

2017 VCE Chinese Second Language Advanced written examination report

General comments

Most students demonstrated a good understanding of the content and skills required in the 2017 Chinese Second Language Advanced examination. The overall quality of work was good, with some high-scoring and impressive performances. Students approached the examination with confidence and managed their time well, with very few incomplete responses.

Students need to pay more attention to the explicit requirements of each question in all sections of the examination. Students are reminded that it is not acceptable to replace characters with Pinyin (Chinese phonetic alphabet) when responding to questions in Chinese. In the translation task and questions requiring responses in English, names of people and places can be written in Pinyin – for example, Deng Xiaoping in Question 6 and Wang Ming in Question 7, as well as the name of the city Shanghai – but words that have a tangible meaning must be written in an English equivalent, such as Gaotie as high-speed railway in Question 2 and Jingju as Peking Opera in Question 4c.

In Section 3, many students endeavoured to use a range of vocabulary, including complex phrases and idiomatic expressions. Students need to make sure that they have a complete understanding of these expressions and are confident using them appropriately in the given context.

Also, in Section 3, students need to make sure they know what their chosen question is asking and they need to answer all aspects of it. For example, Question 8 asked students to describe a music concert in Australia, not just any concert the writer attended; Question 10 asked students to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of young people working from home, not other age groups; and in Question 12 the main character, Mingming, was an astronaut, not a tourist or an extraterrestrial. Although students will not be penalised for writing more than the indicated length of 300 characters, sometimes any extra time would be better used to proofread the writing carefully to eliminate character and grammatical errors.

It is important that students learn effective dictionary skills in order to take full advantage of having and using this valuable tool during the examination. Students should form a habit of using a printed dictionary during the year to help them develop their dictionary skills.

In 2017, a small number of students ran out of time to complete either the translation task or the writing task in Section 3. When completing various tasks during the year, it would be helpful for students to practise under strict time constraints as often as possible, to get used to the time pressures of the examination.

Specific information

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

Section 1 – Listening and responding

Part A – Answer in English

Most students handled this part confidently; however, most responses included insufficient information, so not many students scored full marks. Students must read the questions very carefully before the recording is played so that they can listen for and select the relevant information.

Students should ensure that they answer the questions as comprehensively as possible. For example, in Question 1, providing the actual cost was not enough to justify the speaker's decision.

Text 1

Question 1

- It was not too expensive.
- There was a vacancy.
- The hotel offers a pick-up service.

Text 2

Question 2

Any two of:

- the bullet train/high-speed train is cheaper
- the train station is in the CBD and doesn't take that long to get there (it's convenient)
- he doesn't have much luggage.

Part B – Answer in Chinese

In Part B, students were required to demonstrate their full understanding of the spoken text by responding to questions in Chinese characters. Most students wrote grammatically correct full sentences in the correct characters.

Students need to make sure that they read the questions carefully and get a complete understanding of the text. For Question 3b., students needed to mention 'in the Chinese bookshop' when providing reasons. There were students who misread the question as 'Why has Daming refused to go to the city with Xiaowen?'.

It is important to always provide accurate details. In Question 3a., for example, it was not accurate to say it is faster to buy books online. The correct answer should have been, 'the delivery is fast'.

Text 3

Question 3a.

- 大明通常在网上买书，因为它既便宜和方便，送得又快。(Daming normally buys his books online, as it is cheap, convenient and fast in delivery.)
- 小文通常去书店买书，因为她喜欢去书店看看/喜欢书店的环境。(或包括了有关书店环境的所有细节。)(Xiaowen normally goes to the bookshop to buy her books, as she likes to look around/the atmosphere there. [Or include all relevant details of the environment of the bookshop.])

Question 3b.

- 因为他可以和书店里的人练习说汉语 (Daming is convinced that it is a good idea to go to the bookstore as he can practise Chinese there.)
- 因为他可以在书店喝免费的中国茶 (He can drink Chinese tea for free.)

Section 2 – Reading, responding and translating

Part A – Answer in English

Many students achieved high marks in this part by successfully identifying all key points and presenting the information clearly; however, a significant number of students missed out on marks by not providing enough detail or by making careless mistakes. Students are reminded that they need to use the information from their reading and all answers need to be based on the text. An example of this issue occurred in Question 4c., when students answered that the tourists cannot be late otherwise others have to wait for them.

Text 4**Question 4a.**

Xiaofang is a tour guide.

She is going to visit the famous cultural street of Beijing.

Question 4b.

- It has a long history of around 400 years.
- It is a must-visit/favourite place for both domestic and international tourists.
- Many famous people used to live there.
- It has a lot of calligraphy and painting stores.
- It has a lot of antique stores.
- Tourists can learn calligraphy there.
- It is in a prime location/close to other attractions (such as authentic Beijing local restaurants).

Question 4c.

Choice	Advantage
• follow her through the stores on the street	• she can tell them the history of the street
• wander around by themselves	• they can stay longer at their favourite store

Question 4d.

- They have to walk together to the next street/to the restaurant.
- Xiaofang has already booked a restaurant for lunch at 12.30 pm./They need to go to a restaurant to eat lunch at 12.30 pm.
- They are also going to see Peking Opera at 2.00 pm.

Part B – Answer in Chinese

In Part B, students were awarded marks for comprehension and marks for their capacity to convey information in Chinese and their use of the Chinese language. In 2017, students were required to read one text about the changing roles of teachers over time and the challenges that teachers

face. A large number of students could not distinguish between the 'role of teachers' and 'the challenges that teachers face' when completing Questions 5a. and 5b. Some students resolved this by including all key points in their responses to both questions. Providing the same information for both questions meant that the students did not provide correct answers for all questions, and consequently, full marks could not be awarded.

Students missed out on marks for not writing in full sentences and for not including required information.

Text 5

Question 5a.

过去的老师以讲为主，以解 为次。 现在和将来的老师以解为主，以讲为次，帮助学生获取知识，形成自己的观点。将来的老师还要教学生新的学习方法和新的学习能力。(In the past, the teacher's role was mainly to pass on their knowledge and then to explain/answer questions. The teacher's role now and in the future is mainly to explain/answer questions and then pass on their knowledge. Their role is to help students obtain knowledge and form their own opinions. In the future, teachers also need to teach new study methods and new study skills.)

Question 5b.

教师所面临的挑战是学会使用电脑和上网，教学生如何获取和运用有效的信息，教会他们团队合作和交流技巧。(The challenges faced by teachers are to learn computer skills and internet skills, to teach students how to get and manage useful information, and to teach students teamwork and communication skills.)

Part C – Translation

In Part C, students were required to translate two texts into English. Students who scored highly demonstrated excellent knowledge of Chinese idiomatic expressions, as well as sound language skills in English. Students should realise that, when translating, it is not easy to achieve exactly the same meaning by using the same words and the same structure. In many situations, meanings can be lost when translating word for word. It is impressive, however, to see that some students were able to keep a good balance between being faithful to the original and being natural in English. Some students missed out on marks by paraphrasing or rewriting the text, although more students missed out on marks for grammatical errors. Apart from common mistakes to do with verb tenses, plural nouns, subject–verb agreement and prepositions, a problem worth noting was word choice. Some students misused words that look or sound alike but have different meanings. Some examples were: beside and besides, athlete and athletics, they're and their, grow and grow up, hard work and hardship, its and it's.

Question 6

Everyone in China knows Deng Xiaoping. He believed: 'No matter if it's a white cat or a black cat, as long as it catches a rat, then it's a good cat.' Since the reform, Chinese people have become open-minded, have worked hard and have started to live a better life. Meanwhile, the rapid development in China has also received attention from many other countries. People from other countries have become friends and business partners with Chinese people. More and more Chinese tourists have travelled overseas. What China has achieved nowadays cannot be separated from Deng Xiaoping. Lots of people believe that his contributions to Chinese history cannot go unnoticed.

Question 7

In the past 20 years, China's sports status has been one of the best in the world, but how have their athletes developed? Wang Ming, the tennis coach from Shanghai Sports School, told me that

the majority of the kids came from other places. They entered the school at about only seven years old and they all lived at the school. Other than the daily four-hour-long tennis training in the morning and three lessons in the afternoon, the athletes also have two hours of training on physical strength every day. They must improve by 10 per cent or more every month, or they have to leave the school. Therefore, their growth cannot be separated from their effort.

Section 3 – Writing in Chinese

Students attempted the full range of the writing topics, with Questions 8, 10 and 11 being the most popular. Most students demonstrated a clear understanding of their chosen task, provided the required information with some interesting elaboration and handled basic grammatical structures well.

Students are advised to first write out their plan and the main points to be included, and then refer to this during the writing process to ensure that they remain on the right track.

When presenting information, students should resist overstating the facts in an attempt to strengthen their argument. Very often this is counterproductive. For example, for Question 10 it was not believable to say that working at home means one can watch television all day long.

The majority of students demonstrated their understanding of different text type features by including features such as a salutation and date for a letter and a title and author for a newspaper article. It is important to keep in mind that the same style should continue throughout the writing. For example, to execute the speech text type well, it was not enough to just provide an opening and a concluding remark. Incorporating more speech features, such as rhetorical questions, personal asides and direct questions to the audience, will help achieve the effect.

Question 8

Students were asked to write a letter telling their penpal in China about a memorable music concert they attended.

Text type: letter

Audience: penpal in China

Type of writing: personal

Points/responses students could have included are:

- description of the concert (who, when, where, etc.)
- what happened/their experience
- why it was memorable/unique and significant/reflection.

Question 9

Students were asked to write an informative article for a Chinese newspaper, informing readers about three aspects of the Melbourne tram restaurant that make it a unique experience for tourists.

Text type: article (newspaper)

Audience: readers of a Chinese newspaper

Type of writing: informative

Points/responses students could have included are:

- general information, cost, where to catch it, how to book it
- the journey/scenery for the tram ride
- the food served/eating while moving

- the history of trams in Melbourne.

Question 10

Students were asked to write a report for a business magazine, evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of working from home.

Text type: report

Audience: readers of a business magazine

Type of writing: evaluative

Points/responses students could have included are:

- Advantages:
 - freedom/being one's own boss
 - flexibility in terms of working hours and deadlines
 - being environmentally friendly/cost effective/no traffic jams
- Disadvantages:
 - hard to get help straightaway/lack of direct interaction/social isolation
 - distractions/interruptions
 - not very good in the long-term for career prospects.

Question 11

Students were asked to write the script of a speech that they will give at the next school assembly, persuading students to participate in the local fundraising run.

Text type: script of a speech

Audience: students at the school assembly

Type of writing: persuasive

Points/responses students could have included are:

- good exercise
- donation will help others
- good way to get involved in contributing to society/for a good cause.

Question 12

Students were asked to write an imaginative story for a children's book, about Mingming and his experiences as an astronaut living on the Chinese space station.

Text type: story

Audience: children

Type of writing: imaginative

Points/responses students could have included are:

- establish the role/character
- development of plot
- describe experiences on the Chinese space station.