodate the large number of candidates for these 4 subjects. 8 examination centres were also set up in Cheung Chau and Tung Chung for candidates from these 2 areas.

A total of 247 halls and 781 classrooms were used as examination centres for the English Language listening test while 257 halls and 643 classrooms were used for the Chinese Language (Cantonese) listening test. The listening tests were broadcast by RTHK Radio 2 in the majority of these centres. A total of 31 and 39 examination centres with unsatisfactory radio reception used the infra-red (IR) transmission system to deliver the English Language and Chinese Language (Cantonese) listening tests respectively, providing an additional 7 350 places. Candidates sitting the listening tests at these IR centres listened to the broadcast using the receivers provided by the HKEAA. The quality of broadcast was comparable to that of FM radio.

The Chinese Language (Putonghua) listening test was, on the other hand, conducted via the PA systems in 7 school halls.

The English Language oral test was conducted in classroom centres of 36 schools (6 on Hong Kong Island; 14 in Kowloon; 16 in the New Territories). The Chinese Language (Cantonese and Putonghua) speaking examinations were conducted in 34 schools (6 on Hong Kong Island; 10 in Kowloon; 18 in the New Territories).

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 and Other Language subjects examinations.

Centre Supervisors' Conferences were held on 17 March and 19-21 March 2012 to brief centre supervisors and their deputies on the procedures for the conduct of examination.

The number of invigilator-sessions for the written examinations and listening tests was 16 429. Participating schools provided for 98.9% of the total invigilation requirement. The remaining 1.1% 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.

To enhance the provision of effective and real-time administrative support to examination centres and to facilitate the reliable and efficient tracking of candidates' attendance and collection of answer scripts in written examinations, the 'Public Examinations Communication & Support System (PECSS)' and 'Attendance & Script Tracking System (ASTS)' had been piloted in different examinations since 2007 prior to its full implementation in 2012. This year, a total of 402 centres participated in the system implementation, of which 391 centres were used for the HKDSE examination. In general, the feedback from the examination centres and examination personnel on the systems was positive.

To familiarise centre supervisors, invigilators and school IT technicians with the set-up and operation of the PECSS and ASTS, the Authority conducted 5 briefing sessions and 20 training workshops for around 1 100 invigilation staff and school IT technicians from early February to early March 2012. Positive feedback was received from the participants. To cater for the invigilation staff and IT technicians who did not attend the training workshops, 10 on-site training sessions were organised at their schools prior to the 2012 live examinations.

Full-scale deployment of the Oral Recording System (ORS) for the dual cohort covering the HKDSE Chinese Language and English Language speaking examinations was carried out in 2012. Because of the double-cohort year, the 2012 ORS implementation was the largest scale in history. Over 17 intensive briefings and training workshops were conducted for around 309 ORS assistants and 122 School ORS assistants, 4 briefing and training workshops were conducted for 264 teams of Chinese Language oral examiners and 228 teams of English Language oral examiners.

Distribution of Question Papers and Collection of Scripts

Question papers were delivered by courier in the morning of each examination day to 397 (or 99.75%) examination centres which had opted for this service. Depot was also operated in San Po Kong to distribute question papers to centre supervisors who had opted for collection by themselves.

8 collection centres were set up in Heng Fa Chuen, Yau Ma Tei, San Po Kong, Tsuen Wan, 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 1 056 HKDSE examination candidates with various special needs including candidates with physical, visual, aural, oral or specific learning disabilities.

83 special centres (16 for oral and 67 for written examinations) were set up to serve these candidates. Some candidates were exempted from part of an examination such as listening or speaking test, his/her results for the affected part(s) were assessed. The details of any such assessment were indicated on the candidates' certificate. However, the reason for the exemption was not listed on the certificate.

A total of 11 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 30 candidates who, due to religious reasons, could not take examinations on Saturday mornings. These candidates sat the listening test of English Language, Tourism & Hospitality and Chinese History after sunset on the examination days at a special centre under the supervision of the HKEAA.

Arrangements were made for 18 candidates serving sentences to take the HKDSE examination inside the correctional institutions, under the supervision of invigilators provided by the Correctional Services Department and the HKEAA.

Marking and Grading

The barcode system has been introduced since 2006 to enhance reliability and efficiency in the processing of examination scripts, and to pave the way for phase implementation of on-screen marking. In 2012, on-screen marking was used in 18 subjects out of 24 subjects in Category A New Senior Secondary subjects.

There were 1 091 000 scripts from the written examinations this year. 4 540 markers and marking assistants, 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.

This year, over 1 124 oral examiners were appointed to conduct the HKDSE speaking examinations.

Examination Irregularities

All cases of irregularities reported by centres, schools or candidates 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 in Table 1 – Statistics Overview on page 18.

Examination results

Release of Results

The examination results were released on Friday, 20 July 2012. Results notices were issued to school candidates through their schools. Private candidates' results notices were sent by post. Schools could obtain softcopies of Examination Results Data File, School Results List as well as Analysis of School Results via the Results Dissemination System at the HKDSE Examination Online Services.

Private and evening school candidates were able to view their results on the Internet from 7:00 am on 20 July for a period of 3 weeks.

Private and evening school candidates who had not received their results notices by 10:00 am on the day of release of results could come to the HKEAA Southorn Centre office for re-issue of their results notices immediately. This year, 9 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. A total of 34 applications were approved this year. The assessed results of the subjects concerned, either level 2, 3 or 4 for Category A subjects, were listed in the candidate's certificate. Candidates with assessed results below level 2 were not awarded any assessed results.

Rechecking and Remarking

Candidates may apply for rechecking or remarking of their examination results within 5 days 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 or remarking (which includes rechecking of technical errors and remarking of answer scripts) for up to 4 subjects. Requests for rechecking or remarking for more than 4 subjects may be considered if there are extenuating circumstances supported by documentary evidence and the requests are submitted within the application period for rechecking and remarking. A total of 114 and 21 779 applications were received for rechecking and remarking respectively this year. The results for rechecking and remarking were released on 20 August 2012. School candidates collected their notification letters of rechecking / remarking results from their schools while private candidates received the letters by post. Private and evening school candidates were also able to view their rechecking / remarking results online from 8:30 am on 20 August to 9 September 2012. The JUPAS office was informed of the upgraded results of candidates at the same time.

Appeal Review Committee

Candidates who disagreed with the decisions of the Public Examinations Board on examination irregularities or had doubt about the process of rechecking / remarking or the marking of examination scripts after gaining access to scripts might submit an appeal review application to the independent Appeal Review Committee. In 2012, a total of 10, 36 and 29 applications were received for review of the processing of examination irregularities, the process of rechecking and remarking and the marking of scripts respectively.

Certificates

The 2012 HKDSE Examination certificates were issued to candidates in October via their schools and private candidates received theirs by registered mail.

For Category A subjects, results were reported in 5 levels (1-5), with Level 1 being the lowest and Level 5 the highest. Achievements below Level 1 were designated as “unclassified”. To give recognition to outstanding candidates, top candidates within Level 5 were awarded Level 5* and Level 5** as appropriate. Component levels for Chinese Language, English Language and Science (for Combined Science electives only) were reported on the certificate.

For Category B subjects, assessment was undertaken by course providers. After moderation by the HKEAA, the final results were recorded on the HKDSE certificate. The results were reported as “Attained” and “Attained with distinction”.

For Category C subjects, marking and grading were conducted by CIE. Results were reported in 5 grades (a-e), with grade e being the lowest and grade a being the highest. Achievements below grade e were designated as “ungraded”. A separate speaking endorsement grade (With Distinction/Merit/Pass in Speaking) was reported for candidates who satisfy the conditions as stated in the syllabus. Achievement below “Pass in Speaking” was not recorded.

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

Chinese Language
English Language
Combined Science (Biology, Chemistry)
Combined Science (Biology, Physics)
Combined Science (Chemistry, Physics)

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