

GCSE  
**CHINESE (MANDARIN)**

8673/WH: Writing (Higher)  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

The quality of work produced for this new examination was encouraging. The paper differentiated very well in that students were able to score marks over a variety of questions. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was of a higher standard than at the Foundation tier.

The ability to use a range of time frames and more complex language was generally impressive and students were also able to express and justify opinions well. Although the latter was not a requirement for question 1, justifications seen there were viewed as a development of information and credited accordingly.

Where students failed to score marks it was due to inaccuracies which caused a delay in communicating messages. The usual reasons for this were either wrong word order, inaccurate character writing which caused ambiguity or students writing extended responses, far longer than the suggested word count, something which created scope for error. Another barrier to achievement was the omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in Questions 1 and 2.

## 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, about four different bullet points in total. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The standard of work at this tier was generally very good, with many students able to provide extended responses demonstrating their ability to develop ideas, express opinions and refer to different time frames.

In Question 1.2, an invitation to write in a past-time frame was not made explicit to students. Therefore, an amended mark scheme allowing access to the full range of marks for Quality of language using two time frames was applied to this question (and Q4.2 on the Foundation Tier) for the 2019 series only to ensure students were not disadvantaged by the question wording. Please see the mark scheme for full details. Analysis was carried out post marking which showed no meaningful difference between the performance of Question 1.1 and 1.2. The question paper and mark scheme will be updated after the post-results period has concluded.

## Content

The criteria for assessment focuses on the four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered.

## Question 1.1

This was by far the more popular choice for students and it was done well on the whole. It was a topic with which students are familiar, but it is important to remind students that this new specification requires them to use their knowledge to respond to the exact requirements of the task rather than just reproduce pre-learned language.

The first and the last bullet points were handled very well. Some student only wrote about one aspect of the holiday rather than both positive and negative aspects as specified in bullet point 2. It was pleasing to see that a vast majority of the students used conjunction, 虽然……但是……for this bullet point. It seems that bullet point 3 was the challenging one in this question as there were a mixed range of answers. However, marks were awarded as long as students expressed their holiday preferences, eg 我喜欢去中国度假。 There were some excellent answers such as 我喜欢去海边度假因为我喜欢游泳。我喜欢的假期是和我的家人一起度假。

### Question 1.2

Again, students were familiar with most of the topics in this question and produced extended responses, especially relating to bullet points 1 and 4. More able students managed to use 兼职 or 我的兼职工作是…… to answer bullet point 1. It was pleasing to see that a range of occupations were mentioned in bullet point 4 using a future time frame. Very effective answers such as 长大以后, 我想当医生因为医生不仅可以帮助病人, 而且医生赚很多钱。因为我对英文有兴趣, 所以将来我想当一个作家。 There were varied but good answers for bullet point 3, as some students used a past time frame to describe what they bought whilst others answered in the future time frame by describing what they were going to buy. Similarly to Question 1.1, some students only wrote one aspect of their job for bullet point 2, which had impact on marks for Content.

### 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; different persons of the verb; structures reflecting complexity often successfully attempted, for example a range of connectives, 虽然……但是……, 不仅……而且……, 一边……一边……, 又……又…… and adjectives, use of subordinate clauses like 我觉得, 我认为, comparison 比 and superlatives 最.

A few students got confused about time words, typical wrong answers were the use of 上年 instead of 去年; 下年 instead of 明年. Mistakes in word order like, 我喜欢去美国和我的朋友, and errors in character writing which caused ambiguity, 我想用我赚的钱买一个毛机 instead of 手机。 中国的东西很更宜 instead of 便宜。

### Advice to students:

- aim to write roughly the suggested number of characters
- mention all of the bullet points. Attempt to write *something* about them rather than omitting them. 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 word and verb formation are accurate
- make sure you include opinions as required by the task
- write in pinyin rather than leaving it blank if you are stuck with a particular character as a small amount of pinyin is acceptable.

### 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 of the bullets. More

students chose Question 2.2 than Question 2.1. The quality of the work was mixed. Whereas many students were able to write fluently in response to the bullet points, using language that was largely accurate and varied, there were some who found great difficulty in addressing the more open-ended tasks. Some students did not respond to the second bullet point in this question. Students needed to write things that were relevant to the bullet points. Often this was not the case, especially in the response to the first bullet point of each question. Where students exceeded the recommended character count significantly there were usually more errors, which had a negative impact on the language marks in many cases.

The final bullet point on the front page of the question paper should have stated ‘In order to score the highest marks for Question 2.1/Question 2.2, you must write something about each bullet point. You must use a variety of vocabulary and structures and include your opinions and reasons’. At the end of this bullet point the word ‘and reasons’ had been omitted. Manual checks were completed by the Lead Examiner in order to ensure no students were unfairly disadvantaged by this omission.

## Content

The criteria for assessment focuses 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.

As mentioned above, not all responses are relevant to the bullet points. Some very able students wrote a piece of ‘free style’ writing, not following the bullet points or only partially covering the bullet points, which prevented them from gaining Content marks. Furthermore, some students had no difficulty in developing ideas and expressing and justifying opinions, but there were occasions when inaccuracy led to a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘ambiguities’). Again, this impacted on marks awarded.

## Question 2.1

Although question 2.2 was a more popular choice, the students who chose this question were able to address both bullet points well in this question. A lot of students were able to make a statement about the importance of protecting the environment. Those most able students talked about 我们只有一个地球，我们要保护它 and gave detailed justifications about the importance of protecting the environment and event he/she was going to participate in. Lots of students mentioned saving water, not littering, recycling and walking/cycling rather than driving. Some students mentioned climate change and global warming. This demonstrated an ability to use their knowledge to produce a more creative response.

## Question 2.2

The performance for this question was mixed as a large number of the students chose this question. There were some outstanding pieces of writing which were fully relevant with lots of details, with opinions and justifications. Examples include 网络非常有用，在网上你什么都可以做。我觉得上网的时间太长了，会对眼睛不好，还会对大脑不好。虽然我觉得上网很重要，但是很多老年人觉得上网不好。 On the other hand, there were some responses which were very short and limited. As this is a more familiar topic, some students saw the first bullet point as an opportunity to write pre-learnt information referring to their experience in using the internet rather than giving their views about the internet and justifying them. This was acceptable, however it was noticeable that there was some overlap with bullet point 2. Furthermore, with regards to bullet point 2, a few

students wrote about the activities involved with the internet a year ago rather than a ‘recent’ activity, which had an impact on 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 in the criteria, but the use of these would be considered to be attempts at complexity. In terms of variety of language, there was a good variety of connectives seen such as 越来越……、除了(以外)……还、……的时候、如果……就、是……的。What was also encouraging was the ability of many students to include structures like 第一/首先、第二/其次、最后，在我看来，总的来说 in their writing.

### Accuracy

Lots of excellent work was seen during the marking where the sentences were free of mistakes even when attempting more complex structures and the use of the time words and verb formation were secure. It is to be noted that a ‘major’ error is one that interferes with communication, and a ‘minor error’, albeit still an inaccuracy, does not. The majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above. The common errors are mainly in word order, wrong time word, inappropriate use of conjunctions and adjectives and character writing errors. Where students scored 2 and below, there was normally poor performance across the areas of the criteria with very limited and ineffective writing.

It is also worth noting that the criteria refer to style and register. This was not generally an issue with the quality of the work.

### Advice to students:

- aim to write roughly the suggested number of characters
- read the bullet points and the scene setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what they require 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
- write in pinyin rather than leaving it blank if you are stuck with a particular character as a small amount of pinyin is acceptable.

### 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 covering Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well with the vast majority of students able to score some marks.

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

**Conveying key messages**

My grandmother.....together with us	This was well answered. Answers without 一起 were also accepted.
spent Chinese new Year	Most students were able to write 中国新年、春节 but were not so sure about the verb 过
last January	Common errors were 上年一月、上一月
In addition to	The answers were mixed. However, a few students failed to gain marks by only writing either 除了 or 还
the dishes mum cooked	Quite a few students were not sure of the use of 的 to form an adjective.
we made dumplings	This was done well. A small number of students got confused between 饺子 and 包子.
Next year I am going to	This was well answered. Some less able students used 去年, 昨年
(to study art) at an American university	This was very well answered.
to study art	The response was mixed. Some failed to gain a mark due to not knowing the characters 艺术 or 美术.
It takes (approximately) 14 hours	This was done well but a few students were not sure about 小时. Typical wrong answer : 14点.
approximately	The majority did not know 大约/左右/差不多, however, some more able students secured the mark.
to fly	This was well answered. 飞到 was accepted too.
from China to the United States	Quite a few students did not know the 从..... 到 structure, although 中国到美国 was accepted.

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

Minor inaccuracies, such as in character writing, will not on their own prevent the award of a mark for the key message providing it does not lead to a different meaning. However, some word order errors which would have had an overall impact on accuracy could be reflected in the mark for application of grammar. Nevertheless, there was usually a direct correlation between the two 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
- check the word order and verb formation
- if you are not sure about how to write a character, it is best to write out the pinyin rather than leave it blank as a small amount of pinyin is acceptable.

### **Use of statistics**

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

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

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