

Examiners' Report/
Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2012

GCE Chinese (6CN03) Paper 1A

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Publications Code UA031908

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Introduction

This examination rewards candidates for their ability to understand and respond in writing to written Chinese. It also enables candidates to demonstrate their ability to write in Chinese and promotes knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and/or society through focused research. The paper requires candidates to complete four sections of the question paper in an allocated time of 2 hours 45 minutes. There was little evidence that candidates did not have sufficient time to finish all four sessions.

Summary

Section A is a reading assessment with a maximum of 10 marks. Candidates are required to read a piece of authentic Chinese text and to retrieve and convey information from it. To demonstrate that they can do this, they will need to answer a series of questions in Chinese.

Section B is a translation with a maximum of 10 marks. Candidates will be assessed on their ability to transfer meaning from a short passage written in English into Chinese. The theme of the text is linked to the reading text in Section A. A maximum of 10 marks will be awarded for quality of language in accordance with the published assessment criteria.

Section C is an essay writing assessment with a maximum of 30 marks. Candidates are required to write a 250-300 character essay in Chinese in response to an essay title that links to the reading text in Section A. A maximum of 30 marks is awarded in accordance with the published assessment criteria that rewards Content and Response and Quality of Language.

Candidates should be reminded of the importance of adhering to the specified word limit for the essay as there is little benefit gained from writing in excess of 300 characters. It is also important to remind candidates not to write a draft of their essay in other parts of the examination booklet as this often delays the marking process. All rough drafts should be completed on separate paper and handed in to the Invigilator at the end of the examination.

Section D is the Research-based essay which is awarded a maximum of 30 marks. Candidates are required to write a 250-500 essay in Chinese about an area of interest to them and which they have researched in advance. Candidates are allowed to set their own title for this activity but it is important that teachers agree the title with candidates to ensure that it relates directly to Chinese culture and/or society and to a specific topic area, film or book chosen from a prescribed list. A maximum of 30 marks is awarded in accordance with the published assessment criteria. This criteria rewards candidates for Organisation and Development, Completion of Task and Quality of Language.

It is imperative that candidates are fully prepared for the research-based essay as marks are often lost for irrelevance of the task which does not relate to a specific topic area.

Question 1

The total marks for this passage is 10 in accordance with the reading-specific mark scheme. The vast majority of candidates performed well. However, some of the errors were evidence of inadequate reading of the text.

Q1(a) (b) (c) and (d) caused little difficulties. Candidates who made errors and lost marks were rare. A very small number of candidates when given the example in response to (c) did not understand that '啦' is an exclamation word to express feeling and lost the mark by including it unnecessarily. Some candidates omitted the word '一天' which rendered the response to (d) insufficient.

Most candidates made mistakes on (e) (f) and (g). Quite a few candidates relied on lifting regardless if the details were relevant or not. A noticeable number of candidates repeated the same piece of extract from the text for (e) (f) and (g) which testified to a lack of adequate reading of both the text and questions. Candidates who had read the text thoroughly were able to establish the correct answers by distinguishing the meaning for each of the three different terms '課外班/课外班', '學科補習班/学科补习班' and '興趣班/兴趣班'.

Most candidates also answered (h) correctly. Some candidates lost mark because they omitted the word '担心或可能' and failed to convey the sense of uncertainty in the attitude or opinion expressed.

Question 2

The total mark for this paper is 10 in accordance with the assessment criteria for this unit. The passage proved accessible to most candidates. The majority of candidates achieved a mark of 5 and above.

Certain items of vocabulary seemed to have caused candidates trouble. A noticeable number of candidates were not sure of the term 'two fifth'. Quite a few translated it as '二分之五'. Some wrote '20%'. In a couple of extreme cases candidates understood it as 'children of 5 years old'. Some candidates were not able to take advantage and to associate 'fierce competition', 'happy to pay' and 'effective' with the vocabulary support provided in passage 1. Many seemed to have confused 'effective' with 'efficiency'.

Question 3

The total marks for this section is 30 in accordance with the assessment criteria that reward content and response and quality of language. Candidates were not unfamiliar with this test type. The majority of candidates had been well trained at AS level to respond to bullet points in the continuous writing. Even though this is a similar question type, writing for this section at A2 level involves more of a discursive essay involving discussion and opinions on both sides. Students should learn how to present opposing views and give comment on them. They should also learn to avoid relying simply on own personal view that contains polarisation and high emotion.

Many candidates were aware of the support from the text and information in Sections A and B with regard to ideas. However candidates who relied too heavily on lifting and copying text from Section A did not score highly in content and response. There was also evidence that some candidates who did not understand the terms '學科補習班/学科补习班' and '興趣班/兴趣班' in passage 1 tended to include more irrelevant materials in the writing.

Question 4

The standard of writing in this section was mixed. Examiners found it hard to apply the full range of marks as the number of research-based essays written as a piece of simple discursive writing or even free prose was still overwhelming.

Examiners also noted that the practice of "lifting" paragraphs of information or tales from the previous sections without a clear issue was still common.

Examiners were particularly concerned about an increase in the number of candidates copying the exemplar essay from the Edexcel website without evidence of extra or added personal work or researched materials, apart from rephrasing some insignificant sentences.

Candidate are advised to choose their titles carefully. It was already stated in the Examiner Report of 2010 that 'binding feet' is not an appropriate title for the topic 'Chinese tradition'. Although it was once a custom, it, as a way of acting, was broken and has not continued.

Grade Boundaries

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link:

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