

Examiners' Report/ Principal Examiner Feedback

June 2011

GCSE Chinese (5CN04) Paper 01

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Alternatively, you can contact our GCSE Chinese Advisor directly by sending an email to LanguagesSubjectAdvisor@EdexcelExperts.co.uk.

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Writing in Chinese

This is the second year for the writing controlled assessment, but for many centres, it was their first attempt. There are five themes in which candidates can choose a topic of interest for their writing assessment:

- Media and culture
- Sports and Leisure
- Travel & Tourism
- Business, work & Employment
- Centre devised option

Candidates could have two weeks preparation time and up to 6 hours guidance from the teacher. Some teachers adapted the sample tasks and stimuli provided by Edexcel while others created their own according to their students' abilities and interests.

It was pleasing to find that the majority of essays generally covered a wide range of knowledge and details showing their efforts in research and preparation prior to the writing assessments. Stronger candidates produced coherent, well presented, pleasant-to-read essays. Even weaker candidates managed to produce some contents relevant to the topics chosen. Their efforts were highly appreciated and duly rewarded.

The Topic, task and stimuli

It is essential that candidates understand the topic and task before preparing and writing the essay. In some cases, candidates produced work that was irrelevant. For example, for the title "Write an imaginary account on a day-out with a famous person" some wrote wholly about the life of a famous person and could not score any content marks. The stimuli and CA4 Notes Forms should be used to guide candidates to write according to the task.

There were some centres which used the same topic, task and stimuli for all candidates resulting in similar contents in their essays. In some rare cases, the vocabulary and structures were similar as well. This is not good practice as it limits capable candidates' creativity and language skills, while the less able candidates struggle to produce the same content. The same applies to some candidates who memorized a model essay and wrote it out at the assessment session. Examiners always look for individuality in writing rather than reproduction of a piece of model composition.

CA4 Notes Form

Many problems were discovered with how candidates used the CA4 (Notes Form). Many candidates failed to observe the word-limit of 50 characters /30 English words / 30 characters + 20 English words. Instead they wrote down whole sentences or paragraphs of their essay. This is prohibited. Candidates are reminded that Notes Form should be used as a plan, preferably in the form of mind-map or bullet points. For the correct use of Notes Form, please refer to "The Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination and Controlled Assessments 2011" which can be found in the "Exam Materials" column on Edexcel website.

The word-count

The majority of essays submitted were within the recommended word count of 100-150 characters. Some weaker candidates failed to write to the minimum 100 characters, and their scores in contents and communication marks were affected – sometimes not more than half of the total content marks (<15).

There is no upper limit for the word-count for the essay. There is no penalty for essays which exceed 150 characters, nor any credits added. However, it was found that candidates normally performed well within the word-count limit, while some excessively long essays were prone to writing errors and irrelevance.

Administration

Centres are required to send the following to the examiner:

- attendance register
- mark sheet with authenticity signatures from teacher & candidate
- task and stimuli
- CA4 Notes Form
- two essays

It is pleasing to find that many centres followed the "The Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination and Controlled Assessments 2011" (ICE). It is good practice that the controlled assessments are prepared and conducted in accordance with the guidelines and all the necessary documents are sent together with the essays to the examiners so that the examination and marking can proceed smoothly.

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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