# DELTA

Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment

# Guidelines for Users

## 2018-19

# Contents

# 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 students' self-assessment during the course of their studies at university.

The DELTA provides all stakeholders with valuable information on which decisions can be made about language enhancement provision, both by students individually and by institutions. It is important that students 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). Students can then target their learning and make much better use of their time.

As students progress through their programme of study, they will take the DELTA at intervals and use the results to make improvements in their overall proficiency so that they reach a point at graduation having made real improvements. In other words, they will be able to 'track' their progress to ensure that they remain 'on track' to attain the outcome in terms of language proficiency required by the discipline that they intend to enter post-graduation.

## 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 academically-oriented so as to measure the language skills that the students use during their studies at university. 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 though a secure network at each university test centre. Students take the DELTA in a computer or language lab under supervision. Students can enrol to take the DELTA through the DELTA website at each participating university, e.g.

**The DELTA website of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

## Accessing the DELTA Report

After taking the DELTA, students 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 students 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 students 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, students will find the DELTA suitable for their proficiency level. The DELTA tests and associated systems contribute to the development of students 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 70 minutes. Each component (except 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 | Easier | 20–25 minutes |
| | Part 2 | 1 Recording + 6–8 items | ↓ | |
| | Part 3 | 1 Recording + 6–8 items | | |
| | Part 4 | 1 Recording + 6–8 items | More difficult | |
| **Vocabulary** | | 20–25 Items | A range | 45–50 minutes |
| **Reading** | Part 1 | 1 Text + 4–6 items | Easier | |
| | Part 2 | 1 Text + 6–8 items | ↓ | |
| | Part 3 | 1 Text + 6–8 items | More difficult | |
| **Grammar** | Part 1 | 1 Text + 10–15 items | A range | |
| | Part 2 | 1 Text + 10–15 items | | |

**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 four parts and the Grammar component consists of two parts. 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 one hundred.
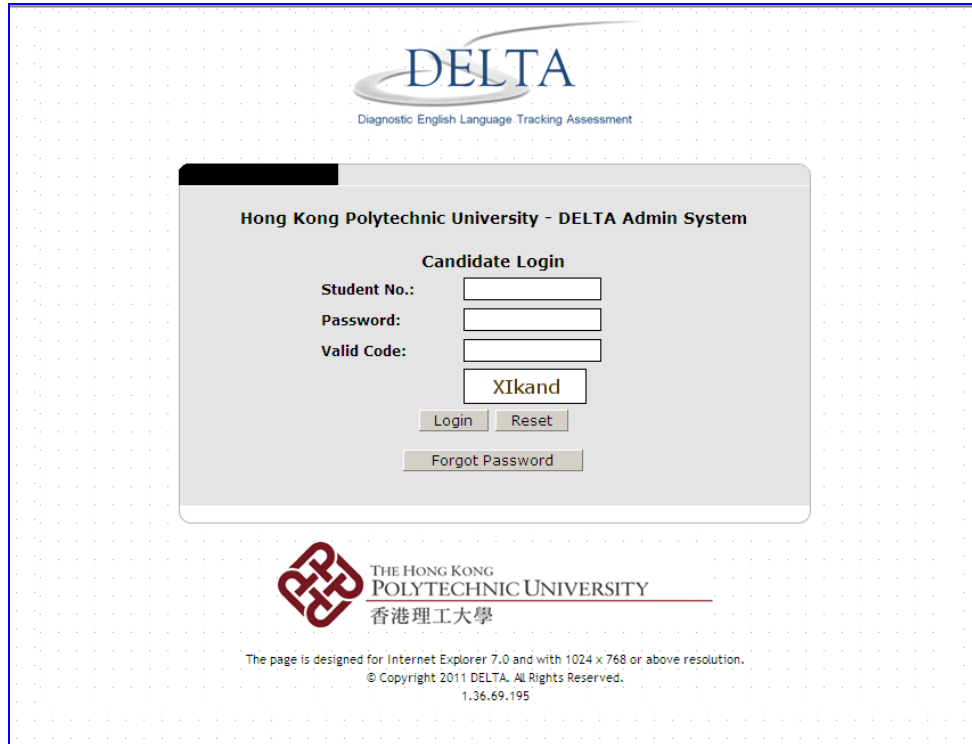
## Scoring

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 student's overall proficiency or **DELTA Measure**. The **language subskills** tested by each item are recorded in the student's **DELTA Report**. Statements of student's strengths and weaknesses in the language subskills are based on the item difficulty relative to the student's proficiency. In other words, items that are of a lower difficulty level than the student's proficiency are those that the student 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 DELTA Admin System login page**

From here, students 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 student's DELTA Report as shown below.

**The first page of a student's DELTA report showing the DELTA Measure attained and the DELTA Track**

The first page of the DELTA Report shows a student'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 ±3 points.

The first page also shows the **DELTA Track**, which plots a student's DELTA Measure at the time that they took the DELTA and then plots that student'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 student's previous performance and other students' (with similar characteristics including stage of degree, discipline studied, etc) performance. Also plotted is the **Target DELTA Measure**, which the student inputs him/herself. The default setting

for this is current DELTA Measure plus 1. Over time, the DELTA Track will grow to show the student's progress in English language learning.

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



COMPONENT SKILLS PROFILE (08/2011)

The Component Skills Profile above shows the contribution that the scores that you attained on each component has made to your DELTA Measure. Components below the line indicate areas of relative weakness.
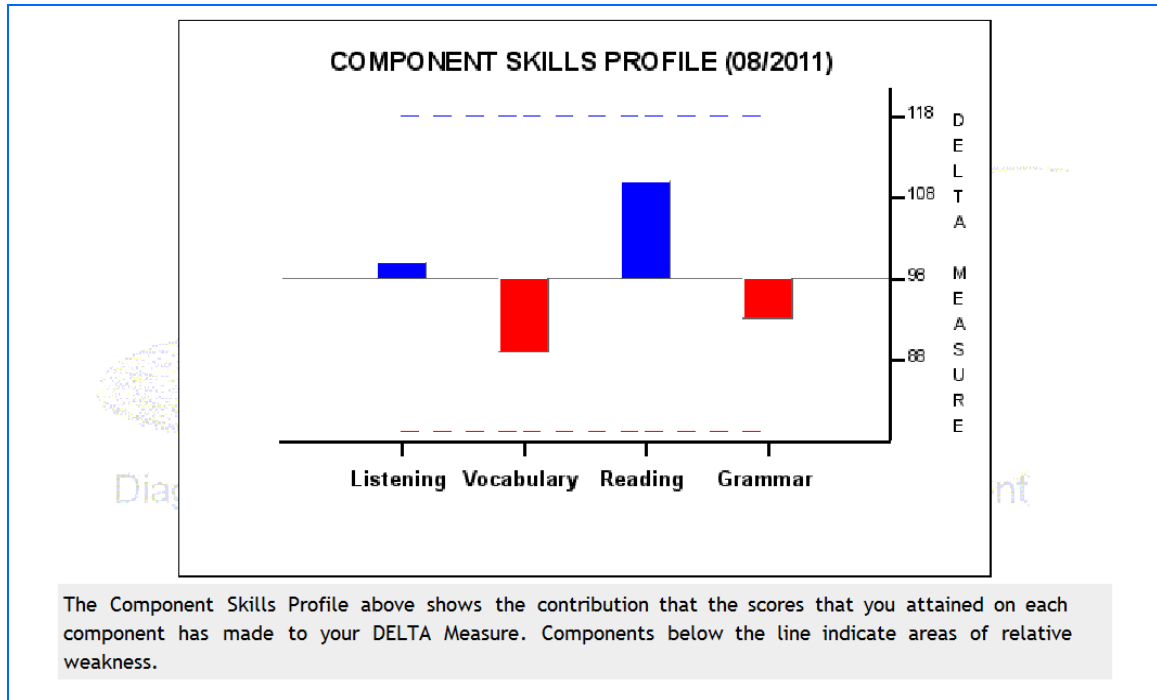
**The DELTA Report Component Skills Profile**

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 student 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. Students 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 student can view individual reports on each component that show the sub skills tested and how the student performed in each sub skill in the **Component Diagnostic Reports**, shown below.

## Component Diagnostic Report

The four reports below show your performance on each of the four tests in the DELTA. They show a description of the subskills tested by each of the items you did, in descending order of difficulty. Your proficiency level as indicated by your DELTA Measure is also shown. Items below the line of your proficiency level are those that you would be expected to answer correctly. The items that are highlighted indicate the subskills that you should focus on in your English language learning.

### Listening

| | Subskills tested | Text Type | Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| More ↑ | x Identifying specific information | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| | x Understanding information and making an inference | TV/Radio interviews | Technology |
| | x Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| | x Identifying specific information | Information and instructions | Food and drink |
| | √ Inferring a speaker's reasoning | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| | x Inferring a speaker's reasoning | TV/Radio interviews | Environmental Issues |
| | x Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | TV/Radio interviews | Environmental Issues |
| | x Identifying specific information | TV/Radio interviews | Technology |
| | x Identifying specific information | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| | x Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | TV/Radio interviews | Environmental Issues |
| Difficulty | x Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | TV/Radio interviews | Environmental Issues |
| | x Understanding information and making an inference | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| | x Identifying specific information | Information and instructions | Food and drink |
| | x Identifying specific information | TV/Radio interviews | Environmental Issues |
| | x Identifying specific information | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| | x Identifying specific information | Information and instructions | Food and drink |
| | √ Identifying specific information | Information and instructions | Food and drink |
| | x Identifying specific information | TV/Radio interviews | Technology |
| | √ Inferring a speaker's reasoning | TV/Radio interviews | Environmental Issues |
| | | | *DELTA 08* |
| | x Identifying specific information (highlighted) | TV/Radio interviews | Environmental Issues |
| | x Identifying specific information (highlighted) | Information and instructions | Food and drink |
| | √ Identifying specific information | Information and instructions | Food and drink |
| | √ Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| | √ Identifying specific information | Presentations and lectures | Education |
| Less | √ Identifying specific information | TV/Radio interviews | Technology |
| | √ Identifying specific information | TV/Radio interviews | Technology |

The report for Listening above indicates subskills to work on. You can find resources for improving your listening at http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/listenin.htm.

### Vocabulary

| | Academic Word Sublist | Words for revision |
|---|---|---|
| More ↑ | √ AWL Sublist 7 | |
| | x AWL Sublist 8 | ambiguity |
| | x AWL Sublist 9 | supplements |
| | x AWL Sublist 5 | sustain |
| | x AWL Sublist 6 | explicit |
| | x AWL Sublist 8 | minimal |
| | x AWL Sublist 2 | distinction |
| | x AWL Sublist 7 | advocate |
| | x AWL Sublist 3 | demonstrates |
| | x AWL Sublist 5 | conflict |
| Difficulty | √ AWL Sublist 7 | |
| | x AWL Sublist 9 | accommodate |
| | | *DELTA 08* |
| | x AWL Sublist 3 (highlighted) | alternative |
| | x AWL Sublist 2 (highlighted) | focus |
| | x AWL Sublist 6 (highlighted) | expertise |
| | x AWL Sublist 1 (highlighted) | identified |
| | √ AWL Sublist 3 | |
| | √ AWL Sublist 5 | |
| | √ AWL Sublist 2 | |
| Less | x AWL Sublist 2 (highlighted) | relevant |
| | √ AWL Sublist 2 | |
| | √ AWL Sublist 2 | |

In the report for Vocabulary above, the items are drawn from the Academic Word List (AWL). The AWL is divided into 10 sublists of words used in academic English. Sublist 1 consists of the most frequent words. Sublist 2 contains the next most frequent and so on. You can find more information above the AWL at http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/eap/wordlists.htm.

### Reading

| | Subskills tested | Text type | Theme |
|---|---|---|---|
| More ↑ | x Interpreting an attitude or intention of the writer | Fiction | History and culture |
| | √ Interpreting an attitude or intention of the writer | Feature articles | Health and bodycare |
| | √ Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the writer | Fiction | Relations with other people |
| | √ Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | Fiction | Relations with other people |
| | √ Identifying specific information | News articles | House and home |
| | x Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the writer | Feature articles | Health and bodycare |
| | √ Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the writer | Feature articles | Health and bodycare |
| | x Identifying specific information | Fiction | Relations with other people |
| | √ Identifying text type | Fiction | History and culture |
| | √ Identifying specific information | Fiction | History and culture |
| | x Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | News articles | House and home |
| Difficulty | x Interpreting an attitude or intention of the writer | News articles | House and home |
| | x Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | Fiction | Relations with other people |
| | x Identifying specific information | Fiction | History and culture |
| | √ Inferring the writer's reasoning | Fiction | History and culture |
| | | | *DELTA 08* |
| | √ Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas | Fiction | History and culture |
| | √ Interpreting a word or phrase as used by the writer | News articles | House and home |
| | x Interpreting an attitude or intention of the writer (highlighted) | Feature articles | Health and bodycare |
| | √ Understanding information and making an inference | Fiction | History and culture |
| | √ Identifying specific information | Fiction | Relations with other people |
| | √ Identifying specific information | News articles | House and home |
| | x Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas (highlighted) | Feature articles | Health and bodycare |
| | √ Identifying specific information | News articles | House and home |
| Less | √ Identifying specific information | Feature articles | Health and bodycare |
| | √ Identifying specific information | Feature articles | Health and bodycare |

The report for Reading above indicates subskills to work on. You can find resources for improving your reading at http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/reading.htm.

### Grammar

| | Subskills tested | Example |
|---|---|---|
| More ↑ | x voice | The law should (amend) BE AMENDED immediately. |
| | x determiner | She had a long holiday in (the Asia) ASIA last year. |
| | √ present perfect tense | I (lived) HAVE LIVED in Hong Kong since I graduated. |
| | x preposition | The personalities of the children are a very big concern (of) FOR parents. |
| | x word form | It is a very (comforting) COMFORTABLE chair. |
| | x phrasal verb | I could tell she was angry as she (hung down) HUNG UP on me while we were talking on the phone. |
| | √ past perfect tense | By the time I got up, he (ate) HAD EATEN all the sausages. |
| | x singular or plural | Children need this kind of support in their daily (life) LIVES. |
| | √ simple present tense | I don't think the law to solve the problem of campus bullying (was) IS the way to success. |
| Difficulty | x determiner | She had a long holiday in (the Asia) ASIA last year. |
| | √ simple present tense | I don't think the law to solve the problem of campus bullying (was) IS the way to success. |
| | √ preposition | The personalities of the children are a very big concern (of) FOR parents. |
| | | *DELTA 08* |
| | x relative pronoun (highlighted) | The main idea for the project, (who) WHICH is led by Professor Chan, is to design a better system. |
| | x relative pronoun (highlighted) | The main idea for the project, (who) WHICH is led by Professor Chan, is to design a better system. |
| | x voice (highlighted) | The law should (amend) BE AMENDED immediately. |
| | √ phrasal verb (highlighted) | I could tell she was angry as she (hung down) HUNG UP on me while we were talking on the phone. |
| | √ phrasal verb | I could tell she was angry as she (hung down) HUNG UP on me while we were talking on the phone. |
| | x word order (highlighted) | The situation (unclear is at the moment) IS UNCLEAR AT THE MOMENT. |
| | √ gerund (highlighted) | I look forward to (meet) MEETING you next week. |
| | √ determiner | She had a long holiday in (the Asia) ASIA last year. |
| | x verb formation (highlighted) | Most people (have been support) SUPPORTING the idea of a minimum wage for some time. |
| | √ adjective | John is (friend) FRIENDLY to his new roommate. |
| | √ word form | It is a very (comforting) COMFORTABLE chair. |
| | x voice (highlighted) | The law should (amend) BE AMENDED immediately. |
| Less | √ possessive pronoun | Many advertisements do not appeal to consumers because of (they're) THEIR inappropriate style. |

The 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. You can find resources for improving your grammar at http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL/grammar.htm.

## The DELTA Report Component Diagnostic Reports

Each Component Diagnostic Report shows the subskills (or Academic Word List sublist from which the tested word was drawn in the case of Vocabulary) tested by each item that the student answered in order of difficulty, with the most difficult at the top and whether that item was answered correctly or not. Also shown is the student's DELTA Measure on the same scale. Items which were less difficult that the student's ability should have been answered correctly. If they weren't then this indicates an area of potential weakness or a sub skill that is causing the student problems. These are highlighted in yellow and are hyperlinked to relevant learning resources which the student may then make use of. There is also a link at the end of each report to more general learning resources in the particular component skill area.

The final part of the report is a summary of **Overall Performance**, shown below.

## Overall Performance

Your Component Skills Profile suggests that you should priorities your English language learning as follows:

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

You should study the diagnostic information relating to your performance on each test component to gain an idea of your areas of strength and weakness. You should aim to improve your proficiency by focusing in particular on those areas in which you have shown weakness.

The next time you take the DELTA, the tests will be targeted to your proficiency level, enabling you to demonstrate the progress that you have made.

Thank you for taking the DELTA and good luck in your English language learning.

Language Testing Unit
English Language Centre

Save Report

Last Updated: 08 Sep 2011 3:10:21 PM

Diagnostic English Language Tracking Assessment

**The DELTA Report Overall Performance summary**

The summary advises the student on which component skill areas s/he should focus on in order of priority. There is also a function for students to save the report as a PDF file.

# Chapter 2:  Preparation

## Test Preparation

Students 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, students 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 students to take on a voluntary basis. Students 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 students 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 students have a target to aim for when they try to accomplish anything and the DELTA is no different. By setting a **Target DELTA Measure** students 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 students 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). Students 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 students 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 themself 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, students will be taken to online learning resources that can help them to improve in these subskills.
- Discussing DELTA results with an English teacher. Students 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. Students 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 students to improve in these areas.
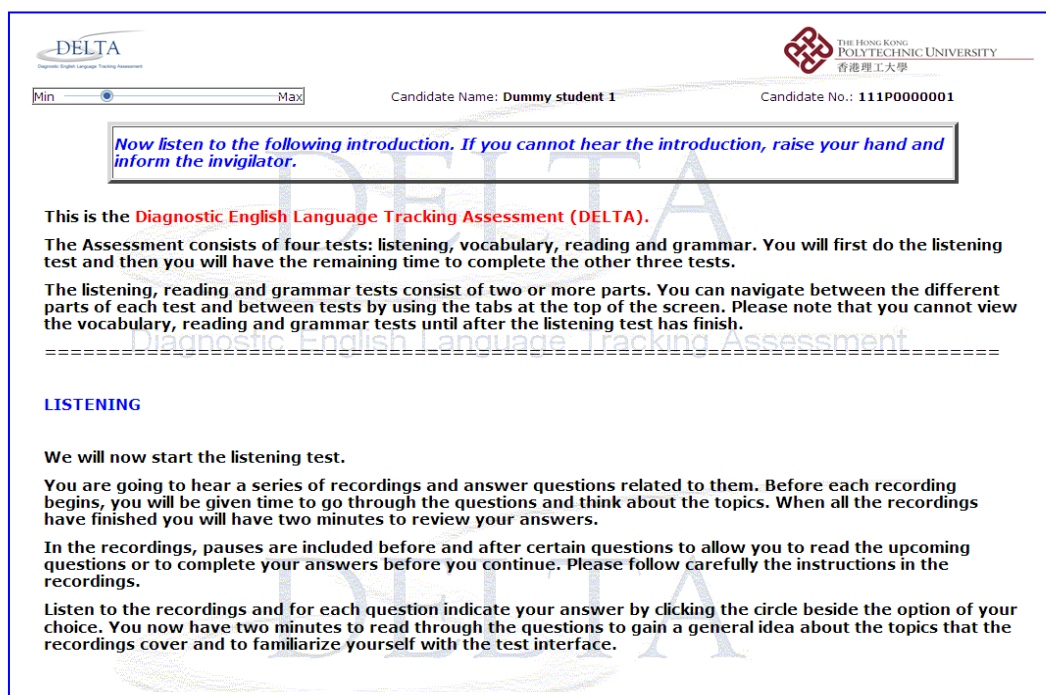
## Test Delivery

At the appointed time, students 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.



**The DELTA Test System login page**

Students 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 student 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.



**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 students' 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:
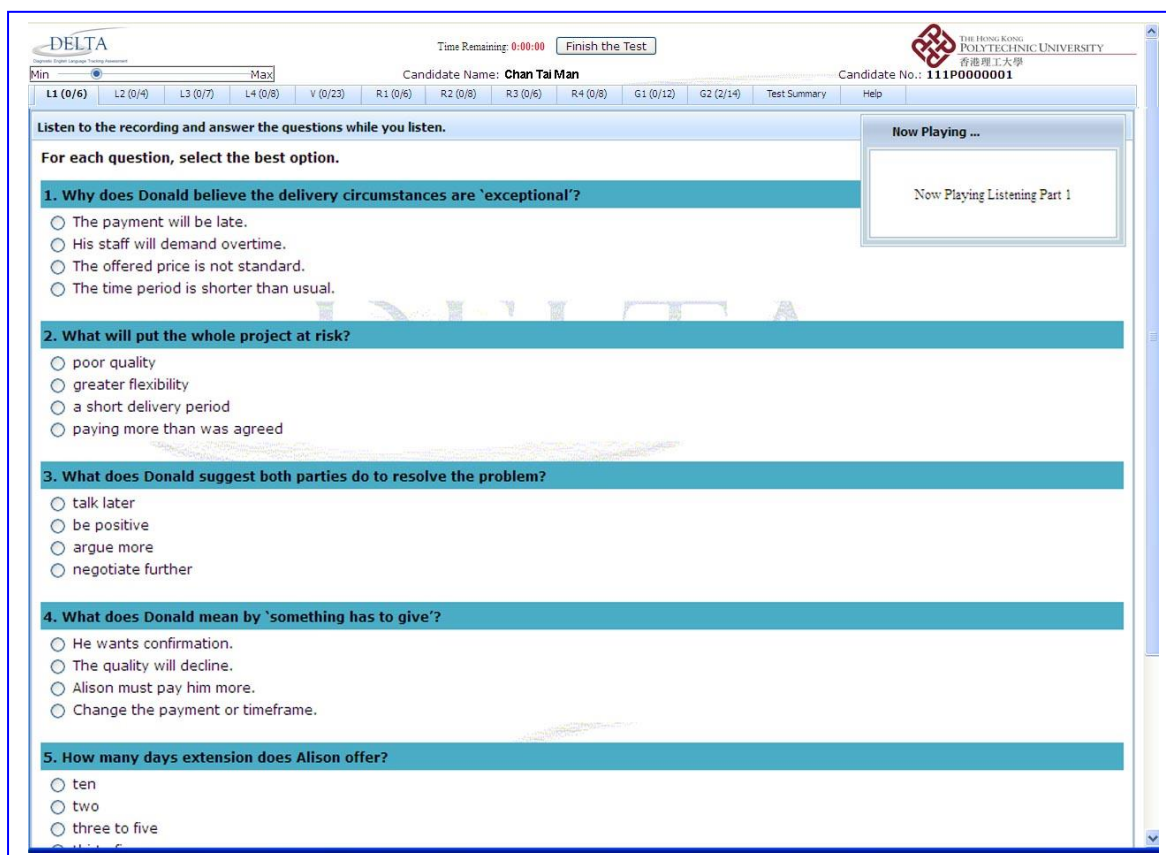


**The test interface of the DELTA test system Listening component**

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.

Students 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 student which part of the Listening component is currently playing.

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

**Recording Types**

The recordings that students 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 student 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 students 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**

| No. of items | 20 - 30 |
|---|---|
| Item types | Multiple choice<br><br>Items can be gap-fill, sentence completion or questions. |
| Options | Each item has four options which are arranged according to their length, from short to long. |

| Answer format | For each item, students click the radio button to indicate their answer. |
|---|---|
| Scoring points | Each item is recorded as having been answered correctly or incorrectly in the Component Diagnostic Reports (see page 9). <br><br> 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 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.*

Students 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 students' 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, students 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 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

| No. of items | 20 - 25 |
|---|---|
| Item types | Multiple choice |
| Options | Each item has four options which are arranged according to their length, from short to long.<br><br>All items are gap-fill. |
| Answer format | For each item, students click the radio button to indicate their answer. |
| Scoring points | Each item is recorded as having been answered correctly or incorrectly in the Component Diagnostic Reports (see page 9).<br><br>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".

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9. A new treatment programme in the New Territories is helping former addicts to _____ into the local community.

   ○ emerge
   ○ transfer
   ○ proceed
   ○ integrate

10. Classes A and B are _____; therefore students can only attend one.

    ○ coherent
    ○ concurrent
    ○ coincidental
    ○ 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:

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**9.** **A new treatment programme in the New Territories is helping former addicts to _____ into the local community.**
(AWL Sublist 3)

   ○ emerge
   ○ transfer
   ○ proceed
   ⊙ integrate

**10.** **Classes A and B are _____; therefore students can only attend one.**
(AWL Sublist 9)

   ○ coherent
   ⊙ concurrent
   ○ coincidental
   ○ controversial

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# Chapter 5: The DELTA Reading Component

The DELTA Reading component tests students' 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.

Students read the text and select their answers to the test items. There are functions which enable the student 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 students 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 student 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**

| No. of items | 20 - 30 |
|---|---|
| **Item types** | Multiple choice<br><br>Items can be gap-fill, sentence completion or questions. |
| **Options** | Each item has four options which are arranged according to their length, from short to long. |
| **Answer format** | For each item, students click the radio button to indicate their answer. |
| **Scoring points** | Each item is recorded as having been answered correctly or incorrectly in the Component Diagnostic Reports (see page 9).<br><br>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.

---

**3.   The writer believes that standardizing English on Chinese menus _____.**

- ○   cannot be done
- ○   is harder than expected
- ○   does not result in accuracy
- ○   is hard to do for all Chinese dishes

---

**4.   The committee hopes that eventually the new translations will _____.**

- ○   not be applied to 3-star restaurants
- ○   be used only in expensive restaurants
- ○   spread to 40,000 unlicensed restaurants
- ○   gradually become more widely used all over China

---

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, 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 Tourism and they have gathered over 10,000 menus to study.  A dedicated committee

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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 Feng Dong Ming because, "food names are a very sophisticated part of our culture and

45
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 flavoured shredded pork', 'slivered pork in garlic sauce' or just 'Sichuan sliced pork'?

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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.

3.

4.

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

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**3.  The writer believes that standardizing English on Chinese menus _____ .**

(Understanding main ideas and supporting ideas)

○  cannot be done
◉  is harder than expected
○  does not result in accuracy
○  is hard to do for all Chinese dishes

**4.  The committee hopes that eventually the new translations will _____ .**

(Identifying specific information)

○  not be applied to 3-star restaurants
○  be used only in expensive restaurants
○  spread to 40,000 unlicensed restaurants
◉  gradually become more widely used all over China

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# Chapter 6: The DELTA Grammar Component

The DELTA Grammar component tests students' ability to identify and correct grammatical errors that might be made by Hong Kong tertiary student writers.
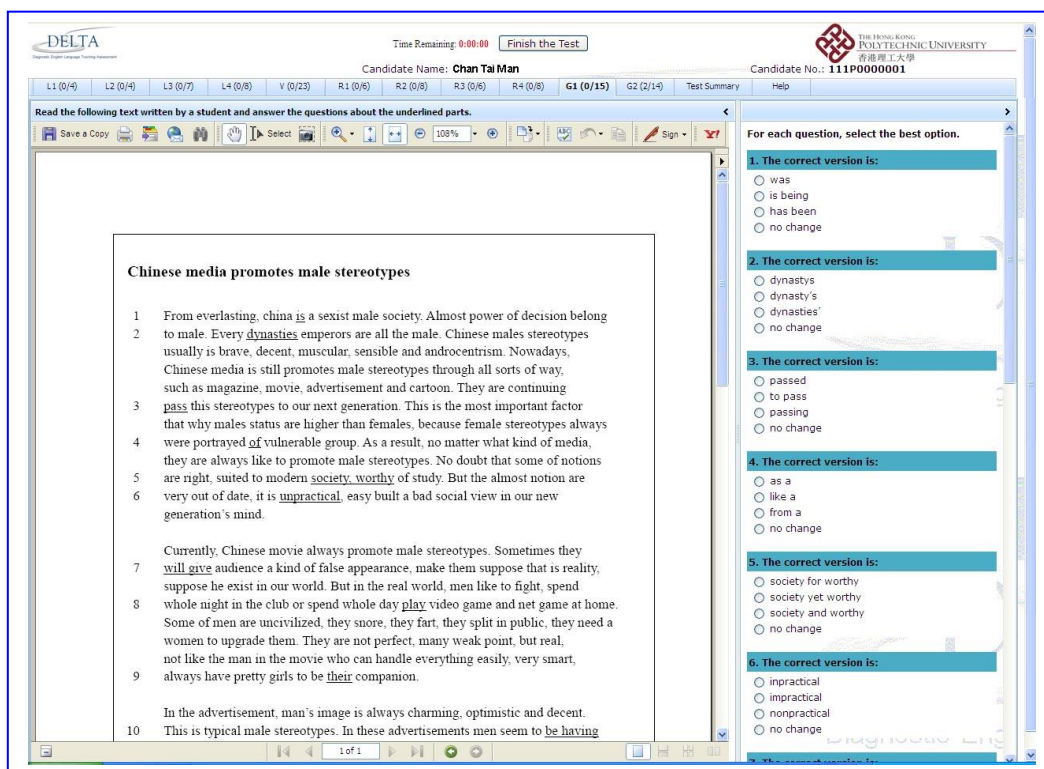
## Grammar Subskills

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. Students 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 student should choose from options A, B and C which consist of possible alternatives to the underlined section. Option D is always "no change" indicting that the original version is correct. There are functions which enable the student 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 students 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 student 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**

| No. of items | 20 - 30 |
|---|---|
| Item types | Multiple choice |
| Options | Each item has four options. Option D is always "No change". |
| Answer format | For each item, students click the radio button to indicate their answer. |
| Scoring points | 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 <u>is</u> a sexist male society. Almost power of decision belong to male.
>
> 2 Every <u>dynasties</u> emperors are all the male. Chinese males stereotypes usually is brave,
>
> decent, muscular, sensible and androcentrism. Nowadays,

**Sample Items:**

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**1. The correct version is:**

- ○ was
- ○ is being
- ○ has been
- ○ No change

---

**2. The correct version is**

- ○ dynastys
- ○ dynasty's
- ○ dynasties'
- ○ No change

---

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

| | |
|---|---|
| **1.** | **The correct version is:** |
| | (present perfect tense) |
| | ○ was |
| | ○ is being |
| | ⊙ has been |
| | ○ No change |
| **2.** | **The correct version is** |
| | (possessive) |
| | ○ dynastys |
| | ⊙ dynasty's |
| | ○ dynasties' |
| | ○ No change |

# Chapter 7:  After Taking DELTA

After taking DELTA, students 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 student'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 student to progress. It is advised that students 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 www.deltatesting.net.