

2019 VCE Chinese Second Language Advanced written examination report

General comments

The 2019 Chinese Second Language Advanced examination consisted of three sections: listening and responding; reading, responding and translating; and writing in Chinese.

Most students were able to complete all sections to an appropriate standard, suggesting adequate preparation and good time-management skills under examination conditions. Students who scored highly demonstrated a strong understanding of the specific requirements of the task and were able to address all points effectively. Students should take every opportunity during the year to pay more attention to details to improve their skills in interpreting questions.

In the listening and reading sections, students needed to respond to questions in either Chinese or English and demonstrate their ability to grasp the main ideas, interpret the information and convey relevant details. High-scoring responses not only showed these abilities, but also made specific and correct reference to the original texts. Other responses, however, did not address all aspects of the questions. For example, in Question 3a., responses indicated that many students understood the information on the undesirable weather conditions but did not make a reference to its impact on the speakers' original plan.

Similarly for Section C – Writing in Chinese, students are encouraged to spend extra time reading the examination questions to make sure they fully understand the requirements of the topic they chose. For example, in Question 8 students were required to write a diary entry about 'your teacher and the influence she has had on your studies', with students expected to describe the teacher as well as their influence on their studies; however, many students wrote only about their Chinese learning experience with the teacher and did not describe the teacher.

Specific information

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section 1 – Listening and responding

There were two parts in the listening component of the exam. In Part A, students listened to two texts and responded to questions in English. In Part B, students listened to one text and needed to respond to questions in Chinese characters and full sentences.

Many students were able to provide accurate information in both parts, demonstrating their excellent aural skills. A small number appeared to have difficulty comprehending the texts or lacked effective note-taking skills, and they did not score well. A large number of students, however, lost marks because they misinterpreted the question or did not include enough details.

For example, in responding to Question 1a., 'Why did Xiaoming call his mother?', many students wrote that Xiaoming 'forgot' to bring his Chinese homework while the correct answer was 'to ask his mother' to bring his Chinese homework. In Question 3a., 'Why did Wang Ying say, "How bad is our luck?"', it was not enough to mention the weather conditions without clearly stating that their original plan to go to the beach for the long weekend was ruined. In Question 1b., 'How did Xiaoming convince his mother to help?', it was not sufficient to reply, 'Xiao Ming convinced his mother to help through explaining his situation'.

Students need to make sure that their responses, whether in English or Chinese, convey their intended meaning accurately. For example, to reply to Question 1b. that 'Xiaoming will be left behind by the teacher after school' is not as clear as 'the teacher will make Xiaoming stay after school'.

In Part B, marks were deducted for character mistakes or if Pinyin was used. Common character mistakes in the students' responses were: 刮风, 海边, 冷, 远, 决定.

Part A – Answer in English

Text 1

Question 1a.

He called his mother to ask her to bring his Chinese homework (because he forgot to bring it).

Question 1b.

He convinced his mother by telling her

- His (Chinese) teacher (Ms Zhang) will give him detention if he can't hand in the homework.
- His mum will pass/is passing by the school.

Text 2

Question 2

The two reasons why Dawei and Lanlan change their original plans are

- They need more exercise and can swim and play water polo in the (new) swimming pool.
- Xiaoying/Other friend loves water polo.

Part B – Answer in Chinese

Text 3

Question 3a.

- 他们要下个长周末开车去海边玩两天。(They want to drive to the beach for a couple of days for the long weekend next week.)
- 天气(不好), 刮风, 下雨, 温度变化大。(The weather is not good, windy, rainy, the temperature changes dramatically.)

or

- 天气(不好), 刮风, 下雨, 一会冷, 一会儿热。(The weather is not good, windy, rainy, sometimes it's cold and sometimes it's hot.)

or

- 天气（不好），刮风，下雨，星期六/一天41度，后两天不到20度。（The weather is not good, windy, rainy, the temperature is 41 degrees one day, but below 20 degrees for the last two days.）

Question 3b.

他们得开得远一点（的地方去玩）。（They will drive a bit further away from Melbourne for a getaway.）

Section 2 – Reading, responding and translating

Part A – Answer in English

In this section, students responded to one text on the topic of travel. Most students performed well, and those who included accurate and specific information achieved higher marks.

Students are reminded to read the questions carefully to avoid misinterpreting the questions, and to include as much detail and accurate information in their response to demonstrate their thorough understanding of the text.

For Question 4b., ‘Describe Xiao Wang’, students needed to elicit information from the entire first paragraph in order to present a whole picture of Xiao Wang, but many failed to include important information such as ‘he is a tour guide’, or ‘his English is not very good’. Students who misread Question 4d. as ‘what it means ...’ responded by explaining the advantages/disadvantages of the transport used, and as a consequence could not be awarded full marks. In Question 4c., some students described Daming’s activities but without explaining why he enjoyed them, although this was clearly specified in the question. In Question 4e., it was not enough to mention that Daming walked on the glass bridge to demonstrate that the activity was one of the highlights of his trip, without clearly indicating that it was the first time he’d done so.

Text 4

Question 4a.

Daming was surprised that there are only five people.

Question 4b.

Xiao Wang

- is a tour guide
- is just over 20 years old
- is warm-hearted/passionate **and** gracious/generous/extroverted/easygoing
- likes to tell stories / is humorous/talkative/knowledgeable
- does not have very good English.

Question 4c.

The activity he enjoyed the most was

- singing and dancing show / song and dance performance
- colourful costumes
- both singing and dancing were excellent / all performances were of a high standard.

Question 4d.

The means of transport mentioned in the text are by

- plane
- car / tour guide's (Xiao Wang's) car.

Question 4e.

Any four of the following highlights were accepted:

- He recognised one of the scenic places as it had appeared in one of the movies.
- He walked on the famous glass bridge for the first time.
- He conquered his phobia of heights/acrophobia).
- He tried the local cuisine which he had never had before and enjoyed it/tasty.
- He visited lots of attractions.

Part B – Answer in Chinese

In this section students were required to demonstrate their understanding of the written text through an extended response, written in full sentences, explaining how people should spend their time to achieve success. Students were awarded marks for comprehension and for their ability to convey the information accurately and logically in Chinese. Responses that presented information as a list or in point form were not awarded full marks. . Some character mistakes included writing 周末 as 未, (有)些(人) as 此, 放(假) as 方.

Most students did well in this task, although not many gained full marks. To address the question, students needed to identify the relevant information and analyse it in order to incorporate it effectively into their responses. Many students, however, shifted the focus from explaining how people should spend their time in order to achieve success, to explaining ways of spending time which result in people becoming unsuccessful. (Many students directly copied from the reading text: 每天花很多时间玩手机、看电视, ...).

Text 5

Question 5

A possible response is as follows. Key points are shown in bold.

人们通过有效的利用时间来取得成功。举例来说，**有些人把每一分钟都计划得好好的，每天有该做的事；周末有各种活动，放假时去不同的地方旅游。**这样有效地利用时间使得他们的**生活很充实**。他们不但**有时间做好家里的事**，而且**学习好，生活过得快乐体面**。不仅如此，有效利用时间的人会**避免每天花很多时间玩手机、看电视；避免花很长时间大吃大喝；也不会浪费时间闲聊**。除此以外，**利用时间取得成功要从小学会利用时间，要向会用时间的人学习。**

(People achieve success by utilising their time effectively. For example, **some people organise their schedule to the minute, things they need to attend to are organised on a daily basis; a range of activities are organised for the weekend, and travelling to different places is planned for the holidays.** Good time management make their **lives richer**. Not only do they **have time to manage their home activities**, they **achieve well in their study**, and their **life is happy and respectable**. More than that, people who utilise their time effectively do not waste time playing games on mobile phones/watching too much T.V, avoid **wasting time eating and drinking**, or on idle talking. Apart from this, **the skills of achieving success through effective time management need to be developed from a young age**, and should continue to **learn from those who know how to utilise time.**)

Part C – Translation

This year's translation task was about the origin and the construction of the Chinese four-character idioms. Ideally, both the literal and figurative meanings of the idioms should have been reflected in the translation, but it was acceptable for students to mostly translate the meanings figuratively, with the exception of the three idioms outlined below.

These three examples illustrate how some Chinese idioms use directional terms (天南地北 'from the south of the heaven to the north of the earth', which means far apart), animal names (九牛一毛 'a single hair out of the nine ox hides', which means 'a drop in the ocean') or include numbers (一马当先 'one horse leads ahead', which means 'take the lead'). Students were required to convey both their literal and figurative meanings in the translation to show how the idioms correlated with directional terms, the animals and the numbers respectively.

It was not acceptable to only use Pinyin for the idiomatic expressions. Students were also assessed for their command of the English language and the accuracy of the translation. It is important that the translations read well overall.

Question 6

The following is an example of a possible high-scoring response.

Idioms/idiomatic phrases are often used in spoken and written Chinese. The majority of these idioms have only four short characters, but they can have deep/profound meanings. Most idioms are associated with historical stories such as 'only the heaven and earth know', which means 'between you and me'. Some idioms use directional terms and names of animals such as 'from the south of the heaven to the north of the earth', which means 'far apart/a wide range', and 'a single hair out of the nine ox hides', which means 'a drop in the ocean'. Some are phrases from ancient texts like 're-group and re-emerge', which means 'come back after defeat' / 'make a comeback'. Some proverbs have numbers, such as 'one horse leads ahead' which means 'take the lead'. Some are straightforward, such as 'a clear distinction between black and white' / 'right and wrong'. There are others which appear easy, but the meaning is difficult, such as 'three long, two short', which means 'mishap' / 'have an unexpected misfortune'.

Question 7

The following is an example of a possible high-scoring response.

Christmas is the most important festival in western countries. Christmas in the northern hemisphere happens to be in winter when it often snows. Christmas is therefore called 'White Christmas'. In contrast, Christmas in the southern hemisphere is in summer. Christmas celebrations in many countries are very similar. However, people nowadays are more and more generous. They are more willing to show their compassion by donating gifts and food to people in need of help.

Section 3 – Writing in Chinese

Students attempted a full range of the essay topics, with Question 10 being the most popular. The standard of writing varied, with a large number of responses in the high-medium band of the marking scale. Responses that scored highly demonstrated a well-structured, well-sequenced and coherent text that effectively addressed the question. For example, Question 10 required students to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of an 'unstaffed restaurant'. High-scoring responses presented unbiased and balanced opinions that were well supported by relevant evidence and examples. Low-scoring essays presented positive and negative implications that contradicted each other, concentrated on the benefit or the drawback itself, and overly exaggerated the pros or cons.

Students need to pay attention to the kind of writing required for their chosen topic. Some students who chose Question 9 wrote a persuasive piece instead of the required informative piece. When planning their responses, students should consider carefully both the range and the depth of the information. For example, in Question 9, in addition to the description of the activities at the event, including other aspects such as the event's history/origin and/or atmosphere etc. may have enhanced the breadth of the writing. In general, students demonstrated an appropriate command of the language, but they should ensure that they have enough time to thoroughly proofread their work.

Question 8

Text type: diary entry

Audience: oneself

Kind of writing: personal

Points/responses students could have included:

- A description of the teacher, including his/her personality, teaching style and a reflection on their Chinese learning under the teacher's influence.
- Elements of personal language such as the use of the first person, subjective/informal/familiar style/register; emphasis on opinions, feelings and impressions rather than factual, objective information.
- The diary entry should have been appropriate for its target audience: the writer himself/herself.
- The piece of writing should have been clearly recognisable as a diary entry through the use of some of the following: date, structure, opening, content, conclusion, register, style, layout.

Question 9

Text type: script of a speech

Audience: Chinese learners/students and teachers/judges of the competition

Kind of writing: informative

Points/responses students could have included:

- Students were expected to inform their audience about an amazing multicultural event. This could have included the history of the cultural event, the atmosphere and the activities/highlights of the event.
- The speech needed to be informative: objective style, structure and sequence to make message clear and unambiguous, use of facts and examples.
- The speech should have been appropriate for its audience: participants and judges of the competition.
- The piece of writing needed to be clearly organised as a speech through the use of some of the following: title/topic, structure, opening, conclusion, register, style, layout.

Question 10

Text type: newspaper article

Audience: readers of the newspaper

Kind of writing: evaluative

Points/responses students could have included:

- Students were expected to present appropriate advantages and disadvantages of an unstaffed restaurant. Advantages may have included increased efficiency and absence of errors.

Disadvantages may have included: the cost of maintaining machines, an unfriendly atmosphere and the lack of interaction.

- As an evaluative piece of writing, students should have provided a logical presentation and discussion of ideas, expanded on important aspects of the issue, used evidence to support contrasting sides, appealed to reason, not emotion, and created an impression of balance and impartiality.
- The article should have been appropriate for its audience: readers of the local newspaper.
- The piece of writing needed to be clearly recognised as an article through characteristics such as topic, structure (introduction, body, conclusion), content, title, author (fictional name), register, style, layout.

Question 11

Text type: letter

Audience: the manager of a big department store.

Kind of writing: persuasive

Points/responses students could have included:

- In their responses students should have attempted to persuade the manager of the department store to give them a pay rise. They were expected to present convincing arguments. These could have included points such as they are hardworking/reliable, their salary is lower than their peers and they are popular with customers.
- Elements of persuasive language should have been employed such as appeals, emotive language, repetition etc.
- The letter needed to be appropriate for its audience: the store manager.
- The piece of writing needed to be clearly organised as a letter through the use of some of the following: date, structure, opening, conclusion, register, style, layout.

Question 12

Text type: writing competition entry

Audience: judges of the competition/members of the Chinese Writing Club

Kind of writing: imaginative

Points/responses students could have included:

- Students were expected to write an imaginative story about an event that was poorly organised but was successful in the end. The event described could be anything.
- Elements of imaginative writing could have included the development of the plot and characters, descriptions of the setting, heightened drama, etc.
- The piece of writing needed to be clearly organised as a story through characteristics such as title/topic, structure, content, author (fictional name), register, style, layout.