

# Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers (English Language) 2012

## 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 2012.

### General Observations

2. Candidates achieved different proficiency attainment<sup>1</sup> rates in different papers. The approximate attainment rates for individual papers were: Reading 88%; Writing 37%; Listening 83%; Speaking 50%; Classroom Language Assessment 95%.

### Paper 1: Reading

3. The paper comprised three reading passages, with a number of multiple choice items included amongst the questions for each passage.

4. Candidates' performance:

- 4.1 Paper completion

Most candidates completed the questions for all three reading passages; however there were a number of cases of questions being left blank. In a few cases, no attempt had been made to answer any of the questions for a particular passage, suggesting that those candidates may have run out of time to complete the paper.

- 4.2 Understanding what the questions were asking and therefore what was required in a response

- 4.2.1 In Passage A, Question 1 asked for 'The result of *what?*' Candidates needed to respond with the action that led to the result, e.g. 'typing...', 'entering...'. The response 'dresses' would suggest a lack of awareness that 'results' cannot be achieved by 'dresses' but by the action of entering the word 'dresses'.

- 4.2.2 In Passage A, Question 7 'What *phrase* suggests that...' the majority of candidates recognised the need to identify a specific phrase. Candidates who copied out the whole sentence, including the phrase, were not awarded the mark.

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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.

- 4.2.3 In Passage A, Question 19 asked ‘*Who* regulates...’. Candidates who responded correctly identified Google as the company doing the regulating. The incorrect response ‘Google guidelines’ suggested that some candidates had misread ‘Who’ as ‘What’.
- 4.2.4 In Passage B, Question 30 asked ‘How did the writer *feel* about meeting the family?’ The majority of candidates correctly identified the question as asking about the writer’s feelings. A few candidates responded as if the question had asked about the writer’s thoughts.
- 4.2.5 In Passage C, Question 45 asked ‘What would those *results* be?’ Correct responses identified the results as the foundation for, or as helping to lay the foundation for, greater success, or greater success itself. Responses that spoke of the parents’ beliefs were incorrect because those beliefs were not the results of the learning sessions in which the children had been enrolled.
- 4.2.6 In Passage C, Question 53 asked ‘What actions *has* Nini’s family *taken*...’. Many candidates recognised that ‘actions’ are different from ‘plans’ and answered correctly that they had enrolled her in the early education class (at Combaby) and had booked a place at another centre to learn English. The plan to enroll her in piano and calligraphy classes was only a plan on which they had not yet acted and was therefore not a correct response to the question.

4.3 Identification of referents  
Overall, candidates performed well on questions asking for references to information in the passages; for example in Passage B, Question 32 and Passage C, Question 48. Passage A, Question 17 was less well-handled, with some candidates wrongly identifying ‘fingerprints’ as the referent.

4.4 Recognition of meaning indicated in the structure/grammar of the questions  
Candidates’ responses generally indicated that they had understood the structure of the question. Questions which were less well-tackled included the following:

- 4.4.1 In Passage A, Question 9 (‘In drawing... what does Google *nonetheless* allow?’), candidates who answered correctly recognised that *nonetheless* signalled that Google was making a distinction between deceptive ‘black hat’ services and legitimate, allowable ‘white hat’ approaches.

- 4.4.2 In Passage A, Question 10 ('...would *know better*'. *Than to do what?*'), the expression signals that the action which comes next will be wrong or have negative consequences – for example 'You should know better than to talk to your teacher so disrespectfully'. Candidates who answered this question correctly identified that a company with a reputation as strong as Penney's should not (i.e. should *know better than to*) use 'black hat' methods or game the results of an internet search.
- 4.5 Grasp of global meaning: reading beyond the sentence level  
The majority of candidates gave correct responses to multiple choice questions 39 in Passage B and 54 in Passage C, indicating their ability to derive overall meaning from a passage.
- 4.6 Appropriateness of responses  
Strong performers identified, either in parts of the passage or in their own words, the material that was relevant to the question being asked. Overall, there was relatively little evidence of indiscriminate copying, although where this did take place the response was often inappropriate and attracted no marks.
5. Advice to candidates:
- In general:
- 5.1 Plan, monitor and use your time carefully so that you can respond to all questions. Note that the length of passages and the number of questions for each will vary. Remember that you may tackle the passages in any order; start where you feel most confident and aim to work reasonably quickly so that you have time to review any questions where you are least certain of your responses.
- 5.2 Read a passage quickly first, noting the title and getting a sense of the writer's point of view. Skim read the questions to check on what you have already understood in your first reading of the passage.
- 5.3 Pay attention to how ideas are constructed in a passage. Sometimes you may need to read back and forth to build your understanding.
- 5.4 Be aware that your first answer to a question is the one which will be marked; there is little point in copying out a list of items or answers in the hope that one of these will attract a mark.
- 5.5 Be aware that if more than one mark is awarded to a question you may need to provide more than one point in your answer.
- 5.6 Read each question carefully to ensure that you identify what is being asked.

- 5.7 Check the next question to the one you are answering to help you differentiate between questions and ensure that each answer is relevant to a specific question.
- 5.8 When responding to a question about the *meaning* of something in a passage, make sure that you take into account the *context* of the passage. The paper does not test vocabulary or meaning without reference to the context.
- 5.9 Remember that each question is looking for specific information which must be clearly identified in your response. Marks cannot be awarded when a long piece of text has been copied which may include the answer to the question but does not identify it clearly. For example, when a question asks for the identification of an expression, specific word, phrase or metaphor/simile, include only that information as the response.
- 5.10 Pay attention to the grammatical structure of your responses. While errors in grammatical structure are not taken into account in the mark scheme, you should recognise that markers cannot give credit to responses that are not intelligible or to mis-spellings where they create a different word from that you wish to use.
- 5.11 If the best response to a question is contained in words from the passage, use those words. If you choose to use your own words, check that you have expressed your meaning clearly so that the marker can understand your answer.
- 5.12 Enhance your reading skills by reading on a regular basis. Choose first to read what you enjoy and then expand the range of your reading both within and outside of your professional field. In doing so you will broaden your comprehension of lexis and meaning and thus your appreciation and understanding of the structural and literary nuances of written English. That appreciation and understanding can, in turn, positively inform your teaching and your students' learning.

## **Paper 2 (Writing)**

6. This paper consists of two parts, Part 1: Task 1, Composition, and Part 2: Tasks 2A and 2B, Correcting and Explaining Errors/Problems in a Student's Composition.

### ***Part 1: Composition***

7. In Part 1 of the paper, candidates are required to write a text. The 2012 task was to write a letter to the Editor responding to an article about graffiti. Candidates were asked to write to the Editor giving their opinion 'on whether graffiti should be promoted in Hong Kong' and 'whether it should be included in the visual arts curriculum'. The topic of graffiti is a social

issue that was accessible to all candidates and the background information provided in the given text was helpful and informative for those who may not have had any prior knowledge of the topic. The writing task gave candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their English language ability.

8. Candidates' performance is 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 but some candidates performed less well, particularly on scales (2) and (3).
9. For scale (2) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range, it was common for scripts to contain expressions which were inappropriate to the formal context of a letter to the Editor. Spelling was also a problem and sometimes impeded understanding. Candidates are reminded to practice writing compositions for this paper without the help of a computer. Grammatical problems were also identified, some of which were intrusive and impeded understanding. Below are some common problem areas:
  - Subject-verb disagreement, e.g. "Different types of graffiti is attractive to tourists"; "Hong Kong people is creative".
  - Limited or repetitive use of vocabulary.
  - Overuse of clichés, such as "a coin has two sides".
  - Some misuse of cohesive devices. Candidates are reminded that cohesion and coherence are achieved not simply by inserting one or two lexical connectives, such as "moreover" or "besides", but by making sure that the ideas themselves follow on from each other clearly and logically.
10. Some markers felt that candidates wrote too much and that this had a negative impact on organisation and cohesion, and sometimes on comprehensibility. Candidates are reminded that they should write about 400 words and that they should refer to the information provided but not copy sections of the text indiscriminately.
11. For scale (3) Task Completion, markers found that some candidates had not written a letter to the Editor, instead writing a standard argumentative essay. The letter was sometimes inappropriately structured, with a few candidates giving support to both sides of the argument. Candidates are reminded that audience awareness and understanding of genre type are being tested in this task. At times, candidates were unable to support their opinions with clear examples or illustrations.
12. Candidates did not always provide a balance between giving their opinions on whether graffiti should be promoted in Hong Kong and whether it should be included in the visual arts curriculum. In particular, some candidates did not give enough detail on the latter and simply stated that it should be included in the curriculum without any attempt at elaboration or explanation.

13. There was sometimes minimal/insufficient evidence given to support candidates' opinions and views. Markers felt that there was a lack of depth in some answers, and that candidates should try to demonstrate that they had thought seriously about the topic.
14. Candidates are reminded to follow the instructions, write within the word limit, not write in the margins and to ensure that their writing is legible.

***Part 2: Correcting and explaining errors/problems***

15. Part 2 of the Writing Paper is divided into two parts: Task A, correcting errors/problems and Task B, explaining errors/problems. Candidates were given a composition that contained errors/problems and were asked to correct those that appeared in the first part of the composition for Part 2A of the Writing paper, and to fill in incomplete explanations of some of the errors/problems in the remainder of the composition in Task 2B.
16. Markers felt that the instructions for Part 2 were clearly stated and that the composition contained a balanced and comprehensive range of testing items.
17. All the items in Task 2A discriminated successfully between better and worse candidates. The following items were done particularly well and were answered correctly by more than 80% of candidates: (5b), (9), (11), (12), (13) and (14). The final item (16) was answered correctly by more than 90% of candidates.
18. The weakest items were the following:
  - Item 7a: "Every time when". Candidates had to recognise that 'when' is redundant.
  - Item 6a: "What must go through". This is a complex construction which tests candidates' understanding of modality and aspect.
  - Item 2: "has raised". Candidates needed to distinguish between different forms of the verb 'to rise' in order to correct this item.
  - Item 5a: "we grief". Many candidates seemed to recognise that a verb is needed here, rather than a noun. The spelling of the verb proved to be problematic, however.
19. Candidates should note that the 2A composition contains specific errors which need to be corrected in specific ways. No marks are awarded to answers which simply re-write phrases or clauses, only to those in which the specific error has been corrected. This is the case even where the re-written part is grammatically correct. This policy needs to be applied to ensure that candidates can correct specific errors, not simply work around them by paraphrasing.
20. 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. Some problems in 2B

answers were:

- Incorrect spelling of some key terms, e.g. “conjunction”, “interrogative”.
  - Missing meta-language, such as “verb form” (17b), “relative pronoun” (19b) and “singular subject” (21c).
21. A problematic item was (19c), which required candidates to explain why the relative pronoun ‘who’ should be inserted after the noun ‘parents’. Fewer than half the candidates explained that the relative pronoun ‘who’ functions as the subject in the relative clause.
  22. Candidates are reminded to check their spelling and to review their answers to make sure they are logical and grammatically correct, and that appropriate terminology has been used. Candidates are reminded that they should not use abbreviations and short forms (such as prep., adj., vb.) in answering Task 2B. They are advised to demonstrate their understanding of the linguistic problems with full spellings of words and terms.

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

23. This year’s paper consisted of three sets of items on three different listening texts. The first text was a radio interview on the topic of the use of CCTV in schools; the second was a talk-show with a host and three guests discussing how a cultural hub might be developed in the city; the third was an interview with a man who spent five years living in a simple cottage in a remote part of Wales. There were male and female speakers in the test, with a variety of accents, speaking at normal speed for the type of interaction.
24. As usual, the paper went through a rigorous moderation and pre-testing process. The Moderation Committee considered the content of the three texts to be appropriate, allowing for interesting listening and for setting meaningful questions of varied types. Markers expressed satisfaction with the marking schemes and processes.
25. A variety of task types were included in the paper, which allowed for a range of micro-listening skills to be tested, focusing both on gist and intensive listening. The paper included blank-filling, table-completion, multiple choice and open-ended questions. There was no evidence that any of these formats was generally more difficult or easier than others for candidates. Although (as noted below) two of the four items where more than 90% of candidates got the correct answer were multiple choice questions, one of the harder items in the first text (Question 6) was also a multiple choice question. As reflected in the range in percentages correct for the paper, the questions on each text demonstrated a range of difficulty. All but a handful of items discriminated well between better and worse candidates.
26. It was pleasing to note the generally high scores achieved by this year’s cohort, and that approximately 83% of candidates attained Level 3 or above.

## 27. The easiest items

- 27.1 Five items were answered correctly by more than 90% of candidates, and all of these items were shown to have discriminated effectively between weaker and stronger candidates. As noted above, two of these (questions 15 and 24) were multiple choice questions.
- 27.2 Question 7 (bullying) proved to be very easy, which is understandable given that the speaker signalled her list of school problems by saying “such problems as...”.
- 27.3 In the third text, Question 23(iii) was answered correctly by just over 90% of candidates. This was probably due to it requiring fairly simple global listening skills and the fact that the prompt ‘Furniture’, together with the simple cottage scenario, provided a strong linguistic contextual signal for the correct answer – ‘beds and chairs’.
- 27.4 Question 26(i) was answered correctly by 97% of candidates. The answer was not only quite clearly signposted but was reinforced a minute or so later with three references to walking (the correct answer) in a chunk of about one minute of speaking.
- 27.5 Given the context given to the candidates in the rubric before listening to the text, which referred to ‘wilderness’ and living in a ‘cottage’, Question 23(ii) was rather easy (75% of candidates answering it correctly). A wide range of answers relating to open country were allowed.

## 28. The hardest items

- 28.1 The three hardest items were found in the second text. Question 17(a) was one open-ended question which carried 2 marks. Candidates had to identify the speaker’s point of view. This was prefaced by reference to the French Revolution and if candidates missed or misunderstood this reference it would have deprived them of a useful contextual signal. Despite being a difficult item, it discriminated effectively.
- 28.2 The other hard item was Question 19 (Edna’s opinion). This required candidates to identify the speaker’s view and, again, if they missed or misunderstood the reference to MoMA in New York it would have made the processing of the speaker’s view that Hong Kong can learn from this great museum more difficult.
- 28.3 Candidates generally found the third text to be the easiest, with the most difficult item (the first testing point in Question 25) being answered correctly by 21% of candidates. That this question was found to be difficult is not surprising since candidates were required to include in their answer the notion that the speaker’s expectation



had not been met. A number of candidates seem to have missed the word 'unexpected' in the question.

29. Some markers felt that the summarising skills required for Question 19 placed quite heavy demands on the candidates, but the range of those providing correct responses (with the exception of the MoMA item discussed above, from 51% to 73%) suggests that this is perhaps not a cause for particular concern.

30. Extracting answers

As in previous years, questions which required the candidates to listen to stretches of text but then extract answers only from specific chunks generally proved challenging, as noted above for Question 17(a) for example. However, this was not always the case and other items requiring similar skills proved less difficult.

31. Vocabulary

Although vocabulary knowledge did not seem to be a major issue, some lower frequency lexical items including 'truancy' (Question 7) and 'archive' (Question 13(iv)) proved difficult for candidates. When answering Question 13(iv), a number of candidates wrote down what they thought they had heard while clearly not understanding the correct answer.

32. As in previous years, some candidates did not write anything in answer to some of the questions, which meant that there was no chance of getting a mark. Candidates are reminded that there is nothing to be lost by writing down what they think they have heard as this may turn out to be correct. The mark will be awarded as long as the candidate's answer is considered to be a misspelling of the required answer rather than a completely different word.

33. Advice to candidates

As in previous years, candidates are reminded to:

- Read the tasks carefully in the time allowed and consider exactly what it is that you are being required to listen for.
- Check the number of marks allotted to a particular question as this will give an indication of the number of points required in the answer.
- Make sure responses are comprehensibly written and that spelling is as accurate as possible.
- Pay attention to discourse markers such as 'however' to mark contrast or 'previously' as a time marker.
- Listen to a wide variety of source materials in English in order to increase your awareness of different genres and text-types.

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

34. Paper 4 consists of two parts. In Part 1 there are two tasks; Task 1A:

Reading Aloud a Prose Passage and Task 1B: Recounting an Experience/Presenting Arguments. There is only one task in Part 2: Group Interaction.

35. Candidates are tested on six scales of performance. Task 1A assesses candidates on two scales: (1) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation and (2) Reading Aloud with Meaning. Task 1B assesses candidates on two different scales: (3) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range and (4) Organisation and Cohesion. Finally, Task 2 assesses candidates on two different scales: (5) Interacting with Peers and (6) Discussing Educational Matters with Peers.
36. Five minutes are given for both Tasks 1A and 1B, with Task 1B beginning immediately after Task 1A finishes. After Task 1B is over, candidates are asked to go back to the preparation room where they wait for a short while before returning to the assessment room for Part 2 – Group Interaction, in which they discuss a topic of relevance to the educational context of Hong Kong. The Group Discussion lasts for either 10 minutes (if there are three candidates in a group) or for 13 minutes (if there are four candidates in a group).

***Part 1: Task 1A Reading Aloud a Prose Passage***

37. The passages that candidates were required to read for Task 1A were extracted from a wide variety of sources and concerned a range of topics. Care was taken to ensure that the texts presented candidates with an opportunity to read aloud description, narration and dialogue/conversation.
38. During the moderation process, passages were examined for words and phrases that would discriminate between candidates in terms of clarity and effective use of pronunciation, stress and intonation. The chosen passages were long enough for accurate assessment to take place, but short enough to ensure that candidates had adequate time to complete the tasks.
39. Overall, candidates performed quite well in the Reading Aloud task, with many establishing the meaning and mood of the passages through effective use of intonation and tone to differentiate narration from dialogue. They were also able to chunk language into meaningful units, use strong and weaker forms in context and link items (i.e. use juncture).
40. With regard to pacing, less successful readings occurred when candidates read the passages either very slowly, which resulted in loss of meaningful grouping of ideas, or the opposite, where candidates read aloud too quickly. Very quick readings had a negative impact on pronunciation and the meaningful use of intonation, pacing and volume in terms of establishing the mood of the passage.
41. In addition, less successful performances were due to candidates not being able to produce language that demonstrated clarity across a range of features. Some particular issues were: word(s) in the text being substituted for alternative words, problems articulating vowel length (e.g. using short vowels

where a long vowel was needed), problems articulating consonant clusters (particularly at the beginning and ends of words, e.g. –ed endings). Finally, candidates encountered problems chunking words and phrases meaningfully into sense groups through the use of linking, pitch and intonation, without which a speaker cannot guide the listener meaningfully through a passage.

42. Stronger readings were produced by candidates who were able not only to convey meaning through clear pronunciation, stress, intonation and chunking of sense groups, but who indicated the shifting mood and tone in a passage by effective use of changes in volume, pitch and pacing. Sensitive readings came from candidates who were able to modulate their reading to capture, for example, likely feelings and attitudes developed through narration and dialogue in the passage whilst avoiding becoming overly dramatic.

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

43. This task takes place immediately after Task 1A. Both Task 1A and 1B are completed in the assessment room within 5 minutes. Whereas Task 1A assesses candidates on their accurate and meaningful reading of a prepared passage, Task 1B assesses candidates in a different area: that of speaking spontaneously or semi-spontaneously on a topic. It provides candidates with the opportunity to put to use their own language resources to demonstrate their ability to produce meaningful, flowing spoken English.
44. In order to provide candidates with accessible tasks, the topics chosen for Task 1B were intended to be relevant to the candidates' personal experience. Many of the topics were opinion questions about issues in Hong Kong and in education.
45. One of the two scales for this task is Organisation and Cohesion. At the level of discourse, candidates had a range of approaches to Task 1B, with some approaching the task in an informal, unstructured and conversational or chatty way, where a shift in topic was the means used to indicate a new phase in the discourse. Others approached the task as one might approach formal public speaking, with overt signposting to structure the organisation, where phrases such as, 'There are three reasons for this. Firstly...'; 'More importantly...'; 'That aside...' or, 'To summarise...' were common.
46. As the tasks this year largely involved presenting an argument, (essentially an expository task), clear topic shift and/or signposting was seen in more successful performances, and this helped the listener navigate the views and opinions within the flow of discourse.
47. Candidates who relied on the use of the connective 'and' to string their ideas together tended to produce more 'list-like' spoken texts, whose point and views were difficult for the listener to establish as there was little sense of the argumentation that comes from relating ideas to each other.
48. Candidates who made use of organising phrases to indicate priorities ('Well, the main point is...'), for example, or the way in which ideas were related to each other ('as well as this...'; 'equally...'; 'you could also argue...') or

were in some way contrastive or concessive ('having said that...'; 'however...'; 'that said...'; 'despite that...'), tended to produce more successful flowing speech in that the sequence of views was clearly accessible to the listener.

49. Less successful performances were those where the ideas seemed to have little connection or relationship to one another, or where it was difficult to ascertain which views were being expressed. Some candidates read aloud from a script they had written during preparation, and this led to a spoken task that lacked spontaneity, and shifted the focus once again to 'reading aloud' skills. The purpose of the task is to assess language that is, to a large extent, spontaneous, so stronger performances were from candidates who were using bullet points for general organisation and producing the language to convey these ideas spontaneously.
50. This task also assesses Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range. This scale is sensitive to the topic of the task given and the register that has been selected by the candidate (from less formal to more formal). More successful performances were by candidates who were able to make use of words, phrases, collocations and grammatical phrases that demonstrated sensitivity to the topic at hand and also conveyed their own views on it.
51. Less successful performances were from candidates who had difficulty producing language that showed range in meaning, who relied on a limited repertoire of vocabulary or grammatical frames to introduce or convey their ideas, or who failed to sustain some level of accuracy across their spontaneous turn. There were issues with, for example, subject-verb agreement, reference, cohesive items, use of grammatical phrasing and tense in context, and confusion of singular and plural forms (which caused problems when making generalised claims).
52. Timing is a final point to note. Candidates are reminded that they have 5 minutes in total to complete Task 1A and Task 1B, one following immediately after the other. Therefore, it is practical to make note of how much can realistically be said in Task 1B in a period of approximately two minutes, and to make full use of the time available. If candidates exceed the 5 minutes allowed for Task 1A and Task 1B, examiners will ask candidates to stop; equally, where candidates complete Task 1B and have time left, examiners will check that candidates have said all that they intended to.

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

53. In Part 2 of the paper, candidates discuss an education-related, school-based issue, plan or project. The task is designed so that candidates have an opportunity to take part in a professional, collaborative, focused discussion during the course of which they contribute their own views and ideas, extend, develop, consider, investigate or challenge the ideas of others, working constructively with each other from the task agenda. In general, candidates were able to take part in this collaborative, professional discussion in a way that was focused and relevant.

54. The scales for Part 2, Group Interaction are Interacting with Peers and Discussing Language Matters with Peers.
55. Stronger performances were those where the candidate was able to take part fully in a meaningful professional exchange where, in terms of dialogue, s/he demonstrated a range of 'discourse moves'. Such moves include: making claims and suggestions whilst being sensitive to the professional social setting the conversation was taking place in; asking for the views of others; constructively exploring the points made by others; showing a level of acceptance and concession based on other views; and demonstrating an ability to keep the discussion focused and on-track.
56. In addition, stronger performances were from candidates who brought their understanding of learning and teaching, children, parents, teachers, schools and classrooms to the discussion forum, as well as a level of professional reflection and insight, in order to provide practical and meaningful frameworks for discussing any (language) learning aspects of the task agenda.
57. Stronger performances were also from those candidates who were able to briefly clarify or justify their own or points from others, relate them to context, summarise points made, and flexibly allow others to do so, and in so doing, collaboratively move the conversation on.
58. Less successful discussions were from candidates who tended to contribute less, remained quiet for extended periods, took shorter turns, and who provided ideas and suggestions without being able to take on board what others were contributing to the discussion. These candidates were unable to demonstrate an ability to extend, develop, modify and accommodate others' views within the framework of a focused professional discussion on a school-based issue. Indicative of this was a seeming lack of active listening and follow-up questions or comments that show one is part of purposeful professional discourse, coupled with an absence of conversational resources to keep the discussion, and one's contribution to it, flowing. The overall effect was a lack of confidence and involvement.
59. Where less successful candidates came together in a group, the group dynamic tended to be typified by sequential turn-taking, where points were made without candidates taking on board what others were saying. There was little collaborative professional action, and an inability to establish or maintain a professionally vibrant exchange. The flow of conversation was obstructed via 'I agree' without any follow up, engagement or extension offered on the point just given. This had the effect of appearing mechanical and uninvolved, and in addition to remaining undialogic (i.e. without meaningful exchange), the substance of contributions made remained at a superficial and surface level as the speaking resulted in a list of individuals' ideas rather than a professional, energised exploration and teasing out of issues and factors leading to palpable outcomes.
60. In preparation for Part 2, future candidates are encouraged to take part in meaningful professional exchange and dialogue by discussing learning and

teaching issues with their colleagues, which will serve as fruitful practice.

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

61. A total of 369 candidates were assessed between November 2011 and March 2012. The attainment rate was high, with 95.4% of the candidates achieving the proficiency level on all four scales: (1) Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range; (2) Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation; (3) Language of Interaction; and (4) Language of Instruction.
62. Most lessons observed were appropriately prepared and the majority of candidates performed well, demonstrating confidence in using the language. Comments on the individual areas of assessment are given below.
63. Grammatical and Lexical Accuracy and Range
  - 63.1 Candidates in general demonstrated a good grasp of basic grammar and a high degree of accuracy was noted. The strongest candidates stood out as exemplary language models for their students and demonstrated a high level of competence in using an extensive range of structures and vocabulary in a natural and idiomatic way.
  - 63.2 In general, most of the grammatical mistakes that occurred did not impede communication. Errors spotted included the inconsistent agreement and use of tense across clauses/sentences e.g. “Toes are... Yes, it is...” Some complex structures proved to be tricky for candidates whose use of structure was less precise. The wrong subject-verb order in indirect question forms such as “Do you remember what is a leaflet?” was still a prevalent problem. First language interference and inadequate mastery of correct usage also accounted for a number of the inaccurate utterances. These errors included wrong choice of words, as in “Have you had a choice” instead of “made a choice” and “Turn your body” for “Turn around”. There were also faulty structures like “One more thing forgot to tell you” and “Raise up your hand”.
  - 63.3 Apart from grammatical competence, lexical range also proved a discriminating factor. The stronger candidates chose their words with care, providing students with rich language exposure, while weaker candidates tended to use very simple and repetitive language.
64. Pronunciation, Stress and Intonation
  - 64.1 Pronunciation of sounds, sentence stress and intonation patterns was generally accurate. There were an encouraging number of candidates who served as good classroom models of spoken English usage for the students. They displayed not only accuracy but also an excellent command of fine variations in tone to convey the intended meaning.

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

- 64.2 One cause of the unnatural-sounding patterns in the speech of weaker candidates was the inappropriate stress placed on weak syllables and unstressed words. This often involved the schwa /ə/ being stressed in words like “picture”, “together” and “correct” and stressing the weak form of function words such as “to”, “of” and “for” as in “This is what your partner has to do”.
- 64.3 Some recurring errors among the weaker candidates included the confusion between long and short vowels as in “leave/live”, and between /l/ and /n/ as in “knife/life”. Some consonant sounds like /v/, /dʒ/ and /ð/, consonant clusters such as /bl/, /pl/ and /fl/ and final consonants as in “line”, “chill”, “music” and “sing” also proved tricky for them. These individual errors alone did not cause too big a problem in communication but when more than one appeared in the candidate’s speech, meaning was occasionally impeded and it put strain on the listener.

## 65. Language of Interaction

- 65.1 Most candidates were able to employ appropriate language to interact fairly naturally with their students. There was always a clear effort to elicit responses from the students, acknowledge their responses and give verbal praise. However, concrete comments were scarce. This was particularly obvious in the senior forms as there was often a greater need for specific guidance. The stronger candidates demonstrated an ability to use a wider range of interactive language with ease. They were able to give concrete feedback on students’ responses and make use of prompting and probing questions to negotiate teaching and learning, thus engaging students in extended dialogues on a range of topics.
- 65.2 Among the weaker candidates, the language used tended to be rather repetitive, with “What else?” and “How about you?” being the most frequently asked questions. There was also the tendency to just repeat a student’s answer to imply errors or use sentence completion as prompting or probing questions instead of asking a more precise and properly framed question. It was also noted that many questions were display questions which only required very short and simple answers and so did not allow candidates adequate opportunities to demonstrate their ability to use interactive language.
- 65.3 Given the effort to initiate communication, the failure to maintain the interactive process often came as a letdown. Some candidates failed to respond to students’ incomplete or wrong answers by rephrasing the questions or providing proper clarification and feedback. In some cases, the weaker candidates’ lack of appropriate language for handling spontaneous interaction also resulted in instances of communication breakdown, especially when students gave unexpected responses.

## 66. Language of Instruction

- 66.1 Most candidates were able to give clear instructions on classroom routines and conduct learning activities using natural-sounding language. The language used was generally appropriate and the discourse was coherent. There was also the appropriate use of signalling devices to draw students' attention to various stages of the lesson in general. When explaining new words and language items, the stronger candidates also made a commendable effort to give clear and precise presentations characterised by a logical flow of ideas and suitable examples.
- 66.2 Occasionally noted among the weaker candidates was a lack of spontaneity as they tended to rely too much on the textbook and handouts and read from prepared notes or even scripts. In these lessons, very often, valuable language teaching opportunities were not exploited to the full.