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# **Examiners' Report**

## Principal Examiner Feedback

### Summer 2017

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE  
In Chinese (4CN0)  
Paper 3: Speaking



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## General Review

The Chinese International GCSE speaking examination is one of the four compulsory exams forming the Chinese International GCSE qualification. The International GCSE speaking examination includes two sections and lasts 10 minutes long: Section A (4 minutes) and Section B (6 minutes).

The Chinese International GCSE speaking examination of 2017 was successful; most centres had prepared well for this speaking examination, and the majority of candidates showed high quality in their performance providing evidence for being awarded high marks in the assessment. However, a number of isolated incidents of centres not fully committing to the exam procedures and requirements, might have affected their candidates' performances.

### Speaking examination requirements:

This speaking examination covers 5 topic areas and all sub-topic areas can be found on page 11 of Chinese International GCSE Specification (Issue 3).

**Topic A: Home and Abroad;**

**Topic B: Education and Employment**

**Topic C: House, home and daily routines**

**Topic D: The modern world and the environment;**

**Topic E: Social activities, fitness and health.**

Candidates need to choose three **different** exam topics from the five available. Failure to comply with this rule can lead to no credit awarded to the clashing areas. Centres must pay attention to this point.

### Section A: there are two parts in this section, 4 minutes in total:

**Presentation:** Picture based presentation (monologue) for 1 minute. Each candidate needs to choose their own visual stimulus for this part and **describe details of the chosen stimulus** for 1 minute. Please be aware that all pictures (including old exam materials) displayed in the Chinese International GCSE Samples Assessment Material **must not be used** for this speaking exam. Centres, candidates and interviewers should be restricted from using them. Candidates' results can be affected if this is the case. The used visual stimulus must be attached with the candidate coversheet together for the external assessment.

In this part, if candidates' presentation time is over 1 minute, the additional speaking time does not help candidates towards receiving a higher score. However, when candidates' speaking time is less than 1 minute, it can lead to a deduction of marks for candidates. Centres must take the above points into account.

**Conversation:** An interactive conversation based on the chosen stimulus follows the presentation, for 3 minutes. Interviewers **must ask meaningful and structured questions related to the chosen visual stimulus**, which should include **direct and indirect questions** to the chosen stimulus first, and then **extension questions** within the topic area. All **three** types of questions can encourage candidates to demonstrate his/her own speaking and understanding skills of the language proficiency. Close-ended questions are not helpful for candidates.

Time management is another considerable factor. Surpassing time limits cannot benefit candidate's scores, but less speaking time can certainly affect the assessing result. Interviewers should manage the conversation time of 3 minutes in this section.

**Section B: there are two conversations in this section, 6 minutes in total:**

**Conversation 1:** a different topic area from Section A - interactive conversation's time is 3 minutes.

**Conversation 2:** another different topic area from Section A and Section B (conversation 1) - interactive conversation's time is 3 minutes.

In this section, interviewers should ensure that the speaking time for each conversation is 3 minutes; and interviewers should also ensure all questions asked are clear, understandable and well structured. Failure to do so can limit candidates' performance.

Please be aware of that time management is crucial. As mentioned above, because surpassing the time cannot help improve candidates' marks, but less speaking time can certainly have a negative impact on the assessing result. Consequently, interviewers are the main controller for this section.

Because candidates do not have preparing time prior taking this speaking exam, therefore, proper preparation and practice are very important for candidates before attending this actual speaking examination. Centres should ensure their candidates have received adequate training and practice prior to taking this speaking examination.

**Assessment: Section A (Presentation and conversation)**

**Presentation, conversation and fluency (10 marks)**

The majority of candidates appeared to have prepared well and consequently performed to a very high level in their presentation this year; especially, a large number of candidates from centres overseas. Those candidates also demonstrated their confidence and fluency in their conversation.

However, a number of issues of this speaking exam occurred in 2017; therefore it requires centres, interviewers, and future candidates to take them into account in their coming exam:

1. Some candidates could not be fully credited in the part of their presentation because they gave no direct description or inadequate details of the chosen visual prompt. For example, if the chosen picture was a basketball player, the candidate did not describe details of the picture itself, instead, talked about his/her hobbies, future plan, friends and school. Since the candidate's presentation did not provide adequate direct information to the chosen stimulus, candidates did not achieve higher marks. Candidates are strongly suggested to choose a picture with more contents, in order to support them in describing the chosen stimulus.

2. This year, again, a large proportion of candidates' were unable to access higher marks due to the fact that interviewers did not ask direct questions to the chosen stimulus. There are three questions types which should be asked by the interviewers in the conversation of Section A: direct questions to the chosen stimulus; indirect questions to the chosen stimulus and extension questions to the chosen topic area. For instance, a chosen stimulus is family - in Topic area C. Candidate described their family members and their dog, but the interviewer did not ask any direct questions related to the stimulus, such as "What is your father's name? How old is he? What is his job?"

Centres and their appointed interviewers should follow the instructions set on p39 of International GCSE Chinese Specification (Issue 3) and the main requirements for the conversation of Section A mentioned above, in order to support their candidates in the coming exams.

3. Some irrelevant or inappropriate questions were asked by interviewers this year, which had let down the exam performance of their candidates. For instance, the chosen stimulus was "Types of home" in Topic area C. The interviewer asked "Which types of families do we have in our society nowadays?" The candidate initially was not sure about the meaning of the question, so the interviewer repeated it with some ideas of single families and normal families. The support from the interviewer is appreciated; however, the "Types of home" topic is about the style of the house. Possible questions might have included "Can you describe your house?" or "Tell me about your house." Such question was neither inappropriate nor far beyond the GCSE level for the candidate to respond. Unfortunately, inappropriate questions from interviewers could have led to lower marks because candidates were not able to provide a good response to the said questions.

4. A number of centres did not enclose the chosen stimuli with the signed coversheets to their allocated examiners. This caused inconvenience following up the missing materials with centres Please note that **no** chosen stimuli enclosed by centres could lead to **no** credit being granted to the presentation to those candidates. It is the centres' responsibility to ensure all stimuli and signed cover sheets are sent to their allocated examiners.

5. Time management is extremely important for this speaking exam. Having mentioned the time required for each section above, it is down to the interviewer to control and manage the time of each section for their candidates. In some centres, interviewers did not control the time of each section - often it was too short. Centres and interviewers are kindly reminded that when a presentation's time is less than 1 minute, or a conversation's duration less than 3 minutes in Section A, full marks cannot be achieved by the candidates.

Centres and interviewers should also be aware of that timing for each conversation starts when the candidate starts to speak. Each section time should not include the introduction of the interviewer.

6. Centres should confirm the dialects (Mandarin, Cantonese or both) spoken by interviewers prior to conducting the assessments. On occasion it was noted that interviewers spoke a dialect different to the candidate and so the candidate was left trying to interpret and understand the questions being asked. This will have affected the candidate's ability to fully demonstrate the knowledge and skills.

Some interviewers asked questions in English or used words within their questions. This is not acceptable practice for the speaking examination and must not be repeated by examiners.

7. A number of centres used one single and same visual stimulus for all candidates; this is prohibited by the oral exam. Candidates may have a chance to adapt similar ideas from their classmates, which had stopped candidates from presenting their own and unique thought to the same topic. This oral exam is to encourage candidates to demonstrate their language ability as well as their personal understanding to the topic that they like. Centres and interviewers should support their candidates choosing their own topic and stimulus in Section A.

8. It is centres' and interviewers' responsibility to study all requirements of this oral exam prior conducting the actual exam. The specification of this exam is published on the Pearson's web site, containing all requirements of the exam. Candidates should receive support or revision lessons for their International GCSE exams prior to undertaking the assessment. During this series, we appeared to have a repeated issue from previously when native-language candidates did not provide details of the chosen stimulus to the interviewer before the assessment.

### **Knowledge and application of language (5 marks)**

Candidates should have received a high mark if they could demonstrate good language ability, such as by using a wide range vocabulary, complex sentence structures.

### **Accuracy (5 marks)**

Candidates should have also been awarded a high mark if they could show strong evidence of word order and correct intonation and pronunciation

consistently.

### **Assessment: Section B (conversation 1 and conversation 2)**

In this section, two conversations should be on different topic areas and they are assessed globally.

#### **Communication, interaction and fluency (10 marks)**

Candidates did better in Section B than in Section A overall this year, where they demonstrated great improvement within their conversations.

Candidates were awarded high marks if they could communicate smoothly with their interviewers, showing no difficulties in response to a wide range of questions as well as confidently express personal opinions to them.

Interviewers should follow the Instructions for the conduct of examinations on p39 of International GCSE Chinese Specification (Issue 3). However, a number of issues that centers and interviewers should consider in the coming exam follows.

1. Some interviewers did not appear to have prepared their questions systematically and structurally well for the conversations in this section. Their questions were sometimes long and complicated, which not only confused some candidates, but also took away the opportunity from candidates to demonstrate their speaking abilities in answering the questions, resulting in them being unable to reach the highest marks.
2. This year, in some cases concern was noted over the interviewers' proficiency level (including pronunciation) in Chinese language, both Mandarin and Cantonese. Significant difficulties were noted; they either took a long time or only managed to ask a few questions (some of them with great grammatical errors), or were not able to present their questions in the right dialect, as a result, candidates found it either difficult to understand the questions or their chances were less to perform well in the exam.
3. A number of centres recorded the conversations in section B separately. The two conversations in section B must appear on the same recording along with the response to Section A.

#### **Knowledge and application of language (5 marks)**

Candidates should have received a high mark if they could demonstrate their language ability, such as by using a wide range vocabulary, complex sentence structures.

#### **Accuracy (5 marks)**

Candidates should have also been awarded a high mark if they could show strong evidences of word order, agreement and intonation and

pronunciation seldom interfered with comprehensibility.

### **Administration:**

#### **Candidate coversheet:**

Both interviewer and candidate must sign the declaration of authentication on the candidate coversheet. A copy of the said coversheet can be found on p47 of International GCSE Chinese Specification (Issue 3).

#### **Medias:**

Centres should ensure all speaking scripts are correctly recorded on CDs or USBs before sending out to examiners; please also ensure all CDs are fully protected to avoid any damage caused in the post. All CDs and USBs must be clearly labeled. It is important that centres keep back-up files of the speaking recordings in the event of loss of originals or damages.

**Please note that CD provided must be well protected, in order to avoid any delay to the marking process. USB can be a better solution.**

#### **Recording:**

The recording for all sections for each candidate must be continuous. There should be separate recordings for each candidates (i.e. not one continuous file with multiple candidates).

#### **Centres and Interviewers:**

All interviewers should study the exam instructions for the conduct of examinations on p39 of International GCSE Chinese Specification (Issue 3) prior conducting this examination. Clear, structured, appropriate and logical questions are helpful for candidates to achieve their higher potential.

Please note that this speaking examination is assessed externally. Centres' teacher / Interviewer should not need to mark this paper.

Centres with larger number of candidates should arrange adequate interviewers to conduct this speaking examination, in order to avoid missing part of two sections, cutting conversation times and importantly, fatigue of the interviewers which can cause more issues to this examination.

#### **Conclusion**

International GCSE Chinese speaking examination provides an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their speaking and understanding abilities from a wide range of topics. In order for centres to assist their candidates in achieving their highest quality of performance, centres should offer adequate and proper practical



exercises for them prior their actual speaking examination; and also should ensure that interviewers, in particular, external interviewers should fully comprehend and comply with the requirements and procedures set for this speaking examination in the International GCSE Chinese Specification.

## **Grade boundaries**

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/support/support-topics/results-certification/grade-boundaries.html>