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Chinese (background speakers)

2015 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 the folio: 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.

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 responses demonstrated a clear idea of the purpose, audience, and context of the texts, and this understanding influenced the structure of and the language used in the text. These responses also demonstrated competence in both the Ideas and the Expression assessment design criteria by including opinions in response to open-ended questions, without being overly reliant on a script.

The less-successful responses consisted of mainly general information on the topic, with less explanation of the information they referred to and less analysis of the topic. Some students needed more confidence and preparation to respond in greater depth to unscripted questions and comments.

Text Production

Responses were 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 those that were elicited from questions that were specific rather than simply ‘Write an essay on…’ or ‘Write a response to ...’.

Students might be disadvantaged if a general or broad topic is given without context, audience, and a clear purpose for writing. For example, if students are asked to write a response to a film, they may summarise the content/scenes of the film instead of reflecting on the issues or providing their evaluation/interpretation.

The more-successful responses were elicited when the task gave clear instructions and included a specific context, audience, and purpose for writing. These tasks also were related to an issue specified in the subject outline and required students to consider multiple perspectives and convey their opinion on the issue, as well as provide information. The most successful responses used information and ideas arising from the text(s) to form and express opinions. Less-successful responses were from tasks that only required a recount or information and didn’t allow for high-order thinking skills.

Text Analysis

It is important that teachers are clear about the requirements as set out in the subject outline and that they 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.

If the text is too simple and questions only focus on the contents of the text, the task may neglect the analysis of linguistic and stylistic features of the language use. Such task design limits opportunities for students to perform at the highest level and does not provide enough opportunities for students to demonstrate performance of ER2 (Analysis of linguistic, cultural, and stylistic features) and possibly also ER1 (Interpretation and evaluation of meaning in texts).

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 responses included analysis and explanation of the content, audience, and purpose of the texts in the students’ own words, along with appropriate supporting textual references. The less-successful responses identified the key issue but did not incorporate examples from the text/s to effectively support opinions.

**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 at a high level.

The topics for the IDS that were chosen by the students or the teachers were mostly appropriate, diverse, and interesting. Even topics that have been seen in previous years were looked at from some fresh angles. However, topics such as a film or book review, a specific festival, and Chinese cuisine do not lend themselves to in-depth analysis and reflection and are therefore inappropriate for this assessment type. Furthermore some students’ IDS topics were the same as or similar to topics covered in the school folio tasks, a situation that is not to be encouraged.

The better Chinese written responses demonstrated analysis of findings from a variety of sources and synthesis of information. Better responses correctly referenced quotes and the ideas of others, which were then elaborated upon in the students’ 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 overreliance on prepared answers or reading from a script. Successful oral presentation tasks featuring open-ended questions on the investigated issue allowed students to demonstrate analysis and comprehensive knowledge.

The same requirements should not be used for both the oral presentation and the written response in Chinese. 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 that would limit students’ opportunities to meet the requirements. These tasks must differ in context, audience, and purpose.

The most successful English responses clearly indicated goals for this assessment. They focused on some specific aspects and detailed, with analysis or explanation, how the texts studied informed students’ 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 research process.

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 have a word or character limit, and anything over these limits is not taken into account at moderation.

## External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Examination

Oral Examination

The vast majority of students successfully achieved a satisfactory or higher result, and among them several students achieved A− to A+. The mean mark indicates that the overall achievement of students in this part of the examination in 2015 was almost the same as that in 2014. Students demonstrated evidence of their learning process and their understanding of the contemporary issues in China with some degree of depth and breadth.

The most successful responses in the oral examination demonstrated:

* carefully chosen, meaningful, and interesting topics
* appropriate and thorough research
* an excellent knowledge and deep understanding of research topics
* use of references to justify views
* clear, logical, and coherent expression
* profound and insightful reflection, incorporating students’ own values, beliefs, ideas, and experiences
* excellent preparation for the discussion

The less-successful responses did not demonstrate a depth of knowledge or thorough understanding of the topics studied. They only demonstrated a general knowledge and/or superficial understanding of the topics. The most successful responses provided a clear and insightful reflection on the in-depth study.

The less-successful responses could have been improved by:

* demonstrating evidence of learning
* improving research and understanding the meaning of ‘research’
* selecting an appropriate research topic
* avoiding reciting memorised answers without listening to the examiner’s questions
* sufficient preparation

Most of the chosen topics provided opportunities for in-depth research and were appropriate and diverse. Some of the topics were fresh and interesting, for example, ‘Real estate issues in China’, ‘Personal privacy in China’, ‘The health care system in China’, and ‘Courtship and dating culture in China’. However, the topics covering ‘population issues’, ‘education issues’, ‘the gap between the rich and poor’, and ‘environmental issues’ were still maintained as the favourites.

Advice to teachers:

* Support students to select an appropriate topic that enables sufficient depth for investigation.
* Ensure that the in-depth study topics are different from the school folio tasks.
* Allow time for explicit teaching of research skills.
* Support students to develop appropriate supporting materials, such as pictures and diagrams for use in the oral examination.

Written Examination

Section 1: Listening and Responding, Part A

The overall achievement of students in this part was comparatively low. As in previous years, this may have been due to English being the students’ second language, which prevented students from expressing themselves clearly or fully understanding questions posed in English. However, the successful responses demonstrated a sound understanding of the text and the questions, and use of simple English vocabulary and grammar structures.

Students are encouraged to read the questions carefully, and pay attention to the directives to answer ‘in *Chinese*’ or ‘in *English*’ for each part of each question.

**Question 1**

(a) Most students answered this question correctly. However, some students answered ‘What does the text talk about?’ instead of ‘What is the *purpose* of the text?’.

(b) The majority of students answered part (i) well. Most responses for part (ii) included some relevant information. The most successful responses displayed a comprehensive understanding of the text.

(c) This was the most difficult question for students to answer. The most successful responses captured the speaker’s ‘feelings’ accurately through analysis of the speech (text) and were supported with some evidence from the text. The less-successful responses did not demonstrate an understanding of the speaker’s feelings. Students are encouraged to develop their listening comprehension, analysis, and evaluation skills in English and Chinese in order to achieve at the highest level.

Section 1: Listening and Responding, Part B

**Question 2**

The majority of students performed very well in this section and achieved a satisfactory or higher result. Seven students gained full marks, and 24% of students achieved an A− or higher grade.

The most successful responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of the texts, evaluation of both points of view on issues from the two texts, and clear, logical, and cohesive expression of the students’ own opinions.

Less-successful responses could have been improved by:

* a more thorough understanding of the issues that were presented in the texts
* use of information from both texts
* analysis and evaluation of the issues in the texts, instead of restating of portions of the texts
* inclusion of personal opinions
* a logical and cohesive presentation of views
* use of the correct text type (e.g. writing an ‘article’, as directed by the question)
* use of the correct characters.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part A

The majority of students achieved a satisfactory or higher result for this part.

The most successful responses demonstrated an excellent knowledge of Chinese literature and reading comprehension skills. These responses articulated appreciation of the author’s ideological connotations, and also clearly and accurately identified and explained the literary techniques used in the text.

The less-successful responses showed a lack of knowledge of literary appreciation and reading comprehension skills. Also some students did not write an answer on the last page of this section (Booklet 2), and 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. Students should be given plenty of opportunity to practise under examination conditions.

**Question 3**

(a) Most students correctly identified the two literary devices used in the text and were also able to explain accurately the function of each literary device in the context of the text.

(b) Some students accurately identified the three positive emotions conveyed by the author and justified their answers with evidence from the text. However, for the majority of responses students continued to identify the literary devices instead of the positive emotions.

(c) Most students performed well in this question, however, a few responses were either incomplete or incorrect. The question required a precise and clear explanation of *why* the author was surprised by the two young men.

(d) The majority of responses were very good and displayed some degree of understanding of the significance of each sentence in the context of the text.

Students who performed well in this part of the examination had proficiency in reading comprehension and Chinese literary appreciation.

Section 2: Reading and Responding, Part B

The vast majority of students performed well in this part of the examination. Most students achieved a satisfactory or higher result.

The most successful responses demonstrated a thorough understanding of the issue, rigorous analysis and evaluation of the issue in relation to the text, in-depth discussion, and logical and cohesive writing structure.

Most students referred to the information in the text, showed a sound understanding of the issue, and expressed their views clearly, following the conventions of the text type.

Less-successful responses could have been improved by:

* reference to the information in the text
* analysis and evaluation of the issue
* inclusion of personal opinions
* clear expression of opinions
* use of the correct text type (e.g., a ‘letter of response’ ⎯ not an article)
* logical and cohesive writing.

The most successful responses in this part demonstrated independent critical and creative thinking skills, and in-depth analysis and evaluation of texts.

**Section 3: Writing in Chinese**

The table below shows the themes and the text type for each question.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Question** | **Theme** | **Text Type** |
| 5 | China and the World – Population issues and policies | Newspaper article |
| 6 | The Overseas Chinese-speaking Communities –  Chinese contributions in Australia | Essay |
| 7 | Modernisation and Social Change – The impact of technology | Newspaper report |
| 8 | The Overseas Chinese-speaking Communities –  Globalisation and Chinese culture | Magazine article |

More than half of the students answered Question 5; approximately 30% answered Question 7; approximately 15% answered Question 6; and Question 8 was answered by very few students.

The overall performance of the students was of a high standard in this part. Several students were able to achieve at the highest grade level.

The most successful responses commonly demonstrated a thorough understanding of the chosen topic. These responses provided clear, logical, and cohesive views on the issue, as well as explanations and justifications.

Less-successful responses could have been improved by:

* a more careful reading of the question
* a focused point or argument
* inclusion of opinions relevant to the question
* a better knowledge and understanding of the issues
* more in-depth discussion on social issues
* clear expression and justification of opinions
* concise, logical, and cohesive paragraphs
* use of the appropriate writing style (e.g., a ‘report’, as directed by the question ⎯ not a letter; a formal rather than a colloquial tone)
* better time management, to ensure task completion
* use of correct characters.

**Question 5**

This question was the most popular choice, and the one in which students performed the best. The most successful responses demonstrated confidence and depth of knowledge in discussion of the issue.

**Question 6**

This question presented a common problem for students: many responses lacked an analysis of *how* overseas Chinese students can have an impact on Australia’s economy and society.

**Question 7**

The most successful responses discussed the impact of social media on traditional communication methods in Chinese society at an in-depth level. The less-successful students simply wrote about the advantages and disadvantages of using new technology. Once again ‘evaluating’ was a challenge for some students.

**Question 8**

The most successful responses showed application of students’ own experiences and their knowledge of globalisation to the discussion of the importance of cross-cultural study.

Overall for this part of the examination, students benefit from examination preparation that focuses on careful reading of questions and thoughtful responses that include high-level writing skills.

Conclusion

The vast majority of students successfully completed all learning requirements for this subject in 2015. They achieved a satisfactory or higher result.

## Operational Advice

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.

The following advice is provided to teachers in regard to the preparation of moderation materials:

* Please ensure the approved learning and assessment plan (including addendum where applicable), samples of the nominated students’ work (organised by assessment type), and a copy of the task sheets are submitted.
* Please be reminded that formative class materials or draft student work are not required.
* Tasks should be labelled clearly using students’ SACE registration numbers.
* When providing task sheets with individual student work, please ensure they are attached to the correct task.

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