

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCE

GCE Chinese (8CN01)

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AS Unit 1 (6CN01): Spoken Expression and Response in Chinese

This assessment requires candidates to speak for five to six minutes about the English stimulus they are allocated according to the confidential sequence in the invigilators handbook.

Candidates are allocated 15 minutes preparation time and they are allowed to make notes during the preparation time which may be referred to during the assessment. The use of a dictionary is not permitted.

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.

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

Assessment: Content and understanding

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

Most candidates started the exam with full or partial translation of the English stimulus, the manipulation and/or paraphrasing are usually sufficient to provide a good start. Candidates who extended their speech beyond translating the English stimulus, covered the bullet points well and provided relevant experience from their own lives were awarded high marks.

The candidates that had not prepared for the exam struggled to speak for the full time allocation and often repeated themselves. Quite a few candidates failed to extend their responses to the full range of guidance points, especially the last open-ended point. Candidates who simply recited the notes they had made during the preparation time did not score highly because they did not develop their answers in depth.

Candidates are expected to give developed and detailed answers, demonstrating that they have done some thinking about the issues stemming from the stimulus during the preparation time.

Take Stimulus 1 of the topic area Leisure, Youth Interests and Chinese Festivals as an example. The topic of the stimulus is Marathon running with basic information about Marathons, such as the length of a Marathon and the London Marathon. Candidates should move on from the topic of Marathons and use the last question 'What do you do in your spare time' to express relevant ideas and opinions or to demonstrate good understanding of the topic area.

Assessment: Quality of language

This relates to the whole test.

Both pronunciation and grammar accuracy are rewarded in this part of the assessment. The weakest candidates seemed to have big problems with tones which caused difficulty in their meaning. 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 quality and variety of vocabulary is considered, as well as the range of structures used. Some candidates spoke fluently but were not awarded high marks due to the simplicity in structure and restricted vocabulary.

Administration

Most centres recorded their tests on audio-cassettes, a few used audio CDs or data CDs only playable on computers. Audio-cassette recordings sometimes were at high speed and unplayable on ordinary cassette machines.

Centres that chose to record on CD must ensure that the CD can be played on an ordinary CD player. Please refer to the Handbook of Instructions for centres on the Edexcel website for further guidance.

A few problems were experienced: wrong recording sent, missing oral forms and attendance lists.

The quality of recording on the whole was fair but there were instances of disturbing background noise e.g. a telephone ringing.

Centre name, centre number and candidate name, candidate number and stimulus card number should be announced at the start of every recording by the invigilator in charge of the recording.

There were many examples of good practice but invigilators should be reminded to read the instructions, the handbook of instructions for centres and the oral training guide carefully before conducting this test.

The stimulus material needs to be allocated according to the sequence: some centres appear to have allowed candidates to select a stimulus card.

Invigilators should not prompt candidates by reading out questions from the stimulus card or with supplementary questions either in English or in Chinese.

Some invigilators allowed candidates to use several different stimulus cards instead of keeping to one.

Some invigilators appear to have used the pause button during recording to allow candidates more time to think. This is not permitted. The must not be paused or stopped and then restarted.

AS Unit 2 (6CN02): Understanding and Written Response

This paper carries 70 marks and consists of 3 sections. In this first year of the new specification, candidates generally performed well in all sections and there were few really low scores. Whilst candidates are to be congratulated on their ability to cope with the challenge presented by the paper, this report will offer guidance with a view for further improvements. There are some basic aspects of examination technique that candidates need to bear in mind. For example, some candidates would do better if they read the rubrics and questions carefully so that they understand the task requirements.

Section A - Listening

Passage 1

All candidates made a good start to the examination and scored well although (c) had invited some incorrect answers. Candidates required to show the skill of listening for gist to be able to understand that '8 o'clock' was the correct answer, not '9:30'.

Passage 2

Most candidates tackled this very competently. Weaker candidates were also able to score at least 2 marks on A and E.

Passage 3

This question posed no problems for candidates, but many candidates did not adhere to the rubric instructions, namely to *circle* the correct answer in the bracket. The correct answer was accepted in whichever form it was offered but candidates are advised to comply with the rubric.

Passage 4

The questions requiring a response in Chinese characters were generally well attempted. The vast majority of candidates appeared to understand the extract well but there were certain parts that caused problems.

(a) A tiny number of candidates forgot the need to change the form of pronoun from the first person 'at the time I became a mother' to '方盈' or '她' in their response and rendered the answer incorrect.

(b) A few candidates left out the part 'she liked to work' and lost one mark.

- (c) Some candidates had difficulty writing the answers in Chinese characters correctly and led to the loss of mark. Others confused what Fang Ying liked to do (design) with the job she later got (art director), suggesting that the candidates did not listen carefully.
- (d) Again some candidates either did not listen carefully or did not pay enough attention to the questions and confused her role with the type of company she worked for.
- (e) This was tackled very confidently although a small number of candidates struggled to give the correct registers.

Section B - Reading

Overall this section was pleasingly done. Passage 6 appeared to have invited more mixed responses than expected. Students are reminded to read the rubric and to adhere to the requirement that (1) all answers should be in English and (2) all answers should be based exclusively on the information in the passage. No credit can be given for answers written in Chinese and that have no basis in the stimulus.

Passage 5

- (a) A sizeable minority of candidates were not able to transfer the notion of 'mei (every)' and wrote 'half a year' or 'half year' rendering the answer incorrect.
- (b) A minority did not transfer the keyword '找到我' properly as 'find' or 'contact' in (i).
- (c) Caused no difficulties
- (d) Produced mixed responses with a sizeable number of candidates not able to establish the correct answer 'cannot finish homework'.

Passage 6 -

- (a) Candidates lost the 1 mark mainly due to a lack of understanding of either (1) 'one of the most' or (2) the direction 'south east'
- (b) A noticeable minority of candidates attempted unsuccessfully to find the English term 'primary school students'.
- (c) Some candidates did not understand the term 'summer holiday'. There were several instances of giving the date 2nd of May.
- (d) A few candidates were not able to give the correct English term 'expert' or 'professional'.
- (e) Most candidates were able to score the 1 mark.

Passage 7

The overwhelming majority of candidates scored a pleasing mark for this passage. Part (f) had invited more wrong answers when some candidates did not pay attention to the keyword 'taste' or 'flavour' and incorrectly suggested 'any ingredients' or 'stuff' or 'forms'. A minority added the answer for (e) to (d), while there were several instances that candidates gave extra answers to (g) based on their own experience. It would be advisable to bring to candidates' attention that (1) marks could not be awarded to an answer that exhibits indecision and (2) any additional detail that negates would render the answer irrelevant and lead to the loss of marks.

Section 3 - writing

This section was pleasingly done. However, it is crucial that candidates read the instructions carefully and comply with the required length of answers for this section. Many able candidates failed to score highly for content because they wrote more than 200 characters, which meant that they were not able to cover all four bullets within the word-limit and lost marks. It also appeared that some candidates had allowed the first or/and second bullet to take up too much of the writing by explaining in detail how much time spent a day watching TV and rambling about their favourable programmes. Candidates perhaps should try to identify the overall theme and the structural link among the bullets in order to organise the details sensibly.

2009 Statistics

Unit 1: Spoken Expression

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	30	21	18	15	13	11
Uniform boundary mark	30	24	21	18	15	12

Unit 2: Written Response

Grade	Max. Mark	A	B	C	D	E
Raw boundary mark	70	59	50	41	32	24
Uniform boundary mark	70	56	49	42	35	28

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