

## **Number of candidates and examination subjects**

### **Participation**

This year, 42 874 school candidates from 474 participating schools and 7 637 private candidates entered the HKDSE. Of the total candidature of 50 511, 48 762 candidates sat the examination. School and private candidates, on average, entered for six and three subjects respectively.

### **Examination Subjects**

Three categories of subjects were offered in the HKDSE: Category A Senior Secondary subjects, Category B Applied Learning subjects and Category C Other Language subjects. Altogether 24 Category A subjects were examined this year, with 19 subjects offering both Chinese and English versions. The percentage of subject entries taken in Chinese was 54%. A total of 45 Category B subjects where there is no public examination were offered. A total of six Category C subjects were examined using the Advanced Subsidiary level question papers from Cambridge Assessment International Education (Cambridge International).

## **Registration of entries**

### **Registration**

Registration was conducted in two phases. The June registration covered six Category C (November 2022 series) subjects while the September registration covered Category A and Category B subjects. Schools submitted the examination entries of their students via the HKDSE Examination Registration System at the HKDSE Examination Online Services. Private candidates also registered for the examination through the same Registration System.

### **Handbook for Candidates**

An electronic version of the *Handbook for Candidates* was made available for candidates in mid-December 2022. The Handbook contains examination regulations and important instructions to candidates including offences which could lead to mark penalties or disqualification from the examination.

## **Examination centres and invigilation staff**

### **Examination Centres**

Examination centres were set up in 437 schools, including 553 halls and 582 classrooms. The majority of schools were used for 6 to 10 days. 21 examination centres were also set up in Cheung Chau and Tung Chung for the convenience of candidates from these two areas.

A total of 502 halls and 405 classrooms were used as examination centres for the English Language listening examination while 485 halls and 298 classrooms were used for the Chinese Language (Cantonese) listening examination. The listening examinations were broadcast by RTHK Radio 2 in the majority of these centres. A total of 86 and 85 halls with unsatisfactory radio reception used infra-red (IR) transmission system to deliver the English Language and Chinese Language (Cantonese) listening examinations respectively, providing an additional 8 000 places. Candidates sitting the listening examinations at these IR centres listened to the broadcast using the receivers provided by the HKEAA. In addition, some centres used Public Address (PA) system, USB players or computers to deliver the listening examinations. The quality of broadcast at non-radio listening examination centres was comparable to that at radio listening examination centres.

The Chinese Language (Putonghua) listening examination was conducted via the PA system, USB players or computers in 19 school halls and 72 classrooms.

The English Language speaking examinations were conducted in classroom centres of 25 schools (4 on Hong Kong Island; 10 in Kowloon; 11 in the New Territories).

To safeguard the health and well-being of candidates and invigilation staff against possible infections, precautionary measures were taken at examination centres which included checking candidates' identity before admitting them to the examination hall/room, making optimal use of school premises as far as possible to space out candidates in the examination centre, adopting the ideal seating distance not less than 1.5 metres between candidates.

### **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, points to note and specimens of examination documents. Separate handbooks were also issued for English Language, Chinese Language and Other Language subject examinations. In addition, a set of handbooks was specially provided to centre supervisors serving at examination centres for candidates with special educational needs (SEN).

Centre Supervisors' Conferences were held on 4, 13, 14 and 17 April 2023 via webinar to brief centre supervisors and their deputies on the procedures for the conduct of examinations as well as the contingency and precautionary measures at examination centres. Besides, the online Training Workshops for Cross Invigilators at SEN centres were held on 13 and 15 April 2023 to familiarise the invigilators with the invigilation duties at SEN centres.

The number of invigilator-sessions for the written examinations (including listening examinations) was 11 707, of which 92.2% was provided by participating schools while the remaining 7.8% 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 around 550 hall centres in 2023. In general, the feedback from the examination centres and examination personnel on the systems was favourable. A pilot run of the PESS2 was smoothly conducted in the HKDSE Chinese Language and Mathematics Compulsory Part examinations in 48 normal hall centres, and positive feedback were received from the pilot schools. As such, PESS2 will be fully implemented in all normal centres (including the Special Rooms for the Listening component) from the 2024 HKDSE.

To familiarise centre supervisors, invigilators and school IT technicians with the set-up and operation of the PECSS, ASTS and PESS2, the online briefing session and a series of workshops were conducted. Positive feedback was received from the participants.

The Oral Recording System (ORS) was fully deployed in the 2023 HKDSE English Language speaking examinations. Seven intensive briefing and training workshops were conducted for around 87 ORS assistants and 29 School ORS assistants. Besides, eight briefing and training workshops were conducted for 159 teams of English Language oral examiners.

The Chinese Language speaking examination in the 2023 HKDSE was cancelled because of the streamlining arrangement under the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Distribution of Question Papers and Collection of Scripts**

Question papers were delivered by courier in the morning of each examination day to 451 (99.78%) examination centres which had opted for this service. A depot was also operated in San Po Kong to distribute question papers to the centre supervisors of the remaining examination centres who had opted for self-collection prior to the commencement of the examination.

Eight 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 the centre supervisors after the examination.

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

## **Services for candidates with special educational needs**

Same as previous years, special examination arrangements (SEAs) were made for SEN candidates so as to enable them to be equitably assessed under suitable conditions. This year, applications for SEAs were approved for 3 898 HKDSE SEN candidates including those with physical, visual, aural, oral, specific learning disabilities (SLD) or other disabilities (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD), etc.). SEAs such as extra time allowance, supervised breaks during examinations, provision of question papers/question-answer books in special format, specially-designed supplementary answer sheets/graph paper, use of ancillary equipment (e.g. Braille, screen reader, speech-to-text software, word processor) were provided in the examinations.

To serve candidates with special needs, 433 SEN centres for written examinations and 27 SEN centres for speaking examinations were set up this year. Some candidates were exempted from component(s) / part(s) of an examination such as listening examination. Their results for the affected component(s) / part(s) were assessed based on their performance in the other component(s) / part(s) of the examination sat. The component(s) exempted were indicated on the candidates' certificate. However, the reasons for granting the exemption and the SEAs made were not recorded.

Two candidates being hospitalised during the examination period were given permission, with the consent of the doctor, to sit the examination in hospitals under the supervision of 2 invigilators appointed by the HKEAA.

Special arrangements were made for 2 candidates who, due to religious reasons, could not take examinations on Saturday mornings. These candidates sat English Language and Geography examinations after sunset on the respective examination days under the supervision of the HKEAA.

Arrangements were made for 47 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**

On-screen marking was adopted for all 24 Category A subjects.

This year, 4 762 markers and marking assistants, mainly secondary school teachers, were recruited for marking 663 000 scripts from the written examinations. The same marking scheme and grading standard were adopted for the English and Chinese versions of subjects with bilingual versions.

In addition, 460 oral examiners were appointed to conduct the HKDSE English Language 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 2.

## **Examination results**

### **Release of Results**

The examination results for Category A and Category B subjects were released on Wednesday, 19 July 2023. Results notices were issued to school candidates through their schools while 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 online from 7:00 am on 19 July to 31 August 2023.

This year, the HKEAA continued using Short Message Service (SMS) to send out examination results and rechecking and remarking results to both school and private candidates who provided their SMS phone numbers as an optional service and a back-up in case of contingency. Candidates choosing this service received text messages of their examination results starting from 9:00 am on 19 July 2023.

Private and evening school candidates who had not received their Category A and Category B results notices on 19 July 2023 could come to the HKEAA Southorn Centre office for the re-issue of their results notices.

### **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 152 applications were approved this year. The assessed subject levels were confined to Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 for Category A core subjects and Levels 2, 3 and 4 only for elective subjects. Candidates with assessed results below the above lowest level were not awarded any assessed results.

Due to the special circumstances arising from COVID-19, school candidates who could not sit the examinations due to medical reasons or special circumstances but fulfilled the documentation requirement for application were given an assessed subject level up to Level 5. In the 2023 HKDSE, 11 candidates received Level 5 in 11 subjects. The assessed results of the subjects concerned were listed in the candidate's certificate.

### **Rechecking and Remarking**

Candidates may apply for rechecking or remarking of their examination results within 5 calendar 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 marks 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 133 and 16 538 applications were received for rechecking and remarking respectively this year. The results for rechecking and remarking were released on 16 August 2023 as scheduled. 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 16 August to 31 August 2023. The JUPAS / tertiary institutions concerned and EDB were informed of the upgraded results of the candidates concerned at the same time.

Candidates who had applied for rechecking and / or remarking and provided their SMS phone numbers received text messages of their rechecking and remarking results starting from 9:00 am on 16 August 2023.

### **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 and remarking or had queries regarding the marking of examination scripts provided through Data Access Request may submit an appeal review application to the independent Appeal Review Committee. In 2023, a total of three and 73 applications were received for review of the processing of examination irregularities and the marking of scripts respectively, and no appeal review applications for review of the process of rechecking and remarking were received.

## Certificates

The 2023 HKDSE certificates were issued to school candidates in October 2023 via their schools while private candidates received the certificates 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 being the highest. Achievements below Level 1 were designated as 'UNCL' (unclassified). Among Level 5 candidates, the highest achieving ones were awarded Level 5\*\* while those with the next highest level of performance were awarded Level 5\*. Component levels for Chinese Language, English Language and Combined Science were reported on the certificates.

For Category B subjects, assessments were undertaken by course providers. After moderation by the HKEAA, the final results were recorded on the HKDSE certificates. Starting from 2018, results of Applied Learning subjects (except Applied Learning Chinese) are reported in three levels, namely 'Attained', 'Attained with Distinction (I)' and 'Attained with Distinction (II)'. Performance of 'Attained with Distinction (I)' is deemed comparable to Level 3 while 'Attained with Distinction (II)' is deemed comparable to Level 4 or above in Category A subjects. For Applied Learning Chinese, the existing levels of results, i.e. 'Attained' and 'Attained with Distinction', will continue to be used.

For Category C subjects, marking and grading were conducted by Cambridge International. Results were reported in five 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 reported.

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

Chinese Language

Combined Science (Biology, Physics)

English Language

Combined Science (Chemistry, Physics)

Combined Science (Biology, Chemistry)

The language medium in which a candidate entered a subject was not recorded on the certificate.