

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/11
Reading

Key Messages

When answering this paper, candidates need to remember to read the passages carefully before starting to write their answers. In **Section 1**, it is important to address the specific questions asked, paying attention to detail and giving precise answers. In **Section 2**, it is important that candidates' answers reflect what is written in the given passages – candidates should not answer from their own experience or knowledge.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to show that they can:

- understand and collate explicit meanings
- understand, explain and collate implicit meanings and attitudes
- select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates need to show that they can understand how writers achieve effects.

In **Section 2**, they will need to show that they can:

- order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- understand and use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- use language and register that is appropriate to audience and context.

General Comments

Candidates performed extremely well on this paper again this year, with the majority of them demonstrating a sound grasp of the Chinese language.

The majority of candidates showed that they had a thorough understanding of the passages in **Section 1**. **Section 2** requires candidates to write a summary of the two reading passages, focusing their response on the two bullet points mentioned in the question. This remains the most challenging part of the exam.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (c) Candidates were required to explain a phrase given in the question. Most candidates understood the meaning of the phrase, but in order to be awarded 2 marks, some needed to mention the fact that the saying refers to two parties who will not accommodate the opposite point of view.
- (d) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question well.

- (f) There were three marks available for this question. Candidates should be reminded that there is usually a correlation between the number of marks allocated and the number of pieces of information required in the answer. For this question one mark was available for each of the following points:

就事论事 (1分)

讲出你们的期待 (1分)

并多问自己以后遇到同样的事情要怎么办 (1分)

A number of candidates did not manage to mention all of the points in their answer.

- (g) Most candidates answered this question well.

(h)(i) and (ii)

Weaker candidates found this question quite challenging. The keyword for (i) was 澄清, therefore answers which merely quoted the beginning of paragraph 5 and talked about the importance of listening could not be credited.

- (i) Most candidates did well in this question.

Section 2

Question 2

This section continues to be the most challenging to candidates. Many candidates produced essays of good quality, containing a reasonable level of sophistication.

The area where most improvement could be made was in the organisation of the summary. Candidates are reminded that whilst the question contained two bullet points which candidates should structure their summary around, the expectation was that a single piece of writing be produced, rather than an essay in two parts – (a) and (b). The completed essay should have well grouped ideas with good linkage between paragraphs. The essay should also be a piece of continuous writing and should not appear in list form. Candidates should be encouraged to be succinct and to avoid repetition in their answers. Each relevant content point can only be credited once.

Question 2 is designed to test candidates' skill in extracting relevant information from the texts, summarising the points in the two given passages. This is not a piece of creative writing and candidates need to understand that their answers must be drawn from the key points made in the passages, and not from general knowledge or personal experience. A considerable number of candidates this year wrote their own story, ignoring the given passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/12

Reading

Key Messages

When answering this paper, candidates need to remember to read the passages carefully before starting to write their answers. In **Section 1**, it is important to address the specific questions asked, paying attention to detail and giving precise answers. In **Section 2**, it is important that candidates' answers reflect what is written in the given passages – candidates should not answer from their own experience or knowledge.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to show that they can:

- understand and collate explicit meanings
- understand, explain and collate implicit meanings and attitudes
- select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates need to show that they can understand how writers achieve effects.

In **Section 2**, they will need to show that they can:

- order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- understand and use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- use language and register that is appropriate to audience and context.

General Comments

Candidates performed extremely well on this paper again this year, with the majority of them demonstrating a sound grasp of the Chinese language.

The majority of candidates showed that they had a thorough understanding of the passages in **Section 1**. **Section 2** requires candidates to write a summary of the two reading passages, focusing their response on the two bullet points mentioned in the question. This remains the most challenging part of the exam.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (c) Candidates were required to explain a phrase given in the question. Most candidates understood the meaning of the phrase, but in order to be awarded 2 marks, some needed to mention the fact that the saying refers to two parties who will not accommodate the opposite point of view.
- (d) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question well.

- (f) There were three marks available for this question. Candidates should be reminded that there is usually a correlation between the number of marks allocated and the number of pieces of information required in the answer. For this question one mark was available for each of the following points:

就事论事 (1分)

讲出你们的期待 (1分)

并多问自己以后遇到同样的事情要怎么办 (1分)

A number of candidates did not manage to mention all of the points in their answer.

- (g) Most candidates answered this question well.

(h)(i) and (ii)

Weaker candidates found this question quite challenging. The keyword for (i) was 澄清, therefore answers which merely quoted the beginning of paragraph 5 and talked about the importance of listening could not be credited.

- (i) Most candidates did well in this question.

Section 2

Question 2

This section continues to be the most challenging to candidates. Many candidates produced essays of good quality, containing a reasonable level of sophistication.

The area where most improvement could be made was in the organisation of the summary. Candidates are reminded that whilst the question contained two bullet points which candidates should structure their summary around, the expectation was that a single piece of writing be produced, rather than an essay in two parts – (a) and (b). The completed essay should have well grouped ideas with good linkage between paragraphs. The essay should also be a piece of continuous writing and should not appear in list form. Candidates should be encouraged to be succinct and to avoid repetition in their answers. Each relevant content point can only be credited once.

Question 2 is designed to test candidates' skill in extracting relevant information from the texts, summarising the points in the two given passages. This is not a piece of creative writing and candidates need to understand that their answers must be drawn from the key points made in the passages, and not from general knowledge or personal experience. A considerable number of candidates this year wrote their own story, ignoring the given passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/13

Reading

Key Messages

When answering this paper, candidates need to remember to read the passages carefully before starting to write their answers. In **Section 1**, it is important to address the specific questions asked, paying attention to detail and giving precise answers. In **Section 2**, it is important that candidates' answers reflect what is written in the given passages – candidates should not answer from their own experience or knowledge.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to show that they can:

- understand and collate explicit meanings
- understand, explain and collate implicit meanings and attitudes
- select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates need to show that they can understand how writers achieve effects.

In **Section 2**, they will need to show that they can:

- order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- understand and use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- use language and register that is appropriate to audience and context.

General Comments

Candidates performed extremely well on this paper again this year, with the majority of them demonstrating a sound grasp of the Chinese language.

The majority of candidates showed that they had a thorough understanding of the passages in **Section 1**. **Section 2** requires candidates to write a summary of the two reading passages, focusing their response on the two bullet points mentioned in the question. This remains the most challenging part of the exam.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section 1

Question 1

- (a) The correct answer for this question was “感冒，（1分）因为唠叨和感冒一样很常见。” A number of candidates wrote “因为唠叨和感冒一样污染了家里的气氛” which was not precise enough.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question well.
- (c) There were three marks available for this question. Candidates should be reminded that there is usually a correlation between the number of marks allocated and the number of pieces of information required in the answer. For this question one mark was available for each of the following points:

小孩尚未具有内在责任感（1分）

小孩对自己冲动的克制力还很弱 / 需要外在的控制 (1分)

小孩很容易移开注意力 / 注意力很短 (1分)

A number of candidates did not manage to mention all of the points in their answer.

- (d) To get the full 2 marks for this question, candidates needed to point out that 唠叨和提醒的态度不一样, (1分) 结果也不一样。(1分)
It was also possible to make a more detailed comparison, such as 提醒的态度友善, 可是唠叨能听出来不耐烦。(1分) 提醒可以让孩子成长, 可是唠叨只会让孩子反抗。(1分)
Candidates needed to ensure that both 唠叨 and 提醒 were discussed in order to be awarded both marks. Candidates are reminded to answer questions as precisely as possible.
- (e) Performance on this question was variable, with some candidates clearly not understanding the meaning of the phrase given in the question and giving answers such as “想做什么就做什么”. Some candidates needed to explain the literal meaning of the phrase rather than talking about the phrase in the context of the passage. Such answers could be credited if a correct interpretation of the phrase was given. Unfortunately most candidates answered with variations of 要分清提醒与唠叨的区别, which did not explain the meaning of 施之于行. In these cases, the mark could not be awarded.
- (f) Most candidates did very well in this question. Where candidates did not gain both marks, this seemed to be because they had not noticed that two marks were available and so two pieces of information were required, rather than any problem in understanding the question or being able to access the answer. Candidates are once again reminded to take note of the mark allocation for each question.
- (g) Most candidates answered this question well.

(h)(i) and (ii)

Weaker candidates found this question challenging and sometimes confused the answers for (i) and (ii).

Section 2

Question 2

This section continues to be the most challenging to candidates. Many candidates produced essays of good quality, containing a reasonable level of sophistication.

The area where most improvement could be made was in the organisation of the summary. Candidates are reminded that whilst the question contained two bullet points which candidates should structure their summary around, the expectation was that a single piece of writing be produced, rather than an essay in two parts – (a) and (b). The completed essay should have well grouped ideas with good linkage between paragraphs. The essay should also be a piece of continuous writing and should not appear in list form. Candidates should be encouraged to be succinct and to avoid repetition in their answers. Each relevant content point can only be credited once.

Question 2 is designed to test candidates' skill in extracting relevant information from the texts, summarising the points in the two given passages. This is not a piece of creative writing and candidates need to understand that their answers must be drawn from the key points made in the passages, and not from general knowledge or personal experience. A considerable number of candidates this year wrote their own story, ignoring the given passage.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/21

Writing

Key messages

When answering a question from **Section 1**, candidates need to remember to present an argumentative or discursive piece of writing. When answering a question from **Section 2**, candidates need to provide a description or narration, depending on the topic set.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- present facts, ideas and opinions in a clear logical manner
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- articulate genuine personal experience (where necessary)
- express what is thought, felt or imagined
- address the specific topic that they have chosen and ensure that their answer is relevant
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

General comments

Content & Structure

Content: The majority of candidates performed well on this paper. Most wrote good quality essays and adhered to the required number of characters. The best answers contained very vivid descriptions, touching narratives and effective and convincing arguments. Some very creative and interesting answers were produced, with some candidates managing to write from an unusual or interesting perspective. In particular, candidates who chose **Question 7** 透过窗户，我看到…… produced very vivid descriptions that were touching and effective, reflecting a firm grasp of the genre on the part of these candidates.

Candidates tended to produce very convincing arguments when they wrote on topics about which they felt very strongly, as in the cases of **Question 3** about the advantages and disadvantages of attending 'Olympic Maths' classes, and **Question 4** about parents' expectations of their children. They were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most of the essays contained a clear progression of ideas, argument or story line. Very occasionally, some essays were too short, containing less than 100 characters in total. When the answers are excessively short, there is not enough material to show any development of ideas or present a clear description of a person, an object or event.

Style & Accuracy

Style: A number of examples of sophisticated pieces of writing were seen, with an excellent range of vocabulary, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas.

The majority of candidates were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker candidates could improve their writing by avoiding repetition of content and ideas, and trying to introduce more variety in expressions used.

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated an excellent grasp of Chinese grammar and a wide range of vocabulary.

The strongest candidates were able to use sophisticated structures and expressions effectively. Others had difficulty in this area and used words that were either the wrong register, for example, 我致电给他妈妈 or inappropriate to the context, for examples, 我毫不犹豫地笑了。

It was evident this year that some candidates' use of Chinese structure contained interference from English grammar. For example, 2012年是我的第二年在中学, (meaning "my second year at middle school") is the wrong word order for Chinese.

Punctuation was usually used well. Improvements could be made with the use of commas and full stops; these cannot be used at the beginning of a line.

The incorrect use of characters could be reduced in some cases with more careful checking of work. Some errors included either the wrong radical, e.g. 渡过 (should be 度过) 一个难忘的假期; 多财多艺 (should be 多才多艺) or confused homonyms, e.g. 下苦工 (should be 苦功); 修理热水气 (should be 热水器). As in previous years, misusing characters that have the same pronunciation but a different meaning is the biggest area of inaccuracy in this paper.

Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are perfectly acceptable, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing.

Candidates should also be reminded to read the rubric carefully: this year once again, some candidates answered two questions rather than one.

All candidates seemed to manage time well and completed the answers in the given time.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates were expected to discuss their views on the merits of diligence. This was a popular choice. Stronger essays managed to illustrate how hard work and commitment lead to success, giving examples of their own experience or using historical figures. Weaker answers were characterised by under-developed and repetitive arguments.

Question 2

Candidates were expected to discuss their view on the popularity of the Chinese language. Relatively few candidates chose this question, but those who did produced competent answers with convincing arguments. Stronger answers included discussion of the richness of the language, the rising Chinese economy and how mastering Chinese can offer access to the vast Chinese culture and business opportunity.

Question 3

This question required candidates to discuss their view about the advantages and disadvantages of attending 'Olympic Maths' classes. This is a topic that some candidates clearly felt very strongly about and they were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts.

Weaker answers were characterised by one-sided arguments, limiting the discussion to the disadvantages of attending such classes, without mentioning whether such classes have any value at all.

Question 4

Candidates were expected to discuss their view on the statement that Chinese parents' expect their children to be obedient. This was also a popular choice. Some candidates clearly felt very strongly about this topic and they were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts. Overall, the quality of answers to this question was very high.

Section 2

Question 5

This was a popular choice. Candidates were expected to write about their aspirations, and some extremely interesting compositions were seen. Many candidates wrote about how an event, e.g. a childhood illness or the death of a loved one had inspired them to want to become a doctor. Some wrote about how their sense of social responsibility had inspired them to study to become a lawyer to help disadvantaged people. One candidate wrote that his concern for the environment had put him on the career path of a car designer to change the Asian car market. Overall the standard for this question was very high.

Question 6

This was the most popular choice of question, and produced a wide range of performance. Candidates were expected to write about an unforgettable holiday. Many answers were very interesting and touching with vivid details leading to a climax. The holiday could be a re-union with grandparents at their birthplace, or a short working holiday as a volunteer at an old people's home. The details made it possible to feel how the holiday had enriched or changed the author.

Weaker answers were characterised by list-like responses, detailing what happened each day, from the arrival time to the food and the games. Such answers used very simple language and limited ideas, and lacked the required build-up of characters or setting.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to write about what they saw outside of the window. Not many candidates chose this question but those who did produced very good compositions. The best candidates produced detailed images and created an atmosphere that was heart-warming.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to write about recycling in their community. This was not a very popular choice, but most of the answers were clear, usually about the recycling efforts at their own school. Candidates needed to mention not only how recycling helps the environment but also some detail pertaining to action / schemes within their own community.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/22

Writing

Key messages

When answering a question from **Section 1**, candidates need to remember to present an argumentative or discursive piece of writing. When answering a question from **Section 2**, candidates need to provide a description or narration, depending on the topic set.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- present facts, ideas and opinions in a clear logical manner
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- articulate genuine personal experience (where necessary)
- express what is thought, felt or imagined
- address the specific topic that they have chosen and ensure that their answer is relevant
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

General comments

Material: The majority of candidates performed well on this paper. Most wrote good quality essays and adhered to the required number of characters. The best answers contained very vivid descriptions, touching narratives and effective and convincing arguments. Some very creative and interesting answers were produced, with some candidates managing to write from an unusual or interesting perspective. In particular, a small number of candidates chose **Question 7** 透过窗户，我看到…… and produced very vivid descriptions that are touching and effective, reflecting a firm grasp of the genre on the part of these candidates.

Candidates tended to produce very convincing argument when they felt very strongly about a topic, as in the cases of **Question 3** about the advantages and disadvantages of attending Olympic Maths classes, and **Question 4** about Chinese parents expectation of their children to be obedient. They were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most of the essays contained a clear progression of ideas, argument or story line. Very occasionally, some essays were too short, of one or two very short of less than 100 characters in total. When the answers are excessively short, there are not enough materials that show any development of ideas or present a clear description of a personal, an object or event to merit a pass mark.

Style: A number of examples of sophisticated pieces of writing were seen, with an excellent range of vocabulary, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas.

The majority of candidates were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker candidates could improve their writing by avoiding repetition of content and ideas, and trying to introduce more variety in expressions used.

At the top end, candidates were able to use sophisticated structures and expressions effective. At the lower end, some candidates used words that were either the wrong register, for example, 我致电给他妈妈 or inappropriate to the context, for examples, 我毫不犹豫地笑了。

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated an excellent grasp of Chinese grammar and a wide range of vocabulary.

The word order of some candidates' writing shows strong interference from English. For example, 2012 年是我的第二年在中学, (meaning "my second year at middle school") which is the wrong word order for Chinese.

The best way to counter such linguistic interference from English is to read and use Chinese more frequently and regularly.

Punctuation occasionally presented a problem for some candidates. Just as in English, full stops and commas cannot be used at the beginning of a line.

The incorrect use of characters can be reduced in some cases with more careful checking of work. Some errors included either the wrong radical, e.g. 渡过 (should be 度过) 一个难忘的假期; 多财多艺 (should be 多才多艺) or confused homonyms, e.g. 下苦工 (should be 苦功); 修理热水气 (should be 热水器). As in past years, mis-using characters that have the same pronunciation but different meaning is the biggest area of inaccuracy in this paper.

Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are perfectly acceptable, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing.

Candidates should also be reminded to read the rubric carefully: this year once again, some candidates answered two questions rather than one.

All candidates seemed to manage time well and completed the answers in the given time. The excessively short pieces were not caused by the time factor.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates were expected to discuss their views on the merits of diligence. This is a popular choice. Stronger essays managed to illustrate how hard work and commitment lead to success, giving examples of their own experience or from historical figures. Weaker answers were characterised by under-developed and repetitive arguments.

Question 2

Candidates were expected to discuss their view on the popularity of Chinese language. Relatively few candidates chose this question but the answers were competent and the argument convincing. Strong candidates talked about richness of the language, the rising Chinese economy and how mastering Chinese can offer access to the vast Chinese culture and business opportunity.

Question 3

This question required candidates to discuss their view about the advantages and disadvantages of attending Olympic Maths classes. This is a topic that some candidates clearly felt very strongly about and they were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts.

Weaker candidates only talked about one aspect, usually the disadvantage of attending such classes, without mentioning if such classes have any value at all.

Question 4

Candidates were expected to discuss their view on the Chinese parents' expectation of their children to be obedient. This was also a popular choice in Section 1. This is another topic that some candidates clearly felt very strongly about and they were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts. Overall, the quality of answers to this question was very high.

Section 2

Question 5

This was a popular choice. Candidates were expected to write about their aspiration. Many candidates wrote about how an event, e.g. their childhood illness or the death of their loved one had inspired them to become a doctor. Some wrote about their sense of social responsibility had inspired them to become a lawyer to help the disadvantaged people. One candidate wrote about his concern for the environment had put him on the career path of a car designer to change the Asian car market. Overall the standard for this question is very high.

Question 6

This is the most popular choice of the whole paper, but it produces very different quality of answers. Candidates were expected to write about an unforgettable holiday. At the top end, the answers were very interesting, touching with vivid details leading to a climax. The holiday could be a re-union with grandparents at their birthplace, or a short working holiday as a volunteer at an old people's home. It is possible to feel how the holiday has enriched them or changed them.

At the weaker end, the answers tended to read like an itemized list of what happened from Day 1 to Day X, the arrival time, the food, the games. Such answers used very simple language and limited ideas, they were flat and lacked build-up of characters or setting.

Question 7

Candidates were asked to write about what they saw outside of the window. Not many candidates chose this question but the standard was high. The best candidates produced detailed images and created atmosphere that was heart-warming.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to write about recycling in their community. This is not a very popular choice but most of the answers were clear, usually about the recycling efforts at their own school. Some weak candidates only talked about how recycling saved the environment but forgot to mention what action actually took place.

FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/23

Writing

Key messages

When answering a question from **Section 1**, candidates need to remember to present an argumentative or discursive piece of writing. When answering a question from **Section 2**, candidates need to provide a description or narration, depending on the topic set.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- present facts, ideas and opinions in a clear logical manner
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- articulate genuine personal experience (where necessary)
- express what is thought, felt or imagined
- address the specific topic that they have chosen and ensure that their answer is relevant
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling.

General comments

Content & Structure

Content: The majority of candidates performed well on this paper. Most wrote good quality essays and adhered to the required number of characters. The best answers contained very vivid descriptions, touching narratives and effective and convincing arguments. Some very creative and interesting answers were produced, with some candidates managing to write from an unusual or interesting perspective. Although relatively few chose to do descriptive writing, the work produced was of a good standard, reflecting a firm grasp of the genre on the part of these candidates.

While most candidates produced answers that were relevant to the questions, others needed to be more careful that their responses actually answered and were related to the question asked. For example, in **Question 6** 博爱的奶奶, some candidates wrote about what their grandmother did to look after them, instead of showing the humanitarian or philanthropic side of her character or actions. Others wrote about how their grandmother learnt different skills and gained knowledge, confusing the meaning of 博爱 with 博学.

In the narrative questions, the best answers were characterised by interesting stories or events that led to a climax or surprising ending with sufficient characterisation. Weaker answers tended to comprise of very flat lists of events; this was more often seen in **Question 7** 周末.

Candidates tended to produce very convincing arguments when they wrote on topics about which they felt very strongly, as in the cases of **Question 1** (about specialising in a subject or being more well-rounded), and **Question 4** about a gap year. They were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts.

Structure: In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most of the essays contained a clear progression of ideas, argument or story line. Very occasionally, some essays were too short. When the answers are excessively short, there is not enough material to show any development of ideas or present a clear description of a person, an object or event.

While most candidates were able to structure their writing appropriately, others needed to present their ideas in suitable paragraphs, rather than using a very short opening and closing paragraph with everything else contained in the middle paragraph.

Style & Accuracy

Style: A number of examples of sophisticated pieces of writing were seen, with an excellent range of vocabulary, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas.

The majority of candidates were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker candidates could improve their writing by avoiding repetition of content and ideas, and trying to introduce more variety in expressions used.

Accuracy: Most candidates demonstrated the linguistic competency of a first language user of Chinese, showing a good grasp of Chinese grammar and a wide range of vocabulary.

It was evident this year that some candidates' use of Chinese structure contained interference from English grammar. For example, 她常常穿着长恤衫, 配上长裙和带上一顶大太阳帽。Unlike the English "and", the Chinese "和" is not used to link clauses or verbal phrases.

The strongest candidates were able to use sophisticated structures and expressions effectively. Others had difficulty in this area and used words that were either the wrong register, for example, 我便立刻上前慰问她 or inappropriate to the context, for example, 他遇上了最近很流行的凶杀案。

Punctuation was usually used well, but where problems were seen, this was usually in the use of punctuation unique to Chinese. For example, 《》 needs to be used with the title of a book or an article, as in the case of 《出师表》.

The incorrect use of characters can be reduced in some cases with more careful checking of work and a good understanding of characters that share the pronunciation but with different meaning. For example: 气氛 (not 分); 充分(not 份), 灌输 (not 惯); 蚂蚁 (not 码议).

Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are perfectly acceptable, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing.

Candidates should also be reminded to read the rubric carefully: this year once again, a small number of candidates answered two questions rather than one. It was also evident this year that candidates managed their time well and completed their essay in the given time.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates were expected to write about their views on being a specialist or being an academic all-rounder. This is an issue that many candidates had strong feelings about. They were able to present their own views in a clear logical manner with relevant facts of either their own experience or of famous people. Weaker answers were characterised by one-sided or under-developed arguments, with lots of repetition.

Question 2

Candidates were expected to discuss life-long learning. This was a popular question and the overall standard was good. Many candidates were able to develop the topic with some good examples. Improvements could have been made by having a broader view of the question, as some candidates only focused on why learning is necessary for the older generation, or restricted their understanding of learning to just reading books.

Question 3

Candidates were expected to comment on the merit of team work. This question was not chosen by many. Stronger candidates were able to develop a clear and logical argument; weaker candidates either produced too many irrelevant facts or focussed too heavily on just one aspect of the question and thus produced an unbalanced essay.

Question 4

Candidates were expected to comment on the gap year. In general, candidates did quite well on this topic by providing strong examples and arguments. Most candidates produced well supported views that a well-spent gap year would help them be more “world wise”, more mature and find out their area of interest. Occasionally, candidates also discussed how the gap year could be wasted if not managed well. Overall, the quality of answers to this question was very high.

Section 2

Question 5

This was the most popular topic, which many candidates managed extremely well. In this question, the majority of candidates tended to use different writing styles which made the essay more interesting to read. Some candidates presented very moving life stories.

Question 6

This was also a popular question. Candidates were expected to write about the humanitarian or philanthropic side of a grandmother. There was a wide range of performance here. Stronger candidates produced very detailed descriptions and accounts of an old lady. One wrote about how her grandmother fed and looked after stray cats, another wrote about how her grandmother selflessly helped homeless strangers. The characterisation was strong and the story convincing.

Weaker candidates wrote about how loving their grandmother was in caring for them. Many wrote more predictable accounts of things their grandmother had done for them, which did not meet the requirement of the question. Some misinterpreted the question and wrote about their grandmother’s love of learning and developing new skills in old age. Such answers were not very relevant to the question.

Question 7

Candidates were expected to write an essay about the weekend(s). The overall standard was good. The best candidates presented a carefully balanced story with well-managed climaxes; weaker answers were characterised by a more flat narrative, using very simple language and with limited ideas, or a weekend itinerary with no attempt to create any atmosphere or climax.

Question 8

Candidates were expected to write about a person who won their respect. This was another popular question and most candidates produced a carefully balanced story with a well-managed climax.