

**Q&A on Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment Framework**  
**Literature in English**

- 1. We are concerned about the level of difficulty of the Literature in English curriculum. Does the selection of set texts cater to a wide range of student abilities and interests?**

Careful consideration has been given to the selection of texts for the Literature in English curriculum to ensure that it is appealing and manageable for average senior secondary students, and at the same time challenging enough for meaningful tasks to be set for students to demonstrate their literary skills and knowledge.

The set texts aim at offering a balance of classical and contemporary works by male and female writers, mainstream British/American writers as well as writers from other parts of the world. Options have been provided for teachers to select texts that suit their students' abilities and interests.

- 2. Would choices be provided for the texts to be studied under each genre?**

When the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum was introduced in the 2009/10 school year, options were provided in the form of two sets of texts. The combination of texts within each set was fixed, allowing no further choice of set texts under each genre.

After the Short-term Review of the senior secondary curriculum and assessment for Literature in English, one of the finalised recommendations was to merge the two sets of texts and provide two options for each of the three genres (i.e. novels, plays and films), in order to offer more flexibility in the choice of texts. Corresponding changes were also made to the design of the examination papers (e.g. offering more options and setting more generalised comparison questions for the Essay Writing paper). The above changes on the curriculum and assessment are effective from the 2016 Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination. Upon the completion of the Medium-term Review, a mechanism for the replacement of set texts was recommended to ensure a regular renewal of set texts under each genre and introduce new texts from time to time. For details of the assessment frameworks, please refer to the URL below:

[http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/hkdse\\_subj.html?A2&2&17\\_1](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/hkdse_subj.html?A2&2&17_1)

**3. Regarding film study, it seems that a lot of emphasis is placed on the teaching of technical aspects such as lighting and camera angles. Is this the focus in the study of the genre?**

Teachers are encouraged to aim for a balanced focus on the literary (e.g. themes, characters, setting, narrative), dramatic (e.g. acting, costumes, make-up) and cinematic (e.g. audio-visual effects, camera angles and positions) aspects in the study of film. While students may have to deal with the cinematic aspect of films, they are not expected to demonstrate extensive technical knowledge or a high level of understanding of cinematic techniques. This point has been made clear in Section 4.3.4 of the *Literature in English Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6)* (CDC and HKEAA, 2007) (with updates in November 2015). The Guide can be accessed at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/eleg>.

**4. Are the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum and the HKDSE Literature in English Examination internationally recognised?**

In designing the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum, reference was made to the requirements and standards of the literature curricula in other countries. The senior secondary Literature in English curriculum has also been benchmarked by curriculum and assessment agencies in different countries, such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) in the UK. It has been found to be comparable to the senior secondary literature curricula of these countries.

Standards in the HKDSE Examination are benchmarked against key overseas examinations in the same way that previously applied to the HKCEE and HKALE. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the UK has included the HKDSE in the UCAS Tariff system with tariff points awarded to the 24 HKDSE subjects, including Literature in English. The qualification is recognised as comparable to the UK GCE A-Level. The HKEAA has been working with overseas universities in the UK, Australia, Canada, Mainland China, the USA, New Zealand and Taiwan to promote the HKDSE qualification. So far, over 270 tertiary institutions worldwide have indicated their acceptance of students with HKDSE qualification. Details are available on the website of the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority:

[http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/recognition/hkdse\\_recognition%20/ircountry\\_hkdse.html](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/recognition/hkdse_recognition%20/ircountry_hkdse.html)

**5. Where can teachers have access to information about the HKDSE Literature in English Examination?**

Information about the HKDSE Literature in English Examination (e.g. Assessment Framework, *Literature in English Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6)* (with updates in November 2015), Standards-referenced Reporting (SRR), level descriptors, samples of candidates' performance, as well as sample and practice papers) can be accessed on the HKEAA's website: ([http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/hkdse\\_subj.html?A2&2&17](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/hkdse_subj.html?A2&2&17)). The HKEAA also disseminates details about the HKDSE Literature in English Examination results including feedback on individual papers with reference to statistical data, examiners' comments, live scripts and level descriptors at briefing sessions for teachers usually held in October of the examination year. The HKDSE Examination papers for this subject, the marking scheme and the report on students' performance are included in the Examination Report and Question Papers for the subject which is made available to schools by the end of the examination year.

**6. What measures are in place to ensure the reliability and fairness of the SBA?**

Various support measures are in place to enhance teachers' assessment literacy and ensure the reliability and fairness of the SBA for Literature in English. SBA Teachers' Handbook, which provides details on the conduct of SBA, assessment requirements, administrative arrangements and moderation mechanism, has been prepared and can be accessed on the HKEAA's website: ([http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/sba/sba\\_hkdse\\_elective/dse\\_subject.html?17&2](http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/sba/sba_hkdse_elective/dse_subject.html?17&2)). Annotated examples are also provided on the HKEAA website after each examination year for teachers' reference.

To enhance teachers' understanding of the assessment criteria and procedures, an optional school trial was conducted in the 2018 HKDSE Examination. Training in carrying out SBA had been provided to teachers before the school trial and the scores given by most participating schools were within the accepted parameters compared to the moderated results, which showed teachers' understanding of the assessment criteria.

A moderation mechanism is in place to ensure consistency in marking among teachers from different schools when SBA is fully implemented starting from the 2019 HKDSE Examination. The moderation is conducted by HKEAA appointed personnel (e.g. moderators, district co-ordinators) through inspection of samples of

students' work covering the full range of attainment, followed by recommendations for mark adjustment. The HKEAA will specify the sample size required for inspection, which will be sufficient for evaluating a school's judgement at different performance levels. Additional samples may be requested if necessary. Students' SBA marks may be adjusted but the rank order determined by the school will remain unchanged. After the examination each year, SBA moderation reports will be sent to schools for their reference. The report will specify the extent of adjustment made to the marks submitted by schools.

**7. Are there any professional development opportunities to support subject teachers in teaching the subject and preparing students for the public assessment?**

The EDB organises networking activities and professional development programmes to enhance teachers' subject knowledge (e.g. capacity for literary appreciation) and teaching skills (e.g. strategies for teaching different literary genres), as well as facilitate sharing on effective teaching practices. The HKEAA also provides professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their capacity to prepare students for different assessment components of the HKDSE Literature in English Examination (e.g. SBA). Details of these programmes are disseminated to schools and teachers through the Training Calendar System (<https://tcs.edb.gov.hk/tcs/publicCalendar/start.htm>).

**8. Has the reduction in the number of elective subjects students have to take under the senior secondary curriculum adversely affected the future of Literature in English as a subject?**

The senior secondary Literature in English curriculum appeals to students who are interested in developing skills such as creativity, literary appreciation and analysis. Students understand that the study of Literature in English will equip them with the skills that can be applied in a wide range of disciplines at university.

Further, professional development programmes and networking activities have been conducted since the 2005/06 school year to enhance teachers' subject knowledge and teaching strategies, as well as to heighten their awareness of the need to publicise the benefits of the subject and to cultivate students' interest through promoting language arts at the junior secondary level.

Schools are also encouraged to explain to parents and students that taking

Literature in English would not affect their chance of being admitted to any university degree programmes and students should choose the elective subjects to study based on their interests and ability. Schools may also explore ways to offer the subject to their students, for example, by making use of the Diversity Learning Grant and collaborating with other schools to offer networked classes. Please refer to the URL below for details of the Grant:

[https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/gifted/resources\\_and\\_support/dlg/](https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/major-level-of-edu/gifted/resources_and_support/dlg/)

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