



Examiners' Report

Principal Examiner Feedback

Summer 2025

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

In Chinese (4CN1)

Paper 03: Speaking

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Overview

The speaking assessment (4CN1_03) for the International GCSE Chinese specification (2017) is worth 25% of the qualification. It is conducted in exam centres and assessed externally by Pearson.

The maximum mark in this speaking test is out of 40 and the total assessment time is between 8 and 10 minutes. This assessment consists of three tasks:

Task A – a picture-based discussion

Tasks B and C - two conversations on two different topic areas.

Content overview

Students are assessed on their ability to convey their understanding of spoken Chinese through three speaking tasks. Students must be able to:

- describe the contents of a picture.
- describe possible past or future events related to the people in the picture.
- respond to questions about the picture and its related topic.
- take part in a spontaneous conversation on two further topics.

Assessment overview

- Task A (2 - 3 minutes carries 12 marks) requires students to answer five questions.
- Tasks B and C (3 minutes to 3 minutes 30 second each) carry 28 marks in total over both tasks B and C are conversations on two different topic areas, determined by the randomisation grid supplied by Pearson.

The three topic areas of the three different tasks must be chosen from the five topic areas:

- A Home and Abroad
- B Education and Employment
- C Personal life and relationships
- D The world around us
- E Social activities, fitness and health

Each topic area may only be addressed once .

The sub-topics A3 Services, C3 Role models, C5 Childhood, D2 weather and climate and E4 accidents, injuries, common ailments and health issues are **not** assessed in the speaking test.

Pearson provides a randomisation grid and the majority of centres adhered to it this year. If a topic area is repeated, then no marks can be awarded for the repeated topic. There were very few centres that tested the same topic area twice, although there were occurrences of digression within the topic areas. As a consequence, these responses were not credited. Teacher examiners should remember that the announcement of student name and number, centre and topic areas do not count towards timings. Timings must begin when the student begins their response to the first question in Task A, or when they respond to the first questions in both conversations in Task B and C. Task A should be a **minimum of 2 minutes and a maximum of 3 minutes** in length. Each of the conversations in Task B and Task C should be a **minimum of 3 minutes and up to a maximum of 3 minutes 30 second**. Examiners do not reward extraneous material delivered beyond the allocated timings, which are strictly observed.

Task A

In the first part of the examination the student selects a picture on which they answer five questions.

The picture must contain people, objects and interaction and must be linked to one of the five topic areas in the specification.

This part of the test lasts between 2 and 3 minutes. Timing begins as the student begins to answer the first question.

Where Task A is too long:

- If the teacher/examiner is speaking at 3 minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at that point.
- If the student is speaking at 3 minutes, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at the end of the sentence / the next sense break.

It is important therefore that teacher examiners observe the timings in future series.

Teacher examiners are reminded that they may not practise Task A with their students using the picture to be used in the final test. They may practise using other pictures on the same topic, but they may not practise or rehearse using the picture the student has chosen to use in the exam. Students must not have prepared answers for the 5 questions; a lack of spontaneity in Task A may affect the mark awarded for Communication and Content.

Most students this series chose a suitable picture. Where they did not, this had no automatic effect on the mark awarded for Task A but may have made it more difficult for the teacher examiner to ask a question or questions of the required type.

The student gives the teacher examiner a copy of the picture in advance of the exam. The teacher examiner must prepare five questions to ask each student about their chosen picture but must not share these questions with the student before the test.

The student may not take any notes into the exam but may bring in a copy of the picture he or she has chosen to use.

The question types for Task A are prescribed and this requires thorough preparation from the teacher examiner in order to achieve the best marks available for students. The pattern of these five questions must follow the examples in the specification and should consist of the following:

Question type 1: A description of what you can see in the picture

Question type 2: Specific factual information about the picture

For example, select a person or persons in the picture and state what they are doing.

Question type 3: Past or future hypothesis

This question must ask the student to imagine a possible past or potential future event **relating to the picture**. This is the opportunity to support the student in using additional tenses and time frames.

Question type 4: Opinions about the picture

This question elicits the student's opinions on the picture and the topic.

Question type 5: Evaluation

The teacher examiner should elicit an evaluation from the student. This question will move away from the content of the picture and exploit the wider topic area.

As an example, if the student chooses a picture of a group of boys playing in a football match (Topic E, sub-topic 2: Hobbies, interests, sports and exercise) the five questions could be:

Question 1 : 说一说图片上有什么？

Question 2 : 图片中最左边的男孩子在做什么？

Question 3 : 你觉得他们打完球之后会去哪里？

Question 4 : 爱好对你重要吗？为什么？

Question 5 : 要是有时间，你会学什么新的东西？

In order to enable students to develop their responses, teachers are allowed to use prompts for questions. Only the following three prompts may be used:

- 为什么（不）呢？ Why (not)?
- 还有吗？ Anything else?
- 你还有时间，请继续。 You still have time, please continue.

There must be no other supplementary questions and teachers must not deviate from these prompts.

Teacher examiners should also be aware that they can only **repeat** the question but **not rephrase** the question, as the response can then not be credited.

In a significant number of centres this year, Task A was conducted incorrectly. While examiners apply the mark grids positively, incorrect conduct of the test may prevent the student accessing the entire range of marks available.

Task A Student performance

This is a picture- based question and answer task. The picture or photo which was chosen by the candidate affected the content of the description. The teacher examiner cannot conduct the test properly if the image is not clear or without any specific object. The current specification has been ongoing for a few years and as such, the 5 compulsory questions were structured and presented well.

However, some teacher examiners asked too many questions and exceeded the allotted 3 minutes time limit, which caused inevitable mark lost. It is worth to note that some native speakers answered fluently but too fast, so the time used might be less than 2 minutes. Therefore, the teacher examiner should take note of the time limit in each part.

Task A Tips for teacher examiner

- Ensure that a suitable picture is chosen with people, objects and interaction. This should be a range of topics across the centre and no two students should have the same picture.
- Prepare the five questions in advance to ensure that the specification is being followed correctly.
- Ensure questions 2 and 3 are about the people in the picture, not the students themselves.
- Ask not more than 5 questions, even if the student response is short, as these will not be credited.
- Encourage the student to develop their answers, by using only the allowed prompts.
- Ensure that all five questions are answered within the three-minute time limit; maybe this will entail cutting a student short in question 1 if they describe the picture in too much detail.
- Give the student time to formulate their response and encourage them to develop their answer.
- Ask one tense for question 3; there is no requirement to ask all 3 tenses in this task.
- Repeat a misunderstood question rather than rephrase it as rephrasing invalidates the response.
- Ensure all questions are within the chosen topic area.
- Do not correct a student's language during the test.

Task B and C

Tasks B and C are two conversations on two different topic areas. The topic areas to be used in Tasks B and C are determined by the grid provided by Pearson. Note that the following subtopics will not be assessed in the speaking test: A3, C3, C5, D2 and E4.

Each conversation should last between 3 minutes and 3 minutes 30 second. Timing begins as the student begins to answer the first question.

Where Task B or Task C is too long:

- If the teacher/examiner is speaking at 3 minutes 30 second, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at that point.
- If the student is speaking at 3 minutes 30 second, the examiner stops assessing the conversation at the end of the sentence or the next sense break.

The randomisation grid was adhered to in almost all cases, but there were many issues with timings reported. Each conversation should last between 3 minutes and 3 minutes 30 second and timing begins as the student begins to answer the first question. As already mentioned, both Task B and Task C are timed separately, so a short Task B is not compensated by an overlong

Task C, and vice versa. Please ensure that timings are adhered to, as it seems that a number of teachers were not aware of this, and it did have a negative impact on some performances.

Before the beginning of the first conversation, the examiner should announce the first topic area to be covered and then they should announce the second topic area at the changeover to the second conversation.

Some teacher examiners were very adept at encouraging the student to produce spontaneous speech. However, if a student does not respond spontaneously to questions, they may not be able to access the full range of marks available for Interaction and Spontaneity. Teacher examiners should not use a list of pre-prepared questions but, instead, react to and build on what the student says. In this way a spontaneous and logical conversation will develop.

Tasks B and C Student performance

The main problem that occurred within these conversation-based sections this year were the quantity and quality of the questions asked by the teacher examiner. With fewer than expected questions asked, there were certain situations where student did not maximise their marks because they did not have the chance to demonstrate all their skills. This negatively affected the final mark and may not accurately reflect the student's ability. Some questions asked by the teacher examiner could be deemed hard to answer, as they were not completely open ended and may not allow the candidate to fully express their linguistic ability. Therefore, the teacher examiner should prepare questions with different varieties and levels.

The topics and guidelines were generally followed well and there were not many cases of deviation from the topic or of irrelevancy. In addition, questions must fall under only one subtopic in each conversation. Some teachers asked more than one subtopic and this is not appropriate.

Tasks B and C Tips for teacher examiners

- Be sure in advance of the examination which conversation topics are to be discussed according to the randomisation grid. This should not be discussed with students.
- Observe the timings carefully to maximise opportunities for students to access the full range of marks.
- Be clear and announce when the topic changes from task B to C to help both student and examiner.
- Ensure that tasks B and C are balanced in terms of linguistic knowledge. Ask questions in both conversations which prompt the student to use present and past and/or future time frames.
- Choose the right questions for the ability of the students. Find an appropriate level; do not limit them, but push each student to reach their potential.
- Listen to the student. Follow up with an appropriate question or ask them to expand on what they have said rather than sticking rigidly to a set of questions.

- Encourage spontaneous speech by the student.
- Encourage the student to develop answers, elicit opinions and reasons for their opinions.
- Ask open questions: encouraging the students to answer using an extended phrase or sentence.
- Keep teacher input to a minimum so that the student speaks as much as possible. The students do not have to ask a question.
- Do not correct a student's language during the test.
- If a student does not understand a word in a question, the teacher examiner should move on, not labour the point or ask additional questions with this word.

Administration

Most centres followed the guidance for the administration of these tests. On occasion, the requirements were not followed, and centres had to be contacted to upload documents and/or replacement recordings.

Recording and uploading of tests

- Make sure that both the student and the teacher/examiner can be heard clearly; where only one microphone is used, make sure that this is placed closer to the student.
- The room used should be quiet so that no extraneous noise is heard during the test.
- Introduce the student's name and number clearly at the beginning of the test.
- Do not stop or pause the recording at any time during the test.
- Tasks A, B and C should be conducted in that order.
- Check that the whole test has been recorded clearly.
- Ensure that **three** files are uploaded individually for **each** student, not as one document for all students: MP3 recording, picture and candidate cover sheet.
- Audio files should be in the correct format. MP3 is preferable, but files as outlined in the 'guidance for oral recordings' are also acceptable.
- Audio files should be labelled, for example, 12345_7890_Steve_M for ease of examining.
- Cross check that the candidate numbers match across all uploaded files for each candidate.
- Ensure that the teacher examiners and students have signed the candidate cover sheet before uploading.

Further information can be found on the Pearson website and teacher/examiners should make sure they are familiar with the following documents (all available on the Pearson website):

- Specification: International GCSE Chinese (first teaching 2017)
- International GCSE Chinese: Getting Started Guide
- International GCSE Chinese: Oral Examination Training Guide

