



GCSE
Chinese (Mandarin)

8673/WF Paper 4 Writing Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

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General Comments

It was pleasing to see that the number of the students who sat this paper has continued to grow. The vast majority of students were entered at the correct level and the paper was clearly accessible to almost all, with most students able to make some attempt at most questions. It was obvious to the examiners that this year's performance on this paper was a lot better than last year's. The mean mark was over 18, which was almost 6 marks higher than last year.

The questions on the paper are targeted at different levels of demand and the vast majority of students were able to score marks in Question 1 and Question 2. As they are designed to do, Questions 3 and 4 discriminated much more, and there were many more low-scoring answers to these questions, especially Question 3, which a few students left unattempted. More students chose Question 4.1 than Question 4.2 and the performance on Question 4.1 was slightly better.

There were a few scripts written entirely in pinyin, which severely affected marks for language. Students need to be reminded that use of pinyin should only be a last resort and should be used sparingly. Furthermore, handwriting was occasionally an issue, either because characters were carelessly written, or because strokes were joined together making it really hard to read. Whilst examiners try their best to read whatever students have written, credit cannot be given where a word/character is not clear.

Question 1

Over a quarter of students scored the full two marks for each of the questions. It was excellent to see that students had been very well prepared by teachers; quite a few responses beginning with 照片里有……; 我看见照片里有……were seen. Other good answers were: 这里有四个人; 她是中国; 书架上有书; 他们在工作; 男人有短头发, all of which were both relevant to the photo and consisted of full sentences with correct measure words, adjectives and verbs.

Some students struggled with the characters 照片 and simply wrote 四个人, which scored half marks. Some students only wrote single word responses, eg 爸爸、妈妈、老师 or 学生 which could not be credited. Also, some students wrote content which was not related to the photo, eg 他们不在家; 今天天气很好. Students should bear in mind they have to write sentences which relate to the photo in order to be awarded marks.

Advice to students

- Learn the characters 照片 ……
- Make sure you write in full sentences, including a subject, a verb and (if appropriate) an object.
- Choose to write about items in the photo that you are most sure that you know the Chinese characters for.
- Keep the sentences short and simple to make sure you communicate a clear message.

Question 2

In this question there are 10 marks available for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 30 characters in total, in response to four different bullet points. All bullet points must be referred to, but there is no need for equal coverage of each one.

Most students were able to make a reasonable attempt at this question and quite a few students produced responses consisting of well over 30 characters. The performance on this question was the best in this paper, with a good number of students securing full marks.

Content

Over 40% of students achieved 8 marks and above for Content by covering all four bullet points in understandable language. It was noticed by the examiners that the majority of students tackled bullet points one and two better than bullet points three and four. The most common hobbies students wrote about were 看书、画画 and 上网. Typical responses for bullet point two were: 因为很有意思; 因为很好玩. Some students found bullet point three a little challenging as they were struggling to use the structure 和……一起.

Whilst it was encouraging to see that about 85% of students secured marks on this question, there were still around 10% of students who scored 0 marks.

Quality of language

In order to score well for Quality of language, students had to show a variety of structures, but there is no requirement for complexity of language in this question. It is perfectly acceptable, and in fact advisable, to present information using the present tense only.

Some excellent sentences using 因为, 又……又, 和 were frequently seen during marking. However, some students used 我喜欢 repetitively, which did not always meet the requirements for Content. Some students found writing the vocabulary 喜欢、常常、好玩儿、在家 accurately a challenge.

Advice to students

- Mention all the bullet points. Attempt to write something about each of them rather than leaving any out.
- Tick off bullet points once you have addressed them.
- Practise writing the verbs 是, 有, 喜欢 and the stative verb 很.
- Learn a few common adjectives.

Question 3

For this question, there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures.

Approximately 23% of students scored 2 or above for Key Messages and around 27% for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. The most frequently achieved mark for both sets of criteria was 1, suggesting that the translation continues to be a task that students find extremely challenging.

The sentences were divided into 12 key messages, as in the table below, with each key message meriting a tick.

Conveying key messages

My grandma is	我奶奶 were well written, but 是 was often not present.
a writer.	Students found this very demanding.
Her friend	This was written very well.
does not have a dog.	Well answered.
Maths.....Chinese.	A mixture of responses were seen, most struggled with writing 数 correctly.
is harder than	比 was written well, but students found 难 challenging.
I think	The best answered part of this question.
his garden	Many found this quite challenging and some wrote 公园 instead.
is both big and pretty.	A mixed performance. Some students responded well, and some found it challenging.
Last weekend	Generally, well answered. But some students found 周末 demanding. A few students mixed up 上 with 下 and wrote 下个周末.
my dad and I	This was written well.
watched a film.	Answers were mixed. Those students who failed to achieve this key message either wrote the character 影 incorrectly or confused 看电影 with 看电视.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

There was usually a direct correlation between the mark for Key messages and the mark for Application of grammar. However, the mark for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures was sometimes lower, especially if the student had been credited for several key messages in spite of poor character writing or excessive use of pinyin; or higher, if the mark for Key messages had been lowered as a result of several relatively minor errors, but where character accuracy was good.

Advice to students

- Practise high frequency words and phrases.
- Learn vocabulary linked to past time frames.
- Check carefully that you do not miss out any parts of the translation by accident.
- If you are not sure about how to write a character, it is best to write out the pinyin rather than leave a blank.

Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks available for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 75 characters in total in response to four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of each one.

Approximately 78% of students chose Question 04.1 and approximately 22% Question 04.2. The performance on 04.1 was slightly better too. Unfortunately, there were quite a few students who scored zero in this question, particularly those who chose 04.2.

Content

The criteria for assessment focussed on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Some students managed to write more than 75 characters covering all four bullet points, but others lost marks for Content because they only wrote around half that amount. Others wrote too much, and either included content that was irrelevant or made lots of errors in the additional material. This affected the mark for Quality of language and also the mark for Content, in cases where the language was unclear or irrelevant.

At this tier, it was usually the students who wrote concisely and accurately who scored the highest marks.

Question 4.1

This was a very popular topic. As the level of difficulty increased in this question, only around 6 per cent of students scored 8 and above for Content. Overall, bullet points one and two were responded to well. Successful students were able to write: 上网好玩; 有意思; 喜欢上网 in response to bullet point one and 天天、常常 for bullet point two, although the character 常 was often not secure. The majority of students in this tier found bullet points three and four more demanding. Students frequently used the present time frame to write about an activity in bullet point three, which did not meet the criteria. For bullet point 4, it was sometimes unclear if students were referring to an online learning activity or simply an activity done online. And as with bullet point three, the time frame was often missing.

Sometimes, what was written was completely irrelevant to the task and students simply wrote what they knew rather than respond to the question. In total, only 25 per cent of students secured 5 marks and above, despite the popularity of this question.

Question 4.2

Coverage of each bullet point varied. 老师 was a popular job for students to write about, and most could express two opinions using simple adjectives, eg 好玩儿、有意思. High ability students often expressed

opinions beyond basic adjectives. Good examples seen were 我觉得老师帮学生学习；我将来想当中文老师，因为我爱学习中文. Although most students attempted the last two bullet points, many were less successful due to the lack of key vocabulary for “to wear,” “clothes” and “school uniform.”

As in Question 04.1, some responses were completely irrelevant to the question, as if students had simply written out a piece of pre-learnt writing. Overall, only around 3 per cent of students achieved 8 marks and above for Content. 12% of students were awarded 5 marks and above, which was considerably lower than for Question 04.1.

Quality of language

There was evidence that some students tried their best to attempt a variety of structures, such as 因为、又……又、但是、不但……而且, and the superlative 最. Most pupils successfully used three time frames, and some students used more advanced vocabulary such as 上次、将来、舒服、裙子 etc.

Where errors occurred, it was mainly due to inaccurate character writing or word order. For example, the time frequency word 常常 was placed at the beginning of the sentence. Common errors included mixing future time words with past auxiliary verbs eg 下个周末我买了东西, which was regrettable.

Many students combined both pinyin and characters to help clarify the intended meaning. While this is an acceptable strategy, it should be noted that extensive use of pinyin was penalised in Quality of language.

Students are reminded that they should only use pinyin as a last resort and it is important to master a few pieces of core vocabulary for each topic, as well as a range of frequently used structures and opinions.

Advice to students

- Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been covered.
- Make sure you learn verbs which allow you to express opinions, such as 喜欢 and 觉得.
- Be careful with time frames; always include the particle 了 when referring to actions in the past, or an auxiliary verb such as 想 or 要 to refer to the future.
- Try to write as many characters as possible. If you are stuck on a particular character, write in pinyin rather than leave a blank.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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