

Optimising Senior Secondary English Language: FAQs on Curriculum and Teaching Arrangements

Lesson Time	
Q1	<p>Is it a must to release 50 hours of lesson time from the existing senior secondary English Language curriculum?</p> <p>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 requiring cross-subject coordination and holistic planning.</p>
Q2	<p>Without any reduction in curriculum content and assessment components, how can schools release lesson time from senior secondary English Language?</p> <p>If it is deemed necessary to reduce the existing lesson time for senior secondary English Language to create space for differentiation measures after deliberations at school and subject levels, 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.</p> <p>It should be noted that under the optimising arrangements, the English learning/lesson time can vary by group/class based on students' needs. Schools can also arrange school-based remedial/enrichment programmes and co-curricular/OLE activities (e.g. drama programme, film appreciation, debate competition) with the time released from optimising four core subjects to enrich students' learning experience and cover some learning elements in the English Language curriculum.</p>
Q3	<p>Will the reduction of lesson time have adverse effects on students' learning and their English standards?</p> <p>A reduction of lesson time does not necessarily lead to a drop in English standards unless the cut in lesson time is significant. In fact, the purpose of optimising the four core subjects together is to allow greater flexibility for</p>

	<p>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.</p>
<p>Q4</p>	<p>What can schools do with the released time? Will there be any guidelines / suggestions on how to allocate the released hours to different options (e.g. elective subjects, ApL courses, English learning programmes and activities)?</p> <p>Schools can use the released time to make arrangements for students to take an extra elective subject / Applied Learning courses / M1 or M2, and to participate in OLE or co-curricular activities. To enhance English learning, schools may consider offering:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 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) <p>The options to be offered and the time allocation are school-based decisions to be made with due consideration to school context and student needs.</p>
<p>The Role of the Elective Part</p>	
<p>Q5</p>	<p>Under the optimising arrangements (e.g. integration of the Elective Part into the Compulsory Part, delinking Part B of the Writing Paper from the elective modules), do schools need to cover all eight elective modules to prepare students for the public examination?</p> <p>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 existing Elective Part to focus on. A balanced coverage of text-types and exposure to a variety of topics are conducive to students' language</p>

	skills development.
Q6	<p>What is the purpose of teaching the elective modules if all the assessment components are delinked from the Elective Part?</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Q7	<p>How to integrate the elements of the Elective Part into the Compulsory Part?</p> <p>Under the optimising arrangements, the Elective Part will be 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 Annex B of EDBCM No. 20/2021 “Optimising the Four Senior Secondary Core Subjects to Create Space for Students and Cater for Learner Diversity: School Questionnaire Survey and School Briefing Sessions” for reference.</p>
Academic Use of English through RaC/LaC	
Q8	<p>How can RaC/LaC be implemented at the senior secondary level? Will there be any support for schools and teachers (e.g. funding, professional development programmes, resource materials)?</p> <p>Depending on school contexts, the implementation of RaC/LaC at the senior secondary level may require the collaboration between English and other subject teachers, or the English teachers taking the lead (in schools with most senior secondary subjects taught in Chinese). Schools are advised to select suitable topics and learning objectives (e.g. essay writing, graph and chart description) as the focus to help students connect the learning in English and</p>

	<p>other subjects, thereby heightening students’ awareness of English commonly used in academic texts they read and/or write in other subjects and facilitating their current and/or further studies.</p> <p>For more information on LaC and RaC, teachers may refer to EDB website and relevant curriculum documents, such as Booklet 2 and Booklet 6B of the <i>Secondary Education Curriculum Guide</i> (2017). The EDB has been providing different support measures, including professional development programmes, Collaborative Research and Development (“Seed”) Projects, school-based support and learning and teaching resources, to facilitate the implementation of LaC and RaC in secondary schools.</p>
Q9	<p>Does promoting academic use of language mean teaching students to write academic essays with citations and bibliography?</p> <p>The promotion of academic use of English seeks to help students connect the learning in English and other subjects, thereby heightening students’ awareness of English commonly used in academic texts they read and/or write in other subjects and facilitating their current and/or further studies. Depending on school contexts, students’ needs and the subjects involved, teachers can identify suitable topics and learning objectives (e.g. essay writing, graph and chart description) to focus on in the LaC and RaC activities to promote the academic use of English. It is not necessary to cover/focus on writing academic essays with citations and bibliography, unless it is deemed an essential skill required for the subject in focus and an area where students need more support.</p>
Implementation	
Q10	<p>Are the optimising arrangements and assessment changes applicable to S4 students in the 2021/22 school year only? Does it mean the current practices at the junior secondary level and S5-6 will remain unchanged?</p> <p>Changes to the HKDSE Examination are proposed for commencement in the 2024 HKDSE Examination (i.e. the S4 students in the 2021/22 school year). The S5-6 students in the 2021/22 school year will not be affected.</p> <p>The optimising arrangements on the release of lesson time for the four senior secondary core subjects to create space for differentiation measures concerns mainly the S4 students in the 2021/22 school year and after. Schools might, if deemed necessary, review their existing curriculum practices at the junior secondary level for better curriculum alignment and interface across key stages.</p>

Applied Learning

Q11 **Is the qualification gained from ApL (VocE) comparable to the levels attained from HKDSE English Language in application for degree / sub-degrees programmes?**

The result in ApL (VocE) is **not** equivalent to any level in the HKDSE English Language Examination, nor can it be used as an alternative qualification for English Language. Same as other ApL subjects, the results of ApL(VocE) are reported in three levels: “Attained”, “Attained with Distinction (I)” and “Attained with Distinction (II)” in the HKDSE.

Tertiary institutions value the learning experience students gain in ApL subjects. Individual programmes may accept ApL subjects as elective subjects in application, award them bonus marks or consider them supplementary information. For sub-degree programmes, students with Level 2 or above in five HKDSE subjects (including Chinese Language and English Language) are eligible to apply for admission to Associate Degree or Higher Diploma programmes. In general, students can use up to two ApL subjects for application but they should visit the websites of individual institutions for details.

Q12 **Do school teachers need to teach ApL(VocE) courses?**

No, ApL courses are provided by course providers and delivered by tutors recognised by course providers irrespective of the modes of implementation.

Q13 **Do students need to pay for the ApL(VocE) courses?**

No, full subsidy is provided for students to take ApL courses to broaden their learning experiences. Each eligible student (i.e. students in aided, government and Direct Subsidy Scheme secondary schools, caput schools and special schools with senior secondary classes following the senior secondary curriculum recommended by the Curriculum Development Council) is entitled to funding for a maximum of TWO ApL courses, excluding ApL (Chinese) for non-Chinese speaking students.

Q14 **Do students need to compete for places for ApL(VocE)?**

There is a maximum capacity for each ApL course but all interested students will be given equal opportunities for selection interviews. Selection is based on

	<p>students' interest in developing English for further studies or career pursuits, their aptitude, as well as their English communication skills. Schools are encouraged to communicate closely with the course providers on the selection criteria and interview arrangements to better prepare their students for the selection interviews.</p>
Q15	<p>Is ApL(VocE) an easier/ lower-level English course for weaker students?</p> <p>ApL (VocE) is a Level 3 certificate programme recognised under the Qualifications Framework (QF). Each module of ApL(VocE) is pegged at either QF Level 2 or 3, which allows students to build confidence and a solid foundation before progressing to next level of learning. The course is designed to address students' diverse interests and needs, providing additional learning opportunities for those who can benefit from a strong practical orientation in English language learning and have an interest in vocational and professional education and training (VPET). Apart from studying the core subject English Language, any senior secondary students who wish to prepare themselves for further studies or career pursuits can consider taking ApL(VocE).</p>
Q16	<p>What is the role of English teachers if students take ApL(VocE)?</p> <p>English teachers play an important role in facilitating the implementation of the course and supporting students during the course. Teachers can offer advice on course selection and enhance students' understanding of course content and study arrangements, so as to help them make informed decisions in course application. In the course of the programme, English teachers are advised to work closely with the course provider to make arrangements for course delivery (for Mode 2) and follow up on students' progress. Teachers' timely support could facilitate students' successful course completion.</p> <p>Teachers may also review the school-based English Language curriculum in view of the design and content of ApL(VocE) and make adjustments where appropriate to avoid repetition and help students connect their learning experiences.</p>