

MANDARIN CHINESE (Short Course)

Paper 1341/01
Speaking

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 Conversation 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 the Language (10 marks). This gives a total of 60 marks for the Speaking paper.

At the beginning of each recording, Teacher/examiners should announce the Syllabus code, language and level and session (1341, Pre-U Mandarin Chinese, Short Course, June 2010), cassette/cd number (if relevant), Centre number and name, date and Examiner name. At the beginning of each test, the Teacher/examiner should also announce the candidate's name and candidate number. As the recordings will be listened to by an external Moderator, the recording volume needs to be checked in advance to ensure good sound quality. The microphone should be placed nearer to the candidate than to the Teacher/examiner as candidates' voices tend to be fainter. There should be no significant background noise on the recording.

It is helpful for the candidate and for the Moderator if the Teacher/examiner makes it clear when they are moving from the Topic Conversation to the General Conversation and also when they are moving between Topic Areas within the General Conversation.

Candidates have time during the year to work on their Prepared Topic and should be able with practice to present fairly fluently. The initial presentation by the candidate should last two minutes, but once the two minutes have elapsed, and if the candidate shows no signs of concluding the presentation, s/he should be interrupted by the Teacher/examiner so that the Topic 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. Teachers get used to understanding their own candidates and making allowances for their errors, but the candidate needs to be able to be understood by the Moderator listening to the recording as well. Candidates will score highly on the Prepared Topic when they also demonstrate good preparation both in terms of the content of their presentation and the vocabulary/structures used – e.g. good use of conjunctions etc.

In all cases, the best conversations ensue when the Teacher/examiner asks good, open-ended questions to which the candidate can respond on a variety of levels, depending on ability. Teacher/examiners should avoid filling any pauses by answering or commenting on the question they have asked, before the candidate has had the chance to formulate an answer, or by repeating back the candidate's answer, as if to check their own comprehension. There should not be any correction of what a candidate has said.

Teacher/examiners should avoid any potentially embarrassing questions and keep the flow of conversation going in as relaxed a manner as possible. They need to ensure that they do not pitch all questions at a level which the candidate is easily able to handle. The Teacher/examiner may have a view about the level of questioning which a certain candidate can cope with, but some stretch questions must be included, as otherwise the candidate is given no opportunity to access the higher range assessment criteria. At this level, candidates should be aware of the importance of developing their answers, even if they are asked a very straightforward question; Teacher/examiners should try to give them time to do so, rather than filling any slight pause with their next question. In this way, candidates will be given the opportunity to demonstrate what they can do, thus maximising their chances of good marks, which are obtainable with a natural, responsive conversation showing good use of vocabulary, structures and idiom.

The Speaking test is led by the Teacher/examiner, but the candidate should be doing most of the talking and the Teacher/examiner should be flexible enough to adapt questioning to a candidate's line of thought, so that

a genuine conversation ensues. A Teacher/examiner should not use the same set of questions for one candidate as has been used for a previous one.

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 Teacher/examiner as the testing and marking of candidates takes place.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Short Course)

Paper 1341/02
Chinese Culture

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. Their 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 (not generalized statements) to back up his/her argument. The Mark Scheme gives some indicative content for the questions on the paper, but this is not intended to be prescriptive and is by no means exhaustive.

The majority of candidates chose to answer on *Chinese Literature and Film*; there were some very successful essays which demonstrated in-depth analysis backed up by specific reference.

Essays should start with an introduction which should outline how the question is going to be tackled. Subsequent paragraphs should develop a clear argument/line of thinking with specific, relevant examples to illustrate the argument and essays should finish with a strong conclusion.

Essays should not be a list of facts. 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. Organisation of material is vital and an appropriate style should be used.

It is intended that the study of a Chinese text or film will give candidates a valuable insight into Chinese culture and an understanding of the influences that have resulted in the China we see today. Despite the unfamiliar settings, these texts/film reflect human experience and therefore give expression to ideas and feelings we can all understand, which is reassuring to candidates. However, it is essential that candidates are also aware of the 'differences' and without an understanding of the historical and social background of the works of literature/film studied, their interpretations will be flawed. For example, in the case of *Yellow Earth*, candidates will need to have a good grasp not only of the history of the period in which the film is set, but also of the context in which the film was made and released.

In order to be able to respond to these essay questions 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.