2021 VCE Chinese Language, Culture and Society written external assessment report

General comments

Most students attempted all sections of the 2021 Chinese Language, Culture and Society written examination. The responses showed various levels of knowledge and skills.

Students performed better in Part B of Section 2 – Writing in Chinese, compared to Part A. Students showed a wide range of knowledge and skills in Section 1 – Listening and responding and Section 3 – Culture and society in Chinese-speaking communities. Some students were able to elaborate with in-depth opinions on the given topics.

Students should use the reading time to familiarise themselves with all questions. They are also expected to be able to use dictionaries for unfamiliar Chinese vocabulary efficiently.

For Part A of Section 1, it is recommended to take notes in the note taking space while listening. Most students used the space provided to take notes; however, some students took notes in Pinyin but did not manage to convert them to meaningful English or Chinese responses. Students should use dictionaries to correct the writing of characters whenever time allows for Part B questions.

All students attempted to provide a response in Section 3, with high-scoring responses demonstrating sound knowledge and skills.

Specific information

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

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

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A

Most students responded to all questions for Texts 1 and 2.

It is important for students to take notes when listening to texts. Most students were able to capture and convey key information for all texts, but some students missed key information or made the wrong links between informative points. For example, in responses for Text 1, some students captured the fact that numbers are used in messaging because it is ‘quick’, but missed the opinion ‘it is fun’ that was also expressed. In Text 2, most students were able to understand the significance of the number one of the dates but couldn’t make the link between the number one and the implication of being single. Another example of a typical response for Text 3 is identifying the relationship between two speakers based on their dialogue about subject selection. A range of reasonable implications were accepted, such as classmates or friends.

Students should attempt to identify the scenario of the dialogue (e.g., the relationship between speakers, the intention of the conversation or the outcome of the discussion) from the first round of listening time and use the second round to self-correct and capture further information.

Question 1a.

An example of a correct response is either ‘it is quick’ or ‘it is interesting’ and ‘it is fun’.

Question 1b.

Correct responses are ‘520’ and ‘1314’.

Question 1c.

The male speaker says:

* I love you
* For the rest of my life
* Let’s go out for a movie.

Question 2a.

* It is on 11th day of the 11th month (or written in Arabic number format as 11/11).
* The date is written in all number ones.
* In Chinese, those who are single are called ‘single pole’ / the number one represents single people.

Question 2b.

* Single people treat themselves and shop for something nice for themselves.
* Couples buy something nice for their spouse / loved one.

Question 2c.

* The shops will have discounts/activities/promotions.
* It is cheaper to shop on Single’s Day.

Part B

Students were expected to answer all questions in Chinese. Responses that scored highly demonstrated the student’s capacity to accurately organise information with linking words/phrases, relevant content and accurate use of grammar. They were also able to demonstrate their capacity to understand general and specific aspects of texts. Many chose to include the rephrased question in Chinese at the beginning of the response. Students are advised to address only the key words from the question in their responses. Students who rephrased the full question could have better used this time to check the accurate spelling of the Chinese characters in their answers with a dictionary. Practice in the use of a bilingual dictionary is strongly recommended.

Question 3a.

* 他们是同学 / 朋友 (They are classmates/friends.)
* 因为他们在讨论选课 / 学中文。 (Because they are discussing subject selection / whether to learn Chinese.)

Question 3b.

男说话人觉得： (Male speaker feels:)

* 学中文很好/有好处/应该学中文 (He thinks that learning Chinese is good, or beneficial, or agrees to learn Chinese.)
* 对将来有用 (Useful for the future)
* 将来去中国旅行，如果知道中国的历史、文化和中国人的生活，那就有意思多了 (If you know Chinese history, culture and lifestyle, travelling in China will be much more interesting.)

女说话人觉得： (Female speaker feels:)

* 中文太难了 (Chinese is too difficult.)
* 没有用 (Not useful)
* 人人都会说英文 (Because everyone speaks English.)

Question 3c.

* 她想去中国做生意 (She wants to do business in China.)
* 她想去中国吃地道的中国菜 (She wants to eat authentic Chinese food in China.)

Section 2 – Writing in Chinese

Part A

Question 4

Students were expected to write an email in Chinese based on the given text. The majority of students showed their capacity to understand and convey some key information from the given text; responses that scored highly were structured, covering most of the key customs outlined in Text 4 with a clear, informative writing style. These students were capable of manipulating Chinese effectively and organising information in a logical way.

Suggested key areas of information students may have included in their response:

* 选择礼品 ( 给老师和学生的不同，男的和女的不同 ) (Selection of gifts: for example, gifts for teachers should be different from those for students; gifts for males are different from those for females.)
* 礼品数目 ( 选择 6 或 8 ， 不要选 4) (Number of gifts: number of gifts should be an even number, best are numbers 6 or 8, never number 4.)
* 什么时候送 ( 看朋友；请客；去别人家里 ) (When to give the gifts: when visiting a friend, be invited for a meal, or visiting a family.)
* 怎么送 ( 最好自己送 ) (How to deliver: it is best to give the gifts to someone by yourself.)
* 注意的方面 ( 接、送礼物时用双手；收到礼物后不要在客人面前打开； 说客气的话，不能送白花，包装用红色 ) (Attention: using two hands when you give or receive a gift; don’t open the gift in front of the gift giver; say something politely, don’t give white flowers, gifts should be packed in red.)

Features of an email text type include email addresses for sender and receiver, subject of the email and other relevant email features.

Part B

For Part B, students were expected to produce a piece of writing in Chinese. More students chose Question 5 (journal entry) than Question 6 (imaginative speech). Most students were able to produce a structured piece with ideas sequenced appropriately. Various techniques were used, such as variation in sentence length, quotes and emotional language (e.g. effective use of interjections). Responses that scored highly included engaging details for Question 5 and inspiring ideas for Question 6. However, greater attention is needed to improve the accuracy and appropriateness of grammar and the range of vocabulary.

Question 5

For this question, students were required to write a journal entry describing their experience in one of the sports activities at school, including Kung Fu, Tai Chi, table tennis, badminton, basketball or soccer. Features of a journal entry include recording the events, personal reflections, thoughts and feelings at a particular time.

Most students demonstrated a good understanding of the task requirements, and many were able to describe their participation in school sports that reflected their personal experiences with those typical Chinese sports. Some students were able to give interesting details and events that were significant on that day. Responses that scored highly demonstrated the students’ ability to produce a sophisticated personal writing piece. Some students wrote about a type of sport that was not listed in the task, which was not relevant to the question.

Question 6

Students were required to write an imaginative speech as a famous millionaire to Shanghai city council on the topic ‘The first things I did when I became a millionaire’. Responses were expected to address the audience with appropriate tasks that the imaginative figure had accomplished. Responses that scored highly were structured, with several interest areas that were inspiring, as well as authentic, demonstrating the students’ thoughts on certain social issues and possible solutions. Some responses included an interesting twist, giving the reasons for their action, which made the responses more convincing. These responses were meaningful, creative and focused.

Section 3 – Culture and society in Chinese-speaking communities

In Section 3, students were expected to respond in English, analysing and evaluating information from prescribed texts according to the questions. Question 8 was more popular than Question 7. Responses that scored highly performed well in the critical analysis of ideas and extensive arguments relevant to the task, as well as in the effective selection and use of relevant material and appropriate examples. Marks were awarded for developing a coherent and well-reasoned response that addressed the specific demands of the task.

Question 7

Students were required to explore how the concept of Guanxi is influencing relationship-building in contemporary Chinese communities. Most students were able to produce a response that addressed the concept in-depth. However, some students provided limited discussion on its impact on relationship-building. Students were required to make links with evidence and examples from Scott Seligman’s work to show their knowledge of the text. Key points to consider included:

* the concept of Guanxi and its key features relevant to relationship-building
* the significance on recognising Guanxi and the protocols for doing business in China
* possible explanations of Guanxi drawn from Confucius and Daoist philosophical frameworks and its impacts on relationship-building
* examples of successful relationship-building and its application of Guanxi.

Most students were able to identify several key features of the concept of Guanxi with examples. Some students recognised the values and applications of Guanxi in social relationship-building. However, a few students only provided an informative piece explaining the concept, rather than an analytical demonstration of its social impact. It is important for the students to read the question carefully and address all task requirements.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response and meaningful analysis. It is an effective discussion that uses the reference from the prescribed text well. It explains how Guanxi is significant, as well as influential, for relationship-building in Chinese communities. There were other high-scoring responses that were structured using other logical frameworks, which reflected a variety of approaches to interpret the concept and its impact.

Scott D Seligman’s “Chinese Business Etiquette: A Guide to Protocol, Manners and Culture in the People’s Republic of China”, explores the significance of guanxi in the Chinese speaking world. The concept of guanxi, meaning relationships or connections stems from Confucian values of an interconnected society. It is essential to climbing the hierarchy of society in order to achieve success in business. Furthermore, it can be a very powerful resource when kept in balance.

Guanxi encourages people to build relationship within society. The influence of Guanxi demonstrates the prevalence of Confucianism on contemporary Chinese society. The concept of guanxi stems from the fifth Confucian relationship of friend to friend. This horizontal relationship demonstrates the importance of an interconnected Chinese society. During a time of economic reform and a society of resources, guanxi became a way of obtaining “goods and services that were otherwise difficult or impossible to come by”. Therefore, through people’s relationships with others they were able to gain access to things they need. Guanxi is essentially a “tit-for-tat”, “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” network of connections that allows an individual to function within the network of society. Through this exchange of favours, individuals are able to build strong connections with people they trust. Thus, guanxi is present throughout the network of Chinese society.

Furthermore, having guanxi is essential to achieving success in business. Through guanxi, an individual may forge relationships with people in “high or strategic places”, to gain access to new jobs or opportunities. By making use of this social capital, an individual is able to climb the ranks of a hierarchical society. Particularly due to a lack of a reliable legal system, businessmen will often choose to do business only with people with whom they have guanxi as they believe it minimises risk, the lines between personal and work life are often blurred. Thus, guanxi is a very powerful resource acting as “grease for the wheels of China”, as it is often the only way of achieving success in the business world.

Many people in China will build relationships in order to maintain guanxi and keep it in balance. Guanxi can easily be created by offering a gift or a gesture such as inviting a friend to dinner. It comes in many forms including face-giving but is usually not cash. By exchanging gifts and favours of equal value, people are able to create strong relationships, however, guanxi can also be an “exhaustible resource” if not kept in balance. As a “reciprocal obligation”, stakeholders have a duty to repay with favours of equal value, thus keeping guanxi in balance. If one oversteps their pull and asks for too much, guanxi may be withdrawn and the relationships broken. Likewise, a recipient may refuse a gift if they are not able to repay it. Thus, relationship can be forged by offering a gift, and maintained by ensuring balance and equality between people.

In conclusion, guanxi is prevalent throughout contemporary Chinese society as a driving force for relationships between people. It is essential for getting things done and often guides the way people interact in an interconnected society.

Question 8

Students were required to explore how social change in China impacts positively and negatively on people in China, as demonstrated in Yang Zhang’s film Shower. Most students discussed a range of ideas in the text, demonstrating their understanding of social changes in China from a variety of perspectives and approaches. Some students structured their arguments according to the impacts on different generations, while others structured their paragraphs into positive or negative impacts. Responses that scored highly were insightful and logical, with original arguments supported by a broad range of evidence from the prescribed text.

Students should always include information that is relevant to the question and avoid pre-learnt information that is beyond the scope of the question. A high-scoring interpretation was able to provide a strategic overview of China’s social changes and dive into various areas of social life to show critical thinking skills. Responses that scored highly focused on evidence of the impacts and evaluated its positive or negative nature, rather than simply explaining causes of the social changes. Some students misunderstood the task as to retell the story of the film rather than provide an analytical review of the social changes from a Chinese perspective. A response that presented an oversimplified understanding of China’s social change praising younger generation’s industrialised commercial lifestyle lacked adequate depth for the task.