

interpreting the meaning behind Michelle Obama's words that we would expect to see in the stronger readers choosing to take Part B2.

A final point to make is that a significant number of candidates copied extensively from the text, often leading to a range of problems in their responses. This was particularly seen in Q.53iv, Q.54 and Q.55. Such problems included a resultant lack of logic in their answers, the incorporation of irrelevant or inaccurate content, and a failure to demonstrate their ability to distinguish between specific examples and broader conclusions.

The complex ideas tested in all these items were at the heart of Part B2's text, and the questions successfully probed understanding of the very highest-order elements of the paper.

### Recommendations

The instructions provided to candidates for answering exam questions are crucial in ensuring that the requirements of the questions are clearly delivered. It is important for candidates to read and understand the instructions carefully, especially with regard to specific requirements such as the use of certain words or phrases from particular paragraphs in the passages. This can be a determining factor in scoring marks for certain questions and neglecting such instructions can lead to a loss of marks.

Additionally, when candidates are required to lift language from the passages, they should ensure that they spell the words correctly. In cases where a question calls for a longer and more open answer, candidates should be careful not to copy excessively, as seen in Q.42 and Q.53iv. The danger of copying excessively is that the candidate may fail to demonstrate their understanding of the ideas tested and may lose marks as a result.

In some questions, grammatical prompts may be given, such as at the beginning of sentence-completion items (e.g. Q.18, Q.30, Q.39, Q.46) and candidates should pay close attention to such prompts. They should also take note of plurality, as in Q.13 where the question required the identification of 'whose faces'.

Candidates need to be mindful of the use of figurative and metaphorical language in the texts. In such cases, it is advisable to select more focused and shorter chunks of language, as seen in Q.12. If candidates lift overlong stretches of text, it becomes difficult for them to clearly demonstrate that they have identified the pertinent part of the text.

Candidates may also need further practice in understanding referencing within a text and the relationships between ideas, especially when references are made over longer stretches of a text. This is important in ensuring that candidates can demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic and how the ideas presented in the text relate to each other.

As demonstrated again this year, this paper's purpose is to test candidates' ability to deal with a range of genres and text types, from a variety of authors and contexts in which they are written. This year's reading passages were taken from both fiction and non-fiction, from personal memoirs and news reports. These were sourced both locally and from abroad. Candidates are encouraged to embrace the opportunities available to them to read as widely as possible in order to increase exposure to genres and text-types, to enhance their reading skills as well as to build up their knowledge of lexis, syntax, connotation and so on.

### 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 45,362.

### Overall Results

Parts 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	54.4	21.6
Part B	42	51.5	20.3

#### Part A

Part A is a short writing task. This year, candidates assumed the role of a worker for Planet Smart, a company that sells eco-friendly products. The company wanted to set up a pop-up shop inside a shopping centre for three months to promote their products to new customers. Candidates were asked to complete an application form divided into three sections: a Company Profile, their Best-selling Product and an In-store Event. It was expected that readers of the form would be the management of the shopping centre and therefore the tone and style was expected to be persuasive.

Most candidates were able to develop their own ideas under the three headings, including first the company profile. Candidates generally wrote about how their company was set up to sell environmentally-friendly products and these ranged from toys to clothes and cooking utensils. There was a lot of imagination shown. The best-selling product was quite well described and candidates were able to provide descriptions and reasons as to why the product was popular. Such products were often simple like reusable drinking bottles and so on. The in-store event was usually some kind of open day in which products were displayed, games organised and discounts given.

Some candidates were able to make use of descriptive language to promote their company and persuade the management of the shopping centre to accept their proposal. This included the use of adjectives ('adorable', 'captivating', 'tailor-made', 'fascinating', etc.) and vocabulary such as 'recyclable', 'going green', 'environmentally-friendly', 'reusable' and 'conservation'. Higher performing candidates were able to use such language and to make accurate use of appropriate sentence structures and tenses.

The task prompt guided candidates to write about 70 words for each section of the proposal. Most candidates did this and many made use of the supplementary pages to write more. This sometimes was to the detriment of the candidates' work as in some cases it meant that it was less succinct than that of candidates who followed the word guide. Many weaker candidates wrote one or two sentences only under each heading and struggled for ideas.

In general, however, most candidates were able to make use of the headings to write a persuasive proposal in an appropriate tone.

#### 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 achieved for each elective is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Paper 2 Part B statistics

Question	Elective	Mean (%)	Popularity (%)
2	Sports Communication	48.1	16
3	Popular Culture	48.9	21
4	Debating	58.2	23
5	Short Stories	39.0	3
6	Drama	47.2	3
7	Social Issues	58.2	15
8	Poems and Songs	56.1	9
9	Workplace Communication	56.6	10

The most popular question was attempted by around 23% of the candidature followed by around 21%. The spread of popularity amongst the eight questions was relatively even compared to previous years.

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

*Question 2: Learning English through Sports Communication*

Candidates were required to write an article for a travel magazine explaining the benefits of tai chi. The article was meant to appeal to tourists. This question was quite a popular choice among candidates.

Most candidates wrote about how tai chi can improve health, create a mindful state, calm one down and relieve stress. They were able to describe the popularity of tai chi in Hong Kong and provide information via interviews with tai chi masters, participants and tourists. This included descriptions of where to find people practising tai chi (e.g. Victoria Park) and how it is a part of Chinese culture.

Candidates showed an ability to use a range of linguistic forms to describe the practice of tai chi and what it involves. This included using different tenses and aspects, mainly active forms, modal verbs and appropriate adjectives to describe 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 engaging and meaningful to an audience of potential visitors.

*Question 3: Learning English through Popular Culture*

This question required candidates to assume the role of a reporter for the school magazine and write an article about Anime Expo, Hong Kong's biggest anime, manga and video game exhibition. They attended the exhibition and interviewed some people dressed in cosplay. This question was a very popular choice among candidates.

Candidates had few problems understanding the requirements of the task. They were expected to inform and engage the readers and provide a snapshot of what was happening, a report on their interview with participants (some people dressed in cosplay) and possibly a review or feelings about attending the event. It was expected that some candidates would focus on concepts, or what they had learned from the interviews by incorporating the interviews, or summaries of them. There was a lot of scope for imagination and creativity to be demonstrated in the descriptions of the booths, activities and atmosphere of the exhibition.

Candidates showed an ability to engage the reader with an imaginative use of descriptive language such as adjectives and adverbs to describe the costumes and activities. Candidates were generally able to structure the article appropriately with an engaging introduction followed by descriptions of the

exhibition, interviews with cosplay participants and other facets of the exhibition. The tone used by candidates was generally appropriate, as the audience was expected to be their peers.

#### *Question 4: Learning English through Debating*

The question required candidates to write an essay about the pros and cons of monitoring employees in the workplace. They were asked to address the question of how monitoring affects productivity and job satisfaction. The question proved to be the most popular choice among candidates and on average they scored relatively highly.

Most candidates understood the purpose of the task and were able to write the essay according to the standard structure of a discursive essay, i.e. introduction, points in favour (pros), points against (cons) and conclusion. Candidates were able to elaborate on the main arguments of whether monitoring is intrusive and impinging on employees' rights or whether it is within the rights of the employers to ensure that their employees were on task while being paid to be in work. Better candidates were able to bring in ideas related to the modern working environment including the flexibility of employees to work from home.

In general candidates had a good grasp of the tone and style for an essay and the topic was accessible. They were able to use appropriate language including: nouns such as 'surveillance', 'monitoring', 'privacy', 'policy', 'efficiency', 'productivity', 'security', 'trust' and '(dis)satisfaction'; adjectives such as 'invasive', 'intrusive', 'untrustworthy', 'productive' and 'satisfactory'; and verbs like 'spy', 'monitor' and '(mis)trust'.

Weaker candidates showed a lack of ideas and ability to construct persuasive arguments. They tended to state only the most obvious of pros and cons without going into more detail about the effects of such monitoring on all parties, including employees and their families, employers, society and so on.

#### *Question 5: Learning English through Short Stories*

This question required candidates to write an essay to describe how reading fairy tales and fables has taught them important lessons about life. The question was not a popular choice among candidates and scored the lowest mean.

The question was quite challenging in that to answer the question well, candidates had to demonstrate a knowledge of such kinds of stories and be able to draw on that knowledge to extract meanings and moral messages that may have affected them personally and then explain how. Some candidates were able to do this and to take examples from popular tales or fables and apply them to their own life. Many candidates were unable to do this and wrote quite generally about how reading stories has improved them as a person, without being specific enough on how and in what ways.

Some candidates were able to construct an expository essay of this type and to use appropriate nouns (e.g. 'plot', 'character', 'meaning'), adjectives (e.g. 'determined', 'resourceful', 'reflective') and verbs (e.g. 'learn', 'understand', 'relate to'). Better candidates were also able to use cohesive devices to show the relationships between ideas and actions in the stories they described and in their own lives. Other candidates struggled to express their ideas in a meaningful way.

#### *Question 6: Learning English through Drama*

This question required candidates to write a diary entry describing their experience in a drama class, in which they had to perform an improvised 10-minute comedy sketch with their classmates. This question was the least popular option with candidates.

Most candidates understood the basic requirements of the question, to write about the comedy sketch that they did with their classmates and describe what happened, including classmates' funny actions or speech, their own feelings about the sketch and the class as a whole and what they learned from it. The style expected was one more intimate and personal than an essay or an article and most candidates understood this, beginning the entry with the date and time and/or 'Dear diary'. Many ended the entry with a positive reflection on the day.

In terms of language use, better candidates' scripts demonstrated the appropriate use of tenses, for example, past tense to describe what had happened in the class and their emotions at the time, and present tense to describe their reflections about it. Stronger candidates were able to use a range of lexis to be quite candid about the emotions they felt. Weaker candidates were unable to describe the comedy sketch in much detail or relate their feelings about it.

#### *Question 7: Learning English through Social Issues*

In this question, candidates were required to write a news article about differing views on retirement. They were given the information that most people in their 60s would like to have the option to work past 65, while a growing number of young people would like to retire in their 30s or 40s. The question was not particularly popular, though those who did do it scored relatively highly.

As it was a news article, examiners were looking for candidates to discuss the issues perhaps by including interviews with various people of different age groups or including evidentiary support (e.g. factual or anecdotal) to illustrate their points. Unfortunately, too many candidates wrote a piece more akin to a discursive essay. Candidates were not expected to draw any conclusions about whether earlier or later retirement was preferable. Better candidates were able to describe how different groups of people of different ages think about retirement and why they would opt for the choice to retire (or not).

The language used could vary with different tenses used when describing feelings and when describing events. On the whole, stronger candidates were able to use a range of lexis such as 'job satisfaction', 'financial burden', 'work-life balance' and 'livelihood'. Overall, the tone expected was neutral and objective, though not as academic as that of an essay.

#### *Question 8: Learning English through Poems and Songs*

Candidates were asked to write a letter to the editor on whether computer-generated songs should be allowed to compete in song-writing competitions. The question was not one of the more popular choices but those who did answer it scored quite highly.

In the prompt for this question, candidates were told that contestants in a competition had complained when an AI-generated song had won first prize. From this, examiners expected candidates to write about the use of AI in songwriting, rather than more generally and most candidates were able to do this. One possible approach was to write a piece in which arguments (for or against) were one-sided and this was an approach many candidates adopted. Better candidates were able to introduce arguments counter to their position and then refute them so as to strengthen their own stance.

Most candidates were able to include descriptions of what AI is and how it could be used to write songs. They successfully argued the points about originality, creativity and fairness as well as describing aspects of songwriting, such as melodies, rhythm and lyrics. As with all letters to the editor, the audience is assumed to be the general public and it was not expected that candidates would use more technical vocabulary when describing AI use.

Effective organisation was seen in some scripts through the use of a range of grammatical and lexical cohesion in order to keep the text flowing logically. Where this broke down, arguments and the writer's position became incoherent and unclear.

#### *Question 9: Learning English through Workplace Communication*

In this question, candidates had to write a feature article for a magazine called *Restaurant Business* relating the experiences of a restaurant owner during the COVID-19 pandemic. Candidates were expected to base the article on an interview carried out with a restaurant owner. The question was not one of the most popular options though candidates who answered this question scored quite highly on average. Most candidates drew on their personal experiences during the pandemic. Some, though, did write too much and their answers became less relevant to the topic (i.e. running a restaurant) and more of a set of personal reflections.

Candidates were expected to report on the interview with the restaurant owner. Many did this and produced engaging and interesting articles that an audience who had lived through the pandemic could

relate to. However, they had to remember that they were writing for a specific audience, i.e. people working in the restaurant business, so examiners were looking for candidates to write from that perspective. Typical vocabulary that was used in this respect included nouns such as 'chefs', 'restrictions', 'online ordering', 'takeaway' or 'delivery service'; adjectives such as 'challenging', 'dispiriting', 'innovative' and 'convenient'; and verbs such as 'make staff redundant', 'survive' and 'operate'. The style was meant to be engaging and informative.

Candidates generally followed one of two approaches to writing this text. Some wrote a chronological account of what happened during the pandemic and how the restaurant owners dealt with the situation. Others described the problems faced one by one, perhaps in order of seriousness. Both approaches were acceptable. Where candidates scored lower marks, it was generally because their article lacked cohesion or they were unable to identify problems specific to the restaurant business.

### Recommendations

Candidates need to demonstrate their writing ability by making their writing appropriate to the particular text type they are asked to write and addressing the topic specified. Writing succinctly and concisely may be conducive to writing a successful text in some tasks. Other tasks may require more in-depth and elaborated arguments with more complex language. It is essential for candidates to read a wide range of authentic texts and text types 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 would be advised to examine authentic texts to see what and how grammatical and lexical cohesive devices are used to enhance cohesion in different text types to raise their awareness as to how different types of 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 44,982, of whom around 28% chose B1 and around 72% 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	53	44.8	29.0
Part B1	53	41.2	26.1
Part B2	53	49.8	19.0

### Part A (Compulsory section)

In Part A, candidates had to listen to four recordings related to the theme of a YouTube Channel about people who have made an impact on the world in unusual ways. All four tasks were related to the YouTube Channel called *Extraordinary Hong Kong People*. Unless otherwise stated, synonyms or similar wordings were accepted as correct answers to those stated here.