

Candidates' Performance

Principles of Question Design

The assessment of this subject is based on the Liberal Studies Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4-6). According to the Guide, 'the curriculum aims at integrating, applying, consolidating and broadening the foundational knowledge of every student through studying a range of contemporary issues in different contexts' (Section 2.1). Questions in the public examination of Liberal Studies are designed in accordance with the principles of being issue-driven and assessing candidates' thinking skills, such as their ability to 'analyse issues, solve problems, make sound judgements and conclusions and provide suggestions, using multiple perspectives, creativity and appropriate thinking skills', and to apply 'relevant knowledge and concepts to contemporary issues' (Section 5.3).

Questions in Paper 1 provide data about contemporary issues in various forms, such as tables of figures, graphs, cartoons and texts, to provide candidates with contexts for analysis in answering questions. Paper 2, which uses stimulus materials, requires candidates to draw on a more extensive range of knowledge and concepts to discuss issues in depth.

The public examination aims at assessing candidates' thinking skills and their ability to apply the knowledge and concepts they have learnt in the curriculum. The assessment objectives related to the public examination are broadly reflected in its various assessment items and question papers. Candidates need to apply relevant knowledge and concepts when making judgements about issues. The examination does not aim at assessing factual knowledge and a key assessment requirement is candidates' ability to transfer their skills and concepts acquired from learning to the task of analysing a variety of contemporary issues.

Paper 1

Question Number	Performance in General
1	Fair
2	Satisfactory
3	Weak

- Question 1
- (a) Most candidates were able to analyse the data, draw on and elaborate on two conclusions about the flow of volunteers based on the Human Development Index by explaining the flow of volunteers within the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programmes. Some candidates also applied the concepts of 'developed countries' and 'developing countries' when applying the Human Development Index. Many candidates cited the numbers of volunteers in the source to support their conclusions. Some candidates unnecessarily provided an explanation for the flow, which was not a requirement of the question.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify some difficulties that volunteers from Hong Kong might face when participating in international volunteer programmes. However, some candidates just copied some relevant content from the sources and gave very brief explanations. Stronger candidates were able to fully address the question by further generalising the difficulties into challenges, taking into consideration the roles of volunteers, the contexts of the places receiving voluntary services and the constraints facing Hong Kong volunteers.

Question 2

(c) The majority of candidates were able to cite relevant sources to explain one argument for and one argument against the statement in the question. However, some candidates did not address the requirements of the question completely and failed to discuss one argument for and one argument against the statement with reference to the concept of citizenship. Some candidates commented on the effectiveness of voluntary programmes to explain why they supported or opposed participating in programmes locally or outside Hong Kong. Some candidates only indicated and compared the merits of local voluntary programmes and programmes outside Hong Kong. As a result, they failed to answer the question accurately. Stronger candidates were able to apply the concept of multiple identities in relation to citizenship in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

(a) The majority of candidates were able to understand the data shown in the source and describe the continuous downward trend in the percentages of most sources of stress over the period 2013 to 2017. They were also able to elaborate on some features of the trend with reference to the source. Some candidates confused 'source of stress' with 'stress level', however, so there were inappropriate elaborations on increases and decreases in stress, for example.

(b) Most candidates were able to identify and elaborate on one of the concerns of the non-governmental organisation about education in Hong Kong with reference to Source B. However, some candidates failed to use the source comprehensively to answer the question. They merely copied some parts from the texts describing the findings of the survey conducted by the organisation, and hardly cited the information in the photograph.

(c) The majority of candidates were able to point out and elaborate on one belief that some people held about the purposes of education from Source C. Most candidates were also able to identify parts of the source that reflected the belief, or reflected it less well. However, some candidates showed a limited understanding of the question 'To what extent is this belief reflected?', and only explained their own standpoint without examining the extent to which the belief is reflected in Sources A and B. These candidates gave the impression that they were structuring their answer using a 'standardised framework' and failed to respond to the crux of the question effectively. Stronger candidates were able to elaborate on the extent to which the belief was reflected by integrating the relevant information from both sources.

Question 3

(a) It seems that the majority of candidates did not completely understand the question, or the sources, so they failed to address its requirements in answering the question. They only cited the sources to explain the difference in the content of the financial compensation schemes for organ donation in the two places. Stronger candidates were able to analyse the sources, compare the outcomes of the introduction of financial compensation in the two places, such as the numbers waiting for donation in the two countries, and explain the possible reason for the difference.

(b) The majority of candidates were unable to present the two controversies arising from the provision of financial compensation to living organ donors. Most candidates were only able to discuss the pros and cons of the provision of such compensation or explain the opinions of different stakeholders. To address this question, candidates had to understand the sources and generalise them, using concepts like 'markets', 'ethics' and 'human rights' to derive explanations such as the damage to donors' health caused by the marketisation of organ donation, the unethical commercialisation of the organ trade and equal human rights for the rich and the poor. Only a small number of candidates were able to grasp the meaning of 'controversy' and discuss the relevant value-judgements.

Paper 2

Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
1	20.2	Weak
2	53.6	Fair
3	26.2	Satisfactory

- Question 1 (a) Most of the candidates were able to explain the problems that the 'left-behind children' faced, such as poor education and lack of parental care. However, many candidates failed to relate them to China's future development. Only candidates with high ability explained the impacts on the future development of China in different areas such as human resources development, economic development and social stability.
- (b) Candidates exhibited difficulties in writing about the term 'community'. Some referred to it as 'society', while some thought it was about the mass media. They did not focus the discussion on the context of a 'modernised society' which set the scene for the discussion. Many of them did not make a comparison between the scene and the community to justify which one should have a greater role in the upbringing of children. Instead, they identified and explained the roles that the community and/or the family should play in the upbringing of children. Only a handful of candidates were able to suggest some substantial services provided by the community and/or family, such as day care services for children, or explain the role of family in maintaining traditional values in a modernised society.
- Question 2 (a) Candidates suggested some reasons why people decided to purchase electric vehicles, such as paying lower taxes and saving money on petrol/diesel. However, many candidates were not able to conceptualise these reasons into factors that might influence people's decisions on whether or not to purchase electric vehicles. Stronger candidates were able to conceptualise factors such as adequacy of support facilities, reliability of electric vehicles, economic cost and environmental consciousness. They were then able to explain how such factors might influence people's decisions.
- (b) Some candidates limited the scope of their discussion to a comparison of the economic incentives with other methods such as education for increasing the use of the means of transport powered by energy sources other than petrol. Some of them provided little discussion on the role of the government in the motor industry and environmental protection. Some weaker candidates did not make any attempt to discuss the question from the perspective of the government's responsibility for environmental protection. There was also inadequate discussion of the means of transport powered by different energy sources. The more able candidates explained why and how economic incentives should be provided by the government from a wider perspective by considering various non-petrol powered means of transport.
- Question 3 (a) Most candidates were able to identify the possible impact on different aspects of quality of life at the personal level but only stronger candidates were able to relate clearly how antimicrobial resistance led to the impact. There was not enough discussion on the impact on the quality of life from the macro-perspective, such as the burden on medical services, economic productivity and life expectancy.
- (b) Candidates showed a reasonable understanding of globalization. However, few candidates were able to identify the characteristic features of globalization and analyse the relationship between these features and the control of epidemic diseases. Stronger candidates were able to suggest some evaluative criteria as a common platform for meaningful analysis and establishing an overall judgement of whether globalization hinders more than facilitates/ facilitates more than hinders the control of epidemic diseases.

General Comments

Paper 1 consisted of data response questions which mainly examined candidates' ability to identify, analyse and apply the sources. Candidates had to read all the information provided by the questions to understand the scope of issues, analyse the complicated and controversial nature of the related factual information, and answer the questions with a comprehensive discussion.

Based on the performance of this year's candidates, there is much room for improvement in their ability to read sources, integrate relevant information provided by questions into answers, determine the scope of issues, define the nature of different types of controversies, and use data to address the questions. Candidates need to read questions carefully to understand and follow all the instructions instead of using some 'standardised frameworks' in answering the questions.

In Paper 2, the overall performance of candidates was stable. Candidates were generally able to answer the questions to a reasonable standard.

In view of the common weaknesses identified in answering Paper 2, it is suggested that candidates refer to specific criteria as a common platform for comparison or evaluation so that they can draw well-justified conclusions. In formulating arguments, candidates should take into consideration the counter-arguments, or weigh the arguments and counter-arguments, to develop a convincing and balanced viewpoint, while paying attention to the logic of arguments. Candidates should also bring in a wider range of perspectives in their discussions. Besides the personal and local perspectives, they should also consider the macro-perspective so that they can reflect upon issues at the societal and global levels.