



**General Certificate of Secondary Education
June 2012**

Chinese (Mandarin)

46703

(Specification 4670)

Unit 3: Speaking

Report on the Examination

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General comments

This was the second year of the GCSE award in Chinese Speaking and the response to this specification continues to be very positive. Evidence indicates that the specification allows teachers the scope to engage their students with attainable goals and flexible content and it was pleasing to see a big increase in the number of schools/colleges that entered students this year. There was strong evidence that almost schools/colleges understood the requirements of the specification and applied the criteria correctly. In particular, some schools/colleges who had used this specification last year administered and carried out the tasks to a much higher standard this year. However, in a minority of cases the detailed instructions for the submission and conduct of the test seemed to be misunderstood or partly implemented and this sometimes delayed the moderation process. Fortunately, most schools/colleges responded promptly to requests for these matters to be resolved. Teachers should be aware that there is a great deal of help available for the preparation, teaching and assessment of Speaking through e-AQA, on the AQA website:

http://web.aqa.org.uk/qual/newgcse/languages/new/chinese_materials.php?id=08&prev=08.

Support is also available from the Assessment Adviser, who is always willing to give advice on any aspect of the specification, to ensure that administration and the tests are carried out appropriately. Teachers' attention is drawn to the specific comments below.

Tasks / Administration

Tasks and Task Sheets

Once again, it was very pleasing to see a wide variety of tasks being offered. Most schools/colleges used the AQA exemplar tasks provided in Appendix E of the specification, some used an adapted version of these exemplar tasks, and some produced their own tasks which reflected their students' individual learning needs and interests. In some schools/colleges several unpredictable questions were prepared and appeared very accessible, enabling students of all abilities to respond successfully. The majority of Task Sheets were produced in an excellent, professional way, meeting the requirements of the specification. It should be emphasised that the Task Sheet is a MUST when completing the Speaking tasks. Some schools/colleges were not clear about the difference between the Task Sheet and the Task Planning Form. As a consequence, they thought that the Task Sheet was optional and did not submit it. Some schools/colleges were not clear about the need for unpredictable questions. As a consequence, some teachers did not prepare any unpredictable questions, wrongly explaining, 'all questions asked during the exam were unpredictable'. Teachers must ensure that the requirements of the specification are fully understood and fully followed. Some teachers did not change any element of the unpredictable tasks when they used the AQA exemplar materials and this must be avoided, because the tasks are in the public domain and the students might have seen them. Some teachers used the identical unpredictable questions for all students when they devised their own tasks. It should be noted that teachers can use the same Speaking tasks with a number of students but they must use different unpredictable questions to ensure that the unpredictable question is not known to any student before they carry out the task.

Furthermore, teachers are reminded that the unpredictable questions should only appear on teacher-examiner's sheets and a copy of the unpredictable questions must be included when submitting the materials for moderation. When devising their own tasks, for those students aiming to achieve higher grade teachers must ensure that tasks offer the opportunity to express and explain ideas and points of view (minimum two), to narrate events, producing

extended sequences of speech and to use successfully a variety of time references, ie two or more time frames must be used.

Administration

Most schools/colleges submitted their work in good time, some even well in advance of the deadline, and all the relevant paper work was correctly enclosed with the audio CDs/memory sticks or cassettes, clearly presented, and efficient administration contributed to the smooth running of the moderation process. However, some schools/colleges sent GCSE Unit 3, 46703 Speaking materials to the Unit 4, 46704 Writing examiner's address by mistake, which caused inconvenience and long delays in the moderation process. Some schools/colleges did not seem very clear about what materials should be included. As a consequence, sometimes there needed to be requests via emails, telephone and letters for the missing materials, such as Task Sheets for the recorded (SR) tasks, a copy of unpredictable questions, Candidate Record Forms, Centre Declaration Sheets (fully signed) etc. As mentioned above, some schools/colleges seemed to confuse the Task Sheets with some other forms eg the Task Planning Form (optional) and the Candidate Record Form. Occasionally there were arithmetical errors when adding the itemised marks, and clerical errors when transferring the marks to the CMFs (Centre Mark Form) for SR and SU. Some schools/colleges should be reminded of the responsibility to ensure that the cassettes, CDs, memory sticks are clearly labelled with examination details. Furthermore, care should be taken when preparing to post the submission to ensure that cassettes/CDs are well packaged. In particular, CDs need to be carefully packed to avoid damage in transit. Schools using peripatetic teacher-examiners, should make sure that they read the requirements of the Specification. The moderator was very grateful to those schools/colleges using checklists to ensure correct submissions and to avoid missing materials.

Recordings

As happened last year, the majority of schools/colleges provided excellent recordings, ie one student per cassette, or one student per track, which contributed to a more efficient moderation process. However, some teachers did not clearly indicate each track on the CD for each student, which rendered finding specific students for moderation very difficult indeed. Sometimes the recording quality was variable, in some cases sound quality was poor or very low or with some background noise, the students were not always clearly audible. Teachers are reminded to ensure quiet conditions for recording and if an external microphone is used for recording, please try to place it to favour students rather than the teacher-examiner. Furthermore, teachers should make sure that centre and exam details and the name of the teacher-examiner are recorded at the beginning of each cassette, CD or memory stick and that, before each test, the teacher-examiner announces the student name, number and task title. It is very important to check that students have been recorded before submitting cassettes, CDs or memory sticks.

Examining technique

Timings

Most schools/colleges kept excellent timing - between 4 and 6 minutes as required, however, in some schools/colleges, situations such as less than 4 or more than 6 minutes occurred, which affected the students' marks and this applied particularly to Communication. If a test was too short, the students did not have sufficient time to demonstrate their ability, eg if a

test is less than the minimum 4 minutes, students could not get full marks for Communication. Any information given after the maximum time of 6 minutes cannot be credited, eg unpredictable questions at the end. Therefore, teachers are reminded of the importance of timing during the exam.

Performance

There was strong evidence from the recordings that the majority of teachers did an excellent job, in a very professional way, in encouraging their students to perform very well. Generally, students were given sufficient opportunities to give of their best and to respond to all questions including the unprepared questions. It was a pleasure to hear such good, able students! Obviously teachers worked very hard and their students had clearly been well-prepared for their tests. These were well conducted and encouraged/allowed students to demonstrate their abilities. The topics were appropriately chosen, well presented, well communicated and the range of tasks enabled students of all abilities to respond successfully. Information and events involving two or three different time references flowed naturally and coherently, including views and accurately using the learnt vocabulary, grammar structures including four character expressions. The examining was sympathetic and teacher-examiners put students at their ease. Teacher-examiners worked very hard to get the best out of the less able students.

There was no significant problem with the coverage of bullet points in the tests, although sometimes this did happen due to timing problems. However, there did appear to be some examining issues which need to be addressed next year. The test must be conducted in the target language – Mandarin Chinese. Some teachers used English/Chinese bilingual language to ask questions, which is not allowed. Patience is needed, to allow students some thinking time and to let them complete their answers before moving to another question. Students should not be distracted by the teacher correcting their answers or making other comments during the test. Questions need to be carefully prepared, particularly to avoid repeated questions which might confuse students. Teachers should always remember to prepare and use the unpredictable questions in the test.

Assessment

Evidence indicated that almost all the marking was broadly in line with the AQA standard. Teachers clearly understood the assessment criteria. However, sometimes, marks awarded appeared slightly severe this year, particularly in the category of Communication and Range and Accuracy of Language. Students can be awarded the higher mark band 9 -10 in Communication if they can speak with confidence and narrate events where appropriate including a minimum of two opinions. When students produce a wide range of vocabulary, using complex structures and two or more time references to describe present, past and/or future events and actions, with only some minor errors in the more complex structures, they should be awarded the higher mark band 9–10 for Range and Accuracy of Language. When marking, teachers should be aware that the mark scheme does not contain any half marks: eg the higher mark band of 9–10 for Communication, students can be awarded 9 or 10 marks, '9.5' is not available.

Task Planning Form (TPF)

As the TPF is optional, many students did not use it. Most students who used the TPFs did so effectively. The 40 word or Pinyin maximum was almost always adhered to and caused no significant problems. The moderator was very pleased to see that no drawings, photos, icons or visuals of any kind, or full sentences or long phrases were used this year.

As stated at the beginning of this report, overall, the response to GCSE Chinese Speaking, in this second award of the new examination, proved to be very positive.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.

Convert raw or scaled marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by using the link below:

UMS conversion calculator: www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion.

Teacher Online Support

There will no longer be face-to-face teacher standardisation meetings in the Autumn Term. These will be replaced by teacher online standardisation, which will be available on AQA's website from September 2012. Teacher online standardisation is a web-based system available at anytime and anywhere with an internet connection. It will have a selection of speaking tasks from the June series and teachers will be able to mark them and check their marks against the correct marks awarded and to read the accompanying commentaries and other supporting documentation. This means that all teachers of Chinese (Mandarin) within a department will be able to mark the tasks, either together or independently, and to discuss those marks without having to take time out of school. To use the system teachers log onto e-AQA (Examinations Officers have access to e-AQA) and select 'teacher online standardisation' from the list of teacher services and choose 'Chinese (Mandarin)'. For more information please see:

<http://web.aqa.org.uk/sipport/teacher-online-standardisation/index.php>

Recording the GCSE Speaking Test

Recording the GCSE Speaking test on cassette tapes will be permitted for the last time in summer 2013.