

# FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

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Paper 0509/11  
Reading

## Key messages

As first language learners, candidates need to demonstrate a good level of reading comprehension and linguistic competence.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the theme of the two reading passages
- understand, select and convey information from passages to specific questions
- analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- be able to explain the author's perspective
- understand how authors achieve effects or use language to influence the reader
- make accurate and effective use of grammatical structures, sentences and punctuation.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation to ensure that they develop their answers fully enough to score all available marks.

In **Section 2**, candidates need to show that they can:

- read the questions carefully and follow the instructions to do what is asked
- extract all available points from the two reading passages for each question and avoid focusing only on a small number of points
- order and present facts, ideas and opinions in own words in response to the two questions asked
- write in a summary style with logical linkage
- express the ideas given in the passage without copying examples directly from the text or writing from their own knowledge or experience
- use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures and correct characters and punctuation.
- keep within the word limit

It is important that candidates plan what they are going to write to ensure that they can make enough separate points to score well in the summary question. They also need to remember to spend time proofreading their writing to check for any mistakes and technical errors.

## General comments

The language level of candidates this year was very good. Questions which required more explicit and straightforward answers were generally handled well, while the answers to more stretching questions sometimes needed to contain more analysis and clearer explanation expressed in the candidate's own words. In a small number of cases it was evident that candidates had not read the two passages and questions carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be reminded to use their own words to paraphrase the language given in the passage and should avoid lifting extended chunks of text. In most cases, where candidates rely heavily on lifting, it is not clear that they have understood the text and/or the question.

In order to make an improvement in future examinations for **Section 1**, candidates are advised to pay more attention to the requirements of the question and improve their analytical and summary skills.

In **Section 2**, candidates are encouraged to use their own words to summarise, but should also ensure that the points they make are rooted in the information given in the two passages; no credit can be given for

demonstrating general knowledge on the topic. Most candidates understood that the summary should be written in prose, rather than being presented as a list of points. In some cases, candidates need to improve their summary style, using writing techniques to remain concise and within the word limit, and avoid any repetition. In the summary, candidates need to include enough separate points relating to the question, as each relevant point is awarded 1 mark. Once again this year some candidates included a smaller number of points with extended explanations. This should be discouraged, as this type of response to the summary question is unlikely to score highly for content. Candidates should identify valid points from *both* reading passages when answering the summary question in **Section 2**. The most successful candidates managed to keep their summary concise and precise, and within the character limit, with good linkage and a coherent writing style.

In both sections, candidates should strive to use clear and carefully chosen language and varied sentence structures, vocabulary, and correctly written characters.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section 1, Question 1**

Most candidates were able to show a good level of comprehension, answering more straightforward questions well. Stronger candidates showed they could analyse and summarise the information provided in the passage with clear and well-chosen language. Candidates are reminded to take the time to read the questions carefully to ensure they provide a full enough answer to score all available marks.

- (a) This question required candidates to use their own words to explain in general terms how the author used the technique of comparison to exemplify loneliness. The majority of candidates were able to identify the author's comparison of the bustling city and desolate desert. Only a small number of candidates mentioned the other comparisons of physical and psychological distance, and the language and effect of communication. Copying the whole sentence could not be credited.
- (b) Candidates needed to include two points from the text which showed why the TV / Radio are important to Parisian commuters, and many handled this well. Some candidates scored only one mark due to missing the key word '陪伴/旁边' out in the second point.
- (c) (i) This question asked candidates to identify and express two views given in the paragraph on the social concept of '以群体文化为主'. The majority of candidates wrote about the emphasis on interpersonal relationships, but only the stronger candidates were also able to identify the point that 'loneliness is not accepted in mainstream society'.
- (ii) This question proved to be challenging, as many candidates explained the literal meaning of the word '离经叛道' without considering its meaning within the context of the passage. Only a few candidates mentioned that individual solitude or isolation was generally not accepted by society, where '群体文化' is considered to be the mainstream.
- (iii) Most candidates answered this question successfully, and gained full marks by including an analysis of the two sides of the relationship between society and individual.
- (d) This was a very well answered question. Most candidates received full marks by including three aspects that people would be affected by if they did not have an opportunity to face loneliness at some point. Only a small number of candidates did not manage to include the third point about 'spiritual fulfilment'.
- (e) (i) This question tested candidates' ability to understand the methods used by the author to achieve a particular effect. This was found to be quite challenging. Some candidates were able to identify '引用' or '举例'; only the strongest candidates managed to also identify '类比'. Weaker responses were characterised by the copying of whole sentences mentioning the methods used.
- (ii) This question required candidates to quote from the extract of the poem given in the passage. Marks were only awarded for the exact words, rather than extended quotes.
- (f) This question required a global response, testing candidates' ability to summarise based on their understanding of the whole passage. The best responses showed a high level of comprehension

and analytical skill. Those candidates who were able to successfully achieve full marks managed to summarise the relevant points from the text in their own words. Weaker responses relied heavily on lifting material directly from the reading passage.

## Accuracy

Those candidates who achieved 5 marks for Accuracy in **Section 1** used clear and carefully chosen vocabulary and sentences with hardly any technical errors. Candidates should be aware that they need to generate some of their own language by paraphrasing or manipulating the original wording of the reading passage to demonstrate that they can write accurate Chinese. The highest marks for Accuracy were awarded to candidates who could show they are able to use their own language to answer questions, rather than lifting excessively from the reading passages.

## Section 2, Question 2

Candidates were required to extract information from the two reading passages and use their own words to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper.

Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the two passages carefully before beginning to select the main points for inclusion in their summary and to plan the summary before writing. Excessive elaborations are discouraged; examiners are looking for a concise and coherent summary of the points that appear in the two texts.

Responses to this question produced a variety of performance. Strong candidates demonstrated a high level of comprehension and were able to write in a good summary style, selecting appropriate points from both passages. Weaker responses often consisted of a long, rambling introduction and conclusion; such responses often also included lots of examples or repetitions, and a lack of focus.

Candidates should be reminded that there are 15 marks for content in **Question 2**, which means that they need to include at least 15 distinct points and ideas from the two passages.

Most candidates were aware of the character limit and were able to write a well-structured and focused summary in their own words. Candidates should be reminded that anything written in excess of 275 characters is disregarded, which can lead to content points not being rewarded if they appear after the character limit.

Most candidates were able to use clear and appropriate language in writing the summary. In order to achieve a mark within band 5 (excellent) for Accuracy, candidates need to choose both vocabulary and sentences with greater care. Weaker responses often lifted a lot of language directly from the reading passages, and therefore did not show how well candidates were able to express themselves in their own words. In some cases, a number of technical errors were also present, or less formal language used, which would have been taken into account when awarding the Accuracy mark.

# FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

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Paper 0509/12  
Reading

## Key messages

As first language learners, candidates need to demonstrate a good level of reading comprehension and linguistic competence.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the theme of the two reading passages
- understand, select and convey information from passages to specific questions
- analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- be able to explain the author's perspective
- understand how authors achieve effects or use language to influence the reader
- make accurate and effective use of grammatical structures, sentences and punctuation.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation to ensure that they develop their answers fully enough to score all available marks.

In **Section 2**, candidates need to show that they can:

- read the questions carefully and follow the instructions to do what is asked
- extract all available points from the two reading passages for each question and avoid focusing only on a small number of points
- order and present facts, ideas and opinions in own words in response to the two questions asked
- write in a summary style with logical linkage
- express the ideas given in the passage without copying examples directly from the text or writing from their own knowledge or experience
- use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures and correct characters and punctuation.
- keep within the word limit

It is important that candidates plan what they are going to write to ensure that they can make enough separate points to score well in the summary question. They also need to remember to spend time proofreading their writing to check for any mistakes and technical errors.

## General comments

The language level of candidates this year was very good. Questions which required more explicit and straightforward answers were generally handled well, while the answers to more stretching questions sometimes needed to contain more analysis and clearer explanation expressed in the candidate's own words. In a small number of cases it was evident that candidates had not read the two passages and questions carefully before starting to write their answers.

Candidates should be reminded to use their own words to paraphrase the language given in the passage and should avoid lifting extended chunks of text. In most cases, where candidates rely heavily on lifting, it is not clear that they have understood the text and/or the question.

In order to make an improvement in future examinations for **Section 1**, candidates are advised to pay more attention to the requirements of the question and improve their analytical and summary skills.

In **Section 2**, candidates are encouraged to use their own words to summarise, but should also ensure that the points they make are rooted in the information given in the two passages; no credit can be given for

demonstrating general knowledge on the topic. Most candidates understood that the summary should be written in prose, rather than being presented as a list of points. In some cases, candidates need to improve their summary style, using writing techniques to remain concise and within the word limit, and avoid any repetition. In the summary, candidates need to include enough separate points relating to the question, as each relevant point is awarded 1 mark. Once again this year some candidates included a smaller number of points with extended explanations. This should be discouraged, as this type of response to the summary question is unlikely to score highly for content. Candidates should identify valid points from *both* reading passages when answering the summary question in **Section 2**. The most successful candidates managed to keep their summary concise and precise, and within the character limit, with good linkage and a coherent writing style.

In both sections, candidates should strive to use clear and carefully chosen language and varied sentence structures, vocabulary, and correctly written characters.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section 1, Question 1**

Most candidates were able to show a good level of comprehension, answering more straightforward questions well. Stronger candidates showed they could analyse and summarise the information provided in the passage with clear and well-chosen language. Candidates are reminded to take the time to read the questions carefully to ensure they provide a full enough answer to score all available marks.

- (a) This question required candidates to use their own words to explain in general terms how the author used the technique of comparison to exemplify loneliness. The majority of candidates were able to identify the author's comparison of the bustling city and desolate desert. Only a small number of candidates mentioned the other comparisons of physical and psychological distance, and the language and effect of communication. Copying the whole sentence could not be credited.
- (b) Candidates needed to include two points from the text which showed why the TV / Radio are important to Parisian commuters, and many handled this well. Some candidates scored only one mark due to missing the key word '陪伴/旁边' out in the second point.
- (c) (i) This question asked candidates to identify and express two views given in the paragraph on the social concept of '以群体文化为主'. The majority of candidates wrote about the emphasis on interpersonal relationships, but only the stronger candidates were also able to identify the point that 'loneliness is not accepted in mainstream society'.
- (ii) This question proved to be challenging, as many candidates explained the literal meaning of the word '离经叛道' without considering its meaning within the context of the passage. Only a few candidates mentioned that individual solitude or isolation was generally not accepted by society, where '群体文化' is considered to be the mainstream.
- (iii) Most candidates answered this question successfully, and gained full marks by including an analysis of the two sides of the relationship between society and individual.
- (d) This was a very well answered question. Most candidates received full marks by including three aspects that people would be affected by if they did not have an opportunity to face loneliness at some point. Only a small number of candidates did not manage to include the third point about 'spiritual fulfilment'.
- (e) (i) This question tested candidates' ability to understand the methods used by the author to achieve a particular effect. This was found to be quite challenging. Some candidates were able to identify '引用' or '举例'; only the strongest candidates managed to also identify '类比'. Weaker responses were characterised by the copying of whole sentences mentioning the methods used.
- (ii) This question required candidates to quote from the extract of the poem given in the passage. Marks were only awarded for the exact words, rather than extended quotes.
- (f) This question required a global response, testing candidates' ability to summarise based on their understanding of the whole passage. The best responses showed a high level of comprehension

and analytical skill. Those candidates who were able to successfully achieve full marks managed to summarise the relevant points from the text in their own words. Weaker responses relied heavily on lifting material directly from the reading passage.

## Accuracy

Those candidates who achieved 5 marks for Accuracy in **Section 1** used clear and carefully chosen vocabulary and sentences with hardly any technical errors. Candidates should be aware that they need to generate some of their own language by paraphrasing or manipulating the original wording of the reading passage to demonstrate that they can write accurate Chinese. The highest marks for Accuracy were awarded to candidates who could show they are able to use their own language to answer questions, rather than lifting excessively from the reading passages.

## Section 2, Question 2

Candidates were required to extract information from the two reading passages and use their own words to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper.

Candidates should be encouraged to re-read the two passages carefully before beginning to select the main points for inclusion in their summary and to plan the summary before writing. Excessive elaborations are discouraged; examiners are looking for a concise and coherent summary of the points that appear in the two texts.

Responses to this question produced a variety of performance. Strong candidates demonstrated a high level of comprehension and were able to write in a good summary style, selecting appropriate points from both passages. Weaker responses often consisted of a long, rambling introduction and conclusion; such responses often also included lots of examples or repetitions, and a lack of focus.

Candidates should be reminded that there are 15 marks for content in **Question 2**, which means that they need to include at least 15 distinct points and ideas from the two passages.

Most candidates were aware of the character limit and were able to write a well-structured and focused summary in their own words. Candidates should be reminded that anything written in excess of 275 characters is disregarded, which can lead to content points not being rewarded if they appear after the character limit.

Most candidates were able to use clear and appropriate language in writing the summary. In order to achieve a mark within band 5 (excellent) for Accuracy, candidates need to choose both vocabulary and sentences with greater care. Weaker responses often lifted a lot of language directly from the reading passages, and therefore did not show how well candidates were able to express themselves in their own words. In some cases, a number of technical errors were also present, or less formal language used, which would have been taken into account when awarding the Accuracy mark.

# FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

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Paper 0509/13  
Reading

## Key messages

As first language learners, candidates need to demonstrate a good level of reading comprehension and linguistic competence.

In order to score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the theme of the two reading passages
- understand, select and convey information from passages to specific questions
- analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- be able to explain the author's perspective
- understand how authors achieve effects or use language to influence the reader
- make accurate and effective use of grammatical structures, sentences and punctuation.

In addition, in **Section 1**, candidates are reminded to pay attention to the mark allocation to ensure that they develop their answers fully enough to score all available marks.

In **Section 2**, candidates need to show that they can:

- read the questions carefully and follow the instructions to do what is asked
- extract all available points from the two reading passages for each question and avoid focusing only on a small number of points
- order and present facts, ideas and opinions in own words in response to the two questions asked
- write in a summary style with logical linkage
- express the ideas given in the passage without copying examples directly from the text or writing from their own knowledge or experience
- use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures and correct characters and punctuation.
- keep within the word limit

It is important that candidates plan what they are going to write to ensure that they can make enough separate points to score well in the summary question. They also need to remember to spend time proofreading their writing to check for any mistakes and technical errors.

## General comments

Most candidates showed they had understood the two passages thoroughly, and were able to address the main ideas of the passages as well as the closer details. Some candidates still relied too heavily on copying extended sections of language from the text, and needed to produce responses which contained more analysis and clearer explanations expressed in the candidate's own words. In a small number of cases this year candidates seemed to interpret and base answers on their own personal experience, and should be reminded that this component is designed to test comprehension of the reading passages, therefore answers must be based on the information given on the paper.

The general standard of the summaries produced this year in **Section 2** was very good. Most candidates seemed well-trained, and knew that they needed to identify and draw the key points from both passages. Top candidates were able to present the points in a summary style within the word limit. Weaker candidates needed to be careful not to produce unbalanced pieces drawing too heavily from one passage at the expense of the other.

Candidates are encouraged to use their own words to summarise, but should also ensure that the points they make are rooted in the information given in the two passages; no credit can be given for demonstrating general knowledge on the topic. Most candidates understood that the summary should be written in prose, rather than being presented as a list of points.

The most successful candidates managed to keep their summary concise and precise, and within the character limit, with good linkage and a coherent writing style.

In both sections, candidates should strive to use clear and carefully chosen language and varied sentence structures, vocabulary, and correctly written characters.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section 1, Question 1**

- (a) This question was well-handled by most candidates, who were able to locate the information from the passage relating to the reasons why the author preferred not to travel with a lot of luggage.
- (b) This question proved to be quite challenging for some candidates. Candidates were asked to use their own words to explain how the items given by the mother demonstrated her love for her child. Candidates needed to use skills of analysis and inference, and the strongest answers showed the ability to interpret the deeper meaning of the items, and to use this to infer in which way they showed the mother's affection for her child. Weaker candidates frequently just copied out the relevant sentences, and this alone did not fully answer the question asked.
- (c) The majority of candidates interpreted the meaning of '塞' accurately, but the interpretation of the phrase '穿越星际' produced a more varied performance. Candidates needed to identify that the author used exaggeration to emphasise a long distance or a long time-span. Many candidates managed to include one of the key words '距离远' or '时间长' and were awarded a mark. Weaker responses tended to include some irrelevant information about analysing the author's writing technique, which was not required for this question.
- (d) This question was well answered by most candidates, who mentioned what the mother saw/discovered and her reaction(s). Weaker responses were characterised by reliance on lifting chunks of language from the text or focussing on what the author did about the clothes instead of what the mother did and felt. A small number of candidates over-interpreted the situation, giving drawn-out explanations about the mother making her child feel guilty about not making full use of things that she gave, which were not needed for this question.
- (e) This question required candidates to analyse the change in the mother's attitude by providing examples from the text. Many candidates found this question challenging and variety of performance was seen. Candidates with strong analytical skills were able to summarise two key attitude changes and quoted two corresponding examples from the passage. A number of candidates either missed out points / examples or mismatched the points and the corresponding examples.
- (f) The majority of candidates answered this question very well and were able to use the keyword '老' or its equivalent.
- (g) Another well answered question. Almost every candidate identified and quoted three action verbs from the passage successfully. A small number of candidates could not be awarded the marks here due to writing the wrong characters for the key words; candidates should be reminded to take care in the accuracy of their writing and to check through their answers.
- (h) This question asked candidates to identify the difference between the mother's smile as described in the 3rd and 5th paragraphs. Most candidates displayed a good understanding of the mother's feelings, but some did not manage to describe it accurately. Answers like 'a fake smile', 'a pretend smile' or 'a forced smile' could not be credited. However, the description of the second smile was found to be less challenging. Most candidates were able to describe mother's smile as 'genuine', 'happy', 'satisfying' or 'comforting'.

## Accuracy

Those candidates who achieved 5 marks for Accuracy in **Section 1** used clear and carefully chosen vocabulary and sentences with hardly any technical errors. Candidates should be aware that they need to generate some of their own language by paraphrasing or manipulating the original wording of the reading passage to demonstrate that they can write accurate Chinese. The highest marks for Accuracy were awarded to candidates who could show they are able to use their own language to answer questions, rather than lifting excessively from the reading passages.

### Section 2, Question 2

Candidates were required to extract information from the two reading passages and use their own words to write a summary structured around the two bullet points given in the question paper.

Candidates should be reminded that there are 15 marks for content in **Question 2**, which means that they need to include at least 15 distinct points and ideas from the two passages.

Most candidates were aware of the character limit and were able to write a well-structured and focused summary in their own words. Candidates should be reminded that anything written in excess of 275 characters is disregarded, which can lead to content points not being rewarded if they appear after the character limit. Only a few candidates wrote excessively long pieces this year.

The most successful candidates not only demonstrated their ability to produce a summary within the word limit, but also produced a fluent, well-structured summary, expressing themselves in their own words with excellent linkage. However, some candidates needed to improve on structure to group ideas orderly as well as the flow of the summary with assured use of own words. A significant number of candidates this year produced responses which contained considerable lifting of information from the texts without organising the points or writing in their own words. This does not show the ability to summarise in their own words nor does it demonstrate candidates' ability to use the language skilfully.

Most candidates were able to use clear and appropriate language in writing the summary. In order to achieve a mark within band 5 (excellent) for Accuracy, candidates need to choose both vocabulary and sentences with greater care. Weaker responses often lifted a lot of language directly from the reading passages, and therefore did not show how well candidates were able to express themselves in their own words. In some cases, a number of technical errors were also present, or less formal language used, which would have been taken into account when awarding the Accuracy mark.

# FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

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Paper 0509/21  
Writing

## Key messages

The eight questions in this paper are divided into two sections: argumentative or discursive writing in **Section 1** and descriptive or narrative writing in **Section 2**. Candidates need to write in the appropriate style according to the questions chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the question in order to produce a focused and relevant response
- demonstrate original thinking
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- express what is thought, felt or imagined clearly and effectively
- avoid clichés and articulate genuine personal experience, when appropriate
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures and punctuation

Candidates should also strive to achieve the following in each essay genre:

- In an argumentative piece, candidates need to present a clearly stated view with supporting ideas and evidence in the form of facts or examples. These should be structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity.
- In a discursive piece, candidates need to present a balanced view with opinions from more than one perspective. The arguments should be developed with supporting evidence from all sides and structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity.
- In a descriptive piece, candidates need to describe a vivid scene in an effective manner and with sufficient detail.
- In a narrative piece, candidates need to tell a story (real or imagined) which includes complexity, tension and climax.

## General comments

The majority of candidates performed well in this year's examination. Many candidates were able to produce a well-structured response to their chosen topic with a good range of vocabulary and well-made sentences. Most of the responses were within the advised length of 400-600 characters. The full range of performance was seen across all four types of writing. More candidates chose to write on the topics in **Section 1** than those in **Section 2**. Candidates should be advised to read through all the essay titles to ensure that they fully understand the topic. There were some cases this year where candidates could not provide fully relevant responses due to misunderstanding the question. In order to score in the higher bands in these genres, candidates would benefit from constructing a brief plan to outline the essay, and ensure a strong question focus to avoid writing irrelevant material, and maintain a logical structure.

The best argumentative and discursive essays showed evidence of pre-writing planning and a very structured approach, analysing the topic, identifying the main argument and two or more points supporting the main argument followed by two or more pieces of supporting evidence for each point. Candidates in general need to recognise the difference between argumentative writing and discursive writing. Argumentative compositions are expected to display a clear opinion on a topic. The strongest argumentative essays were clearly focussed on a particular viewpoint and presented a consistently persuasive argument. Strong answers were also characterised by the use of sophisticated structures, appropriate expressions and the presentation of a well-structured and convincing argument. Successful discursive essays presented a balanced view from more than one perspective. Many strong candidates who chose the discursive topics were able to present a balanced and objective examination of the topic, without it being expressly neutral.

Weaker answers needed to discuss or acknowledge both sides of the debate to achieve marks in the higher marking bands. A well-organised structure, including an introduction to the topic and the discussion of each issue in a separate paragraph, was usually met in a good discursive writing piece

In general, candidates who wrote descriptive compositions were aware that the focus should be on description instead of storytelling. Strong responses frequently presented a vivid picture and created a complex atmosphere or tension and often included lots of carefully chosen details and sensory information, such as, images, sounds, smells and tastes, which helped make the picture clear and realistic to readers. Weaker essays in this genre needed to improve the descriptive skills by applying various devices, vivid details and creating atmosphere. In a minor number of cases, some candidates needed to a clearer understanding of the boundaries between descriptive and narrative tasks.

There were many excellent narrative responses presenting a complex and sophisticated structure, with the best essays also using devices such as flashbacks, time lapses, etc. to add interest. Successful narrative pieces often included or were based on interesting real-life experiences rather than made-up stories. Most candidates were aware of the necessary elements in narrating including a carefully managed climax and building up tension. The style of writing was mature and a lot of appropriate detailed descriptions were included to serve the narrative purpose. Weaker narrative responses were often characterised by plain language, narrating everyday happenings or unlikely un-engaging events. They needed to learn how to build up tension and climax and develop character and plot during the process of narrating the story, instead of a simple narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

### **Style and Accuracy**

**Style:** Many candidates were able to produce a sophisticated piece of writing with an excellent range of expressions, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas. They were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker answers were characterised by repetitive language, sometimes using colloquial expressions excessively, and inappropriate ambitious words, etc. Such answers needed to include a greater complexity of ideas and more variety in vocabulary and expressions. Candidates could improve by being more careful and precise in their use of expressions to ensure that they are used in an appropriate manner.

**Accuracy:** Most candidates demonstrated a high level of linguistic competence and a good grasp of Chinese grammar. Their use of structures was assured and their use of expressions appropriate in tone and register. Some weaker candidates needed to improve the correction of complex sentence structures, prepositional phrases, etc. when conveying sophisticated ideas. Some candidates' use of Chinese structure showed interference from English grammar, for example, 和 was incorrectly used to link clauses. Candidates are strongly suggested to review the whole writing to avoid some basic grammatical errors.

Most candidates were confident in their use of punctuation and knew that full stops and commas should not be used at the beginning of a line. The majority of candidates also wrote the Chinese full stop correctly as a small circle and not a solid dot. In some cases, candidates used too many commas, with full stops only appearing at the end of each paragraph.

Candidates need to make sure that they are writing the correct character to express the intended meaning. Many candidates were able to showcase a wide range of vocabulary using a variety of characters. Others could improve by reducing the amount of incorrectly used characters in their compositions. Such errors could be reduced with more careful checking of work and a better understanding of characters that share the same pronunciation but with different meaning (homophones/homonyms). Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are acceptable in this paper, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing. Finally, candidates are reminded to write clearly and legibly to ensure the Examiner can read their scripts and fully credit them for what has been written.

## Content and Structure

**Content:** The most successful answers this year contained effective and convincing arguments, a moving story or vivid descriptions. Stronger answers were characterised by the use of sufficient detail, clarity of expression and fluency of style. Some excellent essays contained well-balanced arguments, imaginative stories with originality, or vivid descriptions from a fresh perspective. Candidates were more likely to produce very convincing arguments when they felt strongly about a topic, as in the case of **Question 2**: 年轻人需要表扬多于批评。Stories that were based on candidates' own experience tended to be convincing and touching, as in the case of **Question 8**: 叙述你去动物园的一次经历。

Candidates would benefit from analysing the topics properly and focusing on the main word(s) of the topic; this will help them write correctly and relevantly. For example, in **Question 3**, some candidates misunderstood the key word of the topic '平凡'. The candidates who chose the discursive tasks did not always understand the Chinese traditional proverbs thoroughly and correctly, for example, the saying in **Question 1** '读书百遍, 其义自见' was partially understood, or entirely misunderstood in some pieces.

**Structure:** In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most compositions contained an effective introduction, followed by a progression of ideas, argument, storyline or description of a scene and used clear paragraphs. It is very important to show the ability of building up tension and managing an identified climax in the descriptive and narrative tasks, and the logical structure in the argumentative and discursive tasks. Weaker responses were characterised by the inclusion of too many ideas within a single paragraph, without an appropriate conclusion.

Relevance is of crucial importance in this paper. For the argumentative and discursive tasks, some candidates spent too much space on stories with unnecessary details or irrelevant information, or in writing material irrelevant to the titles. Being able to write in a concise manner when required is an important skill.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1: Discussion and Argument**

**Question 1** – '读书百遍, 其义自见'。从正反两个方面谈谈你的看法。

Candidates were expected to discuss the Chinese proverb "The meaning of a book will become clear if you read it many (hundreds of) times" from the viewpoints of both *for* and *against*. Candidates often started by explaining the proverb clearly in both traditional and modern contexts, and the strongest responses also built up a complex argument using persuasive examples, including historical stories, and traditional proverbs. Some candidates managed to link the different stages of the argument smoothly, developing points for and against, leading up to a solid conclusion. Stronger candidates successfully connected the discussion with current affairs, showing their personal and unique understanding of this saying. Such responses considered today's learning environment and the availability of information, whilst talking about the benefits and shortcomings of the described learning method. Some weaker responses revealed a misunderstanding of the saying. The best responses maintained a balanced discussion, whilst weaker pieces only discussed one side or the other.

**Question 2** – 年轻人需要表扬多于批评, 从正反两个方面谈谈你的观点。

Candidates were expected to discuss the statement that "Young people need praise more than criticism" considering arguments both for and against. This was the most popular topic on the paper this year, reflecting its close connection to candidate's own life experience. The most successful candidates organised their ideas in a clear and logical way. Whilst many centred their arguments on their own experience, the strongest candidates also expressed views from the perspective of youth development theory, summarising the advantages and disadvantages of praise and criticism to young people. In this topic, it is essential to focus on the comparison of praise versus criticism. Weaker responses were characterised by emphasising the importance of praise to young people, or the necessity of criticising young people, only developing the topic partially.

**Question 3** – 有人说：‘人应该甘于平凡’。你为什么同意或者不同意这个说法？

This is an argumentative title, and as such requires candidates to present a particular viewpoint and support that argument with examples. Most candidates were able to express their standpoint at the beginning of the piece, and the most successful candidates were those able to fully support their opinions with logical structures and effective language, showing a clear progression of the relevant argument before the conclusion was reached. A frequently used method was for candidates to build up their argument using examples from Chinese culture, e.g. citing traditional Chinese sayings, historical stories, or famous examples. Some interesting responses creating a convincing discussion from another angle, looking at the differences between two synonyms 平凡 and 平庸, which were of interest to readers. However, some candidates needed to understand the key word of the topic 平凡 to effectively use this line of argument.

**Question 4** – 有人说：‘一个人不能输在起跑线上’。你为什么同意或者不同意这个观点？

This topic asked candidates to discuss the statement “You can’t lose on the starting line”. This was one of the most popular choices in the paper. Stronger candidates usually expressed whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement at the beginning of the composition and proceeded to create a logically structured argument with a cohesive progression. Some responses approached the discussion from the angle of the current Chinese education situation and made links with their own educational experience, using supporting facts and examples to build up some convincing arguments. The best responses used fluent language with a variety of well-constructed sentences, sophisticated language and ambitious vocabulary. Some weaker candidates needed to focus more on the given topic and organise the supporting facts relevantly and effectively. In a few examples, weaker candidates relied upon retelling the whole life story of a famous person, which contained much irrelevant information, and sometimes contained too many narrative elements.

## **Section 2: Description and Narrative**

**Question 5** – 描写学校课间休息的景象。

Candidates were expected to write a descriptive piece about the break time in their schools. They needed to express a key feature of break time in a school through several vivid images, whether it be lively, relaxing etc. Successful candidates typically built-up the atmosphere using a range of details. They described the images by using the movements of the writer to create a coherent structure, or used various descriptive methods, such as description of the environment, language or actions, to build-up the atmosphere of a school during break time. Some candidates successfully created a close-up scene, which added more detail to the overall image. In the best responses, the language was often sophisticated, and used ambitious words appropriately. Some weaker candidate needed to clarify the boundary of descriptive task and be careful for to tip over into narration. Candidates need to be careful that they focus on the topic and avoid introducing unnecessary information, for example, some pieces spent too many words on introducing the school’s location or the school’s history, etc.

**Question 6** – 描写你在一次堵车经历中的所见所感。

Candidates were expected to describe the scene in a traffic jam. Many candidates were able to describe the atmosphere of the traffic jam successfully through descriptions of the crowded street scenes and the appearances of men or cars in the streets, and they described the vivid images of the scene using the senses of sound, smell, touch, etc. The most successful candidates were able to naturally convey the changes of their mood when they were stuck in a traffic jam as well. The best responses showed excellent descriptive technique, using sophisticated sentences and appropriate ambitious words. Some weaker candidates needed to be clearer on the difference between descriptive and narratives tasks, focusing on the description of street scenes instead of stories taking place in the traffic jam.

**Question 7** – 以 ‘倒霉的一天’ 为题， 写一个故事。

This was a popular topic. Many candidates were able to tell a story taking place on an ‘unlucky day’, including convincing characters and settings. Some candidates successfully used narrative devices such as flashback or time lapse to tell the story; some others described several unlucky scenarios taking place over the course of a day using a more unique narrative style, which was of interest to readers. Narrative writing should aim to balance the different stages of the story, using detailed description to build up tension or manage the climax naturally and carefully, emphasising the features of the story. Some candidates needed to avoid spending too much time leading up to the climax, as they often did not follow it through effectively enough. Some weaker candidates did not seem to have understood the keyword 倒霉 (unlucky), as some of them took the word 倒霉 to mean a negative feeling, and therefore introduced some irrelevance into the story. Candidates must retain relevance and focus on the topic to score highly. In a minor number of cases, candidates wrote an irrelevant story and simply included the sentence ‘那天，我真的很倒霉’ at the end. This approach should be strongly discouraged, as it does not allow candidates to reach the higher marking bands.

**Question 8** – 叙述你去动物园的一次经历。

Candidates were expected to write a story about visiting a zoo. Compositions frequently delivered a story of the visit which included an interesting highlight and described why the visit was noteworthy, including many details and descriptions. The best pieces used a sophisticated narrative style and lively vocabulary. Some candidates focused on conveying their genuine personal feelings with detailed descriptions, and produced impressive evaluations reflecting on the equality of all kinds of lives, or the happiness of childhood. Some candidates needed to improve their ability to manage the climax, as their writing was rather simple, describing the beginning, middle and end of the day at the zoo. In some cases candidates needed to find a better balance between the different parts of the story and avoid inappropriate weight on unimportant parts, such as why they decided to go to a zoo, or the bus journey to get there, etc.

# FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

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Paper 0509/22  
Writing

## Key messages

The eight questions in this paper are divided into two sections: argumentative or discursive writing in **Section 1** and descriptive or narrative writing in **Section 2**. Candidates need to write in the appropriate style according to the questions chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the question in order to produce a focused and relevant response
- demonstrate original thinking
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- express what is thought, felt or imagined clearly and effectively
- avoid clichés and articulate genuine personal experience, when appropriate
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures and punctuation

Candidates should also strive to achieve the following in each essay genre:

- In an argumentative piece, candidates need to present a clearly stated view with supporting ideas and evidence in the form of facts or examples. These should be structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity.
- In a discursive piece, candidates need to present a balanced view with opinions from more than one perspective. The arguments should be developed with supporting evidence from all sides and structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity.
- In a descriptive piece, candidates need to describe a vivid scene in an effective manner and with sufficient detail.
- In a narrative piece, candidates need to tell a story (real or imagined) which includes complexity, tension and climax.

## General comments

The majority of candidates performed well in this year's examination. Many candidates were able to produce a well-structured response to their chosen topic with a good range of vocabulary and well-made sentences. Most of the responses were within the advised length of 400-600 characters. The full range of performance was seen across all four types of writing. More candidates chose to write on the topics in **Section 1** than those in **Section 2**. Candidates should be advised to read through all the essay titles to ensure that they fully understand the topic. There were some cases this year where candidates could not provide fully relevant responses due to misunderstanding the question. In order to score in the higher bands in these genres, candidates would benefit from constructing a brief plan to outline the essay, and ensure a strong question focus to avoid writing irrelevant material, and maintain a logical structure.

The best argumentative and discursive essays showed evidence of pre-writing planning and a very structured approach, analysing the topic, identifying the main argument and two or more points supporting the main argument followed by two or more pieces of supporting evidence for each point. Candidates in general need to recognise the difference between argumentative writing and discursive writing. Argumentative compositions are expected to display a clear opinion on a topic. The strongest argumentative essays were clearly focussed on a particular viewpoint and presented a consistently persuasive argument. Strong answers were also characterised by the use of sophisticated structures, appropriate expressions and the presentation of a well-structured and convincing argument. Successful discursive essays presented a balanced view from more than one perspective. Many strong candidates who chose the discursive topics were able to present a balanced and objective examination of the topic, without it being expressly neutral.

Weaker answers needed to discuss or acknowledge both sides of the debate to achieve marks in the higher marking bands. A well-organised structure, including an introduction to the topic and the discussion of each issue in a separate paragraph, was usually met in a good discursive writing piece

In general, candidates who wrote descriptive compositions were aware that the focus should be on description instead of storytelling. Strong responses frequently presented a vivid picture and created a complex atmosphere or tension and often included lots of carefully chosen details and sensory information, such as, images, sounds, smells and tastes, which helped make the picture clear and realistic to readers. Weaker essays in this genre needed to improve the descriptive skills by applying various devices, vivid details and creating atmosphere. In a minor number of cases, some candidates needed to a clearer understanding of the boundaries between descriptive and narrative tasks.

There were many excellent narrative responses presenting a complex and sophisticated structure, with the best essays also using devices such as flashbacks, time lapses, etc. to add interest. Successful narrative pieces often included or were based on interesting real-life experiences rather than made-up stories. Most candidates were aware of the necessary elements in narrating including a carefully managed climax and building up tension. The style of writing was mature and a lot of appropriate detailed descriptions were included to serve the narrative purpose. Weaker narrative responses were often characterised by plain language, narrating everyday happenings or unlikely un-engaging events. They needed to learn how to build up tension and climax and develop character and plot during the process of narrating the story, instead of a simple narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

### **Style and Accuracy**

**Style:** Many candidates were able to produce a sophisticated piece of writing with an excellent range of expressions, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas. They were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker answers were characterised by repetitive language, sometimes using colloquial expressions excessively, and inappropriate ambitious words, etc. Such answers needed to include a greater complexity of ideas and more variety in vocabulary and expressions. Candidates could improve by being more careful and precise in their use of expressions to ensure that they are used in an appropriate manner.

**Accuracy:** Most candidates demonstrated a high level of linguistic competence and a good grasp of Chinese grammar. Their use of structures was assured and their use of expressions appropriate in tone and register. Some weaker candidates needed to improve the correction of complex sentence structures, prepositional phrases, etc. when conveying sophisticated ideas. Some candidates' use of Chinese structure showed interference from English grammar, for example, 和 was incorrectly used to link clauses. Candidates are strongly suggested to review the whole writing to avoid some basic grammatical errors.

Most candidates were confident in their use of punctuation and knew that full stops and commas should not be used at the beginning of a line. The majority of candidates also wrote the Chinese full stop correctly as a small circle and not a solid dot. In some cases, candidates used too many commas, with full stops only appearing at the end of each paragraph.

Candidates need to make sure that they are writing the correct character to express the intended meaning. Many candidates were able to showcase a wide range of vocabulary using a variety of characters. Others could improve by reducing the amount of incorrectly used characters in their compositions. Such errors could be reduced with more careful checking of work and a better understanding of characters that share the same pronunciation but with different meaning (homophones/homonyms). Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are acceptable in this paper, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing. Finally, candidates are reminded to write clearly and legibly to ensure the Examiner can read their scripts and fully credit them for what has been written.

## Content and Structure

**Content:** The most successful answers this year contained effective and convincing arguments, a moving story or vivid descriptions. Stronger answers were characterised by the use of sufficient detail, clarity of expression and fluency of style. Some excellent essays contained well-balanced arguments, imaginative stories with originality, or vivid descriptions from a fresh perspective. Candidates were more likely to produce very convincing arguments when they felt strongly about a topic, as in the case of **Question 2**: 年轻人需要表扬多于批评。Stories that were based on candidates' own experience tended to be convincing and touching, as in the case of **Question 8**: 叙述你去动物园的一次经历。

Candidates would benefit from analysing the topics properly and focusing on the main word(s) of the topic; this will help them write correctly and relevantly. For example, in **Question 3**, some candidates misunderstood the key word of the topic '平凡'. The candidates who chose the discursive tasks did not always understand the Chinese traditional proverbs thoroughly and correctly, for example, the saying in **Question 1** '读书百遍, 其义自见' was partially understood, or entirely misunderstood in some pieces.

**Structure:** In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most compositions contained an effective introduction, followed by a progression of ideas, argument, storyline or description of a scene and used clear paragraphs. It is very important to show the ability of building up tension and managing an identified climax in the descriptive and narrative tasks, and the logical structure in the argumentative and discursive tasks. Weaker responses were characterised by the inclusion of too many ideas within a single paragraph, without an appropriate conclusion.

Relevance is of crucial importance in this paper. For the argumentative and discursive tasks, some candidates spent too much space on stories with unnecessary details or irrelevant information, or in writing material irrelevant to the titles. Being able to write in a concise manner when required is an important skill.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1: Discussion and Argument**

**Question 1** – '读书百遍, 其义自见'。从正反两个方面谈谈你的看法。

Candidates were expected to discuss the Chinese proverb "The meaning of a book will become clear if you read it many (hundreds of) times" from the viewpoints of both *for* and *against*. Candidates often started by explaining the proverb clearly in both traditional and modern contexts, and the strongest responses also built up a complex argument using persuasive examples, including historical stories, and traditional proverbs. Some candidates managed to link the different stages of the argument smoothly, developing points for and against, leading up to a solid conclusion. Stronger candidates successfully connected the discussion with current affairs, showing their personal and unique understanding of this saying. Such responses considered today's learning environment and the availability of information, whilst talking about the benefits and shortcomings of the described learning method. Some weaker responses revealed a misunderstanding of the saying. The best responses maintained a balanced discussion, whilst weaker pieces only discussed one side or the other.

**Question 2** – 年轻人需要表扬多于批评, 从正反两个方面谈谈你的观点。

Candidates were expected to discuss the statement that "Young people need praise more than criticism" considering arguments both for and against. This was the most popular topic on the paper this year, reflecting its close connection to candidate's own life experience. The most successful candidates organised their ideas in a clear and logical way. Whilst many centred their arguments on their own experience, the strongest candidates also expressed views from the perspective of youth development theory, summarising the advantages and disadvantages of praise and criticism to young people. In this topic, it is essential to focus on the comparison of praise versus criticism. Weaker responses were characterised by emphasising the importance of praise to young people, or the necessity of criticising young people, only developing the topic partially.

**Question 3** – 有人说：‘人应该甘于平凡’。你为什么同意或者不同意这个说法？

This is an argumentative title, and as such requires candidates to present a particular viewpoint and support that argument with examples. Most candidates were able to express their standpoint at the beginning of the piece, and the most successful candidates were those able to fully support their opinions with logical structures and effective language, showing a clear progression of the relevant argument before the conclusion was reached. A frequently used method was for candidates to build up their argument using examples from Chinese culture, e.g. citing traditional Chinese sayings, historical stories, or famous examples. Some interesting responses creating a convincing discussion from another angle, looking at the differences between two synonyms 平凡 and 平庸, which were of interest to readers. However, some candidates needed to understand the key word of the topic 平凡 to effectively use this line of argument.

**Question 4** – 有人说：‘一个人不能输在起跑线上’。你为什么同意或者不同意这个观点？

This topic asked candidates to discuss the statement “You can’t lose on the starting line”. This was one of the most popular choices in the paper. Stronger candidates usually expressed whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement at the beginning of the composition and proceeded to create a logically structured argument with a cohesive progression. Some responses approached the discussion from the angle of the current Chinese education situation and made links with their own educational experience, using supporting facts and examples to build up some convincing arguments. The best responses used fluent language with a variety of well-constructed sentences, sophisticated language and ambitious vocabulary. Some weaker candidates needed to focus more on the given topic and organise the supporting facts relevantly and effectively. In a few examples, weaker candidates relied upon retelling the whole life story of a famous person, which contained much irrelevant information, and sometimes contained too many narrative elements.

## **Section 2: Description and Narrative**

**Question 5** – 描写学校课间休息的景象。

Candidates were expected to write a descriptive piece about the break time in their schools. They needed to express a key feature of break time in a school through several vivid images, whether it be lively, relaxing etc. Successful candidates typically built-up the atmosphere using a range of details. They described the images by using the movements of the writer to create a coherent structure, or used various descriptive methods, such as description of the environment, language or actions, to build-up the atmosphere of a school during break time. Some candidates successfully created a close-up scene, which added more detail to the overall image. In the best responses, the language was often sophisticated, and used ambitious words appropriately. Some weaker candidate needed to clarify the boundary of descriptive task and be careful for to tip over into narration. Candidates need to be careful that they focus on the topic and avoid introducing unnecessary information, for example, some pieces spent too many words on introducing the school’s location or the school’s history, etc.

**Question 6** – 描写你在一次堵车经历中的所见所感。

Candidates were expected to describe the scene in a traffic jam. Many candidates were able to describe the atmosphere of the traffic jam successfully through descriptions of the crowded street scenes and the appearances of men or cars in the streets, and they described the vivid images of the scene using the senses of sound, smell, touch, etc. The most successful candidates were able to naturally convey the changes of their mood when they were stuck in a traffic jam as well. The best responses showed excellent descriptive technique, using sophisticated sentences and appropriate ambitious words. Some weaker candidates needed to be clearer on the difference between descriptive and narratives tasks, focusing on the description of street scenes instead of stories taking place in the traffic jam.

**Question 7** – 以 ‘倒霉的一天’ 为题，写一个故事。

This was a popular topic. Many candidates were able to tell a story taking place on an ‘unlucky day’, including convincing characters and settings. Some candidates successfully used narrative devices such as flashback or time lapse to tell the story; some others described several unlucky scenarios taking place over the course of a day using a more unique narrative style, which was of interest to readers. Narrative writing should aim to balance the different stages of the story, using detailed description to build up tension or manage the climax naturally and carefully, emphasising the features of the story. Some candidates needed to avoid spending too much time leading up to the climax, as they often did not follow it through effectively enough. Some weaker candidates did not seem to have understood the keyword 倒霉 (unlucky), as some of them took the word 倒霉 to mean a negative feeling, and therefore introduced some irrelevance into the story. Candidates must retain relevance and focus on the topic to score highly. In a minor number of cases, candidates wrote an irrelevant story and simply included the sentence ‘那天，我真的很倒霉’ at the end. This approach should be strongly discouraged, as it does not allow candidates to reach the higher marking bands.

**Question 8** – 叙述你去动物园的一次经历。

Candidates were expected to write a story about visiting a zoo. Compositions frequently delivered a story of the visit which included an interesting highlight and described why the visit was noteworthy, including many details and descriptions. The best pieces used a sophisticated narrative style and lively vocabulary. Some candidates focused on conveying their genuine personal feelings with detailed descriptions, and produced impressive evaluations reflecting on the equality of all kinds of lives, or the happiness of childhood. Some candidates needed to improve their ability to manage the climax, as their writing was rather simple, describing the beginning, middle and end of the day at the zoo. In some cases candidates needed to find a better balance between the different parts of the story and avoid inappropriate weight on unimportant parts, such as why they decided to go to a zoo, or the bus journey to get there, etc.

# FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

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Paper 0509/23  
Writing

## Key messages

The eight questions in this paper are divided into two sections: argumentative or discursive writing in **Section 1** and descriptive or narrative writing in **Section 2**. Candidates need to write in the appropriate style according to the questions chosen.

To score well in either section, candidates need to:

- have an accurate understanding of the question in order to produce a focused and relevant response
- demonstrate original thinking
- demonstrate that they can use a wide range of sophisticated structures and expressions appropriately
- express what is thought, felt or imagined clearly and effectively
- avoid clichés and articulate genuine personal experience, when appropriate
- make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures and punctuation

Candidates should also strive to achieve the following in each essay genre:

- In an argumentative piece, candidates need to present a clearly stated view with supporting ideas and evidence in the form of facts or examples. These should be structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity.
- In a discursive piece, candidates need to present a balanced view with opinions from more than one perspective. The arguments should be developed with supporting evidence from all sides and structured in a logical and progressive manner with sufficient maturity and complexity.
- In a descriptive piece, candidates need to describe a vivid scene in an effective manner and with sufficient detail.
- In a narrative piece, candidates need to tell a story (real or imagined) which includes complexity, tension and climax.

## General comments

The majority of candidates performed well in this year's examination. Many candidates were able to produce a well-structured response to their chosen topic with a good range of vocabulary and well-made sentences. Most of the responses were within the advised length of 400–600 characters. The full range of performance was seen across all four types of writing. More candidates chose to write on the topics in **Section 2** than those in **Section 1**, and candidates in general showed more confidence when writing on the descriptive and narrative topics than the argumentative and discursive topics. Candidates should be advised to read through all the essay titles to ensure that they fully understand the topic. There were some cases this year where candidates could not provide fully relevant responses due to misunderstanding the question. In order to score in the higher bands in these genres, candidates would benefit from constructing a brief plan to outline the essay, and ensure a strong question focus to avoid writing irrelevant material, and maintain a logical structure.

The best argumentative and discursive essays showed evidence of pre-writing planning and a very structured approach, analysing the topic, identifying the main argument and two or more points supporting the main argument followed by two or more pieces of supporting evidence for each point. Candidates in general need to recognise the difference between argumentative writing and discursive writing. Argumentative compositions are expected to display a clear opinion on a topic. The strongest argumentative essays were clearly focussed on a particular viewpoint and presented a consistently persuasive argument. Strong answers were also characterised by the use of sophisticated structures, appropriate expressions and the presentation of a well-structured and convincing argument. Successful discursive essays presented a

balanced view from more than one perspective. Many strong candidates who chose the discursive topics were able to present a balanced and objective examination of the topic, without it being expressly neutral. Weaker answers needed to discuss or acknowledge both sides of the debate to achieve marks in the higher marking bands. A well-organised structure, including an introduction to the topic and the discussion of each issue in a separate paragraph, was usually met in a good discursive writing piece

In general, candidates who wrote descriptive compositions were aware that the focus should be on description instead of storytelling. Strong responses frequently presented a vivid picture and created a complex atmosphere or tension and often included lots of carefully chosen details and sensory information, such as, images, sounds, smells and tastes, which helped make the picture clear and realistic to readers. Weaker essays in this genre needed to improve the descriptive skills by applying various devices, vivid details and creating atmosphere. In a minor number of cases, some candidates needed to a clearer understanding of the boundaries between descriptive and narrative tasks.

There were many excellent narrative responses presenting a complex and sophisticated structure, with the best essays also using devices such as flashbacks, time lapses, etc. to add interest. Successful narrative pieces often included or were based on interesting real-life experiences rather than made-up stories. Most candidates were aware of the necessary elements in narrating including a carefully managed climax and building up tension. The style of writing was mature and a lot of appropriate detailed descriptions were included to serve the narrative purpose. Weaker narrative responses were often characterised by plain language, narrating everyday happenings or unlikely un-engaging events. They needed to learn how to build up tension and climax and develop character and plot during the process of narrating the story, instead of a simple narrative with a beginning, middle and end.

### Style and Accuracy

**Style:** Many candidates were able to produce a sophisticated piece of writing with an excellent range of expressions, complex sentence structures and very good organisation of ideas. They were able to write fluently, using a good range of structures and expressions. Weaker answers were characterised by repetitive language, sometimes using colloquial expressions excessively, and inappropriate ambitious words. Such answers needed to include a greater complexity of ideas and more variety in vocabulary and expressions. Candidates could improve by being more careful and precise in their use of expressions to ensure that they are used in an appropriate manner.

**Accuracy:** Most candidates demonstrated a high level of linguistic competence and a good grasp of Chinese grammar. Their use of structures was assured and their use of expressions appropriate in tone and register. Some weaker candidates needed to improve the correction of complex sentence structures, prepositional phrases, etc. when conveying sophisticated ideas. Some candidates' use of Chinese structure showed interference from English grammar, for example, 和 was incorrectly used to link clauses. Candidates are strongly suggested to review the whole writing to avoid some basic grammatical errors.

Most candidates were confident in their use of punctuation and knew that full stops and commas should not be used at the beginning of a line. The majority of candidates also wrote the Chinese full stop correctly as a small circle and not a solid dot. In some cases, candidates used too many commas, with full stops only appearing at the end of each paragraph.

Candidates need to make sure that they are writing the correct character to express the intended meaning. Many candidates were able to showcase a wide range of vocabulary using a variety of characters. Others could improve by reducing the amount of incorrectly used characters in their compositions. Such errors could be reduced with more careful checking of work and a better understanding of characters that share the same pronunciation but with different meaning (homophones/homonyms). Candidates are reminded that whilst both simplified and full form characters are acceptable in this paper, it is good practice to be consistent and avoid mixing the two systems within the same piece of writing. Finally, candidates are reminded to write clearly and legibly to ensure the Examiner can read their scripts and fully credit them for what has been written.

## Content and Structure

**Content:** The most successful answers this year contained effective and convincing arguments, a moving story or vivid descriptions. Stronger answers were characterised by the use of sufficient detail, clarity of expression and fluency of style. Some excellent essays contained well-balanced arguments, imaginative stories with originality, or vivid descriptions from a fresh perspective. Candidates were more likely to produce very convincing arguments when they felt strongly about a topic, as in the case of **Question 2**: 电子翻译工具对学习外语有什么好处和坏处, **Question 4**, 尊重父母就应该做一个听话的孩子。你为什么同意或者不同意这个说法? Stories that were based on candidates' own experience tended to be convincing and touching, as in the case of **Question 8**: 叙述你做家务的一次经历.

Candidates would benefit from analysing the topics properly and focusing on the main word(s) of the topic; this will help them write correctly and relevantly. For example, in **Question 4**, some candidates mixed the concepts of 'respect' and 'obedience'. The candidates who chose the discursive tasks did not always understand the Chinese traditional proverbs thoroughly and correctly, for example, the saying in **Question 1** '不以规矩, 不成方圆' was partially understood or misunderstood in some pieces. Candidates should not attempt to answer a question unless they are confident that they understand it fully.

**Structure:** In general, candidates showed awareness of the need to structure their writing appropriately. Most compositions contained an effective introduction, followed by a progression of ideas, argument, storyline or description of a scene and used clear paragraphs. It is very important to show the ability to build up tension and manage an identified climax in the narrative tasks, and maintain a logical structure in the argumentative and discursive tasks. Weaker responses were characterised by the inclusion of too many ideas within a single paragraph, without an appropriate conclusion, etc.

Relevance is of crucial importance in this paper. For the argumentative and discursive tasks, some candidates spent too much space on stories with unnecessary details and irrelevant information, or using supporting examples irrelevant to the title. Being able to write in a concise manner when required is an important skill.

## Comments on specific questions

### Section 1: Discussion and Argument

**Question 1** – '不以规矩, 不成方圆'。从正反两个方面谈谈你的看法。

Candidates were expected to discuss the saying 'Nothing can be accomplished without rules' from the viewpoints of both *for* and *against*. Candidates included points such as rules and regulations make an orderly society, but can also discourage creativity. The strongest responses included an explanation of the saying clearly in traditional and modern contexts, then cited some persuasive examples or historical stories, or/and ancient sayings to build up a complex discussion. In good responses, the different stages of the argument and the conclusion were linked smoothly, and the discursive sentences within each stage were soundly sequenced. Some weaker responses revealed a misunderstanding of the saying. The best responses maintained a balanced discussion, whilst weaker pieces only discussed one side or the other. Some candidates wrote quite narrowly on the topic, talking about the importance of law and regulations only.

**Question 2** – 电子翻译工具对学习外语有什么好处和坏处?

This topic asked candidates to discuss both the benefits and shortcomings of using electronic translation tools to learn a foreign language. It was one of the most popular choices in the whole paper as it is closely relevant to their learning experience. The most successful candidates organised their ideas in a clear and logical way. Besides using their own experience, candidates also expressed their views from the theoretical perspective of E-learning to summarise the advantages and disadvantages of using electronic translation tools to learn a foreign language. Some candidates needed to keep a balanced discussion instead of only writing about the benefits or shortcomings. Candidates also needed to understand the topic carefully and focus on the main word of 学习外语 (to learn a foreign language), to prevent the discussion from becoming irrelevant to the topic or too general; in cases where this happened, candidates included things such as comparing the electronic translation tools with a traditional dictionary in terms of size and weight, or whether it is good for the user's eyesight, etc. Some could improve by choosing supporting examples more relevant to learning a foreign language, instead of on the electrical tool itself.

**Question 3** – 发展经济比保护环境更重要。你为什么同意或者不同意这个观点？

This is an argumentative title, and as such requires candidates to present a particular viewpoint and support that argument with examples. Many candidates chose this topic as it is something that is often discussed in recent years and there are therefore many relevant examples/facts on the topic. Most candidates successfully expressed their standpoints at the beginning of the writing, and the candidates who achieved higher scores were able to support their opinions well with logical structures and effective language, showing a clear progression of the relevant argument before the conclusion was reached. In this topic, it is essential to focus on comparison of the importance between developing the economy and environment protection. However, some candidates only mentioned why it is more important to protect the environment, and/or how to protect environment; or why it is more important to develop the economy and/or how to develop the economy. Some other candidates needed to argue for one side or the other more persuasively to show their opinion on which factor they felt to be the most important.

**Question 4** – 尊重父母就应该做一个听话的孩子。你为什么同意或者不同意这个说法？

This topic asked candidates to discuss whether being an obedient child shows respect for parents. Many candidates discussed the topic from the perspective of Chinese traditional values and made clear links to their daily experience. Better responses showed a clear understanding of the main words in the topic: 尊重 (respect), 听话 (obedience), and expressed the relationship between 'to be obedient' and 'to respect parents' in a logical structure and with cohesive progression. Some candidates needed to analyse the topic carefully to avoid missing the main meaning. Some candidates argued the importance of respecting parents, or why we should respect parents; others focussed on how to build up a respectful or good relationship between child and parents. Some candidates used excessively colloquial expressions when discussing their life experience, which was not always appropriate in terms of style and accuracy.

**Section 2: Description and Narrative**

**Question 5** – 描写午餐时间学校食堂的繁忙景象。

Candidates were expected to write a descriptive piece about a busy canteen at lunch time in their school. The key word is 'busy' and candidates were expected to build-up the atmosphere within this particular space. Successful pieces were well developed with lively and vivid images of the canteen, describing the busy atmosphere with a range of details. The busy scene was sometimes described by using the movements of the writer to create an overall structure, or described employing different senses to reflect the atmosphere, such as, smells, touch, sounds, etc. Some candidates successfully created a close-up scene, which added more detail to the overall image. In the best responses, language was often sophisticated, and used ambitious words appropriately. Some candidates needed to be clearer about the boundary between descriptive tasks and narrative tasks, because they narrated the beginning, middle and end of happenings during lunch time. Some weaker candidates added irrelevant description, such as playing basketball on the playground, or provided many unnecessary details, such as the teaching buildings on campus, canteen menus, etc.

**Question 6** – 假设你是一条鱼，描写一下你看到的海底世界。

Candidates were expected to describe an imaginative scene under the sea from the eyes of a fish. In the best pieces, candidates were able to characterise themselves as a fish and create a full picture of the life under the sea. Some responses showed excellent descriptive techniques with sophisticated complex sentences and appropriate ambitious words, and they successfully described several vivid images of the underwater world from the senses of tastes, touch, etc. Some pieces reflected some profound thoughts through the described pictures, such as, comparing what the fish sees before and after the ocean became polluted by humans, or reflecting the life cycle under the sea. Some weaker candidates tended to drift towards narration rather than description, telling stories taking place under the sea, such as, a fish who was captured by humans.

**Question 7** – 以‘那天我真的很委屈’为情境，写一个故事。

This was a popular topic due to its open nature. Many candidates managed to tell a story of feeling wronged with proper characters and settings. Stronger responses used devices such as flashback or time lapse to tell the story, which would catch the readers' attention successfully. Some candidates managed to create a well-balanced story, using detailed description to build up tension or create a climax. Candidates must retain relevance and focus on the topic to score highly. Some candidates spent too many words leading up to the

climax but did not then follow it through effectively. Some candidates needed to understand the keyword 委屈 (being wronged) thoroughly, as some of them seemed to understand the word 委屈 as feeling frustrated, or unlucky, or some other type of negative mood. In a minor number of cases, candidates wrote an irrelevant story and ended the writing with the sentence ‘那天我真的很委屈……’

**Question 8 – 叙述你做家务的一次经历。**

Candidates were expected to write a story about their first experience of doing housework. Strong candidates were able to highlight the most interesting part of this life experience, showing how they did household chores with various descriptive skills and details. Many responses used a sophisticated narrative style and lively vocabulary. The strongest responses contained flashbacks or subtext, and candidates focused on conveying their genuine personal feelings with detailed and vivid descriptions. Many included an evaluation at the end of the scrip, such as realising the hard work of his/her mother doing housework on a daily basis, or the love between the family members. Some weaker candidates could improve by managing the climax more effectively, because some pieces showed a simple narrative with a beginning, middle and end, without any building up of tension or providing a sudden turn of events. Some other candidates needed to learn how to balance different parts of a narrative story to keep the irrelevant parts as short as appropriate, because some candidates inappropriately focused on why they did house chores, or poor family financial situations, etc.