



Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment

## **Guidelines for Users (PolyU Staff)**

**2018-19**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Overview

The Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment (DELTA) was developed by a team of language assessment experts from three universities in Hong Kong – the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Lingnan University of Hong Kong and City University of Hong Kong. The DELTA is a web-based English language assessment system that serves a diagnostic function for English learners' self-assessment.

The DELTA provides all stakeholders with valuable information on which decisions can be made about language enhancement provision, both by learners individually and by institutions. It is important that learners have an awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses in English so that they can engage with and ultimately manage their own language learning and the itemized nature of the DELTA report helps them greatly in this regard (see the section on DELTA Reports). Learners can then target their learning and make much better use of their time.

Learners can take the DELTA at intervals and use the results to make improvements in their overall proficiency. In other words, they will be able to 'track' their progress.

## Key Features

### Composition

The DELTA consists of four components:

1. Listening
2. Vocabulary
3. Reading
4. Grammar

All questions follow a multiple-choice question format with 4 options to choose from. The content of the DELTA is both general and academically-oriented so as to measure the language skills of users in universities. The four components are described in detail in Chapters 3 – 6 of these Guidelines.

### Test Delivery

DELTA is a computer-based assessment that is delivered through a secure network at each university test centre. Learners take the DELTA in a computer or language lab under supervision. Learners can enrol to take the DELTA through the DELTA website, e.g.



### **The DELTA (for staff) website of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

#### **Accessing the DELTA Report**

After taking the DELTA, learners are notified by email when their DELTA Report is available (normally within a week from the test date). Using their account, they can view the results of their performance and download and/or print the Report. Please refer to “Scoring” in this chapter for details about the DELTA Report.

#### **DELTA Tracking**

The first time that learners take the DELTA, they receive a general-level test that is designed to allow them to demonstrate their strengths and weaknesses in English. Each time learners retake the DELTA, they receive a combination of texts and items that are targeted to their proficiency level as determined by their performance previously. In this way, learners will find the DELTA suitable for their

proficiency level. The DELTA tests and associated systems contribute to the development of learners as independent learners and constitute a key element in the area of blended learning,

## Structure

The DELTA assesses four language components or skills – Listening, Vocabulary, Reading and Grammar. The assessment lasts 40 minutes. Each component (except Grammar and Vocabulary) consists of a number of parts. The table below shows the test structure. An *item* refers to a multiple-choice question.

Component	Parts	Composition	Difficulty	Time allowed
Listening	Part 1	1 Recording + 4–6 items	Easy	10–15 minutes
	Part 2	1 Recording + 6–8 items	Medium	
Vocabulary		5–8 Items	A range	25–30 minutes
Reading	Part 1	1 Text + 6–8 items	Medium	
	Part 2	1 Text + 6–8 items	Medium	
Grammar		1 Text + 10–15 items	A range	

### The structure of the DELTA assessment

A DELTA assessment is constructed by the DELTA system to the structure shown above. The Listening and Reading components consist of two parts and the Grammar component consists of one part. The DELTA system calculates the total number of items in these three components and then adds items to the Vocabulary component such that the total number of items on the assessment equals fifty.

## Scoring

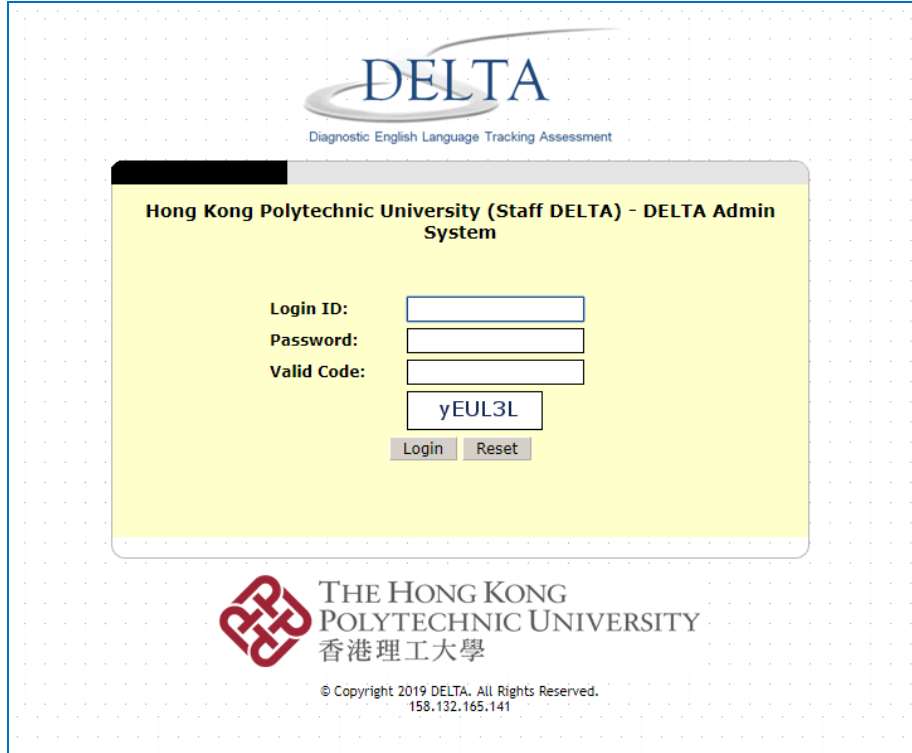
All items in the DELTA are machine scored. Each item contains the following information:

1. item difficulty
2. language subskill

All items are calibrated using live test data. The **item difficulty** of each item answered correctly contributes to the learner's overall proficiency or **DELTA Measure**. The **language subskills** tested by each item are recorded in the learner's **DELTA Report**. Statements of learner's strengths and weaknesses in the language subskills are based on the item difficulty relative to the learner's proficiency. In other words, items that are of a lower difficulty level than the learner's proficiency are those that the learner would be expected to answer correctly. If they are not answered correctly, they indicate a possible weakness in that particular subskill.

## The DELTA Report

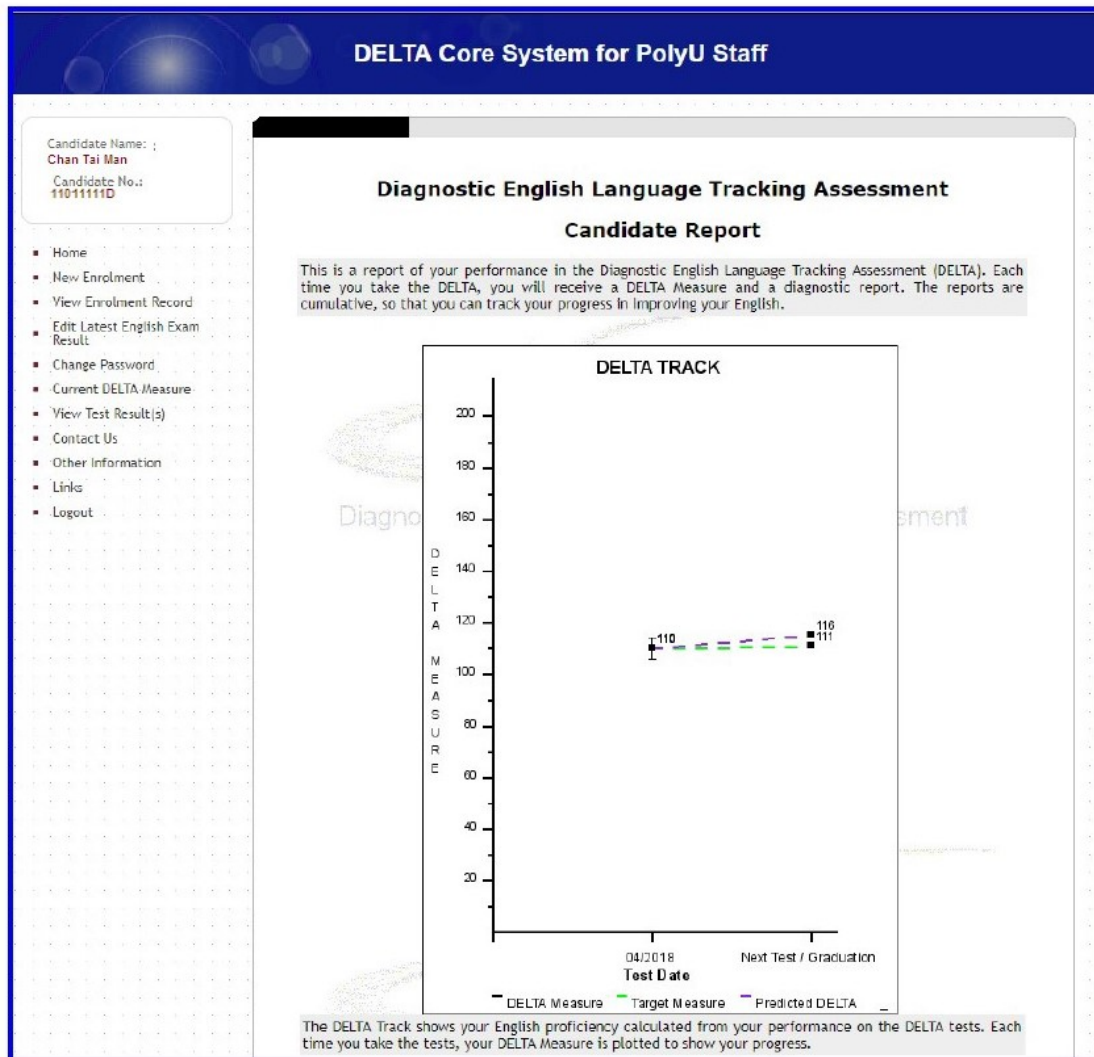
The login page for candidates for the DELTA Admin System at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University is shown below:



The screenshot shows the login interface for the DELTA Admin System. At the top, the DELTA logo is displayed with the text "Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment" below it. The main heading reads "Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Staff DELTA) - DELTA Admin System". The login form includes three input fields: "Login ID:", "Password:", and "Valid Code:". The "Valid Code:" field contains the text "yEUL3L". Below the input fields are two buttons: "Login" and "Reset". At the bottom, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University logo is shown, along with the text "THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY" and "香港理工大學". A copyright notice at the very bottom states "© Copyright 2019 DELTA. All Rights Reserved. 158,132,165,141".

### The DELTA Admin System login page

From here, learners can access the DELTA Admin System to carry out a number of different functions such as enrol for a test session, check their enrolment status and view their DELTA results. Clicking on View Test Results will open the learner's DELTA Report as shown below.

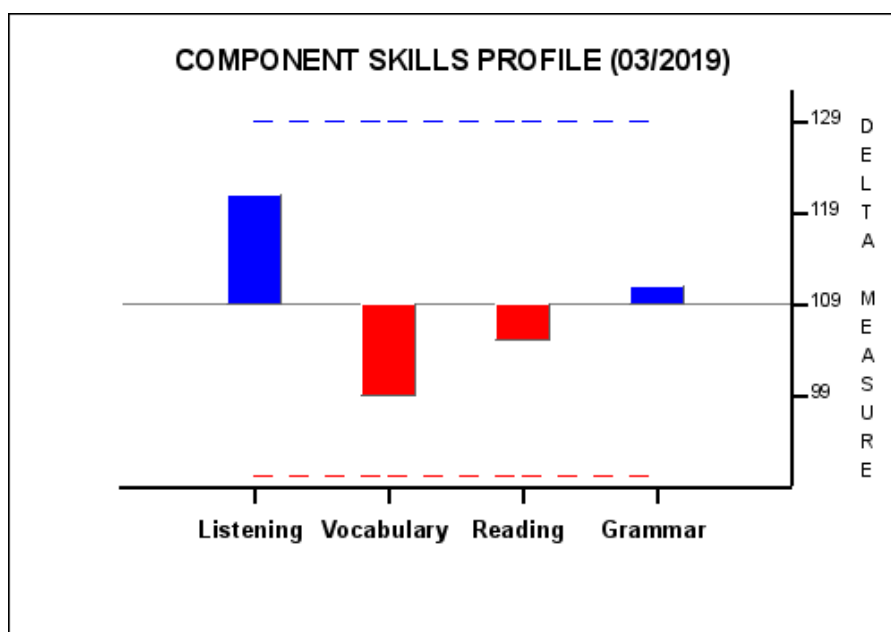


### The first page of a learner's DELTA report showing the DELTA Measure attained and the DELTA Track

The first page of the DELTA Report shows a learner's DELTA Measure, which is a scaled score corresponding to the overall English language proficiency. The DELTA Measure is indicated by a point and an error bar. All measurements are subject to a certain degree of error. The DELTA Measure is normally accurate to within  $\pm 3$  points.

The first page also shows the **DELTA Track**, which plots a learner's DELTA Measure at the time that they took the DELTA and then plots that learner's **Predicted DELTA Measure** the next time that they take the DELTA, or at graduation, whichever comes first. The Predicted DELTA Measure is calculated based on available information in the system, i.e. the learner's previous performance and other learners' (with similar characteristics including stage of degree, discipline studied, etc) performance. Also plotted is the **Target DELTA Measure**, which the learner inputs him/herself. The default setting for this is current DELTA Measure plus 1. Over time, the DELTA Track will grow to show the learner's progress in English language learning.

The next feature of the DELTA Report is the **Component Skills Profile**, shown below.



### The DELTA Report Component Skills Profile

The Component Skills Profile shows the contributions that the score on each component makes to the DELTA Measure. This gives an indication of relative strength and weakness. In the example above, the learner is relatively stronger in reading and listening than s/he is in vocabulary and grammar. The broken lines in blue (above DELTA Measure) and red (below DELTA Measure) show statistically important boundaries. Learners whose score bar for any component reaches below the red broken line should pay urgent attention to that component.

By clicking on the score bar for each of the components in the Component Skills Profile or by simply scrolling down, the learner can view individual reports on each component that show the sub skills tested and how the learner performed in each sub skill in the **Component Diagnostic Reports**, shown below.

Listening			
Subskills tested	Text Type	Theme	
✓ Understand information and make an inference	TV/Radio interview	Health sciences	
✗ Infer the speaker's reasoning	TV/Radio interview	Health sciences	
✓ Understand information and make an inference			
✓ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas			
✓ Infer the speaker's reasoning			
DELTA 109			
✗ Understand information and make an inference	TV/Radio interview	Health sciences	
✗ Identify specific information	News reports	Services	
✓ Identify specific information			
✓ Identify specific information			
✓ Identify specific information			
✓ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas			
✓ Understand information and make an inference			

The report for Listening above indicates subskills to work on and provides links to specific learning resources. You can find resources for improving your listening skills in general at <http://ic.ac.uk/edu/ikc/20listening/>.

Reading			
Subskills tested	Text Type	Theme	
✓ Identify specific information	Feature articles	Education	
✗ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas	Feature articles	Health sciences	
✗ Understand information and make an inference	Academic articles	Education	
✗ Understand grammatical relationships of words or phrases across text	Academic articles	Education	
✓ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas	Feature articles	Health sciences	
✗ Understand information and make an inference	Feature articles	Health sciences	
DELTA 109			
✗ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas	Feature articles	Health sciences	
✗ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas	Academic articles	Education	
✗ Identify specific information	Academic articles	Education	
✓ Identify specific information			
✓ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas			
✗ Understand main ideas and supportive ideas	Feature articles	Health sciences	

The report for Reading above indicates subskills to work on and provides links to specific learning resources. You can find resources for improving your reading skills in general at <http://ic.ac.uk/edu/ikc/20reading/>.



Grammar		
	Subskills tested	Example
More	Preposition	It was <u>late</u> to be home (on) for a test.
	Subjunctive mood	It is <u>important</u> (w) we participate in extracurricular activities in university.
	Phrasal verb	She (surprised) <u>SURPRISED</u> THE AUDIENCE with the quality of her presentation.
	Transitive verb	
Difficulty	Report form	
	Correct structure	The new artist is related to the <u>old</u> .
	Modal	<u>One</u> <u>can</u> go to the supermarket to buy groceries. <u>Should</u> I <u>NOT</u> go to have a resident nurse?
	Discourse marker	
	Gerund	
	Preposition	
	Verb formation	
	Verb	
	Report form	
Less	Determiner	
	Connective	

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This report for Grammar above indicates subskills to work on. In the second column, examples are provided for the incorrect items. The error is in brackets and the correct form is in capital letters. Click on the highlighted subskills to access resources to help you improve these subskills. You can find resources for improving your writing skills in general at <https://elsc.polyu.edu.hk/elt/grammar>

Vocabulary	
	Academic Word Sublist
More	AWL Sublist 1
	AWL Sublist 2
	AWL Sublist 3
	AWL Sublist 4
	AWL Sublist 5
	AWL Sublist 6
	AWL Sublist 7
	AWL Sublist 8
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## Chapter 2: Preparation

### Test Preparation

Learners can prepare for the DELTA by making sure they are familiar with the test format, deciding when to take the DELTA, setting their target DELTA Measure and creating a study programme to ensure that they reach their target.

### Test Format

The structure of the DELTA is shown on page 5. Test items are multiple choice consisting of four options. More details of the test items and the format of each section of the DELTA are given in Chapters 3–6.

### Deciding when to take the DELTA

The DELTA is used in different ways in different institutions. For example, learners may need to take the DELTA as a requirement of their institution; or the DELTA may be a component of an English course or programme that they are taking. The DELTA may also be available for learners to take on a voluntary basis. Learners should make sure that they are aware of their institution's requirements or regulations regarding the DELTA and when they should or can take it. They may contact their DELTA administrator or look at the DELTA website of their institution for this information. It is normally recommended that the DELTA is taken once during each year of study at a tertiary institution. It is normally not possible to observe growth in periods of less than one year and taking the DELTA less frequently than once per year will not enable learners to judge how effective their study methods have been and they are likely to lose motivation in their English language learning.

### Setting a Target DELTA Measure

It is very important that learners have a target to aim for when they try to accomplish anything and the DELTA is no different. By setting a **Target DELTA Measure** learners will be able to track their progress and organise their study programme with much more focus. They should set their Target DELTA Measure after they have taken the DELTA for the first time. The DELTA system will automatically set a default target of the current DELTA Measure plus 1, but learners are expected to set their own target, which must be greater than their current DELTA Measure. The DELTA system will also predict what their DELTA Measure will be the next time they take the DELTA (see the previous section for information on this). Learners should decide whether they want to progress at a faster rate than the system predicts they will.

### Creating a Study Programme

The DELTA is a diagnostic assessment and so the results can tell learners what their areas of weakness are and the subskills that they need to work on. Once they have taken the DELTA they can then set themselves a study programme. A programme may include the following:

- [Using the online materials and resources that are linked to the DELTA report.](#) The DELTA Component Diagnostic Report (see page 7) shows the subskills that were tested and highlights those that caused problems. By clicking on these subskills, learners will be taken to online learning resources that can help them to improve in these subskills.
- [Discussing DELTA results with an English teacher.](#) Learners who are currently taking an English course or programme can discuss their DELTA results with their teacher, who will give advice on suitable learning materials or other resources.
- [Visiting the institution's self-access centre for language learning and speaking to an advisor.](#) Learners who are not currently doing an English course can ask an advisor in the self-access centre to help them to locate suitable learning and practice materials.
- [Enrolling in an enhancement programme that focuses on areas of weakness.](#) The institution may run enhancement programmes or short courses in language skill areas such as reading or listening that can help learners to improve in these areas.

## Test Delivery


At the appointed time, learners will be instructed to enter the test venue and sit at their designated computer. Once everyone has been seated, an invigilator will start the system and the login page will be displayed on the computer screen. The login page is shown below.

**DELTA**  
Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment

**Hong Kong Polytechnic University (Staff DELTA) - DELTA Admin System**

Login ID:   
 Password:   
 Valid Code:

yEUL3L

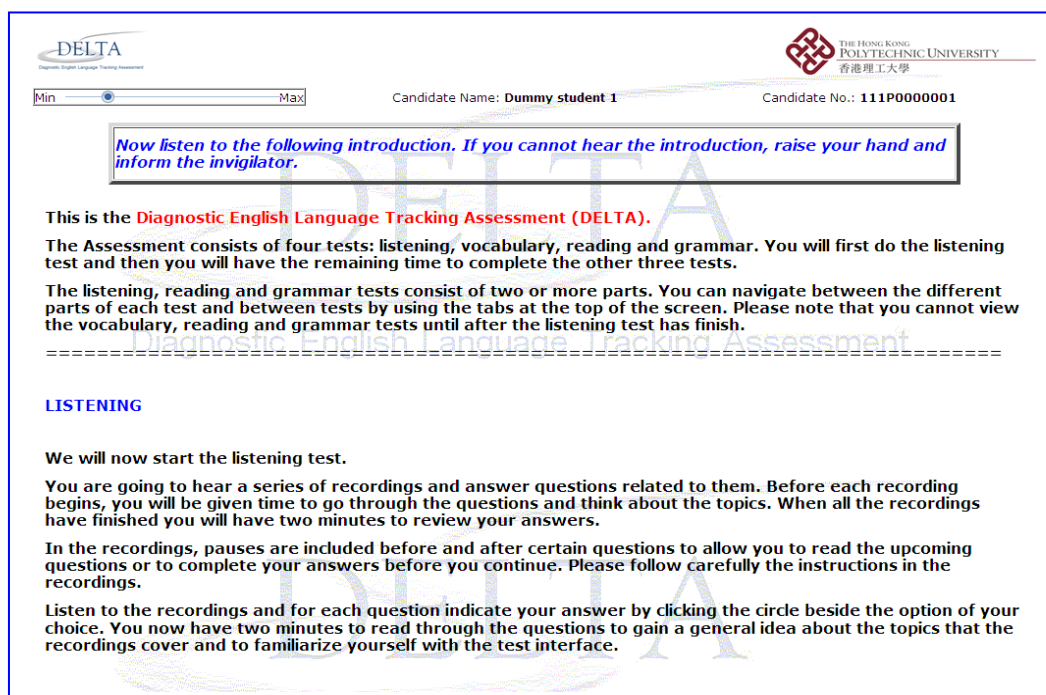

**THE HONG KONG  
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY**  
 香港理工大學

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158.132.165.141

### The DELTA Test System login page

Learners are then instructed to put on their headsets and login to the test system using their login ID (or the default) and their password before entering the valid code.

Once the learner has successfully logged into the system, the DELTA test session will begin with an introduction to the Assessment and some instructions. The instructions are both spoken and shown on the screen as below.



DELTA  
Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment

THE HONG KONG  
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY  
香港理工大學

Min Max

Candidate Name: Dummy student 1

Candidate No.: 111P0000001

*Now listen to the following introduction. If you cannot hear the introduction, raise your hand and inform the invigilator.*

This is the **Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment (DELTA)**.

The Assessment consists of four tests: listening, vocabulary, reading and grammar. You will first do the listening test and then you will have the remaining time to complete the other three tests.

The listening, reading and grammar tests consist of two or more parts. You can navigate between the different parts of each test and between tests by using the tabs at the top of the screen. Please note that you cannot view the vocabulary, reading and grammar tests until after the listening test has finish.

=====

**LISTENING**

We will now start the listening test.

You are going to hear a series of recordings and answer questions related to them. Before each recording begins, you will be given time to go through the questions and think about the topics. When all the recordings have finished you will have two minutes to review your answers.

In the recordings, pauses are included before and after certain questions to allow you to read the upcoming questions or to complete your answers before you continue. Please follow carefully the instructions in the recordings.

Listen to the recordings and for each question indicate your answer by clicking the circle beside the option of your choice. You now have two minutes to read through the questions to gain a general idea about the topics that the recordings cover and to familiarize yourself with the test interface.

### The opening page of the DELTA Test System

After the instructions have finished, the Listening component will begin.

## Chapter 3: The DELTA Listening Component

The DELTA Listening component tests learners' ability to listen to and understand the kinds of spoken English that they would listen to for English language learning and tertiary level study more generally.

### Listening Subskills

The listening subskills tested in the DELTA are:

- **Identifying specific information**

This means listening for certain information and distinguishing it from other information.

- **Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the speaker**

This means using the context and language knowledge to understand words or phrases as they are used by the speakers

- **Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas**

This means distinguishing main ideas from supporting details, including points of view, arguments and opinions. It also means following topic development and identifying relationships between ideas.

- **Understanding information and making an inference**

This means understanding information that is not explicitly stated and using that understanding to make predictions about missing information.

- **Inferring the speaker's reasoning**

This means making logical assumptions about the meaning of complex ideas and interpreting the significance of ideas, actions, events, relationships and conclusions.

- **Interpreting an attitude or intention of the speaker**

This means determining a speaker's attitude or intention towards a listener or a topic by identifying the speaker's use of language (grammar and vocabulary) and tone of voice.

## Overview

After the general listening instructions have finished (see page 12), the screen will show the test interface of the DELTA Test System and the first Listening task will begin:

**DELTA**  
Cambridge English Language Training Assessment

Time Remaining: 0:00:00 [Finish the Test](#)

Candidate Name: **Chan Tai Man** Candidate No.: **111P0000001**

Min  Max

L1 (0/6) L2 (0/4) L3 (0/7) L4 (0/8) V (0/23) R1 (0/6) R2 (0/8) R3 (0/6) R4 (0/8) G1 (0/12) G2 (2/14) Test Summary Help

**Listen to the recording and answer the questions while you listen.**

**For each question, select the best option.**

**1. Why does Donald believe the delivery circumstances are 'exceptional'?**

- ☐ The payment will be late.
- ☐ His staff will demand overtime.
- ☐ The offered price is not standard.
- ☐ The time period is shorter than usual.

**2. What will put the whole project at risk?**

- ☐ poor quality
- ☐ greater flexibility
- ☐ a short delivery period
- ☐ paying more than was agreed

**3. What does Donald suggest both parties do to resolve the problem?**

- ☐ talk later
- ☐ be positive
- ☐ argue more
- ☐ negotiate further

**4. What does Donald mean by 'something has to give'?**

- ☐ He wants confirmation.
- ☐ The quality will decline.
- ☐ Alison must pay him more.
- ☐ Change the payment or timeframe.

**5. How many days extension does Alison offer?**

- ☐ ten
- ☐ two
- ☐ three to five
- ☐ five to ten

**Now Playing ...**

Now Playing Listening Part 1

### The test interface of the DELTA test system Listening component

The Listening component consists of four parts (see page 5). Each part consists of a recording and a number of multiple-choice test items that test the listening subskills described on page 15. The four parts are in ascending order of difficulty so that they get progressively more difficult.

Learners hear each recording once and must select their answers to the test items while they listen. There is a volume control at the top left of the screen to adjust the volume of the recording and a timer at the top centre of the screen which shows the time remaining for the whole test by counting down from 1 hour 30 minutes. In addition, a box appears to tell the learner which part of the Listening component is currently playing.

The total time to complete the Listening component is approximately 25-30 minutes. Learners are given a note sheet to take notes while they listen and to help them when answering the items.

## Recording Types

The recordings that learners listen to can be of various types, including, but not restricted to:

- Debates and discussions
- Dialogues and conversations
- Information and instructions
- News reports and documentaries
- Personal reflections
- Presentations and lectures
- TV/Radio interviews

These are the types of recording that a Hong Kong tertiary learner would be expected to be exposed to in an English language environment. Each recording is in standard English. A balance of English accents is used in each recording, i.e. Hong Kong, British, American, Australian, Canadian etc. and there is a balance of female and male speakers. The speakers in the recordings use a natural rate of speech. The recordings cover a variety of topics or themes, including but not limited to:

- Business and marketing
- Daily life
- Economics
- Education
- Employment
- Environmental issues
- Food and drink
- Health and body care
- Health sciences
- History and culture
- House and home
- International issues
- Language
- Leisure and entertainment
- Media and communication
- Natural sciences
- Philosophy
- Places
- Politics and society
- Relations with other people
- Services
- Shopping
- Social issues
- Technology
- The Arts
- Travel
- Weather

At suitable intervals, pauses are included in the recordings to allow learners to complete their answers. 30-second pauses are given to read the questions before the actual recording begins and 15-second pauses are given for answering questions after the recording.

## Item Types

<b>No. of items</b>	10 – 15
<b>Item types</b>	Multiple choice Items can be gap-fill, sentence completion or questions.
<b>Options</b>	Each item has four options which are arranged according to their length, from short to long.

<b>Answer format</b>	For each item, learners click the radio button to indicate their answer.
<b>Scoring points</b>	<p>Each item is recorded as having been answered correctly or incorrectly in the Component Diagnostic Reports (see page 9).</p> <p>Each item has a calibrated item difficulty which is used to calculate the overall DELTA Measure and the Component Skills Profile (see pages 7-8).</p>

## Sample Items

The sample items below are accompanied by the corresponding excerpt from the tapescript of the recording as well as an explanation of the subskills being tested by the items.

### 2. The speaker says that in STAGE 2 of culture shock “you might begin to lose your sense of balance”. What does this mean?

- ☐ You feel that you are an outsider.
- ☐ You don't care about others' problems.
- ☐ You become overly fond of the new culture.
- ☐ You tend to forget about your home culture.

### 3. At this stage, why will you feel critical about the new culture?

- ☐ You dream of being at home.
- ☐ You think the new culture has no humour.
- ☐ You confirm that your own culture is better.
- ☐ You only remember the good aspects of your own culture.

The excerpt from the tapescript that relates to the two items is:

It's not until after this has worn off a little bit that you start to run into some of the problems and you might begin to lose your sense of balance. The climate will be different, the traffic problems may be very different or you may find that the food is not to your liking. You begin to realise that you are an outsider and although the people from that country are being polite and fairly kind to you, you start to realise that they don't actually understand what the problems are for you.	2
At this point you can feel yourself being critical about the culture and begin to lose your sense of humour. You might begin to think about your own culture very fondly and you might without knowing it idealise or over-idealise your own culture, romanticise it, think about how everything at home is wonderful, you could get quite exaggerated ideas of how it is back home in this particular stage. A lot of people get to this stage, suffer it for a while and then give up.	3



The answers (indicated) and the subskills (in brackets) of questions 2 and 3 are:

**2. The speaker says that in STAGE 2 of culture shock “you might begin to lose your sense of balance”. What does this mean?**

(Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the speaker)

- ☒ You feel that you are an outsider.
- ☐ You don't care about others' problems.
- ☐ You become overly fond of the new culture.
- ☐ You tend to forget about your home culture.

**3. At this stage, why will you feel critical about the new culture?**

(Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas)

- ☐ You dream of being at home.
- ☐ You think the new culture has no humour.
- ☐ You confirm that your own culture is better.
- ☒ You only remember the good aspects of your own culture.

After the recording for Part 4 has finished, the following instructions (or similar) are spoken by the Announcer:

*That is the end of the listening test. You now have the remaining time to complete the vocabulary, reading and grammar sections.*

Learners now have the remaining time to do the other components of the test. They may do these in any order they wish by clicking on the tabs at the top of the screen.

## Chapter 4: The DELTA Vocabulary Component

The DELTA Vocabulary component tests learners' ability to read and understand the English words and phrases that they would encounter as a part of their English language learning and tertiary level study more generally.

### Vocabulary Subskills

In the Vocabulary component, learners are tested on their knowledge of words drawn from the Academic Word List (AWL).

The Academic Word List is a list of words which appear with high frequency in English language academic texts. The list contains 570 word families and is divided into 10 Sublists. Sublist 1 consists of the 60 most common words in the AWL. Sublist 2 contains the next most frequently used words and so on. Each Sublist contains 60 word families, except for Sublist 10, which contains 30. To find these words, an analysis was done of academic journals, textbooks, course workbooks, lab manuals, and course notes. The list was compiled following an analysis of over 3,500,000 words of text.

The words selected for the AWL are words which occur frequently in a range of academic subjects, including the Arts (including history, psychology, sociology, etc.), Commerce (including economics, marketing, management, etc.), Law and the Sciences (including biology, computer science, mathematics, etc.). This means that the AWL is useful to all second-language learners who wish to study in an English-speaking institution no matter what their field of study. The AWL does not, however, include technical words which are specific to a given field. Nor does it contain words which are of general use and very high frequency.

The General Service List and Academic Word List can be found at:  
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/wordlists.htm>.

## Overview

The test interface for the Vocabulary component is shown below:

The screenshot shows the DELTA test interface. At the top, there is a header with the DELTA logo, a timer showing 'Time Remaining: 0:00:00', and a 'Finish the Test' button. Below the header, the candidate's name 'Chan Tai Man' and candidate number '111P0000001' are displayed. A progress bar shows the status of various sections: L1 (0/4), L2 (0/4), L3 (0/7), L4 (0/8), V (0/2), R1 (0/6), R2 (0/8), R3 (0/6), R4 (0/8), G1 (0/12), G2 (2/14), Test Summary, and Help. The main content area contains two questions. Question 1 is a gap-fill question: '1. A new treatment programme in the New Territories is helping former addicts to \_\_\_\_\_ into the local community.' with four radio button options: 'emerge', 'transfer', 'proceed', and 'integrate'. Question 2 is another gap-fill question: '2. Classes A and B are \_\_\_\_\_; therefore students can only attend one.' with four radio button options: 'coherent', 'concurrent', 'coincidental', and 'controversial'. The background of the test interface features a faint 'DELTA' watermark.

**The test interface of the DELTA test system Vocabulary component**

The Vocabulary component consists of approximately 25 items testing words from Sublists 1 to 10 of the AWL.

## Item Types

<b>No. of items</b>	5 – 10
<b>Item types</b>	Multiple choice
<b>Options</b>	Each item has four options which are arranged according to their length, from short to long.  All items are gap-fill.
<b>Answer format</b>	For each item, learners click the radio button to indicate their answer.
<b>Scoring points</b>	Each item is recorded as having been answered correctly or incorrectly in the Component Diagnostic Reports (see page 9).  Each item has a calibrated item difficulty which is used to calculate the overall DELTA Measure and the Component Skills Profile (see pages 7-8).

## Sample Items

The sample items below show two items that may be included in the test. Vocabulary items are written to assess ability to “recognize appropriate word for context”.

9.	A new treatment programme in the New Territories is helping former addicts to _____ into the local community.
<input type="radio"/> emerge <input type="radio"/> transfer <input type="radio"/> proceed <input type="radio"/> integrate	
10.	Classes A and B are _____; therefore learners can only attend one.
<input type="radio"/> coherent <input type="radio"/> concurrent <input type="radio"/> coincidental <input type="radio"/> controversial	

The **item intent** of vocabulary items is written according to the word list that the word was drawn from. The answers (indicated) and the item intents (in brackets) of questions 9 and 10 are:

9.	<b>A new treatment programme in the New Territories is helping former addicts to _____ into the local community.</b>
(AWL Sublist 3)	
<input type="radio"/> emerge <input type="radio"/> transfer <input type="radio"/> proceed <input checked="" type="radio"/> integrate	
10.	<b>Classes A and B are _____; therefore learners can only attend one.</b>
(AWL Sublist 9)	
<input type="radio"/> coherent <input checked="" type="radio"/> concurrent <input type="radio"/> coincidental <input type="radio"/> controversial	

# Chapter 5: The DELTA Reading Component

The DELTA Reading component tests learners' ability to read and understand the kinds of written English that they would read for English language learning and tertiary level study more generally.

## Reading Subskills

The reading subskills tested in the DELTA are:

- **Identifying specific information**

This means reading for certain information and distinguishing it from other information.

- **Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the writer**

This means using the context and language knowledge to understand words or phrases as they are used by the writer.

- **Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas**

This means distinguishing main ideas from supporting details, including points of view, arguments and opinions. It also means following topic development and identifying relationships between ideas.

- **Understanding information and making an inference**

This means understanding information that is not explicitly stated and using that understanding to make predictions about missing information.

- **Inferring the writer's reasoning**

This means making logical assumptions about the meaning of complex ideas and interpreting the significance of ideas, actions, events, relationships and conclusions.

- **Interpreting an attitude or intention of the writer**

This means determining a writer's attitude or intention towards a topic by identifying the writer's use of language (grammar and vocabulary) and tone of voice.

- **Understanding grammatical relationships of words or phrases across text**

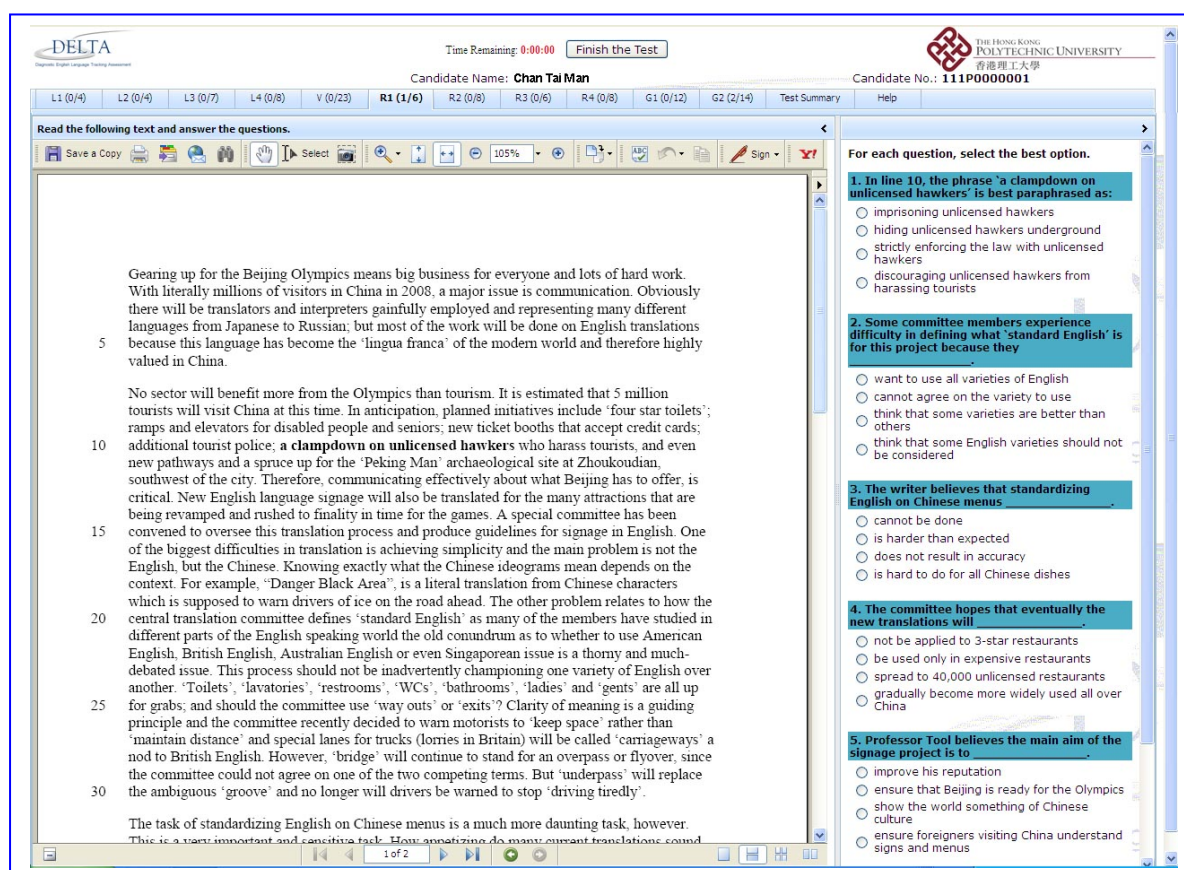
This means understanding the use of cohesion in a text (e.g. referencing).

- **Identifying text type**

This means identifying the type of text (see list of text types below).

## Overview

The test interface for the Reading component is shown below:



**The test interface of the DELTA test system Reading component**

The Reading component consists of four parts (see page 5). Each part consists of a text and a number of multiple-choice test items that test the reading subskills described on page 21. The four parts are in ascending order of difficulty so that they get progressively more difficult.

Learners read the text and select their answers to the test items. There are functions which enable the learner to scroll up or down, to zoom in or out of the text and to change the relative sizes of the text and the items.

## Text Types

The texts that learners read are of various types, including, but not restricted to:

- Academic articles
- Biographies
- Book reviews
- Feature articles
- Fiction
- Film reviews

- News articles

These are the types of text that a Hong Kong tertiary learner would be expected to be exposed to in an English language environment. Each text is written in standard English. The texts cover a variety of topics or themes, including but not limited to:

- Business and marketing
- Daily life
- Economics
- Education
- Employment
- Environmental issues
- Food and drink
- Health and body care
- Health sciences
- History and culture
- House and home
- International issues
- Language
- Leisure and entertainment
- Media and communication
- Natural sciences
- Philosophy
- Places
- Politics and society
- Relations with other people
- Services
- Shopping
- Social issues
- Technology
- The Arts
- Travel
- Weather

## Item Types

<b>No. of items</b>	10 – 15
<b>Item types</b>	Multiple choice Items can be gap-fill, sentence completion or questions.
<b>Options</b>	Each item has four options which are arranged according to their length, from short to long.
<b>Answer format</b>	For each item, learners click the radio button to indicate their answer.
<b>Scoring points</b>	Each item is recorded as having been answered correctly or incorrectly in the Component Diagnostic Reports (see page 9). Each item has a calibrated item difficulty which is used to calculate the overall DELTA Measure and the Component Skills Profile (see pages 7-8).

## Sample Items

The sample items below are accompanied by the corresponding excerpt from the reading text as well as an explanation of the subskills being tested by the items.

<b>3. The writer believes that standardizing English on Chinese menus _____.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> cannot be done</li><li><input type="radio"/> is harder than expected</li><li><input type="radio"/> does not result in accuracy</li><li><input type="radio"/> is hard to do for all Chinese dishes</li></ul>
<b>4. The committee hopes that eventually the new translations will _____.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> not be applied to 3-star restaurants</li><li><input type="radio"/> be used only in expensive restaurants</li><li><input type="radio"/> spread to 40,000 unlicensed restaurants</li><li><input type="radio"/> gradually become more widely used all over China</li></ul>

The relevant part of the text for the two items is:

- 35 The task of standardizing English on Chinese menus is a much more daunting task, 3.  
however. This is a very important and sensitive task. How appetizing do many current  
translations sound, such as 'stewed bean curd'; 'badly cooked starch cubes'; 'fish in first  
position' and 'chicken toenails in soy sauce'? They are all out there for public  
consumption. The committee is currently collaborating with the Beijing Institute of  
40 Tourism and they have gathered over 10,000 menus to study. A dedicated committee  
has now been set up consisting of volunteers, including local English professors, food  
and beverage managers as well as 'foreign experts', mainly English instructors from the  
USA. The aim is to come up with 1,000 dishes most commonly found in 200 of Beijing's  
restaurants with ratings of three stars or above. This endeavour is vital says Professor  
45 Feng Dong Ming because, "food names are a very sophisticated part of our culture and  
we must deliver proper meanings to the foreigners in bundles that cannot be too long or  
too short". This is quite hard to do especially when the common dumpling called Won  
Ton actually has the literal meaning of 'swallowing clouds'. And what about the many  
variations of the names of such staple dishes as 'yu xiang ru si'. Would that be 'fish  
50 flavoured shredded pork', 'slivered pork in garlic sauce' or just 'Sichuan sliced pork'?
- Adherence to this new set of translations isn't mandatory, but the committee is hoping  
that if the names are adopted in the more upmarket establishments, they will spread to  
smaller, unrated and even unlicensed restaurants in Beijing (around 40,000) and then  
55 beyond to the whole of China. And just in case the language and cross cultural  
understanding get left at the kitchen door, plans are afoot to train waiters to take orders  
in standardized English. 4.



The answers (indicated) and the subskills (in brackets) of questions number 3 and 4 are:

<b>3. The writer believes that standardizing English on Chinese menus _____.</b>
(Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> cannot be done</li><li><input checked="" type="radio"/> is harder than expected</li><li><input type="radio"/> does not result in accuracy</li><li><input type="radio"/> is hard to do for all Chinese dishes</li></ul>
<b>4. The committee hopes that eventually the new translations will _____.</b>
(Identifying specific information)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="radio"/> not be applied to 3-star restaurants</li><li><input type="radio"/> be used only in expensive restaurants</li><li><input type="radio"/> spread to 40,000 unlicensed restaurants</li><li><input checked="" type="radio"/> gradually become more widely used all over China</li></ul>

# Chapter 6: The DELTA Grammar Component

The DELTA Grammar component tests learners' ability to identify and correct grammatical errors that might be made by Hong Kong tertiary learner writers.

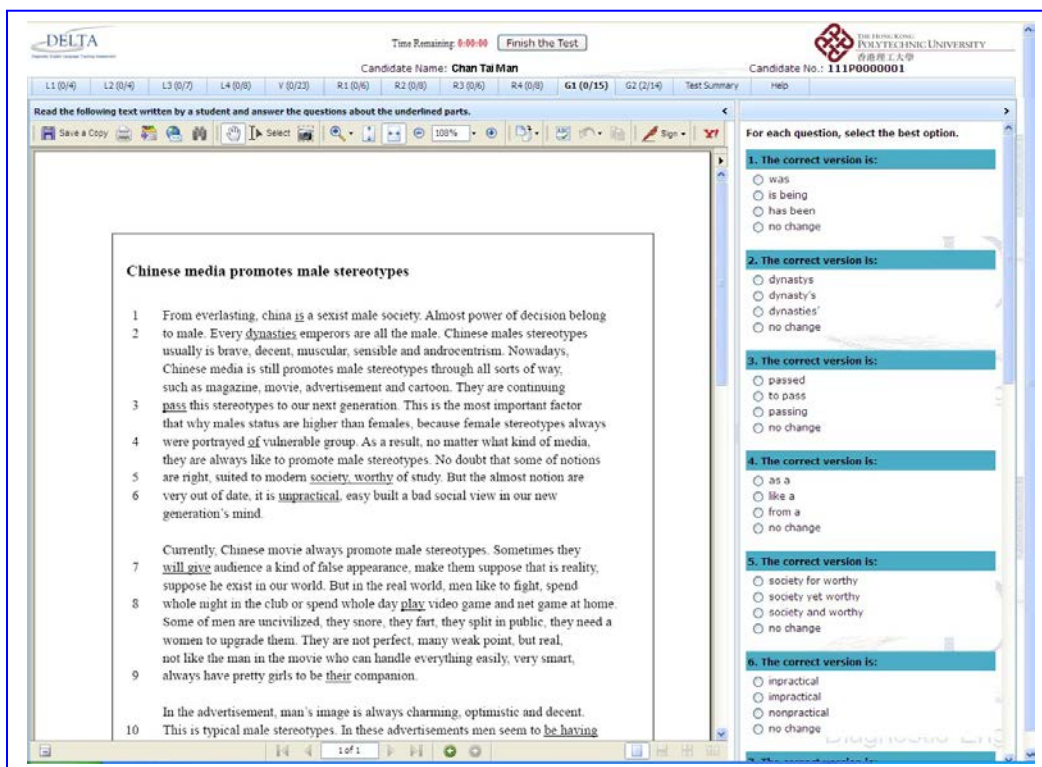
## Grammar Subskills

The grammar subskills tested in the DELTA are:

- Adjective
- Adverb
- Adverbial phrase
- Article/determiner/quantifier
- Cohesive device (including conjunction)
- Comparative
- Conditional
- Discourse marker
- Future tense
- Gerund
- Infinitive
- Modal
- Negation
- Object pronoun
- Part of speech/ word form
- Past continuous tense
- Past perfect tense
- Participles
- Passive (form or use)
- Phrasal verb
- Possessive
- Possessive adjective
- Preposition
- Prepositional phrase
- Present continuous tense
- Present perfect tense
- Pronoun
- Reflexive pronoun
- Relative pronoun
- Simple past tense
- Simple present tense
- Singular/plural (phrases)
- Transitive verb
- Subjunctive
- Subject clause
- Subject/Verb agreement
- Verb form
- Voice
- Word order

## Overview

The test interface for the Grammar component is shown below:



## The test interface of the DELTA test system Grammar component

The Grammar component consists of two parts (see page 5). Each part consists of a text and a number of multiple-choice test items that test the grammar subskills listed on page 25. Learners read the text and select their answers to the test items. Items are identified as occurring in the text by underlining a section of the text. The learner should choose from options A, B and C which consist of possible alternatives to the underlined section. Option D is always “no change” indicating that the original version is correct. There are functions which enable the learner to scroll up or down, to zoom in or out of the text and to change the relative sizes of the text and the items.

## Text Types

The texts chosen originate from authentic texts written by tertiary level learners in Hong Kong. They have been modified so that any errors in parts of the text that are not underlined, i.e. are not tested, do not impede the learner test-taker's ability to answer the items. The texts include but are not limited to:

- narratives
- argumentative texts
- descriptive texts
- explanatory texts
- procedural texts
- expository texts
- persuasive texts

## Item Types

<b>No. of items</b>	10 - 15
<b>Item types</b>	Multiple choice
<b>Options</b>	Each item has four options. Option D is always “No change”.
<b>Answer format</b>	For each item, learners click the radio button to indicate their answer.
<b>Scoring points</b>	Each item is recorded as having been answered correctly or incorrectly in the Component Diagnostic Reports (see page 9).  Each item has a calibrated item difficulty which is used to calculate the overall DELTA Measure and the Component Skills Profile (see pages 7-8).

## Sample Tasks/Items

The sample items below show items that may be included in the test.

### Text:

#### Chinese media promotes male stereotypes

- 1 From everlasting, china is a sexist male society. Almost power of decision belong to male.
- 2 Every dynasties emperors are all the male. Chinese males stereotypes usually is brave, decent, muscular, sensible and androcentrism. Nowadays,

### Sample Items:

<b>1. The correct version is:</b>	
<input type="radio"/> was <input type="radio"/> is being <input type="radio"/> has been <input type="radio"/> No change	
<b>2. The correct version is</b>	
<input type="radio"/> dynastys <input type="radio"/> dynasty's <input type="radio"/> dynasties' <input type="radio"/> No change	

The answers (indicated) and the subskills (in brackets) of questions number 1 and 2 are:

<b>1. The correct version is:</b>	
(present perfect tense)	
<input type="radio"/>	was
<input type="radio"/>	is being
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	has been
<input type="radio"/>	No change
<b>2. The correct version is</b>	
(possessive)	
<input type="radio"/>	dynastys
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	dynasty's
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## Chapter 7: After Taking DELTA

After taking DELTA, learners should use the DELTA Report to plan their English language learning. This should preferably be done in consultation with an English teacher or mentor, who will be able to provide advice on the resources available at the learner's institution, as well as those available online. In addition, the teacher or mentor will be able to advise on learning strategies that will enable the learner to progress. It is advised that learners take DELTA once per year during their academic studies, to track their progress in English language learning.

For more information about DELTA, please visit the DELTA website at:

[http://gsipa.polyu.edu.hk/eng/delta\\_pustaff/staff/aboutTests.html](http://gsipa.polyu.edu.hk/eng/delta_pustaff/staff/aboutTests.html)