

# Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2022

## Assessment Report

### Introduction

1. The purpose of this report is to consolidate the Chief Examiners' observations on the performance of candidates who sat the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) in 2022.

### General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment<sup>1</sup> rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 81.2%; Writing 55.0%; Listening 77.7%; Speaking 71.3%; Classroom Language Assessment 95.3%.

### Paper 1 (Reading)

3. The paper comprised three reading passages on different topics.
4. Candidates' performance

#### 4.1 Paper completion

The vast majority of candidates completed the questions for all three reading passages although there were a few questions left blank, possibly reflecting time management issues.

#### 4.2 Appropriateness of responses

Strong candidates identified the material that was relevant to the question being asked. In general, there was relatively little evidence of indiscriminate copying, although where this did happen, the response was often inappropriate and attracted no marks.

#### 4.3 Drawing inferences from the writer's words

Two questions that asked candidates to draw inferences from the writer's words caused problems.

4.3.1 Passage A, Q.17 asked, 'What point is the writer making by citing the examples in lines 54-55?' Only around 36% of candidates provided the required answer: 'The principle applies to any kind of job/work/occupation'. Many candidates gave an answer that was too general, such as 'Everyone should bear the results in mind.' This perhaps shows a misunderstanding of the purpose of exemplification in the text.

4.3.2 Passage C, Q.44 asked, 'What is the writer's purpose in telling us that "ethically mined gems are more accessible than ever" (lines 28-29)?' This proved to be a difficult item with fewer than 15% of candidates able to

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<sup>1</sup> Scoring Level 3 or above in the Reading and Listening papers, and Level 2.5 or above on any one scale and Level 3 or above on all other scales in the Writing, Speaking and Classroom Language Assessment (CLA) papers.

provide the expected response, that the writer wished ‘to show that diamond mining can be ethical’ or ‘lab-made diamonds may not be necessary’. In order to do this, candidates were required to infer from ‘ethically mined gems are more accessible than ever’ that diamond mining could be done in an ethical way that would not require diamonds to be made synthetically, thereby disfranchising mining communities.

#### 4.4 Identification of referents

Candidates generally understood what was required when a question asked for identification of specific information in the passages. However, the following proved to be challenging:

4.4.1 Passage A, Q.6 asked candidates to identify how many groups had been involved in an experiment described in the third paragraph. The correct answer was four groups. Slightly fewer than a quarter of candidates were awarded the point. Most candidates identified just three as they failed to identify the group mentioned as ‘those who continued with the brainstorming task without an incubation period’ as the fourth group. Candidates seemed to have missed the referent ‘those’.

4.4.2 Passage A, Q.13 asked candidates to identify which experiment was being referred to in the quote ‘the laboratory experiment’ in line 45. Around 30% of candidates answered this successfully. Many candidates gave the answer as ‘The experiment carried out by Baird and colleagues’ or the ‘Unusual Uses Task experiment’, when in fact the correct answer was the experiment carried out by Shin and Grant. The word ‘experiment’ is used in the text to describe the Baird research, whereas the term ‘studies’ is used to describe the work of Shin and Grant. It would seem that many candidates simply looked for the incidence of the word ‘experiment’ and were not able to apply a deeper understanding of the content.

4.4.3 Passage C, Q.45 required candidates to identify the referent ‘them’ in the phrase ‘the industry that has basically kept them alive for decades’. Many candidates thought that ‘them’ referred to ‘the mining companies’ when in fact the writer meant ‘the diamond companies’ or ‘the jewellery companies/industry’. They may have understood ‘the industry’ to refer to the diamond industry and ‘them’ to the miners or the mining industry. Previously in the passage, ‘the industry’ referred mainly to the diamond/jewellery companies. The question required more careful reading and only around 21% of candidates were able to do this.

#### 4.5 Understanding figurative language

Performance on questions requiring interpretation of figurative language in Passage A was satisfactory. Candidates were able to interpret the use of expressions such as ‘necessity is the mother of invention’ and ‘a period of incubation’. Passage A, Q.18 asked, ‘What does it mean for a solution to “bubble to the surface”?’ The examiners were looking for an explanation of this expression such as ‘to come up into our conscious mind’, to indicate a slow process of development. Around 42% of candidates were awarded the point. Candidates who failed to interpret the expression wrote answers that suggested a sudden appearance of the solution, inappropriate in the context of the article.

4.6 Grasp of global meaning – reading beyond the sentence level

Candidates generally performed satisfactorily in this area. Passage B, Q.34 asked for the best title for the passage. More than half of candidates chose the correct answer, ‘being students’. Candidates who chose option C, ‘learning from students’ only took into account what the writer had said in the first paragraph, rather than the meaning behind the whole passage.

5. Advice to candidates

5.1 The passages can be tackled in any order and typically vary in length. Candidates may wish to quickly survey the paper to establish a test-taking strategy.

5.2 Candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation for each question as a general indicator to the length or number of points to include in the answer.

5.3 Each question is different and will require a unique response. Candidates are advised to read the questions and the text carefully to investigate any nuances in meaning.

5.4 Similarly, candidates are advised to carefully consider the context of any figurative language (such as ‘bubble to the surface’, in Passage A, Q.18) to select an appropriate meaning.

5.5 Candidates are advised to pay attention to the grammatical structure and spelling of responses, particularly where wrong spellings or grammar usage may have a significant effect on meaning (e.g. single-word answers such as Passage A, Q.5 and Q.12; short phrases such as Passage A, Q.15 and Passage B, Q.23; items testing precise understanding such as Passage B, Q.25).

5.6 In some cases, the best response to a question can be expressed using words or phrases from the passage. If candidates choose to paraphrase the passage, they should make sure that the meaning is as similar as possible to the original. For example, in Passage A, Q.14 a correct response was ‘Design a workplace space that nudges employees to do more walking’. Rephrasing this as ‘Do more walking’ is an incorrect response as the question asks for what the *employers* should do.

5.7 Candidates are advised to enhance their language skills by reading widely across a broad range of genres. Leisure reading in English is particularly fruitful in introducing and reinforcing knowledge of lexis, grammatical structures and nuances in meaning of written English. The benefits of this approach extend across all English skills, receptive and productive, and entail a positive effect on confidence in teachers’ language ability, their teaching, and their students’ learning.

## Paper 2 (Writing)

6. This paper consists of two parts, Part 1: Task 1, Composition, and Part 2: Task 2A Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems, and 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems in a student's composition.

### Part 1: Composition

7. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates were required to write a coherent text using accurate grammar. The task given for the 2022 examination was for candidates to write a speech for an education conference on the topic of 360° evaluation of school teachers. Candidates needed to discuss with reasons the positive and negative impacts of implementing 360° evaluation of school teachers by different stakeholders, including parents and students. The text length was to be about 400 words. To help candidates, some background information about what 360° evaluation is was included in the question. This was meant to help candidates frame their response and to consider various ways through which school teachers can be evaluated. The task not only allowed candidates to demonstrate their English language ability, but to show their understanding of holistic teacher evaluation in the current educational context of accountability. Having said that, this was not a requirement of the test *per se*, as candidates were required to simply write a response from a consistent perspective.
8. Markers noted that the test paper was well designed and gave candidates the opportunity to frame a response around a topic of interest and relevant to their experience as students, teachers and future educators. This year, the given text was relatively shorter. Markers commented that as a result candidates did not copy as much from the text and were more able to express their own ideas. Some weaker candidates, however, focused too much on their own experience of being evaluated as a school teacher without relating it to the argument of the impact of 360° evaluation. This resulted in anecdotal evidence of a personal account irrelevant to the question.
9. Markers commented that many candidates were able to show a good understanding of the genre of a speech at an education conference, with an appropriate opening addressing a relevant audience such as educators, school principals and fellow teachers, and a brief description of 360° evaluation. Candidates were also aware of the need to consider both positive and negative impacts of implementing the 360° evaluation of school teachers by parents and students, rather than only by the school principal and panel head. Some positive impacts included teachers' better understanding of their students' learning needs, gathering diverse feedback from parents of different professions, and strengthening home-school collaboration. Many candidates pointed out extra pressure on teachers as a negative impact, as stated in the given, but stronger candidates were able to identify other issues such as students' and parents' lack of knowledge of the teaching profession, the potential unfairness of students and teachers judging teachers, and the creation of a customer-oriented school culture.
10. Candidates' performance was graded on three scales for Part 1: (1) Organisation and Coherence, (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, and (3) Task Completion. Most candidates completed the task successfully, with many candidates attaining Level 3 or above on scales (1) and (3).

11. The performance on scale (1) Organisation and Coherence was acceptable, with a majority of candidates achieving Level 3 or above. Candidates occasionally focused more on the paragraph level and as a result did not devote enough attention to the sentence-level organisation. Markers noted that some candidates included too many ideas and the writing seemed to be more of a list than a well-thought-out response. This resulted in ideas that were not clearly connected or explained and could be hard to follow. The reverse would also occasionally happen where candidates focused too much on the details and paid less attention to the larger structure of a speech. In these cases, markers commented that while some individual paragraphs were well written, there may have been limited connection between these larger ideas. Candidates would have benefitted from starting with an overall organisation plan so that they could integrate and develop their arguments with appropriate examples and elaboration about the impacts of implementing 360° evaluation. Some weaker answers relied too heavily on a limited number of sentence-initial connectives (e.g., Firstly, Secondly, Moreover, Furthermore etc.), which made their writing appear mechanical and rather formulaic. Stronger candidates used other types of cohesive devices (e.g., lexical chains, pronouns, synonyms, ellipsis, etc.) to organise their ideas in a more natural manner.
12. The performance on scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, was the lowest of the three scales. Markers commented that some weaker candidates attempted to express simple ideas in overly complex sentence structures, resulting in a high density of grammatical errors. Markers reported errors in such areas as: the spelling of reasonably high frequency words, the use of articles, subject-verb agreement and verb patterns. Markers commented that there were examples of candidates obviously proofreading and correcting their text after they had finished writing. In these cases, at least some of the simple grammatical mistakes listed above seemed to have been avoided or eradicated. Markers also commented that the choice of language and the tone adopted was occasionally inappropriate to the task. Most commonly, the tone and choice of lexis was more akin to a formal essay than a speech.
13. The performance on scale (3) Task Completion, was the highest of the three scales. The majority of candidates demonstrated their awareness of the genre and audience and wrote in an appropriate tone and style for a speech. They included both positive and negative impacts of implementing 360° evaluation of school teachers by parents and students. However, some candidates only discussed the evaluation by students and left out the parents' perspective, resulting in incompleteness of the task. Other candidates failed to offer appropriate justification for their views and were unable to extend their arguments with appropriate evidence. For instance, some candidates mentioned why students and parents were good or bad assessors of teachers without stating, explicitly or implicitly, the possible consequences after implementation. Stronger candidates were able to develop nuanced arguments and elaborate on them with specific examples.
14. Several markers observed that some candidates appeared to believe that going beyond task requirements would give them extra credit. Specifically, some went well beyond the 400-word requirement and wrote as many as 700 words, resulting in repeated ideas, unconcise elaboration, and a higher volume of grammatical and lexical errors. Time could have been spent on more careful planning and proofreading.

## Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems

15. Part 2 of the Writing Paper is divided into two parts: Task 2A, Detection and Correction of Errors/Problems and Task 2B, Explanation of Errors/Problems. For Part 2A, candidates are given a student composition that contains errors/problems and are asked to correct those that appear in the first part of the composition. For Part 2B candidates are asked to fill in incomplete explanations of some of the errors/problems in the remainder of the composition. Markers considered the instructions for Part 2 to be clearly stated and felt that the composition contained a balanced and fairly comprehensive range of testing items.
16. Candidates performed strongly overall in Part 2A, but some candidates struggled with the following items:
- 2(iii): This item proved to be problematic for many candidates with only slightly over 26% of candidates being awarded a point. In this item, candidates were tested on their grammatical knowledge of defining and non-defining clauses. Since the descriptive clause ‘I read on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2022’ is supplementary and does not provide necessary identifying information to the noun phrase it modifies (i.e., the article entitled ‘The Pros and Cons of Later School Start Times’), ‘that’ should have been changed to ‘which’ to lead the non-defining clause. Some candidates correctly changed ‘that’ to ‘which’ but wrongly removed the comma before it. It should be noted that commas are needed to separate non-defining clauses from the rest of the sentence, and therefore, in this item, the comma should be kept.
  - 8(i): In this item, candidates were tested on their grammatical knowledge of the lexical verb ‘lack’. In the sentence, ‘we lack of rest’ should have been changed to ‘we lack rest’, ‘we are lacking rest’ or ‘we are in lack of rest’. When ‘lack’ is used as a verb, it should not be followed by a preposition because it is transitive. The preposition ‘of’ is used when ‘lack’ is a noun. Fewer than half the candidates were awarded a point for this item. A number of candidates wrote ‘we are lacking in rest’. ‘To be lacking in something’ means ‘to not have a quality’, and ‘rest’ is not considered a kind of quality in the text.
  - 11(ii): In this item, candidates should have changed the word ‘adolescence’ to ‘adolescents’. Many candidates missed this point (less than 38% were awarded the point) possibly because ‘adolescence’ and ‘adolescents’ sound extremely similar. ‘Adolescence’ refers to the period between the onset of puberty and adulthood in human development, while ‘adolescents’ are young people going through this period. In the text, the idea of people instead of a period fits the context.
17. In Task 2B, candidates were given incomplete explanations of errors/problems. Candidates were asked to fill in the blanks with one or more words so as to make the explanations complete. Many candidates did this successfully, but below are some examples of common problems in Task 2B:
- 14(iv): Many candidates were seemingly unaware that ‘opposed’ is an adjective when it is followed by the preposition ‘to’, meaning ‘against’ or ‘opposite’. Some candidates wrongly identified it as a verb. However, when ‘oppose’ is used as a verb, it is not followed by a preposition. Other candidates identified it as a ‘past participle’.

However, a past participle can be used as either a verb or an adjective and so this was considered not to be specific enough to merit a point. Only slightly over 27% of candidates were awarded a point for this item.

- 15(i): This item was an open-ended item, in which candidates were expected to provide a clear explanation as regards the omission of ‘to’ after ‘let’. Only around 43% of candidates achieved this. Many candidates failed to use a proper linguistic term or meta-language such as ‘bare infinitive’ or ‘to-infinitive’ to form a complete explanation ‘a bare infinitive should be used after the verb “let” or “let” should not be followed by a to-infinitive’, and therefore were not awarded the point.
  - 17(ii): This is another open-ended item, in which candidates were expected to explain how a passive construction works in a sentence. Again, fewer than half of candidates were awarded a point. The item requires candidates to use linguistic terms such as ‘patient’, ‘goal’, ‘receiver’ or ‘recipient’ to describe the subject ‘the school hours’. Alternatively, candidates could have stated that the ‘school hours’ is not an ‘actor’, ‘doer’ or ‘agent’. Candidates who simply wrote something like ‘the school hours is the subject or object’ without using the appropriate linguistic terminology or meta-language were not awarded the point.
18. Candidates are reminded to check the spelling in their responses very carefully and to review their answers to make sure they are logical and grammatically correct. It is crucial that appropriate meta-language/terminology is used. Candidates are also reminded to demonstrate their understanding of the linguistic problems with complete linguistic terms and not abbreviations.

### **Paper 3 (Listening)**

19. This year’s paper consisted of three different listening texts. The first text was an interview with a Paralympic athlete; the second was a three-speaker podcast about creativity; the third was a talk delivered by a museum guide about the electric telegraph. There was a balance of male and female speakers in the test speaking at a normal to occasionally slower speed for the type of interaction involved.
20. The Moderation Committee selected the texts on the basis of them being culturally and linguistically accessible to candidates. The subject matter and content of the texts was deemed to be relevant and of interest to school teachers in Hong Kong, while also being appropriate for determining candidates’ ability to listen to and process different text types. The questions were designed to require careful listening rather than reliance on prior knowledge.
21. Markers commented that alternative answers were thoroughly discussed during the markers’ meeting and that the marking scheme was unambiguous and ‘easy to interpret and use’. They also felt that the paper was not too challenging and effectively discriminated the candidates’ listening ability through a balanced range of questions types and listening texts.
22. A range of items was included in the paper to test language comprehension and the ability to process information in a spoken text. The item types allowed for testing of a variety of listening skills including listening for gist, stance, main ideas and specific details. The

question types included gap-filling, table and diagram completion, sequencing of a narrative, multiple choice and open-ended short answers. One item featured in this year's paper asked candidates to summarise a more extended listening text which required candidates to listen carefully before writing down what they thought was the main idea.

23. Overall, the difficulty level of the paper was acceptable. The items in Part 1 proved to be relatively easier compared to Parts 2 and 3, with 10 items in Part 1 answered correctly by 80% or more of candidates. Candidates' familiarity with the topic (the Olympic Games took place less than a year ago) and a slower speech rate may account for the higher mean score in Part 1.

23.1 The most challenging item in Part 1 was Q.7(iv) with slightly under 35% of candidates responding correctly. Candidates were asked to complete the answer to the question, 'How do (visually impaired goalball) players know the ball is moving?' Compared to the other answers in the table, candidates were required to provide a longer answer, e.g. 'the ball has bells and players have to listen for certain sounds.' Most candidates failed to include the entirety of the answer.

23.2 The most challenging item in the paper proved to be Q.26(iii), with less than 20% of the candidature responding correctly. This item was part of a task where candidates were required to complete some notes about successful work habits of employees at Apple Inc. To be awarded a mark, the idea of 'open competition' had to be included in the answers. Many candidates wrote 'competition' only but this was judged not to be specific enough.

23.3 Another challenging item was Q.33(ii) with less than a quarter of the cohort answering it correctly. The item involved labelling a diagram which showed the cross-section of an undersea telegraph cable wrapped in different layers of materials. Two of the materials (rubber and tarred fabric) were given, while candidates had to listen for 'copper' and 'brass tape' and label the diagram correctly. Over 55% of candidates were able to correctly label the core (i.e. 'copper') but less than 25% could correctly complete the label for brass tape. Some candidates wrote 'iron', which acted as a distractor for this item, or failed to write anything.

23.4 Overall, most of the questions were fairly easy or acceptable in terms of difficulty and allowed candidates the chance to demonstrate their ability to listen to and understand spoken texts that are appropriate for an English teacher in Hong Kong.

24. Advice to candidates

24.1 Candidates should always read through the questions carefully to understand what is required of them. For example, Q.31(i) and (ii) asked, 'What two problems with railway management did the telegraph solve?' Candidates were expected to identify two solutions to railway management. Vague answers such as 'train travel' or 'schedule' were not accepted.

24.2 For some questions which require candidates listening to a longer stretch of listening text, candidates may want to take down some notes before writing down their answers. For example, in Q.24(i-ii), the question asks candidates to identify two ways in which schools could promote creativity. Some candidates considered



‘taking risks’ and ‘making errors’ as two different ways to promote creativity. However, in the context of the listening passage, making errors is expounded as a kind of risk-taking and therefore should not be considered as a separate means to promote creativity.

- 24.3 When completing open-ended questions, candidates need to reflect on whether they have provided a complete answer. Providing partial answers and omitting key words can result in no marks being given. For example, Q.18 (i) asks candidates to summarise the creative process of the sculptor Michelangelo. A complete answer would be ‘cutting away the surplus until the form appears’, whereas partial answers such as ‘released the form’ were not accepted.
- 24.4 When considering how much to write, candidates can consider the space provided for the answer. In the case of Q.18(i) and (ii) where candidates were required to summarise the artists’ creative process, several lines were given for candidates to write, which suggests more than a few words would be expected.
- 24.5 Candidates should also consider presenting their answers as coherently as possible. For example, an answer for Q.22 such as ‘time passes but people continue to work unstopped’ would be considered unclear in terms of communicating a message and therefore no marks would be awarded.
- 24.6 Candidates are reminded to proofread their answers carefully. Poor spelling may result in candidates not being awarded the point for an item. In particular, marks will not be given if the spelling of a word changes its meaning, e.g. candidates writing ‘divide’ rather than ‘divine’ for Q.19(i) were not awarded a point.
- 24.7 In order to improve their listening skills, candidates are advised to listen to a range of good-quality spoken texts in English on a regular basis, which cover a variety of genres and accents. This exposure will improve their sensitivity to English as it is spoken in different contexts.

#### **Paper 4 (Speaking)**

25. Paper 4 consists of two parts. In Part 1 there are two tasks: Task 1A: Reading Aloud and Task 1B: Recounting an Experience / Presenting an Argument. There is one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.

#### ***Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud***

26. The two scales for this task are scale (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and scale (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. The passages selected included a range of lexis and sentence structures, allowing the accuracy and clarity of pronunciation of individual sounds (vowels, consonants, consonant clusters, etc.), word stress, phrasal stress as well as stress and intonation over stretches of text to be assessed reliably. The passages also allowed candidates to demonstrate their ability to read with meaning through employing pitch and tone, varying speed, breaking text into appropriate ‘thought groups’ as well as employing appropriate pausing to communicate mood.
27. Of all the tasks candidates were required to undertake, Task 1A, Reading Aloud was

where candidates' performance appeared to be weakest in terms of scale (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and scale (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. A number of candidates showed some level of understanding of the text whilst having an awareness of an audience. This was often exhibited in the manipulation of speed and pausing along with stress, rhythm and intonation. On the whole, most candidates were able to identify the overall mood of the text and to communicate this through their manipulation of intonation, tone, speed and pausing. Candidates were able to communicate the differences between narration and dialogue particularly well. Some candidates were able to demonstrate the ability to sustain a high level of proficiency in terms of their pronunciation, stress and intonation.

28. Candidates who demonstrated a stronger performance in Task 1A were able to show a very high level of sensitivity to the text. They were able to move beyond simply differentiating between narration and dialogue in the text and were able to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the mood of the text. In addition, these candidates demonstrated an understanding of the characters' attitudes in the text and were able to express more subtle, nuanced meaning by effectively manipulating speed, volume, pitch and tone. These candidates were also able to express a connection between elements within a sentence and across longer stretches of the text between sentences and paragraphs.
29. Candidates who were less successful often had problems in accuracy and appropriateness and often had difficulties articulating individual phonemes. Common examples of these issues were problems distinguishing between long and short vowel sounds, omission of final consonant sounds, as well as problems with pronunciation of consonant clusters.
30. In relation to those candidates who were less able in their performance of Task 1A, pronunciation features including word and sentence stress, rhythm and connected speech were often negatively impacted by an inappropriate pace; either a slow laboured delivery or a rushed delivery. A slow reading of the text often failed to communicate effectively due to the disruption of thought groups and consequently the candidate was unable to express the mood of the text. A rushed delivery often presented the text as an overly dramatic rendition inappropriate to the mood of the text and the characters.
31. To help candidates prepare for Task 1A, they are recommended to practise reading a text for the meaning, mood and attitudes of the characters. To do this, candidates are recommended to practise reading the text aloud hoping to achieve a naturalness in terms of pace, rhythm, pitch and intonation. Listening to good models of reading aloud may help candidates understand how to read clues within the text such as punctuation, referencing and word choices. With regard to pronunciation issues, candidates are recommended to develop an awareness of their own weaknesses paying attention to some of those common issues highlighted above, i.e. problems distinguishing between long and short vowel sounds, omission of final consonant sounds, as well as problems with pronunciation of consonant clusters. In addition, candidates are recommended to avoid over-articulating every sound and instead to consider those features of connected speech that will improve the pace and fluency.

### ***Part 1: Task 1B Recounting an Experience / Presenting an Argument***

32. The two scales used to evaluate a candidate's performance are scale (3) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, and scale (4) Organisation and Cohesion. The scales assess candidates' ability to organise ideas and demonstrate their lexico-grammatical range and

accuracy in spontaneous or semi-spontaneous spoken English. Candidates can choose to present their response to the task in a conversational, informal discourse or as a more formal style with a clear introduction and conclusion with more explicit signposting throughout. Both approaches are acceptable as long as the argument presented was coherent and the relationships between ideas were clear.

33. In Task 1B, candidates seemed to perform relatively well on both of the scales of assessment. Candidates predominantly chose to deliver a more formal style of response to this task incorporating clear structural signposting identifying both an introduction and conclusion along with more formulaic signposting with the main ideas put forward.
34. Candidates who demonstrated a stronger level of performance in Task 1B were able to structure their responses with less overt, formulaic signposting and were able to access a wider range of cohesive devices to help the listener navigate the views and opinions presented. Additionally, they were able to incorporate a wider range of strategies to help the listener follow the flow of the discourse. This often included building an argument by referring to and adding to previous statements ('similarly', 'at the same time', 'apart from that') linking different stages of the discourse together, developing lexical chains, using parallel structures and employing ellipsis. This also involved referring to and adding to their previous statements in order to develop support for their propositions ('likewise', 'even so', 'albeit', 'meanwhile').
35. Candidates who were less able in their performance of Task 1B seemed to be as a result of two key issues. Firstly, there was a lack of development of ideas resulting from either producing an extremely short response or responses marked with a lack of relevant ideas with which to build and develop an argument in support of their opinions / propositions. The second issue for weaker-level candidates was that they often produced incoherent discourse resulting in confusion for the listener / examiner.
36. Stronger candidates' performances were produced from prepared notes (in bullet point form or note form) where candidates had ideas and a general outline of the organisation of their ideas. In contrast, weaker candidates' arguments were limited in development as a consequence of relying on a rather restricted range of connectives. For example, there would be a reliance of simple connectives such as 'and', 'so' and 'then'. In addition, the language used by stronger candidates was spontaneously produced in the assessment. They called upon a wider range of more precise lexis and wider range of grammatical structures including perfect and continuous tenses, appropriate use of active and passive voice, appropriate use of modal verbs as well as more complex clauses such as embedded clauses to express their own opinions and attitudes.
37. In terms of grammatical and lexical range and accuracy, weaker candidates exhibited a somewhat limited range of vocabulary to express their ideas resulting in a lack of precision as well as lacking an ability to successfully paraphrase any gaps in their lexicon. Grammatical structures contained errors in both simple and more complex structures, with attempts at more complex structures either limited or marked with greater inaccuracies.
38. In contrast, those more successful candidates were able to access a wider range of lexis to add greater precision to their ideas. In addition to this, their performance was marked by a wider range of grammatical structures with a greater degree of accuracy incorporating features such as more complex verb phrases; embedded clauses and modal

verbs to develop their ideas related to the theme / topic as well as to express more complex ideas and their attitudes towards the theme / topic.

39. Candidates are reminded that Task 1B is designed to elicit language that is to a large extent spontaneous (or semi-spontaneous). This cannot really be achieved when candidates read from a pre-prepared 'script'.
40. To help candidates to prepare for Task 1B, candidates should consider the complexity of arguments and counter-arguments and avoid just listing out points. Arguments should be expanded on and should be expressed through a range of grammatical structures and linking devices.

### ***Part 2: Group Interaction***

41. The two scales for Part 2 are scale (5) Interacting with Peers and scale (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers.
42. Less successful candidates in Part 2 often produced more limited contributions to the discussion in terms of development of ideas and opinions, both their own and others', as well as limited frequency of contributions. Some less successful candidates provided ideas and suggestions that were 'off-topic' or had little bearing on the flow of the discussion. These performances were exemplified by two important factors: 1) a lack of ability to effectively develop or build on the ideas of others in the group, and 2) a lack of understanding that expanding or engaging with ideas presented from another candidate is also considered contributions to the discussion. In terms of the first factor, those weaker candidates seemed to lack active listening skills and the conversational skills required to be able to interact effectively with the other group members. Such candidates were often unable to ask appropriate follow-up questions or offer any commentary on others' ideas. For the second factor, these weaker candidates may have felt that they would only be considered to be contributing if they added their own ideas. The overall impression of the weaker candidates was a general lack of engagement and confidence with the topic.
43. Such a lack of engagement was often characterised by sequential turn-taking where points were made without the candidate taking on board the ideas of the other group members. In these discussions, there was little collaborative professional exchange or 'genuine' interaction. This involved a more limited range of discussion functions. This had an impact on the flow and development of the conversation, with contributions from candidates often either not related to each other or only superficially acknowledged (e.g. just stating 'I agree' before moving on to a different issue). This had the effect of appearing mechanical and superficial.
44. Candidates who were more successful in their performance demonstrated a more engaged and meaningful exchange. This would involve a wider range of 'discourse moves' such as making claims and suggestions; asking for and constructively exploring the views of others; facilitating collaboration by accepting and conceding others' views; and demonstrating an ability to keep the discussion focused and on-track.
45. In terms of Discussing Educational Matters with Peers, stronger candidates were able to draw on their understanding of (language) learning and teaching, as well as a level of professional reflection and insight in order to ensure that discussions were meaningful and focused on practical outcomes. This was demonstrated by a familiarity with and an

understanding of more precise lexis related to the education-related, school-based issues, plans or projects under discussion. This resulted in candidates contributing ideas but more importantly justifying those ideas with relevant pedagogical reasoning.

46. To help candidates prepare for Part 2, they are encouraged to participate in meaningful professional exchange and dialogue by discussing learning and teaching issues with their colleagues as well as reflecting on their own learning and teaching experience and knowledge.
47. Candidates should be mindful of more natural features of collaborative interaction and the range of functional language needed in order to be comfortable producing these discourse moves in Part 2 of the assessment. Candidates are advised to avoid producing extremely lengthy ‘monologues’. During the assessment, candidates are advised to listen closely to the other group members’ ideas and to engage with those ideas firstly before incorporating them into their own contributions. Candidates should not be afraid to revisit ideas expressed earlier in the discussion if it is useful to do so and candidates are encouraged to seek clarification from group members should any points raised be unclear.

### **Paper 5 (Classroom Language Assessment)<sup>2</sup>**

48. A total of 380 candidates were assessed between November 2021 and August 2022, with 95.3% of candidates attaining Level 3 or above. Candidates were graded on four scales of performance: (1) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range; (2) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation; (3) Language of Interaction and (4) Language of Instruction. Comments on candidates’ performance on each of the four scales are given below.
49. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range
  - 49.1 Candidates, on the whole, demonstrated an acceptable to good range of grammatical structures and lexical choice necessary for maintaining effective communication in the classroom discourse. The majority of candidates were able to articulate simple and compound sentences accurately. However, when more complex language was attempted, some errors which did not impede the overall communication were spotted. Candidates were often natural and spontaneous in their speech, and some managed to paraphrase their ideas wherever appropriate.
  - 49.2 Stronger candidates were capable of employing a wider spectrum of complex sentence structures accurately (e.g. conditional sentences, adverbial clauses and indirect questions) and of self-correcting their slips promptly and effectively when needed. Those who performed less well, however, used mostly simple sentences in their delivery. Some typical grammatical mistakes included the incorrect use of tenses, subject-verb agreement and indirect speech.
  - 49.3 Candidates exhibited a sufficient vocabulary to make their meaning clear and precise. More competent candidates were able to manifest a wider lexis for communicating meaning. On the other hand, the range of vocabulary was limited among the weakest candidates, as reflected in their heavy reliance on the words and phrases from their prepared lesson materials or the textbooks.

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<sup>2</sup> Administered by the Education Bureau, which contributed this section of the Assessment Report.

## 50. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation

- 50.1 The performance on this scale was the best of the four scales. Most candidates demonstrated an ability to speak fluently with good pronunciation. They spoke in a generally comprehensible way despite errors in the articulation of vowel and consonant sounds at times; their syllable and sentence stress were acceptable and the intonation was appropriate for conveying the intended meaning.
- 50.2 While pronunciation errors were not frequent, some typical pronunciation issues were identified. Greater attention should be paid to the problems related to the omission of final consonant sounds (e.g. /k/ as in 'desk' and 'park', /t/ as in 'paint' and 'worksheet') as well as mispronunciation of consonant clusters (e.g. /kl/ as in 'club', /pl/ as in 'play') and past tense markers (e.g. 'finished', 'wanted'). Less successful candidates often had difficulty uttering the long vowel sounds with appropriate length (e.g. /i:/ as in 'feeling' and 'seat').
- 50.3 In terms of stress and intonation, the speech of candidates who demonstrated commendable performance was characterised by a near-native fluency alongside natural-sounding sentence stress and intonation patterns. Some weaker candidates had problems articulating linking sounds appropriately, hindering the fluency of their speech; some, affected by first language interference, tended to stress every word in a sentence and to consign the emphatic words to obscurity, instead of using sentence stress and weak forms to communicate meaning.

## 51. Language of Interaction

- 51.1 Candidates, in general, manifested a good ability to interact with students naturally. They were able to elicit responses from students as well as use prompts and cues to help students elaborate their answers. Smooth interaction was apparent in most lessons. Strong candidates showcased a high level of spontaneity in their speech. They managed to vary their questions and give specific feedback highlighting students' strengths and areas for improvement. They also demonstrated ample paraphrasing and reformulating of students' language in a timely manner for enhancing clarity and understanding.
- 51.2 The use of a restricted range of functional language remained a common problem among less competent candidates. For instance, questions employed were often confined to display questions that elicited brief and close-ended responses. Perfunctory feedback such as 'very good' and 'good job' was unduly given most of the time. In some cases, candidates were unable to respond spontaneously to students' answers, especially when the answers were unexpected. As a result, students' responses were not fully addressed and, in some cases, what would otherwise have been a more extended dialogue was prematurely brought to an end.

## 52. Language of Instruction

- 52.1 Many candidates were able to make use of appropriate signalling devices for a coherent flow of the lesson. Their explanations, through the use of guided questions and examples, were generally clear, and instructions to language tasks well understood by students. Good performance was marked by the precise use of

language involving effective questioning and paraphrasing for scaffolding, consolidation as well as extended explanation of the target language items.

- 52.2 Weaker candidates displayed a lack of confidence and proficiency in delivering a sustained and coherent discourse spontaneously. In some of these lessons, instructional language was restricted to the prepared notes on the PowerPoint slides. An overuse of words like ‘okay’ and ‘actually’ to connect ideas was discernible at times. Some candidates failed to paraphrase or clarify their ideas even when students showed signs of misunderstanding, and thus breakdowns in communication remained unresolved.