

Q&A on Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment Framework
English Language
(Applicable to Secondary 5 and 6 in the 2021/22 school year & Secondary 6 in the 2022/23 school year)

1. Is the senior secondary English Language curriculum too demanding for the less advanced students?

The senior secondary English Language curriculum is designed to cater for a wide range of student abilities. The learning objectives for English Language at the senior secondary level are built on those for KS3.

The Elective Part aims to broaden students' language learning experience and cater for learner diversity. Based on students' diverse needs and interests, schools can choose to offer two to three elective modules with at least one module from both the Language Arts and Non-language Arts groups. For each module, a wide range of learning activities and materials are suggested to cater for students of different abilities and interests.

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) Examination also takes into account the need to cater for a wide student ability range. Apart from the School-based Assessment (SBA) component, the Graded Approach is adopted in the design of both Paper 1 (Reading) and Paper 3 (Listening and Integrated Skills). Both papers consist of two parts. All students must attempt the first part. For the second part, they may choose to answer questions from either the easier or the more difficult section according to their abilities. This design ensures that while there are questions or tasks which less advanced students will be able to handle, there are also questions or tasks that seek to challenge the more advanced students.

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

In designing the senior secondary English Language curriculum, reference was 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

3. How are the Compulsory and Elective Parts related?

The two parts share the same learning objectives and complement each other. The Compulsory Part focuses on the learning and teaching of the four language skills, vocabulary, grammar, communicative functions and text types. Through exploring themes in varied contexts and engaging in purposeful and meaningful activities, students develop adequate English knowledge and skills for communication. The Elective Part aims to broaden students' learning experience through providing a range of modules and contexts for students of different abilities and interests to reinforce and apply the English language skills and knowledge they have acquired in the Compulsory Part. Teachers have the flexibility to work out the best form of integrating the two parts for their students' benefit.

4. 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/elecsg>) when planning the school-based secondary English Language curriculum.

5. 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 *English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6)* (CDC and HKEAA, 2007) (with updates in November 2015) (available at <http://www.edb.gov.hk/elecgc>) 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. As for the Elective Part, teachers may consult the *Suggested Schemes of Work for the Elective Part of the Three-year Senior Secondary English Language Curriculum (Secondary 4-6)* (CDI, 2007) (available at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/curriculum-development/kla/eng-edu/references-resources/resource%20ss.html>) for ideas and offer modules that suit the abilities and interests of their students. 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/elecgc>) to gain insights into strategies to cater for students' different learning styles, needs and abilities.

6. Although the design of the eight questions in Part B of Paper 2 (Writing) in the HKDSE Examination for English Language is based on the elective modules, the content knowledge of these modules is not assessed. Why should students still spend approximately a quarter of their lesson time on the Elective Part?

The Elective Part covers a range of modules which reinforce different aspects of English Language learning. It should not be regarded as a means to only enhance students' writing skills. Instead, the modules help enrich students' learning experience and provide opportunities for them to consolidate and apply the language skills and knowledge which they have acquired in the Compulsory Part. As for the Paper 2 (Writing) of the HKDSE Examination for English Language, the design of the paper is to assess students' writing proficiency rather than the specific knowledge of the elective modules. When delivering the elective modules, teachers are advised to enhance students' writing skills by enriching their learning experiences, and enhancing their understanding of the topics and the features of related text types.

7. Since 2007, school-based assessment has been implemented in the subject of English Language. Why is there still a need to moderate SBA scores through the moderation mechanism? Does it imply that the EDB and the HKEAA regard the scores awarded by teachers as unreliable?

Moderation is a common practice of assessment authorities in different countries. The

HKEAA carries out moderation based on the raw SBA scores submitted by teachers to ensure fairness and consistency of assessment standards across schools.

8. Where can teachers access the information about the HKDSE English Language Examination?

Information about the HKDSE English Language Examination (e.g. Assessment Framework, samples of candidates' performance, level descriptors and other resources) can be accessed on the HKEAA's website:

http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/assessment/subject_information/category_a_subjects/hkdse_subj.html?A1&1&2

The HKEAA also disseminates details about the HKDSE English Language Examination results, including feedback on individual papers with reference to the statistical data, the examiners' comments, the live scripts and the level descriptors at briefing sessions for teachers. The HKDSE Examination papers for this subject, the marking scheme, the report on students' performance and the conversion tables for papers adopting the Graded Approach (i.e. Paper 1 Reading and Paper 3 Listening & Integrated Skills) 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.

9. 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/networking activities to enhance teachers' subject knowledge (e.g. the learning and teaching of grammar) and teaching skills (e.g. strategies for catering for learner diversity), equip them with strategies for curriculum implementation (e.g. effective assessment practices), 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>).