

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/01
Reading and Writing

Key messages

- In the reading section, candidates are required to understand and respond to information presented in a variety of forms. Candidates are expected not only to understand the information provided in the passages but also to be able to distinguish between facts, ideas and opinions. They should demonstrate the ability to extract relevant specific information from various text types and organise and present it in a logical manner.
- In the writing section, candidates need to show that they can communicate clearly and appropriately in written Chinese to convey information and express opinions. Candidates are expected to use a range of vocabulary and show control of a variety of grammatical structures. Register should be appropriate. Writing conventions, such as paragraphing and punctuation, should be followed. The characters produced by candidates should be accurate.
- Candidates should choose either the traditional or simplified character version of the paper and write all their answers within that section of the question paper booklet. Candidates must not answer in both versions. If a candidate starts to answer in one part of the booklet by mistake and then moves to a different character version, he/she must cross out any work that he/she does not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Candidates should try to be precise when answering questions. Although notes may be made on the question paper, any work that the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. The mark cannot be awarded if the Examiner has to 'choose' the correct answer from a longer response.

General comments

Performance on this component was good. The majority of candidates were able to understand the three reading passages in detail. In the writing section, most candidates showed that they were capable of communicating competently in Chinese. Many responses successfully and clearly communicated interesting ideas, but care should be taken to ensure precision in using simple grammatical structures. Some candidates also need to take care when writing characters to ensure clarity and accuracy.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1 Questions 1 – 7

In this exercise, candidates are presented with a blank form, and need to complete it according to their understanding of the passage. A high level of accuracy is needed to score well.

Question 1 proved challenging for many candidates, they might have misunderstood the requirement of the question or overlooked 年底将满 before 11 岁. Some candidates wrote 年底将满 11 岁, which was not appropriate for filling a registration form. Both **Question 2** and **Question 3** were answered correctly by most candidates.

For **Question 4**, the two awards won by the protagonist needed to be written out precisely. Some candidates missed the prizes or the categories of the awards.

A high percentage of candidates were able to use the information from the passage to answer **Question 5** and **6** with ease.

Question 7 was handled well by many candidates. A small number of candidates answered 寄宿 or 离开父母.

Generally, it was good to see many candidates scored very well in **Exercise 1**. Most candidates also showed care and precision in completing the form, for example not to put 他 or the name of the protagonist 赵子恒 in any of the answers. This is because all the questions in this exercise required the candidate to put himself or herself in the position of the protagonist to fill out the registration form.

Exercise 2 Questions 8 – 15

Questions in **Exercise 2** require precise and accurate short answers. Where questions testing implicit meaning, candidates are required to answer in their own words.

Question 8 was answered well by many.

Question 9 required two elements to be addressed one of which was tackled well by most candidates. Many candidates did not gain full marks due to lifting the whole sentence 财务问题跃升为除了学业因素之外学生退学的第二大原因 without separating the two reasons.

Question 10 was handled well by most candidates. Either 有机会读大学 or 有机会通过读大学跨越因为贫富差距导致的鸿沟 was awarded the mark. A small number of candidates wrote 有机会通过读大学跨越 which was not a grammatically accurate sentence and the meaning was incomplete, hence the mark was not awarded.

Question 11 required candidates to pay close attention to both the passage and the question. Some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote down economic factors to explain why there were more people applying for candidate loans. Some candidates answered 台湾社会也正在经历一场价值革命 without mentioning what value was changed, hence, the mark could not be awarded.

Question 12 was answered well by majority of the candidates.

Question 13 required candidates to explain the differences between candidate loan and other types of loan. Many candidates did not get the mark because they lifted the sentence 一般贷款不会涉及到使用公共资源, 就学贷款则不同 without explicitly stating the difference 就学贷款会使用公共资源 to show their understanding of the question.

Question 14 proved to be the most challenging in **Exercise 2**, as it required candidates to explain the implied meaning of 这些钱应该用在刀刃上 from government's perspective. Many candidates wrote 这些钱应该用在教育上 or 这些钱不应该被浪费 from parents' perspective, which was a misunderstanding of the question. However, more able candidates were able to show that they had understood the messages given in the passage and could then digest the information to produce answers using their own words such as 这些钱应该用在关键/重要的地方 or 这些钱应该用在最需要的学生身上.

Most candidates performed very well in **Question 15** and showed that they had understood the reading passage well.

Question 16 was also handled well by most candidates.

Question 17 required candidates to locate the fundamental measure 给年轻人提供更好的就业机会 rather than other measures such as 检讨学杂费审议机制 or 推动高教公共化 to help young people pay back candidate loans.

In short, candidates are reminded of the need to read the questions and passage carefully in **Exercise 2**. Furthermore, candidates should be reminded to give a precise response but not to lift whole sentences from the passage.

Exercise 3 Question 18 – 27

In **Exercise 3**, the multiple matching exercise, it is recommended that candidates practise skimming and scanning reading techniques and carefully consider each question, taking into account any distracting information in the texts. When writing their answer, candidates should clearly indicate the letter they have selected.

Most candidates demonstrated a good level of understanding of the task and there were some very successful attempts at the exercise. Overall, the whole range of marks was awarded, with most candidates achieving more than five marks. The greatest number of correct answers was to **Question 20**, and the most found wrong answers were **Question 23** and **Question 27**. Presentation of answers was generally clear. When writing their answers, candidates are reminded that if they change their mind, they should not write the second answer over the first, but should cross out the wrong answer clearly, and write their final choice alongside.

Exercise 4

Question 28

For **Question 28**, candidates were required to write a diary entry to talking about an argument they had with their friends. Candidates were asked to include the reason why they had the argument, his/her mood, as well as what he/she plans to do next.

Most candidates were aware that they should write between 100 and 120 characters, and successfully addressed the task given in the bullet points within the character limit.

Many candidates addressed all three bullet points well in their diary. Some missed a mark as they included their friends' mood but not their own.

In terms of language use, many candidates demonstrated that they could use simple grammatical structures effectively and precisely. In order to reach the highest mark band, candidates also needed to show that they can use more complex structures and sophisticated language accurately. Candidates are reminded not to use pinyin in their writing exercise.

Exercise 5

Question 29

Question 29 was found to be the most challenging part of the exam for many candidates. It was a task that invited candidates to present arguments for and against a topic, concluding with their own point of view.

This year, candidates were asked to write an article to their school magazine to express their opinions on whether it is important to do traditional activities with their families during the most important festival of the year.

Two written comments were provided as a stimulus to provoke candidates into thinking about the topic. Candidates were not obliged to include these and could use their own ideas and opinions. These were given as suggestions of the arguments which may be put forward, and it was expected that candidates would not simply re-state the ideas provided, but present their own ideas and opinions as well.

Most candidates could clearly state their opinions. Some misinterpreted the question and argued that doing traditional activities alone or with friends were not as important as being with families. Candidates should be reminded that they need to read the question carefully before planning their essays.

The key to success in this section is to make sure ideas are fully developed, using connective words where appropriate. Candidates needed to generate persuasive arguments and to engage the reader's interest to be awarded the highest marks. The highest scoring essays contained interesting personal opinions in respect of the given issue with well-developed ideas.

In conclusion, centres should continue to support candidates in writing Chinese characters accurately. Candidates should be reminded that the use of idioms and sayings only enhance the quality of the language when used appropriately.

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/02
Listening

Key messages

- Candidates are expected to identify the key information through a range of spoken material, including talks and conversations and to be able to respond to factual information as well as abstract ideas.
- In **Exercises 1 to 3** candidates are required to provide short answers to questions in Chinese characters or pinyin. They can write either in simplified or traditional characters. If a candidate has chosen to write their answers in pinyin instead of characters, there is no requirement to use tones on the pinyin, and the spelling of the pinyin does not have to conform to the standard spelling rules. However, the answer must be completely unambiguous within the context.
- Candidates should choose either the traditional or simplified character version of the paper. They must write all their answers within their chosen section of the question paper booklet. Candidates must not answer in both versions. If a candidate starts to answer in one part of the booklet by mistake and then moves to a different character version, he/she must cross out any work that he/she does not wish the examiner to consider.
- Candidates should attempt all questions; write clear and legible responses in the spaces provided in the question paper. Candidates should not write over their initial answers. Attempts that cannot be read, may not be credited.

General comments

Overall, candidates demonstrated confidence in their listening skills and performed well in this exam. Most candidates were well prepared for the exam and were aware of the requirements.

There were some excellent performances, and many candidates were able to provide brief written responses in Chinese (whether characters or pinyin). Most candidates could identify the relevant keywords from the texts and it was evident that some had taken notes while listening to the recordings to help them. Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully during the reading time and to keep the responses short, clear, and to the point to avoid any incorrect material that may lead to invalidating an otherwise correct response.

It was noticeable this year that answers in characters contained a range of inaccuracies and in some cases the wrong choice of character did not communicate the required elements and therefore could not be credited. Inaccuracies of Chinese are tolerated in this exam as long as that the message provided is communicated clearly and that the candidate's rendering of the answer does not give a different Chinese character/pinyin word with another meaning, which might confuse comprehension of the message.

Comments on specific questions

Exercise 1

Questions 1 to 6

Generally, candidates performed well in this exercise, which required them to write short answers in response to six questions. All candidates understood the rubric well. Candidates who performed well in this section had a thorough understanding of the question words, e.g. how, why, when, and the keywords in the question. In most cases, a short, direct response is most successful

Question 1

This question was quite well attempted. Most candidates understood the whole conversation and wrote down the correct answer 凉茶 in characters or pinyin with ease. The character 茶 was accepted as the variant form of 茶 and only the word 茶 without 凉 was considered as an incorrect answer.

Question 2

This was very well attempted. Many candidates wrote down the keyword 药店 accurately with the additional information 附近. Please note that as long as candidates do not invalidate their answer, additional information given in addition to the answer will not gain or lose credit as long as the keyword is correct.

Question 3

Candidates answered this question quite well. The expected response was 送货 or 配送. Some responses could not be credited where the keyword 送货 was missing. Other attempts such as 下载 APP could not be credited.

Question 4

Most candidates did well in this question. They responded to the question clearly by providing the means of transport, either 自行车 or 单车. Many candidates were able to include the verb 骑 either using the character or pinyin.

Question 5

Many candidates were able to identify the attitude in the dialogue and score the mark by giving the answer 抱歉 which means 'feeling apologetic'. Some candidates mixed up the attitude word with an action word by giving 道歉 as their answer which could not be credited.

Question 6

This question was generally well answered. Many candidates were able to provide the correct answer 租金.

Exercise 2

Question 7(a)–(h)

Candidates generally performed well in this gap-fill exercise where they heard a longer spoken extract about children learning to do household chores in their early years. Candidates are advised to read each question carefully before listening to the recording. Candidates should not only listen for the correct targeted detail in the recording but also check their responses carefully to make sure the word used makes sense in the sentence. Candidates should not include words which are already part of the sentence printed on the question paper before or after each gap as part of their answer.

- (a) Overall, this question was quite well attempted by most candidates. Many candidates understood the meaning of 羡慕 and were able to write the pinyin for one or both characters. Fewer candidates were able to write the characters correctly. The word 骄傲 was not mentioned in the extract if candidates listened carefully; 羡慕 was the correct answer and 骄傲 could not be credited.
- (b) This was consistently well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. The expected response was 电子科技, and 科技 was the key word to be credited not the word 科学.
- (c) Candidates should read the question sentence carefully before and after attempting their answers. The sentence structure '根据...得到...' indicated that an appropriate noun was required in the gap such as 调研/调查/研究 which has the meaning of 'investigation'.
- (d) The correct answer for this question was 失业, and the cue in this question was the word 率 after the gap in the question. Although the pinyin spelling of 失业 and 事业 is the same, they have

different tones. The answer 事业 could not be credited because it changed the original meaning of 'the unemployment rate'.

- (e) This question was well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. The correct answer was a verb phrase 整理卧室. Many candidates were able to write 整理 and 卧室 in characters or pinyin or a combination of characters and pinyin.
- (f) This question was about testing people's attitude towards problems. Most candidates were able to identify the key word 抱怨 by writing down characters or pinyin. Some responses such as 放弃 could not be credited because 放弃 is an action word and not an attitude.
- (g) This was quite well attempted by many candidates. Most were able to write 团队精神 in characters or pinyin. The combination of characters and pinyin was accepted. The wrong character 对 instead of 队 was accepted.
- (h) This question tested the understanding of implied meaning. Many candidates' response was 态度 which was only part of the answer. The key information 积极 or 表率 needed to be in the response to gain a mark.

Exercise 3

Question 8(a)–(h)

In this exercise candidates have to correct a detail in a sentence that contains a piece of incorrect information. Candidates heard a longer spoken text about two older ladies who, during their retirement, became champions in different fields. Candidates are advised to read each given sentence thoroughly before listening to the recording. It is also helpful for candidates to identify the type of word needed to correct the sentence, e.g. a noun/verb/adjective. Candidates also need to be careful not to rewrite the incorrect words already given in the sentence..

- (a) This was extremely well answered. Most candidates were able to write down the correct answer 亚洲 in characters. The wrong character 州 was accepted, judged to be more correct than incorrect.
- (b) This question was well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. The expected response was 丈夫 meaning 'husband'. Some candidates miswrote the character 夫 as 父 or 福 and although the correct character and the wrong character share the same pinyin, 父 means 'father' and 福 means 'fortune', therefore the mark could not be awarded to these answers.
- (c) This question required candidates to pay attention to detail in the context. Only the strongest candidates were able to pick up the correct answer from 没有合适的教练、丈夫的支持、社交媒体 and 运动生涯起步晚.
- (d) Again, it was important for candidates to understand the context and listen for the details in order to answer this question. The expected response 年轻心态 was mentioned at the end of Cheng Li's interview. Many candidates heard the phrase 'calm mindset of thirty years as one day' then jumped to the conclusion that 平静 was the correct response, which could not be credited.
- (e) This was generally well attempted by the vast majority of candidates. The expected response was 时装周 or its pinyin. Most candidates were able to write the answer in the form of characters.
- (f) This question was well attempted. Many candidates heard the key information 银白色的卷发 and answered confidently using characters or pinyin. Both words 白色 and 头发 were required in the response to gain the mark.
- (g) This question was also well attempted. Many candidates heard the key information 心里想着美 and could write the correct answer in either characters or pinyin. The verb 想 or 有 needed to be included in the response to gain the mark.

- (h) There was a high level of success here – the expected response 热爱生活 required candidates to summarise the conclusion of the extract. Candidates needed to listen carefully to the part ‘名誉再是最重要的’ which clearly showed that the word 名誉 was not the correct answer.

Exercise 4

Question 9(a)–(h)

Candidates answer multiple-choice questions in this exercise. Candidates listened to an extract from an interview taken during a live stream of an online book sale. Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the content and a number of them obtained full marks. Candidates should be encouraged to make it absolutely clear which option they wish to be taken as their final choice as the answer. It is also important to emphasise that if two boxes are ticked then, even if one of the responses given is correct, it will not be credited.

CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Paper 0523/03
Speaking

Key messages

- Examiners must ensure that they are familiar with the format of the test, the Topic Areas and the instructions given in the syllabus booklet well in advance of the speaking test period.
- The two-to-three minute Topic Presentation should be related to Chinese culture or an aspect of life in a Chinese-speaking country or community.
- In the Topic Conversation, questions should not require candidates to repeat what he/she has already said in the Presentation. In order to reach the higher marks for vocabulary and structures, new evidence needs to be heard that candidates can use a wider range of vocabulary and structures.
- Good questioning in both Topic Conversation and General Conversation should offer candidates the scope and the depth to use a wider vocabulary and structures, opinions and justifications for higher marks.
- Discussion in both conversation sections should include opinions, explanations and comparisons, as well as facts, to show the level and depth of their command of the language.
- At least two topics should be covered in the General Conversation: one from Areas A-B and one from Areas C-D as set in the syllabus.
- Tests must adhere to the timings as set out in the syllabus.
- A chosen sample and the relevant documents should be double checked before uploaded to Submit for Assessment website for external moderation.
- Tests must be conducted in Mandarin.

General comments

This year has seen the majority of centres carry out the tests well. Candidates gave a prepared presentation on a culture related topic of their own interest, followed by a conversation with teacher/Examiners asking a series of excellent searching questions, which provided candidates with opportunities to express personal ideas and justifications for higher marks. The third part of the test, general conversations showed that the key topic areas in the syllabus had well balanced coverage.

The best performances from candidates of all abilities were heard in centres where candidates were given opportunities to talk about their own interests and to defend their own opinions. In such centres, candidates had prepared their presentations well and the examiner pitched questions at a level and depth appropriate to this syllabus. Candidates gained marks for responding spontaneously to questions and contributing to the conversation by providing ideas and opinions in both conversation sections on a range of different topics. The strongest candidates also showed consistent and precise use of a good range of vocabulary and a variety of structures.

Conduct of the test

From the evidence heard in the uploaded samples, the vast majority of Examiners were familiar with the requirements of the IGCSE Chinese as a Second Language Speaking test and understood the importance of their role. A well-prepared Examiner ensures that his/her candidates are put at ease and given ample

opportunity to demonstrate the full range of their abilities. In a very few cases, the timing of sections was sometimes too short or too long, the questions were too shallow or 'closed' which severely affected candidate performance. Examiners need to be careful not to ask questions which will make candidates merely repeat material from their presentation.

Questions should be clear to facilitate natural and spontaneous conversation. In a small number of cases Examiners had a tendency to give extended responses themselves, and the question was then lost or not clear enough to the candidate.

Recorded sample: quality and composition

This is the first year for centres to submit their sample and the relevant documents on to Submit for Assessment website. While most centres have selected an appropriate sample and submitted a clear scanned Working Mark Sheet, in a number of cases, the quality of the recordings or the documents were poor which made the moderation process difficult. Centres are reminded to spot check the quality of all recordings and the scanned documents before uploading on to Submit for Assessment website.

Internal moderation

Where centres use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess the Speaking test, the coordinating Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the Examiners in the centre. If a particular Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the centre, all the marks for candidates examined by that Examiner must be adjusted before filling in the last column in the Working Mark Sheet. When a total mark has been changed as the result of internal moderation, the breakdown of marks should also be updated accordingly to avoid the confusion with a clerical error. Guidelines for the Internal Moderation of Speaking tests are available from Cambridge.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well understood and applied correctly. In cases where downward adjustments to marks were made, this was often where material from the presentation was repeated and so candidates had not presented new evidence of language/structures. Other examples were where the responses were more like a monologue or over-prepared conversation and so not natural and spontaneous.

Comments on specific questions

Topic Presentation

This part of the Speaking test has given candidates an opportunity to take initiative of their learning to choose an aspect of Chinese culture or life in a Chinese-speaking country or community to give a two-to-three minute presentation. In this year's recordings heard, topics were from those focusing on common traditions and customs, such as 马来西亚华人的文化风俗, 中国服饰, 中国武术, 中国象棋, 中国传统游戏, 二十四节令鼓, 七夕与情人节, 灯谜, 门神, 丹青 to more specific aspects like 汉语成语中的动物, 传统游戏和玩具, 古代中国的传统哲学之一: 道法自然, 孝道, 中国的祭祀文化, 华语电影的发展, 中国动画, 中国火车发展史, 中国文化的输出和输入. Food related topics have been continuously popular, such as 年夜饭常见的菜肴, 香港茶餐厅俗语, 奶茶, 咖啡和茶, 饺子 as well as education topics like 华文的传承, 马来西亚国际学校和华校的不同, 香港新冠疫情下的教育, 网上授课利与弊, 香港家庭教育方式, 双语教育的优势, 补习文化, etc. Others have chosen topics to reflect the life and change in the community and society, for example, 香港中学生的压力和解压方法, 青少年熬夜, 香港的穷人与富人, 疫情后的春节, 偶像团体对我国青少年的影响, 盲盒, 如何利用抖音传播中国文化, 综艺真人秀, etc. Presentations on a historic figure like 韩信, 秦始皇, 苏轼 西施 or a role model from modern society, for example 马化腾 have been linked to a wider range of the key topic areas to discuss in the Topic Conversations.

Centres are reminded that when a more general topic has been chosen by a candidate, for example, 网络的利弊, or 健康饮食, this has to be linked to an aspect of Chinese culture or life in a Chinese-speaking country or community. Candidates are also advised to avoid copying large amounts of material from different written

sources and using these in their presentations unchanged; the presentation should be the candidate's own work, and language drawn from other sources often leads to stilted or less coherent presentations.

Topic Conversation

In most cases, Examiners showed evidence of carefully listening to what the candidate had said and raised open questions that were closely and logically linked to the topic and the materials presented. This gave candidates the scope and the depth to provide opinions as well as to provide further information.

Many candidates responded well to these questions and were able to develop further.

Whilst it is expected that candidates would have thought about and prepared possible follow-up questions around their chosen topic, they should not be aware of actual questions in advance. It is important that Examiners include questions that are more unpredictable, and enable candidates to show their ability to respond spontaneously to achieve a higher category in the mark scheme.

General conversation

At least two topics chosen by Examiners for the General Conversation should not overlap with the content of **Part Two**, Topic Conversation, with one from Areas A and B, one from Areas C and D. A full list of the topics can be found in the Syllabus.

Majority of the Examiners were fully aware that the level of language and depth to which general topics should be discussed in this examination should be beyond that expected of a Foreign Language examination. In a few cases, questions were not challenging enough to allow candidates to express themselves fully. Centres are reminded that the treatment of topics such as 'Sports and exercise' should be more mature and in-depth at this level, for example, 你个人觉得做运动有哪些好处? 有什么坏处? or 有人说做运动会占用学习时间, 你觉得呢? rather than more basic questions such as where they play, with whom, how long for, etc. The best examining was when candidates were invited to express their opinions on a topic, or when Examiners raised a particular issue which gave candidates the opportunity to discuss both sides of the argument.