



GCSE

CHINESE (MANDARIN)

8673/WF: Writing Foundation
Report on the Examination

8673
June 2022

Version: 1.0

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General Comments

It was evident that students who took this paper were entered at the appropriate tier. Despite the fact that performance was quite varied, it was encouraging that the number of students taking the paper had increased. Students showed some knowledge of the vocabulary required for the tasks and had the grammatical knowledge to deal with the different tasks.

Only a small number of students managed to score full marks in Question 1. In Question 2, some students far exceeded the recommended word count, whilst some struggled to meet the demand. Question 3 seemed to be quite challenging for students in general. In Question 4, the responses were very mixed: on the one hand, there were students who covered all four bullet points well; on the other hand, some candidates only produced very limited writing or simply did not answer the question.

Question 1

Students had to write four sentences about the photo and each sentence was worth a maximum of two marks. Marks were awarded depending on relevance and clarity. The most successful answers tended to come from students who kept things simple, often by forming sentences which used the same verb, usually 有, and keeping to items in the photo for which they knew the vocabulary. Typical good answers were: 这里有车; 照片里有人; 照片里有房子. The main problem with character writing was missing strokes. However, in the case of very minor inaccuracies, providing they did not create ambiguity, full marks were still awarded. Quite a few students gave opinions like 我喜欢中国; 他喜欢飞机, which were not relevant to the photo. A few students did not attempt this question.

Advice to students

- Learn the characters 照片里有...
- Make sure you write in full sentences, with a subject, verb and an object.
- Choose the items in the photo that you are most sure that you know the Chinese characters for.
- Keep the sentences short and simple to make sure you communicate a clear message.

Question 2

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 30 characters in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points are compulsory and must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullet points.

Content

In order to score in the top band for Content, students had to give clear information related to all four bullet points. Giving information about colour and size of the new mobile phone proved straightforward for some students, but this was not the case for when it was bought or how it was used. A significant number of students struggled with the characters 手机. Colours like 红色; 白色; 蓝色 were frequently seen; adjectives like 大 or 小 were popular too. Some good answers were 我的手机不大不小; 我常常用我的手机上网和听音乐.

Quality of language

In order to score well for Quality of language, students had to show a variety of sentence types, but there is no requirement for complexity in this question. A few strong candidates were able to use a variety of vocabulary and structures, such as, 跟...一起; 因为.....所以; 用手机... etc. 一边..一边 and 又.....又 were seen as well.

Most students' answers were within the word limit, and only a small number of students exceeded the suggested number of 30 characters. In the past, students who wrote more had a tendency to accumulate errors and this was a contributory factor in the award of a lower mark. This year, those students who wrote more than the required number of characters showed a good grasp of a variety of structures and a solid command of the vocabulary required for this question.

Advice to students

- Mention all bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them.
- Tick off the bullet points once you have addressed them.
- Practise verbs 是; 有; 喜欢 and the adverb 很.
- Learn a few common verb-adjectives.

Question 3

For this question, there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the key messages was aimed at covering Grades 1 through to 5, the question differentiated well and nearly all students were able to score some marks.

The sentences were divided into 12 key messages, as shown in the table below.

Conveying key messages

It rained	雨 was well known but students found 下(了)雨 tricky and wrote 不雨 instead.
yesterday.	This was answered well. A few students wrote 乍天 or got confused with 明天.
We have six lessons	Students found this very demanding. Common incorrect answers were 六课, 六个学校, 六学.
every day.	This was responded to very well. A typical incorrect answer was 海天.
Her younger sister	This was done well, but a few students confused 姐姐 with 姐姐 or struggled with the characters 妹妹.
does not like horses.	This was responded to quite well. A few students were not sure about the character 马 and wrote 妈 or 吗 instead.
I think	This was responded to very well.
my friend	This was responded to very well.
is good-looking.	Most students were able to write 好看 accurately, but missed out 很.
He likes to take the train	This was challenging for the majority of students. Although they accurately wrote 火车 they had no knowledge of the verb 坐.
because	This was the best answered point in this question.
trains are fast.	This was responded to quite well. A number of students were not sure how to write the character 快.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

There was usually a direct correlation between the mark for Key messages and the mark for Application of grammar. However, the mark for Application of grammar was sometimes lower, e.g. if the student had been awarded several marks for key messages in spite of poor character writing or use of pinyin; or higher, if the mark for Key messages had been lowered by several relatively minor errors.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases.
- Learn vocabulary linked to time frames.
- Check carefully that you do not miss out any parts of the translation by accident.
- If you are not sure about how to write a character, it is better to write pinyin rather than leave a blank.

Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 75 characters in total about four bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage.

Overall, Question 4.1 was slightly less popular than Questions 4.2 and 4.3. In all questions, the standard of work varied considerably. Whilst some students handled the questions confidently, including full coverage of the bullet points, opinions and using all three time frames, some students only managed to produce a very limited, and sometimes illegible, piece of writing.

Content

The criteria for assessment focussed on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Most of the students wrote between 75 to 100 characters and covered all four bullet points. Occasionally a bullet point seemed to have been misunderstood and therefore four marks were not awarded for Content. For this tier, it seemed that relevance and clarity often prevented students from achieving higher marks for this category.

Question 4.1

Students found this question more demanding than Questions 4.2 and 4.3 and the performance was weaker. A number of candidates demonstrated the ability to cover all 4 bullet points, with opinions and three time frames. Bullet point 2 was the most challenging for quite a few students and this bullet point was either less successful or omitted in their writing. It seemed a lack of knowledge of the vocabulary item 购物中心 was the barrier; however, a few students used 买东西中心 instead. While this was not an ideal response, the intended meaning was clear and marks were awarded for Content. There were varied but good answers for bullet point 3; some candidates used a past time frame to describe what they had bought. Items like 书; 平板电脑; 篮球; 衣服; 手机 were seen. Bullet point 4 was well handled too.

Question 4.2

The number of students who chose this question was similar to Question 4.3. Students must have felt more familiar with the vocabulary required for this topic, and, as a consequence, the performance was good. Quite a few good sentences were seen, such as: 我家附近的公园不但很大, 而且很漂亮. 我喜欢在下雨天去公园, 因为公园里人不多. Overall, bullet points 1 and 4 were very well answered, and students found bullet points 2 and 3 quite demanding. Although weather is one of the topics that students learn quite early on, it seemed that a number of students were not sure how to apply the vocabulary appropriately within context. Typical mistakes for bullet point 2 were: 我去公园热; 我喜欢大风天气; 我喜欢去公园冷. For bullet point 3, quite a few students wrote 去了火车 instead of 坐火车.

Question 4.3

There was a wide range of responses to this question. A small number of students achieved very good content marks, covering all four bullet points well. Bullet point 4 was answered best, with lots of excellent sentences seen, e.g. 明年我要学数学, 因为将来我想当数学家; 虽然中文很难, 明年我想学中文, 因为中文很有用. Good examples for other bullet points were: 我每天放学后在学校和同学一起踢足球; 我的老师不好, 因为他让我不高兴. Not all students knew the expressions 课外活动 or 俱乐部, but responses like 学校下午三点 or 放学以后 were accepted. Overall, bullet points 1 and 3 were the least successful as students tended to write about a random activity, not linking it to the school context.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. Each of the bullet points for both questions required students to use a variety of vocabulary, because of the different nature of each task. Each one allowed students to choose language which they could use confidently.

In order to score in the top band for Quality of language, there had to be successful reference to events in the present, past and future. One task in each of the questions required the use of a past and a future time frame. Quite a few students only used either a time expression 上个星期; 昨天 or the past time particle 了, rather than include both of them in a sentence. In some instances, students confused different characters, writing 下个星期我买书 as a response to a past action, which created ambiguity. Errors in word order were common in responses to this question too. Apart from that, quite a few students demonstrated a good grasp of variety of vocabulary and structures, which was pleasing to see.

Advice to students

- Mention all bullet points.
- Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been covered.
- Make sure you include opinions such as 我觉得; 我认为 or verb-adjectives.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames.
- Always make sure you make the time reference clear, e.g. by including the particle 了 in sentences referring to past actions, or 要; 想 for sentences referring to the future.
- Check word order.
- Write in pinyin rather than leave a blank if you are stuck with a particular character.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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