



2016 SEAB Assessment Seminar held at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel.

Welcome to Issue 21 of the SEAB-Link newsletter. It has been an exciting first half of 2016 and we cannot wait to share the details with our readers.

2016 marks our 12th anniversary. To commemorate this, we have recently launched "Assessment in Singapore Volume 2 - Strategies and Methods for Classroom Practice". The book comprises a collection of twenty essays penned by SEAB staff who have shared their thoughts and learning on educational assessment.

In addition to sharing these learnings in a book, SEAB also organised a second run of the Assessment Seminar with

the aim of promoting good assessment practices in the classroom. The last seminar was organised more than five years ago, in 2009. The 2016 seminar was well-received by the education fraternity attending the one-day session on 14 April 2016.

New friendships were also forged during these six months as we hosted a number of local visitors and foreign delegates, including personnel from the Singapore Armed Forces Learning Transformation Advisory Board, delegates from the Indonesian National Institute of Public Administration and participants from NIE's Management and Leadership in Schools Programme.

For those interested in building their knowledge about assessment literacy, this issue also includes some of the upcoming training courses available in the second half of 2016.

Last but not least, we would appreciate it if you could give us your feedback and suggestions for the newsletter by filling in our survey form on page 18 of the newsletter, or simply email us at SEAB_SEABLink@seab.gov.sg.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue.

Meng Lee,

On behalf of the SEAB-link Editorial Team



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2016 SEAB Assessment Seminar

Assessment Perspectives, Strategies and Methods for Classroom Practice



Opening speech by Ms Tan Lay Choo, Chief Executive of SEAB.

The 2016 SEAB Assessment Seminar was held on 14 April 2016 and attracted a total of 645 participants from primary and secondary schools, Ministry of Education and iPSLE centres.

Besides the keynote address by SEAB's Chief Executive, Ms Tan Lay Choo, 17 papers were presented on various aspects of educational assessment. The aim of the seminar was to promote good assessment practices in the classroom and SEAB staff shared their assessment knowledge and experiences in the following areas:

- principles and practices of assessment;
- links and alignment between curriculum and assessment; and
- e-Assessment.

The seminar was well-received with more than 90% of all the respondents agreeing that the seminar had met its objective in providing them with new assessment perspectives, methods and strategies for use in the classroom. The respondents valued the wide range of topics presented, covering both discipline-specific and cross-disciplinary assessment concepts and perspectives.

The participants were especially delighted to receive two volumes of *Assessment in Singapore*, which are compilations of essays on educational assessment contributed by SEAB staff. It was hoped that these essays would provide useful tips for classroom assessments and school-wide assessment practices.



Participants focusing on the presentation.

Feedback from school participants:

“

Helps me to think about my teaching practice and how I could facilitate better teaching and learning.

The keynotes are very good and relevant - very enriching and insightful. The presentation topics are very relevant.

Provide a broad understanding of assessment - ranging from Written Assessment to e-assessment to coursework. Most presenters are clear; objectives are clearly stated at the start. [They] highlighted challenges and gave suggestions on how we could mitigate the challenges.

Good perspectives shared by presenters. The opening address by CE is great.

”

Feedback from participants of iPSLE centres:

“

Very informative. Excellent presenters. Books given are much appreciated. Hospitality was excellent.

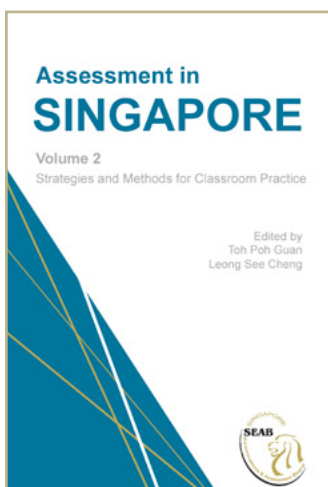
The seminar was well-organised and provided useful research and practical information. It was necessary to see practice based on research.

”



SEAB staff presenting and sharing their assessment experiences with the seminar participants.

Assessment in Singapore Volume 2 – Strategies and Methods for Classroom Practice



In conjunction with SEAB's 12th Anniversary, "Assessment in Singapore Volume 2 – Strategies and Methods for Classroom Practice" was launched on 1 April 2016. The book, comprising twenty essays, was written by Assessment Specialists in SEAB based on their experiences and learning on educational assessment. The essays cover a wide range of topics and issues that are important and useful to teachers and assessors.

The essays are organised broadly around three themes:

■ Curriculum and Assessment

The essays under this theme discuss issues concerning the links and alignment between the subject matter content and the assessment of educational achievements. The common issue across these essays concerns validity, which is a key assessment principle.

■ e-Assessment

The essays under this theme document some of the developing experience and knowledge in the practice of using information and communication technologies (ICT) in assessment.

■ Principles, Strategies and Practices on Assessment

The essays under this theme aim to promote useful ideas to classroom teachers. These essays cover ethics, coursework, assessment formats, scoring rubrics, standards, planned questioning, among others.

To give you a preview of the exciting insights and content offered in the book, here is the full listing of the essays along with the synopses of some selected essays:

1. Assessment of problem solving in Mathematics
2. Developing good listening comprehension tests
3. Subjectivity in assessing writing
4. Choice in Literature examinations: boon or bane?
5. Reflecting on assessment of the Humanities for better classroom practices
6. What e-examinations can or cannot do
7. Considerations in the design of Science e-assessment items
8. Ethics in classroom assessment
9. Teacher guidance in the conduct of coursework
10. Classroom assessment – Set it right!

11. How to develop scoring rubrics for assessment
12. Selecting appropriate formats for your assessment
13. What do we mean by standards?
14. Planned Questioning framework – Evidence of learning in the classroom
15. Assessment and Science of Learning
16. Using the Writing Portfolio to assess broader educational outcomes
17. Loop of active practice – Adapted from Bloom’s and SOLO Taxonomies
18. Aligning assessment practices with curricular changes in the context of globalisation
19. Using two-tier multiple choice instruments to promote deeper understanding in the sciences
20. The 4i strategy for developing item writing skills

Essay 1: Assessment of problem solving in Mathematics

The mathematics framework has been a feature of Singapore’s mathematics curriculum since 1990, and is still relevant to date after a few revisions of the curriculum. The framework sets the direction for and provides guidance in the teaching, learning and assessment of mathematics at all levels, from primary to pre- university. Mathematical problem solving – using mathematics to solve problems is the central focus of the mathematics framework. This essay discusses what problem solving entails, why problem solving is included in our mathematics curriculum; how problem solving is assessed in mathematics; and how to check whether an item assesses problem solving in mathematics.

Essay 3: Subjectivity in assessing writing

This essay shares the nature of subjectivity in the assessment of free response questions, highlighting in particular, the what, where and why of the nature of subjectivity in fair assessment. It details the common threats to fair assessment which include biases, prejudices, preferences, fatigue, and also the strategies to minimise some of these threats.

Essay 7: Considerations in the design of Science e-assessment items

With the rising profile of e-assessment in recent years, interest in designing science e-assessment items would increase. This essay shares some considerations in the design of quality science e-assessment items at the school level. These considerations include determining the construct to be assessed, ways to assess the construct, use of animations & simulations, and ways for students to provide their responses.

Essay 9: Teacher guidance in the conduct of coursework

Coursework has been introduced into more subjects in national examinations in recent years. This trend would evolve in tandem with curriculum reviews to come. It is useful to understand the context of the changes in the curriculum so that the value and challenges of coursework can be better appreciated. This essay shares the considerations for having coursework in national examinations and suggests ways in which coursework in schools can be a worthwhile educational experience that is both meaningful and manageable.

Essay 15: Assessment and Science of Learning

The Science of Learning is a body of empirical research on how individuals learn. This essay shares some useful research findings on the Science of Learning that may be used to plan lessons for more effective learning. In addition, there will also be some examples of translating research findings into potential practical applications that teachers can use in the classrooms. These examples may help students to learn more effectively and to retain what they have learnt over a longer period of time. In particular, it illustrates how assessment can play an important role in these practical applications.

Essay 16: Using the Writing Portfolio to assess broader educational outcomes

This essay shares some fundamental ideas related to the use of the writing portfolio in the English Language classroom. These ideas stem from a study of a school that implemented and assessed the writing portfolio in its Secondary 4 classrooms to pursue broader curricular outcomes (which are not limited to examination performance). In particular, this essay highlights the benefits and challenges the school has experienced in using the writing portfolio. It also illustrates how teachers use the assessment principles effectively in making decisions on students' assessment in their local contexts.

Essay 20: The 4i Strategy for developing item writing skills

Writing quality items is the first step to sound assessment practices in the classroom. This first step is crucial and critical as assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. The 4i Strategy developed by Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board aims to help teachers acquire item writing skills in a systematic and effective way. It comprises four methods for item writing. These four methods can be viewed as a natural sequence of stages where each stage builds up a teacher's readiness for the next. With regular practice and reflection, a teacher would be able to develop his/ her item writing skills as a foundation for good assessment practices.

Keen to read on? Click [here](#) to find out more about how to purchase the book.

Haze Management Measures during National Examinations

Singapore has been experiencing haze due to the periodic forest fires in the region. Besides reducing visibility, the air pollutants in the haze may trigger health issues, such as irritation of the eyes, nose and throat in healthy individuals and even aggravate heart or lung diseases in individuals with pre-existing conditions.

In 2015, the situation worsened with a prolonged haze period experienced in the region. This situation was even worse than the crises in 1997 and 2013. Air quality also reached hazardous levels in late September 2015.

SEAB places the well-being and safety of all examination candidates as our key priority. To manage and mitigate the effects that haze may bring about especially during the national examinations, SEAB works closely with the Ministry of Education (MOE) and schools in ensuring that haze contingency plans and measures are in place.

In September 2015, the haze management plans were activated when Singapore was plagued by haze conditions with air quality persisting in the Unhealthy range. On 24 September 2015, the air quality further deteriorated. Considering that the air quality might further worsen into the Hazardous level the following day, MOE, in consultation with the Ministry of Health, made the decision to close all primary and secondary schools on 25 September 2015. The affected examinations were rescheduled. Schools proactively contacted the affected candidates to inform them about the rescheduling. The 2015 haze situation highlighted the importance of SEAB's efforts in contingency planning and preparation. MOE and SEAB monitors the haze situation closely as part of MOE's haze management plans. In the event that the health advisory for the following day indicates that the air quality will be at hazardous levels, the Ministry will

consider closing all primary and secondary schools. The national examinations may be rescheduled if schools are closed and this announcement will be made together with MOE's announcement on school closure. In addition, schools will inform their students and SEAB will inform the private candidates of the changes in examination dates.

The national examinations will proceed as scheduled when schools remain open. To ensure the safety and well-being of examination candidates, all candidates will sit for their papers in enclosed indoor spaces with air purifiers so that examinations can continue without disruption even in circumstances where the haze conditions worsen unexpectedly during the examinations.

Although contingency measures are in place to mitigate the unexpected haze conditions during the examinations, candidates with pre-existing medical conditions or who feel unwell should seek medical attention. Those who are medically certified unwell and are unable to sit for the examinations should inform their schools on the same day of the examination so that they can update SEAB. Candidates can be assured that processes are in place to ensure that candidates do not get penalised.

It is hoped that the contingency plans will help minimise the impact and anxiety experienced by the candidates due to haze.

Following last year's haze episode, MOE has also reviewed their haze management plans. In 2016, air purifiers will be deployed to all school classrooms to better protect students from the effects of haze and to enhance their well-being. SEAB will also continue to work with MOE to review and refine the contingency plans to ensure that it stays relevant to ever-changing needs.

12 Things about SEAB Day 2016

Here are 12 things about SEAB's 12th Anniversary celebrations...

1

This year, SEAB celebrated its 12th birthday on 31 March with the theme: *"Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Celebrations"*. It was a day for all staff to celebrate together the Board's successes in the past year.



2

The celebrations were held at the Holiday Inn Atrium Singapore, which was a short walk away from SEAB.



3

With a creative cocktail dress code, it was refreshing to see staff all dressed up for the event. Voting was held to decide the six best dressed staff, and it was definitely a feast for the eyes!



4

As part of the SEAB family, our Chairman, Ms Ho Peng, and two of our Board Members joined in the 12th Anniversary celebrations.



5

Addressing the crowd, Ms Ho shared her thoughts about the focus areas and aspirations for SEAB, in line with the theme of "Today's Opportunities, Tomorrow's Celebrations".



6

At SEAB, everyone (well, almost) loves quizzes! Hence, as part of the celebrations, the staff were engaged in a game of "Sure or Not" to test their knowledge of SEAB's history and its premises. There was great enthusiasm during the games. Just look at the excited faces!



7

SEAB's very own talented staff also kept everyone entertained throughout the celebrations with various performances which included singing, dancing and even interactive poetry recital! There was even the performance by a red-haired Gao Ling Feng and accompanying dancers, Ah Zhu and Ah Hua!



8

The PS21 ceremony is held annually during SEAB Day to acknowledge the contributions of the committees supporting the Public Service change movement that encourages public officers to embrace changes to keep the Public Service at the leading edge. The committees in SEAB that are involved in this movement are ExCEL, Innovation, Quality Service and SEABlings Committees.



9

The SEAB INSpire Awards seek to recognise and reward SEAB staff for efforts in ideation, innovation, process improvements and service excellence. In all, 53 awards were presented to staff during the celebrations. External awards such as the MOE Innergy (Statutory Board) and Excellent Service Awards were also presented to the winners.



10

The audience was treated to a surprise Flash Mob dance led by the SEAB Day Organising Committee Chairman, Mdm Premalatha P, and Director of Corporate Services, Ms Selena Yeo. The Flash Mob caught everyone by surprise and ended the celebrations on a high note.



11

The celebration would not be possible without the hard work of the organising committee. Despite the hard work, the committee enjoyed the process of organising this special day and also found camaraderie within the team.



12

As in past years, the event ended with a photo-taking session, reflecting SEAB as one big family.



Welcoming New Members to SEAB Board

SEAB warmly welcomed three new members to our Governing Board on 1 April 2016. The new members are Mr Richard Hoo, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Urban Redevelopment Authority, Mr Chan Cheow Hoe, Government Chief Information Officer/Assistant Chief Executive (Government Chief Information Office) of Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, and Mr Jason Chen, Senior Director, Planning and Organisation, Ministry of Home Affairs. Read on to find out more about them.

Mr Richard Hoo
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA)

As Deputy Chief Executive Officer of URA, Mr Hoo helms the Strategic Planning, Corporate and Information Systems Groups. His role requires him to provide guidance in the formulation of Singapore's long-term land use planning, physical development plans and strategies, as well as research and development in urban solutions amongst others.

Mr Hoo joined URA in 1993. During his career with the agency, he has been involved in diverse functions such as land sale, property research, physical planning, land administration and strategic planning.



Mr Chan Cheow Hoe
Deputy Chief Executive / Government Chief Information Officer
Government Technology Agency

Appointed in April 2014, Mr Chan's role is to oversee the Singapore Government's central information technology systems and infrastructure, as well as drive the development and delivery of innovative public services for citizens and businesses. Having previously held senior management positions related to IT development and systems, Mr Chan brings with him a wealth of experience that spans more than two decades from the information technology sector, including a strong track record of delivering efficient and effective IT systems and solutions through leading IT professionals in global companies and large corporations. He also specialises in leading organisations through transformational change and connecting IT to the needs of the organisation.



Mr Jason Chen
Senior Director, Planning and Organisation Division
Ministry of Home Affairs

Currently with the Ministry of Home Affairs' Planning and Organisation Division, Mr Chen, is no stranger to the education field as he had a former stint with the Ministry of Education.

Besides serving in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Mr Chen also holds a concurrent appointment in the Ministry of Law as the Programme Director of Legal and Intellectual Property Programme Office.



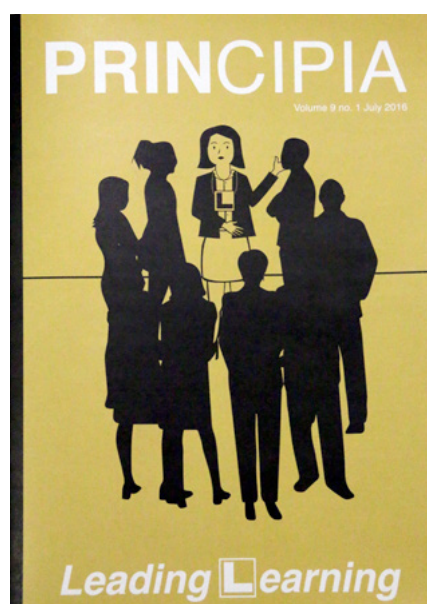
SEAB is honoured to have the new members on board and will definitely benefit from their diverse expertise and experiences as we continue in our mission of assessing educational performance in a rapidly changing landscape. We look forward to their term of office with us.

At the same time, we would like to sincerely thank the following Board Directors for their invaluable service and contributions during their term of office with SEAB:

- Mr Don Yeo Yong Kiang, Deputy President (Administration), National University of Singapore
- Mr Ahsanul Kalam Bin Mohamed Sani, Global Bid Manager, Dimension Data Asia Pacific Pte Ltd
- DC Lim Kok Thai, Deputy Commissioner (Policy), Singapore Police Force
- Mr Ngien Hoon Ping, Deputy Secretary (Performance), Ministry of Finance

We wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Exclusive Interview with SEAB Chief Executive, Ms Tan Lay Choo



The Academy of Principals Singapore (APS) is a professional body for senior educators formed in 2002. The academy publishes a bi-annual newsletter, *Principia*, which features stories of principals and their philosophies.

As a former principal, Ms Tan was invited to share her story with fellow school leaders. In this rare and exclusive interview, Ms Tan shares her story spanning decades in the education field – how she started out in the teaching profession, moved to various portfolios within MOE headquarters, headed Bukit Panjang Government High School as its first female and English-educated principal, and assumed the role of Chief Executive, SEAB in the final phase of her career.

You can click [here](#) to read Ms Tan's story.

Exchanging Ideas, Connecting Minds

From time to time, overseas and local organisations express interest in visiting SEAB to learn more about Singapore's education system, including the national examinations. It has always been a rewarding experience to open our doors and welcome the guests to SEAB. Besides sharing our knowledge on assessment and the national examinations, SEAB has benefitted greatly from the conversations with our distinguished guests, often gaining fresh knowledge and ideas. These events also provide a listening channel through which SEAB is able to gain valuable feedback for improvement.

In the first half of 2016, SEAB was delighted to host three groups of visitors in our humble abode - the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Learning and Transformation Advisory Board, NIE's Management and Leadership in Schools Programme, and the Indonesian National Institute of Public Administration.

Singapore Armed Forces Learning and Transformation Advisory Board (SLTAB)



Led by Senior Lieutenant Colonel, Heng Meng Kwong, personnel from the SLTAB visited SEAB in January 2016 to find out more about the national examination processes and the implementation of the e-Examinations, as part of their efforts in strengthening SAF's learning systems through the seeking of relevant knowledge and applying the best practices in the industry. The visit was hosted by SEAB's Chief Executive, Ms Tan Lay Choo and several senior management members.

The SAF personnel expressed satisfaction with the richness of the discussion and shared the following comments:

“ It was an enriching sharing by CE Ms Tan and her SEAB colleagues to the SAF delegation. In particular, very useful to us was the elaboration on the key principles of assessment and the importance of aligning curriculum-pedagogy-assessment. The frank sharing of challenges faced and future developmental plans was insightful and served as a reference for the SAF team as we develop this domain in our respective areas of work. Thank you CE Ms Tan and SEAB for hosting us!

~ Senior Lieutenant Colonel Heng Meng Kwong
Head, Centre for Learning Systems, SAFTI MI

”

NIE's Management and Leadership in Schools (MLS) Programme



Singapore's successful education system is based on the alignment of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment. Teachers are integral to this success formula; as they not only play a major role in pedagogy and curriculum deliverance, but also ensure the successful conduct of the national examinations

In 2016, SEAB initiated the "Conversations with SEAB" series, targeted at the course participants in NIE's Management and Leadership in Schools (MLS) programme. The participants are typically Head of Departments or subject heads of primary, secondary schools and junior colleges.

Back in 2014, SEAB had hosted a group of teachers who were course participants of the MLS programme. The group had chosen to visit SEAB as industrial visits were part of the course requirements. Positive feedback was received from the participants, as their queries about national examination matters were answered during the session. This had prompted SEAB to work with NIE and allow the MLS participants to sign up for dialogue sessions with us to clarify their queries about national examination processes.

The first session of "Conversations with SEAB" held on 26 February 2016 was well-received by a group of close to 30 MLS participants attending the session. Hosted by SEAB's Chief Executive and Directors, the two-hour session was highly interactive with in-depth discussions about the subject matter.

It was definitely heartening to know that the participants enjoyed the discourse as it clarified their concerns about national examinations and also queries about iPSLE. The participants also shared that the knowledge gleaned from the session could be shared with their colleagues in school. At SEAB's end, we were more than glad to receive feedback that could help us improve our processes and communication to the schools and teachers. SEAB definitely looks forward to hosting the next group of MLS participants.

Here are some comments from the MLS participants who attended the session:

"Thank you for hosting us, MLS participants from Jan 2016 intake. It was an enriching session."

"I didn't know that SEAB provided consultancy services to other systems. This speaks well of Singapore's excellence in assessment products and services!"

"I am more assured about the processes SEAB has to ensure we have a world-class examination (and education) system. Moreover, I did not realise earlier how much SEAB has to do and consider. I am now more appreciative of the work SEAB does."

The National Institute of Public Administration, Indonesia



On the international front, SEAB Directors, Mr Toh Poh Guan and Ms Selena Yeo, hosted a group of Indonesian delegates who were in Singapore for a five-day benchmarking visit in end March 2016. The delegates were public officers attending a leadership training program under Indonesia's National Institute of Public Administration and the aim of the visit was to expose them to good practices in public service, including the introduction of successful public service innovation initiatives. Specifically, the delegation hoped to understand more about SEAB's international Primary School Examinations (iPSLE) which is adopted by a number of overseas schools as a benchmark against Singapore's academic standard.

During the session, the delegates enthusiastically raised questions about how the iPSLE grew in the region as well as SEAB's journey to excellence, such as our competitive edge and even our governance and performance management framework. There was a rich discourse over the short one-and-a-half-hour session.

The Head of Delegation, Ms Dra Army Winarti M. Si, Head of Center for Trainer Supervisory, National Institute of Public Administration of Republic Indonesia, wrote the following compliment in our guest book:

“

*This session is very good. Good and comprehensive presentation.
Many learning and experiences that we can adopt and implement in Indonesia.*

”

With such rich and bountiful learning and sharing experiences, SEAB looks forward to forging new friendships in the months ahead.

Training Calendar (August - December 2016)

FOR MOE SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Workshop Title	Duration (Days)	Date of Training
Assessment – Malay Language	1.5	23 Aug 2016 (Full Day) and 31 Aug 2016 (Half Day)

For more information about the above training courses on TR AISI, please click [here](#).

DESIGN OF INTERACTION TASKS INCLUDING VIDEO STIMULUS FOR CONVERSATION

This workshop is designed to equip participants with the knowledge, understanding and skills to develop new assessment items for the revised 2017 PSLE Mother Tongue Languages. This workshop is intended only for primary school teachers who are in MOE schools.

Specifically, the workshop seeks to help participants:

- gain a deeper understanding of the rationale and changes of the revised examination format
- understand the criteria and guidelines of using video as stimulus for oral assessment
- be equipped with skills to develop new assessment items including the use of video as stimulus for the oral assessment.

Training Schedule

Workshop Title	Duration (Days)	Date of Training
Design of Interaction Tasks including Video Stimulus for Conversation – Tamil Language	1	26 Aug 2016 (Limited seats available)
Design of Interaction Tasks including Video Stimulus for Conversation – Malay Language	1	21 Sep 2016 (Limited seats available)

If you wish to sign up for the courses, please contact us at SEAB_AS@seab.gov.sg.

The training information provided in this publication is accurate at the time of publication.

Help Us Improve!

Dear Readers,

To help us develop more relevant and interesting content for you, we would like to hear from you. We would be grateful if you could take a few minutes of your time to respond to our survey by clicking [here](#). We would like to hear from you on what you like about our newsletter and the content that you would like to see.

If you have any other piece of feedback on our newsletter, you may also write in to us directly at SEAB_SEABLink@seab.gov.sg. Thank you for your time and valuable inputs.

The SEAB-link Editorial Team



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board

Our Vision:

A trusted authority in examinations and assessment,
recognised locally and internationally.

Our Mission:

We assess educational performance so as to certify individuals, uphold
national standards and advance quality in assessment worldwide.

Our Values:

Integrity | Value people | Commitment | Professionalism | Teamwork