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	Satisfactory
2	Fair
3	Fair

Question 1

(a) A lot of candidates were able to describe the changes in the distribution of votes for each political camp. Stronger candidates further pointed out the overall flow of votes from the traditional political camps (pro-establishment, traditional pan-democrats, radical pan-democrats) to the newly-emerged political camps (localists, middle ground), or that the distribution of votes has become fragmentised across various political camps.

(b) Many candidates were able to identify two major features of the composition of the Legislative Council, namely the dominance of members with political affiliations and the dominance of the pro-establishment camp. A common weakness exhibited by candidates was their inability to make full use of the data in the sources to describe the above mentioned features. The data on geographical and functional constituencies were not fully utilised in their answers.

(c) Many candidates were able to cite one argument for and one argument against the statement in the question. Stronger candidates used relevant concepts in their analyses such as separation/fusion of powers, executive-led, and party politics. The major weaknesses of the candidates included the failure to elaborate on their answers using data from different sources. Most candidates used Source C while neglecting Sources A and B. Some of them copied sentences directly from Source C without much elaboration, so their answers were not well supported by examples or data.

Question 2 (a) Most candidates were able to identify a concern that was generally related to environmental pollution. However, they did not go into detail on the possible impact on the environment, as well as how this may arouse the concern of an environmentalist by making use of Source A. Some weaker candidates copied the data from the source without elaboration.

(b) A common weakness was the lack of understanding of the data in the source and the question. Quite a lot of candidates were not able to analyse Table 1 in a comprehensive manner. They were unable to focus on the gist of the question or identify the major features related to 'the flow of plastic waste', such as China being the middle income level country importing the highest amount of plastic waste; high income level countries (with the exception of Thailand) exporting the highest amount of plastic waste to the middle income level country (China).

(c) A major weakness was the failure to make use of the sources to formulate arguments on the possible environmental impacts brought about by the import bans on plastic waste in the global context, in terms of international collaboration, interdependence and the well-being of mankind. While most candidates attempted to elaborate on some positive and negative environmental impacts that might be brought about by the import bans, quite a number of them focused on the impact on Asian countries/regions rather than that at 'a global level'. Some candidates also wrongly placed the focus of their answers on the economic and social impacts, instead of the environmental aspect.

Question 3 (a) Some candidates failed to compare Figures 1 and 2 in Source A. The question required candidates to compare the number of foreign students in China from different regions and the number of Confucius Institutes in different regions. However, many candidates just described separately the features in Figures 1 and 2 without comparing the data in the two figures.

(b) Candidates were generally able to describe, in relation to China's global influence, some pros and/or cons of attracting foreign students to study in China and establishing Confucius Institutes. However, most candidates did not establish a conceptual framework for the answer by identifying different aspects of global influence as a platform for discussion. Therefore, they failed to compare the effectiveness of attracting foreign students to study in China and establishing Confucius Institutes in enhancing China's global influence. Some candidates just copied the data from the sources without doing a meaningful analysis in support of their arguments.

Question Number	Popularity %	Performance in General
1	14.8	Weak
2	25.3	Fair
3	59.9	Satisfactory

Question 1 **(a)** Candidates had a basic understanding of the difficulties faced by patients and their families in general, but most candidates had insufficient knowledge about rare diseases. Also, their understanding of the requirements of the question was inadequate. This question required candidates to point out the types of difficulties encountered by patients with rare diseases and their families and to explain why overcoming such difficulties would pose a challenge to them. Only by doing so could candidates discuss the kinds of assistance offered by different stakeholders in society to help the patients face the challenges. However, most of the candidates only cited information from the question to point out how the patients and their families could be helped. They also failed to carefully consider the actual situation regarding rare diseases. Therefore, they provided rather vague and general explanations regarding the service providers, targets, and means of offering assistance. They also failed to comprehensively consider different stakeholders in society.

(b) Candidates' performance in this sub-question was quite weak. They did not grasp the gist of the question, which required giving priority to one factor out of many. Therefore, they had to compare various factors and justify the one that should be given priority in decision making for the future direction of medical research. Candidates who mechanically used some 'standard sets of factors', such as 'political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental factors', missed the key requirements of the question. Most candidates only discussed superficially a number of factors, or tried to explain one factor without clearly identifying the associations between the factor(s) and medical research. Consequently, they were unable to show the importance of a certain factor in deciding the future direction of medical research, which resulted in unsatisfactory answers.

Question 2 **(a)** Stronger candidates were able to use relevant concepts like sustainable development and cultural heritage, and different perspectives on measuring quality of life, to explain the controversies. However, some candidates failed to specifically pinpoint the controversies over the conservation of historic buildings. The controversies discussed by most candidates focused on the argument between environmental conservation and economic development, and lacked multiple perspectives. They merely 'criticised' the conservation of historic buildings, instead of explaining the controversy. The key points were the various justifications put forward by stakeholders involved in the conservation of historic buildings in Hong Kong (such as various organisations, the public, the community, and society), as well as the discussion of the disagreements and contradictions among the arguments of the stakeholders. Candidates usually referred to the examples given in the source, but they seldom cited other appropriate examples in their explanations.

(b) Stronger candidates were able to use appropriate examples of urban development projects to discuss whether cultural conservation should take priority. However, many candidates failed to demonstrate an understanding of a broad definition of the concept of 'cultural conservation'. As such, their discussions were mostly focused on the conservation of historic buildings. Some candidates only focused on discussing the importance of cultural conservation, but they failed to analyse in detail and discuss whether priority should be given to it. As for candidates' understanding of urban development projects, their performance was mixed. Some candidates mistakenly considered that the focus of the question was on prioritising cultural conservation and urban development, thus affecting the quality of their answers.

Question 3 (a) Most candidates were able to display an understanding of K-pop culture, and offered many specific examples, such as Korean singing and dancing groups and fan clubs, to explain how K-pop became globalized. Candidates had a general understanding of the globalized world and the characteristics of globalization. They were able to offer examples to explain the effects of marketisation and corporatisation. They were also capable of explaining how the development of information technology and global transport led to the worldwide dissemination of K-pop culture. However, some weaker candidates were only able to briefly account for the advantages and disadvantages of globalization and the spread of K-pop, failing to analyse the relationship between the two.

(b) 'Fandom' participation refers to participation in 'group' activities. Candidates were required to explain how the participation in various 'fandom' activities affects the personal development of young people. Stronger candidates were able to cite examples of different 'fandoms', such as international and local fan clubs supporting ball games, hikers' clubs, and e-sports clubs. They were able to justify from various perspectives, including psychological development, social ability, academic performance, career development, and time management, whether 'fandom' participation enhances or hinders the personal development of young people in Hong Kong. However, some candidates only managed to explain the current situation of fandom and discussed how the participation might bring about advantages and disadvantages to society and young people. They neither accounted for the impacts of the participation on their personal development nor provided specific examples to justify their own stances and viewpoints, which resulted in lower marks.

General Comments

In Paper 1, candidates demonstrated a basic mastery of data analysis and made reasonable attempts to use the data to answer the questions. The overall performance of candidates in Question 1 was the best among the three questions, demonstrating that candidates had a reasonable understanding of the election results in the 2016 Legislative Council election and how different interests were represented in the Legislative Council. Candidates found Questions 2 and 3 more difficult. Many candidates failed to compare and made less than full use of the data in the tables/figures, and therefore scored lower marks in these questions. Candidates are advised to enhance their skills in making generalisations and in the interpretation and application of data to formulate arguments around concepts such as 'governance' and 'global influence'.

Paper 2 consists of extended response questions, with sources on issues offering stimuli for thinking. The questions themselves suggest the direction and approach to answering them, so they should be read carefully. Candidates should go beyond the given sources and formulate arguments with additional examples and relevant concepts so as to demonstrate high-level thinking ability. When answering question (b), some candidates did not generalise from relevant examples or deploy relevant concepts in response to the questions, resulting in unsatisfactory answers. As these thinking skills are very important for doing well in Paper 2, candidates should enhance their skills in these areas.