

Chinese (background speakers)

2014 Chief Assessor’s Report

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## Overview

Chief Assessors’ reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

## School Assessment

Assessment Type 1: Folio

There are three assessments in this part: interaction, text production, and text analysis. Most teachers designed four or five tasks for this assessment type, which provided students with more opportunities to demonstrate the performance standards in this assessment type.

**Interaction**

It is important for teachers to be engaged in the interaction tasks, for example, in discussions, care should be taken to give students the opportunity to expand on answers. Presentation tasks with little or no interaction made it difficult for students to demonstrate specific feature E3 (Use of Strategies to Initiate and Sustain Communication).

The most successful students demonstrated a clear idea of the purpose, audience, and context of their texts, and this understanding influenced the way that the text was structured and the language that was used. They also demonstrated competence in the Ideas and the Expression assessment design criteria by expressing opinions in response to open-ended questions, without being overly reliant on a script.

The less successful students gave general information on the topic, i.e. with less explanation of the information they referred to and less analysis of the topic. Some students needed more confidence and preparation to respond at greater depth to unscripted questions and comments.

**Text Production**

Responses appeared to be more successful when they were based on a specified contemporary issue, and when teachers had focused on one text type and explicitly taught the language and structure relating to this text type. Successful responses were achieved when the question was more specific than ‘Write an essay on…’ or ‘Write a response to ...’.

The most successful responses met the task requirements of:

* addressing an issue as specified in the subject outline. It appeared less sufficient to provide, for example, a recount of a film, or information on a topic without considering different perspectives.
* conveying opinion about the issue, as well as providing information. The better responses were from students who were able to use information and ideas arising from the text(s) to form and express their own opinions.

**Text Analysis**

It is important that teachers are very clear about the requirements as set out in the subject outline, and give students opportunities to fulfil these requirements. It was difficult for students to demonstrate specific feature ER2 (Analysis of Linguistic, Cultural, and Stylistic Features) if the written task just required them to respond to a text.

Some good text analysis tasks allowed students to compare the perspectives, ideas, and opinions in the text/s on the topic so that students were able to demonstrate their competence in the essential part of this assessment — the Evaluation and Reflection assessment design criterion.

The most successful students were able to analyse and explain the content, purpose, and audience of the texts. They responded to questions in their own words and with appropriate textual references to support their opinions. The less successful students identified the key issue but were not able to incorporate examples from the text/s effectively when supporting their own views.

Assessment Type 2: In-depth Study

Students were required to carry out an in-depth study (IDS) of one contemporary issue of their choice. While it is appropriate for teachers to advise on suitable issues, the IDS must be a product of independent study and not a response to a topic taught to the whole class.

Students who focused on a specific topic that was of interest or relevance to them had more success. Some students chose broad and general topics, making it difficult for them to demonstrate the Ideas assessment design criterion to a high level.

The topics for the IDS that were chosen by the students or the teachers were mostly appropriate. They were diverse, fresh, and interesting. For example, the impact of e-business on China’s economy, genetically modified food, nuclear energy, etc. Even the ‘old favourite’ topics such as male and female equality, Tibetan independence, population issues, and so on, were looked at from some fresh angles. However, a few topics such as a movie or book review, a specific festival, and Chinese cuisine do not lend themselves to in-depth analysis and reflection and were thus inappropriate for this subject. Furthermore, some students’ IDS topics were the same or similar to topics covered in the school folio tasks, which is not to be encouraged.

The better Chinese written responses were able to analyse findings from a variety of sources and to synthesise information. Better responses correctly referenced quotes and the ideas of others, which were then elaborated upon in the student’s own words. Responses were less successful when presented as a series of quotes without attempts to analyse and evaluate the information, ideas, or perspectives.

Students who achieved a high standard in the oral presentation task were able to present the process of their IDS research in a spontaneous and independent way, without over-reliance on pre-prepared answers or reading from a script. Successful oral presentation tasks allowed students to demonstrate analysis and comprehensive knowledge when the student was asked open-ended questions on the issue investigated.

The same requirements should not be used for both the oral and Chinese written responses. Using the same or similar requirements for both tasks is problematic, as there is almost inevitably some crossover of information and ideas between the two tasks which would limit students’ opportunities to meet the requirements.

For the English responses, the most successful students had a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve in this assessment. They focused on some specific aspects, elaborated in detail with analysis or explanation of how the texts studied informed their own understanding and perspectives on the topic. The less successful responses did not demonstrate a clear purpose other than to present some general information on the topic or simply describe the process of their research.

In addition, a 7-minute time limit is set for the IDS oral presentation task. A number of oral tasks were substantially longer than this. Students must keep within the specified time limit. Similarly, both Chinese and English responses of IDS have a word or character limit, and anything over these limits is not assessed.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

Overall, students in the 2014 oral examination were successful. Through their discussions in the oral examination most students demonstrated evidence of their learning and an understanding of the various contemporary issues with some degree of depth and breadth.

The most successful students in this area showed that their topics were carefully chosen and their research was conducted appropriately and thoroughly. During the discussion, they were able to demonstrate an excellent knowledge of their research topics in depth and use references and valid evidence to justify their views. Their expressions were clear, logical, and coherent. Above all, one of the most important aspects which made them more successful was that they were able to reflect in an insightful manner on their study including their own values, beliefs, ideas and experiences.

A few students appeared to be lacking in research and preparation. Some of them were unable to provide any evidence of learning. These students showed a lack of understanding of the research process and the requirements of the in-depth study. They perhaps needed more guidance to select an appropriate topic. These students lacked enough knowledge of their topic to be able to interact and maintain the discussion during the examination. Some appeared to have memorised information without further analysis or critique.

Students should be advised to use a variety of sources to conduct their research for the in-depth study and select resources that give different opinions and viewpoints. This will help the student to understand all of the aspects of their topic and be able to give an insightful reflection that on the topic presented.

A few students brought pictures or diagrams as their supporting material, some of which was relevant and useful. However, some of the material had a lot of written information on it and was thus unable to be used during the examination.

There were also a few students who did not fill in the In-depth Study Outline for Oral Examination before entering the examination room. It is recommended that students complete the outline, as it supports their performance during the examination.

Advice to teachers:

* help students select an appropriate and suitable topic — not too narrow or too broad
* make sure that your students’ IDS topics are different from the school folio tasks
* teach students research skills, i.e. how to conduct research, how to select valuable information, how to analyse information, and how to draw a conclusion
* help students to complete the In-depth Study Outline for Oral Examination correctly and clearly and remind them to take it into the examination room.

Written Examination

Section 1: Listening and Responding, Part A

This section proved difficult for some students who not only had difficulty in understanding the questions but were also unable to use English to express their thoughts clearly. Some students struggled to answer any questions and this may have been because English is their second language. This has always been the most obvious weakness for students in this subject in the past.

Nevertheless, some students were successful. They understood the questions very well and were able to answer them efficiently, even if they were using simple English vocabulary and grammar structures.

For Question 1(a), the majority of students were able to answer correctly. However, a few students’ answers were incomplete or incorrect.

For Question 1(b), the most successful students were able to answer well. They not only interpreted the literal meaning of the phrases, but most importantly thoroughly explained their meaning in the context. The less successful students failed to explain the meaning of the phrases in the context of the text, or explained them incorrectly.

Many students found Question 1(c) difficult to answer. The most successful students were able to analyse the language used in the text and voice tones used by the speaker, for example, presenting both sides of the issue, encouraging the audience to think by using rhetorical questions, and encouraging the audience to express their opinions by using language like “I am looking forward to hearing your opinions in next week’s program”. Less successful students, however, were unable to analyse and comment on the linguistic features used in the text.

The overall performance in this part of the examination indicates that students need to improve their English, as well as their listening comprehension skills, and analysis and evaluation skills, in order to achieve a good result.

Section 1: Listening and Responding, Part B

The majority of the students demonstrated a good understanding of the texts and achieved a satisfactory or higher result. However, many students were unable to analyse and evaluate the issues that were presented in the texts.

The more successful students were not only able to evaluate both points of view on issues from the two texts, but also able to form their own opinions and discuss them clearly, logically, and cohesively.

The less successful students, however, lost marks for a variety of factors such as not using the information from both texts; simply repeating (or copying) what was in the texts without any analysis or evaluation of the issues; not putting forward their own opinion; using incorrect text type; and using incorrect characters or Pinyin in their writing.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

The overall performances of the students in this part were considerably successful. The mean mark for this part was higher than last year.

Most students understood the text and the questions very well. They were able not only to appreciate both the author’s ideological connotations, but also to identify and explain the literary techniques used in the text. Nevertheless, a few students showed poor knowledge of literary appreciation and were unable to answer most of the questions correctly.

For Question 3(a), the vast majority of students were able to identify the two metaphors used in the text correctly, and most were also able to accurately explain the meaning of each metaphor in the context of the text. However, a few students failed to identify the two metaphors and were unable to explain the meaning of the metaphors in the context of the text correctly.

Similarly, for Question 3(b), the vast majority of students were able to explain the idioms in the context of the text very well. Again, only a few students struggled to give correct answers to the questions.

Most students also performed well in Question 3(c). They were able not only to identify the two different kinds of rhetorical questions, but also to explain their function in the text accurately. However, a few students were either unable to give a complete answer or gave an incorrect answer.

Question 3(d) requested students to understand the text not just from the literal words and sentences, but also to go beyond. Students needed to try to analyse the text and figure out the author’s inner world, and then draw their own conclusion. This was the most challenging task for most students in this subject, perhaps because they are not used to this kind of thinking. However, some students were able to give excellent answers, such as the ‘author appreciates the young man’s assistance and support’, ‘the author admires the young man’s principles and integrity’, ‘the author praises the young man’s courage and sense of social justice’, and ‘the author thinks the young man is exemplary’.

A few students did not answer Questions 3(c) and (d). There is no clear indication of the reason for this. It could be either that they overlooked the instruction ‘PLEASE TURN OVER’ or that they ran out of time.

The overall performance in this part of the examination indicated that students who performed well had good reading comprehension skills, including the basics of Chinese language and literature appreciation.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

The vast majority of students generally performed well in this part of the examination and achieved a satisfactory or higher result. Only a few students failed to reach a satisfactory standard. However, very few achieved at the highest level.

The most successful students were able to identify, analyse and evaluate the issues from the text and form their own opinions. They demonstrated a thorough understanding of the issue, formulated their own opinions with depth, and expressed them in their writing logically and cohesively, with sophisticated language. Critical thinking and creative thinking and skills are important for students to achieve at the highest level in this section.

The less successful students lost marks for a variety of factors, such as misunderstanding the text or the question, not using the information from texts, simply restating (copying) what was in the texts without any analysis or evaluation of the issue, not putting forward their own opinions, providing superficial ideas, not conveying their opinions clearly, using the wrong specification (writing an article instead a letter as they were required to do), not using a logical or coherent structure and sequence, and using incorrect characters or Pinyin in their writing.

Section 3: Writing in Chinese

The table below shows the percentage of students who attempted each question.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Question | Theme | Text Type |  |
| 5 | China and the World – The environment | An article for a newspaper | 42% |
| 6 | China and the World –  Political and historical developments since 1949 | A formal letter | 19% |
| 7 | Modernisation and Social Change | A diary entry | 26% |
| 8 | Language in Use in Contemporary China | An article for a magazine | 12% |

The majority of students achieved a satisfactory or higher result for this section, however, very few students achieved at the highest level.

The most successful students were commonly not only able to meet the specifications with the correct logical structures, but also, most importantly, they had a clear view with a deep understanding of the issues, and were able to use references and to offer explanations and justifications in their discussion.

The less successful students commonly lost marks for one or more factors, such as misunderstanding the question, providing opinions that were not quite relevant to the questions set, a lack of knowledge and understanding about the issues, a lack of depth — their thoughts on social issues were at a superficial level, and not clearly expressing and justifying their opinions. Some students did not write according to the specified text type and wrote an article instead of a diary entry or letter.

Specifically for Question 5, the common problem that students had was that they wrote about what general issues China has, and missed the important part of ‘how can China effectively address its smog problem’ as the question requested.

Similarly for Question 6, the common problem that students had was only talking about how bad the corruption issue is in China, which did not focus on ‘analysing the causes of corruption in China and suggesting effective anti-corruption measures’.

For Question 7, the most common problem was that students focused on how and/or why young people did not show their respect to the old people, but again, they missed the main point for this question which was ‘how the virtues of respecting the old and caring for the young can be maintained in modern society’.

For Question 8, most students failed to explore how the authors have been able to use their works to influence Chinese society, as requested by the question. Instead, they stated what the authors should/could do in general but did not discuss how they did it — providing no evidence/examples to support their opinions. Some of the students only criticised the authors and their works, and completely missed the meaning of the question.

Overall, students benefit from examination preparation including the explicit teaching of writing skills and reading questions carefully. In addition, questions with the word ‘how’ generally request students to discuss and explain the issue in detail and to give examples and/or use references.

In conclusion, the majority of students’ performances in all aspects of the examination were successful in 2014. They met the learning requirements for this subject and achieved a satisfactory or higher result.

## Operational Advice

* There is no need to submit supporting materials, for example, the texts studied for the IDS or the draft of the written tasks. Evidence of students’ learning will only be looked for from the assessment tasks.
* It is vital that moderators are able to access and hear all audio files, as there is at least one oral task within each assessment type. Teachers should refer to the SACE website for information about preparation of non-written materials and submission of electronic files, and submit work in accordance with these instructions. Discs and USBs should be checked to make sure that that all audio files are able to be accessed by moderators.
* A CD/DVD for each student with oral tasks in a separate file (not in a continuous single file) is a good option for presentation of audio files. An alternative is to have a folder of tasks for each student on a single CD/DVD or USB. In either option, students’ identification (i.e. SACE number) should be indicated clearly for each audio file.
* A copy of the learning and assessment plan (LAP) should be included with each school package, together with a complete set of task sheets. If there have been changes in the LAP since it was approved, a signed addendum must be attached to the LAP.
* School assessment tasks are set and marked by teachers. Teachers’ assessment decisions are reviewed by moderators. Teacher grades/marks should be evident on all student school assessment work.

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