

Number of candidates and examination subjects

Participation

This year, 498 schools participated in the HKDSE, presenting a total of 62 199 school candidates. The number of private candidates was 11 932. 72 859 candidates out of the total candidature of 74 131 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: Category A New Senior Secondary subjects, Category B Applied Learning subjects and Category C Other Language subjects (including November 2014 and June 2015 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 58%. A total of 37 Category B subjects and 6 Category C subjects were offered. There was no public assessment for Category B subjects and a list of these subjects is given on 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 subjects for November 2014 series while the September registration covered Category A, Category B and Category C (June 2015 series) subjects. Schools submitted the examination entries of their students 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 2014. 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 404 schools, utilising 398 halls and 2 179 classrooms. In general, each school hall was used for 4 to 9 days. 143 schools were closed for 1 to 5 days during the Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics Compulsory Part and Liberal Studies examinations in order to provide sufficient classrooms for accommodating the large number of candidates for the 4 core subjects. 9 examination centres were also set up in Cheung Chau and Tung Chung for candidates from these 2 areas.

A total of 268 halls and 575 classrooms were used as examination centres for the English Language listening test while 230 halls and 773 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 54 and 43 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 11 079 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 radios.

The Chinese Language (Putonghua) listening test was conducted via the PA system in 7 school halls.

The English Language speaking examinations were conducted in classroom centres of 32 schools (5 on Hong Kong Island; 9 in Kowloon; 18 in the New Territories). The Chinese Language (Cantonese and Putonghua) speaking examinations were conducted in 31 schools (3 on Hong Kong Island; 12 in Kowloon; 16 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 subject examinations.

Centre Supervisors' Conferences were held on 17, 19, 21, 23 and 25 March 2015 to brief centre supervisors and their deputies on the procedures for the conduct of examinations.

The number of invigilator-sessions for the written examinations including listening tests was 14 996. Participating schools provided for 95.3% of the total invigilation requirement. The remaining 4.7% 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 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)' were fully implemented in 398 centres in 2015. In general, the feedback from the examination centres and examination personnel on the systems was favourable.

To familiarise centre supervisors, invigilators and school IT technicians with the set-up and operation of the PECSS and ASTS, the Authority conducted 2 briefing sessions and 5 training workshops for around 530 invigilation staff and school IT technicians from February to March 2015. Positive feedback was received from the participants.

Full-scale deployment of the Oral Recording System (ORS) covering the HKDSE Chinese Language and English Language speaking examinations was carried out in 2015. 10 intensive briefing and training workshops were conducted for around 159 ORS assistants and 73 School ORS assistants, 4 briefing and training workshops were conducted for 207 teams of Chinese Language oral examiners and 198 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 403 (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 self-collection.

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 about 1 746 HKDSE candidates with various special needs including candidates with physical, visual, aural, oral or specific learning disabilities.

133 special centres for written examinations and 17 special centres for speaking examinations were set up to serve these candidates. Some candidates were exempted from part of an examination such as listening or speaking tests. Their results for the affected part(s) were assessed. The details of the exempted part(s) were indicated on the candidates' certificate. However, the reason for the exemption was not listed on the certificate.

A total of 5 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 invigilators hired by the HKEAA.

Special arrangements were made for 8 candidates who, due to religious reasons, could not take examinations on Saturday morning. These candidates sat the Information and Communication Technology, Chinese History and Economics after sunset on the examination day at a special centre under the supervision of the HKEAA.

Arrangements were made for 28 candidates serving sentences to take the HKDSE inside the correctional institutions, under the supervision of invigilators provided by the Correctional Services Department and the HKEAA.

Marking and grading

This year, on-screen marking was adopted for all 24 Category A subjects.

There were 998 800 scripts from the written examinations this year. 5 084 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.

In addition, 1 054 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 Director – Public Examinations 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 19.

Examination results

Release of Results

The examination results for Category A and Category B subjects were released on Wednesday, 15 July 2015 while the examination results for Category C (June 2015) subjects were released on Monday, 20 July 2015. 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 and school candidates sitting Category C (June 2015) subjects were able to view their results online from 7:00 am on 15 July and 8:30 am on 20 July respectively to 2 September 2015.

Private and evening school candidates who had not received their Category A and Category B results notices by 10:00 am on 15 July 2015 could come to the HKEAA Southorn Centre office for re-issue of their results notices immediately.

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 39 applications were approved this year. The assessed results of the subjects concerned, limited to 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 222 and 16 506 applications were received for rechecking and remarking respectively this year. The results for rechecking and remarking were released on 12 August 2015. 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 12 August to 2 September 2015. The JUPAS/tertiary institutions concerned and EDB were informed of the upgraded results of the candidates concerned at the same time.

Appeal Review Committee

Candidates who disagreed with the decisions of the Public Examinations Board on examination irregularities or had doubts about the process of rechecking / remarking or the marking of examination scripts after gaining access to scripts may submit an appeal review application to the independent Appeal Review Committee. In 2015, a total of 11, 7 and 33 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 2015 HKDSE certificates were issued to candidates in October via their schools and private candidates received theirs by local courier post.

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 Combined Science were reported on the certificate.

Starting from 2015, separate grading and reporting of the subject results were adopted for candidates taking the two different elective modules of Business, Accounting and Financial Studies (i.e. Accounting module and Business Management module). The module taken by the candidate was shown on the Results Notice and the HKDSE certificate.

For Category B subjects, assessments were 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 satisfied 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.