**Assessment Task for Speaking**

**Topic: Smoking and the Law**

This assessment task focuses on developing senior secondary students’ speaking skills.

This set of materials consists of Question Paper and Suggested Answers.

**Speaking Task: Smoking and the Law**

**Part A Group Discussion**

Some of Hong Kong’s laws and policies relating to smoking and tobacco products are given below.

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| * No smoking is allowed in public places including public beaches and parks and transport interchanges. * All advertising of tobacco products is banned. * Cigarettes cannot be sold to anyone under 18. * Cigarette vending machines are not allowed. * There is no duty free allowance for tobacco products for visitors to Hong Kong. * Packets of cigarettes must carry a health warning. * Packets of cigarettes must carry a picture showing a health problem caused by smoking. * Sponsorship of sports events by tobacco companies is not allowed. * Tobacco products are heavily taxed. |

Your group are doing a project on smoking in Hong Kong and discussing these controls.

You may want to talk about:

* the effects of the laws and controls
* whether people obey the rules properly
* whether further government action is needed
* anything else which you think is important

**Part B Individual Response**

1. What would you do if a friend offered you a cigarette?
2. Have you had any experiences of suffering from passive smoking?
3. Why, in your opinion, do people smoke despite knowing it is bad for their health?
4. Should smoking be made illegal in Hong Kong? Should smokers be made to pay for their hospital treatment if they suffer from smoking-related illnesses?
5. Do you think schools do enough to discourage smoking?
6. How serious a problem is smoking in Hong Kong?
7. Are there any bad effects of the laws and policies against smoking?
8. Suggested Ideas for Group Interaction and Individual Response

**End of Question Paper**

**Suggested Ideas for Group Interaction and Individual Response**

**Part A Group Interaction**

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| Effects | * Fewer people are smoking so they seem to be having an effect. * The laws change attitudes- people now feel smoking is anti-social. * High prices must discourage smokers. * The health effects of tobacco use are clearly known. * Advertising cannot be used to make smoking seem glamorous. |
| Whether people obey | * On the whole, yes- probably a few individuals smoke where they shouldn’t, but you do not see people smoking in cinemas, malls, etc. Many people are anti-smoking and will soon complain about law breakers. Peer pressure enforces the rules. |
| Need for further action | * Campaigns must be kept up. Rules which can be tightened should be step by step so that Hong Kong can continue to make progress. * No, we are doing the most we reasonably can. * Smoking should be made illegal in public. |
| Anything else | * How to handle tourists * People’s rights * Air quality in general |

**Part B Individual Response**

1. What would you do if a friend offered you a cigarette?

*I ought to reply that I would refuse and tell my friend all about the harmful effects of smoking and make him or her promise not to smoke again. I suppose that is what a true friend should do to protect the friend from harm. But that isn’t very realistic. Teenage friends don’t talk to each other like teachers to students. If you lecture your friends, you soon won’t have any. I think I’d just pull a face to show I didn’t like the idea at all, or I might say something like, ‘Don’t be crazy. I want to be fit,’ and then change the subject. Of course, if my friend made a fuss and tried to force me to smoke, well, I wouldn’t want him as a friend anymore, but if he doesn’t mind my not smoking, I guess I can ignore his occasional cigarette. The decision is his, or hers.*

1. Have you had any experiences of suffering from passive smoking?

*Yes, hasn’t everyone? Our neighbour is a heavy smoker and we can certainly smell his disgusting cigarettes through the wall and in the corridor. If we can smell it, smoke must be coming through. We have talked about complaining, but there is no rule to stop him smoking in his own flat so we think it would be a waste of time. But it isn’t fair that we have to breathe his toxic smoke. Another example I can think of was a trip to Guangdong – we were visiting some relatives of my father’s and they took us to a restaurant. You could hardly see across the room as so many people were smoking. It was really horrible. I could smell tobacco smoke in my hair even after washing it. There are laws against smoking but it seems in smaller places they don’t pay much attention to them. So even non-smokers must suffer.*

1. Why, in your opinion, do people smoke despite knowing it is bad for their health?

*When people are young they don’t really care about what will happen later. They only think of what they want to do now. It’s hard to imagine yourself as old and ill. I think for many young people smoking is a way of rebelling. Everyone tells them they must not smoke so they do to show they don’t care. In groups like that there is also a lot of peer pressure for everyone to smoke. It’s a way of getting a tough image and showing you are one of the group. I think those are some of the reasons people start to smoke. Some might even think they’ll just smoke once or twice to see what it is like and then stop, but for whatever reason you start you can easily become addicted. Once that has happened, it is of course difficult to give up so even if you want to stop and really understand you are hurting yourself, you go on. It’s sad.*

1. Should smoking be made illegal in Hong Kong?

*It’s easy to see why it should. We are doing well at reducing the numbers of smokers but there are still far too many people harming themselves and creating future problems for the health system. A total ban would make it very difficult for people to go on smoking and the final result would be a big improvement. But I can see some problems. I think criminals would sell cigarettes all over Hong Kong. They aren’t illegal over the border so they are easy to obtain and bring in. And the police have too much to do already without making a big effort to catch smokers in their own homes. You can’t send thousands of people to prison for doing something many people think is okay. And what would we do with tourists? Arresting tourists for doing what they do all the time at home would cause big trouble and could really hurt the tourism industry. I don’t think a ban would be practical.*

1. Should smokers be made to pay for their hospital treatment if they suffer from smoking-related illnesses?

*I have read some doctors say this. I suppose if you do something that everyone tells you will cause you bad health, it’s your fault and you don’t deserve much sympathy, especially when compared to people who have illnesses they did nothing to cause. Treating someone for lung cancer can be very expensive and public resources are limited. But I think there are too many problems with this idea. If we refuse free treatment for smokers with smoking-related diseases, shouldn’t we do the same for people with heart problems who didn’t exercise and ate fatty food? And people in car accidents who drove carelessly? And what do you do about people who smoked in the past but not now? How do you even know what they used to do? It’s a problem but doctors should try to save lives. You cannot send them away because you don’t like their habits.*

1. Do you think schools do enough to discourage smoking?

*Yes, I do. I cannot think of much more they could do. Certainly, that’s true of my school and I think most others are the same. The school campus is a no smoking area so no one at all smokes. There are no bad examples. Every year there is a big no smoking event- maybe a special assembly with an outside speaker or a poster competition, something like that. We hear about the dangers of tobacco use in science, and both our Chinese and English textbooks have passages warning about smoking and talking about peer pressure, bad influences and so on. The school has strict rules about smoking. If anyone is found to have cigarettes in their bag, their parents are called to see the Discipline Mistress. And smoking in school uniform is not allowed- I remember some students getting caught smoking in the street and they were in big trouble. What more can the school do?*

1. How serious a problem is smoking in Hong Kong?

*Well, from one point of view you can say it isn’t very serious. I was proud to read we have one of the lowest smoking rates in the world; in fact it might even be the lowest. We have lots of anti-smoking laws as we saw in Part A. There is a great deal of public education about the dangers of tobacco and many companies try to persuade their employees to give up smoking. Most Hong Kong people do not like smoking and complain if they can smell cigarette smoke. So all this is very positive. On the other hand, however, we do still have a serious problem because there are still lots of smokers as can be seen in the streets outside office buildings, smoking-related illnesses are still common and young people, male and female, take up smoking every day of the year. We are progressing step by step and the situation is improving, but it’s still serious.*

1. Are there any bad effects of the laws and policies against smoking?

*That’s rather a strange idea. Everyone agrees smoking is bad for your health and that smokers may get lung cancer, heart disease and all sorts of other nasty health problems- and that tobacco smoke can harm even non-smokers who have to breathe it in. So the more controls and laws to discourage smoking the better. Some people say the laws restrict freedom but there is no human right of harming other people. High taxes on cigarettes as well as discouraging smoking may encourage smuggling. That’s bad but we have a customs department to try to deal with it. I suppose newspapers and magazines have suffered from the loss of advertising revenue, but the Internet has changed their business anyway. Tobacco arts and sports sponsorship was also a loss, but Hong Kong still seems to have plenty of events. There are just a few minor problems- nothing serious.*

**END OF SUGGESTED ANSWERS**