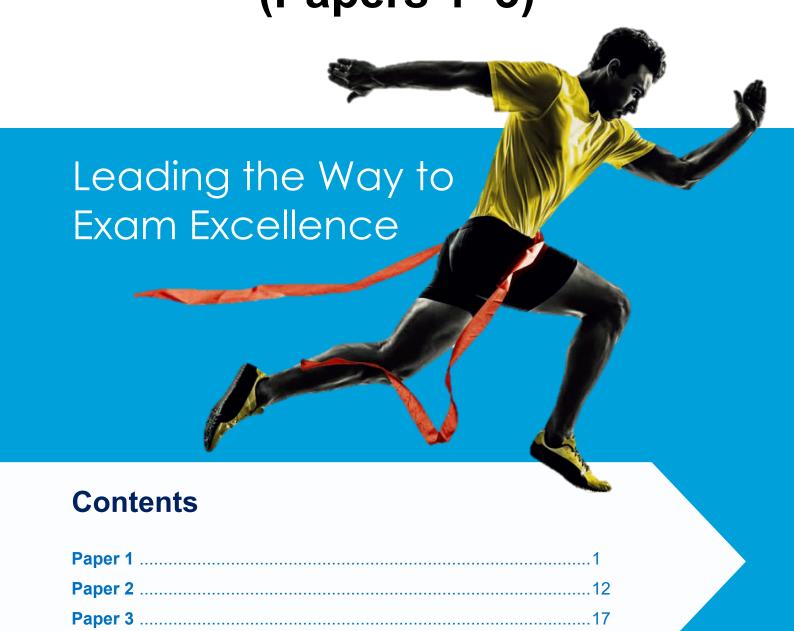


HKDSE English Language Exam Analysis Report 2023 (Papers 1–3)



2023 HKDSE · Paper 1 (Reading)

Overview

	Part A	Par	t B1	Part B2
	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4
Text Type	Article	Article	Article	Excerpts from autobiographical writings
Topic	Flash fiction	Guide	Michelle Obama's childhood	
Title	Flash fiction: writing a story in 1,000 words or less	International Guide Dog Day celebrates the partnership between owner and dog	Hong Kong needs 1,700 guide dogs for the visually impaired, but where can the animals be trained?	_
Source	udemy.com, BBC	dogtime.com	South China Morning Post	People, Becoming
Word Count	1,043	388	641	1,155
Questions	22	11	12	24
Marks	42	19	23	42

Reading Passages



Part A comprises one text: an article on flash fiction and its key features (Text 1). An example of flash fiction—a story about a student who unwittingly enters a science competition—is embedded in the article.

Number of passages: So far, there have been eight papers with one Part A passage (2012, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2022 and 2023), three papers with two (2015, 2016 and 2018) and one paper with three (2021).

Text type: Candidates should be comfortable with reading an article with short sections and multiple (sub-)headings. However, having a story as part of an examination text may be an unfamiliar experience.

Topic: Compared to last year's (the comic industry in Hong Kong), this year's topic is relatively foreign to the average candidate. Since the text deals with English flash fiction, candidates who do not read much may have some trouble grappling with the concepts of 'scene', 'conflict', 'theme', etc., not to mention the story itself.

Level of difficulty: As mentioned above, candidates who do not have a strong reading habit are likely to struggle to comprehend parts of the text. The notions of 'character development' (paragraph 4), 'antagonist' (paragraph 4), 'scene' (paragraph 5), 'conflict' (paragraph 6) and 'moral argument' (paragraph 7) in the context of literature may elude the weaker candidates. The story (*The Big Bang*) is rich in descriptive and figurative language: 'blackened with soot' (paragraph 10), 'smouldering wood and shattered glass' (paragraph 10), 'fixing him with a steely gaze' (paragraph 11), 'barged past' (paragraph 11), 'the pinnacle of my teaching career' (paragraph 12), 'wide-eyed enthusiasm' (paragraph 13), 'scurried around like a pack of lab rats' (paragraph 14) and 'a tear of pride trickled down Professor Snookhorn's cheek' (paragraph 16) are but a few examples.

Rart B1

Part B1 comprises two articles (Text 2 and Text 3) on the topic of guide dogs.

Number of passages: There are two passages in Part B1 this year, which is the same number as last year. Judging from what we have seen in all HKDSE papers except for the first one (2012), the tendency is to have multiple passages in Part B1 to make the reading less daunting to less able candidates.

Text type: The two articles that appear in this year's Part B1 are both reasonably accessible. Text 2 is essentially a collection of three brief stories about guide dogs and their owners; with such clear headings as 'Story 1' and 'Story 2', candidates should find the text easy to follow.

Topic: The concept of guide dogs is familiar to most candidates. Even if some have not come across the English term before, the image of a guide dog with its visually impaired owner provided at the beginning of Text 2 should help. As for Text 3, candidates may not know much about the training of guide dogs and the challenges faced by trainers, but the issues are introduced in easily comprehensible terms.

Level of difficulty: Candidates who attempted Part B1 should have found the passages manageable for the most part, especially Text 2. Text 3 does contain a number of advanced vocabulary items, e.g. 'canine buddy' (paragraph 2), 'commotion' (paragraph 4), 'escalate the matter' (paragraph 4), 'dignified' (paragraph 7), 'rehabilitation organisations' (paragraph 11), but the choice of words is in general on the accessible side.

R Part B2

Part B2 comprises one text: a collection of two excerpts from autobiographical writings of Michelle Obama.

Number of passages: So far, there have been eight papers with one Part B2 passage (2013, 2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2020, 2022 and 2023), two papers with two (2012 and 2018) and two papers with three (2016 and 2021).

Text type: Michelle Obama's writings are stylistically comparable to the examination texts in 2019 and 2020, which had a distinct personal voice and a good deal of sarcasm, etc. Since the writer is recounting her own childhood experiences, the language is naturally more flowery than an article's. This may pose a challenge to even the stronger candidates.

Topic: The two writing excerpts deliver the same message: that children, particularly girls, should be given a voice of their own and supported by people around them so that their 'flame' may remain 'lit'. This is not entirely foreign, though the way in which the message is presented—via relatively lengthy, introspective accounts—could to a certain extent obscure it, as far as the average candidate is concerned.

Level of difficulty: As expected, the Part B2 passage contains a considerable number of advanced vocabulary items, e.g. 'the limelight' (paragraph 2), 'chide' (paragraph 4), 'ornery' (paragraph 4), 'contentious' (paragraph 4), 'bordering on negligent' (paragraph 5), 'rule the roost' (paragraph 5), 'fiddle around' (paragraph 9), 'treason' (paragraph 9), 'attest' (paragraph 10), 'seething' (paragraph 13) and 'feistiness' (paragraph 13). It is possible for candidates to get by without knowing some of these words, though a few questions do presuppose knowledge of the advanced vocabulary.

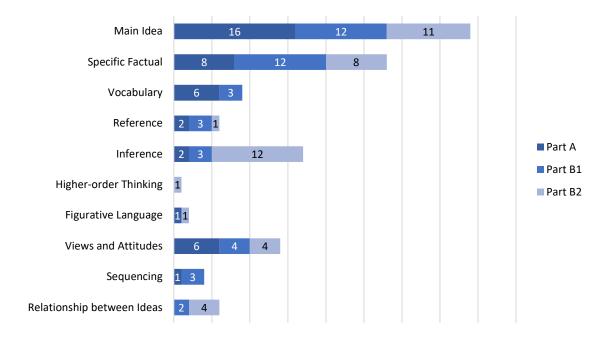
Questions



Question Types

This year, the bulk of the questions are of the main idea or the specific factual kind. Candidates attempting Parts A and B1 do 48 marks' worth of those questions; as for those attempting Parts A and B2, the total number of marks is 45. In Part B2, candidates are also required to draw inferences (12 marks) and identify views and attitudes (4 marks).

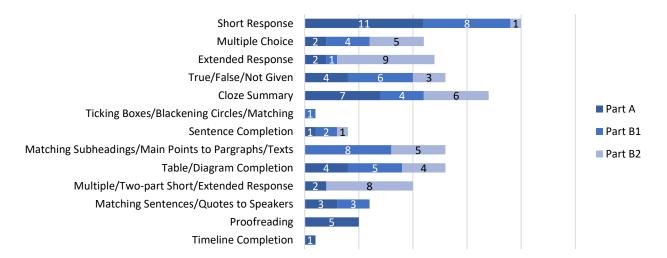
Question Type	Part A [42 marks]	Part B1 [42 marks]	Part B2 [42 marks]
Main Idea	Q1 [3], Q6 [5], Q7 [4], Q14 [4]	Q33 [3], Q36 [4], Q44 [5]	Q47, Q65 [5], Q68 [5]
Specific Factual	Q3, Q11, Q16 [4], Q17, Q18	Q23, Q24 [3], Q25, Q28, Q29, Q32, Q41 [3], Q43	Q48, Q52 [3], Q57, Q62, Q66 [2]
Vocabulary	Q2, Q4, Q5 [3], Q10	Q31 [2], Q37	_
Reference	Q8, Q13	Q26, Q34, Q38	Q51
Inference	Q9, Q19	Q39, Q40, Q42	Q46, Q49 [2], Q54, Q55 [2], Q56, Q61, Q63 [2], Q67 [2]
Higher-order Thinking	_	_	Q69
Figurative Language	Q12	_	Q59
Views and Attitudes	Q15, Q21 [2], Q22 [3]	Q35, Q45 [3]	Q50, Q58, Q60, Q64
Sequencing	Q20	Q27 [3]	_
Relationship between Ideas	-	Q30 [2]	Q53 [4]



Question Formats

As expected, the 2023 Paper 1 is comprised mainly of short-response and multiple-choice questions. A significant number of extended-response questions are set in Part B2, taking up a total of 16 marks in that section. Some of the question formats prominently featured in 2022, such as sentence completion, table/diagram completion and ticking boxes/blackening circles/matching (Part B1 only), do not feature as heavily this year. Do note that table/diagram completion remains an important question format as it appears in Parts A, B1 and B2.

Question Format	Part A [42 marks]	Part B1 [42 marks]	Part B2 [42 marks]
Short Response	Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5 [3], Q8, Q10, Q12, Q13, Q15	Q26, Q29, Q31 [2], Q34, Q37, Q38, Q43	Q59
Multiple Choice	Q9, Q11	Q28, Q32, Q35, Q40	Q48, Q50, Q51, Q57, Q62
Extended Response	Q17, Q19	Q42	Q54, Q56, Q58, Q60, Q61, Q64, Q66 [2], Q69
True/False/Not Given	Q16 [4]	Q24 [3], Q41 [3]	Q52 [3]
Cloze Summary	Q1 [3], Q14 [4]	Q36 [4]	Q47, Q65 [5]
Ticking Boxes/Blackening Circles/Matching	_	Q25	_
Sentence Completion	Q18	Q23, Q39	Q46
Matching Subheadings/Main Points to Paragraphs/Texts	-	Q33 [3], Q44 [5]	Q68 [5]
Table/Diagram Completion	Q7 [4]	Q27 [3], Q30 [2]	Q53 [4]
Multiple/ Two-part Short/Extended Response	Q21 [2]	_	_
Matching Sentences/ Quotes to Speakers	Q22 [3]	Q45 [3]	_
Proofreading	Q6 [5]	_	_
Timeline Completion	Q20	_	Q49 [2], Q55 [2], Q63 [2], Q67 [2]



Noteworthy Questions and Recommendations

R Part A

Question(s)	Analysis	Recommendation(s)
6	This is a main idea question in the format of a proofreading exercise. Item (iv) is interesting as candidates have to correct 'unless' to 'if' in order to be awarded a mark. Such grammatical changes are relatively uncommon as proofreading exercises in the HKDSE usually test students' understanding of content.	Traditional proofreading practices, e.g. HKALE past papers, could be assigned to high achievers.
7, 14	Questions 7 and 14 are main idea questions. Both require candidates to fill in each blank with one word taken <i>verbatim</i> from the paragraph, in line with recent trends.	Students should be reminded to read the instructions carefully to ascertain whether they can lift the answers verbatim from the text, or whether they might have to change the word form to arrive at the correct answer.
13, 15, 19	Question 13 is a reference question whereas Question 19 is an inference question. To be awarded a mark in each of these questions, candidates essentially have to say the unsaid and 'complete' the meaning of a sentence: 'Shocked faces gazed'—whose faces? 'Too late'—too late to do what? 'A tear of pride'—pride in what?	Students can be encouraged not only to understand the implications of sentences but also to express them in clear written English so as to be prepared for such questions in the HKDSE.
21	This is a views justification question in the format of an extended response. Candidates need to identify whether the given story is a good example of flash fiction and provide reasons. In attempting this question, they are expected to draw upon the criteria laid down by the article and decide whether they are met. This requires a good general understanding of the story as well as analytical skills.	_

Rart B1

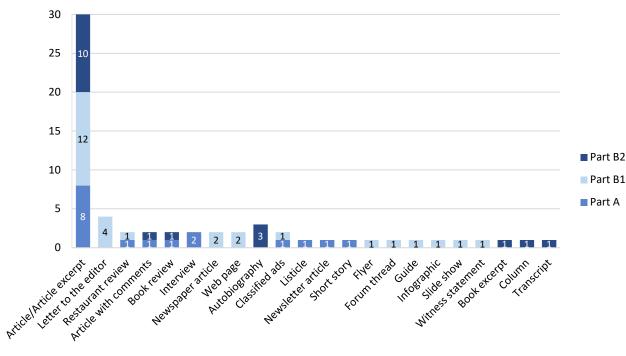
Question(s)	Analysis	Recommendation(s)
31	This is a vocabulary question. Weaker candidates may be a little confused by its wordings as 'refer to' is used but they are not asked to supply the referent; instead, they have to identify phrases that have an identical meaning as 'guide dogs' in the text.	Students can be introduced to these 'reverse reference questions' in class.
35	This is a views and attitudes question. It is actually not necessary to refer to the text since the question tests students' comprehension of the line's literal meaning.	_
44	This is a main idea question in the format of a matching exercise. There is some novelty as candidates are given sentences describing the purpose of each paragraph (e.g. 'the paragraph shows the limitations of') and asked to write the corresponding paragraph numbers. This is different from the usual practice of providing headings for candidates to match to paragraphs.	_

Rart B2

Question(s)	Analysis	Recommendation(s)
49	This is an inference question. Having learnt about the personality of the writer's mother from reading paragraphs 2 to 4, candidates make sensible guesses as to what she would do in two hypothetical scenarios. This puts their ability to draw inferences to the test.	_
53	This is a relationship between ideas question. Candidates are given a list of general terms, such as 'a parenting lesson' and 'a misunderstanding', and are then asked to find corresponding examples in the designated paragraphs. They may be tempted to copy large chunks but that would not go down well; for their answer to the sub-question 'a misunderstanding', for example, must be a misunderstanding, not the whole story.	Students ought to read the instructions carefully and only supply answers that meet the specific requirements of each question. Indiscriminate copying should be discouraged.
59, 60, 61, 64, 67	Question 59 is a figurative language question; Questions 60, 61 and 64 are views and attitudes questions; whereas Question 67 is a specific factual question. What these questions have in common is an emphasis on lexical understanding: 'treason' in Question 59, 'chastened' in Question 60, 'unyielding' in Question 61, 'seething' in Question 64 and 'sassy' in Question 67. In many cases, it is nearly impossible for one who does not know the vocabulary in question to offer a satisfactory answer.	Students should, of course, be encouraged to read widely to develop a stronger foundation in vocabulary and usage.
65	This is a main idea question set in the format of a cloze summary, perhaps the hardest in years. Except for item (i) whose answer can be lifted from the paragraph, candidates must draw on their own vocabulary to fill in the blanks grammatically. For instance, items (iii) and (iv) require candidates to change 'stubborn' to 'adamant/determined to do things her own way' and 'refusing to fulfil/grant/follow her great-aunt's wishes' respectively. This is cognitively very demanding.	High achievers can engage themselves in rewriting exercises where they try to express the same meaning in different words so as to build up their vocabulary. HKALE past papers may also help.

HKDSE Paper 1 Statistics (2012–2023)

Text Types



Number of Texts

Year	Part A	Part B1	Part B2
2012	1	1	2
2013	1	2	1
2014	1	2	1
2015	2	2	1
2016	2	5	3
2017	1	3	1
2018	2	2	2
2019	1	3	1
2020	1	2	1
2021	3	2	3
2022	1	2	1
2023	1	2	1
Average	1.4	2.3	1.5

Reading Passages Word Count

Year	Part A	Part B1	Part B2		
2012	994	888	1,103 (194+909)		
2013	1,088	818 (412+406)	1,090		
2014	956	894 (378+516)	1,105		
2015	1,022 (729+293)	914 (225+689)	1,114 (997+117)		
2016	988 (237+751)	881 (65+90+299+117+310)	1,116 (380+444+292)		
2017	1,057	768 (354+25+389)	1,190		
2018	1,090 (160+930)	1,066 (581+485)	1,213 (447+766)		
2019	1,088	971 (170+421+380)	1,163		
2020	1,033	1,052 (362+690)	1,217		
2021	1,000 (338+278+384)	994 (687+307)	1,037 (139+379+519)		
2022	1,175	1,035 (188+847)	1,177		
2023	1,043	1,029 (388+641)	1,155		
Average	1,045	943	1,140		

Number of Questions & Marks

Vasu	Par	t A	Par	t B1	Part B2		
Year	Questions	Marks	Questions	Marks	Questions	Marks	
2012	20	47	20	45	33	46	
2013	25	41	20	41	20	41	
2014	30	47	29	41	25	41	
2015	31	40	24	40	22	40	
2016	18	41	28	43	29	43	
2017	21	41	22	43	15	43	
2018	22	42	23	42	26	42	
2019	18	42	23	42	25	42	
2020	19	42	22	42	21	42	
2021	27	42	19	42	20	42	
2022	23	42	19	42	23	42	
2023	22	42	23	42	24	42	
Average	23	42	23	42	24	42	

Question Types

Parts A+B1

Question Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Thematic	2	1	1	2	0	0	3	2	2	0	2	0
Main Idea	6	3	1	12	7	2	4	6	7	18	28	28
Specific Factual	13	21	28	10	17	25	15	11	36	26	16	20
Vocabulary	4	2	4	4	3	8	6	4	4	7	7	9
Reference	3	3	6	5	4	2	6	6	5	5	9	5
Inference	10	12	16	12	7	2	8	6	8	11	7	5
Higher-order Thinking	0	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	1	0
Figurative Language	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	4	4	1	2	1
Views and Attitudes	1	0	0	4	5	1	0	1	9	10	11	10
Sequencing	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	4	0	0	4
Language Usage	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship between Ideas	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	5	4	1	2

Parts A+B2

Question Type	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Thematic	1	1	0	3	0	1	2	1	0	4	0	0
Main Idea	9	6	3	13	8	2	4	4	11	8	29	27
Specific Factual	10	14	20	3	13	21	8	9	21	16	7	16
Vocabulary	8	2	1	5	5	2	8	6	2	8	8	6
Reference	4	3	9	5	2	1	4	7	5	5	7	3
Inference	14	12	18	13	12	9	14	10	12	19	3	14
Higher-order Thinking	3	2	1	2	0	3	0	0	1	2	1	1
Figurative Language	1	2	3	3	3	2	7	3	6	1	3	2
Views and Attitudes	2	0	0	5	3	1	0	2	13	1	11	10
Sequencing	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	1
Language Usage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Relationship between Ideas	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9	20	14	4

Question Formats

Parts A+B1

Question Format	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Short Response	10	13	26	30	13	12	14	11	9	14	15	19
Multiple Choice	11	9	11	7	13	13	11	10	11	17	10	6
Extended Response	1	4	5	2	6	7	7	1	3	4	6	3
True/False/Not Given	2	4	4	2	2	2	2	3	10	10	3	10
Cloze Summary	2	3	0	1	4	3	4	3	10	17	3	11
Ticking Boxes/Blackening Circles/Matching	1	3	1	0	1	2	3	3	7	9	12	1
Sentence Completion	3	1	2	0	0	0	2	4	4	1	4	3
Matching Subheadings/ Main Points to Paragraphs/Texts	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	8
Labelling Pictures	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Table/Diagram Completion	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	2	11	8	17	9
Multiple/ Two-part Short/Extended Response	0	0	0	0	1	5	0	1	2	4	4	2
Sequencing	2	1	2	1	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	0
Matching Sentences/Quotes to Speakers	2	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	9	0	5	6
Proofreading	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	4	0	1	5
Timeline Completion	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1

Parts A+B2

	2042	2012	2044	2045	2046	2047	2040	2012	2020	2024	2022	2022
Question Format	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Short Response	17	11	26	24	17	6	17	13	9	16	13	12
Multiple Choice	15	11	11	6	13	9	11	9	11	15	10	7
Extended Response	9	7	4	5	7	7	9	6	7	4	7	11
True/False/Not Given	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	8	12	3	7
Cloze Summary	2	4	1	2	1	1	5	2	5	8	6	13
Ticking Boxes/Blackening Circles/Matching	0	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	12	0	1	0
Sentence Completion	1	0	2	0	2	2	1	2	1	0	10	2
Matching Subheadings/ Main Points to Paragraphs/Texts	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	2	4	3	0	5
Labelling Pictures	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Table/Diagram Completion	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	1	10	20	18	8
Multiple/ Two-part Short/Extended Response	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	3	4	6	5	10
Sequencing	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0
Matching Sentences/Quotes to Speakers	1	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	5	0	6	3
Proofreading	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	4	0	1	5
Timeline Completion	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1

2023 HKDSE · Paper 2 (Writing)

Part A

Question 1

Question	Text Type	Role	Target Audience	Register
1	Application form	An employee of Planet Smart	Management of a shopping centre	Formal / Semi-formal

This year, candidates are required to fill out an application form on behalf of Planet Smart, a company which sells eco-friendly products. The application in question concerns setting up a pop-up shop in a shopping centre, the aim of which is to promote the company's products to new customers. To assist candidates in understanding the concept of a 'pop-up shop', which may be foreign to the weaker ones, a picture of such a shop is provided. The form is divided into three parts, namely 'Company Profile', 'Best-selling Product' and 'In-store Event', with short explanatory notes next to each heading to guide candidates.

Content-wise, one major hurdle for the candidates is showing an understanding of what 'eco-friendly' means. The company logo on the application form includes a light bulb and a plant—probably intended to hint at the 'green' nature of its products—but strictly speaking the term 'eco-friendly' is not further explained. As a result of this, lower-ability candidates may end up producing pieces bordering on irrelevancy, where the background of the company, the best-selling product and the in-store event are not directly related to environmental conservation. Apart from addressing the question's contextual requirements, candidates also ought to demonstrate their creativity by coming up with believable details in each of the sections. For example, when introducing Planet Smart, they might want to mention the company's aims, founder(s), growth, operations, etc. In the section on the 'Best-selling Product', candidates who touch upon its appearance, functions and any unique features will likely be awarded high marks.

The text type of an application form is not entirely familiar to candidates and this may be a source of trouble as far as language style is concerned. In fact, this application form is in some ways similar to a formal proposal, since the aim is to make suggestions to someone in authority and persuade him/her to accept them. Although it is acceptable, even desirable, for the product to be described in glowing terms, the text is *not* to be treated as a promotional leaflet for general consumption. As such, rhetorical questions (e.g. 'Do you know what our best-selling product is?') or conversational language (e.g. 'You may wonder what events we will organize in our pop-up shop') are unsuitable. Candidates can show an awareness of the text type by expressing hope that the application will be approved, e.g. 'If our application is approved, we are confident that ...', 'it is hoped that Planet Smart and your shopping centre may work together and ...').

Part A General Observations and Recommendations

Part A is a guided short writing task. Apart from the words that make up the question proper, candidates are almost always provided with additional prompts that mandate or suggest ideas to be included. The headings this year, the map of an adventure farm in 2022, the poster for an annual school fair in 2021 and the aspects of a dining experience (food, service, dining environment and price) in 2020 are but a few examples. Regardless of their ability, candidates should first ensure that they have 'ticked all the boxes' and there are no big 'gaps' in their content, before going beyond the prompt to demonstrate their creativity. As is the case with all compositions, candidates should adjust their choice of language based on the text type they are required to produce.

Part B

Question	Text Type	Role	Target Audience	Register
2	Article	Not specified	Readers of <i>International Travel</i> magazine	Semi-formal
3	Article	A school reporter	Fellow students (Readers of the school magazine)	Semi-formal
4	Essay	Not specified	Not specified	Formal
5	Essay	Not specified	Not specified	Formal / Semi-formal
6	Diary entry	A drama student	The writer himself/herself	Informal
7	News article	A reporter for the <i>Hong Kong Daily</i>	Readers of the <i>Hong Kong</i> <i>Daily</i>	Semi-formal
8	Letter to the editor	Not specified	Editors and readers of a newspaper/magazine	Formal / Semi-formal
9	Feature article	A report for <i>Restaurant Business</i> magazine	Readers of <i>Restaurant Business</i> magazine	Formal

Question 2: Sport Communication

For this question, candidates have to write an article for a travel magazine to share with tourists the benefits of tai chi. Since the context provided is minimal, a number of approaches are possible. Candidates may, for example, produce a less formal article with three body paragraphs focusing on the positive impact of tai chi on one's physical health, emotional well-being, etc. Higher-achievers may be inclined to include interviews with tai chi masters and/or ordinary men and women who enjoy tai chi; in this case the text produced would be similar to a magazine feature.

Although in-depth knowledge of tai chi and the use of specialized vocabulary are not necessary—the readership being tourists who are likely to be ignorant of tai chi altogether—many candidates may find this question challenging. Tai chi is more popular among older people and thus candidates may not have tried it themselves. Without even a basic understanding of the nature of tai chi, they may describe the practice in very vague terms and struggle to be awarded high marks in content.

Question 3: Popular Culture

This is another 'article' question. Taking on the role of a school reporter who has attended the Anime Expo and interviewed some cosplayers, candidates write an article on the event. Compared to Question 2, this task is somewhat more 'restrictive' as it mandates the inclusion of interviews. Candidates may write in the style of a magazine feature to explore the event from multiple angles (e.g. what draws the cosplayers to the practice, how they view their hobby, what companies did to attract fans). Equally acceptable is a more personal approach akin to a column, where the writer recounts his/her first-hand experience of visiting the event and speaking to the cosplayers and then expresses his/her emotions and/or views.

This question may be attractive to candidates who are themselves interested in anime and cosplaying, but they should note that details of specific anime series are not necessary. Instead, they should focus their attention on the interviewees, the event and the wider phenomenon of cosplay. If writing a magazine feature, overly subjective remarks (e.g. 'he looked gorgeous', 'she was sensational') ought to be avoided.

Question 4: Debating

Question 4 requires candidates to produce an essay discussing the pros and cons of monitoring employees in the workplace. Two-sided argumentative essay questions have not appeared in local public examinations for nearly twenty years, so this marks a new text type for the HKDSE. Candidates should ensure that both sides of the argument are given equal attention (e.g. two body paragraphs each) and avoid showing overt support for or opposition to the practice in the first and last paragraphs.

The prompt includes a question that reads: 'How do you think [monitoring employees] affects productivity and job satisfaction?' This actually provides two ready-made points for candidates and lowers the level of difficulty of the otherwise slightly daunting task. Candidates may argue that constant surveillance creates a sense of distrust in the office and adversely affects job satisfaction, that proper monitoring can increase productivity for employees will reduce time-wasting behaviour, and so on. As for language, candidates should understand that a formal style is expected in essays and employ corresponding features, such as the passive voice.

Question 5: Short Stories

In a significant departure from past HKDSE papers (except 2015 Q9 in which candidates were asked to write an email), this year's Short Stories question is not a short story but an essay. Candidates have to draw upon their experiences of reading fairy tales and fables and share the lessons they have learnt from these stories. While any sensible lesson is acceptable, the prompt does provide plenty of examples to guide candidates, including 'find love', 'survive family conflicts', 'defeat the rich and powerful', etc.

Candidates may be uncertain as to the style in which they should write. The fact that an 'essay' is required may suggest that the text should be formal and objective, but the task specifically calls for a personal take on fairy tales and fables. Therefore the 'essay' may resemble a personal reflection complete with descriptions of actual stories and the impact they have had on the candidate. Weaker candidates' work may be characterized by a lack of concrete examples, as they may not be able to name any story relevant to the topic.

Question 6: Drama

Question 6 is a diary entry about performing an impromptu comedy sketch in a drama class. The word 'improvisation' may appear intimidating to some candidates but the idea is explained in simpler terms ('without a script or any preparation time'). Candidates are given considerable freedom in terms of what points to include and how to structure them. For instance, the performance could be a success, a failure or a mixture of both, so long as there is an element of comedy and humour involved.

To score high on this question, candidates should give specific details about the comedy sketch, e.g. how the plot and characters were developed, what jokes were incorporated into the performance. In addition, they should spend time reflecting on the experience, such as acknowledging shortcomings and discussing how it can be done better next time. It would be preferable to include some vocabulary pertaining to drama.

Question 7: Social Issues

Candidates are required to write a news article about people's views towards retirement. The results of a survey are summarized in the prompt to narrow the scope of the question: candidates should focus on individuals who wish to work beyond the retirement age of 65 and young people who prefer retiring early. Given that this content requirement is met, candidates have considerable freedom as to how to structure their text. They can compile a news report with the survey results as a starting point, in which case the journalistic 'inverted pyramid' structure (more important information first) may be employed. They may write a feature article which focuses on the general phenomenon and incorporates multiple interviews. A more expository style where candidates analyse the issue objectively and include few to no quotes is also possible.

Regardless of the approach taken, candidates need a good understanding of the issue of retirement to do well. Those mentioning that older people want a sense of purpose and fulfilment from having a job, whereas younger people derive that satisfaction elsewhere, will probably be awarded high marks. Nonetheless, since candidates have not started their careers at all, they may find the topic foreign and struggle to generate sensible ideas.

Question 8: Poems and Songs

Question 8 is a letter to the editor on whether songs created by artificial intelligence (AI) should be allowed to enter song-writing competitions. The notion of AI should be familiar to the candidates given the rise of ChatGPT in recent months; however, youngsters may not have paid much attention to the ethical and practical implications. For instance, should candidates decide to argue against the proposition, they may write that AI is in essence unoriginal as it draws inspiration from past input, that AI prevents budding (human) songwriters from achieving success, and so on.

Candidates should also note that letters to the editor are slightly different from formal essays in terms of style. It is possible for them to give themselves a 'role', e.g. that of a songwriter or a pop music fan, and speak from 'experience' when constructing arguments. Formal or semi-formal registers are acceptable.

Question 9: Workplace Communication

This is the last of the four 'article' questions in 2023. The context is perhaps more accessible as candidates are instructed to write an article about running a restaurant during the pandemic; at the very least they should be aware of the difficulties, having been exposed to all sorts of 'social distancing' measures in the past two or three years. According to the prompt, the article should be based on an interview with a restaurant owner. Thus, direct quotes and indirect speech ought to be included.

Again, candidates are given some flexibility in terms of content and organization. Although the pandemic was a cataclysmic event for many restaurants, candidates who also manage to discuss its positive impact on the business model, such as an expansion to the takeaway market, the introduction of automated ordering systems and a heightened awareness of hygiene, would be able to offer a more nuanced account. Candidates may also showcase their creativity by coming up with interesting stories as to how the restaurant owner they interviewed responded to and survived (or succumbed to) the pandemic.

Part B General Observations and Recommendations

- Pictorial prompts: In recent years, pictures have featured heavily in Part B of the writing paper. Many are cosmetic, but a few do provide candidates with a starting point. In 2023, Question 3 on the Anime Expo included a picture from that event which serves to help students associate the name ('Anime Expo') with the event. Question 9 on running a restaurant during the pandemic has an image depicting restaurant staff donning a mask and inviting patrons to place orders by scanning a QR code. These ideas could be addressed by candidates in their articles.
- A 'general' orientation: From the 2024 examination onwards, there will only be a total of four questions and they will be 'de-linked' from the elective modules. If the sample paper is an accurate guide, it appears that the questions will provide students with a greater degree of flexibility (e.g. Question 2: 'Write an article about Star Ferry') in terms of interpretation. In this respect, many of the Part B questions in 2023 are similar. For example, candidates who attempt Question 2, 3, 7 and 9 are free to structure their article as they see fit, as long as the given context is addressed. This could pose difficulties to weaker students who work better with clear guidelines ('do this, then do that').

2023 HKDSE · Paper 3 (Listening and Integrated Skills)

Part A

Part A of the 2023 Paper 3 consists of four short listening tasks revolving around a YouTube channel called *Extraordinary Hong Kong People*.

Task	Context	Question Formats	Task Type	Marks
1	Two YouTuber sisters interviewing their mother	Q&A, MCQ, cloze completion	Note sheet	13
2	An interview with a marble racing contestant	Gap-filling, table	Note sheet	12
3	A discussion between an Internet cat influencer and the chair of a cat shelter	Gap-filling, Q&A	Note sheet	14
4	A conversation about the development of emojis	Q&A, table	Note sheet	13

R Task 1

Task 1 is the easiest task in Part A. Candidates listen to two YouTubers (who are sisters) interviewing their mother. Question formats include question-and-answer, multiple choice and cloze completion. Answers are usually not more than three words long. The clear enunciation and slow delivery of the speakers, as well as the frequent repetition of key information, mean that most candidates should have no trouble following the conversation.

Question(s)	Analysis	Recommendation(s)
5	The question reads, 'What type of aircraft does she fly?' Some candidates may expect to hear 'type' or 'aircraft' but these words do not appear in the recording. Instead, 'helicopter pilot'—indicating that the answer is 'helicopter'—is mentioned twice. Candidates need to know that a 'helicopter' is a type of aircraft in order to answer this question correctly.	Candidates should read the instructions carefully and avoid including redundant information that may lead to a loss of marks. No mark can be awarded to those who write 'helicopter pilot' in the blank.

R Task 2

In Task 2, candidates listen to an interview with Ranbir Singh, who talks about a new pastime called marble racing. Similar to Task 1, there is a substantial amount of repetition to aid candidates. Again, answers are usually not more than three words long. For example, the blanks in the table 'Marble Olympic Events' (Questions 19-24) require only one single word each. In many cases, the speakers use the same wordings as those in the Question-Answer Book; candidates should listen for keywords before and/or after each blank and be prepared to make notes once they hear those cues.

R Task 3

Task 3 involves a discussion with the owner of an Internet cat influencer and the chair of the Hong Kong Cat Shelter. Almost half of the questions involve gap-filling, and on some occasions longer responses are necessary. This means some of the questions resemble those that are more commonly found in Task 4.

Question(s)	Analysis	Recommendation(s)
27, 32	For Question 27, the host first gives '4.1 million' but this figure is soon corrected to '4.12 million' by the owner of Mr Suess. Similarly, for Question 32, 'getting gifts' is first mentioned but a brief exchange that ensues ('So he's popular for getting gifts?' followed by 'Well, no, it's not just getting the gifts; he's famous for opening the gifts!') reveals that 'opening gifts' is the essential part of the answer.	Candidates need to watch out for information that is given but then revised or corrected.
35	Candidates may be unfamiliar with the term 'attention span'.	_
40	Candidates may have trouble copying the entire line: 'cat owners may abandon their cat once it stops being popular / making money'.	Candidates should make good use of the margins to take notes. Insisting on filling in the blank at the first instance may not be beneficial.

Task 4

Task 4 is the most difficult task in Part A. Candidates listen to a conversation about the development of emojis online. As has been the norm since 2015, this task contains items in the question-and-answer format. Content is delivered at near-natural speed in a monologue. Students are likely to struggle with the amount of note-taking required.

Question(s)	Analysis	Recommendation(s)
43	Candidates may have trouble copying the entire line: 'a picture used in texting to convey an emotion or an idea'.	See Question 40
45, 48, 53	Candidates may be unfamiliar with the words 'flirt' (Question 45), 'standardize' (Question 48) and 'suspicious' (Question 53).	_
49, 50, 51, 52, 53	Although these items may appear a little daunting, they can be done without too much difficulty if candidates can pay attention to the hints embedded in the recording. For example, the answer to Question 49 (under 'Concern') occurs after 'the first issue of concern'; that to Question 50 (under 'Consequence') occurs after 'and as a result of this'—'result' and 'consequence' are interchangeable here.	Candidates can be trained in listening for cause and effect. They should be aware of the various ways in which cause and effect can be expressed by native speakers.

Part B

Part B of the 2023 Paper 3 presents candidates with a workplace situation. Candidates assume the role of Nico Lin, who works for the Internet TV company *Teen NetChefTV*. Parts B1 and B2 consist of three tasks each and it appears that the practice of allocating one 'Task Completion' mark to each content point has been maintained.

Task	Context	Text Type	Word Limit	Marks
5	Completing a fact file with information about a talent competition	Fact file	_	16
6	Responding to an email about the filming of a cookery show	Email	120	18
7	Writing an email to a chef to suggest changes of a recipe	Email	120	19
8	Writing an announcement in support of a chef of the company	Announcement	200	19
9	Writing an email about the training courses of the company's employees	Email	150	17
10	Writing a script for a video to promote a new cookery show	Script	120	17

Listening Note-taking Sheet

Candidates listen to a recorded online staff meeting attended by show producer Ms Winnie Tang, Director Mr Dante Cruz and Marketing Manager Mr Archie Li. This year, there are four note-headings, compared to five in 2022. Under one of the note-headings, there are two bulleted sub-headings to further assist candidates. The note-heading 'Golden Sun Tower Private Kitchen complaints' is relevant to both Part B1 and Part B2, proving that each note-heading is not always relevant to either Part B1 or Part B2.

Rart B1 Data File

The Part B1 Data File contains nine items, two more than its Part B2 counterpart. Although the reading load appears to be heavier than past years, a number of sources do not contain a lot of text, including two group chats (page 7) and a recipe (page 8). These should be easy to understand even for the less able candidates. This year's instructional email is also relatively candidate-friendly as the 'boss' specifies all the sources that are useful in completing each task (e.g. 'Check the email from Ms Ma, the Filming Team group chat, and listen to the online staff meeting'). In addition, each of the group chats pertains only to one task, reducing the cognitive load in terms of the extraction of content points.

Part B1 Task 5

With the exception of 2020 and 2022, Task 5 is a guided task that requires no extended writing. This can serve as an easier task to ease candidates into this part of the examination.

This year, candidates have to complete a fact file which provides prospective participants with information about a talent competition called *Live, Study, Cook*. Since the content points are clearly identified by the fact file and candidates only have to write a few words lifted *verbatim* from the Data File or the recording at a time (without having to manipulate the tone, register or style), the task should pose no trouble. Some less able candidates who tend to struggle when following the recording may lose 'Task Completion' marks because some of the answers come from the listening note-taking sheet.

Part B1 Task 6

Task 6 is a formal email in response to the concerns raised by Ms Betty Ma, the owner of Golden Sun Tower Private Kitchen, as regards filming another cookery show. In general, the 'Task Completion' marks are straightforward, though some may have trouble with the points related to the kitchen 'fire' as they are all given in the recording.

Since Ms Ma is expressing her dissatisfaction with the hiccups that occurred during the previous filming session, candidates must write in a tone that is polite and perhaps slightly deferential. They should apologize where appropriate and reassure Ms Ma that her complaints are being taken seriously. The most challenging part of this task concerns money: candidates need to make clear that only HK\$5,000 can be offered (as opposed to the HK\$10,000 that Ms Ma is requesting) without causing offence. Owing to the above challenges, a majority of Part B1 candidates are likely to struggle with obtaining full 'Appropriacy' marks.

Part B1 Task 7

Task 7 is an email to a chef suggesting that he make some changes to his recipe, based on comments from the Head Chef and some viewers. A good deal of synthesis is required as candidates must constantly refer to three sources—the original recipe, viewers' comments and the Head Chef's email (presenting the verdict)—in locating the 'Task Completion' marks. Having said that, the task is not unmanageable since the Head Chef's email contains bullet points that provide a structure for the email and allow candidates to obtain some 'Coherence and Organisation' marks. Moreover, all content points are derived in the same way, that is to say, understanding the recipe, going through the viewers' comments and confirming the changes by checking the Head Chef's email.

Candidates may choose to write formally or semi-formally as both are acceptable in writing an email to a colleague. Regardless of their choice, they should not attempt to lecture the chef; ideas should be presented as suggestions, not demands or criticisms.

Part B2 Data File

The Part B2 Data File is considerably more complex than that for Part B1. In line with usual practice, the instructional email does not specify all sources that candidates have to consult to complete each task, instead suggesting a 'starting point' only. Relatively long texts include a news article (page 5), an Intranet page on corporate training (page 9) and a series of reviews on corporate training courses (page 10).

R Part B2 Task 8

Candidates have to write an announcement in support of chef William Puddle to be posted on the company website. They should first identify the criticisms levelled at William from the Big Cheese Celebrity Food Gossip article (page 5), then refer to the chat between William and a staff member (page 7) as well as the listening note-taking sheet for the explanations. In terms of 'Task Completion', Task 8 is perhaps the easiest in Part B2 since it can be completed based on information from only two sources, for the most part.

It may be a little tricky to score high on 'Appropriacy'. While candidates can choose to produce a formal or a semi-formal message—the latter would be geared more towards fans—they ought to be prudent when they acknowledge William's mistake and clarify the misunderstandings. They can be apologetic but not overly so; emphasising that similar hiccups will certainly not occur in future shows is key. When clarifying, a confrontational style (e.g. 'This is a ridiculous accusation as the whole video is about cooking onions!') should be avoided.

Part B2 Task 9

Task 9 is probably the most challenging Part B2 task in recent memory, mainly because candidates' 'fate' hinges upon their choice of training courses to be included in the text. Candidates have to write an email to all staff highlighting three training courses and describing each. The full list of seven courses is provided in the Intranet page on page 9, so what candidates are expected to do is select three out of seven, based on the hints given in the listening note-taking sheet, the staff weekly email (page 8) and reviews from previous participants (page 10). For instance, according to the recording, chefs must attend fire safety training. But is it 'Advanced Fire Safety', 'Hazard Awareness' or 'The Fire Chef's Manual'? To arrive at a conclusion, candidates should refer to page 8—fire safety training is for 'all staff, not just chefs'—and page 10, which indicates that 'Advanced Fire Safety' (for management only) and 'The Fire Chef's Manual' (not for indoor kitchens) are unsuitable. Given the difficulty in selecting the correct courses, it is entirely possible for certain candidates to obtain zero marks in 'Task Completion' despite having written a full page.

R Part B2 Task 10

Task 10 is a script for a video to promote the new cookery show *Viewer's Choice*. In terms of 'Coherence and Organisation', candidates should have little trouble as the storyboard (page 6) presents the intended sequence of points very clearly. Candidates are expected to copy from the storyboard, while adding details from other sources, namely the listening note-taking sheet, the chat (page 7) and the staff weekly email (page 8). Some ability to synthesise information is expected, such as 'fruit pie' (page 6) and 'choice between apple and blueberry filling' (page 7) constituting one content point, but the task is on the whole less daunting compared to the previous one.

Candidates should note that the purpose of the text is to stimulate interest in the new programme and therefore an engaging style is preferable. They should not employ overly formal cohesive devices, such as 'as a result' and 'in conclusion'.

HKDSE Paper 3 Statistics (2012–2023)

Mark Distribution

			Part A				Par	t B1			Par	t B2	
Year	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Total	Task 5	Task 6	Task 7	Total	Task 8	Task 9	Task 10	Total
2012	13	13	14	13	53	12	18	18	48	18	18	18	54
2013	14	13	15	16	58	18	18	18	54	18	18	18	54
2014	12	15	15	18	60	18	18	18	54	18	18	18	54
2015	17	14	16	11	58	18	18	18	54	18	18	18	54
2016	15	16	16	11	58	18	18	18	54	18	18	18	54
2017	13	13	15	13	54	17	19	17	53	22	18	13	53
2018	13	13	13	12	51	14	18	20	52	22	13	17	52
2019	14	13	13	13	53	16	19	18	53	18	17	18	53
2020	16	13	13	10	52	18	18	17	53	18	18	17	53
2021	16	15	12	13	56	17	18	18	53	16	19	18	53
2022	13	12	14	13	52	18	18	17	53	18	17	18	53
2023	13	13	14	13	53	16	18	19	53	19	17	17	53
Average	14.2	13.6	14.2	13	54.8	16.7	18.2	18.0	52.8	18.6	17.4	17.3	53.3

Task Completion Marks & Content Points (Part B)

			Par	t B1			Part B2					
Year	Tas	sk 5	Tas	sk 6	Tas	sk 7	Tas	sk 8	Tas	sk 9	Tas	k 10
	TC	CPs	TC	CPs	TC	CPs	TC	CPs	TC	CPs	TC	CPs
2012	14	14	9	12	9	15	9	15	9	13	9	14
2013	16	16	9	9	9	18	9	13	9	9	9	13
2014	14	14	9	9	9	10	9	15	9	11	9	10
2015	16	16	9	10	9	12	9	12	9	11	9	13
2016	16	16	9	9	9	10	9	9	9	11	9	12
2017	13	13	10	10	8	8	13	13	9	9	7	7
2018	12	12	9	9	11	11	13	13	7	7	8	8
2019	14	14	10	10	9	9	9	9	8	8	9	9
2020	9	9	9	9	14	14	9	9	9	9	8	8
2021	15	15	9	9	9	9	7	7	10	10	9	9
2022	9	9	9	9	14	14	9	9	8	8	9	9
2023	14	14	9	9	10	10	10	10	8	8	8	8

Word Limit (Part B)

Voor		Par	t B1		Part B2				
Year	Task 5	Task 5 Task 6		Total	Task 8	Task 9	Task 10	Total	
2012	_	120	150	270	150	200	200	550	
2013	_	120	150	270	150	120	200	470	
2014	_	120	150	270	150	150	200	500	
2015	_	120	150	270	120	180	200	500	
2016	_	120	150	270	120	150	200	470	
2017	_	120	120	240	220	150	100	470	
2018	_	120	150	270	220	120	150	490	
2019	_	150	100	250	180	120	200	500	
2020	100	150	_	250	150	150	200	500	
2021	_	120	150	270	120	180	150	450	
2022	100	120	_	220	150	170	180	500	
2023	_	120	120	240	200	150	120	470	

Data File Items & Word Count (Part B)

Vacu	Par	t B1	Par	t B2	
Year	Data File Items	Word Count	Data File Items	Word Count	
2012	7	1,070	8	1,768	
2013	9	1,254	10	1,866	
2014	9	1,517	13	1,902	
2015	11	1,440	10	2,087	
2016	9	1,256	10	2,009	
2017	9	1,396	11	2,310	
2018	7	1,224	8	1,787	
2019	10	1,139	8	1,941	
2020	10	1,433	10	1,901	
2021	9	1,342	9	2,078	
2022	8	1,228	11	1,902	
2023	10	1,499	8	2,377	
Average	9.0	1,317	9.7	1,994	