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FOREIGN LANGUAGE MANDARIN CHINESE

Paper 0547/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Generally, candidates performed well. As usual there were a number of exceptional candidates, but it was also pleasing this year to see that only a very small number of candidates experienced any real difficulties.

For the first time, there were a small number of candidates who performed well in the 'reading' sections of the Paper, but had significant problems with the 'writing' sections due to a very limited ability to write (as opposed to read) Chinese characters. Centres are reminded that no marks are given for *Hanyu Pinyin* or other romanisations, or for words in languages other than Chinese.

A small number of candidates based their answers to questions on their own views/interpretations (see comments on **Section 3 Question 32**). Centres may wish to remind candidates that if they are required to give their own views or interpretation this will be signalled in the question e.g. 'What do you think is...?'. In all other cases, the answers provided in the passage itself are required.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1 - 5

Most candidates performed very well here. Where errors were made, they were predominantly on **Question 5**, indicating that a small number of candidates may have difficulty with vocabulary relating to work roles.

Exercise 2 Questions 6 - 8

Most candidates answered correctly. Errors were made in a small number of cases, generally by candidates whose overall performance was not very strong.

Exercise 3 Questions 9 - 11

Very strong performance in these questions by almost all candidates. Where errors were made they were generally on **Question 10**, indicating that some candidates may have difficulty with vocabulary relating to modes of transport.

Exercise 4 Question 12

A good performance here with most candidates achieving full marks for this question. Almost all candidates appear to have clearly understood the type and length of answer required. There were very few examples of overly long answers this year and those were normally from the more exceptional candidates.

Among the reasons for candidates not achieving full marks, Centres may find it helpful to note the following: (i) listing one item for **12 (b)** rather than the two that the question requested (ii) difficulties writing Chinese characters.

Question 12 (b) asked 'What two things did you buy?'. Candidates were expected to indicate two different things to achieve the full two marks for content. A very small number of candidates answered that they bought 'two things' (*Liangjian Dongxi*). This was not accepted as an appropriate answer and no marks were awarded. A tiny number of candidates answered that they bought two of one thing e.g. two hats. This was awarded one mark, unless the candidate distinguished the items in some way e.g. one blue hat and one red hat, in which case it was awarded the full two content marks.

Section 2**Exercise 1 Questions 13 - 20**

Candidates performed very well in these questions. The majority of candidates responded in full sentences. A smaller number used one or two word answers, which was also acceptable at this stage in the Paper.

Exercise 2 Question 21

A good performance by almost all candidates this year. The exception was a small number of candidates who experienced serious problems, which, as noted in the general comments, was normally due to difficulties in writing Chinese characters.

Centres will note from the mark scheme that the majority of marks (10 out of the 15 available for the question) continue to be awarded for communication. Candidates were expected to communicate 10 items of content on the subjects indicated by the rubric for full marks. A small number of candidates wrote extremely brief answers and did not include sufficient points of content to gain the full 10 communication marks.

A very small number of candidates omitted to address one of the questions posed by the rubric ((a), (b), (c) and (d)), thereby losing one communication mark.

Section 3**Exercise 1 Questions 22 - 26**

Most candidates performed well in this exercise. There was no particular pattern of errors.

Exercise 2 Questions 27 - 32

Generally, candidates performed well, though this exercise did produce the most variation in responses. Comments on each question are given below:

Question 27 Candidates generally had no difficulties with this question.

Question 28 Most candidates had no difficulties.

Question 29 The question asked for details of 'sleeping habits'. A small number of candidates provided a more detailed description of a range of habits associated with lions and water buffalo. It would be helpful if Centres could remind candidates that it is important to answer the question asked, rather than copy sections from the passage at this stage in the examination.

Question 30 Candidates generally had no difficulties with this question.

Question 31 Most candidates had no difficulties here. However, a small number copied directly from the passage. Candidates should be reminded that they must answer the question asked, rather than simply copy sections from the passage and leave it up to the Examiner to choose what is relevant.

Question 32 Although most candidates performed very well, a small number provided answers that gave their own views/interpretation and did not supply the answers contained in the passage.

<p>Paper 0547/03</p>

<p>Speaking</p>

General comments

In most Centres the Speaking Test was conducted very well, with the Teacher/Examiner using skilful and sensitive questioning techniques to allow the candidates to show their skills. Most candidates demonstrated a high standard of spoken Mandarin Chinese. Both candidates and their Teachers are to be congratulated on the standards achieved.

There were some technical problems this year, with more Centres than usual failing to check the levels of the recording, making moderation difficult as the tapes were virtually inaudible. *It is vital that checks are made at the time of the Speaking Test to ensure that tests are properly recorded.*

In a few Centres the required questioning was not carried out in the Topic Conversation, and this seriously disadvantaged candidates.

Marking was generally consistent and fair, and, in all but a few Centres, moderation resulted in only adjustments.

Comments on specific questions

Role plays

Most Teacher/Examiners kept to the tasks provided for the Role plays, but a few departed from the situations as outlined in the Teachers' Notes Booklet and/or asked supplementary questions. This is not necessary and may disadvantage candidates, especially weaker ones who can easily become confused. It is important to remember that marks can only be awarded for carrying out the tasks stipulated on the Role play cards.

Role play A (cards 1, 2 and 3)

Most candidates had no problems with this role play.

Role play A (cards 4, 5 and 6)

The second question specifically asked how long the illness had been going on, rather than when it had started. Weaker candidates seemed unfamiliar with the expression *duochang shijian*?

Role play A (cards 7, 8 and 9)

Weaker candidates did not know how to give the direction of their school.

Role play B (cards 1, 4 and 7)

The final question about the difficulty of studying Chinese was a very standard one which all but the weakest candidates managed to answer.

Role play B (cards 2, 5 and 8)

Weaker candidates found the questions about a Chinese-language newspaper and the final question about their intended activities in Wuhan challenging.

Role play B (cards 3, 6 and 9)

All but the weakest candidates managed this role play situation well, with the term *mingsheng guji* being unfamiliar only to a few.

Topic/discussion

Although it was interesting for Moderators to hear some more ambitious prepared topics tackled this year (e.g. conscription, the contrast between different countries, racism) – as well as more familiar ones (e.g. school, my friend, holidays) – it is important to remember that topics dealing with politics or social and economic issues go beyond what is required at IGCSE and can disadvantage candidates if they do not possess the necessary linguistic skills and maturity of ideas.

Some Centres are still allowing candidates to talk for far too long before interrupting them to ask questions (one or two minutes of the topic presentation is enough); a few went to the other extreme of not allowing any development of the topic by the candidate before interrogating them. *Neither extreme allows the candidate to show his or her full mastery of the language.*

General conversation

In most Centres the Teacher/Examiner used skilful questioning to allow a relaxed but searching conversation to take place. However, some Centres are still failing to make the transition from the Topic/Discussion to the General Conversation clear. Doing so is helpful both to the candidate and to the Moderator: saying *xianzai ziyou jiaotan* or *xianzai disan bufen* are both acceptable ways of indicating the transition.

Paper 0547/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

As in previous years, the overall quality of candidates' work in the Continuous Writing test was very good. There was a large number of interesting and lively letters and stories, with a good range of vocabulary, structures and idiomatic phrases correctly used.

For each essay, the Mark Scheme is divided into marks for Relevant Communication, Accuracy (of Characters and Grammar and Structures) and Impression.

Although candidates were not penalised for writing too much in this examination, it should be remembered that quality not quantity is rewarded. The candidate filling a whole page with characters, without interesting elaboration of the guidelines and with a lot of repetition, will not do as well as a candidate who writes a shorter, more interesting essay using idioms and a good range of vocabulary and structures. Candidates writing significantly fewer than 150 characters are unlikely to do themselves justice.

Before attempting to express a line of thought, candidates should try to ensure they know most of the characters they will need. Whilst slips in individual characters do not detract greatly from the overall quality of a piece of writing, a whole section with a lot of inaccuracies is best avoided.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some very well-written letters. The majority of candidates took care to fulfil the requirements of the rubric, thereby achieving full marks for Relevant Communication.

- (a) Those who chose this question were able to demonstrate their knowledge of the characters for subjects, characters to describe people and feelings etc. Some of the 4 character phrases used to describe the school campus were excellent. The letters often read as if candidates were really thinking about their penfriend as they wrote; in these cases, the letters were very successful.

The requirements laid out in the rubric for this letter were straightforward, which made it accessible for all abilities. However, candidates choosing this letter needed to ensure that they still used Chinese to their maximum capability rather than just using simple structures. On the whole, they did so.

There are always problems in the use of *de*. Candidates should learn to acquire as much help as they can from the rubric. In this case, when the question stated 第一天过得怎么样, then there was no reason why the correct *de* should not be used in response.

- (b) A smaller number of candidates chose this question. Those who did write well-argued and thoughtful responses to the magazine, which should have convinced any editor of the validity of their views! This topic gave the confident candidate the opportunity to express more complex ideas.

Question 2

This question was designed to give candidates the opportunity to dream up their happiest day. Candidates needed to remember it was a cycling holiday. However, whilst the question was China specific, there was no need for the answer to be so. Essays on beach trips, shopping trips, restaurants etc did not require the inclusion of material specific to China. Candidates were not penalised for inaccuracy of information, as for instance when a bike ride from Beijing to Shanghai was undertaken in the space of one day! Some candidates had obviously visited or read about China and wrote well on the Great Wall or the Fragrant Hills in the autumn. Occasionally, candidates misread the question and wrote about the unhappiest day of their holiday. However, assuming, they wrote a good story, then those candidates only lost one mark for Relevant Communication.

Candidates scoring highly were those who wrote a good story using a wide range of vocabulary, sentence structures and idiom.

There was no need to copy out the question and then start the story: this wasted valuable time.

Although only a few candidates were affected, it is worth reminding all of them, that before trying to express a line of thought, they should ensure they know most of the characters they will need. In a few cases, a significant number of characters written in pinyin marred an otherwise successful essay. (It should be added that one or two characters written in pinyin is not something to worry about, particularly if a good range of characters has been used elsewhere.)

General comments on characters and grammar

The essays of many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters. The ones which were frequently wrongly written were as follows:

名字, 欢迎, 环境, 认识, 已经, 风景

There was some confusion between 可是/可以, 都/到, 后/候, 令/今, 住/往, 那/拿, 要/有, 在/再. However, it was most encouraging to note that characters which have caused significant problems in previous years were much more widely known this year, e.g. 知道, 漂亮, 名胜古迹.

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Chinese grammar. The most frequent problems which did occur are listed below:

- There was some confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地 with correct use of the latter two characters causing particular problems
- In some cases, 有 was used to indicate the past tense e.g. 我有去 for 'I have been'
- There was a tendency to overuse the particle 了.