

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

GCSE Chinese (1666/1667)

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## Paper 1 - Listening and Responding

Overall the standard of entry was good. Weaker candidates were all able to answer at least parts of each question. Examiners were delighted to see the increase in the number of candidate taking the examination, who had been generally well prepared by schools.

### **Question 1**

All candidates made a good start to the examination and scored well although a tiny number of candidates confused 'soft drinks' with 'water' and/or 'bread' with 'noodles'.

### **Question 2**

This question was very well attempted by all candidates across the ability range.

### **Question 3**

Part (i) and (ii) caused no particular difficulties for all candidates. Part (iii) was about school subjects. It was a familiar topic but 'Physical Education' was tested for the first time and had invited more incorrect answers. Part (iv) meant to discriminate and it did. Candidates had to demonstrate the skill of listening for gist to be able to tick the correct answer 'home'. A noticeable number of candidates opted for the wrong answer 'geography lesson'. Part (vi) was about illness, a topic that weak candidates did not always have confidence in. Many of them were only able to identify 'headache'.

### **Question 4**

Many average and able candidates scored full marks on this question. Some weaker candidates seemed to have relied on guesswork and ticked 'dragon dance' in part (i) instead of the correct answer 'moon cake'. In part (vi), a noticeable small number of candidates opted for either A (the toddler) or B (the boy, suggesting that candidates had difficulties with the Chinese terms and concepts for younger and elder sister or sister and brother.

### **Question 5**

The question was well attempted as this being a familiar topic on 'jobs'. It was (i) that had invited more incorrect answers from weaker candidates who were only able to identify 'teacher' but not 'actor' as the two correct answers. Some learner candidates also responded less confidently on (iii) despite 'businessman' had been used frequently in previous papers.

### **Question 6**

The responses were mixed. The more able candidates were able to identify all items correctly. Some of the average candidates had problem with part (ii) 'taking drug'. But the weaker candidates were still able to score 1 to 2 marks on (iv) and (v).

### Question 7

This question caused little difficulties for the vast majority of candidates.

### Question 8

This question posed no problems for candidates.

### Question 9

Most candidates this year showed that they had been better prepared for the four directions. Examiners noted that some candidates wrote the pinyin 'dong', 'nan', 'xi' 'bei' next to 'N E S W' in the picture clue. This obviously helped them to distinguish between individual answers when they listened to the extract.

### Question 10

This last question required candidates to answer in English. Examiners noted a marked improvement in candidate performance across all ability.

- (a) Whilst responded well by the majority, some of the weak candidates relied on guesswork and made up their own answers.
- (b) Some candidates wrote 'small', which was not the same as 'not tall' and lost mark.
- (c) A sizeable number of candidates either had difficulty spelling 'engineer' or misunderstood the job as 'mechanic' or 'architect' and lost mark.
- (d) A fair number of candidates described the mother as working at a 'call centre' or 'telephone factory' and was not able to score the mark.
- (e) Where candidates failed to score it was because they omitted the key word 'stories and rendered the answer incorrect'.
- (f) The responses were very mixed. The more able candidates were able to identify the correct answer 'hardworking'.
- (g) The notion of 'thousand' appeared to cause problem for some of the average to weak candidates.
- (h) This was tackled competently across the ability range.
- (i) Very well responded; the majority of candidates chose 'library' over 'book shop' in their answer.

## Paper 2 - Speaking

The overall performance of candidates is very good. The requirements of this paper with regard to the topics, suggested questions, timing & assessment criterion are similar to previous years'. There is a continual increase of candidates from the non-native speakers, and their performance has been improving. It is encouraging to see that many of them achieved high grades with a few exceptions that were obviously not well prepared.

### Comments on Candidates' performance

Candidates were generally well prepared for this exam. Many of them managed to convey their ideas and opinions with appropriate lexis and structures with the guidance of the teacher-examiners in the conversations.

However, some teacher-examiners allowed candidates to carry on in monologue for the first topic without any interactive questions asked, thus affecting the mark scores. Some did not ask higher-tier questions to elicit ideas and opinions from the candidates, hence affecting the performance of candidates.

It was also discovered that some candidates were so well prepared that they were able to give a fluent and well-structured narrative immediately after the question was asked, e.g. questions on uniform, school environment, facilities. Some answers were identical. However examiners would appreciate candidates' own answers which reflected their views and abilities more than pre-learnt ones. Extra merits would be given to language showing individuality rather than fluency in the narration.

There were some discrepancies found in the candidates' performance, some of which were replicas from past years:

- Candidates gave a monologue in topic 1, some even extended to topics 2 & 3 without any interactive conversations with the teacher-examiner
- "Question & answer" mode rather than interactive conversations
- Not responsive enough - just give one or two words without expansion and opinions. Some elaboration would have enhanced the scores
- Insufficient vocabulary on describing people, places or events. Some even failed to understand terms, e.g. "season" [ 季節 / 季节 ], "Part-time job" [ 兼職 / 兼职 ], "family relationship" [ 家人關係 / 家人关系 ], "savings" [ 儲蓄 / 储蓄 ] which were found in the core vocabulary bank.



## Comments on Administration

- Topic 1 was chosen by the Candidate, and he / she was allowed to give a talk up to 1 minute on the topic chosen. Then the teacher-examiner had to intervene and carry out an interactive conversation basing on the contents spoken. Some teacher-examiners allowed candidate to carry on with the monologue, hence candidates were deprived of chances to demonstrate their interactive language abilities
- "Reading" out questions from the examiner's handbook, resulting in a series of "questions and answers" rather than "asking" questions orally to create a genuine conversation.
- Lack of competence in using Cantonese / Mandarin by teacher-examiners or candidates often caused communication problems and affected candidates' performance. As suggested in previous years, candidates should be tested in the dialect (Cantonese / Mandarin) they are prepared for.

## Comment on the topics

All 4 topics were well attempted by candidates. The following questions are well answered:

- Topic A - In the UK & Abroad  
Candidates generally answered well on weather, home-town and trips abroad with detailed description related to personal experience. Many were well prepared for the additional higher questions on "If you had a lot of money, where would you like to go? Why" and came up with very interesting answers.
- Topic B - Education, Training & Employment  
Questions on school life, timetable, subjects and uniform were rather straight forward, and the majority of candidates managed to give detailed answers.
- Topic C - House, Home & Daily Routine  
This appeared to be the most favourite topic chosen by candidates, and most of them did well on sub-topics such as description of their houses / rooms, family members, routines, likes & dislikes.
- Topic D - Media & Social Activities  
Many candidates managed to give the names of their favourites e.g. hobbies; music, TV Programs, books etc, but not many gave details and extensions.

Some problems were found in the following areas:

- Topic A- In the UK & Abroad
  - (i) Some candidates did not know the terms “season” [ 季節 / 季节 ], “on holiday” [ 渡假 ], “Souvenir” [ 紀念品 ], “country” [ 鄉村 / 乡村 ], “town” [ 城市 ] and failed to answer the questions
  - (ii) Questions on “Where did you go on holiday last year?” and “Where are you going on holiday this year” involve different tenses. Some candidates mixed up the past tense [ 去了 ] and the future one [ 會去 / 会去 ], and some just used the present tense [ 去 ] in all occasions.
  - (iii) Not many candidates gave good description on the questions related to “Places of interest in your area” [ 遊客可以去的好地方 / 游客可以去的好地方 ] and “Festival celebration” [ 節日慶祝 / 节日庆祝 ] which reflected both their general and cultural knowledge.
- Topic B - Education, Training & Employment  
Some candidates failed to answer questions on: “school facilities” [ 學校設施 / 学校设施 ], “Part-time job” [ 兼職 / 兼职 ], “future plans” [ 將來計劃 / 将来计划 ], “work experience” [ 工作經驗 / 工作经验 ], because of not understanding the terms or not having the appropriate knowledge / vocabulary / experience.
- Topic C - House, Home & Daily Routine  
Questions on “housework” [ 家務 / 家务 ], “family relationship” [ 家人關係 / 家人关系 ] were not well answered for the same reasons as Topic B.
- Topic D - Media & Social Activities  
This topic was comparatively less favourably answered. Not many candidates gave elaboration or opinions to their answers apart from the names of their favourites. The questions on “savings” [ 儲蓄 / 储蓄 ] and “famous people” [ 名人 ] continued to be problematic, reasons being the same as topic B. Sometimes English words were used, and they were acceptable only when no appropriate / corresponding Chinese translation available, e.g. names of Celebrities, Music or books, or commonly used items such as “CD” “DVD”. Where equivalent Chinese translations such as “college” [ 學院 / 学院 ], “singer” [ 歌星 ] are available, candidates should give their answers in Chinese.

It was noted that the performance of the teacher-examiner played an important part in the assessment. Apart from monitoring the timing and topics in the examination, teacher-examiners were also responsible to carry out a genuine interaction with the candidates and played the part of interlocutor in the conversations. Some even gave extra help when candidates did not understand certain questions / terms by re-framing the questions or asked another question-type to help candidates move on. This eased candidates' anxiety and they generally managed to answer the following questions well. This is a good practice worth sharing among all teacher-examiners.

## Paper 3 - Reading and Responding

This paper tests candidates' reading comprehension through a variety of texts which included matching basic vocabulary to pictures, a birthday invitation, a short letter, personal information, an advertisement and a biography about a famous Chinese musician. It takes the form of selecting the right answers to multiple choice questions, matching texts to pictures, filling in blanks and for the last question answering comprehension on a passage in English. The higher level candidates were expected to be able to extract relevant information from a longer passage and give more accurate and detailed answers.

Overall candidates performed well, exhibiting a good standard of reading comprehension. The last question, which tested candidates' bilingual skills, was well answered by most candidates although it was noticeable that many candidates had difficulties in spelling and presenting information in a sentence: this was more marked in papers of native speakers as against learners.

Questions 1 and Question 2 tested basic vocabulary within the syllabus. Candidates responded very well to these questions with many scoring full marks.

Question 3 required candidates to understand a text about a birthday invitation. Strong candidates scored full or nearly full marks. A number of candidates did not pay attention to the specific question in part (i) indicating the individual invited not whose birthday the passage was about. In part (iii) a number of candidates only gave one response although it was a 2 mark question.

Question 4 was generally well handled by candidates although did appear to prove more of a challenge to learner candidates. A recurrent issue was candidates marking the answer in the wrong row of boxes for responses causing subsequent answers to be misaligned.

Question 5 was again generally well handled. Where errors arose was most often through students not paying attention to all details in the passage but guessing the answer based on partial information e.g. in part (ii) noting the word "restaurant" in the text they chose answer B. In 2008 the word for "temple" was noted as causing issue and this would appear to have been picked up by candidates.

Question 6 on the whole candidates managed this question well with part (iii) and part (iv) being the most challenging particularly to learner candidates.

Strong candidates generally managed to get full marks for Question 7. However, part (i) appeared to be a key differentiator in relation to candidates' ability to correctly interpret the answer as B, with most selecting C.

Question 8 was a key differentiator with candidates' either scoring full marks or struggling to answer correctly. Answers C ("convenience"), E ("facility") and F ("not far") in particular caused candidates' difficulties.

Question 9 (a) and (d) generally elicited good response from the almost all candidates.

In response to Question 9 (b) candidates who did not score well either gave the answers as "Beijing" (presumably seeing the character for "Bei" in the text) or wrote the literal translation of "Dong Bei" where-as the question clearly states to respond in English. There was also a range of confusion on the presentation of compass directions with candidates commonly writing East-North rather than North-East.

Question 9 (c) while candidates picked up on the term "telephone", many were less successful in translation of "engineer".

Question 9 (e): candidates commonly only provide part of the answer missing out reference to "international" or indicating that it was a "concert" rather than "competition".

Question 9 (f) proved to be quite a challenging question with many candidates failing to indicate the changes described in the passage just giving general response that did not describe an impact.

## Paper 4 - Writing

### Comments on Candidates' performance

The questions and requirements of this paper are similar to previous years'. Candidates generally did well in the exam with a few exceptions falling into the lower mark ranges. The topic for Question 4 "Work experience" caused some confusion and problems for some candidates. On the whole, all questions were well answered, with some common errors found in individual questions as listed in the following.

### Comments on Questions:

#### Question 1:

This question proved to be accessible to nearly all candidates. As marks were awarded for communication only, not the accuracy of writing, nearly all answers given were accepted, except a few like [ 熊貓 / 熊猫 ], [ 汽車 / 汽车 ] without the words [ 玩具 ] attached to them. Some candidates followed the example given and added [ 中文 ] in front of every answer, thus giving items such as [ 中文茶 ], [ 中文畫 / 中文画 ], showing their weakness in comprehensive writing. However, majority of the candidates scored high marks for this question.

#### Question 2:

This question was well attempted, but the performance differed among candidates with different writing abilities. As this question required appropriate answers in context as well as the accuracy of character writing, some weaker candidates failed to achieve good marks because they did not know the vocabulary or could not produce the correct writing of the characters. The following are some common errors found:

- Inappropriate terms / phrases: e.g.
  - (i) [ 餐館 / 餐馆 ] / [ 餐廳 / 餐厅 ] - [ 飯廳 / 饭厅 ] which has a different meaning
  - (ii) [ 駕車 / 驾车 ] / [ 坐車 / 坐车 ] - [ 司機 / 司机 ] which does not fit into context
  - (iv) [ 踢足球 / 踢足球 ] - [ 玩足球 / 玩足球 ], [ 打足球 / 打足球 ] which are inappropriate terms with regards to the picture prompt and the context  
[ 看電影 / 看电影 ] - [ 看電視 / 看电视 ] which is incorrect with regard to the picture prompt
- Some candidates showed difficulties in writing these characters correctly, especially in the traditional writing:  
[ 餐廳 / 餐厅 ], [ 踢 / 踢 ] [ 電影 / 电影 ] [ 麵 / 面 ]

### Question 3:

Most candidates answered this question well. It required 30 characters to cover the 3 bullet points. Many candidates managed to give the name of the place e.g. [北京], the weather e.g. [天氣冷 / 天气冷], and the sight-seeing e.g. [萬里長城 / 万里长城] and [故宮]. Majority of them scored very high mark or full mark with some enhancement of the weather such as [風和日麗 / 风和日丽] or the sight-seeing [壯觀 / 壮观], [美麗 / 美丽].

There are also some common errors found in this question:

- Tenses - Bullet 1 is in present tense, and bullet 3 is in past tense
- Giving the names of places in English e.g. Paris, The Big Ben, where the corresponding names in Chinese [巴黎], [大笨鐘 / 大笨钟] should be given.
- Bullet point 3 - writing about activities such as [游泳], [購物 / 购物] instead of sight-seeing.

### Question 4:

This question was designed to differentiate different levels of candidates, allowing the more able ones to express their ideas with various writing skill while the weaker ones could also respond to the bullet points in simple sentences. The following is an analysis of the performance in responding to the bullet points:

- (i) The most common work places mentioned were: restaurants, schools, hospitals, retail shops. Surprisingly, some candidates failed to write the characters: [醫院 / 医院], [學校 / 学校], [教師 / 教师] correctly. These are common terms in the core vocabulary.
- (ii) Majority of the candidates managed to write about the time they worked, with a few wrote down the days or dates instead. Some candidates neglected this bullet point and went on with the lengthy description of the work they did, hence lost marks in the content score.
- (iii) This bullet point differentiated the writing abilities of the candidates. The able candidates managed to give a detailed description of what they did as well as their feelings, while the weaker ones just managed to write one or two simple sentences such as [我煮飯 / 我煮饭], [我上課 / 我上课] without much extension. Some even wrote down activities such as [上網 / 上网], [看書 / 看书], [踢足球 / 踢足球] which were irrelevant to their work experiences.
- (iv) The responses to this bullet point varied according to candidates' different abilities. Some gave good reason(s) to support why they liked or disliked their work-experience, while some just put down: [有意思] which was not a good response.

The topic on “Work experience” seemed to be unfamiliar and difficult to some candidates. While many candidates managed to write a piece of genuine or imaginary account on their work experiences, some showed deficits in their writing, mainly because of insufficient relevant vocabulary to express their ideas. Some misunderstood the topic, writing about “jobs” rather than “work experience”. Some even wrote about their “school life” or “home-life” instead. Marks were awarded positively throughout the paper.



## 2009 Statistics

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries 1666 (Four skills)

| Grade                            | Max. Mark | A* | A  | B  | C  | D  | E  | F  | G  |
|----------------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Overall subject grade boundaries | 100       | 84 | 73 | 62 | 52 | 44 | 37 | 30 | 23 |

(NB each paper is worth 25% of the total)

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries 1667 (Three skills)

| Grade                            | Max. Mark | A* | A  | B  | C  | D  | E  | F  | G  |
|----------------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Overall subject grade boundaries | 100       | 80 | 71 | 62 | 54 | 47 | 40 | 34 | 28 |

(NB each paper is worth 33% of the total)

### Paper 1 Listening and Responding

| Grade                    | Max. Mark | A* | A  | B  | C  | D  | E  | F  | G  |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Paper 1 grade boundaries | 50        | 41 | 36 | 31 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 |

### Paper 2 Speaking

| Grade                    | Max. Mark | A* | A  | B  | C  | D  | E | F | G |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|
| Paper 2 grade boundaries | 20        | 18 | 16 | 12 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 6 | 4 |

### Paper 3 Reading and Responding

| Grade                    | Max. Mark | A* | A  | B  | C  | D  | E  | F  | G  |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Paper 3 grade boundaries | 50        | 41 | 36 | 31 | 26 | 22 | 18 | 14 | 10 |

### Paper 4 Writing

| Grade                    | Max. Mark | A* | A  | B  | C  | D  | E  | F  | G  |
|--------------------------|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Paper 4 grade boundaries | 55        | 43 | 38 | 33 | 28 | 25 | 22 | 19 | 16 |



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