



GCSE **Chinese (Mandarin)**

8673/WH Paper 4 Writing Higher Tier

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

The overall performance of students this year was very encouraging. The mean mark on this year's paper was higher than last year's at just over 41/60 (just under 65% of the total mark). As in previous series, the vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. Students were able to refer to different time frames and express opinions and reasons and the quality of work generally seen across the paper was good.

Almost twice as many students chose Question 01.1 over Question 01.2. However, the performance in 01.2 was better than in 01.1. Similarly, more students chose Question 02.1 over Question 02.2, but here the performance in 02.2 was stronger than in 02.1. It was pleasing to see that the majority of students were able to make an attempt at the translation.

On this paper in particular handwriting was at times an issue; students' scripts were either carelessly written, or the handwriting was too small. Whilst examiners try their absolute best to read what students have written, credit cannot be given for work that is unintelligible. Students should be reminded that it is in their own interests to ensure that examiners are able to read their work clearly.

Question 1

For this question there are 10 marks available for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 75 characters in total, in response to the four bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of each one. The standard of work at this tier was generally very good, with many students able to provide extended responses that demonstrated their ability to develop ideas, express opinions and refer to different time frames.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. The vast majority of students wrote more than 75 characters, which enabled them to cover a lot of information and fulfil the requirements of the higher bands for this category. Students do, however, need to be reminded that coverage of the four bullet points is key. Occasionally one of the bullet point seemed to have been misunderstood, which prevented students achieving a Content mark higher than 4. In order to score 7 marks or more for Content, information referring to all four bullet points must be conveyed. Lapses in accuracy which have a bearing on Communication can also contribute to a lower mark for Content.

Question 1.1

The Internet was clearly a popular topic amongst young people and nearly two-thirds of students chose to respond to this question. In general, most students managed to address all bullet points with sufficient detail, including opinions and three time frames.

The first bullet point was responded to best, and many students handled some complex ideas successfully. Excellent examples were seen, including 我觉得上网对我的学习有帮助; 在我看来, 上网太多不好. There was clear evidence that students had mastered vocabulary for expressing frequency as lots of positive responses were seen for bullet point two. It seemed that students found bullet points three and four more challenging, though responses were generally comprehensible. Delays in communication were mainly caused by language errors; students tended to forget to use the words 上网

or 网上 to specify that the activities had been carried out online. It was noticeable that a few students interpreted bullet point four as “what do you want to *do* online” rather than “what do you want to *learn* online,” as required by the question. Responses were therefore at times not relevant.

Question 1.2

Over thirty per cent of students responded to this question. Again, the responses were very positive with students producing extended pieces of writing that included a lot of detail. As mentioned above, the overall performance was better than in Question 01.1. This might be because the topic areas covered, occupations, activities and clothes, were more accessible to students.

It was clear that students were more confident in handling bullet points one and two. For bullet point one, many students expressed good content using structures such as 将来, 我想当……, 因为……。 For bullet point two, many students were able to successfully provide details of how they spend their weekends. Occasionally, students wrote about what they did on a previous weekend, together with their plans for the coming weekend, which was accepted as covering the required information for bullet point two. However, those students who wrote either only about a past weekend or a future weekend were not credited for this bullet point. For bullet point three, examiners noticed that lower ability students struggled to write the verb 穿 successfully. Whilst it was good to see that students were able to write a range of vocabulary, including 方便、(不)好看、贵、and 舒服 to express opinions, in bullet point four only a limited number of students wrote 校服 correctly.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. In relation to the first three elements, the following were seen: successful references to two or three time frames; use of first and third person; successful attempts at complex structures, eg a range of connectives, 虽然……但是……; 不仅……而且……; 因为……所以; 又……又……; 除了……以外……; 对……; ……的时; verb-adjectives and use of subordinate clauses such as 我觉得/我认为. Verb-adjectives such as 好, 好玩儿、有意思、(不)好看、难看 and 贵 were frequently seen.

Word order errors and inaccurate character writing are still common. Furthermore, quite a few students struggled to differentiate past and future time frames, which led to ambiguity in their responses, eg 明天我上网买了很多…; 作天 instead of 昨天. Common character mistakes were 好元、方更、交服、校衣 etc.

Advice to students

- Refer to all the bullet points.
- Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been covered.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your time words and verb formations are accurate.
- Make sure you include opinions as required by the task.
- Try to write as many characters as possible. If you are stuck on a particular character, write in pinyin rather than leave a blank.

Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks available for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students need to write approximately 125 characters in total, covering two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of each one. The range of the responses varied from fully fluent coverage of the bullet points, using language that was largely accurate and varied, to content that was not always relevant, sometimes repetitive, and not always easily understood.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of both bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions. A large number of students wrote more than 125 characters, but there were a number of students who wrote way in excess of the required wordage. Unfortunately, for some of these students, the irrelevant information and inaccuracy of their language had a detrimental effect on the mark for Communication, as well as on the mark for Quality of language.

As mentioned above, more students chose Question 02.1, perhaps because they felt that food was a more familiar topic than environment.

Question 2.1

As stated above, this was the more popular choice amongst students and the vast majority of them answered bullet point one directly and confidently. Many used the structure: 我觉得…因为… to give opinions and justifications. A good range of views were expressed by students. The most popular ones were: 中国的饭很好吃; 吃饭/做饭很重要. Higher ability students mentioned and compared different types of food; a typical example was: 多吃蔬菜比吃肉更健康. Some students drew convincing conclusions like: 所以我认为人们应该多吃蔬菜. Special occasions such as 春节 and 生日 were frequently mentioned by students. However, a small number of students wrote about cooking a meal without specifying the special occasion involved. Similarly, there were some students who wrote about buying food or eating at a restaurant, eg 上周我过了生日, 我和朋友去中国饭店吃饭了, which did not meet the explicit requirements of bullet point two.

Question 2.2

This question was less popular than 02.1; however, student performance was better. For bullet point one, a variety of environmental issues were identified by students. Some high ability students referred to 我住的地方 or 小镇, while a more common response was 我家. Students were able to express their opinions about environmental problems in their local areas with justifications, including vocabulary such as: 垃圾、有很多车、空气污染、水污染、树 and 公园不多. On occasion, some students got carried away, largely writing about environmental protection methods instead of actual issues. For bullet point two, there were a good range of different places mentioned in response to where students would like to live in the future. A fair number of students expressed their wish to live in China in the future, together with their reasons for this. The most popular reasons given were: 中国的饭很好吃; 我对中国有兴趣; 我想学中文; 中国又大又方便 etc. Other students referred to countries like 法国、美国、西班牙 etc. Some students came up with more abstract ideas like 比较安静的地方, 人少的地方.

Range of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences. Many students attempted to use a wide range of complex sentences, often successfully.

Students were able to use a variety of language in this question. Most students used 因为 to express justifications. In addition to the structures used in Question 1, it was pleasing to see many students using structures such as: 如果……就; 越来越……; ……极了; 第一, 第二……; 比 and 最; 和……相比; 离……远/近. A range of more complex vocabulary was seen too, eg 有空的时候、打算/计划、便宜、贵、不过、不冷不热、各种各样、从小……etc.

Accuracy

Lots of excellent work was seen during the marking, with sentences free of errors even when attempting more complex structures. The use of time words and verb formation were secure, resulting in a fair number of students achieving full marks for Accuracy.

Where errors occurred, they were mainly in the accuracy of characters and the use of incorrect time words. It appeared to the examiners that quite a few students were not sure of the second character in 空气 with 其、汽 and 期 all used instead. Inaccurate characters also included, 食物、做饭、牛肉、面包、饺子、环境、污染、将来 etc. It is also worth noting that the criteria refer to use of the correct style and register. However, this was not generally an issue with the quality of the work.

Advice to students

- Read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what is required in terms of response.
- Ensure that what you write relates to the bullet points in some way.
- Try not to say things that are really difficult or for which you do not know the vocabulary. It is better to be simple and clear than complex and unclear.
- When you give an opinion, make sure you justify it. Ensure there are at least two opinions and justifications in your writing.
- Try to write as many characters as possible. If you are stuck with a particular character, write in pinyin rather than leave a blank.

Question 3

For this question, there are 6 marks for Conveying key messages and 6 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well with the vast majority of students able to score some marks.

It was very encouraging to see most students attempt this question in this season, which was not always the case in previous years.

The passage was divided into 13 key messages, as in the table below, with each key message meriting a tick.

Conveying key messages

Today is a sunny day.	The character 晴 was challenging for most students. Common errors were: 青天、请天、日天、晴天。 Some students interpreted 'sunny day' as: 今天天气很热; 太阳很大, which were not accepted.
My family and I are planning	This was responded to well. Most students were able to write 要/想/打算.
go to the seaside.	Some students were not sure about the characters 海边 and wrote 每边 instead.
(when we went) last time	There was a mixed range of responses. Some handled the vocabulary very well; some wrote 上会、上了 and 上去了, which did not merit a tick. It was regrettable that some students lost a tick by writing 上欠 instead of 上次.
when we went (last time)	Some students wrote的时候 successfully. A common mistake was 时后.
the food there was very expensive,	This was relatively well answered. A few students struggled with 贵, and tried to paraphrase it into 要很多钱, which was not awarded a tick. Some attempt to write 贵 but wrote 员 instead.
therefore	Well responded to.
Dad is going to buy bread and juice (for us) at the supermarket.	Lots of students found this challenging. Very few students knew the characters/vocabulary 超市 and used 商店 or 市场 instead. Some students struggled to write 果汁 accurately; common mistakes were: 水果、果水、果汁.
for us	Only high ability students managed to secure the tick. Common errors were 对我们 or 买我们.
After I get a job,	Common mistakes for 工作 were 公作、工做、工作. Some students got confused between 以后 and 然后.
if	This was well answered.
I have lots of money,	This was well answered too. A few students found the character 钱 quite challenging.
I want to have a beautiful boat.	Generally well answered. 舟 was accepted here. Those students who missed the tick miswrote the character 船; a common mistake was 般.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Overall, students showed reasonable knowledge of the required information and most of them achieved 3 marks or above. As seen in other questions, word order and character accuracy were challenging for some students. Minor inaccuracies, eg in character writing, did not on their own prevent the awarding of a tick when considering the key message, providing they did not lead to ambiguity. However, an accumulation

of such errors had an overall effect on accuracy which was reflected in the mark in this category. Excessive use of pinyin also had a negative effect when awarding marks.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives.
- Check carefully that you do not miss out any parts of the translation by accident.
- Be careful with time frames; always include the particle 了 when referring to actions in the past, or an auxiliary verb such as 想 or 要 to refer to the future.
- Try to write as many characters as possible. If you are stuck with a particular character, write in pinyin rather than leave a blank
- Always try to complete a sentence rather than leave gaps.
- Avoid leaving sections of the translation unattempted.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.