

MANDARIN CHINESE (Short Course)

Paper 1341/01
Speaking

Key messages

- For the Prepared Topic, candidates should choose a topic that is of interest to them and which they are able to talk about with the language they have at their disposal.
- Candidates should prepare for the Topic Conversation by anticipating the kinds of questions an interested layman might ask about their chosen topic.
- In the conversation sections, candidates need to be prepared for straightforward questions but also ones which will stretch them.
- Candidates should be encouraged to get into the habit of developing their answers, even to straightforward questions.

General comments

There are two parts to this examination – **Section 1** is a Prepared Topic and Topic Conversation and **Section 2** is a General Conversation. The Prepared Topic is marked out of 15 with 10 marks for Content/Presentation and 5 marks for Language. The Topic Discussion and the General Conversation are each marked out of 15 with 5 marks for Comprehension and Responsiveness and 10 marks for Accuracy and Range of Language. In addition, 15 marks are awarded globally for Pronunciation/Intonation (5 marks) and Feel for Language (10 marks). This gives a total of 60 marks.

The Speaking examination is scheduled to last between 12-15 minutes. The Prepared Topic/Topic Conversation should last 5-7 minutes and the General Conversation should last 6-8 minutes. Examiners should keep to this time schedule.

At the beginning of each cassette or CD, Examiners should announce the Syllabus code, level and language and session (e.g. 1341, Pre-U Mandarin Chinese, Short Course, May 2013), cassette number (if relevant), Centre number and name, Date and Examiner Name (this information should be saved as a single separate file named 'introduction' in the case of CDs). At the beginning of each test, a candidate's number and name should be recorded. As the recordings will be listened to by a Moderator, the recording volume needs to be checked by the Centre in advance. Candidates usually speak more softly than the Examiner so to ensure they are clearly audible it may be necessary to place the equipment to favour them. There should be no significant background noise on the recording.

The Speaking examination is the opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate what he/she can do; the practice and preparation before the examination should focus on this. The topic for the topic presentation should be carefully chosen; the topic should be of interest to the candidate, and, equally importantly, should be something that it is well within the candidate's reach to talk about with the language at his/her disposal. Where this is not the case, a carefully prepared presentation can sound stilted, and a candidate can be left exposed if he/she is then unable to engage with the Examiner's questions in the Topic Conversation.

The Examiner should try to make the move from the Topic Conversation to the General Conversation clear to the candidate and, wherever possible, should also signal the transition between topic areas within the General Conversation. Clear indication of a change of topic area will help to avoid any candidate confusion in the General Conversation. Examples of the kinds of sentences that can be used by the Examiner are 你今天讲什么题目? and 现在我们讲一讲其他的题目, 好不好?

Candidates have time during the year to work on their Prepared Topic and, with practice should be able to present fairly fluently. This initial presentation should last a maximum of 2 minutes. Once the candidate has presented for 2 minutes, the Examiner should intervene so that the conversation can take place. Whilst tones and pronunciation are not expected to be perfect, the presentation should be easily understood by a

sympathetic native speaker; candidates should have a good feel for the rhythms and cadences of the language within the sentences. If, for any reason – e.g. nerves/hesitancy – the presentation lasts longer than 2 minutes, Examiners should not then shorten the Topic Conversation to compensate, as this will reduce the time available to the candidate to demonstrate what he/she can do and may affect his/her marks for this part of the test.

Short Course Examiners will have become used to understanding their own candidates and making allowances for their errors. Candidates should be reminded that they also need to be understood by the Moderator listening to the recording of their test. It is very natural for the Examiner to want to correct or help the candidate, but this must be avoided. It is also tempting for Examiners who know the candidates well to say too much themselves during the examination; again, this should be avoided. Candidates will score highly on the Prepared Topic when they also demonstrate they have prepared well in terms of both the content of the material presented, and in terms of the vocabulary and the structures used – e.g. good use of conjunctions, correct word order and timeframes etc.

In the Topic Conversation, the Examiner should play the part of the intelligent layman and should be genuinely interested to talk with the candidate about the Prepared Topic. Candidates' preparation should focus on anticipating and making sure they are ready to answer the kinds of general questions which could be asked by an interested layman.

During their course of study, candidates should have developed the vocabulary and linguistic skills to answer a range of questions both on their Prepared Topic and also during the General Conversation. Rather than asking a series of pre-prepared questions, the Examiner should seek to follow up what the candidate says so that a spontaneous and natural conversation develops. For the General Conversation, although sample questions are suggested in the syllabus, a majority of questions asked by the Examiner should **not** be taken directly from this list, though they should be of a similar standard. Although questions should not be complicated it is important that Centres ensure that candidates have had the opportunity to prepare for the General Conversation. If, for instance, the candidate is asked about the differences between UK and Chinese secondary education, it should not be the case that he/she is discussing this fairly general topic for the first time in the examination. This kind of topic should already have been discussed in class.

In both conversation sections, the Examiner should keep the flow of conversation going in as relaxed a manner as possible. Candidates need to be aware that in addition to straightforward questions, they will be asked questions to stretch them. Examiners must ensure that they do provide stretching questions, even for weaker candidates, as otherwise they are not providing the opportunity for all candidates to demonstrate the full extent of what they know in an examination at this level. While the aim of the Examiner should be to foster a genuine conversation, candidates should be advised to make the most of any opportunity to show the Examiner what they can do, in order to maximise their chances of good marks (these are obtainable when a natural conversation showing good use of vocabulary, structures and idiom takes place). At this level, candidates should be encouraged to develop their answers, even if they are asked a very straightforward question. If a candidate has areas of a topic where he/she feels particularly confident, it is up to the candidate to try to respond to questions in such a way as to be able to demonstrate this to the Examiner. Candidates should not worry that their answer to a question is factually untrue or does not really reflect what they think; the Examiner is interested in the level of their Chinese and will not judge them on what they think. Candidates should not worry if they do not understand a question; they should ask for it to be repeated or rephrased (this request should be made in Chinese); if they still do not understand it, the Examiner should try to move swiftly on to another question.

Cambridge Pre-U Mandarin Chinese is an examination for foreign language learners. Therefore, native speakers of Mandarin who have a well-prepared topic may, in all likelihood, score maximum marks. However, it is the standard required for the foreign language learner which should be borne in mind by the Examiner in the testing and marking of candidates.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Short Course)

Paper 1341/02
Chinese Culture

Key messages

- Questions are open to interpretation and it is important that candidates start by considering the wording of the question and outlining the approach they will take.
- There is often no right or wrong way to answer a question: it is up to the candidate to develop an argument and produce evidence to support it.
- As well as facts, answers should include discussion (backed up by examples), analysis and evaluation.
- To score highly, candidates must write a well-argued essay which is clear and focused.

General comments

Candidates are required to answer one question for this paper, chosen from either the *Topics in Chinese Culture* section or from the *Chinese Literature and Film* section. The answer is marked out of 30 with a mark out of 25 for content and a mark out of 5 for structure. In all cases, questions are open to interpretation; it is up to the candidate to develop an analytical response to the question with clear, specific examples/evidence (not generalized statements) to back up his/her argument. The Mark Scheme gives some indicative content for each question on the paper. However, there is often no right or wrong way to answer a question; it is up to the candidate to develop an argument and find evidence to support it. There were some very successful essays which demonstrated in-depth analysis backed up by specific reference.

Candidates should make sure they read the question very carefully before they start, making a careful assessment of what is asked for; they should plan their answer before beginning to write.

The essay should start with an introduction which should outline how the question is going to be tackled; candidates should avoid giving away the conclusion to their essay in their introduction. Subsequent paragraphs should develop a clear argument/line of thinking with specific, relevant examples/evidence to illustrate the argument, which should always link to the question, and the essay should finish with a strong conclusion.

Essays should not be a descriptive list of facts or the story of what happened in a period of history, a novel or a film. Candidates obviously need to have a lot of facts at their fingertips, but then need to be in a position to manipulate those facts to demonstrate their deeper understanding and analytical capability in response to the question. Evaluation is the key. Organisation of material is vital and an appropriate style should be used.

In order to be able to respond appropriately, candidates need to be exposed during their studies to a range of commentaries/view points about a particular topic and to have had the opportunity to discuss ideas with their teachers and other candidates to inform their interpretation of events or their interpretation of a book or film. It is only this exposure to a variety of views that will give candidates the ability to handle these essay questions with sufficient analysis.