

Q&A on Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment Framework
English Language
(Applicable to Secondary 4 in the 2021/22 school year and after)

1. What are the major changes to curriculum and assessment under the optimisation of senior secondary English Language?

Several optimising measures for senior secondary English Language are in place from S4 in the 2021/22 school year to offer greater flexibility for schools to better cater for learner diversity and create space for students to broaden their knowledge and learning experience. They include:

- integrating the Compulsory and Elective Parts of the curriculum to create space;
- offering Applied Learning (Vocational English) and other English-related Applied Learning courses to cater for students' diverse interests and needs;
- promoting the creative use of English through language arts, and the academic use of English through Reading across the Curriculum (RaC) and Language across the Curriculum (LaC) to stretch students' potential in English learning; and
- streamlining the design of Paper 2 (Writing) of the HKDSE English Language Examination and School-based Assessment (SBA) to reduce the workload of students and enhance the effectiveness of the assessment.

2. Is it a must to release 50 hours of lesson time from the existing senior secondary English Language curriculum? Will the reduction of lesson time have adverse effects on students' learning and their English standards?

Time to be released from English Language is not prescriptive and flexibility is allowed based on school context and student needs. Schools are encouraged to review the existing time allocation for the four core subjects and students' elective subject choices to assess the need to create space for more subject choices or/and differentiation arrangements. Whether to reduce the lesson time for English Language and the number of hours to be allocated is a school-based decision.

A reduction of lesson time does not necessarily lead to a drop in English standards. In fact, the purpose of optimising the four core subjects together is to allow greater flexibility for schools to make by class/group arrangements to address students' diverse needs, including their English learning needs. While the regular lesson time for English Language may be reduced, schools can offer focused differentiated English learning programmes/activities (e.g. drama class, remedial/enrichment programmes) for individual group(s) of students to address their interests and needs. With focused and tailor-made differentiation measures to support students' English learning, their English standards should not be adversely affected.

3. How can schools release lesson time to create space for students and better cater to learner diversity?

Schools are encouraged to integrate the Compulsory and Elective parts to reduce overlap and release time. With effective curriculum restructuring and task design, teachers can address multiple learning objectives and cover different curriculum and assessment components in one unit of work. Under the optimising arrangements, the English learning/lesson time can vary by group/class based on students' needs. The released time can then be used to enhance English learning through offering the following:

- short school-based programmes (e.g. drama class)
- pull-out remedial/enrichment programmes (e.g. phonics class for less advanced students, writing workshops for advanced students)
- cross-/co-curricular activities (e.g. LaC Week, debating competition)
- English-related Applied Learning courses [e.g. Applied Learning (Vocational English), Applied Learning (Translation Studies)]
- English-related elective subject (i.e. Literature in English)

4. In addition to offering school-based differentiation programmes with the released time, how can schools make use of the optimising measures to enhance English learning?

To further heighten students' awareness of English commonly used in academic texts in other subjects and to facilitate students' current and/or further studies, schools are encouraged to promote academic use of English through LaC and RaC. Besides, to stretch students' potential, promote literary appreciation and develop students' sensitivity to language use, more emphasis can be placed on the creative use of English with the use of language arts materials.

To complement the study of senior secondary English Language, and offer additional language exposure and English learning opportunities for students, English-related Applied Learning courses [e.g. Applied Learning (Vocational English)] can be offered to cater for students' diverse interests, needs and aspirations.

5. How to integrate the elements of the Elective Part into the Compulsory Part? Is it necessary for schools to integrate all eight elective modules into the Compulsory part and how much time should be allocated to the learning elements in the previous Elective Part?

Under the optimising arrangements, the Elective Part is fully integrated into the curriculum as its extension/enrichment components. Schools are advised to review their existing curriculum to identify suitable topics/themes, text-types or language skills as the entry points for connecting the learning elements in the Compulsory and Elective Parts. Please refer to the suggested learning activities for integration provided in Chapter 2.5.3 of the *English Language Curriculum*

and Assessment Guide (S4 – S6) (2021):

[https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/Curriculum%20Document/English%20Language%20Curriculum%20and%20Assessment%20Guide%20\(Secundary%204%20-%206\)%20\(2021\).pdf](https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/Curriculum%20Document/English%20Language%20Curriculum%20and%20Assessment%20Guide%20(Secundary%204%20-%206)%20(2021).pdf)

Learning elements in the previous Elective Part remain important as the extension/enrichment components of the integrated curriculum. Under the optimising arrangements, there will no longer be any restrictions on the number of elective modules to deliver and suggested time allocation. Schools can flexibly adjust the breadth and depth of teaching based on student needs and select suitable learning elements (e.g. themes, text-types, language skills) from the previous Elective Part to focus on. They can introduce the learning elements in different units using a theme/task-based approach, short-focused learning modules or school-based programmes (e.g. drama programmes) or school activities (e.g. debate competitions). A balanced coverage of text-types and exposure to a variety of topics are conducive to students' language skills development.

6. Will the integration of the Elective Part and Compulsory Part affect the way students are assessed?

Under the optimising measures, the assessment framework of the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) English Language subject will remain unchanged. However, as the Elective Part and Compulsory Part have been integrated, the questions in Part B of Paper 2 (Writing) will be delinked from the eight elective modules and the number of questions will be reduced from eight to four. A sample of the Writing Paper in the 2024 HKDSE English Language Examination is available at:

https://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/DocLibrary/HKDSE/Subject_Information/eng_lang/ENG-SP-Paper2-2024.pdf

Apart from the design of the HKDSE English Paper 2, the School-based Assessment (SBA) has also been delinked from the elective modules and streamlined to reduce the workload on students and enhance the effectiveness of the assessment.

For more information about the streamlined assessment arrangements, please refer to “Measures to Optimise the Four Senior Secondary Core Subjects” (EDBCM 39/2021):

<https://applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBCM/EDBCM21039E.pdf>

7. What is the purpose of incorporating the learning elements of the elective modules in the curriculum if all the assessment components are delinked from the Elective Part?

Delinking does not mean the teaching of learning elements in the elective modules is no longer necessary. It only serves to align with the integration of the Compulsory and Elective Parts to

allow greater flexibility in curriculum planning and teaching. Learning elements in the existing Elective Part remain important as the extension/enrichment components of the integrated curriculum. These elements (e.g. debate, drama, social issues, workplace communication) will continue to feature in different parts of the public assessment. Relevant learning experience would enable students to comprehend the reading texts and generate ideas for writing more effectively.

8. How can the interface between the junior secondary and senior secondary English Language curricula be facilitated?

The entire English panel should be kept updated about the latest developments with regard to the senior secondary English Language curriculum. They should also exercise careful planning, making sure that important groundwork is laid in the junior secondary curriculum in terms of incorporating key learning elements (e.g. developing students' language skills and grammar knowledge, encouraging critical thinking and creative use of language and exposure to a wide variety of text types, including those related to both language arts and non-language arts) that will facilitate transition to the senior secondary level. Teachers are encouraged to refer to the supplementary notes on *Building a strong interface between the junior and senior secondary curricula: Focusing on the development of literacy skills* and *Supplement to the English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Secondary 1-3)* (2018) (both documents available at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/elegc>) when planning the school-based secondary English Language curriculum.

9. What measures can teachers take to cater for learner diversity?

Teachers should work closely as a team to share ideas and devise a plan on how to meet their students' diverse needs. Teachers may refer to the *CDC-HKEAA English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6) 2021* [Effective from Secondary 4 in the 2021/22 school year] and *CDC English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 - Secondary 6) 2017* (available at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/elegc>) for suggestions on catering for learner diversity, such as adapting the school curriculum, making use of graded tasks and activities and employing a variety of teaching techniques to cater for students' different needs. Teachers are also encouraged to take part in the related professional development programmes organised by the EDB and refer to the supplementary notes on catering for learner diversity in the senior secondary English classroom (available at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/elegc>) to gain insights into strategies to cater for students' different learning styles, needs and abilities.

10. Are there any professional development programmes in support of the implementation of the senior secondary English Language curriculum to cater for teachers' training needs?

The EDB organises professional development programmes to enhance teachers' subject knowledge (e.g. the role of grammar and vocabulary in academic reading and writing) and teaching skills (e.g. promoting the creative use of English through language arts), equip them with strategies for effective curriculum implementation (e.g. integrating elements of the Elective Part into the school-based English language curriculum), as well as facilitate sharing on effective teaching practices. The HKEAA also offers professional development programmes to enhance teachers' capacity to prepare students for the School-based Assessment of the HKDSE English Language Examination. Details of these programmes are disseminated to schools and teachers through the Training Calendar System (<https://tcs.edb.gov.hk/tcs/publicCalendar/start.htm>).

11. Are the senior secondary English Language curriculum and the HKDSE English Language Examination internationally recognised?

In designing the senior secondary English Language curriculum, reference had been made to the requirements and standards of the English Language curricula in other countries. The senior secondary English Language curriculum has also been benchmarked by curriculum and assessment agencies in different countries, such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO), the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). It has been found to be comparable to other senior secondary English Language curricula.

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 English Language. The qualification is recognised as comparable to the UK GCE A-Level. So far, around 300 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/ircountry_hkdse.html

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