

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/11

Listening

Key messages

In preparation for this paper, it is worth bearing in mind the following points:

- When answering in Chinese (whether characters or pinyin), full sentences are not required. Brief answers are frequently all that is required.
- Inaccuracies of Chinese (whether characters or pinyin) are tolerated provided that the message is clear and that the candidate's rendering of the answer does not give a different Chinese character/pinyin word with another meaning, which might confuse comprehension of the message.
- Answers should be written in black or blue ink. Answers should not be written first in pencil and then overwritten in ink as this makes them very difficult to read.
- In exercises where candidates are required to tick a certain number of boxes, such as **Exercise 2** in **Section 2**, candidates must not tick more/fewer than the required number of options. If a candidate makes a choice and then changes his/her mind, s/he 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

There were many excellent performances from Centres all over the world, showing that listening skills are being well taught in many Centres. Candidates were generally very well prepared and were familiar with the requirements of the examination.

Candidates are allowed to write their answers in either Chinese characters or pinyin, but English or other phonetic systems other than pinyin are not accepted. Candidates should be reminded that questions with a written response in Chinese only require brief answers, and complete sentences are often not necessary. If candidates get into the habit of keeping their answers short, clear, and to the point, they can reduce the risk of adding extra incorrect material, which can invalidate an otherwise correct response.

It was noticeable this year that answers written in pinyin contained a range of incorrect spellings. Inaccuracies in Chinese characters or pinyin are accepted provided that the meaning is clearly communicated. In some cases, the spelling errors in the pinyin made it very difficult to understand, and it was unclear what the candidates' intentions were. This is an area in which improvements could be made.

Regrettably, a few candidates ticked more than one box in response to the multiple-choice questions in **Section 1**. When responding to questions requiring only one choice as the answer, if a candidate makes two choices (whether in pencil or in ink), the mark **cannot** be awarded. It is worth reminding candidates that any answers which they do not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out.

It was pleasing to see that this year candidates were very careful not to tick more than 5 boxes in response to **Question 16**.

Candidates should write their answers in the spaces provided on the question paper. Answers which the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. In this year's exam, there were instances where candidates had bracketed parts of their answer. Candidates should be aware that

anything written in Chinese characters or pinyin will be considered as part of the candidate's answer unless it is clearly crossed out.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Candidates generally did well on this multiple-choice exercise, which tested the comprehension of very short items of one or two sentences.

Question 1 tested candidates' knowledge of items of clothing, and some candidates selected **A** instead of the correct answer **B**, suggesting that improvements could be made in this lexical area.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This exercise featured a short conversation about Xiao Qiang's day out with his friends. Candidates generally did well on this multiple-choice exercise.

The most common errors were seen in **Question 9**, where **A** was sometimes selected instead of **C**, and in **Question 8** where **C** was sometimes selected instead of **A**.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 11-15

This exercise tested the candidates' understanding of a short weather forecast. Candidates generally performed well in this exercise. If candidates did make a mistake, it tended to be in **Questions 11, 12** or **14**. For **Question 12** some candidates answered **F** instead of **G**.

Exercise 2 Questions 16

Candidates heard a conversation between Xiao Gang and a friend. They talked about Xiao Gang's plan for his last year at Beijing University. Candidates generally performed very well in this exercise. If candidates ticked 1 of the 4 incorrect pictures in this question, they tended to choose **C** or **F**. Amongst the 5 right choices, most candidates correctly selected **D** and **G**.

It was pleasing to see this year that only a few candidates ticked more than 5 boxes, which is a great improvement on previous years. There were still, however, a few candidates who did not tick the correct number of boxes. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the rubric carefully.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 17-21

This exercise featured five friends talking about what they do at weekends to help their families. On the whole, candidates performed very well in this exercise. **Question 17** and **Question 19** were challenging for some candidates.

Exercise 2 Questions 22-25

Candidates heard an interview with a foreign candidate. As intended, this final exercise elicited the widest range of performance.

As described in the rubrics, both Chinese characters and pinyin are accepted in this exercise. Candidates should be aware that phonetic systems other than pinyin, or languages other than Chinese are not accepted.

Question 22 asked candidates what 玛利亚 was studying in China. Most candidates answered this question well. Some candidates seem to have confused 音乐 with 英语 and gave the wrong answer as a result.

Question 23 asked candidates about the teaching by 玛利亚's Chinese teacher. There were a range of answers here and most were acceptable. Some incorrect answers included 很人正, ren 中国老师很好.

Question 24 required candidates to state the reason why 玛利亚 did not go back to the U.S. to see his family during the winter holidays. The majority of candidates showed that they had understood that the reason was related to the Spring Festival. Candidates who had not understood this wrote answers including 跟朋友玩, 喜欢在中国过寒假, 喜欢在中国 and 喜欢中国, which were not accepted.

Question 25 proved to be the most challenging in this exam, and not all candidates attempted to answer it. It asked candidates to list the two things that 玛利亚 enjoyed doing the most during the Spring Festival.

One activity was 逛街 (guang jie). A huge variety of answers was seen here, and many candidates showed a good understanding of what they had heard. The range of pinyin spellings was exceptionally wide here. Among the answers where misspelling caused problems of comprehension, and therefore could not be accepted were "guan quant", "guang xue" and "guang jing".

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MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/12

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General comments

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Paper 0547/13

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MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/21

Reading and Directed Writing

Key Messages

To maximise the chances of success, candidates should:

- be aware of the format and rubrics used in the Question Paper, as well as the Minimum Core Vocabulary list. Familiarity with this can help to expand candidates' vocabulary.
- attempt to answer every question on the paper.
- give clear answers to questions. When responding to questions requiring only one choice as the answer, (as in the multiple choice questions in **Section 1**) if a candidate makes two choices (whether in pencil or in ink), the mark cannot be awarded.
- aim to write short, accurate answers. Full sentences are not required, and brief answers with sufficient content are frequently all that is needed.
- ensure that they indicate the final answer clearly. If it is necessary to make a correction, candidates should do so by clearly crossing out the incorrect answer.
- remember that they must not use pinyin or English in their answers, as this will not be credited.

General comments

Candidates generally appeared well prepared for the examination and there were some excellent responses to this paper. Most candidates were familiar with the syllabus and aware of the requirements of the examination.

The majority of candidates were able to deliver excellent responses in **Section 1**. A small number of candidates chose not to attempt **Question 12** and **Question 23**. Candidates should be encouraged to try and answer the Writing tasks, even if they are less confident in writing Chinese, otherwise they are missing the opportunity to access 20 available marks. It is necessary for responses to be relevant to the writing task - simply copying the content of the question cannot be credited.

Improvements could be made in time management, as not all candidates managed to complete the questions in the final exercise.

There were some common grammatical errors appearing in responses and candidates could improve their performance by focussing on the following areas:

- Correct use of phrases and characters. There were often inversions of words and characters: '为因' instead of '因为'; '好友' instead of '友好'; '口禾' instead of '和'.
- Care should be taken to avoid anglicising sentence structures, such as '我坐公车跟我的好朋友们'; '我学习在学校'.
- Care needs to be taken when writing characters with similar sounds but different meanings. Some candidates were confused with the following words, e.g. '可学'(科学); '两千' (两千); '生体'(身体); '中要' (重要); '老是'(老师).

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, Questions 1–5

Most candidates tackled the questions in this exercise very well, especially **Question 4**, which was answered correctly by most. Both **Question 1** and **Question 2** were also very well handled.

Question 5 proved to be difficult for some candidates. This required candidates to recognise the means of transport mentioned in the sentence and match it to the given pictures. Many candidates went for **B** ‘坐飞机’ instead of the correct answer **C** ‘开车’.

Exercise 2, Question 6–8

In general, candidates delivered a strong performance in this exercise this year, with the majority of candidates excelling in these questions. **Question 6** was answered by most with ease. A small number of candidates had a problem with **Question 8**, as it required candidates to understand ‘每天’ and refer it to the content in the whole table.

For these true / false questions, candidates must provide a clear answer, by placing a tick or a cross in the relevant box. Candidates should be reminded that if they provide more than one answer, marks will not be awarded.

Exercise 3, Question 9–11

In general, candidates across the ability range answered these multiple choice questions well. **Question 10** proved to be more challenging, as some candidates did not understand the meaning of ‘机场’ and selected answer **C** ‘邮局’.

Exercise 4, Question 12

For this piece of writing, there were 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were required to write a short note to a member of their family before they went out. They needed to mention:

- (a) Where they were going
- (b) Who they were going with
- (c) What they were going to do

Candidates needed to include each of these 3 elements in their answer in order to gain the full 3 marks available for communication.

A minority of candidates chose not to attempt this question at all. The most successful answers were those which managed to communicate the required information briefly, yet accurately. Pinyin should be avoided in this exercise.

For point **(a)**, a place was required and the majority of candidates answered very well. Candidates need to be careful not to miss out key words from their answers as, by missing a word, sometimes the whole sentence can take on a completely different meaning, such as ‘我要去中国’ vs. ‘我要中国’. Careful reading through of answers could help to avoid this. Additionally, a number of candidates added the preposition word ‘在’ unnecessarily, e.g. ‘我去在法国’. For point **(b)**, a person was required, such as a friend or a family member. Candidates generally wrote well on this point. For point **(c)**, an activity was needed. Most candidates managed to provide a large variety of activities; others could make improvements with the usage of ‘做’, as seen in ‘去做很多地方’; ‘去做图书馆’.

The most common incorrect characters were ‘东四’ for ‘东西’ and ‘上每’ for ‘上海’. It is important to make sure that handwriting is clear and legible, as some Chinese characters are quite similar; careless writing can cause confusion in comprehension, such as ‘看’ and ‘青’.

Section 2

Exercise 1, Questions 13–22

In this exercise, candidates were asked to read a piece of text and to answer questions on it, in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage. The passage took the form of a letter from Xiao Wang to his friend Xiao Zhang about his work experience in a zoo. Often, only a very brief answer was required, but provided that the correct answer was present, additional material copied from the text was tolerated, unless contradictory. The quality of written Chinese is considered only for the purposes of communication.

The responses were of a satisfactory standard. Not all candidates attempted all the questions, and **Question 15** and **Question 22** were the most common omissions. On the whole, candidates handled **Question 13** and **Question 16** well. **Questions 15, 21** and **22** proved to be the most challenging. For **Question 15**, a number of candidates were confused by the different time phrases that appeared in the text and were unable to identify the correct answer. For **Question 22**, some candidates seemed not to understand the meaning of ‘好像’ in the passage and so provided the wrong answer ‘和我说再见’.

Exercise 2, Question 23

In this writing task candidates were asked to write a letter to a Chinese pen friend talking about their School. As in previous years, the mark scheme was divided into marks for communication (10 marks) and accuracy of language (5 marks). Within the 10 communication marks, 1 mark was awarded for each item of relevant information conveyed.

This question produced a mixed response. Candidates did not always answer all of the required bullet points, or provide sufficient detail to obtain all available marks for communication. Many candidates only provided a very short composition, or one with little relevant content. Candidates should remember that they need to address each bullet point given in the question, and that they should expand their answer to each point beyond one short response. In order to gain the maximum 10 marks for communication, each of the bullet points must be covered, and further marks are awarded for additional details written on each question. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written (after they have achieved the minimum required characters), it should be remembered that a composition requires a certain amount of words to address all the bullet points in the question, and variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. The points frequently missed were point **(b)** ‘你是几年级的学生’ and point **(c)** ‘你怎么去学校’. Candidates should remember to study the questions carefully before they start writing and to try not to skip questions.

The lower scoring responses were usually characterised by significant amounts of irrelevant content, or over-usage of pinyin. When constructing their responses, candidates should try and choose vocabulary for which they know the Chinese character, even if this means using a simpler word; this is preferable to (and will gain more credit) than using complex vocabulary, but writing in pinyin.

In terms of accuracy of language, there was an improvement in the use of efficient simple structures. In order to produce more accurate responses in answer to point **(c)**, candidates needed to avoid missing out the verb before a transportation method e.g. ‘我自行车上学’, or adding an extra unnecessary verb, such as ‘我坐开车上学’. Further improvement could also have been made when composing certain sentence structures; in particular, it was not uncommon to see the English sentence order being applied, such as ‘我爱你很多’; ‘我坐公车跟我的好朋友们’; ‘我学习在学校’.

Candidates should be reminded to take care when writing Chinese characters, as inversions of words and characters was quite common: ‘为因’ for ‘因为’; ‘好友’ for ‘友好’; ‘口禾’ for ‘和’. Characters with the same sound but different meanings also remain a challenge for many candidates, e.g. ‘可学’(科学); ‘两千’(两千); ‘生体’(身体); ‘中要’(重要); ‘老是’(老师).

Neat and clear handwriting should also be encouraged, as several candidates mixed ‘八’ with ‘儿’.

Section 3

Exercise 1, Question 24–28

In this exercise, candidates were set the task of reading an extended passage in Chinese and then answering the multiple choice questions that followed. A small number of candidates omitted **Question 24**, but otherwise all questions were answered fully.

Performance in the questions was variable. **Question 26** was answered well by most, whilst both **Question 24** and **Question 28** generated a higher number of incorrect answers. Many candidates chose the incorrect answer **C** for **Question 24** as they did not understand that ‘温度很高’ means ‘天气很热’. **Question 28** posed a problem for some candidates as they did not know ‘不太健康’.

Exercise 2, Question 29–35

In this final exercise in the paper, candidates were asked to read an extended passage in Chinese, and to demonstrate their understanding by answering questions in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage.

Regrettably, several candidates decided not to attempt these questions, in particular **Question 29**, **Question 33** and **Question 35**. As this was the last exercise in the paper, it is possible that candidates ran out of time, and so candidates could improve performance through more emphasis on time management in the future. For instance in **Question 35**, those who attempted it generally answered correctly.

The majority of candidates demonstrated good reading comprehension skills in these questions. Most candidates found **Question 30** and **Question 34** to be accessible and consequently responses were of a high standard.

A significant number of candidates encountered difficulty with **Question 29** and **Question 33**. **Question 29** asked ‘when did Wang Long start to learn martial arts?’, which required candidates to identify the correct time phrase given in the passage. Some candidates incorrectly chose when Wang Long was born, not when he started to learn martial arts.

Question 33 also proved to be challenging in this exercise. This question required candidates to provide an answer identifying what kind of person Wang Long thought could be successful. Many candidates offered ‘让人们身体健康，认识更多的朋友’, which is why it is useful to learn martial arts. It is clear that in order to attain higher marks in this exercise, candidates will need to ensure they gain an accurate understanding of the question itself, before producing an answer.

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Paper 0547/22
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- remember that they must not use pinyin or English in their answers, as this will not be credited.

General comments

This year, the overall performance demonstrated by candidates was very good, and showed that candidates were well-prepared and familiar with the syllabus and exam requirements. In particular, the responses provided in the Writing sections showed improvements. Candidates demonstrated the ability to use different sentence structures and a varied vocabulary, which made the written pieces fluent and lively.

The majority of candidates were able to deliver an excellent response in **Section 1** and an improvement in performance in **Exercise 1** of **Section 3** was seen. All candidates attempted **Question 12** and fewer candidates chose not to attempt **Question 23** than last year. Candidates should be encouraged to try and answer the Writing tasks, even if they are less confident in writing Chinese, otherwise they are missing the opportunity to access 20 available marks. It is necessary for responses to be relevant to the writing task - simply copying the content of the question cannot be credited.

Candidates should be reminded that in order to access the higher marks in **Question 23**, they are required to provide some elaboration or additional detail for each bullet point provided in the question. Some stronger candidates missed out on marks, as they had not provided sufficient information. Once again, some candidates used English and pinyin in their answers; credit can only be given for answers written using Chinese characters. In particular, candidates need to be able to write Chinese characters for numbers, countries and names for people.

Improvements could be made in the following grammatical areas. A considerable amount of candidates showed confusion in composing sentence structures with location and verb phrases, such as '我打篮球公园', which should be '我在公园打篮球'. Candidates also seemed to struggle to give a clear answer when using time phrases, as many wrote '六时候, 下年, 七点晚上'.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, Questions 1–5

These discrete multiple choice questions were generally handled well, especially **Question 3**, which was answered consistently, with most candidates getting the right answer.

A few candidates found **Question 2** problematic, answering **A** instead of **C**. This seems to indicate that candidates were not familiar with the vocabulary for items of clothing, and confused the characters for trousers ‘裤’ and skirt ‘裙’ which share the same radical.

Exercise 2, Question 6–8

The majority of candidates performed extremely well in these questions. A small number of candidates made an incorrect attempt at **Question 7**, perhaps because it required candidates to understand the content of the whole table.

For these true / false questions, candidates must provide a clear answer, by placing a tick or a cross in the relevant box. Candidates should be reminded that if they provide more than one answer, marks will not be awarded.

Exercise 3, Question 9–11

In general, candidates across the ability range answered these multiple choice questions well. **Question 9** proved to be one of the most challenging, as some candidates did not recognise the word biology ‘生物’ in the text and confused it with geography ‘地理’.

Exercise 4, Question 12

For this piece of writing, there were 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were required to write a short note to a friend, in which they had to mention the following details about their shopping trip:

- (a) What they are going to buy.
- (b) Where they are going.
- (c) When they will come back.

Candidates needed to include each of these 3 elements in their answer in order to gain the full 3 marks available for communication.

Overall, candidates delivered a strong performance, with all candidates making a good attempt and many scoring full marks.

For point **(a)**, any item that could be purchased was accepted and the majority of candidates answered this very well. When answering a question like this, where a wide range of responses are possible, candidates should remember to choose an item that they can write correctly, rather than what they would want to buy in reality. For point **(b)**, a place to buy things or a shop was required. Candidates need to remember that English is not accepted, and that the location has to be relevant and logical e.g. ‘到中国旅游’, or ‘到公园买裤子’ could not be credited. For point **(c)**, both a time phrase and the verb indicating ‘coming back’ were needed. Some candidates had difficulty in composing time phrases in Chinese characters, whilst others were confused with the verbs to go ‘去’, to come ‘来’, and to return ‘回’.

Frequently occurring errors in this question were problems relating to the sentence pattern with location and verb phrases and the use of pronouns. As the stimulus question was “what will you buy?”, it was expected that candidates would frame their answer using ‘I will buy...’ but a number of candidates used ‘you will buy...’ e.g. ‘你要去商店买衣服’. Whilst such a minor slip was tolerated, it occasionally caused confusion in comprehension.

Section 2

Exercise 1, Questions 13–22

In this exercise, candidates were asked to read a piece of text and to answer questions about it, in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage. The passage took the form of a letter from Xiao Ma to his friend Xiao Zhang about his experience in the mountain forest and introduced his father and elder brother who work there. Often, only a very brief answer was required, but provided that the correct answer was present, additional material copied from the text was tolerated, unless contradictory. The quality of written Chinese is considered only for the purposes of communication.

The questions were answered well by most, with **Question 13** and **Question 19** being the most accessible. Where there were incorrect answers, the problems frequently occurred in **Questions 17** and **18**. For **Question 17**, a significant number of candidates gave the following incorrect answer: ‘在大湖边的医院里’. This may indicate that they misunderstood the question, which was asking where the hospital is rather than where his father works. Candidates who did not answer **Question 18** correctly often lifted the phrase ‘喝白水, 活百岁’, from the passage, but missed the hint in the word ‘由于’ which provided a reason. Improvements could be made in understanding the different ways of expressing reasons.

Exercise 2, Question 23

In this writing task candidates were asked to write a letter to a Chinese pen friend talking about their hobbies. As in previous years, the mark scheme was divided into marks for communication (10 marks) and accuracy of language (5 marks). Within the 10 communication marks, 1 mark was awarded for each item of relevant information conveyed.

Although candidates demonstrated variable ability in response to the required bullet points, the overall standard of candidates’ work is to be commended. The best responses were the ones that addressed the specific question asked with plenty of additional details. It was encouraging to see evidence that able candidates could apply a wide range of vocabulary in answer to the question ‘when did you first start this hobby?’, e.g. ‘这几天我迷上了舞蹈’; ‘从八岁开始我就对电脑很感兴趣’.

In terms of content, most candidates were able to talk generally about hobbies, especially different sports activities. On occasion, a very small subset of candidates confused hobby ‘爱好’ with like ‘喜欢’ and love ‘爱’, and wrote about a best friend, such as ‘我爱好小丽’. The majority of candidates answered each bullet point in the question, but those who did not tended to miss out point (d) ‘when did you first start this hobby?’, or misunderstood it to mean ‘when do you do the hobby?’. Therefore, a careful approach is required when studying the questions. Some candidates also needed to pay closer attention to the time frames given in the question, and to answer accordingly and logically. A few candidates gave a date in the future in response to a question asking them when they started their hobby, which must have been in the past.

Candidates should remember that they need to address each bullet point given in the question, and that they should expand their answer to each point beyond one short response. In order to gain the maximum 10 marks for communication, each of the bullet points must be covered, and further marks are awarded for additional details written on each question. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written, it should be remembered that a composition requires a certain amount of words to address all the bullet points in the question, and variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. The lower scoring responses were usually characterised by significant amounts of irrelevant content, or over-usage of pinyin.

In terms of accuracy of language, there was an improvement in the use of efficient simple structures with varied vocabulary. Improvements could be made when composing certain sentence structures, as a considerable amount of candidates applied the English sentence order and provided sentences like ‘我打网球在学校和爸爸’; ‘我开始喜欢踢足球小时候’. In particular, ‘看书在十点’ instead of ‘在十点看书’.

Characters with the same sound but different meanings remain challenging for most of the candidates. Many candidates made several such grammatical errors in their written pieces e.g. ‘但时 (是); 下牛 (午); 没 (每) 天; 开时 (始); 快了 (乐); 第第 (弟弟)’.

Section 3

Exercise 1, Question 24–28

All candidates managed to attempt the questions in this section and handled them fairly well.

In **Exercise 1**, candidates were set the task of reading an extended passage in Chinese and then answering the multiple choice questions that followed. Responses for **Question 24**, **Question 25** and **Question 27** were of a high standard, with the majority of candidates achieved full marks.

A few candidates encountered difficulty with **Question 26**, but **Question 28** proved to be the most challenging, with some candidates incorrectly selecting **A**.

Exercise 2, Question 29–35

In this final exercise, candidates were asked to read an extended passage in Chinese and demonstrate their understanding by answering questions in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage.

Most candidates managed to show their proficiency in understanding the passage. The majority of candidates answered **Questions 30 - 32** with ease. **Question 29** was not usually answered well and this was possibly due to candidates not being able to distinguish between different locations that appeared in the passage. **Question 33** also posed problems for many candidates, as they only managed to provide one correct answer and missed out the second question '为什么'. To attain higher marks, candidates need to study the questions carefully and make sure they have answered them fully.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/23

Reading and Directed Writing

Key Messages

To maximise the chances of success, candidates should:

- be aware of the format and rubrics used in the Question Paper, as well as the Minimum Core Vocabulary list. Familiarity with this can help to expand candidates' vocabulary.
- attempt to answer every question on the paper.
- give clear answers to questions. When responding to questions requiring only one choice as the answer, (as in the multiple choice questions in **Section 1**) if a candidate makes two choices (whether in pencil or in ink), the mark cannot be awarded.
- aim to write short, accurate answers. Full sentences are not required, and brief answers with sufficient content are frequently all that is needed.
- ensure that they indicate the final answer clearly. If it is necessary to make a correction, candidates should do so by clearly crossing out the incorrect answer.
- remember that they must not use pinyin or English in their answers, as this will not be credited.

General comments

Candidates generally appeared well prepared for the examination and there were some excellent responses to this paper. Most candidates were familiar with the syllabus and aware of the requirements of the examination.

The majority of candidates were able to deliver excellent responses in **Section 1**. A small number of candidates chose not to attempt **Question 12** and **Question 23**. Candidates should be encouraged to try and answer the Writing tasks, even if they are less confident in writing Chinese, otherwise they are missing the opportunity to access 20 available marks. It is necessary for responses to be relevant to the writing task - simply copying the content of the question cannot be credited.

Improvements could be made in time management, as not all candidates managed to complete the questions in the final exercise.

There were some common grammatical errors appearing in responses and candidates could improve their performance by focussing on the following areas:

- Correct use of phrases and characters. There were often inversions of words and characters: '为因' instead of '因为'; '好友' instead of '友好'; '口禾' instead of '和'.
- Care should be taken to avoid anglicising sentence structures, such as '我坐公车跟我的好朋友们'; '我学习在学校'.
- Care needs to be taken when writing characters with similar sounds but different meanings. Some candidates were confused with the following words, e.g. '可学'(科学); '两千' (两千); '生体'(身体); '中要' (重要); '老是'(老师).

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, Questions 1–5

Most candidates tackled the questions in this exercise very well, especially **Question 4**, which was answered correctly by most. Both **Question 1** and **Question 2** were also very well handled.

Question 5 proved to be difficult for some candidates. This required candidates to recognise the means of transport mentioned in the sentence and match it to the given pictures. Many candidates went for **B** ‘坐飞机’ instead of the correct answer **C** ‘开车’.

Exercise 2, Question 6–8

In general, candidates delivered a strong performance in this exercise this year, with the majority of candidates excelling in these questions. **Question 6** was answered by most with ease. A small number of candidates had a problem with **Question 8**, as it required candidates to understand ‘每天’ and refer it to the content in the whole table.

For these true / false questions, candidates must provide a clear answer, by placing a tick or a cross in the relevant box. Candidates should be reminded that if they provide more than one answer, marks will not be awarded.

Exercise 3, Question 9–11

In general, candidates across the ability range answered these multiple choice questions well. **Question 10** proved to be more challenging, as some candidates did not understand the meaning of ‘机场’ and selected answer **C** ‘邮局’.

Exercise 4, Question 12

For this piece of writing, there were 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were required to write a short note to a member of their family before they went out. They needed to mention:

- (a) Where they were going
- (b) Who they were going with
- (c) What they were going to do

Candidates needed to include each of these 3 elements in their answer in order to gain the full 3 marks available for communication.

A minority of candidates chose not to attempt this question at all. The most successful answers were those which managed to communicate the required information briefly, yet accurately. Pinyin should be avoided in this exercise.

For point **(a)**, a place was required and the majority of candidates answered very well. Candidates need to be careful not to miss out key words from their answers as, by missing a word, sometimes the whole sentence can take on a completely different meaning, such as ‘我要去中国’ vs. ‘我要中国’. Careful reading through of answers could help to avoid this. Additionally, a number of candidates added the preposition word ‘在’ unnecessarily, e.g. ‘我去在法国’. For point **(b)**, a person was required, such as a friend or a family member. Candidates generally wrote well on this point. For point **(c)**, an activity was needed. Most candidates managed to provide a large variety of activities; others could make improvements with the usage of ‘做’, as seen in ‘去做很多地方’; ‘去做图书馆’.

The most common incorrect characters were ‘东四’ for ‘东西’ and ‘上每’ for ‘上海’. It is important to make sure that handwriting is clear and legible, as some Chinese characters are quite similar; careless writing can cause confusion in comprehension, such as ‘看’ and ‘青’.

Section 2

Exercise 1, Questions 13–22

In this exercise, candidates were asked to read a piece of text and to answer questions on it, in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage. The passage took the form of a letter from Xiao Wang to his friend Xiao Zhang about his work experience in a zoo. Often, only a very brief answer was required, but provided that the correct answer was present, additional material copied from the text was tolerated, unless contradictory. The quality of written Chinese is considered only for the purposes of communication.

The responses were of a satisfactory standard. Not all candidates attempted all the questions, and **Question 15** and **Question 22** were the most common omissions. On the whole, candidates handled **Question 13** and **Question 16** well. **Questions 15, 21** and **22** proved to be the most challenging. For **Question 15**, a number of candidates were confused by the different time phrases that appeared in the text and were unable to identify the correct answer. For **Question 22**, some candidates seemed not to understand the meaning of ‘好像’ in the passage and so provided the wrong answer ‘和我说再见’.

Exercise 2, Question 23

In this writing task candidates were asked to write a letter to a Chinese pen friend talking about their School. As in previous years, the mark scheme was divided into marks for communication (10 marks) and accuracy of language (5 marks). Within the 10 communication marks, 1 mark was awarded for each item of relevant information conveyed.

This question produced a mixed response. Candidates did not always answer all of the required bullet points, or provide sufficient detail to obtain all available marks for communication. Many candidates only provided a very short composition, or one with little relevant content. Candidates should remember that they need to address each bullet point given in the question, and that they should expand their answer to each point beyond one short response. In order to gain the maximum 10 marks for communication, each of the bullet points must be covered, and further marks are awarded for additional details written on each question. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written (after they have achieved the minimum required characters), it should be remembered that a composition requires a certain amount of words to address all the bullet points in the question, and variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. The points frequently missed were point **(b)** ‘你是几年级的学生’ and point **(c)** ‘你怎么去学校’. Candidates should remember to study the questions carefully before they start writing and to try not to skip questions.

The lower scoring responses were usually characterised by significant amounts of irrelevant content, or over-usage of pinyin. When constructing their responses, candidates should try and choose vocabulary for which they know the Chinese character, even if this means using a simpler word; this is preferable to (and will gain more credit) than using complex vocabulary, but writing in pinyin.

In terms of accuracy of language, there was an improvement in the use of efficient simple structures. In order to produce more accurate responses in answer to point **(c)**, candidates needed to avoid missing out the verb before a transportation method e.g. ‘我自行车上学’, or adding an extra unnecessary verb, such as ‘我坐开车上学’. Further improvement could also have been made when composing certain sentence structures; in particular, it was not uncommon to see the English sentence order being applied, such as ‘我爱你很多’; ‘我坐公车跟我的好朋友们’; ‘我学习在学校’.

Candidates should be reminded to take care when writing Chinese characters, as inversions of words and characters was quite common: ‘为因’ for ‘因为’; ‘好友’ for ‘友好’; ‘口禾’ for ‘和’. Characters with the same sound but different meanings also remain a challenge for many candidates, e.g. ‘可学’(科学); ‘两千’(两千); ‘生体’(身体); ‘中要’(重要); ‘老是’(老师).

Neat and clear handwriting should also be encouraged, as several candidates mixed ‘八’ with ‘儿’.

Section 3

Exercise 1, Question 24–28

In this exercise, candidates were set the task of reading an extended passage in Chinese and then answering the multiple choice questions that followed. A small number of candidates omitted **Question 24**, but otherwise all questions were answered fully.

Performance in the questions was variable. **Question 26** was answered well by most, whilst both **Question 24** and **Question 28** generated a higher number of incorrect answers. Many candidates chose the incorrect answer **C** for **Question 24** as they did not understand that ‘温度很高’ means ‘天气很热’. **Question 28** posed a problem for some candidates as they did not know ‘不太健康’.

Exercise 2, Question 29–35

In this final exercise in the paper, candidates were asked to read an extended passage in Chinese, and to demonstrate their understanding by answering questions in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage.

Regrettably, several candidates decided not to attempt these questions, in particular **Question 29**, **Question 33** and **Question 35**. As this was the last exercise in the paper, it is possible that candidates ran out of time, and so candidates could improve performance through more emphasis on time management in the future. For instance in **Question 35**, those who attempted it generally answered correctly.

The majority of candidates demonstrated good reading comprehension skills in these questions. Most candidates found **Question 30** and **Question 34** to be accessible and consequently responses were of a high standard.

A significant number of candidates encountered difficulty with **Question 29** and **Question 33**. **Question 29** asked ‘when did Wang Long start to learn martial arts?’, which required candidates to identify the correct time phrase given in the passage. Some candidates incorrectly chose when Wang Long was born, not when he started to learn martial arts.

Question 33 also proved to be challenging in this exercise. This question required candidates to provide an answer identifying what kind of person Wang Long thought could be successful. Many candidates offered ‘让人们身体健康, 认识更多的朋友’, which is why it is useful to learn martial arts. It is clear that in order to attain higher marks in this exercise, candidates will need to ensure they gain an accurate understanding of the question itself, before producing an answer.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/03

Speaking

Key messages

- To score high marks, candidates need to show their ability to use a variety of structures and precise vocabulary both in the Topic Presentation and in the Conversation sections.
- The teacher/Examiner needs to ask questions which allow the candidate to show that s/he can describe events or express ideas about both the past and the future.
- Discussion in the General Conversation should be appropriate to the individual candidate's ability; the same questions should not be asked of all the candidates.
- At least two topics need to be covered in the General Conversation and should not overlap with the content of the Topic Presentation.
- The Speaking test should be conducted and assessed in Mandarin Chinese. There should be no use of English in the test. Only Chinese should be used in the transitions between sections of the test.
- Centres wishing to use more than one teacher/Examiner must seek permission from Cambridge before the Speaking Test period starts. Permission must be sought for each examination session.

General comments

Most Centres administered and carried out the tests very well. In order to give candidates the best possible chance, teacher/Examiners should ensure that they have read the Teachers' Notes booklet carefully so that both the tests and the relevant administration are carried out correctly.

Centres wishing to use more than one teacher/Examiner need to read the relevant guidelines and follow the procedure carefully.

In order to allow the moderation process to operate effectively, it is important that CDs arrive undamaged. Tapes or CDs must therefore be well packaged. CDs are particularly vulnerable to damage in transit, and need to be carefully packed in strong containers, ideally in a plastic case inside a padded envelope.

• **Clerical checks**

In most Centres, the addition and transfer of marks was accurate. In some Centres a number of errors were found, sometimes with large discrepancies between the recorded totals and the actual totals. It is essential that the addition of marks on the Working Mark Sheet as well as the transcription of the total mark onto the MS1 mark sheet is checked to ensure that candidates receive the correct mark. It may be advisable for more than one person in the Centre to check these numbers.

• **Cover sheet for moderation sample**

Most Centres remembered to submit the Cover Sheet for Moderation Sample, duly completed, along with the other materials for external Moderation. Completion of this form allows Centres to check that their moderation sample is correct.

- **Sample size and recording quality**

Many Centres managed to select a good recorded sample which covered the full spread of performance in the Centre. Centres need to ensure that the marks are spread evenly from the Centre's range, not grouped as "good", "middling" and "poor": for example, they might be 99, 87, 76, 67, 53 but not 99, 98, 76, 75, 53, 51.

Centres using more than one teacher/Examiner should include samples from each teacher/Examiner in an appropriate proportion.

In a small number of cases, candidates and/or the teacher/Examiner were not always clearly heard. If an external microphone is used for recording, it should be placed nearer to the candidate. The recording should be checked at intervals by the teacher/Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. In some instances this year, the tape/CD received by the moderator was almost inaudible, making moderation difficult. The tape/CD should not be stopped during the recording. Centres are also reminded that the tracks on CDs must be named using the convention specified in the Teachers' Notes, and not merely "Track 1", "Track 2" etc. The candidates should be introduced by name and candidate number by the teacher/Examiner, not by the candidates themselves.

- **Internal moderation in Centres**

In most cases, Centres which had been given permission to use more than one Examiner had adopted a thoroughly professional approach to internal moderation and had carefully documented their procedures for achieving consistency. It was clear that in many Centres great efforts had been made to cross-check the standard applied by different Examiners and to ensure that marks awarded followed a single rank order before these were submitted to Cambridge.

In a small number of cases, Centres had provided insufficient evidence of the internal moderation procedures that had been carried out, merely writing different marks next to the original marks on the Working Mark Sheet. Some justification of why the adjustment was made must be included in the documentation.

The coordinating Examiner at the Centre is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the teacher/Examiners in the Centre. Where this checking reveals a particular teacher/Examiner's marking to be harsh or lenient, the marks for all candidates examined by that teacher/Examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge.

Centres with large numbers of candidates who wish to use more than one teacher/Examiner for the tests are reminded that they must apply to Cambridge for permission **in advance** of the speaking test period. This will enable them to access detailed guidelines from Cambridge outlining the procedures to be followed. Centres are also reminded that permission must be sought for *each examination series* – it cannot be carried over from the previous examination series.

- **Transitions between sections of the test**

Please remember that there is no need for any use of English during the tests: each new section can be introduced in Chinese, for instance by using sentences such as 现在进行情景对话A / 现在进入第二部分。 / 现在进行自由对话 吧。

- **Working Mark Sheets**

This year there were several examples of incomplete Working Mark Sheets being submitted. These should be filled in with candidates' full names, the numbers of their Role Play cards, and signed and dated by the teacher/Examiner. It is also helpful to the moderator if asterisks (*) are put against the candidates' names who have been included in the sample, particularly in Centres with many candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Teachers/Examiners are reminded of the need for careful preparation. Centres are reminded that the teacher/Examiner must not create extra tasks, nor must s/he omit tasks. If the stipulated tasks are changed or omitted and/or extra tasks are added this will confuse candidates and it changes the nature of the examination. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role play cards. Candidates should be trained to include a greeting and thanks where appropriate. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be sufficient to attract a mark of three.

Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to be given the Role play cards in random order, not 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2... The number of the card given to each candidate should also be recorded in the space provided on the Working Mark Sheet.

It is good practice for the teacher/Examiner to read the Chinese introduction to the Role-play aloud, to set the scene, and to indicate the roles of the candidate and the teacher/Examiner. This is important for the candidate, and helps them to understand that they need to answer according to the role they are playing, rather than answering as themselves.

Candidates should avoid answers in the Role-play tasks which are formulaic or neutral, such as 对了 or 不知道, as they cannot be awarded any marks as such answers give no indication that the candidate has understood the question.

A Role Plays

In general, most Centres conducted this part of the exam successfully.

You are a foreign student on a bus in Shanghai, talking to another traveller.

Most candidates handled this very well.

You are at a high school in China, talking to a history teacher.

This was handled well by most candidates.

You are ill. You are now talking to a doctor.

This caused few problems for most candidates.

B Role Plays

Again, most Centres conducted this part of the exam well.

You are in Beijing travelling by taxi, and talking to the taxi driver.

Most candidates handled this well. Weaker candidates did not realise they had to give a specific type of Chinese food in answer to the third question. Some weaker candidates were not familiar with the question word 多久.

You are in Beijing. A passer-by asks you the way.

Most candidates handled this well. Weaker candidates did not recognize the word 教 *jīào* (teach).

You are discussing your plans after graduation with a friend.

Most candidates carried this out well. Some candidates were not familiar with the word 继续 *jìxù* (continue) and/or inverted the order of the two syllables in *jìxù*.

Topic Presentation and Conversation

Moderators were again impressed with the high standard of work heard in this section. Centres are reminded that the whole section, Topic Presentation and Topic Conversation, should last in total about five minutes. In some Centres much less time than this was allowed, which therefore did not allow candidates sufficient time to show their full ability. In a few cases the teacher/Examiner did not ask any questions after the candidate had finished the presentation. In such cases candidates were severely disadvantaged, as the mark scheme specifically rewards *responses* to questions.

It is helpful for the candidate to begin by stating clearly what his/her topic is: “我的题目是...”. as such a statement helps candidates focus on their topic.

The teacher/Examiner should include questions about the past (“When did you begin...?”) and about the future (“When do you intend to...?”).

Many candidates chose ‘My family’, ‘My hobby’, ‘Sport’, ‘School life’, ‘My future’, ‘My friend’ or a comparison between life in two different countries. More able candidates should be encouraged to tackle more challenging topics than these. A few candidates appeared not to have prepared a topic at all. Candidates should be discouraged from choosing ‘Myself’ or ‘My life’ as their topic, as this can seriously limit the possibilities for the General Conversation.

Interesting topics this year included: ‘Philosophy’, ‘My dream’, ‘My favourite author’ and ‘The violin and me’. It was evident that in some cases, the opening parts of the Topic Conversation seemed to have been memorised. It is the extent to which candidates can manipulate their prepared material according to the needs of the teacher/Examiner that determines their marks. Candidates should be encouraged to speak spontaneously, and not to memorise speeches.

In the best Centres, the teacher/Examiner listened carefully to the candidates’ presentations and then led them skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions, allowing them both to develop their topic and to demonstrate their language skills. In a few cases the teacher/Examiner did not pay close enough attention to what the candidate had said and asked a pre-prepared question to which the candidate had already given an answer.

Teachers/Examiners are reminded of the importance of indicating to candidates that the Topic Conversation has finished and the General Conversation is about to begin. This can be simply done by saying, for example, 现在进入第三部分。 or 现在进行自由对话吧。

Centres are reminded that no English should be used in the Speaking test, and that candidates should not be corrected during the tests.

General Conversation

Many teachers/Examiners were aware of the need to cover 2 or 3 different topics in this section of the test, though it is worth bearing in mind that it may be necessary to cover more topics with weaker candidates who will not be able to answer in as much depth. The topics discussed in this part of the test should not be the same as those discussed in the Topic Conversation and should be chosen by the teacher/Examiner, rather than by the candidate.

Please note that the General Conversation should last about five minutes: whilst most Centres adhered to the timings set out in the syllabus, in some cases much less time than this was allowed, which did not afford candidates the opportunity to work for marks.

In a few Centres identical questions were asked of all the candidates. This is not appropriate as using the same set of questions with each candidate can lead to conversations that are lacking in spontaneity. Each candidate should be asked different questions at an appropriately challenging level, according to their ability. The teacher/Examiner should judge the appropriate level of question for the individual candidate. A weaker candidate might be asked ‘What sports do you like?’, but a more able candidate might be asked ‘Why do you think that exercise is important?’ Once underway, the General Conversation should be based on the individual candidates’ responses and so should not be overly rehearsed beforehand. Questions should arise spontaneously as the conversation develops in a natural way.

The teacher/Examiner should include questions about the past (“When did you begin...?”) and about the future (“When do you intend to...?”).

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/41
Continuous Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this paper, candidates need to demonstrate that they can communicate in writing, showing knowledge of a range and variety of vocabulary and applying the grammar and structures of the target language accurately.

There is no need for candidates to be unduly concerned about forgetting how to write the occasional character. The questions are intended to enable candidates to show what they know and the guidelines are deliberately left as open as possible in order to allow candidates to choose the vocabulary that they wish to use. They should, therefore, avoid embarking on topics for which they know very few of the characters involved.

Candidates should write compositions which have some sort of short introduction and ending with proper paragraphing and punctuation. Letters should have an appropriate beginning and ending and should also be punctuated correctly. Punctuation and paragraphing add clarity to a piece of writing and ensure that the Examiner does not have to 'guess' the meaning that the author intended.

General comments

The general standard of candidates' work is high. Many of the letters and also the story about going out to buy bread in the snow and what happened used a wide range of vocabulary (including idioms and 成语) and sentence structure e.g. verb complements and comparisons. They were interesting and lively to read and showed that the candidates had been very well prepared for the examination and had revised very well, paying attention to the letter form and showing good understanding of the tasks.

As in previous years, for each essay, the Mark Scheme was divided into marks for Relevant Communication (5 marks), Accuracy of Characters (5 marks), Accuracy of Grammar and Structures (10 marks) and Impression (5 marks).

The examination rubric asks for 150 characters for each essay i.e. about 300 characters in total for the 2 essays. Candidates were not penalised for writing too much. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written, it should be remembered that variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. Therefore, a long, but less varied essay will not be awarded as many marks as a shorter one with greater variety and interest. However, candidates should be reminded that if they write significantly fewer than 150 characters they will not produce enough evidence of their ability to gain access to the highest marks.

If pinyin is used at all, it must have the correct tones in order for it to be given any credit. A small percentage of candidates wrote their whole essay in pinyin or used words in English interspersed throughout their essays; this should be avoided.

Overall, the effort made by the candidates and the effectiveness of their teaching showed through and was impressive. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions with success including the seemingly weaker candidates. Most candidates were mindful of the need to cover all the bullet points and used the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Conjunctions were used well; it is always useful for candidates to be taught to use 因为...所以, 先...然后..., 虽然...但是... etc

The compositions of many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters.

For both essay topics, characters with the same sound but different meanings (别字) were a problem for some candidates, along with characters being written incorrectly (错字).

The main common errors in character-writing are listed in bold as follows:

中头, 时后, 半, 球, 买 and 卖, 告诉, 天安门, 公园, 看, 黑, 晴天, 奶奶, 健康, 比赛, 运动, 上海, 每, 裤子, 冷, 觉得

Some candidates also used the wrong characters as they have same pronunciation or look similar to the correct ones. See the incorrect characters below in bold:

知**到** (知道), 生音, 地**房**, 应**刻** (应该)。

A number of candidates expressed the following words or phrases incorrectly

1. To do something: 做东西 should be 做事情
2. To take: 那 should be 拿
4. Every day: 海天 should be 每天
5. Shanghai: 上每 should be 上海
6. To return home: 去家 should be 回家。

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Chinese grammar. There was particular improvement in basic sentences like 我很忙, 我很好。 (when in previous years, some candidates have incorrectly inserted 是.)

There was good use of structure and idiom, although candidates need to make sure that they know how to use idioms correctly. The most frequent problems were:

1. Confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地 – although this had again improved over previous years
2. Some candidates did not use 的 when it was required e.g. 黑黑头发.
3. Some phrases or words of place and time were at the end of sentence but not before the verb, e.g.
打篮球在体育馆
4. Measure Words
5. The usage of 还是/或者; 也/和
6. The usage of 会/可以/能
7. Many candidates found it hard to use 了 correctly. Most candidates were able to use 了 correctly some of the time, but not all the time. Some candidates also found it difficult to use the aspect marker 过 correctly.
8. There was also occasionally an inversion of the time phrase e.g. 三点下午 instead of 下午三点
9. Many candidates did not know that 'time how long' comes after the verb.
10. Some candidates should try to reduce the use of □ when referring to a past timeframe i.e. 有做什么.
11. Timeframes remain a confusing area for quite a few candidates who wrote sentences like 'next week, 'I went' or 下星期我要去了北京。
12. some candidates misused 所以, thinking it is the equivalent of 'so that' in English
13. It is good to see many candidates using 成语 in their writing, though it has presented a bigger challenge to candidates in terms of how to get the word order correct when using 成语 in a sentence.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The majority of candidates chose the letter to their friend about the trip to a big city; they covered all the guidelines and wrote a suitable beginning and ending to their letters, thereby achieving the full 5 marks for Relevant Communication. Where they misunderstood or missed out one of the guidelines they only lost one mark for communication. This did not affect the other marks they attained. Some candidates could not access the highest marks because of a very limited variety of vocabulary and sentence structure. Using large chunks of pre-learnt material is to be discouraged, but if candidates have a few model sentences which they can merge seamlessly into the composition, then this is, of course, fine.

To gain higher marks, candidates could be encouraged to use other adjectives rather than repeating '很好'. They should try their best to attempt to write some more advanced adjectives/characters, whilst making sure that they are able still to write the simple ones correctly.

- (a) Candidates wrote some good letters, covering all the bullet points in excellent detail. A few candidates talked about a restaurant to answer the first bullet point, when they should have been talking about the hotel. Where talking about, for instance, items bought, it is better to have examples, rather than just saying 我买了很多东西。

A few candidates used complex vocabulary and sentence structures well, but made mistakes in basic characters like 电视.

- (b) A much smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)**, but did so well.

Question 2

Question 2 provided a platform for the candidates to demonstrate good story telling, developing interesting storylines from the original scenario. There were some excellent descriptions of the trip to the breadshop in the snow and what happened next. Some candidates got so caught up in what happened next that they forgot to go back to take the bread to granny until much later in the day, if at all. It was not compulsory to talk about the snow, but those candidates who read and absorbed the whole scenario often wrote a better story.

All candidates should remember that writing in Chinese still requires a story structure with a proper concluding paragraph rounding off events. The ability to use 了 and the ability to use time phrases with correct word order sequence would have improved the quality of many essays. It is not intended that this essay should be written as a dialogue.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/42
Continuous Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this paper, candidates need to demonstrate that they can communicate in writing, showing knowledge of a range and variety of vocabulary and applying the grammar and structures of the target language accurately.

There is no need for candidates to be unduly concerned about forgetting how to write the occasional character. The questions are intended to enable candidates to show what they know and the guidelines are deliberately left as open as possible in order to allow candidates to choose the vocabulary that they wish to use. They should, therefore, avoid embarking on topics for which they know very few of the characters involved.

Candidates should write compositions which have some sort of short introduction and ending with proper paragraphing and punctuation. Letters should have an appropriate beginning and ending and should also be punctuated correctly. Punctuation and paragraphing add clarity to a piece of writing and ensure that the Examiner does not have to 'guess' the meaning that the author intended.

General comments

The general standard of candidates' work is high. Many of the letters and also the story about the phone call at the Chinese speaking competition and what happened used a wide range of vocabulary (including idioms and 成语) and sentence structure e.g. verb complements and comparisons. They were interesting and lively to read and showed that the candidates had been very well prepared for the examination and had revised very well, paying attention to the letter form and showing good understanding of the tasks.

As in previous years, for each essay, the Mark Scheme was divided into marks for Relevant Communication (5 marks), Accuracy of Characters (5 marks), Accuracy of Grammar and Structures (10 marks) and Impression (5 marks).

The examination rubric asks for 150 characters for each essay i.e. about 300 characters in total for the 2 essays. Candidates were not penalised for writing too much. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written, it should be remembered that variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. Therefore, a long, but less varied essay will not be awarded as many marks as a shorter one with greater variety and interest. However, candidates should be reminded that if they write significantly fewer than 150 characters they will not produce enough evidence of their ability to gain access to the highest marks.

If pinyin is used at all, it must have the correct tones in order for it to be given any credit. A small percentage of candidates wrote their whole essay in pinyin or used words in English interspersed throughout their essays; this should be avoided.

Overall, the effort made by the candidates and the effectiveness of their teaching showed through and was impressive. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions with success including the seemingly weaker candidates. Most candidates were mindful of the need to cover all the bullet points and used the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Conjunctions were used well; it is always useful for candidates to be taught to use 因为...所以, 先...然后..., 虽然...但是... etc.

The compositions of many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters.

For both essay topics, characters with the same sound but different meanings (别字) were a problem for some candidates, along with characters being written incorrectly (错字).

The main common errors in character-writing are listed in bold as follows:

中头, 时后, 半, 球, 买 and 卖, 告诉, 天安门, 公园, 看, 黑, 晴天, 奶奶, 健康, 比赛, 运动, 上海, 裤子, 冷, 觉得

Some candidates also used the wrong characters as they have same pronunciation or look similar to the correct ones. See the incorrect characters below in bold:

感快去街电话, 时后 (时候), 知到 (知道), 生音, 地房, 应x刻 (应该)。

A number of candidates expressed the following words or phrases incorrectly:

1. To do something: 做 ▪ 西 should be 做事情
2. To take : 那 should be 拿
3. Everybody is looking at me. 大家都看这我 should be 大家都看着我
4. Every day : 海天 should be 每天
5. Shanghai : 上每 should be 上海
6. To return home: 去家 should be 回家。

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Chinese grammar. There was particular improvement in basic sentences like 我很忙, 我很好. (when in previous years, some candidates have incorrectly inserted 是.)

There was good use of structure and idiom, although candidates need to make sure that they know how to use idioms correctly. The most frequent problems were:

1. Confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地 – although this had again improved over previous years
2. Some candidates did not use 的 when it was required e.g. 黑黑头发.
3. Some phrases or words of place and time were at the end of sentence but not before the verb, e.g. 打篮球在体育馆
4. Measure Words
5. The usage of 还是/或者; 也/和
6. The usage of 会/可以/能
7. Many candidates found it hard to use 了 correctly. Most candidates were able to use 了 correctly some of the time, but not all the time. Some candidates also found it difficult to use the aspect marker 过 correctly.
8. There was also occasionally an inversion of the time phrase e.g. 三点下午 instead of 下午三点
9. Many candidates did not know that 'time how long' comes after the verb.
10. Some candidates should try to reduce the use of 有 when referring to a past timeframe i.e. 有做什么.
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13. It is good to see many candidates using 成语 in their writing, though it has presented a bigger challenge to candidates in terms of how to get the word order correct when using 成语 in a sentence.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The majority of candidates chose the letter to their grandparents about the trip to China; they covered all the guidelines and wrote a suitable beginning and ending to their letters, thereby achieving the full 5 marks for Relevant Communication. Where they misunderstood or missed out one of the guidelines they only lost one mark for communication. This did not affect the other marks they attained. Some candidates could not access the highest marks because of a very limited variety of vocabulary and sentence structure. Using large chunks of pre-learnt material is to be discouraged, but if candidates have a few model sentences which they can merge seamlessly into the composition, then this is, of course, fine.

To gain higher marks, candidates could be encouraged to use other adjectives rather than repeating '很好'. They should try their best to attempt to write some more advanced adjectives/characters, whilst making sure that they are able still to write the simple ones correctly.

- (a) Candidates wrote some good letters, covering all the bullet points in excellent detail. Quite a number of candidates wrote 日 to express 'hot' instead of 热. Where talking about places visited, food eaten, it is better to have examples, e.g. 我吃了很好吃的东西, 比如北京烤鸭和青菜。

A few candidates did not read the question carefully enough and wrote to their friend instead of their grandparents. A few candidates used complex vocabulary and sentence structures well, but made mistakes in basic characters like 电视.

- (b) A smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)**. A number of those candidates did not refer to the famous sports person but rather to his/her friend. Some candidates did not address the magazine at the beginning or include their names at the end.

Question 2

Question 2 provided a platform for the candidates to demonstrate good story telling, developing interesting storylines from the original scenario. There were some excellent descriptions of the phone call disturbing the Chinese speaking competition and what happened next, with a focus on the reaction of the audience and themselves when the phone rang or the dramatic messages they received from the incoming phone call.

It was clear that some candidates did not understand 响, and wrote an essay about losing (丢) their phones. However, if the candidate managed to talk about a story of trying to find the mobile phone, they were credited with some communication marks, as well as being marked for language in the normal fashion. 刚刚 also appeared to cause some problems. A few candidates just talked about learning Chinese in school, and other stories were written as though the competition was due to start next week or tomorrow, thereby setting the story in the incorrect timeframe. Candidates should avoid writing too much with respect to setting the scenario; those who did this often ran out of time, and did not manage to cover the key points of the question, such as the phone ringing or what happened after the phone rang. It was evident that not all candidates understood the phrase, 'talk about what happened next', which was a key part of the question. Instead, they went on to discuss their lessons and hobbies. Familiarisation with past papers would help here, as the phrase for 'what happened next' is used quite frequently, year on year.

It is not intended that a misunderstanding of one character in the essay question should unduly affect a candidate's score, so candidates were marked positively and awarded communication marks for anything of relevance and their language marks were awarded as normal. It is also not intended that candidates should be able to pre-learn a story and reproduce it in the examination room; this should be avoided.

All candidates should remember that writing in Chinese still requires a story structure with a proper concluding paragraph rounding off events. The ability to use 了 and the ability to use time phrases with correct word order sequence would have improved the quality of many essays. It is not intended that this essay should be written as a dialogue.

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