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# GCSE

# CHINESE (MANDARIN)

8673/WH: Writing Higher  
Report on the Examination

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## **General Comments**

The performance of students this year on this paper was encouraging. The extra optionality in Question 1 and Question 2 offered students more scope to perform well on the paper as a result of the greater variety of questions. This provided an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. Overall, the vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. Students were able to refer to different time frames and to express and justify opinions, covering the bullet points in the questions.

The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was good. In comparison with the Foundation tier, students were better able to produce more accurate and complex pieces of work. Where students failed to score marks, it was due to inaccuracy causing a delay in communicating the message. Similar to past years, the usual reasons for this were incorrect word order, inaccurate character writing which led to ambiguity, or students writing overly extended responses, far longer than the suggested word count, creating greater scope for error. Another barrier to achievement was the omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in Questions 1 and 2. There were some students who provided a piece of writing with very good quality language, but the content was totally irrelevant to the questions.

## **Question 1**

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 different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullet points. The quality of answers was obviously better at this tier than at Foundation tier, and a good proportion of students scored very high marks.

It was pleasing to see that justifications were provided in some students' answers as well as opinions, even though justifications were not essential for this question. For all three questions, there was a requirement to refer to events in the past, present and future, and the majority of students were able to do this successfully.

## **Content**

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. A vast majority of students wrote more than 75 characters, which enabled them to cover a lot of information and fulfil the requirements for the higher bands for this category. Students need to be reminded that coverage of the bullet points is key. Occasionally a bullet point seemed to have been misunderstood and therefore four marks could not be awarded for Content. In order to score 7 marks or more for Content, information related to all four bullet points must be conveyed. Lapses in accuracy which had a bearing on communication could also contribute to a lower mark for Content.

## **Question 1.1**

Students who attempted this question performed the best, despite the fact that it was the least popular question. This contrasted with performance in the Foundation Tier. The first bullet point

was well answered by students, with correct vocabulary to express frequency; 每天 and 每个星期 were often seen in the answers. The second bullet point, *your views about your local shopping centre*, offered students an opportunity to develop a more detailed response, although students need to be reminded that they are required to express an opinion. The more able students gave opinions successfully, together with descriptions of the local shopping centre. However, it was noted that a number of students were not able to recall 购物中心, resulting in a lack of clarity in fulfilling this bullet point. Moreover, a few students completely neglected to answer the bullet point, leading to the loss of four marks for Content. Most students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4.

### Question 1.2

This was the most popular choice with students in this section. Clearly, this was a topic with which a vast majority of students were familiar, and they were able to produce extended pieces of writing. Lots of good responses were seen in response to bullet point 1. Bullet point 2 seemed to be a little more challenging; quite a few candidates only mentioned the type of weather they liked. However, provided that the context was clear (i.e. that students were referring to the park), marks were awarded. Most students successfully mentioned a method of transport in responding to bullet point 3. However, there was a small proportion of students who wrote about the activities they *did* in the park rather than *how they travelled there last time*, e.g. 我们在公园跑了步 or 我们在公园坐了火车 which were not relevant to the bullet point. Students performed well on bullet point 4 and a range of good answers were seen. For example, 周末的时候, 我和我的姐姐要带我的狗一起去公园; 除了我的好朋友以外, 我也要和我的弟弟一起去公园踢足球。

### Question 1.3

Although this was a less popular choice with students, the overall performance was good. A large number of students demonstrated their understanding of all four bullet points and provided detailed answers with opinions. Amongst the four bullet points, some students found bullet point 1 the most challenging. Whilst the more able students managed to use the correct term for *after-school activity* (课外活动/课外俱乐部) in their answer, some used 放学以后, 我参加学校的篮球队, which was accepted. However, some students only mentioned an activity without referring to school, e.g. 我和朋友一起看电影; 我在公园打网球. For answers like this, which did not have an explicit enough link to school, no mark was awarded. Providing the answers clearly described a school setting, all reasonable activities linked to schools were accepted. Similar to bullet point 1, provided that students mentioned a teacher and an activity in the past linked to the school setting, marks for bullet point 2 and 3 were given accordingly. Bullet point 4 also elicited some good extended responses. However, where students were less successful was when they referred to their favourite teacher or future career without making reference to a specific subject, which was a requirement of the task set.

### Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. It was very encouraging that a wide range of appropriate structures were seen, such as 对.....; 越来越.....; 如果.....就 as well as 因为.....所以; 一边.....一边; 不但.....而且; 虽然.....但是; 又.....又. Comparisons like 最 and 比 were used frequently too.

Whilst it was pleasing to see good application of structures, not all students were able to secure the use of time frame marks in their writing due to their confusing different characters; sentences like 下个星期, 我买了一个手机 for bullet point 3 in Question 1.1 were seen quite frequently. This caused ambiguity in the intended meaning. Similar errors occurred in Questions 1.2 and 1.3 as well. For those students who included the past time particle 了 or future time expressions such as 要; 想, provided that there was enough evidence to differentiate between time frames, marks were awarded.

In terms of vocabulary, 好玩儿; 有意思; 有用; 方便; 好看; 友好 etc. were the most frequently used verb-adjectives. However, not all students were secure in their use of the verb-adjective structure; a few less able students omitted 很 before adjectives. Errors in word order, e.g. 我要买东西在商店; 我去了公园坐车和朋友 occurred in some students' answers. Students who relied on the use of *pinyin* in their writing were not able to secure full marks in this category.

### 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 as required by the task.
- 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, etc. 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.

### Question 2

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy. Students write approximately 125 characters in total, about two different bullet points. Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage. More candidates chose Question 2.2 than Questions 2.1 and 2.3. Students' responses were generally very good, with most students able to cover both bullet points in detail. They demonstrated well their ability both to justify opinions and to provide a range of language with a level of complexity. Where students were less successful, it was because the content was not always relevant to the question, the language used was repetitive, or it was difficult to understand the students' intended meaning. In addition, students need to be reminded that they should tailor their knowledge to suit the demands of the tasks, rather than reproduce pre-learnt texts, which might not be totally relevant.

### 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, and there were a number of students who wrote far in excess of the required number. Unfortunately, for many of these students, the inaccuracy of their language had a detrimental effect on the mark for Communication as well as on the mark for Accuracy.

As mentioned above, not all responses were relevant to the bullet points. In some cases candidates wrote a piece of “free style” writing, either not responding to the bullet points or only partially covering the bullet points, thereby losing Content marks. Furthermore, while some students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing and justifying opinions, there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity in communication, and this impacted on marks awarded.

### Question 2.1

The best performances were in response to this question, despite the fact that it was chosen by the fewest students. Lots of impressive responses were seen. Students were able to produce extended pieces of writing, addressing positive elements of music, such as 音乐让我觉得放松 and 对我来说, 听音乐十分重要, 因为听音乐让我高兴. Some students used their personal experience of learning a musical instrument to justify their views. The second bullet point was also tackled well by many students; many wrote successfully about a range of music events that they had been involved in, e.g. 音乐比赛; 音乐会; 唱歌比赛; 音乐节 etc. showing just how successful these open-ended tasks can be.

### Question 2.2

This was the most popular choice amongst students, as *holiday* is a topic with which they are very familiar. Most students were able to provide detailed and extended responses, conveying a lot of information. For bullet point 1, more able students gave answers like 我认为度假有很多好处, 因为度假可以让人放松 and 虽然度假很贵, 但是度假可以让我学新东西. Instead of expressing views about holidays, quite a few students wrote about a past holiday experience, which led to their answers being focused on a particular location, such going on holiday to China, France, Italy, etc. In this situation marks were awarded, provided that views about holidays were covered. However, such students did not ‘hit’ the top band for Content due to the reduced relevance. Bullet point 2, *dream holiday* 理想的假期, proved challenging for some students. Instead, students used 我最想要的假期; 我最想去的国家 etc. which worked very well. Overall, opinions were expressed in covering both bullet points, but not all students gave justifications, which had a negative impact on marks awarded for Content.

### Question 2.3

Most students found this question demanding and performances were weaker than for the other two questions in this section. Responses to bullet point 1 were more successful than bullet point 2. Typical good answers included expressions such as: 我觉得我们学校的图书馆又大又好; 学校的图书馆虽然大, 但是很旧, 而且那里的书不多. A lot of special events directly linked to libraries were mentioned, such as 作家来了图书馆; 在图书馆卖书; 图书馆有读书比赛. Answers like 在图书馆看电影; 在图书馆过春节; 老师在图书馆过生日, which related to students’ experiences in the library, were accepted if appropriate. However, it was noted that some candidates struggled to recall vocabulary items such as 图书馆 or 看书, using instead phrases such as 我和我的朋友听音乐, which had no connection to libraries, thereby affecting the Content mark.

## Range of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences. It is worth noting that reference is not made to time frames or tenses in the criteria, but their correct use is accepted as an example of a complex structure. In terms of variety of language, a very good range of structures were seen: 和.....相比; 更.....; 一.....就.....; 和.....一样; 越来越.....; 除了(以外).....还; .... 的时候; 如果.... 就; 是.....的 and the co-verbs 对; 给; 带 as well as those which were mentioned in Question 1. Expressions for sequence and summary 第一; 第二; 首先.....其次.....最后; 在我看来; 总的来说 were seen in students' responses.

A number of students were sometimes unsure about the vocabulary they used, leading to answers that were contradictory, e.g. 虽然音乐很有意思, 但是很无聊; 工作人去度假, 因为又好玩儿又意思; 不但坐公共汽车很无聊, 而且很快. Furthermore, some students mixed structures together incorrectly, such as 我喜欢度假在山区比海边很多了. Word order errors were common; answers like 我旅行了在中国各地; 对我们非常重要不用网上得太多 caused confusion. In addition to the above, those students who relied on the use of *pinyin* in their writing were not able to meet all criteria required for this category.

## Accuracy

It was pleasing to see that the majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. Quite a lot of outstanding work was seen this season, with students producing pieces of writing which were free of errors even when attempting complex structures. The most common errors were mainly in the accuracy of characters, word order, incorrect time words, inaccurate use of verb-adjectives and errors in sentence structures. Where candidates scored 2 and below, this normally reflected in poor performance across all areas of the marking criteria, resulting in very limited and poor writing.

## 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 two justifications in your writing.
- Write in pinyin rather than leave a blank if you are stuck with a particular character.

## 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 key messages to be conveyed was aimed at covering Grades 4 through to 9, this question differentiated well, with the vast majority of students able to score some marks.

The passage was divided into 13 key messages, as shown in the table below.

**Conveying key messages**

Last Saturday	Well answered. A number of students wrote 下 instead of 上.
was my friend's birthday.	This was answered well. A few students missed 是 or were not sure how to write the characters 生日.
I went with my friend to	Nicely done. A few students added 一起 and this was accepted.
a Chinese restaurant.	This was answered well. A few students wrote 官 instead of 馆.
We drank tea.	Majority performed well. Some were not sure how to write the characters 喝 and 茶. Not everyone used 了.
<u>Tea</u> tastes better than <u>coffee</u> .	This was done well. A few struggled with characters.
Tea <u>tastes better than</u> coffee.	This was answered well. A small number of students found the characters demanding.
I study Mandarin at school.	This was very well answered. No mark was given for 中语.
I think	This was very well translated.
Chinese lessons are more and more interesting.	This was quite demanding. Quite a few students used expressions like 更有意思, which were not accepted, and some were not sure how to write the character 越.
In five years,	The answers were mixed. Common errors included 五个年, 在五年中, 下五年.
I would like	The most successful response in this section.
to teach English in China.	Quite a few students wrote 去中国当老师, which was not accepted

**Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures**

Minor errors, such as small inaccuracies in character writing, provided that they do not change the meaning of the phrase, do not on their own prevent the award of a tick for the key message. However, an accumulation of such errors has an overall effect on accuracy, which could be reflected in the mark for this category. Excessive use of *pinyin* also has a negative effect when awarding marks for this category.

**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.
- Always include the time frame particle or future time expression where appropriate.
- If you are not sure about how to write a character, write the pinyin rather than leave a blank.



### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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