



Frequently Asked Questions

English Department

General Paper

FAQ #1: What is General Paper?

- General Paper is a subject that allows students to explore a range of key issues that are significant locally and globally. Examples of such issues include historical, social and political topics, such as inequality within societies and international cooperation.
- General Paper equips students with future-ready skills and competencies by guiding students to construct persuasive and compelling arguments.
- Through class discussions and debates, students will learn how to communicate their ideas clearly and effectively. This allows students to discover their own voice through forming informed opinions and articulating them in a cogent manner.
- The goal of General Paper is to broaden students' global outlook, and allow students to situate themselves within our shared historical, social and cultural context.

FAQ #2: How is General Paper assessed?

- There are two papers - Paper 1 requires students to write an expository essay. Paper 2 is a comprehension paper with short answer questions, a summary question and an application question.
- Paper 1: The expository essay is minimally 500 to 800 words in length, and requires students to display critical thinking while providing a cogent argument that supports their opinions and perspectives.
- Paper 2: The comprehension paper exposes students to passages that reveal authors' stands on various issues, and students have to read the passages for authorial intent and display comprehension of the authors' claims in order to answer the short answer questions, summary question and application question that accompany the comprehension passages.

FAQ #3: How is General Paper taught in YIJC?

- At YIJC, students will go through a two year spiral curriculum that is designed to allow students to revisit the skills and concepts learnt in an iterative way. This allows students to be exposed to the breadth of themes within General Paper,

and gradually deepen their understanding of these themes with each successive encounter through independent research of topics that interest them.

- There is a progression of skills across two years - students will be guided through the basic skills for each paper. Tutors will provide explicit instructions on how to tackle various parts of writing the essay (e.g., how to write an effective Introduction, a clear stand, etc.) as well as different types of short answer questions for Paper 2.
- In our college, we adopt the Lecture-Tutorial format. This means that students will attend an online or face to face lecture to acquire the relevant content and skills. Then, students will be able to clarify any doubts they have from the lecture, and apply the content and skills to questions in a tutorial setting.
- Content lectures (e.g., Media, Value of the old, Politics & Governance) will outline the key issues students should pay attention to for each topic while time will be carved out for students to explore beyond what was covered through collaborative learning methods in tutorials.

FAQ #4: How is General Paper different from GCE 'O' Level English?

- All essay questions in Paper 1 are argumentative in nature.
- There is more emphasis placed on close reading and techniques for answering short answer questions and the summary question in Paper 2.
- The Application Question (at the end of Paper 2) requires students to apply the authors' claims to their own society.

FAQ #5: How should I study for General Paper?

- Through the GP lectures, students will gain an overview of the themes and topics within GP. Then, students should endeavour to explore the topics that interest them in more depth by reading widely from sources such as opinion pieces in New York Times, and The Straits Times.
- Be prepared to do self-directed reading and learning in order to gain an understanding of societal issues and the interconnectedness of themes and topics within GP.

FAQ #6: If I performed poorly for GCE 'O' Level English, would it mean that I would not do well for General Paper?

- From our experience, we have had many students who have done well for GP at the GCE A levels regardless of their GCE O level English grade. What matters most in GP is the ability to apply oneself by taking an interest in the relevant societal issues, and to read consistently and widely. This should be followed up by consistent practice so that students hone the skill of being able to apply content to essay and comprehension questions.

FAQ #7: Is reading the newspaper regularly sufficient to do well for General Paper?

- Reading the newspaper regularly is but one of the many strategies required for students to do well in GP.
- Apart from reading the local newspapers, students need to also expose themselves to global perspectives on issues, and regularly practice essay and comprehension questions to assess their own understanding of these issues.

FAQ #8: What other experiences can I look forward to as a General Paper student? Will I get the chance to apply my learning in the real world?

- Students in YIJC can also look forward to experiences that help them glean the real-world applications of General Paper. Students can participate in seminars chaired by practitioners such as lawyers and journalists from diverse fields so as to learn from their first-hand experiences.
- Student voice and participation is strongly encouraged, as students are invited to participate actively in learning journeys to visit places like the Tiong Bahru Heritage Trail. These experiences help to bring the learning from the classroom into the real world. Students are then encouraged to share their learning with their peers on various physical and virtual platforms.

FAQ #9: Are there any assessment books / reading material I should buy to better prepare myself to study GP?

- Our college prepares many reading materials in the form of lecture notes for students to gain a core understanding of themes and topics. Tutors will then recommend additional readings and supplementary reading materials (e.g., Broader Perspectives magazines) for students. Students should consider getting a better understanding of the nature of GP as a subject before purchasing additional reading material.

Thank you