

ANGLO-CHINESE JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2026

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

August 2026

INSERT

1 hour 30 minutes

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Insert contains the passages for comprehension.

This document consists of **4** printed pages.



Passage 1. *An author writes about the declining levels of trust in the modern world.*

- 1 Trust has long been regarded as the invisible architecture of civilised society. It is the unspoken compact that allows strangers to cooperate, institutions to function and democracies to sustain themselves across generations. Trust, therefore, is not merely a private virtue or a pleasant social habit; it is a public necessity. Without some baseline confidence in others and in institutions, societies cannot coordinate action, resolve conflict or accept collective decisions. Without it, every transaction becomes adversarial, every promise suspect, every election a crisis of legitimacy. 5

- 2 Yet across much of the world today, this essential resource is in precipitous decline. The 2025 Edelman Trust Barometer¹, surveying more than 33,000 respondents across 28 countries, found that government and the media are now tied as the least trusted institutions globally, with five of the ten largest economies ranking among the least trusting nations on Earth. The roots of this erosion are multiple and reinforcing. In the political sphere, a pattern of broken promises, institutional corruption and partisan polarisation has steadily hollowed out public confidence. A different survey from the OECD found that 44 per cent of citizens reported low or no trust in their national government, compared with only 39 per cent who expressed high or moderately high trust. Crucially, the survey identified that the single largest trust gap was associated with whether individuals felt they had a meaningful say in government decisions: 69 per cent of those who felt heard trusted government, whereas only 22 per cent of those who did not feel heard extended the same confidence. 10 15

- 3 Unfortunately, the media landscape has been no less corrosive. Where journalism once served as a vigilant watchdog, guarding the public interest against the excesses of power, it now finds itself drowning in a deluge of disinformation that has poisoned the well of public discourse. Many people now struggle to distinguish credible reporting from fabricated content, and believe that government officials, business leaders and journalists deliberately mislead them. Once broken, trust does not diminish; it metastasises into something far more dangerous – the embrace of hostile activism to drive social change. 20 25

- 4 The consequences of this trust deficit extend well beyond the political arena. Economically, declining institutional trust translates into reduced cooperation and increased transaction costs. Businesses face greater regulatory scepticism, investors demand higher risk premiums and consumers grow wary of corporate claims about product safety or environmental responsibility. Socially, the damage may be even more profound. Communities fractured by distrust become fertile ground for conspiracy theories and populist demagoguery, and when citizens cease to believe that institutions are acting in their interest, they do not simply disengage; they actively seek alternatives, whether in radical movements, authoritarian strongmen, or the seductive certainties of online echo chambers. 30 35

- 5 It would be tempting to conclude that trust is a relic of a more naïve age, destined to erode further as societies grow more complex. Yet this fatalism overlooks the asymmetry at the heart of the problem: trust is extraordinarily difficult to build and remarkably easy to destroy. The real question is not whether trust still matters — it manifestly does — but whether societies possess the collective will to rebuild it. The evidence suggests that transparency, accountability and genuine civic participation remain the most reliable foundations for restoring public confidence. Whether these principles will prevail against the forces of polarisation and disinformation, however, remains an open and urgent question. 40

¹ Edelman Trust Barometer: An annual global survey conducted by the communications firm Edelman that measures and analyses public trust in the government, business sector, media and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Passage 2. *An author cautions against placing trust too readily in others.*

- 1** We are taught from childhood that trust is a virtue, but this assumption deserves close interrogation. Trust is not, by itself, a good thing; it is a wager, and like any wager, it can be lost. To grant trust is to lower one's guard, to reduce the time and effort one spends watching, checking and questioning the other party. When that wager is misplaced, the costs to the truster, and to society, can be severe. A healthy scepticism, far from being cynical, is a prerequisite of mature judgement. 5
- 2** Consider, first, how easily trust is exploited. Confidence tricksters, dishonest merchants and corrupt officials succeed precisely because their victims are willing to assume goodwill where none exists. Worse still, human beings possess a deep cognitive bias towards trusting authority figures, often suspending their own judgement in the process. A uniform, a title or a confident manner is mistaken for evidence of competence, and the ordinary citizen ceases to scrutinise. History furnishes countless cases in which obedience to authority enabled disastrous policies, financial scandals and even atrocities. Vigilance, then, is not paranoia but self-protection. 10
- 3** There are further reasons for guarded judgement. Distrust forces institutions to earn legitimacy; it pressures governments to be transparent, courts to be impartial and corporations to honour their contracts. A wary citizenry exposes lies, demands evidence and resists manipulation; a credulous citizenry rewards political propaganda. At the personal level, waiting for trust to be earned guards against the disappointment that arises from developing a deep connection too quickly. It also encourages the truster to gather information, to weigh character and to look for credible commitments rather than glib reassurance. 15 20
- 4** Distrust, of course, has its costs. Yet a society that trusts blindly is a society waiting to be deceived. To withhold trust is to insist on evidence and to refuse the comfortable shortcut of taking another's word. In a world crowded with persuasive strangers, that refusal is not a weakness but a virtue. 25

Passage 3. *An author writes about how a budget reform changed two Brazilian residents' trust in their local government.*

- 1 Maria, owner of a hillside grocery in Porto Alegre, used to dread the rainy season. For thirty years, her Councillor promised to repair the unpaved road outside her shop. Maria lamented, 'Nothing came of it. The road only mattered when somebody important needed our votes.'
- 2 What changed for Maria was not a new Councillor, but the introduction of participatory budgeting, where ordinary residents, not just officials, decide how public money is spent. This allowed residents to sit in a public hall, examine the council's spending records, vote openly on their desired projects and follow those projects through to completion. 'I have more faith in the system now because I can see the books and have my voice heard!' Maria says. 'That is what a citizen is meant to do.' 5 10
- 3 Maria's neighbour, Tomas, used to take his cues from the men in suits at city hall. He voted as the local party chief told him; when a city hall clerk said his business permit required an unexplained new fee, he paid it without asking why. 'I don't do that anymore,' he says. 'I read the papers and ask questions until I understand the answer. Those men in suits are not always right, and now I know I am allowed to say so. The Councillor still expects deference. He does not get it from me.' 15

Copyright Acknowledgements:

- Passage 1 © Edelman. "2025 Edelman Trust Barometer." Accessed May 3, 2026.
<https://www.edelman.com/trust/2025/trust-barometer>
- Passage 2 © Margaret Levi. "A State of Trust." In *Trust and Governance*, edited by Valerie Braithwaite and Margaret Levi, 77-101. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1998. Accessed May 28, 2026.

ANGLO-CHINESE JUNIOR COLLEGE
JC2 PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION 2026

CANDIDATE
NAME

INDEX
NUMBER

GENERAL PAPER

8881/02

Paper 2

1 hour 30 minutes

Candidates answer on the Question Paper.

Additional Materials: Insert

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your index number and name on all the work you hand in.

Write in dark blue or black pen.

Do not use staples, paper clips, highlighters, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **all** questions.

The insert contains the passages for comprehension.

Note that up to 15 marks out of 50 will be awarded for your use of language.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together.

The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.

For Examiner's Use	
Content	/35
Language	/15
Total	/50

This document consists of **7** printed pages.



Answer **all** questions.

Your answers should be:

- written **in your own words as far as possible**. Where you select the appropriate material from the passage for your answer, you must still use your own words to express it.
- written in **continuous prose**.

From Passage 1

- 1** Explain what the author means by ‘invisible architecture of civilised society’ (line 1).

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.....

.....

..... [2]

- 2** In paragraph 2, explain **two** reasons for the erosion of trust today.

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..... [2]

- 3** In paragraph 3, how does the author’s use of language show the destructive impact of disinformation on public discourse?

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..... [3]

- 4 Explain the author's use of the word 'even' in line 31.

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.....

.....

..... [2]

- 5 What does the author suggest about the nature of trust with the use of the word 'asymmetry' (line 38)?

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

From Passage 2

- 6** Summarise the problems of trusting easily **and** the benefits of withholding trust.

Write your summary in **no more than 120 words**.

[8]

[Number of words:]

From all the passages

- 7** Passage 1 states that 'the single largest trust gap was associated with whether individuals felt they had a meaningful say in government decisions' (lines 16-18).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

- 8** Passage 2 states that 'human beings possess a deep cognitive bias towards trusting authority figures, often suspending their own judgement in the process' (lines 9-10).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer.

.....

.....

.....

..... [2]

- 9 The reading passages cover a range of views about the value of trust. How far do you agree that trust remains essential for your society?

Support your answer with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from **at least** one of the reading passages
- examples from your own experience and that of your society.

[illegible]

[12]

Band	
Marks	

8881 H1 General Paper
2026 Anglo-Chinese Junior College Preliminary Examination Paper 2 Answer Scheme

Common errors:

- Illegible handwriting, which was marked as spelling errors, often severely impeded examiners' understanding of responses.
- Students are reminded to pay attention to the accurate identification of question types for short-answer questions.
- Weaker students did not use the present tense in referring to the author's intention or when referencing the author.

From Passage 1

1. Explain what the author means by 'invisible architecture of civilised society' (line 1). [2]

From Passage 1	Pt	Paraphrased	Marks
Trust has long been regarded as the invisible architecture (line 1)	a	Trust serves as the unseen / tacit / implicit / unwritten but essential basis/ foundation/ framework... (2-part answer)	1m
of civilised society. (line 1)	b	of a cultured / enlightened / harmonious / advanced / refined / sophisticated / moral developed society. Do not accept: educated, prosperous, better, orderly, stable Allow lift for 'society'	1m

Question type: Vocab

Examiner's Comments: Many students recognised this question as vocabulary in context and understood what was required. However, many responses struggled to paraphrase 'civilised' in context. There were also responses that neglected 'architecture', resulting in the loss of marks.

2. In paragraph 2, explain **two** reasons for the erosion of trust today. [2]

From Passage 1	Pt	Paraphrased / inferred	Marks
In the political sphere, a pattern of... (<i>must be captured for pts A, B, C</i>) broken promises... (lines 12-13)	a	The reasons for the erosion of trust include repeated / recurring / persistent instances / failures of... ...officials failing to fulfill / honour / deliver on their pledges / commitments, OR There was a continuous cycle of unkept / unfulfilled commitments by the politicians	1m
...institutional corruption (line 13)	b	(repeated / recurring / persistent instances of) dishonesty / unethical conduct / abuse of power / mishandling money / siphoning funds within governing bodies/ systems,	1m
and partisan polarisation has steadily hollowed out public confidence. (line 13)	c	(repeated / recurring / persistent instances of) and political divides / ideological fragmentation. OR the division of society into opposing political factions.	1m
... whether individuals felt they had a meaningful say in government decisions... (lines 17-18) 69 per cent of those who felt heard trusted government, whereas only 22 per cent of those who did not feel heard extended the same confidence. (lines 18-19)	d	Citizens felt that they had no voice / were powerless / unable to influence policy outcomes. Allow lift for 'government', 'felt' / 'feel' (Any 2 points = 2m)	1m

Question Type: Literal

Examiner's comments: Many students lost marks because they did not capture the idea of 'pattern'. This idea was needed for points (a), (b) and (c), because 'pattern' is the head noun of the sentence's subject: "a pattern of broken promises, institutional corruption and partisan polarisation".

3. In paragraph 3, how does the author's use of language show the destructive impact of disinformation on public discourse? [3]

From Passage 1	Pt	Paraphrased / inferred	Marks
...the media landscape has been no less corrosive (line 20)	a	<u>Idea: the metaphor of corrosive metal</u> The word 'corrosive' suggests that disinformation in the media landscape has degraded / deteriorated the accuracy of the media. OR led to the disintegration of the quality of public discourse.	1m
(Journalism) now finds itself drowning in a deluge of disinformation... (line 22)	b	<u>Idea: the imagery of a natural disaster (Flood)</u> The word 'drowning' / 'deluge' suggests that the volume/scale of disinformation is so great that it makes it impossible to discern the truth.	1m
...that has poisoned the well of public discourse. (lines 22-23)	c	<u>Idea: the metaphor of environmental taint</u> The word 'poisoned' / The phrase 'poisoned the well' shows how disinformation has ruined / tainted the very foundation of communication (so severely that no healthy conversation can take place / it kills democratic decision-making). OR the damage caused to journalism spreads / diffuses to the entire community (such that no one is spared from the dangers of disinformation).	1m
Once broken, trust does not diminish; it metastasises into something far more dangerous – the embrace of hostile activism to drive social change. (lines 25-26)	d	<u>Idea: the metaphor of a biological disease</u> The word 'metastasises' shows that when trust is compromised, it mutates / morphs into accepting hostile activism, which is a lot more perilous / harmful for society (in terms of disinformation).	1m
Any 3 points = 3m			

Question Type: Use of Language

Examiners' Comments: This question was poorly done, as many students failed to capture the meaning in context despite identifying the correct use of language. Many weaker responses selected words or phrases that were irrelevant to the question.

4. Explain the author's use of the word 'even' in line 31. [2]

From Passage	Pt	Paraphrased/Inferred	Marks
The consequences of this trust deficit extend well beyond the political arena. Economically, declining institutional trust translates into reduced cooperation and increased transaction costs. Businesses face greater regulatory scepticism, investors demand higher risk premiums, and consumers grow wary of corporate claims about product safety or environmental responsibility. Socially, the damage may be even more profound . (lines 27-31)	a	<u>Function:</u> The author emphasises that there is an <u>escalation / intensification</u> of something <u>already terrible</u> becoming worse.	1m
	b	<u>Context</u> The societal consequences are worse than the economic ones.	1m

Question Type: Inference

Examiners' Comments: Many students demonstrated understanding that the existing economic consequences were already dire, and thus, the use of the word 'even' emphasises that the social impacts will be much worse in comparison. Weaker answers were not structured around function and context, and lost marks when either was omitted.

5. What does the author suggest about the nature of trust with the use of the word 'asymmetry' (line 38)? [2]

From Passage	Pt	Paraphrased/Inferred	Marks
Yet this fatalism overlooks the asymmetry at the heart of the problem:	a	The author is suggesting that trust is imbalanced.	1m
trust is extraordinarily difficult to build (line 38) and remarkably easy to destroy (line 38).	b	Establishing trust necessitates prolonged, arduous effort/ a significant investment of time. Conversely / Yet, trust can be obliterated / annihilated / demolished almost instantaneously / with little / minimal effort / force.	1m

Question Type: Vocabulary

Examiners' Comments: This question was generally well attempted, with many students recognising that 'asymmetry' points to an imbalance in the nature of trust. However, weaker responses did not show a holistic understanding of this imbalance and merely paraphrased the lines without explaining what they suggest about trust – that it is difficult to build but easy to destroy.

From Passage 2

6. Summarise the problems of trusting easily and the benefits of withholding trust. Write your summary in no more than 120 words. [8]

From the Passage		Paraphrased / Inferred
Trust is not, by itself, a good thing; it is a wager , and like any wager, it can be lost ... (lines 2-3).	1	(Inferred) Trusting easily is a risk / may not pay off.
To grant trust is to lower one's guard (line 3)	2	Trusting others can cause people to become less cautious/ relax their defences.
...to reduce the time and effort one spends watching, checking and questioning the other party (lines 3-4) ...the ordinary citizen ceases to scrutinise (lines 11-12)	3	(Inferred) As such, people do not take as much time / effort examining / verifying others carefully / making critical inquiry (when they should).
When the wager is misplaced, the costs to the truster, and to society, can be severe (lines 4-5)	4	Misplaced trust can have very damaging / serious consequences/ repercussions.
A healthy scepticism, far from being cynical, is a prerequisite of mature judgement . (lines 5-6)	5	A healthy scepticism is an essential condition / basic requirement / for sound / informed decision-making.
Consider, first, how easily trust is exploited . Yet a society that trusts blindly is a society waiting to be deceived . (lines 23-24)	6	When one trusts easily, one becomes an easy target for manipulation / fraud by unethical / unscrupulous / morally dubious individuals / figures.
... victims are willing to assume goodwill where none exists (lines 8-9)	7	People too readily believe others have good intentions (when reality is different). It involves the naïve presumption of benevolence/ good intention in the untrustworthy. Allow lift of 'good'
... [human beings possess a deep cognitive bias towards trusting authority figures,] suspending their own judgement ... (of the authority figures) (line 10)	8	(Trusting others easily) causes people to abandon / relinquish their independent thinking/ critical agency to evaluate those in power. OR (Trusting others easily) causes people to be uncritical of those in power.
A uniform, a title, or a confident manner is mistaken for evidence of competence (line 11)	9	Trust can lead one to wrongly interpret that those who appear to be/ look powerful as people who possess real/ actual ability.
... obedience to authority enabled disastrous policies, financial scandals and even atrocities (lines 12-13)	10	(Obedience to authority) has enabled major catastrophes / crises / financial manipulation / misuse / horrific human rights abuses.
Vigilance, then, is not paranoia but self-protection (lines 13-14)	11	(When we withhold trust,) staying alert serves as a safeguard/ acts as a form of security for the individual.
Distrust forces institutions to earn legitimacy (lines 15-16): ...it pressures governments to be transparent , courts to be impartial and corporations to honour their contracts (lines 16-17)	12	Distrust compels / demands that organisations prove their credibility/ demonstrate their worthiness/ stay accountable to the people. OR Distrust pressures institutions to exercise integrity / be fair / be open / be accountable.
A wary citizenry exposes lies, demands evidence (line 17) ... refuse the comfortable shortcut of taking another's word (lines 24-25)	13	By withholding trust, citizens are more guarded / cautious / do not accept / avoid accepting claims without proof / blindly.
A wary citizenry exposes lies , (line 17)	14	A wary citizenry seeks the truth/ uncovers/unmasks falsehoods/ deception,
... demands evidence (line 17) It also encourages the truster to gather information (lines 20-21)	15	...insists on / requires / expects proof / substantiation OR (Withholding trust) encourages individuals to conduct research / obtain facts / acquire details
... and resists manipulation (line 18)	16	... and avoids / stands firm from being controlled / brainwashed.
...a credulous citizenry rewards political propaganda (line 18)	17	Trusting easily incentivises / emboldens / gives license to political manipulation / misinformation / manufactured political narratives Allow lift of 'political'
... guards against the disappointment that arises from developing a deep connection too quickly. (lines 19-20)	18	Being sceptical protects / shields us from being let down / disenchanted by others.
... weigh character ... (line 21)	19	(Withholding trust) encourages us to evaluate / be discerning of the integrity / values of others...
...and look for credible commitments (line 21)	20	...and to judge one's reliability / trustworthiness carefully / prioritise people who honour their word / pledges.

No. of points	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9	10-11	12-13	14+
Marks	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

Examiners' Comments: Precise paraphrasing in context remains a concern. Many students dropped key words or phrases, especially in points that required more than one part of the text to be captured, while others read the text too literally and missed its meaning. Concision is also a concern, as many students used too many words to secure a single summary point, leaving less room for other points within the word limit. As the summary is also used to determine the language mark, students should make sure that their sentences are coherent and grammatical.

From all the passages

7. Passage 1 states that 'the single largest trust gap was associated with whether individuals felt they had a meaningful say in government decisions' (lines 16-18).

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support the statement. Justify your answer. [2]

From Passage 3	Pt	Paraphrased / inferred	Marks
What changed for Maria was not a new Councillor, but the introduction of participatory budgeting, where ordinary residents, not just officials, decide how public money is spent. This allowed residents to sit in a public hall, examine the council's spending records, vote openly on their desired projects, and follow those projects through to completion. (lines 5-8) OR 'I have more faith in the system now because I can see the books and have my voice heard!' Maria says. 'That is what a citizen is meant to do.' (lines 8-10)	a	Passage 3 states that, Maria / people gained greater confidence / trust in the system because it allowed people to have control over how government funds are used. OR she could vote on projects and have her views taken into account by the council and have her views known / engaged in the democratic process. OR she could see the plans/proposals through to their final execution. OR In Passage 3, Maria / people gained greater confidence / trust in the system because she can engage / contribute / get involved in government decisions / the democratic process. Allow lift of 'more' and 'vote'	1m
Passage 1 the single largest trust gap was associated with whether individuals felt they had a meaningful say in government decisions (lines 16-18)	b	This supports Passage 1 because Maria's experience is proof that when citizens are given actual decision-making power, their faith in the government is restored, thereby closing the trust gap.	1m

Question Type: Connection of ideas

Examiners' Comments: This question was well attempted, as many responses successfully captured the required idea, along with a valid justification. Some of the weak responses merely lifted the identified idea with no attempts at paraphrasing, while others failed to give relevant signposts to differentiate between the passages.

8. Passage 2 states that 'human beings possess a deep cognitive bias towards trusting authority figures, often suspending their own judgement in the process.' (lines 9-10)

Identify **one** specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine the statement. Justify your answer. [2]

From Passage 3	Pt	Paraphrased / inferred	Marks
Maria's neighbour, Tomas, used to take his cues from the men in suits at city hall . He voted as the local party chief told him; when a city hall clerk said his business permit required an unexplained new fee, he paid it without asking why. 'I don't do that anymore,' he says. 'I read the papers and ask questions until I understand the answer. (lines 11-14)	a	Passage 3 states that, Tomas previously took instructions / suggestions / hints from those in charge / government leaders, but now, he no longer does so, reading the news / getting updated and making inquiries / discoveries until he comprehends / fully knows the issues. OR Even though Tomas used to just trust government leaders, he was able to change and no longer does so, as he is now able to seek clarification.	1m
Passage 2 human beings possess a deep cognitive bias towards trusting authority figures, often suspending their own judgement in the process. (lines 9-10)	b	This undermines the statement in Passage 2 because rather than blindly believing in their leaders / those who are in charge, people can change their ways and verify / evaluate other sources before making decisions. OR ...because not everyone will necessarily have an innate propensity to blindly believe in their leaders / those who are in charge and withhold their own true opinion. Instead, some pose queries / are inquisitive / do not take things for granted.	1m

Question Type: Connection of ideas

Examiners' Comments: This question was poorly attempted, as many responses failed to capture the change exhibited by Tomas: he used to simply follow the authorities, but no longer does so. Students are reminded that signposting is important in connection-of-ideas questions, and that paraphrasing the given quotation is not sufficient as a justification.

Additional note regarding Qns 7 and 8:

- The 1st mark (a) can be awarded for identifying and paraphrasing the relevant idea from Passage 3 if the justification is wrong.
- The 2nd mark (b) can be awarded for explaining the justification if the idea from Passage 3 is correctly identified but lifted/ is awkwardly paraphrased.
- However, the justification (b) cannot be awarded if the idea is not correctly identified. In this case, even if a student somehow gets the justification, no marks will be awarded, as the student has not demonstrated understanding.

9. The reading passages cover a range of views about the value of trust. How far do you agree that trust remains essential for your society? [12]

Support your answer with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from **at least** one of the reading passages.
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

Requirement

Students should

- explain the extent of their agreement with the authors' views on whether trust remains essential for Singapore society, across spheres ranging from government and the media to the economy and everyday relationships;
- support their views with reasoned argument grounded in the Singapore context; and
- show understanding of the ideas and attitudes about trust raised in the passages.

Explanation

Students should show understanding of some of the following issues:

- Does ready trust in institutions help a society function, or does healthy scepticism keep those institutions honest?
- In an age of disinformation, is a trusting public or a questioning public better protected from manipulation?
- How does the level of trust in an economy affect the cost of doing business and the safety of ordinary consumers?
- When neighbours and strangers extend trust to one another, does it strengthen community bonds or expose people to harm?
- Has the meaning of trust shifted in Singapore as the population matures and life moves increasingly online?
- How far can transparency and independent verification substitute for trust without breaking down cooperation?

Evaluation

Students:

- should question or show reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with some of these views.
- should give examples from their own and their society's experience in support of their views; and/or
- may put forward original ideas on whether trust remains essential for Singapore today.

Examiners' Comments:

Trust was a topic that students could readily relate to, and many drew on apt Singapore examples in their responses. Some used the Covid-19 pandemic to show how trust enabled Singaporeans to cooperate well with the government while putting up with many inconveniences, illustrating the author's point that without "baseline confidence in others and in institutions, societies cannot coordinate action" (Passage 1, lines 4 - 5), while others cited POFMA to illustrate how Singapore's media is not "drowning in a deluge of disinformation" (Passage 1, line 22). Several students also argued well that trust remains essential in Singapore because, as a small, multiracial nation, it needs trust between communities to maintain social harmony, and as a country with no natural resources, it relies on investors' trust in its institutions to sustain its economy.

However, there were key structural weaknesses in the AQ responses. A number of students wrote exceedingly long introductory paragraphs that compromised the depth of the body paragraphs. Some students still struggled to select apt references, or selected references that were too long. In addition, many responses proceeded to paraphrase their chosen quotations, resulting in the loss of time that could have been spent on developing the reference chosen. Students are reminded that if the chosen reference is clear as it is, there is no need to devote more sentences to repeating the reference in a paraphrase.

While apt examples were deployed in the development of the body paragraphs, evaluation is still an area for improvement for most students. Students are reminded that their body paragraphs should not end with the examples. Rather, the implication and significance of the examples in relation to the chosen reference ought to be the focus at the end of the exemplification. Many weak responses merely name-dropped characteristics of Singapore without linking them to trust.

Many weak responses struggled to develop body paragraphs meaningfully as students merely focused on the benefits of trust rather than on the stakeholders involved and on how and why trust remains essential or not. Many responses also attempted to push beyond two body paragraphs, but this often resulted in thin paragraphs that lacked depth and development. Students are reminded that given the limited time they have, it is wiser to focus on developing two balanced body paragraphs.

Finally, as the question asks how far trust remains essential in your society, responses needed to evaluate this against Singapore's distinctive characteristics to reach the highest band. Most responses stopped short at arguing either that trust is essential or that it is not, without considering how Singapore's circumstances make it more or less so, and thus failed to meaningfully capture the nuance and contention that the question is seeking to assess.

9. The reading passages cover a range of views about the value of trust.

How far do you agree that trust remains essential for your society? [12]

Support your answer with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from **at least** one of the reading passages
- examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society.

Key Ideas about Trust (Passages 1, 2 & 3)	Guiding Questions	Trust remains essential	Trust is no longer essential
1. Trust in government and the legitimacy of public institutions “It is the unspoken compact that allows strangers to cooperate, institutions to function, and democracies to sustain themselves across generations.” (Passage 1, lines 1-3) “the single largest trust gap was associated with whether individuals felt they had a meaningful say in government decisions” (Passage 1, lines 16-18) “Distrust forces institutions to earn legitimacy; it pressures governments to be transparent” (Passage 2, lines 15-16) “What changed for Maria was not a new Councillor, but the introduction of participatory budgeting, where ordinary residents, not just officials, decide how public money is spent. This allowed residents to sit in a public hall, examine the council's spending records, vote openly on their desired projects, and follow those projects through to	Does trust in the government enable Singapore run smoothly and respond quickly during a national crisis? If Singaporeans become more sceptical of official assurances, does that scepticism weaken governance or actually push institutions to be more transparent and accountable? How far should citizens place their confidence in the state, and when does healthy questioning become more valuable than ready trust?	[EV] While distrust can sometimes pressure a government to be more transparent, in Singapore, a high level of trust in public institutions remains essential because it is what allows the state to act quickly and decisively when the whole country is at risk. Singaporeans have long extended confidence to a technocratic government that delivers competent long-term governance, from public housing to healthcare. That stored-up trust becomes a national asset in a crisis. When citizens believe the authorities are honest and capable, they comply with difficult instructions without waiting to be forced, which lets policy move at a speed that constant suspicion would make impossible. [EG] During the Covid-19 pandemic, this trust translated into one of the most effective national responses in the world. The 2021 Edelman Trust Barometer recorded Singapore's overall Trust Index at a ten-year high of 68 points, with the government the most trusted institution at 76 per cent. This is because most citizens believed official guidance, they followed Safe Management Measures and downloaded contact-tracing tools, and they accepted movement restrictions that helped Singapore emerge with one of the lowest pandemic death rates globally. The example shows that without a reservoir of institutional trust built over years, the government could not have coordinated a population so swiftly and saved lives.	[EV] Although respect for a capable government has served Singapore well, in a more mature society, ready trust is no longer enough on its own, and public scepticism has become the more valuable force. Distrust forces institutions to earn legitimacy and pressures governments to be transparent. Singaporeans today are more educated and more willing to question official assurances rather than accept them automatically. When citizens push back, they compel the state to explain itself and to correct course. Thus, what protects good governance is not blind confidence but an alert public that holds the authorities to the promises they make. [EG] This was evident during the Ridout Road saga in 2023, when questions emerged over the rental of state-owned black-and-white bungalows by Cabinet ministers K. Shanmugam and Vivian Balakrishnan. Rather than accepting official assurances at face value, many Singaporeans questioned whether the ministers had received preferential treatment and demanded greater transparency over the rental process. Recognising that public confidence could no longer be taken for granted, the PAP government responded by having the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau conduct an independent investigation before releasing its findings publicly. The ministers were also required to address the issue in Parliament and explain the circumstances surrounding the rentals in detail. Even though the investigation concluded that there had been no corruption or wrongdoing, the government's extensive efforts to disclose information and account for its decisions reflected an understanding that legitimacy had to be earned through openness rather than assumed through long-standing trust. The episode

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completion.” (Passage 3, lines 5-8)			demonstrates that an alert and questioning public encourages the government to be more transparent and accountable, strengthening good governance by ensuring that those in power remain answerable for their actions.
2. Trust in the media and information in an age of disinformation “government and the media are now tied as the least trusted institutions globally” (Passage 1, lines 10-11) “it now finds itself drowning in a deluge of disinformation that has poisoned the well of public discourse. Many people now struggle to distinguish credible reporting from fabricated content” (Passage 1, lines 22-24) “A wary citizenry exposes lies, demands evidence and resists manipulation; a credulous citizenry rewards political propaganda.” (Passage 2, lines 17-18) “I read the papers and ask questions until I understand the answer.” (Passage 3, lines 13-14)	Can Singaporeans still trust the mainstream media to tell apart credible reporting from fabricated content online? In an age of disinformation, is a trusting public or a questioning public better protected against manipulation? How far should a citizen take official information at face value before demanding evidence?	[EV] Even though a sceptical public has its uses, in Singapore, a broad baseline of trust in mainstream media remains essential because it provides society with a common factual basis for coordinated action. In a small, densely connected city where rumour can spread within hours, having outlets that the public widely regards as reliable is what prevents panic and lets the country coordinate. Without a trusted common source, every citizen would have to verify everything independently, and in an emergency, that delay could be dangerous. [EG] This was evident after the introduction of the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA) in 2019. Whenever false claims circulated online on issues such as elections or public policy, mainstream news organisations reported both the original claims and the official corrections required under the law. As many Singaporeans continued to regard these outlets as credible sources of information, they were able to distinguish verified facts from online speculation instead of relying on conflicting accounts circulating on social media. This shared understanding helped limit confusion on matters of public importance and enabled public discussion to proceed on the basis of a common set of facts. This shows that while falsehoods can spread rapidly online, trust in the mainstream media remains essential because it provides society with an authoritative source of information that citizens can rely on when competing claims emerge.	[EV] While trusted outlets are useful, in an age of disinformation a citizen who simply trusts what they are told is no longer well protected, and a questioning habit has become the better safeguard. Singaporeans now live in an information environment flooded with deepfakes and scam messages engineered to deceive. In that setting, the prudent response is not to extend automatic trust to any single source but to check claims against evidence. The valuable skill is verification, not faith. [EG] This shift is reflected in Singapore's efforts to strengthen media literacy rather than encourage unquestioning trust. Through the National Library Board's S.U.R.E. (Source, Understand, Research, Evaluate) campaign, Singaporeans are taught to evaluate the credibility of sources, verify claims using reliable evidence and avoid sharing information simply because it appears convincing online. Similarly, the government's Factually website regularly addresses false or misleading claims circulating on social media by presenting supporting evidence and explaining why such claims are inaccurate. Instead of asking citizens to accept official statements uncritically, these initiatives encourage them to compare information with credible evidence before forming conclusions. Their emphasis on verification demonstrates that, in an era of deepfakes and sophisticated online scams, the best defence is no longer trust alone but the habit of questioning what one encounters before accepting it as true.
3. Trust in the economy, commerce, and everyday market transactions “Without it, every transaction becomes adversarial, every	Does Singapore's reputation as a low-corruption, high-trust hub lower the cost of	[EV] Although caution has its place in commerce, in Singapore a high-trust economy remains essential because it is the foundation of the country's prosperity. Singapore has deliberately built a reputation as a clean, rules-based hub where contracts are honoured and officials cannot be bribed. That reputation lowers the risk	[EV] While a high-trust reputation helps the economy overall, for the individual consumer ready trust in everyday transactions is no longer safe, and vigilance has become the real protection. Singapore's highly digital, cashless marketplace has given fraudsters new ways to reach people through fake online listings and spoofed bank

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promise suspect" (Passage 1, lines 6-7) "declining institutional trust translates into reduced cooperation and increased transaction costs. Businesses face greater regulatory scepticism, investors demand higher risk premiums, and consumers grow wary of corporate claims about product safety" (Passage 1, lines 29-31) "Confidence tricksters, dishonest merchants and corrupt officials succeed precisely because their victims are willing to assume goodwill where none exists." (Passage 2, lines 7-9)	doing business and attract investment? When consumers grant trust too readily, do they become easier targets for scams and dishonest sellers? Is a wary, verifying consumer better protected than a trusting one in everyday transactions?	of doing business and draws global capital to a small country with no natural resources. If that trust is eroded, the very advantage that sustains Singapore's economy would be lost. [EG] The strength of this trust is measurable. In Transparency International's 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index, Singapore ranked as the third least corrupt country in the world with a score of 84, the top performer in the Asia-Pacific region. Maintained by the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau, this standing signals to multinational firms that they can operate without paying bribes or fearing arbitrary treatment, which is a major reason so many locate their regional headquarters here. The example shows that institutional trust is not a soft virtue but a hard economic asset that lowers costs and attracts the investment the country depends on.	messages that impersonate trusted brands. In this environment, the consumer who lowers their guard and trusts a slick interface is the one most easily exploited. The person who verifies before paying is far better defended than the one who trusts by default. [EG] The scale of the problem makes this concrete. In 2024, scam victims in Singapore lost a record S\$1.1 billion across 51,501 reported cases, the highest number ever recorded, with e-commerce and phishing among the most common ruses. Many victims were caught precisely because they trusted a convincing message or seller without checking. In response, banks introduced money locks and cooling-off periods, and the police established the Anti-Scam Command, which recovered over S\$182 million in 2024. These defences all push the public toward verifying rather than trusting, which shows that in day-to-day commerce a wary consumer is now safer than a trusting one.
4. Interpersonal and community trust between ordinary people "Communities fractured by distrust become fertile ground for conspiracy theories" (Passage 1, line 33) "waiting for trust to be earned guards against the disappointment that arises from developing a deep connection too quickly" (Passage 2, lines 19-20) "In a world crowded with persuasive strangers, that refusal is not a weakness but a virtue." (Passage 2, lines 25-26)	Does neighbourly trust strengthen community bonds in dense HDB living, or has Singapore become a society of cautious strangers? In a world full of persuasive strangers, is caution toward people you do not know a weakness or a sensible safeguard?	[EV] Even though caution toward strangers can be sensible, in Singapore trust between ordinary people remains essential because dense high-rise living only works when neighbours look out for one another. With most Singaporeans living in close-packed HDB flats and the population ageing rapidly, neighbourly trust is what allows an elderly resident living alone to be noticed and helped. A community of mutually wary strangers cannot provide that informal safety net. The kampung spirit of looking after the people next door is not nostalgia but a practical necessity in how Singaporeans actually live. [EG] Public policy treats this as worth cultivating. The HDB Good Neighbours Movement and the Singapore Friendly Neighbourhood Award, launched in 2022, recognise neighbourhoods where residents check on one another and share resources with vulnerable households. Ground-up efforts such as Adopt-a-Block schemes see volunteers deliver rations to lower-income residents in rental blocks. These initiatives work only because residents are willing to trust and rely on people	[EV] While neighbourly warmth has value, in much of modern Singapore life, automatic trust in people one does not know is no longer wise, and a measured caution has become the prudent default. Singaporeans increasingly meet strangers through dating apps and online marketplace listings, where a friendly profile reveals nothing about real intentions. In that context, extending trust before it is earned exposes a person to manipulation, and reasonable wariness is simply self-respect. [EG] Singapore's authorities now actively teach this caution. Police advisories urge people never to transfer money to online love interests they have not met, after romance and internet love scams cost victims tens of millions of dollars in recent years, with many cases stemming from trust placed in a stranger met online. Carousell and similar platforms warn users to meet in person and inspect goods before paying, because trusting an unseen seller invites fraud. These widely promoted habits show that the older assumption of goodwill towards strangers has been replaced by a verify-first posture, which

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	How far does waiting for trust to be earned protect a person, and when does that caution start to corrode genuine connection?	they did not choose to live beside. The example shows that interpersonal trust remains an essential form of social capital in Singapore, binding together communities that physical proximity alone cannot sustain.	means uncritical interpersonal trust is no longer the safe default it once was.