

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In the reading section, candidates are required to understand and respond to information presented in a variety of forms. Candidates are expected not only to understand the information provided in the passages but also to be able to distinguish between facts, ideas and opinions. They should demonstrate the ability to extract relevant specific information from various text types and organise and present it in a logical manner.
- In the writing section, candidates need to show that they can communicate clearly and appropriately in written Chinese to convey information and express opinions. Candidates are expected to use a range of vocabulary and show control of a variety of grammatical structures. Register should be appropriate. Writing conventions, such as paragraphing and punctuation, should be followed. The characters produced by candidates should be accurate.
- Candidates should choose either the traditional or simplified character version of the paper and write all their answers within that section of the question paper booklet. Candidates must not answer in both versions. If a candidate starts to answer in one part of the booklet by mistake and then moves to a different character version, he/she must cross out any work that he/she does not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Candidates should try to be precise when answering questions. Although notes may be made on the question paper, any work that the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. The mark cannot be awarded if the Examiner has to 'choose' the correct answer from a longer response provided by the candidate which contains extra material that is incorrect, invented or contradictory.

General comments

Performance on this component was generally good. The majority of candidates were able to understand the reading passages in **Section 1** in detail. In **Section 2** most candidates showed that they were capable of communicating competently in the target language. Many responses successfully and clearly communicated interesting ideas, but care should be taken to ensure precision in using simple grammatical structures. Some candidates also need to take care when writing characters to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1 – 5

Please note that due to an issue with **Question 1**, full marks have been awarded to all candidates for this question in order that no candidate will be disadvantaged. The published question paper has been corrected.

Questions 2 to 5 were answered well by most candidates, showing that they were able to understand this part of the passage fully. The best answers to **Question 2** and **Question 4** showed that candidates had read the passage carefully and paid close attention to the wording of the questions and options.

Exercise 2 Questions 6 – 13

In this exercise, candidates are presented with a blank form, and need to complete it according to their understanding of the passage. A high level of accuracy is needed to score well.

Question 6, 7 and 8 were answered well by most candidates.

Two elements were required in **Question 9**. Most candidates performed well in this question and showed that they had understood the reading passage well. Some candidates wrote the reason why parents would like the protagonist to take part in the programme, which could not be credited.

The strongest candidates were able to provide the required precise response to **Question 10** (实践项目), rather than just 采访娱乐中心的工作人员 or 到小镇上做问卷调查 which could not be credited.

A high percentage of candidates were able to use the information from the passage to answer **Question 11** and **12** correctly.

For **Question 13**, most candidates identified the two activities suggested by the protagonist to be added to future study trips; 自选活动 and 参观高校 were accepted.

Generally, candidates managed to locate the correct information for the questions in **Exercise 2**. Most candidates also showed care and precision in completing the form, for example remembering not to put 'he', 他 or the name of the protagonist, 崔清扬 in the answer, thus fulfilling the requirement for candidates to put himself or herself in the position of the protagonist to fill out the feedback form.

Exercise 3 Questions 14 – 21

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

Most candidates were able to find the answer to **Question 14** competently. **Question 15** was also handled well by most candidates. Some candidates included an extra message 共享单车契合中国可持续发展的建设理念 which invalidated their answers.

The vast majority of candidates were able to find the correct response for **Question 16** and **17**.

Question 18 required two elements. Most candidates could identify one of the drawbacks of the public bike project, but needed to give sufficient information and a precise response with a subject, 还车点, rather than just 可以停放的自行车数量是非常有限的 to be credited with the second point.

Question 19 required two elements. Most candidates answered well. For the second point, many candidates realised that they needed to include the location 在公共场所 in the answer.

Question 20 was answered well by many, only a small number of candidates provided an incorrect answer.

For **Question 21**, two elements were once again required. Candidates needed to provide an accurate answer and the strongest candidates were able to show that they had understood the messages given in the passage and could then digest the information to produce answers using their own words, such as 大量的用户 or 很多用户 rather than reproducing 用户四个月内就增加了900多万.

Candidates are reminded of the need to read the questions and passage carefully in **Exercise 3**. Furthermore, candidates should be reminded to give a precise response but not to lift whole sentences indiscriminately from the passage, as this may not answer the question asked.

Section 2

Exercise 4 Question 22

This year, candidates were required to write a letter to a friend about their plan to get a summer job. Candidates were asked to include the reason they wanted a job, what kind of summer job they wanted, as well as how to prepare for the interview.

Most candidates were aware that they should write between 100 and 120 characters, and successfully addressed the tasks given in the bullet points within the character limit.

Many excellent responses addressed all three points given in the question; others needed to include the main concept of interview preparation to access the higher content marks.

In terms of language use, many candidates demonstrated that they could use simple grammatical structures effectively and precisely. In order to reach the highest mark band, candidates also needed to show that they can use more complex structures and sophisticated language accurately. Candidates are reminded not to use pinyin in the writing exercise.

Exercise 5 Question 23

A range of performance was seen in the responses to **Question 23**. It was a task that invited candidates to present arguments for and against a topic, concluding with their own point of view. This year, candidates were asked to write an article to their school newspaper to express their opinions about whether the school should have Vegetarian Monday every week.

Four written comments were provided as a stimulus to provoke candidates into thinking about the topic. Candidates were not obliged to include these, and could use their own ideas and opinions. These were given as suggestions of the arguments which may be put forward, and it was expected that candidates would not simply re-state the ideas provided, but present their own ideas and opinions as well.

Most candidates could clearly state their opinions. The best answers contained ideas which were fully developed, used connective words where appropriate and generated persuasive arguments to engage the reader's interest. The highest scoring essays contained interesting and sustained personal opinions on the given issue with well-developed ideas.

In conclusion, centres should continue to support candidates in writing Chinese characters accurately. Candidates should be reminded that the use of idioms and sayings only enhance the quality of the language when used appropriately.

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/02
Speaking

Key messages

Examiners must ensure that they are familiar with the format of the test, and should read the instructions given in the syllabus booklet well in advance of the speaking test period.

The two-minute Topic Presentation should be related to Chinese culture or an aspect of life in a Chinese-speaking country or community.

In the Topic Conversation, questions should not require candidates to repeat what he/she has already said in the Presentation. In order to reach the higher marks for vocabulary and structures, new evidence needs to be heard that candidates can use a wider range of vocabulary and structures.

Good questioning in both Topic Conversation and General Conversation should offer candidates the scope and the depth to use a wider vocabulary and structures, opinions and justifications for higher marks.

Discussion in both conversation sections should include opinions, explanations and comparisons, as well as facts, to show the level and depth of their command of the language.

At least two topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A-B and one from Areas C-D as set in the syllabus.

Tests must adhere to the timings as set out in the syllabus.

Tests must be conducted in Mandarin.

General comments

The majority of centres were well-prepared for the conduct of the Speaking component, which resulted in tests being carried out successfully in most cases. The full range of performance was heard this year, with many candidates demonstrating their ability to communicate appropriately in spoken Mandarin Chinese and to confidently use a wide range of vocabulary and structures.

A variety of interesting topics were chosen for the presentation and most examiners were able to help sustain a full follow-up discussion by asking a series of excellent searching questions. The focus of this component is to reward candidates for their ability to communicate appropriately and demonstrate knowledge of a wide range of vocabulary and structures in order to promote their educational or employment prospects. It is therefore very important that examiners ask questions at the appropriate level, which should include questions that are more unpredictable, and enable candidates to show their ability to respond spontaneously.

The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in centres where candidates were given opportunities to talk about their own interests and to defend their own opinions. In such centres, candidates had clearly prepared their presentations well, and examiners pitched questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus. Candidates gained marks by demonstrating a range of vocabulary and structures, demonstrating an ability to be responsive and contribute to a conversation with ideas and opinions, covering a range of different topics across both conversation sections. The strongest candidates showed precise use of a solid range of vocabulary and a variety of structures in their responses.

Conduct of the test

From the evidence heard in the recorded samples, the vast majority of examiners were familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE Chinese as a Second Language Speaking test and understood the importance of their role. A well-prepared examiner ensures that his/her candidates are put at ease and given ample opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In a very few cases, the Topic Presentation didn't seem to have been prepared in advance, the timing of sections was sometimes too short and/or the questions were too shallow or 'closed' which severely affected candidate performance. Examiners need to be careful not to ask questions which will make candidates merely repeat material from their presentation.

Duration of test

Candidates should be allowed to present their topic for two minutes. In this examination series there were many cases of excessively long presentations, which leaves less time for the follow-up discussion with the examiner. Between four and five minutes each should be taken for both of the conversation sections. In the interests of fairness to all candidates, each candidate must be allowed the full examination time in each conversation section, as stipulated in the syllabus. It is essential for candidates to make full use of the time, particularly in the General Conversation section where at least two topics need to be covered.

Recorded sample: quality and composition

In a number of cases, candidates and/or the examiner were not always clearly heard. Background noise makes the moderation process difficult, and in some cases there was evidence that it had affected candidates' performance at the time of exam. If an external microphone is used for recording, please make sure that it is nearer to the candidate. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of all recordings before sending to Cambridge.

Internal moderation

Where centres use more than one examiner to conduct and assess the Speaking test, the coordinating examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the examiners in the centre. If a particular examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the centre, all the marks for candidates examined by that examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge. Details of the centre's Internal Moderation procedures must also be enclosed in the paperwork sent to Cambridge. Guidelines for the Internal Moderation of Speaking tests are available from Cambridge.

When a total mark has been changed as the result of internal moderation, the breakdown of marks should also be updated accordingly to avoid the confusion with a clerical error.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well understood and applied correctly. In cases where downward adjustments to marks were made, this was often because candidates needed to express their opinions and points of view more clearly in addition factual points.

Comments on specific questions

Topic Presentation

This year a wide range of interesting topics about Chinese culture or an aspect of life in a Chinese-speaking country and community were heard. Topics ranged from Chinese historical sites and figures such as 万里长城, 云冈石窟, 故宫博物院, 秦始皇, 武则天, 孔子, 华佗 to very modern topics including celebrities, 姚明, 马云, etc. Topics about local food or drink specialities were still a popular choice, such as 过桥米线, 珍珠奶茶, etc. Apart from traditional Chinese handicrafts and arts like 四大发明, 文房四宝, 粤秀, 旗袍, 变脸, etc., some candidates also spoke about their thoughts on the modern world, such as 电子支付, 留守儿童, 独生子女, 补习现象, 青少年熬夜 etc, which really showed candidates' up to date knowledge. The majority of candidates were well-prepared, and managed to combine factual points on their chosen topic with their own ideas and opinions.

Topic Conversation

Many candidates were able to provide spontaneous responses to the questions asked in the follow-up topic conversation. Most Examiners understood the importance of listening carefully to candidates' presentations, which then enabled them to lead the candidate skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions pitched at an appropriate level, allowing candidates to both develop their topic and to demonstrate their language skills. Examiners should avoid asking the candidate a prepared question if the candidate had already given the answer to that question previously. The most successful conversations included a range of open questions, giving candidates the scope and depth to express their opinions.

General Conversation

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

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