

MANDARIN CHINESE SHORT COURSE

Paper 1341/01

Speaking

Comments

There are two parts to this examination – **Section 1** is a Prepared Topic and Topic Conversation and **Section 2** is a General Conversation. The Prepared Topic is marked out of 15 with 10 marks for Content/Presentation and 5 marks for Language. The Topic Discussion and the General Conversation are each marked out of 15 with 5 marks for Comprehension and Responsiveness and 10 marks for Accuracy and Range of Language. In addition, 15 marks are awarded globally for Pronunciation/Intonation (5 marks) and Feel for Language (10 marks). This gives a total of 60 marks.

The Oral examination is scheduled to last between 12-15 minutes. The prepared topic and conversation should last 5-7 minutes and the general conversation should last 6-8 minutes. Examiners should keep to this time schedule.

At the beginning of each recording, Examiners should announce the Syllabus code, level and language and session (1341 Pre-U Mandarin Chinese Short Course May 2015), CD number (if relevant), Centre number and name, Date and Examiner Name. At the beginning of each test, a candidate's number and name should be recorded. All tracks of the recording/CD should be named with candidate number and name. As the recordings will be listened to by a Moderator, the recording volume at a Centre needs to be checked in advance and the microphone should be nearer the candidate than the Examiner; however, the Examiner must be clearly audible too. There should be no other significant background noise on the recording, e.g. banging doors, playground noise or the noise of the Examiner writing on the table, which can transmit loudly on to the recording. CDs should be packed carefully to send to Cambridge Assessment and must be looked after carefully prior to despatch; slight damage can impair the quality of the test listened to by the Moderator. There is no need for any 'warm up' with candidates to be recorded; the first thing the Moderator should hear is the Prepared Topic Presentation.

The Oral Examination is the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate what he/she can do; the practice and preparation before the examination should focus on this. Topics should be carefully chosen; a topic should interest the candidate, but also be well within their reach to talk about with the language the candidate has at his/her disposal, as otherwise a carefully prepared presentation can sound somewhat stilted and a candidate can be left rather exposed, if he/she is then unable to engage in the Topic Conversation. The candidate should not necessarily cover all aspects of the topic, but might choose to leave one or two obvious things out which can be picked up by the Examiner in the Topic Conversation.

It is helpful for the candidate and for the Moderator if the Examiner makes it clear when they are moving from the Topic Conversation to the General Conversation and also sometimes when they are moving between Topic Areas within the General Conversation. Clear indication of movement between topics will help to avoid any comprehension confusion in the conversation for the candidate too. Teachers should practise this with candidates before the examination. The sentences suggested to be used by the Examiner are 你今天讲什么题目?and 现在我们讲一讲其他的题目,好不好?This movement between topics must be conducted in Chinese; once the test starts, the Examiner should not speak any English.

Candidates have time during the year to work on their Prepared Topic and should be able with practice to present fairly fluently. This initial presentation should only last a maximum of two minutes, but thereafter must be interrupted by the Examiner if necessary so that the conversation can take place. **NB Candidates whose Prepared Topic does not relate to the Chinese world (it can be in a comparative way e.g. a comparison of UK/China education systems, if desired) will have their mark for Content/Presentation halved.**

Whilst tones and pronunciation are not expected to be perfect, the presentation should be easily understood by a sympathetic native speaker; candidates should have a good feel for the rhythms and cadences of the language within the sentences. If, for any reason – e.g. a major bout of nerves/hesitancy - the Presentation

lasts longer than two minutes, Examiners should not then shorten the Topic Conversation to compensate, as this may impact on the candidate's performance in the Topic Conversation, by not giving them enough time to demonstrate what they know.

Short Course Examiners get used to understanding their own candidates and making allowances for their errors, but the Short course candidate needs to be able to be understood by the Moderator listening to them as well. It is very natural for the Examiner to want to correct or help the candidate, but this must be avoided. It is also tempting for an Examiner who knows the candidate well to say too much themselves during the examination, by way of response; again this should be avoided. All candidates should have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to answer more stretching questions; even though he/she knows the candidates well and may feel that certain candidates may struggle with stretching questions, nonetheless, the Examiner should make sure to extend this opportunity to all.

Candidates will score highly on the Prepared Topic when they also demonstrate they have prepared well both in the content of what they say and the vocabulary and the structures used – e.g. good use of conjunctions, correct word order and timeframes etc.

In all cases, the best conversations ensue when the Examiner asks the candidates good, open-ended questions to which the candidate can respond on a variety of levels, depending on ability. Teachers can prepare candidates for this; the Examiner should play the part of the intelligent layperson in the Topic Conversation and should be genuinely interested to talk with the candidate about the Prepared Topic. Candidates, in turn, need to prepare for the Topic Conversation by anticipating and preparing for the general kinds of questions which could be asked by an interested layperson. Pre-learned Topic Conversations should be avoided; the Moderators will be listening for a real conversation. The General Conversation section will begin with straightforward questions about the candidate's background and interests and move quickly on to a more mature conversation covering 2/3 of the following Topic Areas: Family, Young People, Education. Questions in the General Conversation should not cover the same ground as has been dealt with in the Prepared Topic and Topic Conversation. For the General Conversation, although sample questions are suggested in the syllabus, it is expected that a majority of questions asked by the Examiner will not be taken directly from this list, but will be of a similar standard. Candidates should therefore have developed during the course the vocabulary and linguistic skills to answer a range of questions both on their Topic Presentation and during the General Conversation.

The Examiner should keep the flow of conversation going in as relaxed a manner as possible. Candidates need to be prepared for straightforward questions, but also ones which will stretch them and Examiners must ensure that they do provide stretching questions, even for weaker candidates, as otherwise they are not being given the opportunity to try to demonstrate the full extent of what they know in an examination at this level. As well as having a conversation, they need to regard the examination as an opportunity to show the Examiner what they can do, thus maximising their chances of good marks which are obtainable with a natural, responsive conversation showing good use of vocabulary, structures and idiom. At this level, candidates should be encouraged to develop their answers, even if they are asked a very straightforward question. Candidates should not worry if they do not understand a question; they should ask for it to be repeated or rephrased (this request should be made in Chinese); if they still do not understand it, the Examiner will move swiftly on to another question.

The oral is led by the Examiner, but the candidate should be doing most of the talking and the Examiner will need to be flexible enough to adapt questioning to a candidate's line of thought, so that a proper conversation ensues. If a candidate has areas of a topic where he/she feels particularly confident, it is up to the candidate to try to respond to questions in such a way as to be able to demonstrate this to the Examiner. Candidates should not worry that their answer to a question is factually untrue or does not really reflect what they think; the Examiner is only interested in the level of their Chinese and will not judge them on what they think. Examiners should not ask what might be construed as overly personal questions.

Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese is an examination for foreign language learners. Therefore, native speakers of Mandarin who have a well-prepared topic may, in all likelihood, score maximum marks. However, it is the standard required for the foreign language learner which will be borne in mind by the Examiner and Moderator as the testing and marking of candidates takes place. When marking, marks do not have to be in the same band for comprehension and responsiveness and accuracy and range of language e.g. the former could be 3 (Satisfactory) and the latter 8 (Good). It is sometimes easier to award Good/Very Good or Weak marks and the Satisfactory band gets overlooked; Examiners should be aware of this.

MANDARIN CHINESE SHORT COURSE

Paper 1341/02
Chinese Culture

General Comments

The overall standard was high this year.

Candidates are required to answer two questions for this paper, one from the *Topics in Chinese Culture* section or one from the *Chinese Literature and Film* section. Each answer is marked out of 30 with a mark out of 25 for content and a mark out of 5 for structure. In all cases, questions are open to interpretation; it is up to the candidates to develop an analytical response to the question with clear, specific examples/evidence (not generalized statements) to back up his/her argument. The mark scheme gives some indicative content for each question on the paper. However, there is often no right or wrong way to answer a question; it is up to the candidate to develop an argument and find evidence to support it. There were some very successful essays which demonstrated in depth analysis backed up by specific reference. In general, candidates seemed to find Section One – *Topics in Chinese Culture* – slightly more challenging.

Candidates should make sure they read the question very carefully before they start, making a careful assessment of what is asked for. They should also write a plan before beginning to write.

Each essay should start with an introduction which should outline how the question is going to be tackled; giving away all the concluding points in the introduction to the essay should be avoided. Subsequent paragraphs should develop a clear argument/line of thinking with specific, relevant examples/evidence to illustrate the argument, which should always link to the question, and essays should finish with a strong conclusion. The introduction and conclusion of the essay both need to be relevant and convincing.

Essays should not be a descriptive list of facts or the story of what happened in a period of history, a novel or a film. Candidates obviously need to have a lot of facts at their fingertips, but then need to be in a position to manipulate those facts to demonstrate their deeper understanding and analytical capability in response to the question. Evaluation is the key. Organisation of material is vital and an appropriate style should be used. In the case of both novels and the film, candidates needed to have a good grasp of the Chinese history of the period in which they are set.

In order to be able to respond to these essay questions appropriately, candidates need to be exposed during their studies to a range of commentaries/viewpoints about a particular topic and to have had the opportunity to discuss ideas with their teachers and other students to inform their interpretation of events or their interpretation of a book or film. It is only this exposure to a variety of views that will give candidates the ability to handle these essay questions with sufficient analysis.

Comments on Specific Questions:

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates did this very well, with a sound analysis and discussion of the Second United Front and the extent to which the GMD and CCP achieved their aims. A clear sense of chronology is helpful to all candidates, and accurate dates make the discussion more credible. Weaker candidates were not able to go further than giving a narrative account of the events rather than an assessment of their relative successes. The term 'United Front' led some to assume that this was a type of coalition government. Weaker candidates often did not say enough about the Second United Front itself, focusing on the roles of the CCP and GMD in fighting the Japanese

- (b) This question elicited some excellent, detailed answers. Weaker candidates seemed unsure of the precise meaning of 'capitalism' in this context, and this affected their ability to answer the question in sufficient depth. Terms such as 'bourgeoisie' and 'proletariat' need to be used with care in the Chinese context.

Question 2

- (a) This question was also tackled well by many candidates, who sometimes had an impressive grasp of the detailed statistics relating to the policy. The question proved to be well placed in examining candidates' knowledge of Deng's policies and their effects, also revealing that some candidates had not studied or revised the topics in sufficient depth.
- (b) This was not a popular choice, but those choosing it had the detail necessary to frame good answers.

Question 3

- (a) This question was answered very well by some candidates, who had clearly studied the issues relating to water in China in considerable detail and depth. The range of knowledge shown was truly impressive.
- (b) Candidates who attempted this question sometimes were somewhat uncritical of the relationship between modernisation and urbanisation. The most able candidates were able to marshal facts to support their arguments and to provide detailed data in their defence.

Question 4

- (a) There were several sensitive and thoughtful responses to this question, with evidence of careful reading of the author's complex and ambiguous stories. There was excellent and convincing use of quotations by the best candidates. The term 'transition' in the question was not addressed by some candidates.
- (b) This question too elicited a number of thoughtful responses, often relating to how women could escape from convention whilst still having ties to their families. There were arguments made from a variety of standpoints, which is absolutely fine as long as an evidence-based coherent line of thought is put together. It was important to choose stories that would serve the demands of this question adequately, and candidates were judicious in their choices.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates sometimes struggled to make sense of *The Boat to Redemption* as a parable, although there were some very insightful answers from the best. Candidates, in general, demonstrated a good knowledge of the text but tended to stray slightly from the terms of the question. Candidates need to take care to keep their arguments relevant throughout their work.
- (b) This question elicited more successful responses than 5(a), perhaps because candidates could relate to the father-son relationship. There were some thoughtful and detailed answers.

Question 6

- (a) There were some good answers but some suffered from a lack of knowledge about the Cultural Revolution period. Some candidates took a rather simplistic view of the Cultural Revolution and were not aware of how different life at that time could be in remote parts of China such as Sichuan from the urban centres such as Beijing.
- (b) This was one of the most popular questions. Candidates often responded well to the enigmatic character of the *Little Chinese Seamstress* and her changing role from a naïve and uneducated country girl to a confident young woman about to enter a new phase of her life in a big city. Good use was made of quotations. Candidates need to be able to use technical terms such as 'protagonist' correctly. For weaker candidates the essay was largely narrative, with little analysis.