



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



CAMBRIDGE
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education
Advanced Level Higher 1 (2026)**

General Paper (Syllabus 8881)

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INTRODUCTION

The General Paper syllabus is designed to equip students with critical and inventive thinking skills and the use of the English language for effective communication. The syllabus requires students to actively explore a range of key issues of local, regional and global significance. These issues cut across disciplines and are explored from diverse perspectives. Students develop fair consideration of, and respect for different perspectives, appreciate the interrelationship of ideas, and become more adept at interpreting and evaluating the complexities of the world we live in. At the same time, they develop the disposition of active inquiry, the habit of reflection, and the willingness to convey their views in a balanced and thoughtful manner. Students are also encouraged to contribute constructively towards their communities. Underpinning all these are sound values which will help guide students in making responsible decisions in life and for life.

AIMS

The syllabus aims to enable candidates to achieve the following outcomes:

- Understand better the world and themselves by fostering a critical awareness of continuity and change in the human experience
- Broaden their global outlook and deepen their understanding of local issues as well as how issues of regional and global importance relate to Singapore
- Appreciate the interrelationship of ideas across time, space and disciplines
- Develop critical and inventive thinking skills
- Develop critical reading skills and engage in independent research; and
- Develop the skills of communicating clearly, accurately and effectively using the English language.

ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES

Candidates are assessed on their ability to:

3.1 AO1: CRITICAL AND INVENTIVE THINKING

- 3.1.1 analyse arguments to understand the parts of the given texts and how the parts relate to one another to convey an overall meaning
- 3.1.2 analyse and evaluate issues of local, regional and global significance, and their implications on the individual and society (where relevant)
- 3.1.3 evaluate and synthesise arguments and evidence across texts
- 3.1.4 formulate cogent, informed and insightful arguments
- 3.1.5 make observations of trends and relationships as well as connections across issues and ideas, and apply or adapt ideas to other contexts

3.2 AO2: COMMUNICATION

- 3.2.1 demonstrate proficient and effective use of the English language appropriate to the purpose, context and audience
- 3.2.2 present ideas, information, arguments and perspectives in an accurate, coherent and succinct manner
- 3.2.3 use the accepted conventions of spelling, punctuation and grammar
- 3.2.4 use and demonstrate understanding of a range of vocabulary

SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

Paper	Description	Marks	Weighting	Duration
Paper 1 Essay	<p>This paper comprises 8 questions.</p> <p>Candidates write between 500 and 800 words on 1 question of their choice.</p> <p>Candidates examine issues of local, regional and global significance.</p>	<p>Content: 30</p> <p>Language: 20</p> <p>Total mark: 50</p>	50%	1 hour 30 minutes
Paper 2 Comprehension	<p>This paper comprises 3 different passages that allow for comparative analysis. The length of the passages will be approximately 1200 words in total.</p> <p>Candidates answer <u>all</u> questions set on the passages.</p> <p>There will be a total of 8 or 9 questions in this paper.</p> <p>Questions cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • literal comprehension, inference, analysis, evaluation and synthesis of ideas based on Passage 1 (9–11 marks) • summary based on Passage 2 (8 marks) • connections of ideas across two passages: Passages 1 and 3, and Passages 2 and 3 (4–6 marks) • application based on a theme related to the reading passages (12 marks) 	<p>Content: 35</p> <p>Language: 15 <i>(based on the responses to the summary and application questions)</i></p> <p>Total mark: 50</p>	50%	1 hour 30 minutes
TOTAL		100	100%	3 hours

PAPER DESCRIPTION

Candidates are required to sit two papers. Paper 1 and Paper 2 will be taken at separate sittings.

Paper 1: Essay

- Eight questions will be set, of which candidates answer one in 500 to 800 words. This will allow candidates the opportunity to express a cogent, informed and insightful response.
- Candidates examine issues of local, regional and global significance, drawing on current affairs as well as general knowledge related to:
 - society and culture
 - economics
 - politics
 - the arts and humanities
 - science and technology
 - the environment
- Questions will be general in nature and require candidates to draw on their knowledge from across disciplines to show an awareness of significant local/regional/global issues and demonstrate understanding at a conceptual level.

Paper 2: Comprehension

- Three passages of continuous prose will be set. The passages will allow for comparative analysis. The length of the passages will be approximately 1200 words in total. Each passage will be presented with paragraph numbers in the left margin and line numbers in the right margin.
- There will be a range of questions on the passages, requiring candidates to demonstrate their ability to comprehend, infer, analyse, evaluate, summarise and synthesise.
- Candidates will also be required to synthesise information and respond to concepts or ideas conveyed. They will apply their understanding and interpretation of the passages as a whole, in response to a task derived from the text.

BAND DESCRIPTORS

Band Descriptors for the assessment of Paper 1 Content

Band 5 (25–30 marks)

- The **terms and scope of the question are clearly understood** and defined, **with some subtlety**.
- **Engagement with the question at a conceptual level is clearly evident**. Nuanced and measured observations of trends and/or relationships are made. Connections between issues and ideas are identified and explained.
- **Fully appropriate and wide-ranging illustration** is used and developed throughout to support the points made within the argument.
- **Fully relevant**, addressing the requirements of the question throughout.
- There is a **well-balanced discussion** and consideration of differing perspectives and contexts, demonstrating **developed analysis and evaluation of the issues**.
- The **conclusion is measured and nuanced**.

Overall, the response demonstrates full engagement with the question, offering insightful comment and a depth of argument, supported by wide-ranging illustrations. If the examples are consistently evaluated, observations frequently nuanced and connections between issues identified and fully explained, award marks of 28 to 30. If examples are mostly evaluated, observations nuanced, and explanations of connections are made but not fully developed, award marks of 25 to 27.

Band 4 (19–24 marks)

- The **terms and scope of the question are understood** and defined.
- **Some engagement with the question at a conceptual level**, making some measured observations of trends and/or relationships. Connections between issues and ideas are identified.
- **Appropriate and frequent illustration** is used to support the points made within the argument.
- **Relevant**, with almost all content addressing the requirements of the question.
- There is a **balanced discussion** and consideration of differing perspectives, demonstrating **analysis and evaluation** of the issues.
- The **conclusion is well supported**.

Overall, the response demonstrates sustained clarity of relevant and detailed discussion, using appropriate illustration to support the ideas. If examples are wide in range and clear connections are made between issues, with frequent evaluation of arguments, award marks of 22 to 24. If some connections and evaluative comments are evident, award marks of 19 to 21.

Band 3 (13–18 marks)

- The **terms and scope of the question are generally understood**. This may not be explicitly defined but can be inferred from the response.
- **Occasional demonstration of conceptual understanding**. This may not be explicit but is evident from the selection of ideas and examples used. Observations of trends and/or relationships are generalised, assertive and/or descriptive. The connections made between issues and ideas are implicit.
- **Appropriate illustration** is used to support the points made within the argument, but this is narrow in range and/or underdeveloped.
- **Mostly relevant**, with content generally addressing the requirements of the question, but perhaps with some repetition or occasional discussion of the topic or theme more generally.
- There is an **attempt at balance** and reference to differing perspectives, demonstrating **some analysis** of the issues.
- The **conclusion** is likely to be **assertive or a summary** of the argument.

Overall, the response demonstrates competence, but this is not sustained throughout. If there is evidence of analysis, as well as some evidence of implied connections between issues, award marks of 16 to 18. If there is a focus on the question, but observation and analysis are more generalised and underdeveloped, award marks of 13 to 15.

Band 2 (7–12 marks)

- The **terms and scope of the question are partially understood**. The response addresses the **general topic rather than the specific question**.
- **Limited demonstration of conceptual understanding** evident from the selection of ideas and examples used. Limited awareness of trends and/or relationships with few or no connections of ideas made or implied.
- **Use of illustration** is limited in range and undeveloped. Examples may not be consistently relevant to the argument.
- **Some evidence of relevance** which addresses a limited range of general points raised by the question topic or theme.
- There is **limited attempt at balance** and little reference to differing perspectives, with **limited analysis** of the issues.
- The **conclusion** is likely to be **implicit** and brief, with little support.

Overall, the response demonstrates limited clarity of argument and relevance may not be sustained. Basic illustration is offered with little development. If an argument and some developed illustration are attempted, but cogency is uneven, award marks of 10 to 12. If a partial argument and/or undeveloped illustration is evident, award marks of 7 to 9.

Band 1 (1–6 marks)

- The **terms and scope of the question are not understood**.
- **No demonstration of conceptual understanding**. Ideas demonstrate little to no awareness of trends, relationships or connections.
- **Little to no clear use of illustration**. Ideas and examples are superficial and lack relevance.
- **Little to no evidence of relevance**. The response rarely addresses the demands of the question.
- There is **little attempt at balance** or reference to differing perspectives, with **little analysis** of the issues.
- The **conclusion** may be **absent or simply asserting an opinion**.

Overall, the response achieves little coherent discussion. Illustration is minimal and/or offers little support to any line of argument. If occasional ideas and information are offered which relate to the wider topic, award marks of 4 to 6. If little relevant content is evident, award marks of 1 to 3.

A mark of 0

should be given only when nothing in the response meets any of the criteria.

Additional marking guidance for CONTENT

‘Your society’ questions

Answers to ‘your society’ or a specified society (Singapore) question need to be rooted in a specific society. While it is likely this would be Singapore, not all candidates are established Singaporean nationals so they may discuss ‘their society’ or experience outside of Singapore. This is an acceptable approach. Contrasts with other societies may also be relevant when answering these questions, as long as the primary focus remains rooted in the specified society.

Conceptual understanding

For the purposes of assessing this skill within this syllabus, the definition of this term is as follows:

- make observations of trends and relationships as well as connections across issues and ideas
- apply or adapt ideas to other contexts where appropriate and relevant, for example, changes in time and/or place
- analyse and evaluate issues of local, regional and global significance, and their implications on the individual and society (where relevant).

Band Descriptors for the assessment of Paper 1 Language

Band 5 (17–20 marks)

Excellent linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:

- very few errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; meaning is not impeded
- varied and complex sentence structure
- choice of vocabulary is sophisticated and wide in range, with nuanced and convincing language
- paragraphing is coherent, making use of a range of linking devices and logical sequencing

Overall, the response demonstrates assured use of language throughout, with very few errors, and with sophisticated vocabulary, expression and structures used appropriately.

Band 4 (13–16 marks)

Very good linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:

- few serious errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar; meaning is not impeded
- good variety of sentence structure
- choice of vocabulary is varied and consistently appropriate
- effective paragraphing and some variety of linking devices

Overall, the response demonstrates controlled use of language, with few serious errors, and with varied vocabulary, expression and structures largely used appropriately. Meaning is clear throughout.

Band 3 (9–12 marks)

Sound linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:

- errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar may be frequent, but meaning is not significantly impeded
- some attempt at variety of sentence structure; this may not always be successful
- choice of vocabulary is mostly appropriate
- paragraphing and linking devices are present but may be repetitive; there is some sequencing of ideas

Overall, the response is characterised by a general level of competence, with meaning not significantly impeded. Attempts to use varied vocabulary, expression and structures may be present but flawed.

Band 2 (5–8 marks)

Limited linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:

- frequent spelling, punctuation and grammar errors of various types; meaning is occasionally impeded
- limited variety of sentence structure; this may not always be successful
- vocabulary is limited in range or words may be occasionally used incorrectly / in the wrong context
- paragraphing and linking devices are basic; the sequencing of ideas may be difficult to follow

Overall, the response is characterised by a high frequency of (basic) errors and the meaning is not securely communicated. Some re-reading may be required for meaning to be discerned.

Band 1 (1–4 marks)

Weak linguistic ability and organisation of ideas:

- weak spelling, punctuation and grammar which regularly impede meaning
- few sentences showing control or accuracy
- vocabulary is basic and words are frequently used incorrectly / in the wrong context
- there is little attempt to organise or sequence ideas

Overall, the response is characterised by significant incidence of errors, resulting in severe breakdown of meaning. Substantial re-reading may be required for meaning to be discerned.

A mark of 0

should be given only when nothing in the response meets any of the criteria.