

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In the reading section, candidates are required to understand and respond to information presented in a variety of forms. Candidates are expected not only to understand the information provided in the passages but also to be able to distinguish between facts, ideas and opinions. They should demonstrate the ability to extract relevant specific information from various text types and organise and present it in a logical manner.
- In the writing section, candidates need to show that they can communicate clearly and appropriately in written Chinese to convey information and express opinions. Candidates are expected to use a range of vocabulary and show control of a variety of grammatical structures. Register should be appropriate. Writing conventions, such as paragraphing and punctuation, should be followed. The characters produced by the candidates should be accurate.
- In exercises where candidates are required to tick a certain number of boxes, such as **Exercise 1**, **Question 1**, candidates must not tick more than the required number of options. If a candidate makes a choice and then changes his/her mind, he/she must cross out the original choice very clearly.
- Although notes may be made on the question paper, any work that the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. The mark cannot be awarded if the Examiner has to 'choose' the correct answer from a longer response provided by the candidate, which contains extra material that is incorrect, invented or contradictory.

General comments

Performance on this component was generally very good. The majority of candidates coped quite well with the reading passages in **Section 1**. They also demonstrated a sound ability to communicate sophisticated ideas and could argue their cases convincingly in the writing exercises.

In **Section 2** most candidates showed that they were capable of communicating competently in the target language. Many responses successfully and clearly communicated interesting ideas. Some candidates needed to read the questions more carefully to ensure all bullet points were addressed with appropriate register. Some candidates also need to take care when writing characters to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1–5

In **Question 1** candidates are required to identify the four true statements in a list of eight. Most candidates coped well with the format of the question, and realised they must only tick the required number of boxes. Performance on this opening question was good, with even the weakest candidates obtaining 1 to 2 marks. **Questions 2–5** are 3-option multiple-choice questions, and were answered well by most candidates, showing that they were able to understand this part of the passage fully. **Question 5** proved to be the most challenging in this exercise, as it required candidates to read the passage carefully and to pay close attention to both the passage and the question.

Exercise 2 Questions 6–13

In this exercise, candidates should be reminded that the answers need to be precise and accurate. A high level of accuracy is needed to score highly.

Question 6 asks for the name of the School that the protagonist attends. This needs to be the Secondary School and not a University, 清华大学. Candidates needed to write all four characters 襄阳五中 correctly in order to get the mark.

In **Question 7**, candidates needed to make sure that the full name of the teacher, 冯长春 was present and not just the first name. 冯长春老师 was also accepted as a correct answer. Candidates needed to write the characters correctly to be awarded the mark.

Most candidates were able to find the answer to **Question 8** with ease. For **Question 9**, two elements were required in respect of the protagonist's hobbies, 吹长笛 or 长笛 and 电脑游戏 or 玩电脑 were accepted. Some candidates gave 长笛吹 or 读英语小说 which were not accepted as the correct answer.

Questions 10–13 tended to expose candidates who had not fully understood the passage, and this group of questions was found to be challenging by them. In **Question 10**, the rubric asked candidates to identify the University to which the protagonist was admitted. Candidates who gave 清华北大 as an answer could not therefore be awarded a mark. **Question 11** was answered well by most candidates. Very few wrote down *physics* instead of *economics*. In **Question 12**, candidates needed to identify which job the protagonist wanted to do in the future (经济学家); some candidates gave 经济人才 as the answer, which could not be credited as it is not an occupation. **Question 13** was handled well by most candidates. Some wrote down 想做贡献 for one of the bullet points, which is not an opinion on China's development. Candidates are reminded of the need to read the questions and the passage carefully.

Exercise 3 Questions 14–20

Answers to **Exercise 3** needed to be precise and accurate to ensure that they communicated the answers without ambiguity.

Question 14 required two elements and was answered well by many, but where candidates were not awarded the mark, this was usually because they did not give sufficient information. Candidates needed to say that 记忆信息的能力 rather than 能力 is enhanced by practising a musical instrument.

In **Question 15**, the two elements that were required presented few problems for candidates. For **Question 16** two elements were required as well; candidates needed to mention the physical and mental health of the young people not of the children. Candidates should always remind themselves of the need to read the questions and the passage with care.

Questions 17 and 18 also needed a precise response. For **Question 19** two elements were once again required and candidates needed to provide a more accurate answer than just 一些儿童 to be credited.

Question 20 was well handled by most candidates. A number of candidates added 才有创作发展的可能 to the second point, which was considered a harmless addition.

Section 2

Exercise 4 Question 21

This year, candidates were required to write a letter about a sports club and were asked to include their opinions about the coach and teammates, as well as the reason why they had joined the club. Many excellent responses addressed all the points given in the question; others needed to include opinions about both the coach and teammates to access the higher content marks. Some candidates had difficulty differentiating between 训练 and 教练. A number of candidates wrote about the effect of taking part in the sports club rather than giving the reasons why they decided to join in the first place. Most candidates were aware that they should write between 100 and 120 characters, and successfully addressed the tasks given in bullet points within the character limit.

In terms of language use, many candidates demonstrated that they could use simple grammatical structures effectively and precisely. In order to reach the highest marking bands, candidates also need to show that they can use more complex structures and sophisticated language.

Exercise 5 Question 22

This was found to be the most challenging part of the exam for many candidates. Candidates were asked to write a letter to their parent(s) expressing their opinions about a given issue.

Four written comments are provided as a stimulus to provoke candidates into thinking about the topic.

Candidates are not obliged to include these, and could use their own ideas and opinions.

They are given as suggestions of the arguments which may be put forward, and it is expected that candidates will not simply re-state the ideas provided, but present their own ideas and opinions as well.

The key to success in this section is to make sure ideas are fully developed. The highest scoring essays contained interesting and sustained personal opinions in respect of the given issue with well-developed ideas.

For language, the best essays were characterised by being technically accurate and well structured with paragraphs containing a clear beginning and ending. Candidates need to remember to provide links between paragraphs so that there are clear and logical transitions. Centres should continue to support candidates in writing Chinese characters accurately. Candidates should be reminded that the use of idioms and sayings only enhance the quality of the language when used appropriately.

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/02
Speaking

Key messages

- Examiners must ensure that they are familiar with the format of the test, and should read the instructions given in the syllabus booklet well in advance of the speaking test period.
- In the interests of fairness to all candidates, the timings for the two conversation sections should be adhered to (four to five minutes for each conversation section). Candidates should be allowed to present their topic for two minutes uninterrupted.
- Examiners should ensure that they listen carefully to the content of the presentation to avoid asking questions in the Topic Conversation which force candidates to repeat information already given. Candidates need to be given opportunities to provide new evidence of using wider vocabulary and structures to reach the higher marking bands.
- At least two topics from the list given in the syllabus should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A or B and one from Areas C or D.
- Discussion in both conversation sections should include opinions, explanations and comparisons, as well as facts, to enable candidates to show the level and depth of their command of the language.
- Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner must seek permission from Cambridge before the Speaking Test period starts. Centres using more than one Examiner were not always aware of the correct procedure for internal moderation. Feedback to such Centres was provided by the Moderator and should be acted upon in future sessions.
- The Centre needs to check all additions carefully in order to avoid arithmetical errors.
- Tests must be conducted in Mandarin.

General comments

The majority of Centres were well-prepared for the conduct of the Speaking component, which resulted in tests being carried out successfully in most cases. The full range of performance was heard this year, with many candidates demonstrating their ability to communicate appropriately in spoken Mandarin Chinese and to confidently use a wide range of vocabulary and structures. A variety of topics were chosen for the presentation and well-discussed with Examiners. Most Examiners had done the necessary preparation, and asked a series of excellent searching questions.

It is important that candidates choose a topic for the presentation which reflects their interests, as well as being related to an aspect of Chinese culture. It is also crucial that the Examiner asks a series of questions appropriate to the candidate's level. This should include questions that are more unpredictable, and enable candidates to show their ability to respond spontaneously.

It is expected that at this level, topics covered in the speaking test will relate to education, the world of work, current affairs, health and welfare, social relationships, etc. which will help to prepare candidates for their ongoing education or future employment. In a small number of cases, the topics that Examiners chose for the General Conversation were more appropriate for a foreign language examination, and questions were not in-depth enough for candidates at this level.

Examiners need to ensure that their candidates are put at ease and given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In order to give candidates the best possible chance, Examiners should ensure that they have read the syllabus carefully so that both the tests and the relevant administration are carried out correctly.

The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in Centres where candidates were given opportunities to talk about their own interests. It was evident in most cases that candidates had carefully prepared their presentations, and the most successful topic conversations occurred where Examiners were familiar with the descriptors given in the mark scheme, and also managed to pitch questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus.

Candidates were rewarded for demonstrating a range of vocabulary and structures covering a selection of different topics and for showing the ability to respond and contribute to a conversation giving ideas and opinions. The strongest candidates showed precise use of variety of structures and a solid range of vocabulary in their responses.

Duration of test

Candidates should be allowed to present their topic for two minutes. In this examination series there were many cases of excessively long presentations. The two conversation sections should be between four and five minutes each. In the interests of fairness to all candidates, each candidate must be allowed the full examination time in each conversation section, as stipulated in the syllabus.

Recorded sample: quality and composition

Many Centres managed to select a good recorded sample which evenly covered the full spread of performance in the Centre. Centres with permission to use more than one Examiner had taken care to ensure that both a good range of marks and different Examiners were represented in the sample.

A high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality and Centres are thanked for this. In order to ensure that recordings are clear, Centres are reminded to conduct the Speaking tests in a quiet place, away from any noise which may cause disruption. Background noise can make moderation difficult, but may also affect candidate performance at the time of recording. The recording should be checked at intervals by the Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of all recordings before sending to Cambridge.

A list of the featured recordings must be submitted with each CD. Each CD must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the CD number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction needs to be made only once, and should be saved as a separate file (named 'recorded introduction'). The Examiner and not the candidate must introduce the candidate by name and number and the recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named

as follows, Centre number_candidate number_syllabus number_component number. The recording for each candidate must be on a separate file.

Internal moderation

All Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded of the need to apply to Cambridge for permission well before the start of each Speaking test period. Permission is normally granted, on the understanding that internal standardisation/moderation takes place at the Centre before a sample is chosen for external moderation by Cambridge.

Where Centres with large numbers of candidates have been granted permission by Cambridge to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess Speaking tests, the coordinating Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the Examiners in the Centre. If a particular Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the Centre, the marks for candidates examined by that Examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge.

Details of the Centre's Internal Moderation procedures must also be sent to CIE. In order to assist Centres that have been given permission to use more than one Examiner, Cambridge has produced guidelines for internal standardisation/moderation.

Clerical checks

In the vast majority of Centres, the clerical work had been completed efficiently. It is essential that all clerical work is checked carefully so as to ensure that all candidates receive the correct mark. Errors in addition were found and corrected in a small number of Centres. Centres are reminded of the importance of careful checking of clerical work, and to ensure that all additions on the Working Mark Sheet as well as the transfer of marks from the WMS to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) are checked before submitting them to Cambridge.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well understood in most Centres. In cases where downward adjustments to marks were made, this was often because candidates needed to communicate and express their thoughts and opinions more clearly. Some needed to demonstrate their ability to use a wider range of structures and vocabulary more precisely, for example, the use of 家人 and 家庭, 还是 and 或者, 还 and 还有, 平静 and 安静, 尊敬 and 尊重, 思念 and 纪念, etc.

There were some instances where marking was generous due to candidates being credited for giving the same information more than once: Centres need to be careful not to ask a similar series of questions either between conversation sections, or ask questions which require the candidate to repeat information already given in the Presentation.

Comments on specific questions

Topic Presentation

The vast majority of candidates had prepared the Topic Presentation very well, showing good use of sayings and idioms as well as a wide range of different structures. Topics about Chinese culture and customs showed more variety this year, with presentations such as 传统文化上颜色的意义, 中国汉字, 中国武术, 书法, 中国人的姓氏, 十二生肖, 幸运数字和颜色, 粽子, 刀削面, 茶文化, 餐桌礼仪, 满汉全席, 少数民族文化, 葬礼文化, 百善孝为先, 中医, 四大发明, 儒家思想, etc.

Reflections on social and personal issues were also heard in the presentations this year, e.g.

对当地人生活习惯的观察和思考, 年轻人面临的生活压力/失败, 青少年吸烟问题, 经营之神王永庆, 独生子女政策, 虎妈, 留学生情况调查, 童年的趣事, 做有道德的人, 梦想, etc.

Topic Conversation

A good range and quality of vocabulary and structures was heard in the Topic Conversations and the best performing candidates also gave correspondingly impressive performances in the discussions which followed the presentations. Most Examiners understood the importance of listening carefully to candidates' presentations, which then enabled them to lead the candidate skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions pitched at an appropriate level, allowing candidates to both develop their topic and to demonstrate their language skills. Examiners should avoid asking the candidate a prepared question if the candidate had already given the answer to that question previously.

General Conversation

At least two topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A and B (Young people and education / Society); the other from Areas C and D (The world / Cultural diversity). Topics chosen for the General Conversation should not overlap with the content of Part Two, Topic Conversation in this Speaking test.

A variety of topics was heard in the General Conversations: *'environment'*, *'cities and public service'*, *'education and future plans'*, *'healthy eating habits'*, *'urban and rural life'*, *'generation gap'*, *'current affairs'*, *'friendship'*, *'holidays'*, *'festivals and customs'* to name a few. Many Examiners were fully aware that the level of language and depth to which general topics should be discussed in this examination should be beyond that expected of a Foreign Language examination. In a few cases, questions were not challenging enough to allow candidates to express themselves fully. Centres are reminded that the treatment of topics such as 'Sports and exercise' should be more mature and in-depth at this level, including questions dealing with subjects such as *whether taking part in sport conflicts with study time and whether this is problematic*, etc., rather than more basic questions such as *where they play, with whom, how long for*, etc. The best examining was when candidates were invited to express their opinions on a topic, or when Examiners raised a particular issue which gave candidates the opportunity to discuss both sides of the argument.