

Frequently Asked Questions

IGCSE Mandarin Chinese – Foreign Language (0547)

Are there changes to the syllabus?

In **June 2010** and thereafter a Listening Component (Paper 1) will form part of the scheme of assessment. See 2010 syllabus booklet for details.

In **June 2011** and thereafter the sampling arrangements for Paper 3 Speaking will be as follows:

In order to allow CIE to check accurately the standard of assessment, each teacher/examiner must record and send to CIE a sample from each Centre at which he or she examines:

- Centres entering 1-16 candidates must send the recordings of all candidates.
- Centres entering 17 or more candidates must send:
 - (i) the recordings of the first 10 candidates according to candidate number

and

 - (ii) the recordings of 6 candidates across the ability range, eg 2 good, 2 middling, 2 weak. The candidates selected should be representative of the range of marks awarded by the Centre and should be spread as evenly as possible across that range. If possible, the recordings of the strongest and the weakest candidates at the Centre should be included, with the other recordings spaced at equal intervals in between.

NB. Centres entering 17 or more candidates must send a total of 16 recordings: the category (ii) candidates must be chosen from candidates who do not fall into category (i). In Centres with just over 17 candidates, CIE accepts this may mean that the category (ii) candidates are not fully representative of the range.'

In addition, starting in **June 2011**, the Centre is responsible for supplying standard format cassettes/CDs for the recording of its moderation sample: these will not be supplied by CIE. Mini cassettes/mini CDs must not be used.

What resources are available to support this syllabus?

The following resources are available:

- Defined Content Booklet (provides guidance on the topic areas, vocabulary and grammar/structures that are tested on the question papers). A revised Defined Content Booklet, which will replace the current version, will be available on the CIE website from October 2009.
- Distance Training Pack (provides guidance on the conduct and assessment of the Speaking test and includes a cassette of marked work).
- Standards Booklet (provides guidance on the standard of work expected in Papers 2 and 4).
- Past Papers.
- Past Mark Schemes.
- Principal Examiner Reports.
- Resource List.

Are students allowed to take dictionaries into the examination room?

No. This is an IGCSE Language examination and dictionaries are not permitted.

Is IGCSE Mandarin Chinese available in the November session?

No. It is available in the June session only.

I have a candidate who has been preparing for the Extended level papers, but I'm not sure how s/he will perform on the day. What should I do?

You can enter your candidate for Extended level as all Extended candidates are graded twice, once on their performance as Extended candidates (with Paper 4) and once on their performance as Core candidates (without Paper 4), and are awarded the higher of the two grades they achieve.

I have a candidate who is really struggling to make progress in Continuous Writing, but is doing well at Speaking and Reading. What should I do?

Why not enter your candidate as a Core candidate. They will attempt and be able to gain credit for marks gained on all three sections of Paper 2. This will allow the candidate to concentrate on the skills with which s/he is making progress and still allow him/her to achieve a grade C.

May Core candidates choose not to attempt Section 3 of the Reading and Directed Writing Paper?

Candidates **must** attempt all 3 sections of the Reading and Directed Writing Paper. Candidates who choose not to attempt Section 3 may be forfeiting marks that could help them achieve a better grade.

May Core candidates choose not to attempt Section 3 of the Listening Paper (first examination in June 2010)?

Candidates **must** attempt all 3 sections of the Listening Paper (first examination in June 2010). Candidates who choose not to attempt Section 3 may be forfeiting marks that could help them achieve a better grade.

I have heard that some of the candidates who sit this paper are native speakers of Chinese and I am worried that my foreign language speakers are being judged against what a first language speaker might achieve.

You don't need to worry. The level of performance achieved by a native speaker candidate will be off the top of the scale of what is expected from candidates taking this examination.

I have a candidate who is a native speaker of Chinese. Can I enter him/her for this examination?

Yes.

Must I be accredited by CIE before conducting and assessing the 0547 Speaking test?

Accreditation from CIE is not required in order to conduct the IGCSE Foreign Language Speaking test.

However, if you are new to the syllabus, you will benefit from undergoing Distance Training, and in the interests of your candidates we recommend that you do so.

What is the period for conducting the Speaking tests?

The Speaking test period for the May/June session is 1 March-30 April.

When will I receive the materials for the Speaking test?

The materials for the conduct and assessment of the Speaking test are sent out in February for the May/June examination. They are sent out on the basis of Centres' Estimated Entries. If your Centre has not made Estimated Entries, this may result in you not having the necessary material to carry out the Speaking tests at the specified time.

What is the deadline for submitting cassettes/CDs, Working Mark sheets and MS1 mark sheets to CIE for moderation?

Marks and cassettes/CDs for moderation must arrive at CIE no later than 15 May for the May/June session. However, once you have completed your tests, you should despatch marks and cassettes/CDs for moderation as soon as possible. Don't wait until the end of the examination period before sending us these items.

May I record my Centre's speaking tests onto CD rather than onto cassette?

You may. But this must be a standard size CD and recordings must be at 'normal' speed. Where a Centre wishes to submit digital audio recordings, these must be submitted on CD as .mp3 files.

Who marks the Speaking tests?

It is the responsibility of the person conducting the Speaking tests to mark them. The tests should be marked as they are being conducted. Examiners should mark the 'live' candidate and not a recording.

How should I go about choosing someone to conduct the Speaking tests at my centre?

Ideally, a teacher at the school should conduct the Speaking tests. Where this is not possible and it is necessary to look for someone outside the school, you should look for someone who is fluent in the language, preferably with teaching experience and with experience of conducting other oral examinations. It is important that the person appointed takes the time to familiarise themselves with the requirements of the examination before conducting any 'live' Speaking tests. The examination syllabus for the relevant year and a copy of the Teacher's Notes Booklet and Role Play Cards from a previous examination session should be sent to the examiner to read before the day of the examination so that they can familiarise themselves with the general requirements for the conduct and assessment of the Speaking test. On the day of the examination, you should arrange for the examiner to arrive at the Centre 1-2 hours before conducting and assessing the first Speaking test, in order that they can prepare the role-play situations and read through the instructions contained in the Teachers' Notes Booklet for the live session.

What happens to my (Centre's) Speaking marks when they arrive at CIE?

When your recorded sample, working mark sheet(s) and moderator copy of the MS1 mark sheet(s) arrive at CIE, they are forwarded to one of our Moderators. The Moderator listens to your sample and looks at the marks that you have awarded to ensure that they are in line with the IGCSE standard. If your marks are in line, then they will not be changed. If they are not, then an adjustment will be made to bring them into line, eg the marks will be raised if you have marked your candidates severely, or lowered if you have been too generous. A report on your conduct and assessment of the Speaking tests will be sent to your Centre with the results.