



GCSE

Chinese (Mandarin)

8673/SF Paper 2 Speaking Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

8673
June 2024

Version: 1.0

Further copies of this Report are available from aqa.org.uk

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

General Comments

As in previous years, there was a very positive response to this specification: another successful year. The performance of the paper in the light of students' responses demonstrated that schools/colleges continued to have a good understanding of the established specification and its effective implementation. It was very pleasing to see a significant increase in the number of schools that entered students for AQA GCSE Chinese compared to previous years. All these attest to the ongoing encouraging situation for Chinese language teaching and learning.

On the whole, schools/colleges coped very well with the requirements of the specification, with many well-conducted tests seen. The format of the GCSE Chinese speaking test continued to allow all students to demonstrate a level of oral proficiency that was commensurate with their ability. In particular, most schools that had used this specification in the past administered and carried out the tasks to a much higher standard this year, which indicated that they had heeded the report provided by AQA based on the conduct of the exams in 2023 and that teachers had taken on board the advice and suggestions given. While reflecting on this positive aspect, it is also worth noting that in a minority of cases, the specification requirements were not correctly followed, which led to some students being disadvantaged. This report provides a comprehensive overview of the 2024 GCSE Chinese speaking test, both in terms of teacher conduct and student performance. It will highlight best practice, as well as signposting areas for improvement for 2025 and subsequent years.

Tier of Entry

In the light of students' responses, it is clear that the vast majority of Foundation tier students were appropriately entered at the correct tier. In comparison with previous years, this year schools/colleges had made much more judicious entry decisions for their students. There was no significant evidence to suggest that Foundation tier students may have fared better had they been entered for the Higher tier (as was the case in previous years). Nevertheless, schools/colleges are advised to continue making judicious entry decisions that will allow students to perform to their full potential next year.

Quality of Recording

Generally, there was an overall improvement in the quality of the sound files this year. Tests were well administered by schools/colleges, with very clear recordings and accurate information provided about individual students, all of which contributed to a more efficient marking process. Schools/colleges should, however, be aware that it is essential that the speaking test is conducted at a suitable venue and that a quality recording device is used. Although this was usually the case, there were some instances where external background noise and/or poor-quality recordings affected the audibility of the recordings, all of which made marking a very difficult exercise for the examiners. In a minority of cases, the recordings of students were not clearly audible, the teacher's voice was much louder than the student's, or there was a lot of background noise, all of which made it difficult for the examiners to work out what the students were saying. When background noise in all its forms (school bell, mobile phones, paper flipping, teacher's cough, etc.) became intrusive, this created problems for marking. Schools/colleges are reminded to be aware of extraneous noise issues and to avoid this happening again in future years. Teachers are also reminded that they should not stop or pause the recording at any time during the test.

Teacher Conduct

Test Procedures

It was pleasing to note that there has been an overall improvement in the conduct of the tests compared to the previous years of this specification, with the vast majority of teachers adhering closely to the guidelines laid out in the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations*. The introductory information for each test was concisely, clearly, and effectively articulated. However, it is worth reminding teachers that at the start of each student's test, the student's candidate number and full name should be announced by the teacher, and not by the student. Occasionally only the student's given name was announced by the teacher, and this caused confusion and delay in the marking process.

The prescribed combination of Role play, Photo card and General conversation given in the sequence chart was adhered to by the vast majority of teachers. Teachers are reminded that the wrong combination of Role play, Nominated Theme and Photo card used may result in the theme of the Photo card being duplicated in the General conversation, so that only one Theme is covered in the General conversation. In such cases, the maximum mark for Communication that can be awarded is 5 out of a possible 10.

One glaring error was found this year in the conduct of the exam: the questions asked by the teacher-examiner for the Role play and the Photo card were different from the information announced by the teacher-examiner at the beginning of the test. Specifically, the questions were supposed to be from RP1 and Photo Card F but, instead, questions from RP5 and Photo Card A were used. The student, however, responded to the questions as prepared for RP1 and Photo Card F. This mistake also caused a change in the student's previously Nominated Theme task, resulting in the theme of the Photo Card being duplicated in the General Conversation. Such an error seriously disadvantaged the student's overall performance and should not happen in the future.

Teachers are also reminded to follow the correct sequence while conducting the tests. The table in the Sequence Chart must be followed precisely so that the first 20 students examined by each teacher-examiner are all allocated a different sequence of tasks. Only if there are more than 20 students should a teacher-examiner go back to Student No. 1 on the Sequence Chart. This is to avoid a situation in which many students use the same Role play cards.

Once the test has begun, procedural matters should be announced succinctly in the target language. Transitions between sections of the test should be very clear. There is no need for any use of English during the tests: each new section should be introduced in Chinese. For instance, the Roleplay can be introduced by using a sentence such as '第一部分, 角色扮演卡片 1, 我是你的朋友。'. To indicate to the student that s/he should begin his/her Photo card task, the teacher can say '现在进入第二部分, 图片会话/or 看图会话卡片 E. 照片里有什么?'. To indicate the transition from the Photo card task to the General conversation a sentence such as '现在进入第三部分, 普通会话 1, 你选的是主题 2.....' can be used. It is particularly important to announce the change of theme during the General conversation, eg '普通会话 2, 主题是.....'.

This year it was pleasing to see that the vast majority of teachers did very clearly indicate the transition from one section to the next in the target language as suggested above. Teachers should be commended for their well-organised test procedures and consistent way of conducting the test for each student. However, in a minority of cases, English was still used to indicate the start of each section of the test. Occasionally some teachers conveyed the instructions to lower-attaining students in both English and

Chinese. In some cases, there was no transition to indicate the change of theme in the General conversation, not even an announcement of the theme titles. Teachers are reminded that, for the benefit of both students and examiners, they should clearly signal the transition to the second theme of the General conversation in the target language after the discussion of the first (nominated) conversation theme has concluded.

Teachers are reminded that students' language should not be corrected during the test, nor should they be given any key vocabulary. In such cases, no credit can be given for a student's subsequent response.

It is also worth noting that no marks are awarded when a teacher repeats a question after the student has given a complete but incorrect answer. There were also some cases during the Role play and Photo card tasks in which teachers re-phrased an unanswered question many times, even after all the tasks were completed. This is to be discouraged.

Students are expected to use repair strategies, if needed, throughout the test. An aspect of this is to ask for clarification or repetition. Many teachers had taught their students phrases in Chinese such as ‘请再说一遍。’. When students asked in English for a question to be repeated, the subsequent response was credited for Communication but, in the case of the Role play and General conversation, it could contribute to a lower mark for language.

At times, while the student was still trying to answer a question, the teacher moved on to another question and did not allow the student sufficient time to complete their answer. Teachers need to be a little more patient in allowing the students some thinking time and letting them complete their answers before moving on to the next question. On some occasions, teachers accidentally skipped a question in the Role play and/or Photo card sections, which not only confused students but also disadvantaged them by leading to a loss of marks.

It is most important that teachers thoroughly understand the *Instructions for the conduct of the exams* available on the AQA website and ensure that they are applied correctly.

Timings

Timings were usually appropriate for the tier, but in some schools/colleges this was not the case.

There is no fixed time for the Role play task. However, most students completed this section within the suggested two minutes for Foundation tier. Hesitant delivery and repetition sometimes led to overlong Role plays. Occasionally, teachers gave lengthy responses to students' questions, which should be avoided. This also applies to the General conversation section.

Most students completed the Photo card task comfortably within the time limit at both tiers. At Foundation tier, where the time limit is two minutes, there were some cases where not all five questions were asked within the time allowed, or where some answers could not be credited because they were delivered outside the prescribed time. This was occasionally due to very slow delivery by the student, but more often the result of an overlong and repetitive type of answer in response to the first question, ‘what is in the photo?’. The problem was at times also caused by teachers not strictly adhering to the five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but instead asking supplementary follow-up questions or re-phrasing unanswered questions too many times.

At both tiers, most teachers adhered to the minimum and maximum timings for the General conversation. Some failed to reach the minimum time per theme for Foundation tier, ie one and a half minutes. There were also some occasions when the minimum time requirement was not met for both of the themes. This impacted the mark awarded for Communication. Teachers are reminded that it is vital to allocate the time for the two themes appropriately. Teachers are advised to note that the timing of each General conversation theme starts immediately after the first question on that theme has been asked. Anything said by the student beyond the maximum time limit (five minutes in total for the two themes) is disregarded for assessment purposes.

This year there were some particular issues that are worth noting and need to be addressed in future years. In one instance, both sections of the General conversation were much shorter than the required minimum time, eg for each theme only two questions were asked, which resulted in the General conversation lasting less than 0'40". This seriously impacted the student's marks. To avoid such a situation, teachers are advised to pay close attention to timing throughout the test: at Foundation tier, the General conversation must last between three and five minutes. The minimum amount of time per Theme at Foundation tier is one and a half minutes. If the time spent on a Theme is less than this, a penalty of two marks is deducted from the Communication mark.

Conducting the Role play Task

In the Role play, the prescribed wording in the Teacher's booklet was adhered to by most teachers. In a minority of cases, however, teachers rephrased the script, which invalidated any subsequent response by the student. Teacher-examiners must adhere precisely to the script. Teachers may repeat a question, but they should not rephrase any questions. It was noted that some teachers repeated questions too many times, or rephrased questions, sometimes even supplying key vocabulary. Other teachers waited too long when students were clearly unable to answer. On some occasions, teachers kept repeating '还有吗?' in order to elicit further details, when in fact the student had already given sufficient information to answer the question; this confused the students and at times even resulted in incorrect answers. Occasionally, teachers inadvertently omitted or added words to the script when asking a question. For example, in RP6, Q2, a teacher-examiner added '了' after '做' in the question '休息的时候, 你和你同学一起做什么?', so that the time reference of the original question was not correctly conveyed. This change in meaning confused and disadvantaged the student. Teachers are reminded to take extra care when reading from the script in the Teacher's Booklet.

In the case of two-part questions, eg those requiring an opinion and a reason, most students responded very well, using the conjunction word '因为' to give a justification immediately after expressing an opinion. It is good practice to prompt the students by repeating '为什么?' to elicit a missing justification in order to ensure that the task is fully completed. However, in some cases teacher-examiners asked the first part of the question without adding '为什么?' at all, which meant that students did not provide the required justification, and this resulted in a loss of one mark.

Conducting the Photo card Task

Overall, this section was conducted well by the vast majority of teachers. The five prescribed questions were asked in the order given in the Teacher's Booklet. The two-minute maximum time limit for Foundation tier was adhered to, and the time allowance proved ample for students to provide developed answers to all five questions. However, some significant issues occurred in a small number of schools/colleges which need to be addressed for the benefit of future students.

Teachers are reminded that, unlike in the Role play section, in the Photo card task a question may be paraphrased. When considering any paraphrasing of Photo card questions, the original meaning of the question must be preserved. This can be achieved by the substitution of an individual word with a synonym or, in some cases, with the use of a different language structure. However, no additional elements, which aim to clarify the question further, are permitted. During the test, teachers generally made only minor changes to the script, without altering the meaning, which was acceptable. However, at times some questions were significantly changed. For example, in PCB, Q5 ‘你常常和谁一起看电影?’ was changed to ‘你常常和谁一起做运动?’; in PCF, Q4 ‘你觉得什么课最有意思?’ was changed to the negative ‘你觉得什么课最没有意思?’; in PCF, Q2 ‘你喜欢和同学聊天吗? 为什么?’ was changed to ‘你喜欢你的同学吗? 为什么?’ and in PCF, Q2, a supplementary question ‘他们在干什么?’ was added, which confused the student. Occasionally, additional questions were asked, a question was omitted, or the answer was supplied to the student by providing a choice question or vocabulary. All of these situations disadvantaged the students concerned and, as a result, students’ responses could not be credited.

Teachers are reminded to follow the *Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations* which states: The teacher-examiner must ask the student the five questions in the teacher’s booklet in order. They must ask **only** these questions and **no supplementary ones**, even if the test falls short of the recommended maximum time or if students fail to develop enough answers to gain access to the higher mark bands in the assessment criteria. Teachers are also reminded to keep to the appropriate timing: two-minute maximum time for Foundation tier.

On occasion, after the last question of this section had been completed, teachers returned to questions from earlier in the section which had either been incorrectly answered or which the student had failed to answer. This is not permitted, and teachers are reminded that in such instances no marks can be awarded.

Conducting the General Conversation

In general, this part of the test was far more spontaneous than the other two sections, but also more challenging. It was conducted well by the majority of teachers in a highly professional way. Students were provided with sufficient opportunities to show their full potential in responding to questions, including producing at least one question for the teacher to answer during the General conversation. However, there are some areas which need to be improved and also some good practice which should be commended.

It was pleasing to find that many teachers conducted their tests well and asked different questions to different students, tailoring the questions to their students’ abilities and interests. Unfortunately, there were some teachers who seemed to have a set list of questions for each topic and kept to this list for all students, no matter what their ability. This usually had an adverse effect on students’ marks, especially for lower attaining students, who could not answer the more demanding questions. When moving from one theme to another, most teachers did as advised and indicated the change of theme on the recording, as discussed in the section above. This was helpful for the student and also for the examiners.

Timings were usually good. The total timing for the General conversation at Foundation tier is between three and five minutes. However, the time spent on each theme is equally important. If a student spends less than one and a half minutes on one or both themes, there is a deduction of two marks for Communication. It should be noted that students’ responses made beyond the maximum prescribed

time are disregarded for marking purposes. Teachers are asked to bear in mind that if this extra time includes the only reference by the student to past or future time frames, then this can have a serious impact on the student's marks. Teachers should also avoid spending a significantly unequal time on each theme.

Another area where a deduction of marks is applied was when a student fails to ask the teacher-examiner a clearly understandable question. In such cases, there is a deduction of one mark for Communication. The question can be on either of the two themes covered in the General conversation. The teacher-examiner is allowed to prompt the student to ask a question by saying '你有问题吗?', '你有问题要问我吗?' or '请你问我一个问题吧。' In some schools/colleges, the students were not prompted to ask a question. Sometimes the question was asked after the maximum time had elapsed, which meant it was disregarded for marking purposes and a penalty of one mark was applied for Communication. Teachers are advised to encourage students to ask a question early on in the conversation to ensure it does not fall outside the time allowed. At both tiers, it was pleasing to see that teachers consistently asked questions that allowed students to give and explain opinions, which is necessary for accessing the Foundation tier top band for Communication. At Foundation tier, most students were given the chance to use three-time frames and thereby access the 9-10 band for Range and Accuracy.

There were some impressive and spontaneous conversations from the highest attaining students, although some students relied heavily on pre-learnt material. An open-ended question such as '你上个周末做了什么?' enabled high attaining students at this tier to give an extended response by narrating events. Closed Yes/No questions often are of very limited usefulness. In their questions, some teachers strayed beyond the theme being discussed. Teachers are advised to check which sub-topics fall within each theme in order to avoid this. As mentioned above in this report, where only one theme was covered in the General conversation, or where the same theme was discussed in the Photo card task and then again in the General conversation, a maximum of five marks only can be awarded for Communication.

It is not advisable to ask two or three questions together, in quick succession, without allowing students the chance to respond to each individual question as it is asked; eg "你喜欢上网吗? 你常常什么时候上网? 你上网做什么?", as a single utterance. Asking questions in this manner makes it likely that students will forget to respond to one of the questions, potentially disadvantaging the student.

Teachers should be aware that a presentation is not an acceptable format for this section of the test. The emphasis is on a dialogue between the teacher and the student, not a monologue. Where students engaged in long monologues, it prevented them from demonstrating their ability to interact spontaneously, which is the purpose of this section of the test. In order to achieve the best outcomes, students should be given an opportunity to respond spontaneously to a range of questions, rather than relying heavily on pre-learnt responses for a few questions. Where students engaged in long monologues in the manner of a pre-learned presentation the award of marks was seriously affected.

Teachers are reminded that whilst students are permitted to nominate the first theme of the General conversation, they are **not** permitted, according to the Instructions for the Conduct of Examinations, to nominate a topic or sub-topic within this nominated Theme. For example, a student may choose 'Theme 1 Identity and Culture' as a nominated Theme, but may not choose the topic Free-time Activities or the sub-topic 'Music'.

Student Performance

Students mostly coped well with the requirements of the specification and much good language use was in evidence. However, it was found that at Foundation tier some students responded to many of the teachers' questions with '我不知道。', which could not be rewarded. Furthermore, at times, where poor pronunciation and tones resulted in an unclear message, credit could not be given for a particular response.

Student Performance in the Role play Task

It was pleasing to note that most students were able to access the bullet points and formulate an appropriate and succinct response. Sometimes students did not address the tasks, but offered other, unrelated information, or did not answer the questions in a straightforward way, which showed that they were relying solely on pre-learnt responses.

As in previous years, the unprepared question, indicated by '!', proved difficult for some students, even though it only required one detail. Even more challenging was the '?' question, which required students to ask the teacher a question using the information given. The weaknesses in this area indicated the need for more practice in asking different types of questions. It is worth noting that for the ? Task in the Role play and in the General conversation, an elliptical question using '你呢?' is acceptable, but only when there is an obvious context, so that the meaning is clearly understandable from the previous sentence, eg in RP1 '我有很多朋友, 你呢?'.

A significant number of students at both tiers did not take on board the scene-setting statement explaining where the Role play was taking place, eg 'at a shop'. Students need to understand the importance of carefully reading the Role play scenario at the start of their preparation time in order to correctly respond to transactional Role plays.

On some occasions, and at both tiers, students gave far more information than was necessary to accomplish the task, which is to be discouraged in the Role play task.

Specific comments on Role plays

Below are those tasks which appeared to be the most challenging for students. Tasks that are not mentioned were generally executed well, especially those which required opinions and justifications. It is worth noting that, for some students, the responses to the questions containing 什么时候 (when),的时候 (when...), 几点 (what time), 怎么样 (requiring an opinion) remained challenging.

Role play 1

Task 4

For this question '你喜欢什么时候和朋友聊天?', a straightforward answer giving 'when' was required. Some students did not seem to understand '什么时候', and hence were unable to clearly answer the question. Some students were unfamiliar with the vocabulary '聊天' (chat) and instead used '说' (say) which made the response ambiguous.

Task 5 '?'

In this type of yes/no question '? Ask your Chinese friend if he/she has many friends.' some students missed out the particle 吗 at the end of the question and at times failed to use a questioning/rising tone. A similar situation arose in other questions requiring '吗'.

Role play 2

Task 1

In the question ‘你觉得今天的音乐怎么样?’ the interrogative pronoun ‘怎么样’, which was being used to elicit opinions, was not understood by some students.

This was a transactional Role play, referring to a specific scenario. However, many students failed to understand this and rather than responding to ‘今天的音乐 (today’s music)’, as the question required, they failed to include the vocabulary ‘今天的’ giving a general, rather than a specific answer. In such transactional Role plays students need to imagine themselves in the scenario provided and respond appropriately to the task within this scenario; in this case they are attending a specific concert with their Chinese classmate and talking about the (specific) music they are listening to. Students are advised to read the rubric in English on the Role play card carefully so that they are fully aware of what they are expected to do. This is especially true of transactional Role plays. Students should thoroughly understand the scene-setting statement which explains where the Role play is taking place. A similar situation arose in other transactional Role plays such as in **RP3, Task 1** ‘你喜欢这个商店吗?’ where students needed to give their opinion about a specific shop, rather than shops in general.

Task 5 ‘?’

WH-questions, in this instance requiring 和/跟谁(一起) (with who) ‘? Ask your Chinese classmate who he/she likes to listen to music with.’, proved more challenging than yes/no questions. The same issue arose in **Task 2 ‘!’** in **Role play 3** where students had to respond to the question ‘! 你喜欢和谁一起买东西?’

Role play 3

Task 1

In this task ‘你喜欢这个商店吗? 为什么?’ many students appeared not to understand 商店 and were unable to respond appropriately.

Task 3

In the question ‘你住的地方怎么样?’ the interrogative pronoun ‘怎么样’, which was being used to elicit opinions, was not understood by some students. The same issue arose in **Task 1** in **Role play 4** in response to the question ‘你住的地方天气怎么样?’.

Role play 4

Task 1

Some students could not give a detailed description in response to this task and instead provided a basic ‘很好’ or ‘不好’ to the question ‘你住的地方天气怎么样?’ . A mark of one was awarded for such a response.

Role play 5

Task 3 ‘!’

In the unprepared question ‘! 你几点放学?’ , a straightforward answer giving a time was required. Some students appeared not to understand ‘几点’ and responded incorrectly.

Task 4

Some students found the Task ‘你喜欢在哪儿做作业?’ challenging and failed to understand that ‘在哪儿’ required them to give a location.

Role play 6

Task 2 and Task 3 ‘!’

Some students were unfamiliar with the meaning of ‘同学’ (classmate) and used 朋友 (friend) instead, which was accepted for communication purposes.

Task 2

Some students only provided one detail when responding to ‘休息的时候，你和同学一起做什么？’，when two were required, which meant that the message was only partially conveyed, and a mark of one was awarded.

In this task, the time expression ‘……的时候’ was also a major challenge for some students.

Student Performance in the Photo card Task

Generally, students seemed well prepared for this part of the test. Most students were able to give a reasonably well-developed response to the first prepared question ‘照片里有什么？’. In the case of lower attaining students, this tended to take the form of descriptions of people in the photo. Almost all students were able to give personal opinions and reasons. There were a small number of cases where students spoke only briefly about the content of the photo before giving a personalised response that was irrelevant to the question. Understandably, responses to the three prepared questions were usually more developed than those to the two unseen questions. At Foundation tier, only a minority of students gave correct responses to all five questions, with extended answers to three of them, allowing them to access the 13-15 band.

Specific comments on the Photo cards

In order to score in the top band, students needed to answer all the questions clearly and develop at least three (‘most’) answers by using at least three clauses, including at least one opinion and one justification. There was no extra credit given in this question for complex language, as this question is marked in terms of Communication only. Accuracy and pronunciation, however, are important factors in achieving clarity. Lower marks were mainly caused by: students misunderstanding the questions, giving short answers, providing no response or an inappropriate response, lacking knowledge of vocabulary or linguistic structures, missing out an opinion and/or justification, or serious pronunciation errors.

It is worth noting that when responding to the first question ‘照片里有什么？What is there in the photo?’, student responses must be rooted in the content of the photo. Merely saying ‘I like the photo’ without any justification would not constitute, on its own, an answer to the first question because it does not relate to the content of the photo. Remember students must only describe **what is in the photo**, not what is not. When using conjecture, a justification for that conjecture must be given, eg ‘他们很高兴，因为我看到他们在笑。’. A conjecture without justification to support the description/statement cannot be credited.

Regarding the first question ‘照片里有什么？(What is there in the photo?)’, a small number of students responded using the first person, eg: ‘图上有我的妈妈,……’；‘这是/ or 这里有我的家人’；‘我爸爸是……’. Students should be encouraged to narrate their descriptions/information of the photo **in the third person** when responding to this question. Answers like this cannot be credited.

Photo card A

The last question ‘你的朋友喜欢去哪儿玩儿?’ was intended to elicit a response in the third person, but occasionally some students incorrectly responded with ‘我喜欢……’.

Photo card B

Question 5: ‘你常常和谁一起看电影?’ was not answered very well by some students, and the meaning of the phrases ‘和谁’, and ‘看电影’ were not understood; at times, the word ‘电视’ was used in the answer instead of ‘电影’.

Photo card C

Question 2 ‘上个周末，你去了市中心吗? 为什么?’ was not answered correctly by some students. Some students were unfamiliar with the meaning of ‘市中心’, but answered ‘我喜欢城市.’. Such a response was not credited.

Photo card D

In Question 3 ‘你上一次去公园做了什么?’ and Question 4 ‘你的朋友喜欢什么时候去公园?’, the time expressions ‘上一次’ and ‘什么时候’ were responded to appropriately due to the English prompt on the Student card, but the answers were not well developed.

Photo card E

As in Role play 6, it was clear in the response to Questions 2 and 3, that some students were unfamiliar with the meaning of ‘同学’ (classmate) and used 朋友 (friend) instead. It was accepted for communication purposes, but is not to be encouraged.

Photo card F

The last Question ‘说说上大学好不好.’ was intended to elicit opinions and explanations, but many students just answered with ‘好, 因为有意思.’ which was not a sufficiently developed response. Other responses were not clearly articulated, such as ‘我喜欢去大学校, 我想学…….’. A couple of students responded with ‘不知道’ which was not credited.

Student Performance in the General Conversation

It was pleasing to note that most students were able to use the target language to ask for a question to be repeated. Most students were also able to ask the teacher-examiner a question, as required by this section of the test. The questions asked by students were mostly clear and related to one of the two themes. Some students performed well, including reference to three time frames, which enabled them to achieve the top band for Range and accuracy of language at Foundation tier.

There was a wide range in the quality of responses in the General conversation, but the vast majority were able to score at least some marks. As in previous years, there was a pre-learnt feel to some of the conversations, but by and large some spontaneity was maintained.

Specific comments on the General Conversation

Generally, students managed to sustain a conversation for the minimum amount of time across two themes. Most students made an effort to develop responses, particularly in response to questions from the nominated theme. Students often gave and sometimes explained opinions, in addition to providing basic factual information. On occasion, there was an imbalance between the amount conveyed on the first (nominated) theme and the second (prescribed) theme. When this occurred, it inevitably impacted

the overall mark for Communication. The quality of pronunciation varied greatly. Where poor pronunciation seriously hindered comprehension, this could also impact the Communication mark. Most students relied on simple structures and vocabulary, which was sometimes quite repetitive, to convey basic messages. These students often struggled to make successful statements using past and future time frames.

In terms of the mark for Communication, the required length of the General conversation is between three and five minutes. Each theme must last for a minimum of one and a half minutes and if one or both are under that time there is a penalty of two marks for Communication. Such being the case, students should be encouraged to develop their responses by conveying additional information in order to meet the minimum time requirement.

It is worth emphasising a requirement for students to ask the teacher-examiner a clearly understandable question, and this can occur at any time during this section of the test. If no question is asked, there is a deduction of one mark for Communication. Correct timings were generally observed, but many teacher-examiners only invited the student to ask a question at the very end of the General conversation. By the time the student had responded, they were often out of time and hence incurred a one-mark deduction in line with the mark scheme. Given this potential risk, it is recommended that students try to ask a question earlier in the test. Students in some schools/colleges should be commended for asking a question during the first (nominated) theme of the General conversation. Some students generated a follow-up question by using a ‘statement + 你呢?’ , for example ‘我最喜欢圣诞节, 你呢?’ or ‘我喜欢吃米饭, 你呢?’ , which is acceptable.

Some students were able to deliver a reasonably fluent performance using rehearsed responses. However, balanced against this was the lack of ability to interact spontaneously, meaning that the top mark of 5 in the category for Spontaneity and fluency could not be awarded for this level of performance.

In the light of students’ responses, knowledge and skills regarding the time frames need to be enhanced. In Chinese a verb does not inflect or change its form to indicate tense. Therefore an appropriate time word or expression, or a time reference or context for the action of the verb must be clearly provided when referring to past, present or future events and actions. Modal verbs such as 想, 会, 打算, 计划, 希望 or 要 + verb, etc., can indicate future time reference. Aspectual particles/aspect markers can also be accepted for actions with different time references, eg verb + 过 or 了 to indicate past events.

Advice to teachers

Teacher-examiner Tester Performance records (TTPRs)

A *Teacher-examiner tester performance record* (TTPR) will be sent to some schools and colleges following the marking of the speaking tests. The information provided on the TTPR is intended to provide teacher-examiners with feedback on the conduct of the speaking tests, in order to inform the conduct of future tests. It is not possible to provide more detailed feedback than the information on the TTPR form. Feedback is provided on the basis of need only and not for every teacher-examiner. Teachers who receive TTPRs are advised to read them carefully. If one is not received, it is still a very good idea for teachers to take a look at the blank TTPR sheet (available via the AQA website) to help them prepare for future tests.

General

- Do a short test recording before the first student's test to check recording levels and clarity.
- Position the microphone or digital recorder so that it picks up both voices clearly.
- Make sure that your own and the students' mobile phones are switched off (not just on silent) before the recording begins. Students should not have access to their mobile phones during the preparation time or during the exam, in accordance with examination regulations.
- Do not shuffle papers or move items around on the desk during the test. Such distracting practices can be unsettling to the student. With regard to recordings, any extraneous noise produced can obscure utterances.
- The 'Instructions for the conduct of examinations' document is available via the AQA website. It is *essential* that you follow the instructions in that document.
- In the Instructions document, you are told how to introduce each student in English. This is what you should say at the start of the recording for every student:
GCSE Chinese examination, June (*year of exam*). Centre number ____, Candidate number ____, Candidate name ____. Role play number ____, Photo card letter ____, General Conversation theme chosen by candidate Theme (1, 2 or 3).
- Everything said by the teacher-examiner must be clearly audible. Instances of whispering will be referred to AQA.
- After you have introduced each student, their Role play, Photocard, and nominated theme *in English* (as detailed above), then use Chinese throughout the rest of the exam.
- Please use an appropriate Chinese translation for English terms eg Role play card: 角色扮演卡片; Photo card: 图片会话/or看图会话卡片; theme: 主题; topic: 话题.
- Respond positively to what students say, even if it is not very good. It will encourage them during the rest of the test.

Role play

- Keep to your script as laid out in the Teacher's Booklet. Not doing so will mean that the student's response will receive a mark of 0 for Communication for that task.
- If you see that a student is starting to give the wrong answer to your question, stop him/her immediately and repeat the question. Once the student has completed an incorrect answer, a mark of 0 for Communication is given for that task, even if you repeat the question and a correct answer is subsequently given.
- If a student asks you to repeat a question, you may do so. If a student provides no answer, you may also repeat the question before moving on.
- Do not repeat unanswered questions too many times when students are clearly unable to answer.
- Your reply to the question asked by the student should be clear and concise.

Photo card

- You may paraphrase a question, provided the meaning of the original question is maintained. However, be careful to ensure that this is the case or the student's reply will not be credited.
- Ask all five questions in the Teacher's Booklet, but do not ask any additional questions.
- Keep an eye on the timing. If a student's replies are very long and it looks as though you may not be able to ask the final question within the two-minute maximum time, it may be better to interrupt a student's answer and move on to the next question.
- In a two-part question in an unprepared task, ask the first question, wait for an answer, and then ask the second question. Failure to do so in the unprepared task almost invariably leads to the student having to ask for the question to be repeated.

- Do not re-phrase unanswered questions too many times, as this will interrupt the flow of the conversation.

General conversation

- Encourage students to vary their language structures and vocabulary as much as possible, including a range of opinion words, adjectives, time expressions, verbs, modal verbs, conjunctions, and the like to enhance communication skills and enrich conversation content.
- Train students to give and justify opinions without necessarily being asked to do so. This can form the basis of different starter activities in classroom settings.
- Be sensitive to the ability of the students – someone who struggles to describe his/her town is not going to be successful at discussing more challenging aspects of the topic, for example the impact of global warming.
- Try to ask students questions that reflect their interests. Avoid asking all students identical questions.
- In order to achieve a greater sense of spontaneity in the conversation, follow up a student's response by asking about what they have just told you.
- Keep a close eye on the time. If one of the themes lasts for less than 1'30", there is a deduction of two marks for Communication.
- The maximum length of the General Conversation is five minutes. Everything after that will **not** be marked.
- Remember to prompt the student to ask you a question if they do not do so without being asked. It is better to get them to ask you the question during their nominated theme so that you don't forget to do it later on. Alternatively, encourage students to ask the question early on during the General Conversation, to ensure that it does not fall outside the time allowed.
- If the first question the student asks you makes no sense, get them to ask you another one.
- Keep your reply to the question asked by the student as concise as possible.

Advice to students

- Use the 12-minute preparation time wisely. You can write down exactly what you are going to say in the Role-play tasks and in response to the three questions on the Photo card.
- For the Photo card questions, try to prepare answers of at least three sentences, using a verb in each one, and including opinions and justifications.
- Listen carefully to the questions that your teacher asks you for the unprepared questions in the Role-play and Photo card sections, as well as to all questions in the General Conversation.
- You can ask for a question to be repeated in any part of the test, but make sure you ask in Chinese. You could say '请再说一遍。', for example.
- Remember to ask your teacher a question related to the themes during the General Conversation to avoid a loss of one mark for Communication.

Closing remarks

Teachers and schools/colleges are thanked for their hard work and effort this summer, providing their students with a positive experience and the opportunity to perform to the best of their ability in this component.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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