

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/01

Listening

Key messages

In preparation for this paper, it is worth bearing in mind the following points:

- When answering in Chinese (whether characters or pinyin), full sentences are not required. Brief answers are frequently all that is required.
- Inaccuracies of Chinese (whether characters or pinyin) are tolerated provided that the message is clear and that the candidate's rendering of the answer does not give a different Chinese character/pinyin word with another meaning, which might confuse comprehension of the message.
- Answers should be written in black or blue ink. Answers should not be written first in pencil and then overwritten in ink as this makes them very difficult to read.
- In exercises where candidates are required to tick a certain number of boxes, such as **Exercise 2** in **Section 2**, candidates must not tick more/fewer than the required number of options. If a candidate makes a choice and then changes his/her mind, s/he must cross out the original choice very clearly.
- Although notes may be made on the question paper, any work that the candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out. The mark cannot be awarded if the Examiner has to 'choose' the correct answer from a longer response provided by the candidate, which contains extra material that is incorrect, invented or contradictory.

General comments

Many excellent performances were seen this year, and candidates seemed well prepared and were familiar with the format of the exam.

Candidates should be reminded that when giving a written response, only brief answers are required, and that answers given in either Chinese characters or Pinyin are acceptable.

Regrettably, a few candidates ticked more than one box in response to the multiple-choice questions in **Section 1**. When responding to questions requiring only one choice as the answer, if a candidate makes two choices (whether in pencil or in ink), the mark **cannot** be awarded. It is worth reminding candidates that any answers which they do not wish the Examiner to consider must be clearly crossed out.

In **Exercise 2** of **Section 2**, some candidates ticked fewer than the required number of boxes, while some ticked more. Candidates should be reminded that they must tick the number of boxes stated in the rubric. When preparing their candidates, Centres should ensure that their candidates clearly understand the rubrics, as such familiarity can only aid and reassure them in the examination.

This year, answers to **Exercise 2** of **Section 3** that were written in pinyin were less accurate in terms of spelling than those last year. There were some instances where the pinyin spellings contained so many mistakes that Examiners could not be sure that the candidate had understood what s/he had heard. When preparing their candidates, Centres should try to provide extra practice in using pinyin.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, Questions 1-5

Candidates generally did well on this multiple-choice exercise, which tested the comprehension of very short items of one or two sentences.

Question 5 tested candidates' understanding of compass directions in Mandarin Chinese. Candidates could improve their knowledge of this area of vocabulary, as in some cases **B** or **C** were selected instead of the correct answer **A**.

Exercise 2, Questions 6-10

This exercise featured a short conversation about how Xiao Hong spent his birthday. Candidates generally did well on this multiple-choice exercise. The most common errors in this exercise were made in **Question 6** (selecting **C** rather than **A**), and in **Question 9** (selecting **A** rather than **C**).

Section 2

Exercise 1, Questions 11-15

This exercise tested candidates' comprehension of a short introduction given by a shop assistant concerning the floor plans of a big department store. Candidates generally performed very well in this exercise, with most candidates answering **Question 11** correctly. Some candidates had difficulty answering **Question 12**, and some did not attempt all questions.

Exercise 2, Question 16

Candidates heard a conversation between Xiao Lin and a receptionist at a holiday village in Yunan. They talked about the facilities in the holiday village. Candidates generally performed very well on this exercise. A few candidates did not tick the correct number of boxes. Candidates should be reminded of the importance of reading the rubric carefully.

Section 3

Exercise 1, Questions 17-21

This exercise featured five friends talking about their summer holidays. On the whole candidates performed very well in this exercise. **Questions 17** and **18** proved to be problematic for a number of candidates.

Exercise 2, Questions 22-25

Candidates heard an interview with a boarding school candidate. As intended, this final exercise (targeted to test the top Level IGCSE skills) elicited the widest range of performance.

Question 22 required candidates to state the reason why the reporter interviewed Zhang Yue, and a variety of answers were seen. The majority of candidates gave an answer which showed that they had understood the recording, i.e. that the reporter interviewed Zhang Yue in order to write an article. Several candidates did not attempt to answer this question.

Answers given included: “写报纸”, “写杂志”, “写书”.

Question 23 was answered well by the majority of candidates. It asked for the reason why Zhang Yue chose to board even though his family did not live far from the school. Most candidates showed they had understood the reason was that Zhang Yue watched a film (about boarding school life), which made him want to board. Some candidates offered “看电视”, “看电视剧”, “看住读生活”, “住读好看” as their answers, which did not show full understanding of the reason given in the recording.

Question 24 asked the candidates to list the two benefits of boarding, and elicited a variety of responses. Many candidates managed to find the answer that one benefit of boarding was that you learn to take care of yourself, while others did not answer fully enough, writing simply, “学会自己” and “自己学习”. The other benefit (making good friends) was identified by most candidates.

A wide variety of spelling in pinyin was seen here. Inaccuracies in Chinese characters and pinyin are accepted, as long as communication is achieved. In some cases, however, spelling was so muddled that the Examiner could not be sure that the candidate had understood what s/he had heard.

Question 25 was answered well by the majority of candidates. Most had picked up the key element 说话” from the recording.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/02
Reading and Directed Writing

Key messages

To maximise the chances of success, candidates should:

- be aware of the format and rubrics used in the Question Paper, as well as the Minimum Core Vocabulary list. Familiarity with this can help to expand candidates' vocabulary.
- attempt every question in the paper.
- give clear answers to questions. When responding to questions requiring only one choice as the answer, (as in the multiple choice questions in **Section 1**) if a candidate makes two choices (whether in pencil or in ink), the mark cannot be awarded.
- use simple sentence structures and include as much relevant communication information as possible, especially when tackling the writing tasks. Candidates must not use Pinyin or English in their answers, as this will not be credited.

General comments

In general, the standard of performance demonstrated by candidates across the paper was very good and candidates seemed to have been well prepared.

In the writing tasks (**Section 1 Exercise 4** and **Section 2 Exercise 2**), a reduction in the use of English and non-Chinese words was seen. The letter format register was also well executed by candidates. A small number of candidates did not attempt the writing tasks at all, which account for 20 of the total marks. Candidates are advised to attempt all tasks in the paper.

The majority of candidates were able to produce accurate Chinese at this level. Candidates could improve their knowledge of the difference between cardinal and ordinal numbers, and would benefit from practising pronouns.

Further, the usage of '用', '做' and '玩' proved challenging, as many candidates wrote '他/她用裙子'; '他/她用西装' instead of '他/她穿裙子'; '他/她穿西装'. Some candidates wrote '我做跑步'; '我做买衣服', and a number of candidates treated the verb '玩' as having the same scope in Chinese as the English verb 'to play'.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1, Questions 1–5

Most candidates answered these discrete questions with ease. **Question 1** proved to be most difficult as candidates needed to recognise the character for cake '蛋糕'. Some candidates incorrectly chose **C** instead of the correct answer, **B**. A small number of candidates also encountered difficulty with **Question 2** which required them to identify the correct occupation.

Exercise 2, Questions 6–8

In general, candidates handled these true/false questions well. Where errors occurred, these appeared to be the result of problems with individual items of vocabulary, for example, ‘伞’ in **Question 8**. **Question 7** proved to be the most challenging, as candidates did not seem familiar with the words ‘最’ and ‘暖和’.

Exercise 3, Questions 9–11

Overall, candidates answered these questions with ease. **Question 11** was sometimes answered incorrectly, as the link between the pronoun ‘他’ and ‘弟弟’ was not always understood by candidates.

Exercise 4, Question 12

For this piece of writing, there were 3 marks available for communication, and 2 for accurate use of language. Candidates were required to write a short letter to a Chinese friend, in which they had to mention:

- (a) when they are going to China;
- (b) what they will do in China;
- (c) where they will stay in China.

Candidates needed to include each of these 3 elements in their answer in order to gain the full 3 marks available for communication. Those parts of a candidate’s answer which are not credited for communication are not considered for reward for language.

Candidates generally performed strongly on this question, with many scoring full marks.

Candidates were required to include a time expression in response to point (a). Some candidates seemed to misunderstand the question, and thought it was asking ‘how long will you stay in China’, hence some gave an incorrect answer in the form of a duration expression. On point (b), a common error was the incorrect usage of ‘做’ and ‘玩’. Some candidates used a past time frame instead of a future time frame for the letter, which was tolerated for the communication marks. Some examples of incorrect word order such as ‘我会去中国在三月’ were seen, and this is an area in which improvements could be made.

Section 2

Exercise 1, Questions 13–22

In this exercise, candidates were asked to read a piece of text and to answer questions on it, in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage. The passage took the form of a letter from Xiao Li to his friend Xiao Zhang about his experience when attending an international physics competition in Japan. Often, only a very brief answer was required, but provided that the correct answer was present, additional material copied from the text was tolerated, unless contradictory. The quality of written Chinese is considered only for the purposes of communication.

The majority of candidates responded to the questions very well, with **Questions 16 to 19**, being handled with ease. For **Question 14**, some candidates offered the answer ‘来自各个国家’ whilst the correct answer should have been ‘日本’. In **Question 20**, some candidates were confused by who was performing what. The correct answer for **Question 21** was the ordinal number ‘第四名’ not ‘四名’, which has a different meaning in Chinese. **Question 22** proved to be most problematic to candidates, with many candidates providing a generic answer not obtained from the text.

Exercise 2, Question 23

In this writing task candidates were asked to write a letter to a Chinese pen friend talking about their favourite teacher. As in previous years, the mark scheme was divided into marks for communication (10 marks) and accuracy of language (5 marks). Within the 10 communication marks, 1 mark was awarded for each item of relevant information conveyed.

The overall standard of candidates’ work is to be commended, with almost all candidates managing to adapt to the correct letter format. Candidates should be made aware that only one mark is awarded for the ‘top and tail’ of greetings and general pleasantries not related to the question. A significant number of able candidates did not gain full marks due to insufficient content. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count

the number of characters written, it should be remembered that a composition requires a certain amount of words to address all the bullet points in the question, and variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. The lower scoring responses usually consisted of a prepared piece, rather than answering the exact bullet points in the question.

In terms of accuracy of language, there was an improvement in the use of simpler structures and fewer English and non-Chinese words. Further improvement could have been made if more attention was paid to the correct usage of '用'. A small number of candidates confused the verb '穿' with '戴', writing phrases such as '他穿眼镜', '她穿围巾'. Furthermore, there was some overuse of '是' when it was not needed (i.e. when there was no particular emphasis intended, as in '她是穿白色大衣', '她是很高', '她是很好人').

Section 3

Exercise 1, Questions 24–28

Most candidates attempted this most challenging part of the paper, and many handled the questions with confidence.

In **Exercise 1**, candidates were set the task of reading an extended passage in Chinese and then answering the multiple choice questions that followed. **Question 26** appeared challenging to candidates, as the phrase '送餐服务' was not generally understood.

Exercise 2, Questions 29–35

In this final exercise in the paper, candidates were asked to read an extended passage, and demonstrate their understanding by answering questions in Chinese. The questions were asked in the same order as the information was presented in the passage.

Most answers were satisfactory, although some candidates did not attempt the questions. **Question 30** seemed to be one of the most difficult questions, as candidates were required to understand that the pronoun '这' means '张晨考上了北华大学'. **Question 33** was also not usually answered well, with many candidates answering '因为他太年轻'. This was possibly due to candidates noting the conjunction words '因为' in the passage and utilising the words after it straight away. Candidates are reminded of the need to read questions carefully.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/03

Speaking

Key messages

- To score high marks, candidates need to show their ability to use a variety of structures and precise vocabulary both in the Topic Presentation/Conversation and in the General Conversation.
- Discussion in the General Conversation should be appropriate to the individual candidate's ability; the same questions should not be asked of all the candidates.
- At least two topics need to be covered in the General Conversation and should not overlap with the content of the Topic Presentation.
- The Speaking test should be conducted and assessed in Mandarin Chinese. There should be no use of English in the test. Only Chinese should be used in the transitions between sections of the test.
- Centres wishing to use more than one teacher/Examiner need to seek permission from Cambridge before the Speaking test period starts.

General comments

Most Centres administered and carried out the tests very well, but in a small number of cases instructions given in the Teachers' Notes booklet were not followed. The Teachers' Notes booklet should be read carefully to ensure that both the tests and the relevant administration are carried out correctly.

Centres wishing to use more than one teacher/Examiner need to read the relevant guidelines and follow the procedures carefully (see more information under the heading Internal Moderation below).

Conduct of the test

• **Recorded sample: quality and composition**

In general, Centres complied well with the sampling procedures. The recorded sample should be selected to represent the **full** spread of performance in the Centre. This enables the Moderator to check that the application of the scheme is fair and accurate throughout the Centre's mark range. The recorded sample should be selected to represent the whole Centre. Where more than one teacher/Examiner is used, the sample should include examples from each teacher/Examiner. Centres should not select and submit a full recorded sample per teacher/Examiner.

It is helpful to the Moderator if asterisks (*) are put on the Working Mark Sheet to indicate the candidates who have been included in the sample, particularly in Centres with many candidates.

Most Centres sent in clear recordings of the Speaking tests, which is essential for the external moderation process to be carried out successfully. In a small number of cases, candidates and/or the teacher/Examiner were not always clearly heard, and occasionally the tape/CD sent to Cambridge for moderation was almost inaudible. Centres are reminded of the importance of checking that the recordings are present on the cassette/CD, that all parts of the test have been recorded and that all recordings are audible before sending to Cambridge. Please also ensure that the cassettes/CDs are well packaged for sending to Cambridge.

It is very important to check the position of microphones and the quality of the recording, both during the tests (between candidates) and before samples are despatched to Cambridge. The best quality recordings were produced in small rooms in which phones had been switched off and which were not situated close to noisy areas. Where recordings are saved as .mp3 files, please ensure that these have been labelled in

accordance with the naming convention stipulated in the Teachers' Notes booklet. The teacher/Examiner should introduce the candidate: the candidate should not introduce him/herself. **Please note that once an examination has begun, the recording should not be stopped or paused between elements of the examination, but should run continuously until the end of that candidate's examination.**

Centres are also reminded of the importance of ensuring that tapes or CDs are well packaged. CDs are particularly vulnerable to damage in transit, and need to be carefully packed in strong containers, ideally in a plastic case inside a padded envelope. Some CDs were sent in plastic pockets or wrapped in cardboard, and arrived damaged, which can cause delays in the moderation process.

- **Internal moderation**

Where a Centre has a large number of candidates and wishes to use more than one teacher/Examiner to carry out the Speaking tests, the Centre **must** seek permission from Cambridge to use more than one teacher/Examiner **before** the start of the Speaking test period.

Where Centres with large numbers of candidates have been granted permission by Cambridge to use more than one teacher/Examiner to conduct and assess Speaking tests, the coordinating teacher/Examiner is responsible for checking that the mark scheme has been applied consistently by all of the teacher/Examiners in the Centre. If a particular teacher/Examiner's marking is judged by his/her colleagues to be out of line with the other marking at the Centre, the marks for candidates examined by that teacher/Examiner must be adjusted before paperwork is submitted to Cambridge. **Details of the Centre's Internal moderation procedures must also be sent to Cambridge**, as specified on the 'Cover sheet for moderation sample'. Guidelines for the Internal Standardisation/Moderation of Cambridge IGCSE foreign language Speaking tests are available from Cambridge.

- **Working Mark Sheets**

There were a number of examples this year of incomplete Working Mark Sheets. Please ensure that these are filled in carefully with the candidates' full name, the numbers of the Role play cards, and signed and dated by the teacher/Examiner.

- **Clerical errors**

In most Centres, the addition and transfer of marks was accurate. In some Centres, several clerical errors were found and corrected. Centres are required to check all clerical work carefully so as to ensure that all candidates receive the correct mark. On the working marking sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate should be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then for each candidate the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked. On the MS1 mark sheet, the Centre must enter the total mark for each candidate in figures as well as shading the lozenges.

Role- plays

Teachers/Examiners are reminded of the need for careful preparation. Centres are reminded that the teacher/Examiner must not create extra tasks, nor must s/he omit tasks. If the stipulated tasks are changed or omitted and/or extra tasks are added this will confuse candidates. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role play cards. Candidates should be trained to include a greeting and thanks where appropriate. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be sufficient to attract a mark of three.

Centres are reminded that candidates should be given the Role-play cards in random order, (not 1, 2, 3, 4 or 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2...etc) and that the number of the card used should be recorded on the Working Mark Sheet.

Some candidates did not seem to be familiar with what is required for the Role play tasks: they answered the questions relating to themselves, rather than relating to the role stipulated on the Role play card. It is worth practising this type of activity in class to help candidates understand what is required.

If a candidate misses out a task, the teacher/Examiner should try to guide him/her back to it, in as natural a way as possible. It is good practice for the teacher/Examiner to read aloud the introduction to each Role play in Chinese, as this helps to set the scene for candidates. In the interests of international standards, and in fairness to candidates, teachers/Examiners should not miss out parts of the Role play tasks nor replace parts with alternative or different tasks.

'Neutral' answers that candidates give in response to Role play tasks, such as 对了 ('yes') or 不知道 ('I don't know') should be avoided, as they cannot be awarded any marks, as they give no indication that the candidate has understood the question.

A Role Plays

In general, most Centres conducted this part of the exam successfully.

On an underground train, talking to the person sitting next to you.

Most candidates handled this very well. The first question was 你是哪国人? Candidates who had not understood that they were playing the role of an American candidate, and therefore gave their own nationality, could not be awarded any marks here.

In a department store buying clothes for a friend.

The question *Ni nianji duoda?* (你朋友年纪多大?) was misinterpreted by some candidates as asking about the friend's year group *nianji* (年级).

Weaker candidates did not understand the term 个子, and were also unable to handle the comparison with 比 properly.

Studying in Shanghai. You are talking to a new Chinese friend in a restaurant.

Most candidates managed this very well.

B Role Plays

Again, most Centres conducted this part of the exam well.

You are in a post office, posting a parcel to a friend.

Most candidates handled this well. Weaker candidates did not understand the word 东西 in the question 里边是什么东西?

You are discussing your health with a doctor.

Some candidates seemed unfamiliar with 次 *ci* (time) used as a verbal measure-word in 你一个星期吃几次肉?

You are in a bank changing money, talking to a bank clerk.

Most candidates carried this out well. In the question 你想换多少钱?, some candidates did not understand the phrase 换钱 and answered using a number followed by 钱 as a measure word.

Topic Presentation & Conversation

Candidates had chosen a wide range of topics for their presentation. Popular topics included 'My family', 'My hobby', 'Sport', 'School life' and 'My future', or a comparison between life in two different countries. Able candidates often chose to present a more ambitious topic, such as 'My icon', 'The importance of computers'; 'Being filial towards one's parents'. Candidates should be discouraged from choosing 'Myself' or 'My life' as their topic, as this can seriously limit the possibilities for General Conversation.

Unfortunately, a number of the Topic Conversations heard by the Moderators were too brief to warrant the award of the highest marks. Teachers/Examiners are reminded that this section of the examination should last approximately **5 minutes**. A Speaking test that is too short may not allow a candidate enough time to demonstrate his/her abilities.

Some teacher/Examiners forgot to allow their candidates to present their topic, and some teacher/Examiners did not ask candidates questions on their topic presentation. It is very important that no part of the test is

omitted, as this can severely limit a candidate's marks. Some candidates did not seem to have prepared a topic to present.

It was evident that in some cases, the opening parts of the Topic Conversation seemed to have been memorised. It is the extent to which candidates can manipulate their prepared material according to the needs of the teacher/Examiner that determines their marks. Candidates should be encouraged to speak spontaneously, and not to memorise speeches.

In the best Centres, the teacher/Examiner listened carefully to the candidates' presentations and then led them skilfully through the Topic Conversation by asking appropriate questions, allowing them both to develop their topic and to demonstrate their language skills. In a few cases the teacher/Examiner did not pay close enough attention to what the candidate had said and asked a pre-prepared question to which the candidate had already given an answer.

Teachers/Examiners are reminded of the importance of indicating to candidates that the Topic Conversation has finished and the General Conversation is about to begin. This can be simply done by saying, for example, 现在进入第三部分。or 现在进行自由对话吧。Centres are reminded that no English should be used in the Speaking test.

General Conversation

Overall, performance was very good in this section of the test.

Many teachers/Examiners were aware of the need to cover 2 or 3 different topics in this section of the test, though it is worth bearing in mind that it may be necessary to cover more topics with weaker candidates who will not be able to answer in as much depth. The topics discussed in this part of the test should not be the same as those discussed in the Topic Conversation and should be chosen by the teacher/Examiner, rather than by the candidate.

Regrettably, many of the general conversations heard by the Moderators were too brief to warrant the award of the highest marks. Teachers/Examiners are reminded that this section of the examination should last approximately **5 minutes**.

The same set of questions should not be asked of all candidates in a Centre. The teacher/Examiner needs to ensure that s/he has prepared a number of different sets of questions for use with different candidates. The General conversation is intended to be a spontaneous interaction between candidate and teacher/Examiner; using the same set of questions with each candidate can lead to conversations that are rather lacking in spontaneity. Once underway, the General conversation should be based on the individual candidates' responses and so should not be overly rehearsed beforehand.

MANDARIN CHINESE (Foreign Language)

Paper 0547/04
Continuous Writing

Key messages

In order to do well in this paper, candidates need to demonstrate that they can communicate in writing, showing knowledge of a range and variety of vocabulary and applying the grammar and structures of the target language accurately.

There is no need for candidates to be unduly concerned about forgetting how to write the occasional character. The questions are intended to enable candidates to show what they know and the guidelines are deliberately left as open as possible in order to allow candidates to choose the vocabulary that they wish to use. They should, therefore, avoid embarking on topics for which they know very few of the characters involved.

Candidates should write compositions which have some sort of short introduction and ending with proper paragraphing and punctuation. Letters should have an appropriate beginning and ending and should also be punctuated correctly. Punctuation and paragraphing add clarity to a piece of writing and ensure that the Examiner does not have to 'guess' the meaning that the author intended.

General comments

The standard of candidates' work is to be particularly commended this year. Many of the letters and also the story about the new overseas candidate coming to stay for the weekend and what happened used a wide range of vocabulary (including idioms) and sentence structure e.g., verb complements and comparisons. They were interesting and lively to read and showed that the candidates had been very well prepared for the examination and had revised very well, paying attention to the letter form and showing good understanding of the tasks.

As in previous years, for each essay, the Mark Scheme was divided into marks for Relevant Communication (5 marks), Accuracy of Characters (5 marks), Accuracy of Grammar and Structures (10 marks) and Impression (5 marks).

Candidates were not penalised for writing too much. Whilst there is no need for candidates to count the number of characters written, it should be remembered that variety of vocabulary and sentence structure is rewarded. Therefore, a long, but less varied essay will not be awarded as many marks as a shorter one with greater variety and interest. However, candidates should be reminded that if they write significantly fewer than 150 characters they will not produce enough evidence of their ability to gain access to the highest marks.

If pinyin is used at all, it must have the correct tones in order for it to be given any credit. A small percentage of candidates wrote words in English interspersed throughout their essays; this should be avoided.

Overall, the effort made by the candidates and the effectiveness of their teaching showed through and was impressive. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions with success including the seemingly weaker candidates. Most candidates were mindful of the need to cover all the bullet points and used the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge. Conjunctions were used well.

The compositions of many candidates displayed an impressively wide range of characters. Characters with the same sound but different meanings (别字) were a problem for some candidates, along with characters being written incorrectly (错字). The most frequent problems in terms of character-writing were:

- Characters with a similar sound 科目 and 课目, 篮球 and 蓝球, 化学 and 花学, 那 and 拿, 再 instead of 在

- 一候 instead of 以后, 一前 instead of 以前, 一外 instead of 以外, 以经 instead of 已经, 教的 instead of 教得很好
- Confusion between 常 and 带
- Characters commonly written incorrectly include 游泳, 名字, 地里, 数学, 时候, 然后, 所以, 电脑, 电影, 运动, 饭

Candidates showed a good knowledge of Chinese grammar. There was particular improvement in basic sentences like 我很忙, 我很好. (when in previous years, some candidates have incorrectly inserted 是.) There was good use of structure and idiom, although candidates need to make sure that they know how to use idioms correctly. The most frequent problems were:

1. Confusion over the use of 的, 得 and 地 – although this had again improved over previous years
2. Some candidates did not use 的 when it was required e.g. 黑黑头发.
3. Some phrases or words of place and time were at the end of sentence but not before the verb, e.g. 打篮球在体育馆
4. Measure Words (这节课, 这门课)
5. The usage of 还是/或者; 也/和.
6. The usage of 会/可以
7. Many candidates found it hard to use 了 correctly. Most candidates were able to use 了 correctly some of the time, but not all the time. Some candidates also found it difficult to use the aspect marker 过 correctly.
8. There was overuse of 在 before 'time when' phrases e.g. (在) 今天早上. There was also occasionally an inversion of the time phrase e.g. 三点下午 instead of 下午三点
9. Many candidates did not know that 'time how long' comes after the verb.
10. Some candidates should try to reduce the use of 有 when referring to a past timeframe i.e. 有做什么.
11. Where 'if' should have been 是/否, many candidates used 如果 instead. This showed evidence of Anglicisation.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some very well-written letters. The majority of candidates chose the letter to their granny about the school year; they covered all the guidelines and wrote a suitable beginning and ending to their letters, thereby achieving the full 5 marks for Relevant Communication. Where they misunderstood one of the guidelines they only lost one mark for Communication; this did not affect their other marks attained.

Some candidates lost marks because of a very limited variety of vocabulary and sentence structure

- (a) Candidates wrote some good letters, covering all the bullet points in excellent detail. Some even remembered to use 您好 at the beginning of the letter to granny. A number of candidates found 课外活动 challenging and so struggled with the third bullet point. A few candidates used complex vocabulary and sentence structures well, but made mistakes in basic characters like 学校 or 星期六.

Quite a few candidates were a bit shaky on writing the correct characters for a variety of school subjects and a few did not understand 奶奶.

- (b) A much smaller number of candidates answered **Question 1(b)**. Confident candidates who did so generally wrote well and presented convincing and well-written arguments about the merits of eating at home or in a restaurant. To attempt this question, candidates needed to be confident with the use of comparatives. Almost all remembered to use the format of a letter. Some candidates seemed to find it hard to structure their thoughts in this letter or to cover all the bullet points, after they had answered the first one about what they like eating best.

Question 2

Question 2 provided a platform for the candidates to demonstrate good story telling, developing interesting storylines from the original scenario. There were some excellent descriptions of the weekend and some very good expressions of feeling and depictions of scenery etc. However, it was clear that a significant number of candidates did not understand 周末; as long as they wrote about what they did with the overseas candidate, marks were awarded. Other candidates did not seem to understand the timeframe and wrote in a future timeframe with 打算, which resulted in some loss of Communication marks. Some candidates interpreted 发生 as meaning 发现. Many candidates used 来从 for 'come from' (来自).

It is not intended that a misunderstanding of one character in the essay question should unduly affect a candidate's score, but nor is it intended that candidates should be able to pre-learn a story and reproduce it in the examination room; this should be avoided.

All candidates should remember that writing in Chinese still requires a story structure with a proper concluding paragraph rounding off events. The ability to use 了 and the ability to use time phrases with correct word order sequence would have improved the quality of many essays. It is not intended that this essay should be written as a dialogue.