

FOREIGN LANGUAGE MANDARIN CHINESE

Paper 0547/12
Listening 12

Key messages

This paper was found to be accessible to candidates, and the exercises discriminated across the full range of ability. Except for the last exercise, questions were objective, requiring non-verbal responses. The spoken Chinese in the exam gradually increased in terms of difficulty and length, and questions moved from testing candidates' ability to understand short factual information to, in the later exercises, testing their ability to understand and identify opinions, explanations in narrated accounts, and interviews. To do well in this examination, it is essential that candidates learn and be very familiar with the Defined Content for the syllabus. It is also essential that candidates do plenty of listening comprehension practice. To perform well in the last exercise that requires verbal responses, candidates also need to be able to write down their answers in characters or pinyin. These answers can be very short but straight to the point.

General comments

The number of excellent performances this year shows that centres recognise the importance of listening and responding skills, and that these skills are being well taught in many centres. In general, the topics and themes of the exercises were well within the knowledge and life experience of candidates from around the world.

The examination was a test of listening comprehension and visuals were used wherever possible. Candidates from most centres were well prepared for the examination and were usually well aware of the assessment requirements. It is helpful if candidates get into the habit of reading rubrics carefully and following the instructions. The format of the paper and the question rubrics remain fairly constant from year to year. When preparing their candidates, centres should ensure that candidates clearly understand the rubrics, as such familiarity can only aid and reassure them in the examination.

It's worth noting that when responding to questions requiring only one choice as the answer, if a candidate makes two choices whether in pencil or ink, the mark cannot be awarded. Answers which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out.

Candidates should also be advised that they must tick the number of boxes stated in the rubric, such as in **Question 16**. For **Question 16**, it is also advisable that when ticking their choices, candidates put their ticks in the little boxes next to the letters rather than the pictures themselves. Ticks put in the pictures themselves are not obvious to see.

For **Questions 11 – 15** and **Questions 17 – 21**, candidates were required to write the correct letter in the appropriate box. Candidates are advised to write their chosen letters in the boxes in clear handwriting.

For **Exercise 2** in **Section 3**, Examiners do not expect complete sentences in response to these questions. Candidates can write their answers in either Chinese characters or pinyin, whichever enables them to express what they want to say more clearly and correctly. A response written in Chinese characters or pinyin that have minor inaccuracies can be accepted, provided that the response's meaning remains clearly correct according to the recording. It would also be beneficial to the candidates if they can keep their answers clear and straight to the point. This can reduce the risk of adding extra material, which can invalidate an otherwise correct response.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1 – 5

Candidates generally did well on this exercise, which tested the comprehension of very short recordings of one or two sentences. Most candidates scored 5 or 4 marks and performed excellently on **Question 1** and **Question 3**.

In this exercise, most of the mistakes made were with **Question 4**. Other mistakes include selecting **B** for **Question 2**, and **B** for **Question 5**.

Exercise 2 Questions 6 – 10

This exercise featured a short conversation about what Wang Shan did yesterday. Generally speaking candidates performed very well on **Question 6**, **Question 7**, **Question 9** and **Question 10**.

Among the mistakes made, a common one was with **Question 8** where the incorrect choice **A** was usually selected instead of the correct choice **B**.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 11 – 15

This exercise tested the candidates' comprehension of a short description of a department store explaining what is available on each floor.

Candidates performed very well in this exercise. Some candidates incorrectly chose **C**, **E** or **F** for **Question 11** and **C** or **E** for **Question 12**.

Amongst other mistakes in this exercise, a few candidates selected **A** as their answer to **Question 15**.

Exercise 2 Questions 16

Candidates heard a conversation between Li Ming and his mother. Li Ming was due to return to school in a few days. He was talking with his mother about the things he would like to do before returning to school.

Candidates generally performed very well on this exercise and many achieved 4 or 5 marks.

Most candidates correctly chose **A** and **H**. Among the mistakes made, **C** and **I** were often missed and **G** was the incorrect choice that was often selected.

With this exercise, candidates are advised to make all 5 choices to their best understanding and not to tick more than 5 boxes. It was very pleasing to see that this year all candidates completed the exercise in accordance with this principle.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 17 – 21

This exercise featured five friends talking about what they would like to do once at university.

On the whole, candidates performed these questions very well.

Question 21 proved to be the most challenging in this exercise with many candidates choosing **B** or **F** instead of the correct choice **E**.

Among mistakes made with the other questions in this exercise, either **B** or **F** was often incorrectly chosen as an answer.

Exercise 2 Questions 22 – 25

In this exercise, candidates heard an interview with Zhang Yue, the winner of this year's Beijing High school Mathematics Competition.

As intended, this final exercise, targeted to test the top-level IGCSE listening skills, elicited the widest range of performance. There were some very accessible questions, affording even the weakest candidates the opportunity to score one or two marks, but there were also questions to challenge the most able candidates.

Question 22 required candidates to explain how Zhang Yue became interested in mathematics.

Most candidates responded to this question well or gave answers that were acceptable. The most common mistake made here was by simply answering 数学很有意思.

Question 23 asked candidates to state Zhang Yue's mother's profession.

Again most candidates answered this question well or gave answers that were acceptable.

The most frequently seen incorrect answers included '做家', '座家'.

Question 24 asked candidates to list the two reasons why Zhang Yue liked going to the maths club.

This is a challenging question. Many candidates did really well producing excellent answers or responses that sometimes had some minor inaccuracies in character writing or pinyin spelling, but adequately demonstrated sufficient understanding of this part of the interview.

- (i) Mistakes that candidates made here include '跟大家一起玩', '跟大家一起卖书' and '跟大家一走'.
- (ii) Most candidates understood this point really well and expressed in their responses the idea of '有好老师' or '有老师帮助'. Occasional mistakes include '有好老师'.

Question 25 asked candidates to state who organised the mathematics club.

This was a straightforward question. The key word here was '北京大学'. Most candidates responded correctly.

Responses that could not be credited for this question include '北京高中', '北京中学', '兆京大学' and '北景大学'.

On the whole, candidates rose to the challenges in this last exercise with many candidates achieving 3 or more marks.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE MANDARIN CHINESE

Paper 0547/22
Reading 22

Key messages

In order to perform well for this paper, candidates should:

- study and consolidate the entire Defined Content list
- consolidate common key question words, time phrases, synonyms and antonyms
- have a plan on timing for each question, depending on the complexity of the questions
- read the questions carefully and provide answers based on the texts in the paper rather than using own experiences or assumptions
- attempt every question in the paper, even the questions they feel less confident about.

General comments

The majority of the candidates demonstrated a very good understanding of the texts in the paper and responded well to the questions asked. Some did an excellent job, responding to the questions fully, using clear expressions and giving focused answers. Only a few candidates left questions unattempted.

More attention should be paid in reading and understanding the texts fully rather than spotting familiar vocabulary and giving a partial answer. As expected, some candidates found **section 3 exercise 2** challenging, however, it is important that candidates attempt the answers in full detail to avoid losing marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1: Questions 1 – 5

All the questions in this section were very well answered. A small number of candidates found **Questions 1 and 2** more challenging than **Questions 3, 4 and 5**. For **Question 1**, candidates may feel less familiar with ‘办公室’, but recognised the character ‘室’ from ‘教室’, resulting in choosing the incorrect answer.

Similarly, 科学 and 数学 are quite close to each other, therefore, sometimes errors occurred.

Exercise 2: Questions 6 – 9

The performance is exceptionally good as all the questions were very well answered. Most candidates showed an excellent understanding of the vocabulary in the questions and were able to match the pictures to the key words correctly. However, a small number of candidates filled in with the wrong answers for **Question 8** as ‘筷子 chopsticks’ seemed to be challenging for them.

Exercise 3: Questions 10 – 12

All three questions were correctly answered by most of the candidates across the ability levels, **Question 10 and 12** in particular. **Question 11** was proven to be more challenging, as more candidates did not understand the vocabulary ‘银行 bank’. Consequently, some guess work played a part in answers to this question and resulted in the wrong answer being given.

Section 2

Exercise 1: Questions 13 – 16

This exercise required candidates to show comprehension of a short passage and choose the correct words from a given table to complete given sentences. Most candidates were able to locate some correct answers in the passage even when they did not fully understand the content. **Questions 13 and 16** were better answered. This was probably because the text where the answers are located for **Questions 14 and 15** was longer and the distractors were right in the middle of the text. More preparation of grammar and structures would help in tackling these types of questions better.

Exercise 2: Questions 17 – 23

In this part, candidates are asked to read a passage of Chinese and answer a series of questions. The passage was a letter from Wang Zhen about his experience of a party and how he ended up in hospital. There was no requirement for the candidates to answer in full sentences, brief answers were sufficient, providing the answers were clear. For those answers where candidates copied sentences from the text directly, providing the correct answer was present, reasonable additional materials copied was allowed, unless it was contradictory or made the lifted answers incomprehensible.

Most candidates performed strongly on this set of questions, accurately locating and extracting information from the text, carefully avoiding conflicting information. The vast majority of candidates were also aware and made sure they used the correct pronouns in their response, replacing first person ‘我 I’ with third person ‘王真 Wang Zhen or 他 he’, which was pleasing to see.

Questions 17, 20 and 23 were answered best. A very small number of candidates added the extra character ‘上 above/amongst’ before ‘认识的人不多 know few people’ when answering **Question 18**, which was a careless mistake, and resulted in losing a mark because this inclusion does not demonstrate genuine understanding. **Questions 19 and 21** showed a slight increase in excessive lifting. Quite a few candidates wrote ‘不怎么喜欢蛋糕 does not like the cake so much’ as the answer, however, this answer was too general. For **Question 21**, careless mistakes in character, writing ‘肚了’ instead of ‘肚子 tummy’, and this made the answer incomprehensible. Similarly, a handful of candidates wrote ‘体息’ instead of ‘休息 rest’.

Question 22 was the most challenging question in this part. This is partly because the candidates were less familiar with the question word ‘怎么 how’, and partly due to the fact that extra information was included in the answer, which impeded the meaning. For example, ‘在出租车、出租了车’.

In order to score higher in this section, candidates needed to be more familiar with all key question words. Accuracy of the characters needed to be strong to secure the marks.

Section 3

Exercise 1: Questions 24 – 27

In this exercise, candidates read an extended passage in Chinese and then answered multiple choice questions. Public square dancing featured in the texts. All candidates, regardless of their ability level, attempted all four questions. **Questions 24, 25 and 27** were the best performed questions on the paper, with the majority of candidates achieving full marks.

Some candidates found **Question 26** challenging. Both option **B** ‘是老人 are elderly’ and **C** ‘是年轻人 are young people’ were chosen by candidates as wording for both appears after ‘跳广场舞 do public square dance’ in the passage. This suggests that the candidates did not fully understand the passage as they did not manage to distinguish the distractor from the correct answer. Furthermore, ‘跳广场舞 do public square dance’ also appears in the question, and this indicated that the candidates might not have understood the question and therefore tried to guess the answer.

Exercise 2: Questions 28 – 34

In this final exercise, candidates read an extended passage in Chinese and demonstrated their understanding by answering a number of short-answer questions in Chinese. The content of the passage referred to people's views about learning to drive and having a car.

There were some good responses, but in general, candidates found this exercise more challenging than others in the paper. A small number of candidates left some questions blank.

Questions 31, 32 and 34 seemed to be more accessible, apart from for some less able candidates, who found it hard to pick the correct answer from the text. For example, they wrote '几个月前 a few months ago' instead of '上个月 last month' for **Question 31**. Excessive lifting was sometimes seen in **Question 34**. Similarly, the reason the majority of candidates lost marks in **Question 28** was due to lifting too much extra information, the incorrect answer '学开车 to learn driving' invalidates the correct answer '旅游 to travel'.

For **Question 29**, some less able candidates copied '她马上要去美国西部读大学 she is going to a university in the West to study very soon', simply because similar wording appeared in the question, however, not knowing '为 for' in this context, would result in an incorrect answer. '开车 to drive' was a typical incorrect answer as the key concept '学 to learn' was missing.

For **Question 30**, adding or missing characters caused ambiguity in the answers. Examples like, 部公共交通不方便, which did not make sense; or '交通不方便 transport is not convenient' which did not fully cover what the text entails. **Question 33 (i)** was proven to be the most challenging question in the whole paper. The question itself was straightforward, asking 'why did Wang Qiu decide to buy a car?' However, many candidates only gave partial answers. Such as, '不会像以前那么累 will not be as tiring as before' without mentioning '上 下班 go to work and return from work'; some candidates lost marks as they either answered '上班不会像以前 那么累 will not be as tiring when going to work' or '下班不会像以前那么累 will not be as tiring when finishing work'. This also occurred in **Question 33 (ii)** as some candidates omitted '周末 weekend' in their answer.

Candidates needed to have a genuine and thorough understanding of the passage questions and consider all aspects of the questions in order to maximise their potential.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE MANDARIN CHINESE

Paper 0547/03
Speaking

Key messages

- Please refer to the Paper 3 (Speaking) *Teachers' Notes* that accompany the *Role Play Cards* each year to be fully aware of the requirements of this test on <https://schoolsupporthub.cambridgeinternational.org/>
- The duration of the Topic Presentation/Conversation and the General Conversation sections should take 5 minutes each. Please refer to pages 8 – 9 of the *Teachers' Notes* for guidance on this.
- To score high marks, learners need to show consistent ability to use a variety of structures, opinions and precise vocabulary **both** in the Presentation **and** in the Conversation sections. The teacher/Examiner needs to ask questions that give learners the opportunity to show this.
- In the Topic Conversation, the teacher/Examiner should not ask questions which require candidates to merely repeat information from the Topic Presentation. Learners must be given the opportunity to answer unexpected questions to score high marks.
- In both the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation sections, the teacher/Examiner **must** ask questions which allow the learner to show that s/he can describe events or express ideas using **both past and future time-frames**. (See *Teachers' Notes* pages 9, 10 and 15).
- In the General Conversation the same questions should **not** be asked of all the learners.
- 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 entirely in Mandarin Chinese. There should be no use of English in the test. Only Mandarin Chinese should be used in the transitions between sections of the test.

General comments

Most centres administered and carried out the tests very well. In order to give learners the best possible chance, teacher/Examiners should ensure they have read the *Teachers' Notes* booklet carefully so that both the tests and the relevant administration are carried out correctly. Please carefully read the Mark Schemes on page 14 –15 of the *Teachers' Notes* so that candidates are accurately marked.

Centres are also strongly advised to read through a past paper well in advance of the test, so they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties.

The Moderator's Report for the individual centre should also be consulted (assuming there were examination entries for a previous session).

Clerical checks

In most centres, the addition and transfer of marks was accurate. In some centres, however, a number of errors were found. It is essential that the addition of marks on the Working Mark Sheet as well as the transcription of the total marks onto the MS1 mark sheet/computer are checked to ensure learners receive the correct marks. It is advisable for more than one person in the centre to check these numbers.

- **Sample size**

Many centres managed to select a good recorded sample which covered **evenly the full spread of performance** in the centre.

It is helpful to the Moderator if **asterisks (*)** are put on the Working Mark Sheet to indicate the learners who have been included in the recorded sample, particularly in centres with many learners.

Centres using more than one teacher/Examiner should include samples from each teacher/Examiner in an appropriate proportion. Each teacher/Examiner should complete and sign his/her own Working Mark Sheet.

- **Recording quality and presentation of the sample**

They should always be saved onto a CD or USB as an .mp3 file. Please do not put sticky labels on the CD as these can easily become detached and make the CD unplayable.

Speaking tests should be conducted in a quiet place, away from any noise causing disruption. In a small number of cases, learners and/or the teacher/Examiner were not always clearly heard. If an external microphone has been used for recording, please make sure that it is nearer to the learner than to the teacher/Examiner. The recording should be checked at intervals by the teacher/Examiner to ensure that it is clear and there are no extraneous noises. Please ensure you have checked that all the recordings are present and can be played before you send the recording to Cambridge International.

The recording should not be stopped during the three parts of each candidate's speaking exam. The learners should be introduced by name and learner number by the **teacher/Examiner**, not by the learners themselves.

The tracks on CDs should be labelled using the convention specified in the *Teachers' Notes*: centre number_learner number_examination number_component number, e.g. **PQ123_0001_0547_03**. Labelling them as 'Track 1', 'Track 2' etc. is not helpful when finding individual learners. A card stating which learners appear on each CD must be enclosed, *not glued or stapled*, with each CD.

- **Internal Moderation in centres**

In most cases, centres 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 teacher/Examiner and to ensure that marks awarded followed a single rank order before they were submitted to Cambridge.

In a small number of cases centres provided insufficient evidence of the Internal Moderation procedures followed, 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.

Details of the centre's Internal Moderation procedures must also be sent to CIE, as specified on the 'Cover sheet for moderation sample'.

The coordinating teacher/Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the teacher/Examiners in the centre. If a particular teacher/Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the centre, all the marks for learners examined by that teacher/Examiner must be checked and adjusted accordingly before paperwork is submitted to CIE.

- **Transitions between sections of the test**

It is very important to indicate the transition between the 3 parts of the test. In some cases there was no transition indicated between the Topic Conversation and the General Conversation. At times it was difficult to ascertain whether the teacher/Examiner had simply forgotten to conduct the General Conversation, thus affecting the learner's overall mark. 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。 and so on.

- **Working Mark Sheets**

This year some incomplete Working Mark Sheets were submitted. These should be filled in with learners' full names, correct candidate numbers, the numbers of their Role Play cards, and signed and dated by the teacher/Examiner.

It is helpful to the Moderator if asterisks (*) are put against the names of the learners who are included in the recorded sample, particularly in centres with many learners.

- **Dispatch of the sample**

Please ensure that the CDs are 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. A few centres sent their CDs in flimsy plastic or paper pockets. **Avoid using staples** to attach the centre label to the soft plastic cover of the CD, as it can damage the surface of the CD and hence the recording.

Comments on specific sections

1. Role Plays

Overall, the Role Plays were conducted very well. Teacher/Examiners are reminded of the need for careful preparation before the test. If the stipulated tasks are changed or omitted and/or extra tasks are added this will confuse learners and it changes the nature of the examination. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role Play cards. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be sufficient to attract a mark of three.

Each learner should be handed a single Role Play card and should complete both the Role Plays on that card. Learners should be given the Role-play cards in **random order**, not 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2... Please **record the number of the card given** to each learner in the space provided on the Working Mark Sheet.

The situations at the start of each role-play should be read aloud in Chinese by the teacher/Examiner before commencing the test. This is reassuring for the learner, and establishes that he/she is playing a role, not merely answering for him- or herself. **The introduction should NOT be read in English.**

Learners should avoid answers in the Role Plays which are formulaic or neutral, such as 对了 'yes' or 不知道 'I do not know', as they give no indication that the learner has understood the question.

The question words which caused difficulty in the Role Plays in the November 2020 session were 几次? *how many times?*, and 多长时间? *how long?*

Specific feedback on each question:

A Role Plays

- **You are in a classroom talking to a sports teacher.**
Less able learners found it difficult to answer the following: 你一个星期(play sport)几次? *How many times a week do you (play sport)?*
- **You are in a Chinese restaurant talking to a waiter/waitress.**
Most learners handled this well.
- **You are on holiday. You are talking to a traveller on the train.**
Less able learners found it difficult to answer the following: 在(place)你住哪里? *Where did you stay in (place)?* and 坐火车去(place)要多长时间? *How long did it take to get to (place) by train?*

B Role plays

- **The summer holidays are about to start. You are looking for work. You are talking to a teacher.**
Less able learners found it difficult to answer the following: 你想找什么样的工作? *What sort of work are you looking for?* and 你想在哪儿工作多长时间? *How long do you want to work there?*
- **You just came back from travelling in Beijing. You are talking to a friend.**
Less able learners were unable to answer the following question with a past time frame: 你是什么时候去的北京? *When did you go to Beijing?*
- **Your friend telephones you to talk about the plan for this evening.**

Less able learners struggled to answer the following: 你明天有什么计划? *What plans have you got tomorrow?*

2. Topic Presentation and Topic Conversation

The standard of work in this section covered the full range of performance.

Introduction to the Topic Presentation This must be introduced by the teacher/Examiner **in Chinese, not English**, for example by saying 现在进入第二部分。The learner should begin by stating clearly what his/her topic is, for example ‘我的题目是...’ as sometimes it is not obvious what topic is being presented. This statement will also help learners focus on their topic.

Topics chosen

Many learners chose *My Family, My Hobby, Sport, school Life, My Future, My Holiday*.

More unusual topics included: *My Favourite Malaysian Food, Mongolian Musical Instruments, My Hero, Pandas, A True Friend, My Favourite Book*.

Please do not allow learners to choose *Myself* or *My Life* for their Topic Presentation as this restricts the possibilities in the General Conversation.

Timing Please note that the **Topic Presentation and Topic Conversation should last a total of about five minutes**. In some centres much less time than this was allowed, and their learners were thereby disadvantaged. In a very few cases the teacher/Examiner did not ask any questions after the learner had finished the presentation. In such cases **no** marks can be awarded, as the mark scheme specifically rewards **responses** to questions.

Topic Conversation

The teacher/Examiner should introduce this section **in Chinese**, for example by saying ‘现在我会问你几个问题。’

In some centres it was evident that the opening sections of the Topic Presentation had been memorised: this type of rote learning misses the point of the Speaking Test, and will not allow learners to show the full range of their ability in Chinese. Learners should be encouraged to speak spontaneously, and not to memorise speeches.

The teacher/Examiner should listen carefully to the learners' presentations, and then lead them skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions, allowing them both to develop their topic, offer opinions and to demonstrate their language skills. In the Topic Conversation, the teacher/Examiner should not ask questions, which require candidates to merely repeat information from the Topic Presentation. Learners must be given the opportunity to answer unexpected questions to score high marks.

Most centres handled the transition from the Topic Conversation to the General Conversation well, but some centres are still not making clear the ending of the Topic Conversation and the start of the General Conversation. This can be done by saying ‘现在进入第三部分。’

Time-frames: The teacher/Examiner **MUST** include questions **BOTH** about the **past** (e.g. ‘When did you begin to...?’) **AND** about the **future** (e.g. ‘When do you plan to...?’).

Learners who do not produce BOTH past AND future time-frames cannot be awarded more than 6 marks out of 15 for Language Scale(b). See pages 9, 10 and 15 of the *Teachers' Notes*.

In answer to a question such as ‘How long (a time) did you do (an action)?’ saying a length of time such as ‘三年。’ is not by itself sufficient to show that a learner can convey a past time-frame meaning. In such a case, **a verb is also required**, for example ‘我学了三年。’

Teacher/Examiners should ask more questions, until learners have showed they can convey meaning using **both** past and future time frames successfully.

3. General Conversation

Timing: Please note that **the General Conversation should last about five minutes**: in some centres much less time than this was allowed, and their learners were disadvantaged. In most cases, however, it was carried out well.

Questions asked: In a few centres identical questions were asked of all the learners. This is not in the spirit of the examination and makes the whole exercise artificial and lacking in spontaneity. **Each learner 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 learner. A weak learner might be asked *What sports do you like?* but a more able learner might be asked *Why do you think exercise is important?*

The General Conversation should be based on the individual learners' responses and so should not be over-rehearsed or prepared beforehand. Please note that **two or three** of the Defined Content topics should be covered during the General Conversation.

It is better to ask questions in depth on a few topics rather than a large number of unrelated questions.

There is no 'Presentation' in the General Conversation. **The General Conversation involves the teacher/Examiner asking the learners a series of questions on two or three topics.**

Time-frames The teacher/Examiner **MUST** include questions **BOTH** about the **past** ('When did you begin...?') **AND** about the **future** ('When do you plan to....?'). **If this is not done the learners will be seriously disadvantaged. Learners who do not produce BOTH past AND future time-frames cannot be awarded more than 6 marks out of 15 for Language Scale(b).** See pages 9, 10 and 15 of the *Teachers' Notes*.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE MANDARIN CHINESE

Paper 0547/42
Writing 42

Key messages

- Avoid using pinyin for **Question 1** and throughout the paper. Since this is a writing examination, Chinese characters should be used as a default and both English and pinyin should be avoided
- Elaborate with simple sentence structures to achieve the maximum 10 marks for communication for **Question 2**.
- Avoid usage of pinyin for **Question 2**; this will lead to losing communication marks. Use synonym or alternative words to replace the characters candidates do not know.
- Read the scenario carefully for **Question 3** and answer all the questions and pay attention to different time frames.
- For **Question 3**, candidates need to indicate their chosen question of a, b, or c clearly on their answer sheet.

General comments

The overall standard of responses seemed to be very high. It was pleasing to see that the messages in last year's Principal Examiner report were very well received and the centres followed the suggestions, which led to a good and consistent performance across all questions. Most of the candidates tackled the tasks well and not only answered the questions, but also produced detail and additional information for **Question 2** and **Question 3**. Some candidates showed higher proficiency in the language and used more complex structures and more difficult characters, which reflected their linguistic ability. Centres are reminded that Cambridge also offers qualifications in First and Second Language Chinese should this be suitable for particular learners.

Candidates are reminded that responses must be relevant to the questions, and that all the bullet points need to be addressed with as much relevant information as possible. Memorising a big chunk of a general passage e.g. about oneself or family, trips, daily routine etc. is not a good practice, and no marks can be awarded. Candidates should read the scenario and questions carefully, especially the timeframes and key words which are included in the defined content booklet. Since this is a writing examination, Chinese characters should be used as often as possible and both English and pinyin should be avoided.

Candidates were not penalised for writing too much. Whilst there was 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 number of words to address all the bullet points in the question, and variety in vocabulary and sentence structures 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. Candidates are, however, reminded that if they write significantly fewer than 150 characters for **Question 3**, they will not produce enough evidence of their ability to gain access to the highest marks. However, in **Question 2**, candidates should understand the importance of elaboration with simple sentence structures to achieve the maximum 10 marks for communication. Condensed long sentences with many syntaxes will not necessarily score high marks.

Some candidates crossed out correct sentences and forgot to write them again when they produced the final draft, therefore, some marks were lost. Candidates should check their work again after crossing out sentences and make sure that all the bullet points have been attempted and not be afraid to exceed the word limit.

Candidates should circle or write clearly which option they attempted to write in **section 2 Question 3** since there were 3 choices. They should write the story according to the scenario but there was no need to copy out the scenario lines. For the letter writing option (**a**), candidates needed to pay attention to whom they were supposed to write.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates were asked to list five places they enjoy going to at the weekend. There were many excellent answers and most candidates were able to list 游泳池、电影院、公园、图书馆、画画班、网球场、饭馆、购物中心、商店、爷爷奶奶的家 etc. This showed that candidates have been taught well on topics and exam techniques. Some regional variation of words e.g. 草场、读书馆 were accepted.

On the other end of the spectrum, a few wrote in pinyin or English entirely, thus no mark was rewarded. Verbs were not accepted e.g. 看电、学、去北 jing、打篮球、看电脑、和家人吃早餐、打水球. Candidates are advised not to list more than two words with the same suffix in one category, e.g. 奶奶家、朋友家、爸爸妈妈家 etc. which were only awarded maximum two marks.

Adding or missing strokes of the characters was tolerated but if there were missing radicals or wrong radicals which created a new character with a different meaning, the mark could not be awarded. The common mistakes when writing characters were: 菜巾汤 (市场)、学上/权 (校)、商勿 (场)、游动之 (泳池)、课学 (课堂)、篮球场 (场)、足起 (球) 场、球场 (场)、餐斤 (斤)、美 (花) 园、公圆/国 (园)、每 (海) 边

Some candidates wrote characters with the same pronunciation instead of correct ones, e.g. 山点/上店/商点 (商店)、书点 (店)、工 (公) 园、参听 (餐厅)、餐庭 (厅)、饭管/官/馆 (馆)、饭点 (店)、海便 (边)、花元 (园)、活动是 (室)、网巴 (吧)、

Some candidates misunderstood the location words and wrote 右面、书包里、家的奶奶、上白 (面)、水人 (上)、中面

Some of answers were not places: 网, 地铁, 电影、图书、电脑游

A few candidates used pinyin rather than characters and even some English words e.g. dongwu 园、play 场

Candidates must read the instructions both in Chinese and English carefully. If there is any doubt in the Chinese instructions, read both the English ones and the example to help avoid confusion. There were a handful of candidates who did not read the questions carefully and wrote 体育馆 which was in the example and 喜欢的地方 which appeared in the rubric. Copying the example or characters from the rubric and answering the questions in pinyin or English was not awarded marks.

Question 2

The question required the candidates to write about a typical day during their holiday. The overall performance for this question was very good. Most of the candidates understood what was required, produced lots of detailed and interesting information for each task. Apart from addressing the bullet points, many candidates also provided extra information which could be awarded extra marks. However, candidates need to be aware that extended sentences should be related to the tasks, not a free, unrelated elaboration. With guided questions, candidates who were less able could produce some simple answers except for the second task 'where do you go in the morning' which proved trickier.

Some able candidates, despite scoring a full mark for the Language, did not manage to score full marks for the Communication as their sentences were very condensed and they did not give enough extra information to be awarded. Therefore, it was a pity that potential marks were lost.

A few candidates were worried about the suggested word count and deleted parts of what they had written, in order to come under the limit. They counted precisely and wrote down the exact number of characters they used. However, this had the danger of not providing enough pieces of information in **Question 2** and losing

communication marks. Candidates should not worry about the word count if the minimum word limit has been reached. It is shame to see some candidates crossed out correct sentences which contained more information due to the worry of exceeding the word limit.

For **task 1**, most of the candidates recognised the question word 几点 and were able to replace the question word with an exact time. However, some candidates wrote Arabic digits e.g. 7 点 instead of Chinese characters 七点 which should be avoided.

Task 2 was not so well attempted though 哪儿 (where) was not a difficult question word. Some candidates did not answer directly and clearly with a place word e.g. 我和我的姐姐们在打篮球; 吃过早饭后, 我去玩电脑游戏.

In **task 3**, some weaker candidates found the sentence structure more challenging with the word 给 and they simply copied down the question word in their answer e.g. 我的家谁给我和朋友做餐饮 or they just recognised 午饭 so they wrote 我和家人一起吃午饭 or 我们在家吃午饭 instead of answering 'who cooks lunch for you'. However, 我们去了中国餐厅吃我们的午饭 was tolerated since it implied that chefs in the restaurant cook for us. Apart from difficulties in understanding the task, many candidates were able to extend their answers with extra information e.g. 我喜欢吃羊肉, 很好吃; 妈妈做的午饭很好吃, 有鸡蛋炒饭、牛肉、春卷, 我都爱吃 etc. which scored additional marks for communication.

Task 4 and **5** were well answered. For **task 4**, a majority of candidates were very familiar with different activities they like - 运动、画画、看书、玩电脑游戏 etc. were popular answers.

For **task 5**, similar to **task 4**, the majority of the candidates wrote 去旅行 or 做运动 with a future tense particle 想、要、打算 etc., however, a handful of candidates were more careless writing '下个星期' instead of '下个假期'. Some candidates mixed up the characters '上' and '下', using past/present tense instead of future tense, or '我上个假期' instead of '我下个假期'. Some candidates did not omit '做' when talking about specific activities e.g. 我下个假期打算做去英国看我的姐姐; 打算做打篮球 which affected their language marks.

Candidates are advised to answer the questions first then elaborate with the relevant questions. Copying out rubrics without extra information will not be awarded extra marks, e.g. 这是我假期里的一天, however, 我假期里的一天非常好玩, 我早上九点起床 allowed 2 marks for **task 1**.

Some good examples with good idioms and structures were:

- 妈妈为我做了很多我爱吃的菜肴, 我很久没吃她的拿手菜了。那天我吃多了。
- 我和朋友骑自行车出去, 享受大自然, 吸一吸新鲜空气。这也是我最喜欢的活动之一。就这样, 我度过了漫长的一天。
- 下午我平时都会在家打打游戏, 偶尔会约朋友们出去打网球。因为平时周末和假期我都会陪朋友出去玩, 所以这次我决定在家陪爸爸。
- 我跟三位朋友约好一起去公园散步, 这是因为我有一段时间没有运动了, 体重也增加了不少。
- Candidates are reminded that a list could not score more than three marks. If one of the tasks was missing, the maximum communication mark was 9, no matter how many extra marks were gained from other bullet points. If two of the tasks were missing, the maximum communication mark was 8 and so on. Candidates are reminded that this is a writing exam, and Chinese characters should be used as standard, and both English and pinyin should be avoided, especially for the key words, e.g. '我下午最喜欢的活动是 you yong'; '下个假期我打算和家人一起去 lǚ yóu'; '上午妈妈带我去 supermarket' which are sentences which cannot gain communication marks. These sentences could be replaced by 我下午最喜欢的活动是运动 if 游泳 is difficult to write or 上午妈妈带我去市场 instead of supermarket. Pinyin and English words do not count towards the communication mark.

A handful of candidates simply copied out the tasks and swapped 你 with 我 in the sentences, so no marks were awarded.

Candidates could improve on their accuracy of certain characters, some common mistakes were:

人点' for '八点', 哪里 for 那里, 打篮球 for 打篮球, 起庆 for 起床, 牛饭 for 午饭, 工课 for 功课.

Accuracy of language was generally good; simple and straight-to-the-point answers were largely seen. Candidates should, however, be reminded to use varied sentence structures and avoid anglicised structures. There were some common grammatical errors and candidates could improve their performance by placing emphasis on the following:

The most common mistakes were using ‘和’, ‘是’ incorrectly.

1. ‘和’ is wrongly used to link adjectives/verbs/sentences: e.g. 我九点起床和我吃早饭; 我下午去图书馆和打篮球。
2. Using ‘是’ with adjectives: e.g. 奶奶的午饭是很好; 羊肉是好吃。
3. Some candidates attempted using pinyin or English instead of characters: e.g. 我 yao 去中国为因我有家在中国; 他的家很 fujin; 奶奶十点半起床 which is 很不好; 这样可以帮他很 healthy; 我下午在家里看 drama and movie.
4. The same sentences repeated from questions or just changing the question word 你 to 我: e.g. 我几点起床; 谁给我做饭。
5. Carelessly missing characters or writing wrong characters, even some of the characters which were on the scenario or tasks: e.g. 我的两个弟弟做牛饭; 我下午最喜欢的活动是乒乓水; 下个假期你打算打网球; 我也会做假期工课。
6. Missing characters or words: e.g. 中国是好地方有多树; 我们喜买水果。

Section 2

Question 3

Candidates were asked to choose one out of three options to write about. The types of questions were similar to the previous ones in the past few years so the candidates were familiar with the format and were able to opt for the one they felt most confident about. **Question 3 (a)** ‘Write about a club you have joined’ and **Question 3 (c)** ‘You found you lost your school bag after getting off the tube’ seemed to be the most popular choices. Using a letter format was not required as it had been in previous years to score communication marks, therefore, extra and detailed information for the bullet points were required to score the full communication marks. The addressee and ending greeting are not included in the word count. Expanding on the bullet points was likely to score more marks for language than writing general opening and ending formalities e.g. ‘好久没有收到你的信了。你身体好吗? 最近忙吗?’; ‘快给我写信好吗? 祝你身体健康, 万事如意!’ which can be pre-learnt and would not attribute much to the final scores.

Many candidates demonstrated a high proficiency in Mandarin Chinese in terms of Communication, Accuracy of Characters and Grammar and Structures. Some candidates even used complex structures and difficult or unusual characters which reflected their linguistic ability as higher than the level that a foreign language paper in IGCSE requires.

While nearly 42 per cent of candidates chose **Question 3 (a)**, 35 per cent of candidates who opted for **Question 3 (c)** wrote very interesting and complicated stories. **3 (b)** was chosen by 23 per cent which were higher than that in last year, perhaps due to familiarisation with playing computer games. There were many excellent essays showing great language skill and great abilities of creative writing.

Many Chinese idioms were well used in essays: e.g. 各种各样、丰富多彩、人山人海, plus some advanced words: 增加兴趣, 身体强壮, 联络管理员, 安慰照顾我, 没有责怪, 非常担心, 眼睛近视, 善用电脑, 沟通能力, 乐于助人, 照顾老人必须耐心, 锻炼意志力和增强肺能力, 许多不同的体育项目供会员参与 etc.

Candidates who scored highest tended to have a range of sentence patterns, and examiners were pleased to see that 让, 使, 给, 被, 把 were used in some of the essays from **part 1** of the defined content booklet. Many candidates were able to use conjunction words and complex sentences, like 除了... 还; 如果...就; 不但...而且...; 虽然...但是...; 又...又...

- (a)** For **3(a)**, the task was to ‘Write about a club you have joined’. There were a number of excellently written works. Most candidates covered the bullet points very well and they were able to give justification for **task 3** and **4**. It was not seen as difficult for the majority to provide answers for ‘when, what and how’ in **task 1 +2 + 4**. For **task 3** ‘好处/坏处’, candidates needed only answer either advantages or disadvantages, but most of candidates managed very well with both aspects.

Simple answers from ‘很好玩、有意思、有趣、开心、认识新朋友’ to advanced answers e.g. ‘让我感到快乐、集中精力、保持身体健康’ were seen in the scripts. For disadvantages, 紧张、累、浪费时间、不便宜、让我考试成绩更差 were popular answers. There were some very impressive words to describe how the candidates were in the club for **task 4** e.g. 善良、友善、热心、用功、有爱心、对我很有帮助、给我很多帮助, 也带来很多快乐. Different extracurricular activities were mentioned in **task 5** e.g. 华文班、羽毛球/足球/篮球俱乐部、唱歌、画画 etc., a few candidates also wrote ‘继续参加、再参加这个俱乐部’ etc. which were all qualified to score communication marks.

Examiners were pleased to see that the majority of candidates paid attention to whom they should be writing and addressed it to 奶奶 correctly this year. A small number of candidates used the present tense for **task 1** and wrote ‘我八点开始参加俱乐部’ instead of answering it in the past.

The future tense was dealt with very well this year since there were two words 明年、打算 in **task 5** to remind candidates it should be answered using a future tense.

Characters and Grammar

Most candidates understood grammar very well and wrote sentences, even complex ones, correctly. Most essays showed that candidates have no problem using past, present and future timeframes e.g.

- 认识更多的人, 扩展交友圈子。然而, 坏处就是有些同学为了参加俱乐部, 牺牲了很多复习功课时间, 导致学业一落千丈。
- 我觉得参加俱乐部后让我整个人都开朗了起来。此外, 我的社交能力也进步了不少。
- 虽然有一些坏处, 但我觉得参加俱乐部有更多的好处。
- Pinyin was used significantly less this year, however, there were a number of homophone or near homophone errors and characters with similar shape, such as 作天(昨)、海天(每)、公(功)课、休自(息)、者(都)、最经/进(近)、田经(径)、排求(球)、提(踢)足球、为因(因为)、更宜(便宜)、建(健)康、身体(体)、锻炼(炼)、时后(候)、安净(静)、兴(新)朋友、玩友义(游戏)、需(许)多、年几(级)、机(今)年、乔半(举办)、自(目)的、个(各)种个(各)样 etc.

Although the majority of grammatical structures were used correctly and impressively, there were some common mistakes as below:

- Tenses: Similar to last year, misunderstanding the questions and using future tense instead of past happened in some centres: used future tense instead of past: talked about their plan to join a club e.g. 我从下个星期开始参加足球俱乐部。
- The use of present tense throughout.
- When talking about a time, mixing up ‘上’ and ‘下’: 我下个月参加了俱乐部。
- Misuse of ‘和’, ‘也’ and ‘是’ in adjective sentences: e.g. 同学们都是善良; 我参加了打网球和踢足球; 也我喜欢踢足球。
- When a place word was involved in a sentence: e.g. 我打篮球比赛在学校。
- Time word wrongly positioned: 我参加了俱乐部上个星期。

- (b) The task was to express views on playing computer games. 24 per cent of the candidates answered this task and generally performed very well in Communication, Accuracy of Characters and Grammar and Structures. However, a few candidates did not answer **task 3** ‘how long you played for’ and lost the communication mark.

Task 1 was tackled very well with the past tense timeframe. However, less able candidates wrote 从四年开始 rather than 从四岁开始. For **task 2** ‘Who you usually play computer games with’, the majority of candidates answered the question well and with friends or classmates or some family members were common answers. Similar to last year, ‘多长时间’ caused problems when some candidates were writing an answer for **task 3** ‘How long you spent to play for last time’ and simply answered with ‘三时间’ or ‘XX个时间/XX个时候’ instead of ‘三小时’. In addition, some candidates just talked about how they usually play for three hours a week rather than a specific

length of time on the last occasion. It is very pleasing to see the majority of the candidates understood ‘好处’ and ‘坏处’ and produced good reasons to back up their opinions. However, simply writing ‘有好处和坏处’ and not writing details cannot score marks. Candidates are encouraged to answer the questions with greater details and follow the patterns and tense frames which will achieve better results in both communication marks and language marks.

Characters and Grammar

The range of characters seemed very impressive. Candidates could expand the range of vocabulary and sentence patterns on different opinions. Some good examples were:

- 可以拉近朋友与朋友之间的关系，它也是减少压力的方法。
- 从游戏剧情中领悟人生和价值观。
- 在电脑游戏里体会到各国的文化，这可以帮助我了解更多关于各个国家的文化差异。
- 我觉得玩电脑游戏就像是看电影一样，只不过主角变成了我自己。
- 认识很多不一样地方的网友
- 坏处就是会一直想要打游戏，根本不要上课
- 伤害视力，对身体不好
- 我们成天到晚玩着电脑游戏

However, some common errors were:

- Wrong characters: 没友（有）、星期七
- Producing incorrect lengths of time: e.g. 三时间
- Wrong word order: 可以跟一起和朋友玩
- Wrong syntax: 玩游戏是不好我的眼睛，我上次玩了最多时间是五小时因为我们没有学校
- Misuse of 了: 你玩了电脑游戏时，可以找到好多朋友
- misuse of 得: 我们玩的很开心

- (c) This topic was the second most popular task that candidates attempted. About 35 per cent of the candidates opted for this task which was to write about a story of ‘What happened after you discovered you lost your school bag after getting off the tube’. The overall standard was high and very encouraging. There were some very creative, well-constructed and well-written interesting stories which successfully demonstrated an ability to communicate fluently, and with a high level of grammatical accuracy. A vast majority of the candidates observed the rubrics and responded to each question accordingly. The language proficiency of the candidates related to 3(c) was generally good. Some were extremely good in all three areas (Communication, Accuracy of Characters and Accuracy of Grammar and Structures). And on the other hand, some candidates needed to use pinyin to make the whole story complete and coherent.

Communication

Most candidates answered ‘What the school bag like and what is in the bag’ without difficulties. **Task 3** ‘Who you travelled with’ also answered well. However, some of the candidates did not respond to the fourth bullet point 你觉得应该怎么办 directly and wrote 我的朋友帮我去问工作人员 or 小明告诉我给警察打电话.

Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide variety of vocabulary and sentence structures. Candidates are advised not to copy out the scenario line before starting their story, nor write too much for the pre-setting of the story. Pre-learnt passages should not be applied in teaching practice and it is very pleased that those kinds of essays were not often seen this year.

For the last question ‘后来发生了什么事’， many responses ended well with ‘someone found my bag and handed it to the tube service desk’ or ‘my teacher kept it for me’ or ‘my classmates took it by mistake’ or ‘后来发生了爸爸妈妈很生气’. But some answers wrote ‘后来发生我的书包不见了’ which demonstrated that candidate did not understand the task and could not write a complete story.

Some very good examples below:

- 我包里除了有我的手机、电脑、钱以外，还有我的护照。
- 不但可以问警察，还可以问保安。

- 他发现有一个书包在地铁上，但是他不知道是我的。
- 我和我的朋友去附近的地铁站去问问有没有人看见过我的书包。
- 我不知道为什么我的书包不见了。
- 我也详细地跟他们解释关于我书包的特征，比如：书包是浅蓝色的，书包上有小蜜蜂的图案和有黑白色的条纹。
- 不仅如此，我也告诉了他们我的书包里有重要的物品，如手机、钱包还有水瓶和书本，以便他们能更快地找到我的书包。
- 工作人员分工合作，很快就把我的书包给找着了。
- 我特别感恩那位诚实的乘客和高效的工作人员。
- 得到了这个教训后，我不再粗心大意，每次都会注意我身边的物品。

Characters and Grammar

Many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters and idioms, e.g. 红白相间、又大又漂亮、书包上还挂着小熊玩具 etc.

The common mistakes were : wrong characters e.g. 那（拿）了、一（以）后、是后（时候）、合（和）朋友、然候（后）、有入（人）、本（笨）、连（这） etc.

The most common grammar errors were:

- Used present tense throughout the writing, **Question 3** was recounting a past event so the whole story should be in past tense setting.
- Misuse of ‘和’ and ‘是’ : e.g. 我的书包是很大和很新；我是非常笨。
- Wrong sentence pattern used when describing the colour of the bag: e.g. 我的书包红色
- Mixed up 的/得/地
- Use of wrong characters and mixed with pinyin: e.g. 多（过了）一个小时；老师合（对）我说找到了；我们去tu书馆一（以）后。
- Wrong grammar: e.g. 我的书包有画画儿，大画画儿；为我朋友喜欢的看书；我有我的书包了。
- Word order: e.g. 我的书包不见了在地铁上
- Some essays used pinyin and English: e.g. 她hui bang 我find 我的书包。
- Wrong grammar with verbs or adjectives: e.g. 我有很朋友
- Include question word in the answer: e.g. 我跟谁一起妈妈，爸爸，奶奶，哥哥坐地铁。
- Wrong syntax: e.g. 妈妈说她不买我书包；我不见了我的电话；小明给回我的书包；一起用（坐）地铁；妈妈买了我的书包很多元；妈妈买了很多钱。

