

LIBERAL STUDIES (ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES) AS-LEVEL

8.30 am – 11.00 am (2½ hours)
This paper must be answered in English

1. This paper consists of **Section 1** and **Section 2**. Section 1 carries 75% of the module marks, and Section 2 carries 25%.
2. **Section 1** consists of three questions, *all* of which are to be answered. **Section 2** consists of four questions, of which candidates may attempt any *one*.
3. Each question is worth 25 marks : 18 marks are allocated for content and 7 marks for effective communication.
4. The maximum content marks are indicated in brackets at the end of each question and sub-question. They are a guide to the length of answer required, which may vary from one to several paragraphs.
5. Candidates are reminded that this subject emphasises the ability to present and support points of view in a clear, concise and logical manner, rather than the ability to recite facts.

SECTION 1

Answer *all* questions in this section.

1. Consider the following survey results :

How green are Legislative Council candidates

Friends of the Earth conducted a questionnaire survey in May 1998, aiming to gauge the first Special Administrative Region Legislative Council candidates' degree of concern for local and global environmental issues.

- ◆ Only 29% bothered to respond
- ◆ Among which 38% considered Hong Kong's environment as intolerable
- ◆ Their concerned environmental problems :

Air pollution	28%
Water pollution	22%
Food safety	21%
Reclamation	21%
- ◆ None suggested limiting the transport infrastructure development and vehicle growth
- ◆ Only one candidate from the Citizens Party considered 'Polluter Pays' Principle as one of the options to improve Hong Kong's environment

- (a) Referring to the above information, comment on how green our Legislative Council candidates are. (6 marks)
- (b) Explain whether you think it would be the well-being of Hong Kong if the Legislative Council was dominated by green political parties. (12 marks)

2. Consider the following data :

Emission of carbon dioxide (1995) : top 12 countries				
Countries	Carbon dioxide emission (million tonnes)	Population (million)	Carbon dioxide emission per capita (tonnes)	Global Percentage (%)
USA	5,229	261	19.88	23.7
China	3,007	1,200	2.51	13.6
Russia	1,548	148	10.44	7.0
Japan	1,151	126	9.17	5.2
Germany	884	82	10.83	4.0
India	803	929	0.86	3.6
Britain	565	59	9.64	2.6
Canada	471	30	15.90	2.1
Ukraine	431	52	8.35	2.0
Italy	424	57	7.40	1.9
France	362	58	6.23	1.6
South Korea	353	45	7.87	1.6

The Agreement proposed in the United Nations Climate-Change Conference in Kyoto is summarized below :

- ◆ Industrial countries would cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 5.2% from 1990 levels by 2010. European Union Countries would cut their emissions by 8%, Japan would reduce its emission by 6% and the USA and Canada each by 7%.
 - ◆ Australia would be allowed to increase emissions by 8% due to its non-nuclear policy and high coal reserves.
 - ◆ China and other developing nations would not be bound by legal commitments, but they could join up voluntarily to cutting their emissions.
- (a) Explain whether you think reduction of the global greenhouse gas emission could be achieved by means of the above proposals. (9 marks)
- (b) The proposals seemed to satisfy nobody, including the green groups, the industrialised countries and the developing countries. What factors do you think make them so difficult to compromise? (9 marks)

3. Consider the following extract from a newspaper dated 26 November 1998 :

Waste paper crisis after firm's closure

Paper recycling efforts seemed all in vain yesterday even the Government continued to consider rescue measures following last week's closure of Concordia Paper Ltd., the only local recycler which accepted newspaper.

Concordia, which processed about a quarter of the SAR's waste paper, has been placed in receivership, leaving the local industry in crisis. Thousands of tonnes of recyclable paper may now be dumped in a landfill as a result.

'Even if we stockpile this paper on vacant land, then what's next? The Government said most paper is recycled in Hong Kong because exports are going down,' a green group said yesterday.

Schools also reported piles of paper gathering uncollected, while a major voluntary group which collects between 6,000 and 8,000 tonnes of paper a month is struggling to find another recycler.

'Some collectors had withdrawn from their regular work,' said an Environmental Protection Department spokesman.

- (a) What immediate actions would you propose to resolve the waste paper crisis? (8 marks)
- (b) What strategies do you think the government should adopt to prevent similar crises from happening again? (10 marks)

SECTION 2

Answer *any one* question in this section.

4. Consider the following viewpoints on the reclamation in Central :

A government town planning officer	:	The plan was to have the new civic square in Central. You can envisage a tree-lined promenade with views of the harbour. An open area, for cultural shows or celebrations, has been planned outside the future SAR headquarters.
Director of Planning Department	:	The project could help strengthen Hong Kong's reputation as an international business hub. We need new land to build first-rate offices to attract multinational companies to set up offices here. We need new land to build roads to relieve the traffic in Central and on the island's northern coast.
An independent architect	:	There is no reason to reclaim land from the sea to build open space. Why not leave the waterfront untouched and let the harbour itself provide a good open space?
A Hong Kong citizen	:	We don't need more grand office blocks for our civil service. What we urgently need is a determined effort to reverse the mounting pollution that is ruining our health. We should clean up the city and get rid of odours in our fragrant harbour.
An environmentalist	:	The harbour is to be protected and preserved as a special public asset and a natural heritage of Hong Kong people. Once the reclamation is started, it can't be reversed.

In the light of the above viewpoints, explain your own view on the reclamation of Victoria Harbour.

(18 marks)

5. Consider the following viewpoint of a university professor :

What shall we do with repeated offenders?

Over the last twenty years, the Hong Kong Government has established a variety of regulatory measures in order to maintain a safe level of pollution. Despite considerable efforts, enforcement of these laws has proven troublesome and repeated offenders continue to abuse the system.

Understandably, no firm will take action voluntarily to observe the regulations because it is costly and would reduce the firm's profitability. Negative sanctions are therefore imposed in order to induce firms to abide by the law. If the fines cost less than compliance with the regulations, the polluter will choose to pay the fines. In practice in Hong Kong, court fines must be within the means of the offender to pay.

To my knowledge, imprisonment has only been used as a form of punishment for environmental offenders twice in Hong Kong, and in both cases the sentence was suspended. One plausible explanation for this is that environmental offences are not considered to be criminal in nature. Or prosecutors simply find it too troublesome to prove corporate environmental culpability.

In the light of the above viewpoint, do you think a safe level of pollution can be maintained through legislation? (18 marks)

6. Study the following newspaper extract dated 27 August 1998 :

Nature now Taking Long-delayed Revenge

For decades, countries have measured the progress of their nations in terms of per capita output, productivity and consumption. They were pushed in this direction not by the aspirations of their people, but by the ideology of Western economic models and those technocrats who cared little for the environment or the impact of their flawed plans on the lives of the people.

'Per capita income' was the new idol to be worshipped by rulers and ruled alike, with no thought given to tomorrow, to sustainability or to ethical and cultural values. Forests were to be stripped and burned, rivers to be dammed and mountains to be levelled.

The results? No one plans beyond five or ten years since corporations are not interested in long-term results. Our political leaders are business-minded (brain-washed?) and they only exhibit knee-jerk reactions to sudden problems.

Now nature is taking a long-delayed revenge, as we see in the massive floods in China, the ashes of Indonesian forests and the pollution that is engulfing our air and waters. Nature is telling us, in a very painful way, that enough is enough.

- (a) Do you agree with the viewpoint put forth by the writer? Give reasons. (10 marks)
- (b) Discuss whether you think a high standard of living and conservation of living resources can co-exist. (8 marks)

7. Study the following newspaper extract dated 29 October 1998 :

Greenpeace ‘toxic-toy’ Raid

Environmental campaigners from Greenpeace marched into the Ocean Terminal Branch of Toys‘R‘Us yesterday and swept off the shelves toys they claim are toxic, saying the store ignored a call to stop selling the products. They removed five types of infant toys, which they said contained more than 20% phthalate. The legal allowance is 3%. According to Greenpeace, phthalates – used to make toys soft and flexible – can hurt the liver and kidneys and interfere with the reproductive system.

'We informed them last week about the toys and they said they would look at their stock,' Executive director of Greenpeace (China) Ho Wai-chi said. 'We've waited a week and now we are here to help them find the toys.'

Toys ‘R’Us said it would not stop selling these toys because it has not been confirmed that the toxins cause cancer. 'All our toys meet or exceed all governmental or country standards for safety,' general manager Joe Tang said. 'We believe Greenpeace should direct their allegations to the appropriate government agency or toy industry officials.'

- (a) From the perspective of a consumer, do you support the action of Greenpeace in the Ocean Terminal Branch of Toys ‘R’Us? Why? (6 marks)
- (b) From the environmental point of view, do you support using plastics as an alternative to natural materials? Explain your answer. (12 marks)

END OF PAPER