



Raffles Institution
2025 Year 6 Preliminary Examination
General Certificate of Education Advanced Level
Higher 1

GENERAL PAPER

8881/01

Paper 1

1 September 2025

1 hour 30 minutes

Additional Materials: Answer Booklet

READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

Write your name, CT group, and GP tutor's name on all the work you hand in.
Write in dark blue or black ink on both sides of the paper.
Do not use paper clips, glue or correction fluid.

Answer **one** question.

Note that up to **20** marks out of **50** will be awarded for your use of language.

At the end of the examination, fasten all your work securely together. All questions in this paper carry equal marks.

Answer **one** question.

Answers should be between 500 and 800 words in length.

- 1 Evaluate the effectiveness of government efforts to enhance people's quality of life in your society.
- 2 Is foreign aid ultimately more damaging than beneficial to the countries it aims to support?
- 3 Should the value of a person's work be measured solely by monetary compensation?
- 4 'It is never justifiable to disregard ethical concerns for the sake of scientific or technological progress.' Discuss.
- 5 'There is a decline in the appreciation of traditional art forms today.' How far is this true in your society?
- 6 To what extent does the media today undermine rather than support democracy?
- 7 'Developed nations should shoulder a greater burden in addressing climate change.' To what extent do you agree?
- 8 Is it right for a leader to place national interests above global responsibilities?

1. Evaluate the effectiveness of government efforts to enhance the people's quality of life in your society.

Terms and Scope

- **'quality of life'**: refer to the **holistic wellbeing** of Singaporeans in terms of the meeting of **emotional & psychological needs, rather than material or economic wellbeing**. It should be more focused around the matrix of **"happiness"** such as quality of living environments, access to recreation, or relationships. While it is the case that a high standard of living can support a good quality of life, they should not be conflated. People in high paying jobs may enjoy a high standard of living, but have low quality of life if they are stressed, unhealthy, or lack access to meaningful relationships. A consideration of different demographics and their specific life needs in the context of Singapore would also allow for greater scope.
- **'government efforts (to enhance)'**: refers to types of current government efforts or measures that have been taken to increase quality of life (laws, policies, initiatives)
- **'effectiveness'**: can be determined by whether the measures have **achieved their intended outcome**, and if there are any **significant trade-offs or unintended consequences**. The (long-term) **sustainability** and overall **scale of impact** of such measures can also be considered.

Band 4 & above

- Addresses issue of 'effectiveness' in improving QOL
- Incorporates Singaporean context/ characteristics in determining the effectiveness of such measures.

Band 3

- Lists the general benefits and drawbacks of current government measures to address quality of life in Singapore.
- Listing of various government efforts to improve Singaporeans' quality of life

Low Band 3

- Deals solely with matters related to standard of living

Measures have been highly effective:

1. The social challenges that Singapore faces as a developed society have motivated the government to **devote more resources to comprehensively** provide services to enhance people's overall being, including creating social safety nets for the more vulnerable communities, with the intention to minimise the cost that such problems will otherwise create, which will in turn require the government or society as a whole to bear. For example, an increasing focus on **affordable and quality healthcare** has enhanced citizens' overall well-being. Singapore's healthcare model balances individual responsibility with government support. By expanding subsidies and promoting preventive health strategies, the state reduces the burden of hospitalisation while empowering citizens to manage chronic conditions early. This has **lowered long-term healthcare costs, especially for lower income individuals and ageing Singaporeans**.
 - The government's expansion of CHAS (Community Health Assist Scheme) subsidies in 2019 has allowed more middle-income Singaporeans to access primary healthcare at lower costs, making care more inclusive. Over the last decade, the introduction of the Pioneer Generation Package, followed by the Merdeka and Majulah Packages support the different age groups of the older Singaporeans, specifically in the area of healthcare, which they can access at a highly affordable rate.
 - The introduction of the Healthier SG initiative in 2023, which provides free health screenings and personalised care plans for citizens, reflects a shift from reactive treatment to proactive prevention. Active ageing centres also fall under the same category of proactive management of mental health issues associated with age, and

the announcement of Age Well Neighbourhoods indicates the government's long-term focus on integrating and optimising the provision of elderly-centred services to Singapore's steadily ageing population.

2. Recognising the potential repercussions of an increasing level of **stress faced by Singaporeans in a fast-paced society**, the government has introduced initiatives to help Singaporeans cope with the various challenges which affect their overall well-being, many of which deal with sensitive issues related to mental health, reduce burnout, and flexible work arrangements. These measures reflect a **timely shift towards holistic well-being beyond physical well-being**.
 - The launch of the National Mental Health and Well-being Strategy (2023) expanded community mental health services and school-based programmes, signalling stronger national commitment to tackling mental health challenges.
 - The Tripartite Guidelines on Flexible Work Arrangements (announced 2024, effective 2025) require employers to fairly consider staff requests for hybrid or flexible work, supporting better work-life balance and reducing stress from rigid work schedules.

Measures are not really successful:

- The **insufficient provisions to combat rising costs of living means** that higher levels of financial stress persist, which in turn **directly limits Singaporeans' ability to enjoy the benefits of government initiatives** to enhance the quality of life.
 - While government schemes like GST and CDC vouchers offer short-term relief, they do not address structural issues such as wage stagnation relative to inflation. The GST hike, combined with rising transport, food, and utility costs, has left many citizens feeling that government support merely offsets—but does not solve—financial pressures. Furthermore, although subsidies and BTO supply have increased, demand still far exceeds supply. Long waiting times and soaring resale flat prices suggest that government measures address symptoms but not the root causes of housing affordability, such as land scarcity and speculative demand. BTO waiting times of 4-5 years continue to delay home ownership, causing stress for young couples planning marriage or starting a family.
- 2. The government's **excessive emphasis on economic well-being exacerbates the workplace culture** in Singapore, which tends to prioritise productivity and long working hours, **at the expense of other aspects of well-being**.
 - Social stigma also continues to prevent individuals from openly seeking mental health support. This means government initiatives may not translate effectively into tangible everyday improvements in citizens' lives.
 - A 2022 National Council of Social Service (NCSS) survey found that stigma toward mental health issues remained widespread, with many employees still fearing discrimination work repercussions on their promotion eligibility if they disclosed such struggles. Surveys by the Institute of Policy Studies (2023) also found that many employers remain reluctant to adopt flexible work practices, limiting the actual reach of such policies.

2. Is foreign aid ultimately more damaging than beneficial to the countries it aims to support?

Terms and Scope	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘foreign aid’: The provision of humanitarian, developmental, or military aid to countries in need, either by individual donor countries or the international community as a whole. While aid tends to take concrete or material forms like money, goods, or equipment, any kind of assistance provided that the recipient country lacks should be considered ‘aid’. For instance, technical assistance in the form of expertise, knowledge and skills being transferred is also a form of foreign aid • ‘ultimately more damaging than beneficial’: Implies that in the end, the provision of aid may do more harm than good, or be counterproductive in that rather than supporting recipient countries or helping them overcome their need, their need becomes more dire or more entrenched. • ‘it aims to support’: This suggests that the foreign aid is provided with the aim or intention to help countries that may be struggling to meet sudden, urgent needs, such as managing a natural disaster, or overcome long-standing or chronic challenges, such as an ailing economy, or a population whose basic needs are not well-met 	
Band 4 & Above	Band 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links benefits or damage/harms to the needs or challenges faced by countries that aid aims to support • Attempts to weigh damage or harm against the benefits or good of aid. The weighing need not be consistent, sustained, or convincing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listing the pros and cons of foreign aid without explaining the link to whether recipient countries’ needs are ameliorated/met (‘beneficial’) or worsened (‘damaging’) <p><u>Low Band 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses exclusively on foreign intervention

Yes, foreign aid ultimately more damaging than beneficial:

1. While foreign aid **helps** the countries it aims to support **in alleviating short-term or pressing needs**, this often comes **at the expense of fostering a long-term dependence** on aid that leaves these countries unable to decisively break free from adverse circumstances.
 - When donor countries prioritise the meeting of urgent needs such as the provision of food supplies for local populations that lack access to sustenance and nutrition or financial injections to stabilise collapsing economies, they do save lives. However, this focus on immediate relief may inadvertently **cultivate a reliance on external support rather than encourage the development of self-sustaining systems**. Since the countries’ immediate needs are addressed by aid, there is less incentive for governments to strengthen local industries or address systemic inefficiencies. Over time, dependency on foreign aid becomes chronic and self-perpetuating, and aid is repeatedly required just for survival.
 - For example, up to 13% of Malawi’s national budget comes from longstanding American aid dating from the late 1970s. When President Trump decided to cut USAID funding, over \$350 million in aid funding was immediately cut off. Since this aid makes up more than half of Malawi’s healthcare and part of Malawi’s education spending, the **halting of aid funding from the US has triggered a crisis in these critical**

services. This dependence on aid may have **indirectly weakened Malawi's economic resilience.**

2. While foreign aid provides relief for recipient countries in terms of promoting stability and development, it can also **create the conditions for rampant corruption and mismanagement of aid** that eventually hurts the people instead.
 - Especially in the case of developmental aid, recipients of such aid tend to already suffer from weak governance or institutions. Ostensibly, large inflows of aid can be tremendously beneficial to local governments in terms of helping them meet the needs of their people, improve public and social infrastructure, or strengthen various industries. However, as this aid passes through government agencies that tend to either be poorly run or lack strong institutional safeguards, it is prone to being siphoned away by political elites, or misused for projects that **serve private or political interests rather than the needs of the community as a whole.** The presence of foreign aid thus indirectly encourages mismanagement, giving corrupt government officials even greater power and incentive to subjugate rather than to help their people.
 - For instance, in sub-Saharan Africa, aid that is meant to boost growth is in fact more likely to be **channelled by governments into vanity projects that reinforce their popularity and political capital** than to bring lasting relief to their people. A more specific example is Afghanistan, with allegations of the Taliban government having redirected international aid meant for reconstruction towards favoured groups and away from those that may need more help, such as minorities and women. Since local authorities control access to aid through their ability to determine beneficiary lists and partners, the Taliban government is able to 'capture' aid and enrich themselves or their cronies.

No, foreign aid is ultimately more beneficial than damaging:

1. Well-designed aid enhances local knowledge and builds institutional capacity, **empowering recipient countries to gain the ability to overcome their own challenges**, ensuring that these long-term benefits **trump the short-term disruptions to existing systems.**
 - Aid that is multipronged rather than based simply on providing immediate resources would help with enhancing the effectiveness and capacity of the local population, officials, and institutions. This necessitates and will inevitably result in significant disruptions and even short- to medium-term inefficiencies as competencies and capacity need time to be levelled up and built respectively. However, such an overhaul serves the crucial role of providing the **decisive foundations and prerequisites for** recipient countries to develop **long-term self-sufficiency.**
 - The World Bank's Community-Driven Development (CDD) programme in Liberia, introduced to help with Liberia's post-civil war recovery, provided training and resources, and directly involved local communities in the planning and implementation of various development projects. While the programme resulted in significant disruptions and changes to existing systems, and teething problems were common initially, the eventual success of the CDD in Liberia is a powerful example of how the long-term benefits of foreign aid can outweigh the short-term harms done to the stability of existing systems.
2. In addressing urgent human and societal needs, foreign aid assuages widespread suffering and prevents further loss of human lives, which is significantly **more conscionable than withholding aid based on the uncertain fear that it could breed dependency.**

- Particularly in the case of severe humanitarian crises, such as natural disasters, epidemics, or armed conflict, foreign aid could be the decisive difference between survival and the devastation of entire communities. In such situations, the **moral imperative is to immediately relieve human suffering and minimise any avoidable loss of life**. The benefits of foreign aid in directly and promptly averting a catastrophe clearly **override** the concern that direct aid may potentially breed dependency on external help, which is **a hypothetical risk**.
- For example, the Ebola outbreak in West Africa between 2014 and 2016 overwhelmed the region's weak healthcare systems, leading to thousands of deaths across Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, and sparking fears of regional collapse. Local governments lacked the requisite medical supplies, expertise, and healthcare infrastructure to contain the epidemic on their own. Western nations including the US, the EU and NGOs quickly sent emergency funding and medical teams, trained local healthcare workers in infection control and contact tracing, and set up training programmes and emergency treatment centres. Clearly, immediate intervention in the form of various types of aid was crucial in reducing mortality rates, curbing the spread of the infection, and preventing regional chaos. Such **definitive profound benefits certainly outweigh any future, unrealised aid dependency that may or may not result**.

3. Should the value of a person's work be measured solely by monetary compensation?

Terms & Scope

- The issue: To what extent should money (wages, salaries, or other financial rewards) be the primary measure of the worth of someone's work.
- **"solely by monetary compensation"**: viewing a person's worth entirely in financial terms (assumption: high salaries denoting high value; low pay denoting low value). It excludes other possible measures such as social contribution, intrinsic fulfilment, cultural enrichment, or long-term impacts on communities.
- **"value of a person's work"**: Includes economic productivity (GPP contribution, profits), but also social contributions (teaching, caregiving), cultural impact (art, music), and ethical or long-term legacies (activism, community-building).

Band 4 & above

- Engages consistently with 'solely', showing awareness that the question's tension is not about whether monetary compensation can serve as a measure, but whether it is an exclusive and sufficient measure of value of work.
- Discusses the significance of alternative measures of value (e.g. social contribution, moral impact, innovation, legacy) alongside money, weighing their costs/benefits

Band 3 & below

- Merely discusses the advantages or disadvantages of measuring work by money
- Lists other measures of value

Low Band 3/Band 2

- A hijack of the question, when the discussion is about other ways to earn money (i.e. don't have to rely on work when there are better ways like good investment)

Why the value of work should solely be measured by money

1. In capitalist-oriented economies, monetary compensation serves as a **practical reflection of the demand and scarcity of particular skills**, making salary a key **indicator of the value society places on certain kinds of work/skill-set**.

- The higher the demand the society/government sees in a type of work, the greater the monetary compensation and by extension the value of a person.
 - For example, in today's increasingly data and technology-dominated world which is seeing many exciting positive developments and potential betterment in many areas of life but at the same time has revealed more insidious misuse of it, technology-related roles such as Data Scientists, AI Engineers, and Cybersecurity Engineers command high compensation due to governments and businesses' critical need for such specialized expertise in such data-driven decision-making, developing AI systems, and protecting digital assets. **The high demand for these roles reflect the scarce and specialized skills required**, and thus drives up salaries which is further exacerbated as organisations at different levels **compete for top talent** and thus commensurate with the value of the worker.
2. Money is often seen as the clearest expression of the value of work, since it not only **motivates individuals to continue in their roles**, particularly in extraordinary times and in risky jobs, but also **signals the worth that society places on their contributions**.
- This link between value and compensation was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, when governments sought to recognise and retain frontline staff such as doctors and nurses. To sustain morale and ensure that crucial/essential services continued, many countries introduced hazard pay as both a reward and a signal of how much society valued these workers particularly when there was fatigue and fear that could have further demoralized the medical frontline workers. In Singapore, healthcare workers received a monetary award of up to S\$4,000 in recognition of their efforts in the fight against COVID-19, while in the United States, states such as New York and California proposed additional hourly "hero pay" to frontline staff. These measures highlight how, at moments of crisis, governments use monetary compensation not only to **motivate workers but also to publicly affirm the worth of their contribution to society particularly when there is risk of losing them when they are essential in a particular sphere or industry**.

Why the value of work should not solely be measured by money

1. Basing the value of a person's work solely on monetary compensation **risks excluding certain groups of people despite their valuable contributions**. Though much of their labour is either underpaid or unpaid, they **remain indispensable to families, economies, and societies**.
- For example, in many developing countries, women shoulder the bulk of **unpaid care work** such as child-rearing, eldercare, and household chores. The International Labour Organisation estimates that if such work were monetised, it would add US\$10 trillion annually to the global economy, yet because it is unpaid, it **remains invisible and this thought of as unrecognised in value**. However, this cannot be further from the truth: in Singapore, women's unpaid household labour allows their spouses to work long hours in demanding jobs, boosting GDP, even though the household labour itself is excluded from those measures. Similarly, migrant domestic workers in cities like Hong Kong and Singapore are often paid minimal wages despite being essential to the functioning of households and national economies. In Singapore, for instance, a foreign domestic worker may earn as little as S\$400 per month, while enabling middle-class families to participate fully in the labour force while they care for young and elderly dependents. As such, if wages alone define value, these indispensable forms of labour would be dismissed as "low-value" or "worthless," when **in reality they perform critical functions and form the backbone of both family life and wider economic productivity**.

2. The value of a person's work cannot be measured solely by monetary compensation when their work entails **ethical and moral contributions** to society. Such individuals find themselves being valued because their work has led to the betterment of society despite receiving little, if any, monetary compensation.
- This includes the work of activists which often stem from principles rather than profit. Nelson Mandela, for instance, endured 27 years in prison for opposing apartheid in South Africa, receiving no financial reward for his struggle, yet his leadership ultimately dismantled a racist regime and inspired movements for justice across the globe. Likewise, Malala Yousafzai risked her life campaigning for girls' education in Pakistan, surviving an assassination attempt by the Taliban in 2012, but her activism has since reshaped global discourse on education rights and earned her the Nobel Peace Prize. The legacies of these figures demonstrate that the true value of their work lies not in salaries or bonuses, but in the **transformative political and social change** they achieved. These examples contrast with cases where their enormous monetary compensation does not in reality reflect high worth/ value. For example, Sam Bankman-Fried, once worth US\$26 billion and hailed as a visionary for founding the cryptocurrency exchange FTX, saw his empire collapse after revelations of massive fraud and mismanagement. The crash wiped out billions in customer funds and destroyed public trust, leaving him infamous not for innovation but for deception. As such, **financial reward alone is a misleading measure of value, since it may mask unethical behaviour that ultimately causes hurt or damage to society.**
4. **'It is never justifiable to disregard ethical concerns for the sake of scientific or technological progress.'** Discuss.

Terms & Scope

- **'disregard ethical concerns'**: ignoring or overlooking moral principles such as human rights, well-being, responsibility. Specific areas can include how scientific research is designed, how participants are protected (such as whether there is informed consent), how scientific findings are interpreted and reported, or how applications of scientific research and technological developments are managed.
- **'scientific or technological progress'**: advancements in knowledge, tools and applications in the areas of science and technology, with specific references made to our progress in Artificial Intelligence (AI), vaccine development, medical experimentation, genetic engineering, nuclear technology, geoengineering, etc. There should be a recognition of the tension between ethical concerns and scientific/ technological progress.
- **'never justifiable'**: absolute term that needs to be challenged.

Band 4 & Above

- Evaluates the relationship between ethics and progress in science & technology, and considers the trade-off in pursuing scientific or technological progress.
- Responses are able to effectively discuss the term "justifiable", looking into the needs of consumers, businesses and other members of society.

Band 3

- Lists the advantages and disadvantages of modern science or technology without much reference to how these disregard ethical concerns.
- Skewed and/or limited understanding of scientific or technological progress.

Justifiable to disregard ethical concerns for scientific or technological progress:

1. **In times of existential threat, nations have also prioritised scientific or technological advancement over ethical concerns as a matter of survival and stability.**
 - Given that health crises are time-sensitive and directly affect one's well-being, being able to seek scientific progress quickly may benefit a large group of people. The early development of vaccines, for example, relied on Edward Jenner's smallpox experiments in the late 18th century, which were conducted without what we now regard as proper informed consent but ultimately paved the way for eradicating a disease that killed millions. More recently, the unprecedented speed of COVID-19 vaccine development meant that certain stages of clinical testing were accelerated or bypassed, and concerns about global inequalities in distribution were sidelined in the rush to curb the pandemic. **While ethically problematic, these choices arguably saved millions of lives, showing that in extraordinary circumstances, progress can legitimately outweigh immediate ethical concerns.**
 - Today, warfare is being reshaped by the rise of AI-driven drones, as seen in the Russia-Ukraine war which can carry out targeted strikes with unprecedented precision but also raise profound ethical concerns about autonomy, accountability, and the potential removal of human judgment from life-and-death decisions. Nonetheless, many governments defend their development and deployment as essential for national security in a world where rivals may not exercise the same ethical restraint. In this context, disregarding ethical objections can be seen as justified when technological progress **serves the higher goal of ensuring survival and preserving geopolitical stability.**

Not justifiable to disregard ethical concerns:

1. The potentially irreversible damage to the human race from scientific or technological breakthroughs today makes it more important than ever **to protect human dignity and rights, which cannot be sacrificed for progress.** When science and technology advance without ethical limits, people can be treated as mere means to an end rather than as individuals with inherent worth.
 - A more recent example is the controversy around He Jiankui's 2018 experiment in China, where he carried out human embryo gene editing without proper oversight, raising global outrage over consent, safety, and long-term effects on future generations. These cases show that ignoring ethical safeguards not only harms individuals directly but also undermines the moral foundation of scientific work itself.
2. In today's climate of scepticism toward institutions and growing fear of unchecked technology, **overlooking ethics also undermines the trust needed for lasting scientific and technological advancement.**
 - Public confidence is fragile, and when people perceive that innovation is reckless or exploitative, resistance can backtrack progress. The backlash against genetically modified crops in Europe, despite decades of safety studies, illustrates how early failures to engage ethical and social concerns can shape public attitudes for generations.
 - Similarly, AI systems today face widespread criticism for reinforcing biases, and potentially amplifying systemic inequalities. A specific example of AI bias perpetuating gender inequality in healthcare is training a heart disease diagnostic AI primarily on male patient data, which leads to misdiagnoses and inadequate treatments for women because the model doesn't accurately recognize female-specific symptoms. This bias

can stem from historical inequities where women's data was underrepresented in clinical trials, resulting in a skewed model that fails to generalize to the female population, thus causing a disparity in healthcare outcomes. These examples show that without ethical accountability, scientific progress risks losing legitimacy and public support.

5. 'There is a decline in the appreciation of traditional art forms today.' How far is this true in your society?

Terms & Scope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'traditional art forms': This refers to artistic practices, crafts, performances that are passed down through generations in Singapore rather than Western classical artforms. 'Traditional' also implies a connection to cultural heritage – in the Singapore context, this can refer to art forms that are brought to Singapore by immigrants, which reflect Singapore's multiculturalism. Some examples include Chinese opera, wayang kulit, calligraphy, the musical forms of Nanyin (originating from China, Fujian) and Asli (dates back to the 1600s during the reign of the Malaccan sultanate), kuda kepang (or traditional hobby horse dance), batik (ancient art form originating from Java), and folk performances. • 'decline in the appreciation': To consider if there is a growing loss of interest or popularity or relevance of traditional art forms, and what might be contributing factors leading to its demise. Some of these factors might revolve around the perception associated with traditional art forms, or how there are preferences for globalised, modern art forms. 	
Band 4 & above <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyses the (changing) priorities, preferences or perceptions of traditional art forms and how these brought about its decline or continued appreciation. • Establishes how stakeholders such as the government/ NAC/ NHB, schools, clan associations, etc promote support for the appreciation of traditional art forms, and evaluates their effectiveness in doing so. • Shows a keen awareness of a wide range of examples of traditional art forms (performing, visual, literary) in Singapore. 	Band 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listing of the value of generic traditional art forms, with little reference to specific traditional art forms, or limited range. <p><u>Low Band 3/Band 2</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows little awareness of what traditional art forms refer to, and tends to focus excessively on modern art forms (like Kpop, digital/media art, street art) without much comparison or reference to traditional art forms.

Why there is a decline in the appreciation of traditional art forms today:

1. Within Singapore's rapidly modernising and market-driven arts landscape, **traditional art forms are becoming marginalised as they suffer from declining audiences and interest, thus facing limited sustainability.**
 - Once a common sight in the 60s and 70s at community festivals and temple celebrations, Chinese opera now attracts mostly elderly audiences, with younger Singaporeans dismissing it as outdated and difficult to understand due to a lack of proficiency in dialects. Many opera troupes have been forced to downsize or disband due to aging performers and poor ticket sales. Additionally, few young performers are willing to take on the demanding training for a career that offers little stability. Many parents are not keen on sending their children to learn traditional opera as they tend to gravitate towards arts enrichment programmes that have a certain level of certification, such as learning piano.

- Similarly, other traditional art forms like wayang kulit, the traditional Malay shadow puppet theatre, has nearly vanished from everyday cultural life in Singapore. Its elaborate storytelling of myths about good and evil, while artistically rich, may not be relevant in a fast-paced society where audiences prefer more accessible forms of entertainment.
2. Despite various preservation efforts, **traditional art forms in Singapore are not well-integrated into mainstream cultural life**, as they are usually showcased only during festive occasions or special occasions rather than embedded in daily experiences. Over time, this leads to a declining awareness and appreciation of traditional art forms.
- Traditional performances such as **Chinese opera** are now mostly staged during **Hungry Ghost Festival getai shows** or temple celebrations, rather than being accessible at community spaces throughout the year. This may inadvertently emphasise its religious aspects rather than its artistic value. Furthermore, such an association with religious settings often distances non-believers and younger Singaporeans, who may feel these performances are not meant for them, reducing opportunities for exposure and appreciation.
 - Another example is **kuda kepang**, a traditional Javanese dance featuring performers who ride woven horse effigies and enter trance-like states. In the past, kuda kepang was popular in Malay communities, performed at weddings and village celebrations. However, over time it became heavily associated with spiritual rituals and mystical practices, leading to restrictions on public performances in Singapore due to religious sensitivities. By being confined to niche or religious contexts, kuda kepang exemplifies how traditional art forms risk being sidelined from Singapore's mainstream cultural life.

Why there is a continued or renewed appreciation:

1. While many traditional art forms in Singapore face challenges, there are **also signs of renewed appreciation, particularly as traditional art forms are reimagined for modern audiences**.
- **Nanyin**, an ancient form of Chinese chamber music once thought to be fading, has experienced a revival through groups like the **Siong Leng Musical Association**, which stages regular performances and collaborates with contemporary musicians. By incorporating new instruments and multimedia elements while preserving nanyin's distinctive melodies, these groups have attracted younger audiences and kept the tradition relevant.
 - Similarly, **batik art**, traditionally seen as an Indonesian or Malay craft, has found new appreciation in Singapore as local designers and artists adapt batik patterns into fashion, contemporary art, and even lifestyle products. Workshops at cultural centres and schools allow Singaporeans of all ages to experience batik-making firsthand, turning what was once regarded as a heritage craft into a modern form of self-expression. These examples suggest that traditional art forms, when supported by institutions and creatively adapted, can enjoy renewed visibility and relevance in Singapore's cultural landscape.
2. Traditional art forms in Singapore are also likely to experience a resurgence as **they are increasingly embraced as symbols of cultural identity and continuity in a globalised world**.
- For example, **Peranakan beadwork and embroidery**, once practiced mainly by older artisans, has gained renewed interest among younger Singaporeans seeking to

reconnect with their heritage. Institutions such as the **Peranakan Museum** regularly host workshops where participants learn the intricate craft, while social media platforms have enabled artisans to showcase their creations to wider audiences. This reflects a growing trend where traditional arts are valued not only as performance or display, but as hands-on practices that anchor cultural identity amidst the homogenizing effects of globalisation.

6. To what extent does the media today undermine rather than support democracy?

Terms & Scope

- **‘media’**: An expansive understanding of the media ranging from traditional mass media to new or social media is preferred, though it is understandable for the latter to feature significantly in any discussion about the impact of media on democracy, even politics in general. Responses must not be unduly penalised **solely on the basis that a majority of the discussion focuses on social media**.
- **‘today’**: Engagement with ‘today’ can be based on the key characteristics of relatively **modern forms of media** like online or social media, though it may also be sensible to link ideas to the ways in which **traditional mass media have** evolved or **modernised**. Alternatively, students can also examine how the **media landscape, or broader environment in which the media operates, may also exhibit contemporary features** that differ significantly from the past.
- **‘undermine rather than support’**: Addresses why the media today directly or indirectly weaken democracy, rather than strengthen it. This is different from simply identifying the pros or cons of modern media or contemporary media landscape **without analysing their positive or negative impact on democracy**.
- **‘democracy’**: Ideally, this should be unpacked and sensibly broken down into **key democratic processes, institutions, and principles**. The latter could include the effects of modern media on citizens’ ability to choose their leaders, participate in self-governance, or uphold democratic rights and freedoms. Responses must not redefine ‘democracy’ to simply mean effective governance.

Band 4 & above	Band 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluates the impact of pros and cons of the media today on the effectiveness of democracy, in terms of how it can strengthen or weaken democratic processes or principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists pros and cons of the media today that may reasonably or conceivably be related to democracy, but which are not explicitly linked to the strengthening or weakening of democracy <p><u>Low Band 3</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists pros and cons of the media today that are a poor fit to democracy. If a significant proportion of ideas are a poor fit, place response in low Band 3. • Discusses the impact of the media on politics in general (eg. reputation of politicians)

Why the media today undermines democracy:

1. Modern media **erodes the trust citizens have in institutions and in each other, weakening the political engagement** amongst the citizenry as well as the **cooperation** between political factions that are **crucial to the proper functioning of a democracy**.

- Democracies are now caught in an era where reporting is increasingly partisan. To stay relevant in a crowded and saturated media landscape, online outlets and news companies progressively simplify their commentary and frame issues to cater to ‘niche’ or specific ideological groups, allowing them to appeal to the latter’s own ideological leanings and ensure repeated engagement. Given this, citizens today **increasingly perceive media entities** belonging to the other side of the ideological divide, and even **public institutions** like the government and the courts with **more and more suspicion**. Citizens exhibit greater cynicism towards political participation, since they no longer trust that democratic institutions serve their interests. Opposing groups, rather than view each other as partners in democratic governance, see the other as adversaries to be overcome. This prompts a **shift away from the greater good and complicates the consensus building that is key to effective democracies**, undermining the latter.
 - The effect of partisan media on diminishing trust in the media and the government, and between fellow citizens can be clearly seen in America. Media partisanship in America is increasingly severe. In response, conservatives commonly perceive liberal-leaning outlets like the New York Times as biased and unreliable, while liberals tend to also downplay the objectivity and trustworthiness of pro-conservative outlets like Fox News. The corollary is that Americans’ overall trust in the media as a neutral provider of information and in the government as a political entity that serves the best interests of the people has declined. This makes cross-party or -ideology dialogue and cooperation fraught with difficulty and tension, significantly undermining democracy.
2. A large part of the trend of the media today undermining democracy stems from social media’s tendency to **impair citizens’ ability to make informed decisions**, which is absolutely **crucial for them to participate effectively in self-governance**.
- The burgeoning influence of social media means that anyone, regardless of credibility, can provide commentary on a wide range of issues. Additionally, tools that track audience engagement like ‘clicks’, ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ create a self-reinforcing feedback loop **that rewards content that is engaging rather than factual and accurate**. As a result, over-sensationalised content or information that is plain wrong, such as misinformation and disinformation, proliferates quickly. Even more damagingly, the algorithms used by social media **funnel people into communities populated by others with very similar views such that one’s views are further reinforced, or trap us in ‘filter bubbles’**, whereby we are only exposed to information sources that are already fully aligned with our preexisting worldview. Given this, citizens’ ability to participate thoughtfully in democratic processes ranging from voting in elections to engaging in public discourse, is severely hampered.
 - During Myanmar’s 2020 General Election, many voters relied heavily on Facebook for information to help them make an informed vote. Despite Facebook’s attempts to ban accounts linked to the military ruling junta due to the latter being accused of human rights transgressions, Time magazine reported that the platform’s own algorithms were promoting and suggesting sources and pages supporting the military and denigrating the Rohingya minority to users who had previously shown an interest in such content. This prompted a skewed and incomplete understanding of issues, and would have severely compromised the ability of the Burmese people to cast an informed vote, ultimately weakening the integrity of the electoral process and democracy as a whole.

Why the media today supports rather than undermines democracy:

1. In fact, rather than undermine, the media, in particular social media, supports democracy since information is democratised and attempts by those with more power to control the political narrative is more easily thwarted.
 - Before the advent of social media, the media, comprising traditional media channels, were more easily controlled by the government and political elites. This meant that those keen to hang on to power and manipulate the citizenry by way of determining what information the public receives, how that information is framed, and which groups such a framing advantages or disadvantages, can do so with relative ease. **Social media's greatest weakness, its absence of gatekeeping, ironically becomes its greatest strength. It gives ordinary citizens, advocates and activists, independent commentators, and citizen journalists the ability to bypass and circumvent attempts by political elites to shape the narrative to the latter's advantage.** With greater access to diverse perspectives regarding important sociopolitical issues, marginalised groups can highlight injustices that would otherwise be underreported or swept under the carpet, and social movements that challenge the status quo or establish can mobilise quickly and gain traction, better **aligning with the democratic principle that the government should reflect the will of the people rather than the narrow interests of the powerful or elite.**
 - In response to government agricultural reforms that many feared would leave ordinary farmers at the mercy of large corporations, Indian farmers utilised X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, to criticise the ruling Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and protest against the move to weaken government guarantees on the prices for certain crops. After a government order compelled X to block accounts that spoke up against a pro-government narrative, widespread social outcry quickly led to X unblocking those accounts, illustrating both the public's expectation that the social media space be kept unencumbered by government regulation as well as its effectiveness in allowing ordinary citizens to mobilise as a democratic force.
2. Today's media, **in recognising the alarming spread of misinformation** on new, in particular social media, have sought to **counter this negative trend with more reliable and balanced reporting, enabling citizens in the post-truth era to still make sound political decisions.**
 - Unlike social media platforms that emphasise virality and engagement at the expense of accuracy, **mainstream news media are generally guided by professional standards and editorial integrity.** Additionally, as disinformation becomes more endemic, both mainstream news outlets as well as **independent, non-partisan social media news sites and fact-checking organisations are responding proactively by carrying out more fact-checking and providing more holistic coverage of multiple, often contrasting political perspectives.** This allows the segments of the media functioning as an anti-misinformation community to serve as a corrective force, **ensuring that citizens are given accurate facts and well-rounded perspectives, allowing them to still participate effectively in democratic discourse and decision-making,** even in an environment where 'fake news' is rife.
 - The International Journalists' Network reports that a broad-based coalition of more than 20 Indonesian news outlets, formed CekFakta in collaboration with civil society groups and the Google News Initiative to combat the increasing prevalence of misinformation online. As a consolidated platform that aggregates fact-checks

provided by all participating news outlets, the enhanced reach and credibility makes CekFakta particularly influential in ensuring that Indonesians still have access to accurate information despite the proliferation of one-sided or false narratives. For instance, CekFakta provide live fact-checking during presidential debates, with journalists and expert panels verifying claims made by candidates in real-time. During the election day in 2024, the coalition debunked 56 hoaxes and published 107 fact-check articles, ensuring to a certain extent that citizens have access to accurate information to help them make the right decisions at the polls.

7. ‘Developed nations should shoulder a greater burden to address climate change.’ To what extent do you agree?

Terms & Scope: ‘Developed nations’: wealthy, industrialised states with high development indices (e.g. US, EU, Japan, South Korea, Australia, Canada). ‘greater share of responsibility’: Could entail involving heavier financial contributions (climate funds, compensation), policy leadership (ambitious NDCs, stricter emissions cuts), technological support (sharing green R&D expertise, renewables infrastructure, etc). ‘climate change’: Areas that can be considered include mitigation (emissions reduction), adaptation (protecting communities), and climate justice (loss & damage, equity). Should reflect contemporary global examples. Areas to consider in this context can include worsening climate disasters, energy security issues post-Ukraine war, and high-profile recent COP meetings (e.g. COP29 Baku).	
Band 4 & Above <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly addresses the comparative ‘greater share’ (not just responsibility, but more responsibility than others) • Evaluates costs/benefits of developed nations leading, and perhaps even if they can/will they deliver. 	Band 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses the question in terms of what developing and developed countries are doing to address climate change. Does not show evidence of recognising the need to handle what ‘greater share’ entails. <u>Low Band 3/Band 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers consistently to a general problem on the environment (e.g. oil spills) rather than climate change (e.g. loss of biodiversity, pollution of water). Accept examples that are not immediately relevant (such as microplastics in the oceans, or the Great Pacific Garbage Patch) but are sufficiently linked to climate change (e.g. plastic pollution harms plankton and coral reefs, which themselves sequesters carbon).

Why Developed Nations Should Shoulder a Greater Burden

- 1. Developed nations should bear a greater burden in addressing climate change because they are historically the largest contributors to the crisis and thus have a moral obligation to shoulder more of the burden.**

- Many having benefited from the industrialisation wave in the nineteenth century, have grown wealthy through their heavy use of coal, oil and gas. For example, today, the U.S. alone accounts for roughly a quarter of historical carbon dioxide emissions, whereas the entire continent of Africa contributes less than 4%. Many vulnerable countries today had little say in that early process, yet now live with the consequences. For instance, small island states like Tuvalu face rising sea levels that threaten their survival, despite having contributed almost nothing to the crisis. Pakistan's catastrophic 2022 floods displaced millions and caused damage worth over US\$30 billion, even though the country emits less than 1% of global greenhouse gases. Similarly, Pacific island states like Kiribati are facing existential threats from rising seas, with limited means of protection/adaptation.
 - As such, since their economic dominance was achieved at the expense of global environmental stability, it behooves developed nations to take the lead in financing mitigation and adaptation efforts, and shoulder a greater burden because they have a **moral duty** to lead the world in reversing the damage caused. Side-stepping this responsibility is tantamount to shifting the burden onto those least responsible (less developed countries) and least equipped to cope, thereby **deepening global inequality**. The 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change set the stage for this call for **climate justice** by embracing a landmark principle: "common but differentiated responsibilities". It acknowledges that all states share the responsibility to protect the environment, but that their specific duties should be differentiated based on their historical contributions to environmental problems and their varying capacities (economic and technical) to address them. It is in light of this that developing countries demonstrated their frustration at COP 29 in Baku when the \$300 billion annual target for climate finance fell short of the \$1 trillion dollars grant-based goal that developed countries were hoping for.
2. Developed nations should also shoulder a greater burden because they possess far greater **financial clout** than developing countries which thus **can drive climate solutions**.
- Due to their higher GDP per capita, advanced infrastructure, and stronger institutions, developed nations can fund expensive renewable energy transitions more easily than poorer nations. The European Union's Green Deal, committing billions of euros to renewable energy and infrastructure, exemplifies how governments with **deep pockets can make bolder attempts at climate change**. In contrast, many African and South Asian states lack the fiscal space to respond effectively as scarce resources are largely directed to pressing primary needs like healthcare and housing. Low-lying Mozambique illustrates this disparity: repeatedly struck by intense cyclones and floods exacerbated by climate change, the country faces huge costs in damages to homes, roads, and farmland, but has **little by means of funds to rebuild or adapt**. Therefore, expecting equal contributions from both rich and poor would punish the latter, making **global inequality worse** instead of addressing the global crisis.
3. Developed nations also dominate the technologies that are essential for a global green transition, making their leadership not only possible but also necessary.
- Advanced economies are at the **forefront of innovation** in areas such as offshore wind in Denmark and electric vehicle development in the U.S. and Europe. Japan, for instance, has emerged as a global leader in hydrogen technology, becoming the first country to adopt a national hydrogen strategy. Lacking energy resources, Japan placed strategic emphasis on hydrogen as a clean fuel that can generate electricity and heat without carbon emissions. Japanese companies are pioneering its use in energy-intensive industries such as steelmaking, offering alternatives to coal-based

furnaces they employ which coincidentally is one of the dirtiest industrial processes. Further, by scaling these innovations, developed nations **lower global costs and create paths for poorer countries to adopt clean technologies**. For example, early EV development (e.g. Tesla in the U.S., Nissan Leaf in Japan) created a market that drove battery research and economies of scale. By the late 2010s, battery prices had fallen by almost 85% in a decade, enabling China to mass-produce affordable EVs and India to roll out cheaper electric rickshaws and buses. Without such leadership, **many developing nations would be locked out of climate solutions altogether, perpetuating global inequality**.

Why Developed Nations Should Not Shoulder a Greater Burden

1. Developed countries should not bear a disproportionate burden as **today's largest emitters are increasingly emerging economies**.
 - While historical responsibility matters, the reality is that China's total carbon dioxide emissions exceeded those of the advanced economies combined in 2020, and in 2023 were 15% higher; it alone accounts for 35% of global CO₂ emissions today. Similarly, India surpassed the European Union to become the third largest source of global emissions in 2023, with emissions still rising as it seeks to meet the energy demands of a rapidly growing population; for instance, it continues to build coal-fired power plants despite being among the most climate-vulnerable nations. As such, **unchecked industrialisation following the same fossil-fuelled path as the West risks trapping the world into catastrophic warming**. Though fairness demands support from richer states, it would be **irresponsible to absolve developing economies from adopting greater cleaner growth strategies**. If developed countries alone make deep cuts while emerging economies continue to expand coal and oil use, global targets like the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C cap will be unattainable. **Responsibility, therefore, must reflect present realities, not just past actions**. Rather than expecting developed states to carry a disproportionate share, responsibility should be seen as a **shared obligation**.
 2. Disproportionate burden-sharing **risks creating free-riders, where some nations benefit from global climate stability without contributing proportionately to the effort**. If developed nations take on too much of the responsibility, it may disincentivise emerging economies from acting constructively, believing they can rely on others to carry the load.
 - For example debates at COP27 in Sharm el-Sheikh revealed frustrations that countries like Saudi Arabia and Qatar still claim developing nation status under older frameworks, even though they are wealthy petro-states and among the world's top fossil fuel exporters. **Such disparities allow high-polluting nations to avoid stricter obligations, leaving others to carry the burden**. Without broader participation, **efforts by developed countries alone will be insufficient and ultimately unfair**.
8. **Is it right for a leader to place national interests above global responsibilities?**

Terms & Scope:

- **‘national interests’**: The political, economic, security, and social goals that a government pursues to safeguard and improve the well-being of its own citizens. This includes policies that protect domestic security, ensure economic growth, maintain cultural identity, or guarantee citizens’ access to essential resources (e.g., food, healthcare, energy).
- **‘global responsibilities’**: The obligations and duties a state has towards the international community, especially in addressing issues that transcend borders and affect humanity at large. These responsibilities include contributing to collective efforts on climate change, global health, peace and security, and humanitarian aid, even when they may not provide immediate domestic benefits.

Band 4 and above	Band 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addresses reasons why a leader should prioritise one duty over the other. ● Demonstrates an understanding of the duties and obligations of a leader/government both domestically and internationally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Discusses benefits/problems of prioritising national interests OR global responsibilities ● Describes various ways that a government has prioritised either national interests or their international commitments. ● May not mention individual leaders (word can be taken to be decision makers)

Yes, it’s right to place national interests above global responsibilities:

1. Leaders are primarily accountable to their citizens, not the world. A leader’s legitimacy is derived from serving the needs of their people, who elect or support them to protect national welfare, security, and prosperity. **Prioritising global responsibilities at the expense of local needs could be seen as neglecting their primary duty.**
 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, many governments, including the U.S. and those in the EU, prioritised securing vaccines for their populations through export restrictions, even when poorer nations lacked access.
 - India’s wheat export ban in 2022, imposed to stabilise domestic food prices amid global shortages, reflected the government’s prioritisation of citizens’ food security over international trade commitments.
2. **National stability is a prerequisite for meaningful global contribution.** A country facing economic hardship or social unrest may struggle to engage internationally. By ensuring domestic stability first, leaders can eventually contribute more effectively to global responsibilities.
 - Germany’s energy policies post-Ukraine war saw it prioritise national energy security (e.g., restarting coal plants, securing LNG deals) even though this temporarily undermined its climate pledges.

No, it’s not right to place national interests above global responsibilities

1. **Global problems require collective solutions, and nation-first approaches only worsen crises.** Challenges like pandemics, climate change, and international conflicts are transnational. If leaders focus narrowly on national interests, global cooperation breaks down, prolonging or worsening crises that eventually rebound on their own citizens.
 - The failure of equitable vaccine distribution — as wealthy countries hoarded vaccines for their own citizens — led to prolonged global outbreaks and the emergence of new variants, which ultimately affected those same wealthy nations.

- The U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accord under Trump's first stint as US President undermined collective climate action, delaying global progress on reducing emissions while worsening climate risks for all nations.
2. **Neglecting global responsibilities undermines a nation's international reputation and long-term security on the global stage.** A nation that disregards global responsibilities may lose moral authority, trust, and soft power. In a highly interconnected world, national prosperity often depends on cooperation and goodwill, meaning short-term self-interest can harm long-term stability.
- Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro's leadership faced international condemnation for prioritising agricultural expansion over rainforest preservation, damaging trade relations and Brazil's reputation as the "lungs of the Earth."
 - Russia's invasion of Ukraine — framed by Putin as protecting Russian national interests — sparked global sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and long-term economic costs, illustrating how prioritising narrow interests can backfire globally and domestically.