

Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2023

Assessment Report

Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to consolidate the Chief Examiners' observations on the performance of candidates who sat the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) in 2023.

General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment¹ rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 82.3%; Writing 46.0%; Listening 78.6%; Speaking 66.5%; and Classroom Language Assessment 93.8%.

Paper 1 (Reading)

3. The paper comprised three reading passages on different topics: Passage A on the topic of *sleep*; Passage B on *perfectionism*; and Passage C on *the use of robots to care for the elderly*. The attainment rate for correctly answering the questions on each text did not vary greatly, in the 65% - 68% range, showing that the questions were set at an appropriate level.

4. Candidates' performance

- 4.1 Paper completion

The vast majority of candidates completed all questions for the three reading passages.

- 4.2 Appropriateness of responses

In general, there was relatively little evidence of indiscriminate copying. Strong candidates tended to be better at identifying the specific material relevant to the question being asked and were more likely to be able to paraphrase accurately.

- 4.3 Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the writer

This refers to the use of context and language knowledge to understand words or phrases used by the writer.

- 4.3.1 Passage A, Q.8 asked, 'What does "tout" (line 32) mean here?' The examiners were looking for candidates to give a synonym such as 'promote', 'advocate' or 'argue for'. However, many candidates seemed both unfamiliar with the word and unable to use the surrounding context to establish its function. Less than 30% of candidates answered correctly, with incorrect answers such as 'suggest' given.

- 4.3.2 Passage B, Q.23 asked, 'Why might the "achievements" in the paragraph beginning on line 11 not be satisfactory for perfectionists?' The answer

¹ Scoring Level 3 or above in the Reading and Listening papers, and Level 2.5 or above on any one scale and Level 3 or above on all other scales in the Writing, Speaking and Classroom Language Assessment (CLA) papers.

lay in the excerpt ‘can deliver the fleeting sensation that everything is under control’. Candidates needed to understand the meaning of ‘fleeting’ as used by the writer, and that any achievements would therefore only be temporary and thus ultimately unsatisfactory. Most candidates were unable to do this: the item was answered correctly by only 17%.

4.3.3 Passage C, Q.42 asked, ‘Consider the phrase “the gap” on line 35. What is this “gap”?’ The gap was between the number of caregivers and either the demand for professional caregivers or the number of elderly with dementia. Around 34% gave a correct answer, which required both parts of the answer to score. Interpretation of the word ‘gap’ being the distance or space between two things was not done well.

4.4 Understanding information and making an inference

This refers to understanding information that is not explicitly stated and using that understanding to make predictions about missing information.

4.4.1 Passage B, Q.25 asked, ‘According to the writer, who is most critical of someone who has feelings of “socially prescribed perfectionism” (line 20)?’ The answer was ‘ourselves’ or ‘oneself’. Candidates were required to read the whole paragraph and infer that the writer was talking about the reader (and writer) her/himself. Frequent uses of the pronouns ‘us’ and ‘we’ gave clues to this. Around 43% answered correctly with a frequent incorrect answer being ‘the perfectionist’ without the use of the reflexive ‘themselves’ (or similar).

4.4.2 Passage C, Q.38 asked, ‘What is surprising about the physical interaction between Mrs Boone and Zora in the paragraph beginning on line 25? Explain your answer.’ Most candidates (75%) were able to identify that it was surprising that Mrs Boone was cradling or treating Zora like a child, but many fewer (38%) could explain why this was surprising. They were expected to state that it was because Zora was supposed to be her caretaker, or even because Zora was not human / was a robot. It was not stated specifically that this could be considered surprising: candidates had to infer it from the content.

4.4.3 Passage C, Q.46 asked, ‘How does Dr Hoorn justify the use of carebots in the paragraph beginning on line 39?’ The answer required came from lines 41-42 where Dr Hoorn was quoted as saying ‘We have a moral obligation to take care of our elderly parents. But all too often, we don’t.’ Candidates were expected to infer from this that people often don’t take care of their elderly parents (so therefore carebots are justified). Just 39% were able to do this, perhaps not understanding the term ‘justify’ in the question.

4.5 Understanding grammatical relationships of words or phrases across text

This refers to understanding the use of cohesive devices in a text (e.g. referencing).

4.5.1 Passage A, Q.5 asked the candidates to identify what ‘then’ referred to on line 18. The correct answer was ‘a time prior to (the invention of) the lightbulb and indoor heating’. Around 40% of candidates were able to get

this. Those that did not generally missed the point and wrote an answer like ‘winter nights’.

4.5.2 Passage A, Q.16 asked candidates to ‘Consider the phrase “those hours” on line 65’ and to state what was being referred to. The required answer was ‘the hours of recommended sleep’, mentioned in the previous sentence. About 41% of candidates answered correctly with those answering incorrectly seemingly guessing at ‘seven or eight hours’ or ‘suggested sleep’.

4.6 Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas

This refers to distinguishing main ideas from supporting details, including points of view, arguments and opinions. It also means following topic development and identifying relationships between ideas.

4.6.1 Passage B, Q.27 asked candidates what working 20 hours a day was an example of, with the answer expected being ‘an impossible ideal’ or ‘the impossible demands of a boss’. The paragraph beginning on line 24 discussed the concept of ‘other-oriented perfectionism’ and developed it by using examples such as the one referred to. Just 43% were able to process the information in order to understand how the writer had developed the ideas.

4.7 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level

Candidates generally performed satisfactorily in this area. The final question in each passage asked for candidates’ understanding of the global meaning of the passage and in each case over 75% of candidates were able to select the correct answer. For example, in Passage A, Q.18 asked for the best title for the passage. Most candidates (75%) chose the correct answer, ‘Sleep: lessons from science and history’. Candidates who chose other options, which were specific to parts of the text, failed to take a step back and consider the meaning behind the whole passage.

5. Advice to candidates

5.1 The passages can be tackled in any order and typically vary in length. Candidates may wish to quickly survey the paper to establish a test-taking strategy.

5.2 Candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation for each question as a general indicator to the length or number of points to include in the answer.

5.3 Each question is different and will require a unique response. Candidates are advised to read the questions and the text carefully to investigate any nuances in meaning.

5.4 Similarly, candidates are advised to carefully consider the context of any unfamiliar vocabulary (such as ‘tout’, in Passage A, Q.8) and think about what the writer’s intended meaning is.

5.5 Candidates are advised to pay attention to the requirements of each question. In some cases the required answer might be one word (e.g. Passage A, Q.15) or two words (e.g. Passage A, Q.13) or a phrase or phrases (e.g. Passage C, Q.40). In

such cases, answers that are misspelled will not be accepted.

- 5.6 In some cases, the best response to a question can be expressed using words or phrases from the passage. If candidates choose to paraphrase the passage, they should make sure that the meaning is as similar as possible to the original. For example, in Passage B, Q.19 a correct response was ‘over-crowded labour markets’ and ‘unaffordable housing’, both taken directly from the passage. Rephrasing and simplifying to ‘labour markets’ and ‘housing’ would miss the key information.
- 5.7 Candidates are advised to enhance their language skills by reading widely across a broad range of genres. Reading for pleasure in English is particularly beneficial in the acquisition and reinforcement of lexis and syntax in written English.

Paper 2 (Writing)

6. This paper consists of two parts, Part 1: Task 1, Composition, and Part 2: Task 2A Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems, and 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems in a student’s composition.

Part 1: Composition

7. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates were required to write a coherent text using accurate grammar. The task given for the 2023 assessment was for candidates to write an email as a teacher responsible for curriculum development to persuade the Principal to incorporate financial literacy into school education. Candidates needed to present their views on why financial literacy skills are important for students to learn, suggest how financial literacy can be incorporated into the school curriculum, and propose at least one extracurricular activity that can teach financial literacy to students. The text length was to be about 400 words. To help candidates, some background information about the meaning of financial literacy was included in the question. This was meant to help candidates frame their response and to consider various ways through which financial literacy education can be covered in the school curriculum as well as extracurricular activities. The task not only allowed candidates to demonstrate their English language ability, but to show their understanding of the role financial literacy can play in the school curriculum and the importance of financial literacy for students in today’s changing world. Having said that, this was not a requirement of the test *per se*, as candidates were required to simply write a response from a consistent perspective.
8. Markers noted that the test paper was well designed and the wording in the question was easy to understand and unambiguous. The given text provided the context of the new skills required in the ‘increasingly entrepreneurial’ world. It gave candidates the opportunity to frame a response around a timely and interesting topic of financial literacy, which is relevant to their daily life and a recent trend in curriculum reform. While stronger candidates were able to conceptualise the content in the given text and set the scene using their own language, weaker ones tended to copy from the text to illustrate the new skills required in the changing world and what financial literacy is. Candidates are reminded to rely less on the given text and rather to take the opportunity to express their ideas in their own words.

9. Markers commented that the email format posed few problems for candidates. Many candidates were able to show a good understanding of the genre with an appropriate opening greeting the Principal and a closing urging the Principal to consider the proposed ideas. However, some weaker candidates instead wrote an essay prefaced by a salutation such as ‘Dear Principal’, with only a limited attempt to show that they were writing to the Principal and persuading the Principal of the importance of financial literacy for students. The tone of the email was sometimes inappropriate; either too academic or too informal. Candidates were expected to write in a professional manner with courtesy and the content was expected to be persuasive.
10. Candidates’ performance was graded on three scales for Part 1: (1) Organisation and Coherence, (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, and (3) Task Completion. Most candidates completed the task successfully, with many candidates attaining Level 3 or above on scales (1) and (3).
11. The performance on scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was acceptable, with a majority of candidates achieving Level 3 or above. Candidates occasionally focused more on the paragraph level and as a result did not devote enough attention to the sentence-level organisation. Markers noted that some candidates included too many ideas and the writing seemed to be more of a list than a well-thought-out response. This resulted in ideas that were not clearly connected or explained and as a result could be hard to follow. The reverse would also occasionally happen where candidates focused too much on the details and paid less attention to the larger structure of an email. In these cases, markers commented that while some individual paragraphs were well written, there may have been limited connection between these larger ideas. Some candidates wrote too much about why financial literacy is needed, leaving them with less time or space to write about how to incorporate it into the curriculum and propose relevant extracurricular activities. Candidates would have benefitted from starting with an overall organisation plan so that they could integrate and develop their arguments with appropriate examples and elaboration. Some weaker answers relied too heavily on a limited number of sentence-initial connectives (e.g., Firstly, Secondly, Moreover, Furthermore, etc.), which made their writing appear mechanical and rather formulaic. Stronger candidates used other types of cohesive devices (e.g., lexical chains, pronouns, synonyms, ellipsis, etc.) to organise their ideas in a more natural manner.
12. The performance on scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range was similar to that in previous years. Markers commented that some weaker candidates attempted to express simple ideas in overly complex sentence structures, resulting in a high density of grammatical errors. Markers reported errors in such areas as: the spelling of reasonably high frequency words (e.g., justification, corporation vs cooperation), the use of articles, subject-verb agreement and verb patterns. Markers commented that there were examples of candidates obviously proofreading and correcting their text after they had finished writing. In these cases, at least some of the simple grammatical mistakes listed above seemed to have been avoided or eradicated. Markers also commented that the choice of language and the tone adopted was occasionally inappropriate to the task. Most commonly, the tone and choice of lexis was more akin to a formal argumentative essay than an email of persuasion.
13. The performance on scale (3) Task Completion was slightly lower than the other two scales. The majority of candidates demonstrated their awareness of what they were

expected to include in the email. Many started with the importance of financial literacy skills for students to learn within and outside school, and proceeded to propose how financial literacy could be incorporated into the school curriculum and taught through extracurricular activities. However, markers observed that some candidates proposed schemes about how to run a successful business without a direct connection to raising students' financial literacy. In some scripts, irrelevant ideas were observed such as the importance of teaching time management and environmental protection in the school curriculum. Some did not distinguish well between curriculum plans and extracurricular activities. A few weaker candidates did not discuss the importance of financial literacy for students. Stronger candidates were able to develop nuanced arguments and elaborate on them with specific examples.

14. Several markers observed that some candidates appeared to believe that going beyond task requirements would give them extra credit. Specifically, some went well beyond the 400-word requirement and wrote as many as 700 words, resulting in repeated ideas, unconcise elaboration, and a higher volume of grammatical and lexical errors. Time could have been spent on more careful planning and proofreading.

Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems

15. Part 2 of the Writing Paper is divided into two parts: Task 2A, Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems and Task 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems. For Part 2A, candidates are given a student composition that contains errors/problems and are asked to correct those that appear in the first part of the composition. For Part 2B candidates are asked to fill in incomplete explanations of some of the errors/problems in the remainder of the composition. Markers considered the instructions for Part 2 to be clearly stated and felt that the composition contained a balanced and fairly comprehensive range of testing items.
16. Candidates performed quite strongly overall in Part 2A, although they may have found the questions this year slightly more challenging than those in previous years. In particular, some candidates struggled with the following items:
 - 3(ii): This item proved to be very challenging for many candidates, with less than 10% of candidates being awarded a point. In this item, candidates were tested on the part of speech of 'orderly'. Many candidates seemingly thought that 'orderly' was an adverb modifying the main verb 'works' in the clause. Such candidates thus did not make any changes in this part of the sentence. A possible reason for this is that the word ends with '-ly', which, on the face of it, is typical of an adverb. In fact, 'orderly' is an adjective. In order to modify the verb 'works', it should have been changed to 'in an orderly way/fashion/manner'.
 - 8(i): In this item, candidates were tested on their knowledge of the expression 'come first' or 'come in first place'. Some candidates added the preposition 'in' without deleting the article 'the' and wrote 'come in the first place', which has a connotation of 'come at the beginning' and does not fit the context. It was acceptable to change the verb 'come' to some other verbs such as 'attained', 'got' or 'achieved' followed by '(the) first place'. Some candidates changed the verb to 'won' or 'received', which were not considered acceptable because these verbs do not collocate with '(the) first place'.

- 8(ii): Candidates were tested on their grammatical knowledge of the preposition ‘for’ in this item. Many did not delete ‘for’ in ‘for many times’ (slightly less than 20% were awarded the point). Such candidates were seemingly unaware that ‘for’ is used to indicate duration or a period of time, and ‘many times’ is an adverbial phrase that describes the frequency of an action and should be used on its own without the preposition ‘for’.
17. In Task 2B, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems. Candidates were asked to fill in the blanks with one or more words so as to make the explanations complete. Many candidates did this successfully, but below are some examples of common problems in Task 2B:
- 11(ii): This item was an open-ended item, in which candidates were expected to provide a clear explanation regarding when a non-finite subordinate clause starting with a present participle can be used to add supplementary information to the main clause. Many candidates failed to explain that such a situation requires the subjects in the subordinate clause and the main clause to be the same. Only slightly under 20% of candidates were awarded a point for this item.
 - 15(iii): Many candidates were aware of the part of speech and function of ‘warm-hearted’ and thus wrote ‘adjective’ or ‘modifier’. However, these answers were not acceptable because this item, as a follow-up to item 15(ii), requires candidates to explain why ‘warm-hearted’ should be put *before* rather than after the noun being modified, i.e., ‘student’. Therefore, the answer of ‘*premodifier*’, ‘*prenominal modifier*’ or ‘*attributive (adjective)*’ was required. Only about 15% of candidates were awarded a point for this item.
 - 17(ii): This proved to be another challenging open-ended item. In this item candidates were expected to explain how ‘such as’ should be used in a sentence. Only around 15% of candidates were awarded a point. ‘Such as’ is a complex preposition and cannot be used to begin a sentence. Candidates were required to state so, or point out that ‘such as charity sales to raise money’ is a sentence fragment or an incomplete sentence in order to be awarded a point.
18. Candidates are reminded to check the spelling in their responses very carefully and to review their answers to make sure they are logical and grammatically correct. It is crucial that appropriate meta-language/terminology is used. Candidates are also reminded to demonstrate their understanding of the linguistic problems with complete linguistic terms and not abbreviations.

Paper 3 (Listening)

19. This year's paper consisted of three sets of items totalling 69 items, relating to three different listening texts. The first text was a podcast featuring an interview with a neurologist about what happens in the minds of people who collect as a hobby. The second was a roundtable discussion on changes to the family structure and the impact this has on urban planning. The third was a speech about eating insects as a sustainable food source. There was a balance of male and female speakers, talking at speeds ranging from normal to occasionally-slower-than-normal for the type of interaction involved.
20. The moderation committee selected the texts to represent a range of interlocutional patterns for the setting of meaningful questions of different types and at different levels of difficulty.
21. Markers' evaluation reports indicated that they found the paper to be set at an appropriate level of difficulty, and contained interesting topics and well-set questions that could discriminate between candidates at different levels.
22. A variety of items were designed to test a range of listening micro-skills, both when listening for specific details and more holistically. Item types consisted of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, gap-fill tasks, completion of tables and diagrams, and longer summaries of sections of the texts. Items which tested candidates' understanding of the speaker's point of view towards complex ideas tended to be more challenging (e.g. Q.17(ii) and Q.25) and were answered correctly by less than 40% of candidates.
23. The overall mean score for the test was 69% with mean scores for individual items ranging from 6% to 99%. The standard deviation was 16%, which is considered to be acceptable for an assessment of this nature.
24. Overall, the difficulty level of the paper was appropriate with the majority of the items answered correctly by between 45% and 75% of candidates. The second text, containing three speakers, proved to be slightly more difficult than the other parts, with the mean score of its items slightly lower than the other sections. The third text proved the most variable, containing both the highest number of items scored correctly by more than 80% of candidates, and the highest number scored by less than 40% of candidates. The nature of this third text as a straightforward speech perhaps allowed for the setting of the widest range of items at different levels of difficulty. Three questions from the paper are highlighted below for further analysis.
 - 24.1 Question 3 asked candidates to identify the incentives mentioned by Dr Mueller with specific instructions asking candidates to tick the 'ones' mentioned. Although only worth one mark, Dr Mueller mentioned three of the four statements given. Some candidates may have overlooked the requirements of the question as well as the extended listening for detail. Although the mean was relatively low at 18%, this was another highly discriminating item.
 - 24.2 Q.24(ii) was another item which proved more difficult than expected with a mean of around 36%. It was part of a cloze which asked candidates to note down the statistics (or numbers) mentioned by the speaker. The answer for Q.24(ii) was '0.1', with the speaker saying 'nought point one'. It seems quite a number

of candidates were either not expecting to listen for an answer less than zero or were not familiar with the numeral expression of ‘nought’ to express ‘zero’. A common incorrect answer given was ‘9.1’. Once again, this item was successfully answered by the strongest candidates.

- 24.3 Q.25 proved to be difficult with around a quarter of candidates answering it correctly. It required candidates to identify whether the speaker thought insect farming was inhumane, and to provide a reason to support their answer. Candidates needed to listen holistically to this section, with the speaker at first saying, ‘Now that might sound inhumane, but from the insect’s point of view, it’s fine.’ It was important to understand the structural markers that indicate the speaker is first introducing a point of view that is not their own, then to continue listening to the extended section for the speaker’s actual reasoning (that many insects like living closely together). This is a complex combination of skills that helped to discriminate the more able listeners.

25. Advice to candidates

- 25.1 Homophones and other similar-sounding pairs of words caught out a number of candidates as shown in the examples given in the table below.

Question No.	Incorrect answer	Correct answer
4(iii)	<i>waying</i> a decision	<i>weighing</i> a decision
18(ii)	<i>loan</i> parent families	<i>lone</i> parent families
29(v)	insect-based <i>mits</i>	insect-based <i>mince</i>

Candidates are reminded to read more carefully the surrounding context of the item in the Question-Answer Book and to consider the actual sense of what is being said rather than simply writing what they think they hear.

- 25.2 Expanding their working knowledge of collocations may be an area that less able candidates can focus on. For example, erroneous answers given in place of ‘fill an emotional gap’(Q.4(i)) or ‘smoke rising from the lake’ (Q.27(i)) were apparently due to candidates’ ignorance of collocations.
- 25.3 For some questions, answers that did not clearly answer the question would not be considered complete and candidates are advised to make more explicit and extensive reference to the context given in the recording. For example, the answer ‘paid leave’ (Q.19(i)) would be considered too vague but ‘240 days off’ or ‘long periods of paid leave’ would be acceptable. Another example is question 31 in which the answer required was ‘human extinction’ and not just ‘extinction’. Only writing ‘extinction’ could refer to the extinction of other species or all species and therefore, more clarification was expected.
- 25.4 Some candidates may need to review their ability to listen and write down numbers. For instance, in Q.18(i), some candidates confused the correct answer ‘26.5’ with the distractor ‘25.8’ or wrote ‘25.6’ instead of ‘26.5’.
- 25.5 Prospective candidates are recommended to listen to as wide a range of English language listening texts as possible, to help sharpen their listening skills and expose them to a variety of accents, cultures, genres and colloquialisms. The

great range of easily accessible podcasts, digital radio and global broadcasting services available online should make this an easily achievable goal that will have lasting benefits, not least helping to provide future motivation for their students.

Paper 4 (Speaking)

26. Paper 4 consists of two parts. In Part 1 there are two tasks, Task 1A: Reading Aloud and Task 1B: Recounting an Experience/Presenting an Argument. In Part 2 there is one task: Group Interaction.

Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud

27. Task 1A: Reading Aloud, was the task where candidates' performance appeared to be the weakest of all the tasks candidates were required to undertake. The two scales for this task are scale (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and scale (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. The passages selected included a range of lexis and sentence structures, allowing the accuracy and clarity of pronunciation of individual sounds, word stress, phrasal stress as well as stress and intonation over stretches of text to be assessed reliably. The passages also allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to read with meaning through employing pitch and tone, varying speed and breaking text into appropriate 'thought groups'.
28. Those candidates who demonstrated a stronger performance in Task 1A scale (1) were able to sustain a more 'natural' rhythm and sentence stress over longer stretches of text using weak forms as well as incorporating features of connected speech. They also made fewer errors articulating individual phonemes and were more accurate when confronted with less frequently used lexis. In terms of scale (2) stronger candidates were able to show a very high level of sensitivity to the text expressing connections across longer stretches of the text. This means moving beyond a simple differentiation between narration and dialogue. Stronger candidates demonstrated a deeper understanding of the mood of the text and an understanding of the characters and the characters' attitudes and were able to express more subtle, nuanced meaning by effectively manipulating speed, pausing, volume, pitch and tone.
29. Less successful candidates in scale (1) often had problems in articulating individual phonemes including distinguishing between long and short vowel sounds, omission of final consonant sounds, as well as problems with the pronunciation of consonant clusters. Sentence stress, rhythm and connected speech were often negatively impacted by an inappropriate pace, such as a slow laboured delivery. Weaker candidates often struggled to read the text, doing so word-by-word and with frequent phoneme errors. In terms of scale (2), weaker performances were characterised by a failure to communicate effectively the mood/ideas in the text due to inappropriate thought groups or an overly dramatic rendition inappropriate to the mood of the text and the characters.
30. To help candidates prepare for Task 1A regarding scale (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation, candidates are recommended to develop an awareness of their own weaknesses, in particular, in relation to those common issues highlighted above. In addition, it is recommended that candidates avoid over-articulating every sound and

consider incorporating features of connected speech to improve the pace/fluency. With regard to scale (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning, candidates are recommended to start with a closer reading to develop an understanding of the tone/mood of the text by looking at the setting, characters, details and word choices. Candidates are also recommended to practise reading the text aloud in order to achieve a naturalness in terms of pace, rhythm, pitch and intonation. Listening to good models of reading aloud may help candidates understand how to read clues within the text such as punctuation, referencing and word choices.

Part 1: Task 1B Recounting an Experience/Presenting an Argument

31. The prompts for Task 1B reflected a range of issues, topics and themes that are relevant to contemporary life in Hong Kong or to educational matters in general. Candidates were asked to either recount an experience or present an argument using their own language resources to produce a coherent and cohesive response to the prompt. The two scales for this task are scale (3) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, and scale (4) Organisation and Cohesion. The scales assess the candidates' ability to organise ideas and demonstrate lexico-grammatical range and accuracy in spontaneous or semi-spontaneous spoken English.
32. In Task 1B, candidates seemed to perform relatively well in both scales of assessment. Those candidates who demonstrated a stronger performance in Task 1B appeared to work from brief notes or bullet points with a general outline of their ideas rather than a prepared 'script'. Those stronger performances in Task 1B scale (3) incorporated a wider range of grammatical structures and lexis with a greater degree of accuracy. In terms of grammar, this would involve more complex verb forms such as continuous or perfect tenses, modal verbs and appropriate use of active and passive forms as well as more complex clauses, such as embedded clauses, to express more complex ideas or express their attitude towards the topic/theme. In terms of lexis stronger performances incorporated a wider range of lexis to add greater precision to the ideas.
33. Those candidates who demonstrated a stronger performance in Task 1B scale (4) were able to structure their responses with less overt, formulaic signposting. They were able to incorporate a wider range of strategies to help the listener follow the flow of the discourse. This involved some overt organising phrases ('Something we must consider is...', 'This turned out to be significant for me because...') along with less overt strategies such as parallel structures and pronoun referencing, and the development of lexical chains. Their response would often involve referring back to and adding to their previous statements ('likewise', 'on the contrary', 'in the meantime') in order to develop the ideas further.
34. Less successful candidates in Task 1B scale (3) produced frequent errors in both simple and, if attempted, more complex structures. Such weaker candidates also exhibited a limited range of vocabulary to express their ideas resulting in a lack of precision, often repeating lexis or lacking the ability to paraphrase any gaps in their lexicon. In terms of scale (4), weaker performances involved either an incoherent discourse resulting in confusion for the listener or a somewhat limited development of ideas. Such limited development occurred when candidates produced extremely short responses or responses with a lack of relevant ideas with which to develop their response. Weaker candidates also seemed to rely on a more restricted range of connectives, such as 'and', 'so' and 'next'.

35. To help candidates to prepare for Task 1B with regard to scale (3) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, candidates should develop an awareness of their own inaccuracies and deficiencies in their lexico-grammatical range in order to improve in these areas. With regard to scale (4) Organisation and Cohesion, candidates should consider the complexity of arguments and counter-arguments and avoid just listing out their ideas when presenting an argument, or consider the elements of a narrative arc when recounting an experience. Candidates should be conscious of the time allowance for completing Tasks 1A and 1B. Candidates have 5 minutes in total to complete both tasks, one following immediately after the other. Therefore, candidates should be mindful of how much can be realistically said in Task 1B in a period of approximately two to three minutes, and should make full use of the time available.

Part 2: Group Interaction

36. Generally, this discussion task was well handled, with candidates achieving greatest success on Task 2 of the three components of the assessment. Candidates generally demonstrated an acceptable ability to participate in a collaborative, professional discussion. The two scales for Part 2 are scale (5) Interacting with Peers and scale (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers.
37. Those candidates who demonstrated a stronger performance in Part 2 scale (5) were able to demonstrate a more engaged and meaningful exchange with the other candidates. This would involve a wider range of ‘discourse moves’, such as making claims and suggestions; asking for and constructively exploring the views of others; facilitating collaboration by accepting and conceding others’ views; and demonstrating an ability to keep the discussion focused. These candidates were able to more appropriately encourage any quiet members of the group to contribute or develop their ideas as well as to seek clarification from others when their contributions were ambiguous.
38. In terms of scale (6), stronger candidates were able to draw on their understanding of language learning and teaching in order to produce professional reflection and insight into the education-related, school-based issues, plans or projects under discussion. They possessed a familiarity with and an understanding of more precise lexis related to language learning and teaching, which resulted in candidates justifying their ideas with relevant pedagogical reasoning in order to ensure that discussions were meaningful and focused on practical outcomes.
39. The overall impression of the weaker candidates in Part 2 was a general lack of engagement and confidence with the topic. They therefore produced more limited contributions to the discussion in terms of development of their ideas and opinions, as well as limited frequency of contributions. In terms of scale (5), this would involve contributions that were tangential to the discussion focus of the group. Such candidates appeared to lack active listening skills and the conversational skills required to interact effectively with the other group members to develop or build on the ideas of others. They were often unable to ask for clarification from others. Such a lack of engagement was often characterised by sequential turn-taking with little collaborative professional exchange or ‘genuine’ interaction appearing mechanical and superficial. In terms of scale (6), weaker candidates lacked the professional lexis and the ability to express relevant, clear, precise or focused contributions.

40. To help candidates prepare for Part 2, they are encouraged to practise meaningful professional exchange and dialogue discussing learning and teaching issues with their colleagues as well as reflecting on their own learning and teaching experience and knowledge. Candidates should demonstrate more ‘natural’ interaction by considering the functional language needed to produce such discourse moves. Candidates are advised to avoid producing more lengthy ‘monologues’ and are advised to listen closely to the other group members’ ideas and to incorporate these into their own contributions. Candidates should not be afraid to revisit ideas expressed earlier in the discussion if it is useful to do so and are encouraged to seek clarification from group members should any points raised be unclear.

Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment)²

41. A total of 454 candidates were assessed between November 2022 and April 2023, with 93.8% of candidates attaining Level 3 or above. Candidates were graded on four scales of performance: (1) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range; (2) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation; (3) Language of Interaction; and (4) Language of Instruction. Comments on candidates’ performance on each of the four scales are given below.
42. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range
 - 42.1 In general, candidates demonstrated effectiveness in using English in the classroom, showing a reasonable grasp of grammar and vocabulary. Inaccuracies were noted in the choice of vocabulary and use of syntactic structures, but in most cases this did not impede the clarity of communication. While it was pleasing to see more candidates attempt to use a wider variety of language patterns and lexis this year, for most candidates, accuracy and flexibility remained wanting when it came to employing a more varied use of English to meet the diverse demands of classroom language, for example, when scenarios requiring paraphrasing, rephrasing and communicating more nuanced meaning arose.
 - 42.2 In terms of grammar, most candidates were able to make good use of simple and compound structures, but the degree to which they showed an ability to employ more complex structures accurately or self-correct their errors varied. Examples of the types of errors most frequently observed included parts of speech, singular/plural forms, tenses, subject-verb agreement and the formation of indirect questions. Candidates who performed well on this scale, on the other hand, often used a more extensive range of grammatical structures, such as conditionals, relative clauses and cleft sentences, with ease and commendable naturalness.
 - 42.3 In the area of vocabulary use, candidates demonstrated an adequate lexical range on the whole. Only a small number of candidates, who scored low on the scale, confined themselves to the vocabulary found in the teaching materials. This had the inevitable impact of hampering the spontaneity of their speech. Stronger candidates demonstrated an excellent command of a broad lexical

² Administered by the Education Bureau, which contributed this section of the Assessment Report.

repertoire, using vocabulary and idiomatic expressions flexibly and precisely to convey the intended meaning.

43. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

- 43.1 Performance on this scale was the strongest among the four scales. Candidates, in general, exhibited accurate pronunciation and articulation of phonemes. The use of stress at the word and sentence levels was largely appropriate.
- 43.2 Candidates' speech was, by and large, characterised by an amiable fluency in terms of pronunciation; where mistakes occurred, they did not affect the intelligibility of their speech. Nevertheless, some common flaws were identified in the articulation of vowel and consonant sounds of mediocre candidates, such as confusion over long/short vowels (e.g. uttering the clipped vowel /i/ instead of /i:/ in 'feeling' and 'read'), the omission of final consonants (e.g. 'has finished' uttered as 'has finish') and the mispronunciation of consonant clusters (e.g. /stf/ in 'question' not clearly articulated). In respect of stress and intonation, the weaker candidates could benefit from a heightened awareness of English as a stress-timed (rather than syllable-timed) language, so that the common pitfalls of placing undue stress on weak forms or equal stress on most words in a sentence, for instance, could be avoided.
- 43.3 The more successful candidates proved themselves to be good language models, showcasing mastery of an array of prosodic features in connected speech, including pausing, catenation and various intonation contours, to convey and reinforce meaning. Their speech was always natural-sounding and easy on the ear, with stress and pitch patterns properly employed for different communicative purposes, such as highlighting information, showing contrast, and expressing feelings and attitudes. Their pronunciation and enunciation were of a consistently high standard.

44. Language of Interaction

- 44.1 Candidates were, for the most part, capable of maintaining smooth interaction with students. What differentiated the more successful candidates from the less successful ones was their range of interactive language and their level of spontaneity in putting their interactive language to use when negotiating learning and teaching.
- 44.2 The performance of stronger candidates was marked by an evident competence in employing classroom language to meet a wide range of interactional functions, such as elicitation, clarification, and the provision of concrete feedback (e.g. evaluating individual responses and justifying students' answers), with adeptness and spontaneity. As a result of this, they were both ready and able to invite and respond to spontaneous contributions from students, displaying the interactive language necessary for adjustments to their questioning and feedback as they saw fit, such as using prompts and cues to help students articulate, rectify or elaborate their answers, and by reformulating or paraphrasing students' erroneous or unclear responses.

44.3 Weaker candidates tended to fall short of spontaneous questioning and feedback due to a narrow range of interactive language at their disposal. Their performance was typified by restricted and repetitious use of functional language, such as display questions requiring short and expected answers, and perfunctory feedback (e.g. simply asking students to try again when they failed to give correct answers). Students' unanticipated responses were often brushed aside or not addressed.

45. Language of Instruction

45.1 Most candidates were able to demonstrate generally clear and comprehensible instructional language. They organised classroom discourse effectively using some signalling devices. Delivery of instructions and explanations was mostly smooth and natural.

45.2 High achievement on this scale was distinguished by the ability to deliver a sustained discourse with remarkable clarity and coherence. With ideas illustrated by appropriate examples and presented in a logical flow, these candidates' explanations were easy to follow throughout the lesson. Discourse was always well organised, exemplified not only by the smooth and natural transitions between various stages of the lesson, but by the excellent signposting of both the referential and logical connections between ideas presented over longer stretches of time.

45.3 The instructional language of less competent candidates was usually found to be limited. They often fell back on routine and restricted patterns of instruction, and were not capable of giving more extended explanations when required. Excessive use of the word 'okay' as a cohesive device was commonly observed.