

# GCSE

# CHINESE

Unit 4 Writing  
Report on the Examination

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## General Comments

This year's response to the Chinese Writing examination was very positive. On the whole, teachers administered and carried out the examination well. There was good evidence that the majority of teachers understood the requirements of the specification and applied the assessment criteria correctly. It was pleasing to see a wide range of tasks, covering different contexts, in this year's examination.

Overall, the standard of work submitted is varied, ranging from short responses with simple sentences and occasional opinions, through to detailed and generally accurate responses using a variety of vocabulary, structures and time references/tenses.

A few schools did not submit all of the required tasks and/or documentation. More importantly, a small number of school designed tasks did not give students much flexibility to develop. All of these could affect students' marks. Teachers should be aware that there is a great deal of help available during the preparation, teaching and assessment of tasks through e-aqa, accessed via the AQA website.

## Administration

Schools' administration was on the whole excellent. With a small exception, the majority of schools dispatched the examination materials on time, with the relevant forms included and correctly completed. However, schools are to be reminded of the following: there must be an attendance list enclosed with the materials and tasks should be sent to the correct AQA examiner. Some schools sent their Writing tasks to the Speaking moderator, and vice-versa. Schools should ensure that the task titles have been written in all the appropriate places and make sure the tasks titles are identical on each document. Moreover, schools must ensure that the work itself has been labelled 'Task 1' and 'Task 2'. Schools do not need to attach a task sheet to each piece of work. Where a number of students have done the same task, one copy of each task submitted is enough. Schools are reminded to indicate on the reverse of the Candidate Record Form (CRF) if a Task Planning Form (TPF) has been used or not.

Schools are encouraged to:

- enclose the attendance list with clear indication that the student is absent or not. A few schools did not submit the attendance list and on some there was no indication if the student was absent or not, which caused some confusion.
- send the work in the same student order as on the attendance list, as would be done for a terminal examination paper
- collate each student's work – ie the two tasks - together with the CRFs and the TPFs. The use of treasury tags or stapling the work is preferred, as paper clips and plastic wallets cause some handling problems.
- make sure the examiner receives the full controlled assessment task sheet relevant to the student or group. Marking cannot begin until the examiner knows what the students are writing about. There were task titles missing this year, which delayed marking.
- remind students to write neatly, as poor handwriting can affect marks.
- check that the students have correctly filled in and signed the CRF and the TPF (if used). There were some students' or teachers' signatures missing on the relevant forms this year, which could have been avoided if the schools had thoroughly checked all documentation.

- adhere to the deadline of **7 May** by which all materials should be sent to the AQA examiner.

### Task Titles

A wide range of titles were used this year, with schools devising imaginative and interesting tasks for students. Task titles and bullet points should always be in English.

Many schools chose to use AQA exemplar tasks. Schools which designed their own tasks mostly gave students scope to develop their answers using different time references/tenses, which is pleasing to see.

However, a few problems regarding task titles need to be addressed:

- A small number of schools' use titles such as "Write an article", "A blog", "Write a letter", which do not contain any specific context. Lengthy but vague titles should be avoided. The task title should be specific and concise eg "Write an article for a magazine about your healthy lifestyle".
- When schools design their own tasks, they must make sure all the bullet points are relevant to the task title and allow students to develop using different time references. A couple of schools used the task title "A Trip Abroad", but one of the bullet points was "Describe your home country and the sights it offers". This misled the students somewhat and caused a lot of answers to contain irrelevant content in relation to the task title.
- A couple of schools used the Context from the specification as the task title, eg. "Home and Environment"; "Local Area", which is too broad.
- A small number of schools used the Speaking titles for the Writing. Schools must remember to change the tasks into appropriate language. Schools can adapt Speaking titles and Writing titles for the Controlled Assessment, as long as the content is different, however, they must remember to change the task so that it is appropriate to the skill being assessed.

Overall, schools must remember that the title rather than the bullet points defines the content of the task, thus the task title must have a specific meaning on its own. If teachers are not sure about their task titles, they should contact their Controlled Assessment Adviser for help. AQA sends out the details of Controlled Assessment Advisers to schools each year. Alternatively, details can be obtained from the Languages team at: [mfl@aqa.org.uk](mailto:mfl@aqa.org.uk).

### Task Planning Forms

Once again, many students did not use Task Planning Forms (TPFs) as this is optional. Most students who did use the TPF were able to produce good pieces of work, suggesting that the forms are helpful. In order to maximise students' performance, teachers could advise their students to use the TPF according to their ability. Schools are reminded that task titles need to be on the TPF and teachers must make sure these task titles are exactly the same as the ones on the Candidate Record Forms.

Furthermore, there were still a few students who exceeded the maximum of 40 words/characters. A small number of students wrote sentences on the TPFs, which was very disappointing, as this affected the student's marks. Credit cannot be given for full sentences on the TPF. There were very occasional cases where students had simply put a line or cross through illicit information on the TPF and this is not acceptable. Teachers must make sure unacceptable support is completely obliterated.

It is key that schools should make sure the Task Planning Forms are produced properly by

referring to the specification. One character is counted as one word, one pinyin is counted as one word if there is no space in between. For example: 老师 are two words; lǎoshī is one word because it indicates a complete concept the same as “teacher” in English.

### Drafts

Once again, a number of factors need to be emphasised:

- Students are not *required* to write a draft at Stage 2
- If a draft is produced, it must be done under direct teacher supervision, must **not** be commented upon and must be kept in school. This also applies to partially-completed drafts
- At Stage 2, students have access to all resources (**except the teacher**) to assist their planning and preparation. This may include, from Stage 1, their own (corrected) written work, worksheets, text books, on-line resources (other than translation software) etc. All of this is acceptable, within the 6 hours, in school and at home.

### Use of dictionaries

Effective use of bilingual dictionaries was variable. Students should be trained in the use of bilingual dictionaries, in order to avoid misuse and potential loss of marks.

### Word-processed work

There were examples of schools who word-processed one of the pieces of Writing this year. Due to the characteristics of the input methods available, AQA accepts all input methods, providing this does not produce a sentence. The word-processed work contained quite a few mistakes due to choosing the characters on the drop down list the computer software supplies. This prevented students from scoring higher marks for Content, as incorrect characters caused misunderstanding. Schools planning to word process one assignment must remind students to pay more attention to this issue.

### Assessment

#### Content

The majority of students produced relevant, detailed pieces of work in this year’s examination. They were less successful when the tasks included bullet points not totally relevant to the title. Teachers must remind their students that when there are two or more aspects to the title, students must make sure both or all the aspects are covered equally in order to achieve high Content marks. For example, a title such as “Holiday experiences and preferences” where most students spend much of the task describing their holidays but not preferences, affects the Content mark, as the piece is not fully relevant to the task title. Able students may not demonstrate their true ability if they are not writing strictly to the task title.

In addition, students should be encouraged to write more information if they are more able, as the shorter the assignment, the more difficult it becomes to meet the upper bands of the assessment criteria for Content and, as a consequence, other categories. There is no upper limit on the number of words. The examiners will read and mark the whole piece but it is not in candidates’ interest to write much beyond the word guidance.

Schools should make their students more aware of the assessment criteria, as some lost marks in having written something irrelevant to the task. It was clear that some native speakers were not well prepared for this year’s examination, as some students answered the questions in bullet point style, eg, just one or two sentences for each bullet point, with no development in the assignments, and consequently they failed to score higher marks.

### Range of Language

Most students were well-prepared and there was effective use of a variety of tenses, including complex structures and sentences and a range of connectives. As mentioned previously, many students managed to develop their answers using different time references/tenses rather than just the default one. Common errors are in word order, tense formation, inappropriate use of conjunctions and adjectives. Students should be reminded to use different linking words/phrases in the Writing, rather than using repetitions.

Although students should use Chinese for the place names etc, not all places have direct translations in Chinese. Occasional English words indicating places are accepted in the marking, however, students are expected to be able to use Chinese to rephrase the name of the places rather than repeat the name in English. For example, a sentence like “我家在Glasgow, Glasgow很小, Glasgow很美”, could have varied the language eg “我家在Glasgow, 它虽然很小, 但是它很美。” or “我家在Glasgow, 它很小, 它很美” would be better than repeatedly using the English words. A small number of students simply responded to the bullet points in the task, no development was given and the language they used was very basic.

### Accuracy

In general most students produced work that was accurate. The main errors were in relation to tense formation, mistakes in character writing and omissions of verbs including particle for indicating actions completed in the past, which often impeded communication. More commonly, students made mistakes due to the influence of their mother tongue. A common issue was that some students could not remember characters. Students should be reminded of the effective use of the Task Planning Form and making sure the characters on the form are accurate: It was a shame to see students make mistakes on the Task Planning Form and consequently, mistakes occurred in the assignments.

### Advice to Students

Below is some advice you may wish to provide to your students:

- Once the title of your task is known and your teacher has given you the bullet points to use in your task, think carefully about how you intend to write about each one and prepare to write as much as you can within the guidelines from the specification and as clearly and accurately as you can.
- Using a variety of vocabulary and structures will improve your mark, if you can express opinions clearly and, when you can, justify these opinions by giving a reason. It also helps if you can use different time references to say what you did in the past, and/or what you are going to do or will do in the future.
- You are allowed to use a Task Planning Form on which you may write up to 40 characters or 40 words in English and you may use this form at Stage 3 (once it has been checked by your teacher to make sure you have only included words/phrases which are allowed). Be sure to write characters or spell words accurately on this sheet, so that they will be accurate when you write up your piece of work. It might be wise to include the same order of bullet points on your Task Planning Form as the teacher gave you on the Task Sheet and then jot down a few characters/words next to each one. If you are worried you may forget what the character means, you could write the English translation next to it, as long as the English word is included in your final count. Remember no complete sentences are allowed on the Task Planning Form.
- You are allowed to use a dictionary when you write up your piece of work. You should use this to look up occasional words, do not waste too much time looking up lots of words; you

only have 60 minutes and you need to write as full a response as you can.

- Be sure that everything you write is relevant to the title and use different vocabulary and structures.
- Try to write as much as you can about each bullet point, expressing opinions and developing information on the task you are writing about. However, you must keep an eye on the clock. If you follow the order of the bullet points provided, this should bring a well-organised structure to your piece.

### **Conclusion**

Student performance was generally pleasing in the Writing Controlled Assessment tasks. It is hoped that the advice in this report will support teachers in ensuring that they help their students produce their best work and that infringement of the rubric in the specification does not prohibit them from achieving the results they deserve.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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

### **Converting Marks into UMS marks**

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](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion)