

Paper 2

Paper 2 tests candidates' writing skills and consists of two parts: Part A and Part B. Candidates have 2 hours to complete both parts of the paper. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 2 was 44,946.

Overall Results

Part A and B were assessed in three domains: content, language and organisation on a scale between 0 and 7 for each domain. A statistical analysis of Paper 2 was carried out. The overall results are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Paper 2 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	42	54.9	18.9
Part B	42	52.2	20.1

Part A

Part A is a short writing task. This year, candidates assumed the role of a worker at the Visitor Centre of the Hong Kong Adventure Farm. They were asked to write a guide for first-time visitors to the Farm using a map as a prompt which showed the attractions of the Farm. The guide was divided into two parts: the first part serving as a general introduction to the Farm and the second part recommending the top three things to see and do. It was expected that readers of the guide would be looking for guidance as to what to do and therefore the tone and style would be persuasive.

Most candidates were able to develop their own ideas drawing on the information given in the map. In the first part of the guide, some candidates chose to write about concrete facts about the Farm, (e.g. its location, when it opened, directions on how to get there). Other candidates chose to write about more abstract ideas, such as the history or mission of the Farm. Stronger candidates were able to write a summary or provide an overview of the highlights of the Farm. In the second part of the guide, candidates described how visitors could enjoy themselves and what could be seen or done at different locations in the Farm. Typical content included a description of scenery, emotional responses and practical advice, especially for families with children.

Some candidates were able to make use of more expressive and invitational language to appeal to the sense of adventure of the target audience. When describing the attractions of the Farm, a more informal tone was appropriate. Higher performing candidates were able to draw on a range of descriptive vocabulary that described the features of the Farm and what visitors could do there.

The task prompt guided candidates to write a paragraph (of around 50 words) about the Farm and then write about three attractions in three paragraphs (around 150 words). Most candidates did this. In the descriptions of attractions, some candidates were able to introduce the attraction first and then develop ideas about it, including how to get there, what to do there and why it was attractive. Stronger candidates were able to use linking adverbials and other cohesive devices within and across paragraphs to enhance the cohesion of the text. The examiners were looking for clear and concise descriptions that would grab the readers' attention, though some candidates did tend to write too much, thereby including repetition and irrelevance.

In general, most candidates were able to make use of the prompt to develop their ideas and describe its attractions in a way that would encourage visitors to visit the Farm. Some candidates could have shown more awareness of the audience by appealing to the readers' senses and improving on the richness and persuasiveness of the text.

Part B

Part B comprises eight questions (Q.2-Q.9) based on the elective modules in the senior secondary English Language curriculum (S.4-S.6). In this part of the examination, candidates were required to choose one question and write about 400 words.

The mean score for each question is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Paper 2 Part B results

Question	Elective	Mean (%)	Popularity (%)
2	Popular Culture	52.6	25
3	Workplace Communication	53.1	19
4	Sports Communication	45.6	13
5	Social Issues	55.1	17
6	Poems and Songs	45.3	1
7	Drama	37.4	2
8	Short Stories	48.4	4
9	Debating	57.9	19

Question 2 (Popular Culture) was the most popular question with around one quarter of the candidature choosing to attempt it. The popularity of the other questions ranged between just over 1% and 19% of the candidature.

The following is a summary of candidates' general performance in each question.

Question 2: Learning English through Popular Culture

This question proved to be a favourite and was attempted by around 25% of candidates. Candidates were required to write an article for a magazine explaining why they had started a YouTube channel for teenagers and what they had learned in the process.

Most candidates wrote long answers and described in detail why they started the channel and what they had learned from doing it. The reasons provided by candidates for starting the channel included certain topics not being discussed elsewhere, the chance to inform/entertain/inspire others, and the medium being most suitable for teenagers in isolation during the pandemic. In terms of what they had learned, candidates wrote about it being a rewarding experience, having the chance to interview celebrities and earning supplementary income.

Candidates showed an ability to use a range of linguistic forms to describe their experiences in starting and running the channel. This included using different tenses and aspects, passive and active forms, modal verbs and appropriate adjectives to describe their experiences, feelings and emotions. Stronger articles were marked by greater grammatical accuracy, more varied vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. Candidates were able to adapt their writing to suit the genre of an article written in the first person (I/me/my), making it accessible and meaningful to an audience of their peers.

Question 3: Learning English through Workplace Communication

The question required candidates to assume that they write an advice column for a job recruitment magazine. They had to reply to a request for advice from a reader who had to decide between following his/her dream of opening a café and taking a job promotion in a company they were not too keen on.

In general, candidates understood the requirements of the task. They were expected to offer advice and describe the advantages and disadvantages of both quitting their job and opening a café (e.g. follow your

dream, be passionate about what you do, may be difficult to quit job later, don't live with regrets) or accepting the promotion (e.g. save money for later, not a good time due to the pandemic, do some market research first). Stronger candidates were able to do this while weaker candidates tended to write the text as though it were a discursive essay and not an advice letter, thereby lacking empathy or personal connection with the addressee.

Candidates showed an ability to use a range of linguistic forms to provide advice in a sympathetic but pragmatic tone. This included using different tenses and aspects, passive and active forms. The use of different linguistic features such as modals or imperatives to describe scenarios and reflections or the use of conditional sentences to give opinions and advice were also common.

Question 4: Learning English through Sports Communication

The question required candidates to write a speech to be delivered by the captain of the school's basketball team at their end-of-season dinner celebration. The team had reached the final of the inter-school championship but had finished second.

Most candidates understood the purpose of the task and were able to write the speech by thanking the audience for coming, reflecting on the past season, thanking the team mates/coach/school, and closing the speech by looking forward to the next season. Those scoring highly on this task were able to provide details of incidents during the season and anecdotes to make the audience laugh. They were able to reflect on the fact that they had lost in the final but had a great deal to be proud of.

Some candidates had a good grasp of the tone and style needed for a speech of this nature and were able to use language accordingly, making good use of vocabulary specific to basketball and sports in general. They were also able to use the correct tenses to describe events during the season, feelings and emotions and aspirations for the next season. However, a small number of candidates did not adopt an appropriate structure for the speech and wrote it more like a description of the season, without considering the audience and the need to make the speech entertaining.

Question 5: Learning English through Social Issues

This question required candidates to assume the role of the chairperson of the school's Heritage Club and write a letter to the editor in response to a comment in the newspaper that young people today lack interest in traditional art forms. The question was a relatively popular choice among candidates, and candidates performed well on this question on average.

Most candidates provided the reasons for the phenomenon although most of the reasons were very general, such as the pressure from academic study, distractions from IT gadgets, lack of promotion from the government and parents' general attitude towards arts. It would have been more persuasive if the specific qualities of traditional art forms had been pinpointed and contrasted with current social trends. Most candidates made a number of good suggestions regarding how to rectify the problem.

Stronger candidates were able to show their knowledge of the expected tone and style of a letter by getting to the point directly and being concise in their arguments. Most candidates were able to make use of emotive words to engage the readers and most employed the format of a formal letter appropriately.

Question 6: Learning English through Poems and Songs

This question required candidates to write a promotional bio for the website of a musical group. The bio had to include background information about the group, their style of music and their future plans. The question proved to be the least popular among candidates.

Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of the basic requirements of the question, addressing the three required parts adequately with details. Some candidates demonstrated imagination and creativity in the description of the band, for example, naming important childhood influences, awards and achievements and describing the band's distinct music style. Weaker candidates limited themselves to providing general information, such as the instruments played and a list of upcoming activities. This type of content was reasonably informative but not particularly engaging.

As for the use of language, stronger scripts used sophisticated vocabulary and vivid descriptions to capture the artists and their music style. Appropriate tenses were used to outline the history, current events and future plans. Some candidates organised their ideas through the use of sub-headings to enhance cohesion. As this text-type is promotional in nature, candidates were expected to think about engaging the readers' interest through memorable tidbits while also providing facts and important information.

Question 7: Learning English through Drama

In this question, candidates were required to write a journal entry. They were given the scenario of having played the roles of a hero and a villain in different plays and they had to write an entry in their journal reflecting on which role they preferred playing and why.

Stronger scripts showed some insights about playing a hero or villain by describing the typical features of the role and the reasons or intentions behind the character's behaviour. Some scripts went beyond the superficial definition of 'hero' and 'villain' by questioning stereotypes, redefining what is 'good' or 'bad' and explaining why villains are needed for plays. Another example of how candidates demonstrated their creativity and critical thinking was by pointing out how different people (e.g. directors and actors) may interpret heroes and villains differently. Candidates who only described the plot of a play without evaluating the role of a hero or a villain did not fulfil the requirements of the question.

Some candidates were able to make good use of vocabulary related to drama in their reflections and to draw on personal experience and self-awareness as would be typical of a journal entry.

Question 8: Learning English through Short Stories

Candidates were asked to write a short story for a competition on the theme of *Nature: friend or enemy*. They had to write a story about a hiker who gets caught in a storm while hiking in the mountains. The question was less popular compared to short story questions in previous years.

Most candidates were able to write a story that was relevant to the theme and included expected elements such as the characters, settings and events in the story, the feelings and emotions of the characters, and how the story reflects our relationship with nature. Some wrote very imaginatively and included elements in the story such as animals and spirits, while retaining a relationship to the intended theme. Other candidates wrote a story related to hiking in the mountains but did not make the link to the theme of nature or did not make the link clearly enough.

In terms of the use of language, stronger scripts used vivid imagery and descriptions to engage the reader and included such features as dialogue and reference to locations in Hong Kong. Appropriate tenses were used to describe the events, emotions and to convey some kind of message. Effective organisation was seen in some scripts through the use of discourse markers, linking adverbials as well as other cohesive devices to keep the story flowing logically. Where this broke down, stories became incoherent and the reader struggled to follow the plot. Candidates looking to write a story should spend some initial time thinking of the plot and planning what they are going to write before starting.

Question 9: Learning English through Debating

In this question, candidates were required to assume the role of a member of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and to write a letter to the President of the PTA outlining their views on a proposal by the school management to change the school operations from a five-day to a four-day week. This question was the second most popular question in Part B and candidates achieved the highest score on average of all questions on the paper.

Candidates were expected to include a salutation (Dear President, etc.), an opening providing background/reference to the proposal, an elaborated explanation of their view and a closing. Most candidates who answered this question were able to do this and most provide credible reasons to support their view, such as students needing more time to rest or more self-study. Candidates who explored the limitations of potential counter arguments were able to produce a stronger overall argument. For instance, some candidates who were arguing against the proposal conceded that a four-day week would create more free time. However, they argued that one potential consequence would be an increase in teaching

hours per day to compensate for the loss of one day's teaching. This, such candidates, argued, would lead to students feeling overly tired, thus reducing their ability to concentrate and the effectiveness of teaching time.

Candidates were familiar with the language structures needed for this kind of text, such as complex sentences to describe different perspectives and the varied use of tenses for description, exemplification and prediction of outcomes should the proposal be accepted. Appropriate use of linking adverbials and other cohesive devices allowed candidates to make a series of points in a cohesive fashion. Where candidates scored lower marks, it was generally because their letter lacked cohesion and a coherent discussion of the issues.

Recommendations

Candidates can best demonstrate their writing ability by making their writing appropriate to the particular text type they are asked to write. Writing simple sentences accurately might be enough in some tasks but might be too limited for others requiring more linguistic flexibility. It is a good idea for candidates to read different text types and to become familiar with what is appropriate for particular purposes and audiences.

As with language choice, coherence can be achieved in different ways depending on the text type. Candidates are usually quite good at connecting ideas explicitly in persuasive or argumentative essays, though this is often done excessively and mechanically. In some text types (e.g. speech or story), more creative approaches are required. Again, familiarity with different text types is key to raising awareness of how these texts are organised effectively.

Part B tasks can be completed in around 400 words. Longer responses will not necessarily gain higher marks simply by virtue of length. If writing beyond the word guide, the length should not impede the communicative effectiveness.

Paper 3

Paper 3 consisted of three parts: Part A, Part B1 and Part B2. All candidates were required to complete Part A and then choose either Part B1 or Part B2. Part B1 was designed to be the easier section, while Part B2 was designed to be the more difficult section. The total number of candidates attempting Paper 3 was 44,687 of whom around 27.8% chose B1 and around 72.2% chose B2.

Overall Results

A statistical analysis of Paper 3 was carried out. The overall results are given in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Paper 3 overall results

	Full Mark	Mean Score (%)	Standard Deviation (%)
Part A	52	46.9	26.7
Part B1	53	39.1	25.1
Part B2	53	43.4	18.8

Part A (Compulsory section)

In Part A, candidates had to listen to four recordings related to the theme of factory tourism in Hong Kong. All the recordings included members of a tour company for tourists in Hong Kong called Hidden Hong Kong Tours. Unless otherwise stated, synonyms or similar wordings were accepted as correct answers to those stated here.