

FAQs on Applied Learning (Vocational English)

Q1 Why is Applied Learning (Vocational English) [ApL(VocE)] offered in the senior secondary curriculum? What are the features of this Applied Learning (ApL) course?

A1 ApL(VocE) will be offered as an elective subject in the senior secondary curriculum starting from the 2020/21 school year. The course is designed to cater for the different learning needs of students, to provide them with the opportunities to learn practical English, as well as to advance their English communication skills and career-related competencies in simulated applied learning contexts related to work and social situations.

ApL(VocE) is a highly practical course. Through simulated applied learning contexts and a variety of learning activities, for instance, role-play, group discussion, site visits, reading and writing correspondence, etc., students can develop their English proficiency and enhance their confidence and interest in English language learning to prepare themselves for further studies or work.

Similar to most ApL courses registered in the Qualifications Register, ApL(VocE) is also a Level 3 certificate programme recognised under Qualifications Framework (QF). Students will obtain a QF Level 3 certificate issued by the course provider in addition to the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) qualification upon successful completion of the course. Furthermore, each module of ApL(VocE) is pegged at either QF Level 2 or 3. Students will be awarded a QF certificate issued by the course provider upon meeting the assessment and attendance requirements of that particular module.

Q2 Who can take ApL(VocE)?

A2 In addition to studying the senior secondary core subject English Language, students with an interest in vocational and professional education and training (VPET) can consider taking ApL(VocE) as an elective subject at the senior secondary level to prepare themselves for further studies or career pursuits.

Q3 How is ApL(VocE) different from the senior secondary English Language curriculum? Can a student taking ApL(VocE) opt not to study English Language?

A3 The lesson time for ApL(VocE), one of the elective subjects in the senior secondary curriculum, is 180 hours. The subject centres around professional and vocational settings which are used as the applied learning contexts. It provides opportunities for students to develop their English language skills through practice and application, and transfer and

apply such skills in other workplace and daily life scenarios. In this respect, ApL(VocE) is more oriented towards practical application when compared to English Language.

The lesson time for English Language, a core subject in the senior secondary curriculum, is about 310-375 hours of lesson time. Alongside providing students with ample opportunities for enriching the knowledge about language use, it seeks to enhance their learning experience and literacy skills through the Language Arts and Non-Language Arts elective modules. The learning contexts of English Language cover a broad range of themes, including but not limited to individuals and society, cultures around the world, nature and environment, and technology.

On the whole, the curriculum frameworks as well as the learning objectives and outcomes of the two subjects are different. There are inherent differences between the subject requirements (e.g. learning hours, content and assessment modes) of ApL(VocE) and those of English Language. Therefore, a direct comparison between ApL(VocE) and English Language or any equivalence drawn between the two subjects is inappropriate. As such, students taking ApL(VocE) are required to study English Language as well and cannot take the former alone.

Q4 How is ApL(VocE) different from the elective module “Learning English through Workplace Communication” in the senior secondary English Language curriculum?

A4 “Learning English through Workplace Communication” is one of the Non-language Arts Modules in the elective part of the senior secondary English Language curriculum. It aims to cater for the different interests and learning needs of students and enhance their overall English proficiency through facilitating the mastery of grammar and vocabulary and communication skills in varied workplace contexts.

ApL(VocE), on the other hand, uses professional and vocational settings as the applied learning contexts. It provides opportunities for students to develop their English language skills through practice and application, and transfer and apply such skills in other workplace and daily life scenarios, thus laying a good foundation for further studies or work.

Q5 How will the results of students' performance in ApL(VocE) be reported?

A5 Students' assessment results in ApL(VocE) are reported in three levels - "Attained", "Attained with Distinction (I)" and "Attained with Distinction (II)" on the HKDSE certificate. Students with performance below the standard of "Attained", or attendance rates below 80%, will be designated as "Unattained", which will not be reported on the HKDSE certificate.

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. Candidates' results of the first cohort of ApL(VocE) will be reported on the 2023 HKDSE certificates.

Q6 Will the qualification of ApL(VocE) be recognised?

A6 For undergraduate programmes, tertiary institutions value the learning experiences that students acquire in ApL subjects in general. Individual institutions, faculties or programmes may accept ApL subjects as elective subjects in application, award it bonus marks or consider it supplementary information. For other post-secondary programmes, students having achieved 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. Generally speaking, each student is allowed to use up to two ApL subjects (including ApL(VocE)) for application. Please refer to the websites of individual institutions for details.

For civil service appointments, the Civil Service Bureau (CSB) accepts students' results of up to two ApL subjects in HKDSE (including ApL(VocE)). Details are available on the CSB website (www.csb.gov.hk).

July 2020