GCSE
CHINESE (MANDARIN)
8673/RF Paper 2 Reading Foundation
Report on the Examination

8673/RF
June 2023

Version: 1.0

General Comments

Changes were made to the 2023 papers to reflect the removal of the regulatory requirement to test vocabulary outside of the published vocabulary list.

It was encouraging to see a slight increase in the number of students taking Mandarin Chinese after the unprecedented challenges and disruption to teaching and learning during the previous years. This year's paper proved to be accessible to all students and it was clear that a majority of students were appropriately prepared for a wide range of topics across the paper. The mean mark for the paper was just over 25, which remained similar to the last full series in 2019, when the mean mark was around 27. The foundation translation appeared challenging for many students which brought the average mark down.

Unfortunately, handwriting continues to be an occasional issue for examiners and students should be reminded of the need to write their answers, and any changes that have been made, as clearly as possible. Examiners noted that a few students gave unclear answers to multiple choice questions on the paper.

Question 1

The first question provided a positive start to the examination and most students performed extremely well, with above 80% gaining two marks in 01.1 and 01.2. The success rate for 01.3 was 73.6%. The topic of free-time is very accessible to students and the question style was familiar.

Question 2

This question met with mixed responses and proved challenging to many students even though it was designed to be of low demand. The vocabulary 黑白, 床, 晚上 and 音乐 was not well known to students, which led to less than half of students scoring marks.

Question 3

Just over 40% of students scored two marks for each of the questions. Students very often did not understand the meaning of the expressions 去年 and 滑雪 in 03.2.

Question 4

04.2 proved to be quite challenging, with a success rate of just over 40%. The majority of students understood 在电影院旁边 and 咖啡, but 贵 and 蔬菜 were less well recognized; some students provided ambiguous responses to 04.3.

Question 5

This question differentiated reasonably well; students not only had to ensure that they chose correctly the positive and negative aspects, but also had to respond in English in the correct boxes. Most students scored 1 mark in each of 05.1 and 05.2. A significant number of students answered "a lot of people talking on the train" rather than "too noisy", which was a misinterpretation.

Question 6

Foundation papers have to include two extended texts for students to show that they can read and understand a full text; question 6 was the first of these. This was also an overlap (also on Higher tier) and literary question. Questions 06.2 and 06.7 caused unexpected difficulties, due to the use of 南方 and 高兴极了. In question 06.6, many students were unable to draw the correct conclusions from the text, even though 看见前面有一个山村,还有很多好看的房子 seemed reasonably accessible.

Question 7

In this question, it was surprising to see how many students appeared to be unfamiliar with the adjectives 难看，不太好看 and 舒服, which prevented students scoring marks in 07.1 and 07.3. Question 07.4 was answered more successfully, with 友好 and 好朋友 providing the clue for a positive opinion.

Question 8

It was pleasing to note that this more demanding question, which required a written answer in English, was very well answered, with more than 65% scoring marks in 08.2 and 08.3. In 08.1, 没有地方去 proved more challenging, with only 16% of students able to answer the question. A number of students produced the answer "they are bored" or "nothing to do", which were both rejected due to a lack of precision.

Question 9

The relatively low demand set of questions in this task were very well answered. Over 96% succeeded in gaining at least one mark and over 70% gained two marks for the question. Option F was less frequently identified as a correct answer, suggesting that 很早回家了 was not known by some students.

Question 10

This question differentiated well; nearly 10% succeeded in gaining the full three marks and approximately 70% gained two marks for the question. The topic was popular and very accessible to students and the question style too was very accessible. Options C and D were more challenging, despite the use of 然后 and 再 which were intended to be easily recognisable connectives.

Question 11

This was the second extended text and targeted the higher grades at this tier. It was pleasing to note that 11.1, 11.2 and 11.4 were answered reasonably well, with approximately 50% of students answering correctly. However, 11.3 proved more challenging, with most students failing to identify option C because of interference from the distractor A.

Question 12

It was pleasing to note that in this more demanding question, based on a literary text, 12.3 was quite well answered, with approximately 47% of students responding correctly. This is in line with expectations for a question designed to challenge the most able students at this tier. The superlative word 最后 was not understood correctly by more than 77% of students, which caused problems in 12.1. In 12.2 only approximately 35% of students were able to infer the information from 没有人说话, which meant 'sitting in silence'. The vocabulary in 12.4 would normally not be considered too challenging, but many students were unable to provide the correct answer "bluish purple" as they were misled by the distractor "bluish pink".

Question 13

Question 13 was the third overlap question and therefore one of the more challenging at this tier. A reasonable number of students answered 13.1 correctly, with 没意思 being a familiar phrase, allowing students to produce a precise written answer in English. Not surprisingly, it was rare to see students getting the marks in 13.2 and 13.3. Only a very small minority of students managed to score both marks in question 13.3 due to a lack of knowledge of 离公园很近 and 生活很热闹.

Question 14

The translation task contains phrases and sentence patterns targeting all grades from 1-5 and always differentiates well. However this question proved more challenging than in previous series. Relatively few students were able to score five marks or more. A number of students were reduced to making up answers from the few words they knew, and hence what they wrote often had very little relation to the original text. Students should be made aware that it is necessary to reflect any past tense in the English translation, therefore 交了新朋友 must be translated as "made new friends" and not "make new friends". Not being familiar with details such as 市中心, 购物, 下个星期天 and 博物馆 prevented students from conveying the information correctly in English.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.