

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCE Chinese (6CN01) Paper 1

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The assessment requires candidates to speak for five to six minutes based on an assigned English stimulus card with guidance questions.

Candidates have 15 minutes preparation time and they are allowed to make notes during the preparation time which may be referred to during the assessment.

The stimuli cards cover the following four topic areas: Leisure, Youth Interests and Chinese Festivals; Food, Diet and Health; Transport, Travel and Tourism; Education and Employment.

On each stimulus card, there is a picture and a short passage in English which is relevant to the topic. A brief glossary of specialist vocabulary is provided together with guidance in the form of a series of questions providing students with clues to explore their ideas.

Candidates are expected to refer to a series of questions printed on the stimulus so that they can communicate effectively in Chinese about the stimulus topic. Candidates need to express opinions as well as provide relevant and appropriate information. (*Edexcel GCE Chinese specification page 4*)

Assessment: Content and understanding

Candidates are expected to give developed and detailed answers, demonstrating that they have considered thoroughly the issues relating to the stimulus.

The majority of candidates gave good quality performances. Some were very well prepared and spoke logically and accurately in an authentic manner at native or near-native standard.

Most candidates started the speaking assessment with a full or partial translation of the English stimulus, the manipulation and/or paraphrasing are usually sufficient to provide a good start. Candidates who used the English stimulus properly; developed ideas and covered guidance points well and provide relevant experience from their own lives were awarded good marks.

Some candidates were not well prepared and struggled to speak for the full time allocation. Some were over-reliant on pre-learnt material or became repetitive. Quite a few candidates failed to extend their responses to the full range of guidance points, especially to the last open-ended point.

Some candidates ignored the English stimulus and guidance points and produced a free-style speech. For example, some candidates talked about music idols rather than pop music with Stimulus card 1.

Some candidates prepared the relevant section of the stimulus and simply recited their pre-exam prepared notes, hoping that something would be

relevant. Unfortunately, candidates are unable to gain high marks with this type of responses.

Some candidates did not score as highly as they should because they had not prepared the stimulus material sufficiently and were unable to develop their answers in depth.

Candidates were encouraged to use detailed, accurate expressions to show their full understanding of the stimulus.

For example, *stimulus card 8 - training to become a chef*, candidates were expected to cover the content of English stimulus, though not the full content. Some candidates mistook 'apprentice' as 'chef apprentice'. The guidance question, 'What are the advantages and disadvantages of working as chef' was linked to the English stimulus. Candidates were expected to provide their own developed answers to other guidance questions, express relevant ideas and opinions or to demonstrate good understanding of the topic area.

Assessment: Quality of language

Pronunciation and grammar accuracy are rewarded in this part of the assessment. The quality and variety of vocabulary is considered, as well as the range of structures used.

The majority of candidates received good marks for quality of language. High marks of 9-10 were often awarded for performances which were not faultless, but showed clear pronunciation and good control of complex language structures.

The weakest candidates tended to demonstrate problems with tones which caused difficulty in conveying their meaning.

Some candidates spoke fluently but were not awarded high marks due to the simplicity of language structure and limited vocabulary.

Administration

About half of the centres recorded their tests on CD and the remaining centres opted for audio-cassettes.

Centres are reminded to check thoroughly that the recordings on CD and cassette are complete and of a good audible quality before sending for assessment to the Edexcel examiner. In particular, Centres are advised when using audio cassettes for successive assessments, year on year, they should be professionally cleaned so that the recording quality is not affected by poor quality cassettes.

Centres are also reminded that CDs/cassettes should be packaged carefully with appropriate wrapping in order to prevent damage to the recordings.

It is considered good practice for Centres to keep back-up copies of all recordings of candidate assessments, in case of loss or damage to the original recordings. In this respect, it is recommended that Centres record candidate assessments digitally rather than on audio cassette.

The Centre name/number, candidate name, candidate number and stimulus card number should be announced at the start of every recording.

There were many examples of good practice but invigilators should be reminded to read the instructions carefully before conducting this test. It is important for the integrity of the examination that invigilators follow accurately the sequence of oral tests, as specified in the oral booklet. Candidates must not be allowed to choose their own stimulus card.

Furthermore, invigilators should not prompt candidates by reading out questions from the stimulus card, or by asking supplementary questions either in English or in Chinese. The assessment requires the candidates to produce a monologue and additional support by the invigilator could disadvantage the candidates' performance.

Conclusion

The examination requires students to give complex, well-structured and extended answers based on the stimulus material provided by the examination board. In preparation for this assessment, teachers should ensure that candidates are given proper training and experience of the expectations of the assessment prior to the examination.

Overall, the stimulus material in this assessment proved accessible to all candidates.

Grade Boundaries

The modern foreign languages specifications share a common design, but the assessments in different languages are not identical. Grade boundaries at unit level reflect these differences in assessments, ensuring that candidate outcomes across these specifications are comparable at specification level.

Grade boundaries for this, and all other papers, can be found on the website on this link: <http://www.edexcel.com/iwantto/Pages/grade-boundaries.aspx>

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