

Chinese B

Overall grade boundaries

Higher level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 12	13 - 25	26 - 42	43 - 56	57 - 71	72 - 86	87 - 100

Standard level

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 10	11 - 23	24 - 37	38 - 52	53 - 68	69 - 83	84 - 100

Higher level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The May 2013 examination included a new format following the introduction of the new language B syllabus. The overall results of this component at higher level were satisfactory with a good range of candidates across the board and the candidates demonstrated a good competent level in the new format. Although there still seems to be some discrepancy in the level of fluency between the very high achieving candidates and the lowest achieving candidates, they all managed to accomplish the tasks with a good rapport with their respective teachers. The range and suitability of the work submitted on the whole was appropriate and met the expectations of the new syllabus. Both the candidates and the teachers carried out their tasks according to the requirements. Some candidates were even able to demonstrate a very high level of language proficiency. The type of topics and themes were well planned and presented adequately.

In the first part of the individual oral, the candidate must show their productive skills through their presentations. Most of the candidates were able to present their topics within the prescribed time frame. They produced their presentations through the given photo prompt selected by the teacher to

present on the topic for discussion. It was clear that the candidates had done many classroom activities that were similar to the final examination format as they all showed a high level of competence in their presentations with ease in their tones. There was no issue with the selected topics and the content was usually appropriate. The individual oral provided the candidates with an opportunity to demonstrate their gained abilities in presenting spontaneous verbal communication abilities.

The new syllabus gives the candidates opportunities to not only produce their presentations, but also to engage in interactive and receptive practice of their oral skills. In the second part of interaction, there is usually a lively interaction of question and answer period in which most of the teachers played their role well by asking appropriate questions first on the topic presented by the candidates and then by asking a variety of questions. Some were very interesting whereas others perhaps chose to ask questions they were confident that their candidates would be capable of answering. This is acceptable as either way the interaction gave candidates opportunities to show their interactive and receptive skills.

Candidates showed their abilities in responding to various topics for discussion and they were well prepared and knew how to conduct a flowing conversation by listening well and then answering the questions accordingly. The question and answer period was mostly done within the time frame of three to four minutes and was adequate to have given candidates opportunities to interact well with the teacher.

Conduct of the interviews

As the new format of the internal assessment (IA) has taken on the preparation time with a prompt, candidates are truly presenting their individual orals without memorizing something written in prepared paragraphs. The results are in fact quite impressive as almost all the individual orals were executed in a good order with coherent presentations and good interaction between the teachers and the candidates.

Many candidates pointed out the content of the prompt photographs. According to the language B syllabus, candidates may jot down some notes to help them follow a sequence of presentation contents in an orderly fashion. This can be clearly heard from the individual orals based on the photos provided. The timing of the presentations was also well controlled, with adequate time for the teacher and the candidate to interact with one another. The conduct of the interviews was well implemented.

There was also a general improvement in the overall knowledge of candidates' topics and themes. They were varied and interesting, carefully selected by teachers. The candidates could all engage themselves in focused presentations and express themselves fluently with in-depth discussions on the photos presented to them without prior knowledge. All the contents of these topics were suitable for candidates at this level in this age bracket. It shows that the teachers have taken major steps in preparing these examination materials and have trained and prepared their candidates well for the new format of individual oral examination. The candidates demonstrated a strong level of competence in verbal communication skills in the final assessment. The range of the contents of individual orals was wide, from more common topics such as Chinese traditional festivals that is from "Customs and traditions" to deeper discussions such as the impact of pollution on people's health as a key topic from "Health". All of the topics selected were well connected with one of the five options.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Criterion A: Productive skills

At the top of the range, many candidates clearly showed a very sound command of the language, successfully completing every part of the task. They were fluent and clear in presenting their contents in response to the topic. Their language used was accurate and varied, and their intonation was close to a native level of authenticity. Overall, candidates had a good command of the language in their production of the presentation with a flow of coherent speech pattern. The level of accuracy was high and the pronunciation of the words was clear.

Criterion B: Interactive and receptive skills

The candidates all showed strong capabilities in understanding the original questions generated by the teachers. There was not much hesitation from the candidates in responding to the questions asked. This means that the candidates had a very good listening comprehension level and they also demonstrated strong abilities in interacting with the teachers in conducting meaningful conversations. Most of the candidates were ready and eager to answer the teacher's questions with ease. They were spontaneous, well versed and highly communicative. There was little hesitation in their responses.

The register and style of presentation was usually appropriate, with most candidates showing strength in in-depth discussions on any of the five option topics ranging from cultural diversity, customs and traditions, health, leisure to science and technology. As teachers planned well the presentation prompts ahead of time, there was no time wasted. All candidates all seemed to respond well to their teachers' questions.

At higher level, not only did the candidates carry out conversations with simple and straightforward ideas, but they also conducted quite in-depth discussions with complex ideas involved, and personal opinions were given in a coherent manner. Sometimes, candidates engaged in debatable discussions in which they need to prove their point of view with logical and valid rationales. They truly showed their competent level through a flowing communication pattern in a natural manner.

Another new element in the new individual oral is the fact that candidates not only need to show their interactive skills but also their receptive abilities. This means that they really need to fully understand what is being asked or said and demonstrate their good comprehension through their interactive skills. This requires them to carry out a conversation not only with adequate but also sharply focused dialogue with the teacher that runs smoothly. They need to respond well to the teacher's questions by speaking not only clearly but also intelligently to show their arguments and communication abilities. This should be encouraged and supported.

Recommendations and guidance for the teaching of future candidates

As the overall impression from this examination session shows very strong competence in candidates' presentation skills, the following recommendations for the teaching are made:

- The correct placement of candidates is very important to ensure that all candidates are given learning opportunities appropriate to their level of competency.

- Candidates should be trained with brief note taking skills and pinpoint major contents for preparing their presentations within a specified time limit of 15 minutes so that they can be ready for final assessment practice.
- Teachers should prepare candidates to look at different photograph prompts and to come up with a thread of ideas for a well thought out presentation; logical bullet points should be written down for the purpose of presenting their ideas clearly.
- Teachers should emphasize the importance of spontaneous abilities and a natural flow of interaction rather than an overly rehearsed speech.
- Teachers should ensure that candidates know how to plan the start of the presentation, how to develop the main ideas, and how to build into a climax and come to a good conclusion.
- Interactive skills should be practiced in class by conducting questions and answers on a continuing basis with various topics from the options; receptive skills should be practiced by asking candidates to listen to teachers' presentations, topics for discussions and media materials.
- Classroom practice should be implemented with long term planning and commitment so that candidates receive continuous support.
- Teachers should combine classroom teaching with hands-on exercises such as frequent individual presentations, pair work, small group projects, tutorials, topic research and discussions.
- Teachers should find suitable authentic learning materials from various sources in addition to main stream classroom teaching materials.
- Where possible, it is helpful to arrange immersion sessions: field trips locally or out of city/country to enhance candidates' language skills through immersion and in a cultural environment where the language is spoken.
- Various venues / mechanisms of improving teaching methodologies should be explored by using a variety of textbooks, media information, websites and live resource materials.
- Centres should be more receptive to new technologies, but at the same time not too distracted by electronic gadgets.
- Teachers should encourage candidates to choose a topic on Chinese language and culture about which they are genuinely interested – but also make sure it is focused and manageable.
- Teachers should be open to candidates' ideas and encourage creative thinking.

Standard level internal assessment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 6	7 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 26	27 - 30

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms

Regarding forms, please make sure that a 2/BIA, not 2/BWA or any other form, is submitted for each candidate to facilitate the moderation process.

In part 1, make sure that the pictures used are provided with appropriate captions in Chinese, not in English or any other language.

In part 2, as much as possible the examiner should avoid using English to clarify a question or explain the meaning of a word or phrase.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The work submitted was comprehensive, ranging from quite low performance to high performance in terms of candidates' mastery of the spoken language. The pictures selected for assessment purposes were in large part appropriate, interesting, and visually appealing. They were conducive to talking points embracing such topics as food, Chinese or exotic; festivals, Chinese (Dragon Boat races, August Moon and New Year's celebrations) or Western (Easter, Halloween, Christmas); school life (homework, exams, friends); leisure (holidays, sports, movies, concerts); health issues (physical training, weight problems, health food); social problems (interpersonal relationships, drug addiction, senior citizens' care), the environment (pollution, energy sources); and technology (computers, natural science). The great variety of introduced topics no doubt contributed to the substance and quality of the discourse engendered between examiner and candidate, and thus led to a lively, pleasant, and enriching experience for both.

Candidate performance against each criterion

Barring the native/near-native speakers on one side and the real second-language novice learner on the other, the average candidates succeeded in making a creditable oral presentation based on the photographs provided, of which they had no prior knowledge. The production, though not sophisticated in any appreciable degree, was nevertheless reasonably clear and to the point. For the most part candidates interacted with the examiner quite well, engaging themselves in authentic conversations. While exhibiting their linguistic ability, in most cases the candidates also demonstrated a considerable degree of awareness and understanding of the culture that stands behind the language.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Candidates should form conversation groups among themselves so as to extend their learning opportunity and experience beyond the classroom.
- Candidates should be encouraged to tap into the plethora of resources that are available online: TV shows, videos, films, *etc.*
- Above all, candidates should be reminded that learning a language is like opening a new window in the mind, through which to view a way of life previously unknown to them; and that, like learning anything else, it is a lifelong adventure.

Higher level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 18	19 - 21	22 - 25

The range and suitability of the work submitted

The range of the work submitted was very wide. The literary works studied also ranged widely from a piece of essay published on the internet to a famous Chinese classic. Thus, it has created a challenge for examiners to assess the aspect of making good use of the literary work, especially when the literary work studied is not commonly known and is not familiar to the examiners.

The suitability of the work submitted is varied. Most of the written assignments (WAs) were suitable to the level. However, the definition of "a piece of creative writing" on page 42 of the language B subject guide could be interpreted in many ways, thus there were a good portion of candidates that did literary review or personal comments, and it was hard to judge whether it was a creative writing or not.

Candidates' WA submitted this year were mostly diaries and letters. Candidates normally found these two text types easier to handle. It was also easier for them to express their thoughts and show the link to the literary work studied. There were also candidates who submitted WAs in the formats of interview, speech, blog, or drama adaptation which were also written well. Some WAs were on character analysis/interpretation, a self-reflection on the literary work studied, or a reader's comment and that was harder to justify if it was a creative writing or not.

Some candidates performed particularly well in this component which suggested that there was a placement issue here. Some candidates appeared to be near-native in their fluency and would perhaps have been better placed in higher level courses, such as Chinese: Literature / Chinese A: Language and Literature.

Some centres used foreign literature work (eg Renaissance International school of Saigon and R.E. Mountain Secondary school); some centres used a translation work (eg International School of Beijing). It was unfortunate that teachers did not pay attention to the subject guide. At this point, candidates were not penalized for using either a foreign literary work or translation work for their WA, but it is recommended that the centres/teachers be informed because this may not always be the case.

Candidate performance against each criterion.

Criterion A: Language

Overall, candidates were able to meet the minimum requirement of the word limit. Only a few candidates failed to do so which led to a 1-mark penalty. Some did not know to multiply 1.2, and did not write enough. The advanced candidates were not only able to write clearly with complex sentence structures, they also used Chinese idioms, allusions and slang to enhance their writing. The less advanced candidates had some difficulty expressing their views coherently using only simple sentences and phrases.

Most candidates were able to use simple sentences and phrases to present their views well. However, there were some areas worth mentioning: typos or writing the wrong characters were often found in the writing; the grammar was not always used appropriately, and not many complex sentence structures were used.

Criterion B: Content

Generally, candidates were able to connect the WA to the literature studied. The more advanced candidates were able to show their understanding on the theme, motifs and characteristics of the characters in the work. However, it is a challenge for examiners to assess WA, if the work is unknown.

Criterion C: Format

Since candidates chose their own text types to produce their WAs, it was usually done well. In some cases, marks were deducted for inappropriate register or tone.

Criterion D: Rationale

The majority of candidates did not receive the full 3 marks due to a lack of all three aspects required (*ie* introducing the assignment, stating their aim(s): and stating how their aim(s) have been achieved). When a rationale was not written clearly, it also affected marking on Criterion B. Therefore, it is very important for candidates to produce a clear and focused rationale following the subject guide.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates.

- Pay close attention to the subject guide: teachers need to read and follow the Language B Guide carefully.
- Rationale writing: teachers need to teach their candidates how to write a good rationale. This year, the majority of candidates did not know how to write the rationale. In addition, not many candidates covered all three areas required.

- Word limit: some teachers/candidates did not know to multiply the word count by 1.2 for Chinese (it should be 600-720 characters for Chinese, and not 500-600 characters). There were candidates who lost one point for not reaching the minimum word count, and they thought they had.
- Same topic issue: the same topic should not be chosen by candidates from the same centre. Teachers need to pay attention to this during the brainstorming stage, and provide guidance for candidates to focus on a different aspect or a different text type of a similar topic.
- The choice of literary work: do not use the literary texts from past IB examination papers as the literary work. Choose the appropriate level for the candidates. It does not have to be Chinese classics, but preferably a common work. If not, a good summary should be provided on the cover or a summary should be attached to the WA.
- Academic honesty: some candidates stated a total word count that was incorrect. It is the teacher's responsibility to make sure that this kind of behaviour does not happen. In addition, follow the IB subject guide in class to finish the WA, and do not allow candidates to bring the assignment home.

Further comments

A very wide range of literary works chosen by teachers proved to be a challenge for examiners. If the teacher did not provide a brief summary for the literary work, and the examiner did not know of that work, it was very hard to award marks fairly for Criterion B. Teachers are required to provide a summary of the literary works used.

Standard level written assignment

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 - 15	16 - 19	20 - 22	23 - 25

Given that this was the first session in which the WA was introduced, the quality of work was fairly good. This is definitely a worthy exercise, therefore a good component for candidates to learn the skill of using source text information in their own writing, as it is a real life application of so much of our reading and writing. The task nature in itself is a deviation from what Chinese at centres require candidates to learn, therefore the skill required to complete the task well may be a new skill for their teachers as well. Since it is an important life skill and will be required of candidates in their lives beyond school years, the launch of the component may very well have an unexpected side benefit to the writers of Chinese in general.

Recommendations for IB procedures, instructions and forms.

Teachers should guide candidates to produce authentic individual writings rather than feeding them "form" writings to "complete the task". Also, the correct forms should be prepared completely and attached to scripts prior to mailing them.

The range and suitability of the work submitted

Many candidates' works reflect that their teachers have read the subject guide and instructions thoroughly and have skilfully guided candidates to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to complete the task well.

The majority of the texts selected for candidates to work on by teachers are higher, some much higher in difficulty levels than the texts for SL P1 in current and past examination sessions. This in itself is acceptable and logical given that candidates can use a dictionary and have adequate time to work on the writing. This is also a good way of encouraging candidates to use tools to figure out ways to comprehend a text they read. This report would address two issues that arised from this trend:

- Although online tools in real life are much more likely to be used and should be encouraged, they are not allowed for the examination.
- Although a certain degree of higher difficulty of the texts for the WA should be expected, the degree of difficulty in a good number of texts is not at all reasonable for SL level candidates, even with the aid of dictionaries. The fact that the level of difficulty of these texts selected by teachers for their candidates to work on is so high, and candidate performance is relatively high suggests the mis-placement of candidates in the SL program. Centres should be strongly reminded of doing all possible to place candidates in the proper program based on their language proficiency level.

Below are some other issues important for teachers:

- Some teachers only selected one text for their candidates to work on, some chose two: there should be three.
- Quite often the teachers edit texts. It is important that they read the edited texts carefully to ensure fluency and accuracy of the edit before giving to candidates to use. The font size and neatness of the texts should also be appropriate for easy reading.
- Texts selected need to be related to one of the prescribed cores of the curriculum.
- Teachers should avoid using only textbook texts for the purpose.

Candidate performance against each criterion.

Criterion A: Language

Candidates' performance in general is consistent from that of past sessions and other components in the examination. Overall performance ranges from near native level and quality of work to those who are very low achieving in both language skill and ability to select relevant content from source texts and organize such content in a well structured manner in their own writings. The majority of candidates produced very high quality work, those in the lower spectrum are of smaller percentage.

As usual, the lower achieving candidates among the candidates are those who appear to be true language B candidates. However, it is encouraging to see a good number of these same candidates demonstrating a strong sense of how to present a well structured text in their writings even with limited language skills.

Criterion B: Content

Because most candidates have a fairly high proficiency in the language, their ability to interpret the content, and to select relevant parts to use in the new writing are of relatively good quality. The area that candidates found particularly difficult was evident in some candidates' ability to organize the content in a good, logical, well structured manner to deliver an effective message. Some candidates entirely neglected the need to use source text content in support of their new writing, which is a great shame. Better guidance on this area over the course of study would help avoid issues of this nature in the future.

Criterion C: Format

Letters, blogs, emails, diaries and articles are the most chosen text type. For the most part, candidates did well in following the format and tones of the chosen text type. Some candidates failed to specify which text type they were to present their writings in the rationale. This sometimes presented a detrimental challenge for readers of the writing to determine whether or not the "format" was represented well.

Criterion D: Rationale

This proved to be the most problematic criterion in terms of candidate performance. The most notable issue was the failure to state how the aim is achieved in the rationale. Candidates should be guided that the rationale is to consist of three parts: explain the assignment, state the aim of the writing and explain how the aim is achieved. The third component is often missing in the writings.

It is also advisable that the intended text type is specifically mentioned in the rationale even though the instruction does not specifically require such mention except to "explain the assignment". Some candidates even did not include a rationale component in their assignment. Better guidance appears to be needed.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

As in guiding candidates for writing production for paper 2, the written assignment is also a "writing exercise". As such the criteria of language, audience, text type, register, message and structure are basic elements to guide candidates to bear in mind and learn effective measures of crafting their writing.

Creativity and original voices and ideas in the writing is an important element that teachers should aim to guide candidates to present in their writing, instead of offering from writing samples for candidates to imitate.

When choosing source texts, it is advisable to offer a variety of texts to expose candidates to different ideas and writing styles. In addition, take the time to choose age and level appropriate authentic source texts, and when editing is necessary, ensure a cohesive language that make sense before presenting to candidates for examination purposes.

Higher level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 8	9 - 16	17 - 24	25 - 33	34 - 43	44 - 52	53 - 60

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Understanding of a more literary vocabulary is an area that candidates seem to find difficult. As a result, the performance of candidates was affected in questions 25-29 and questions 45-49.

Proper usage of functional words in gap questions assessed in questions 37-40 was also challenging for some candidates.

Idiomatic usage and four-word idioms in questions 11-14 seemed to be extremely challenging even for high performers.

Some candidates had difficulty identifying “who is speaking” in Text 5 since Text 5’s voice and messages are somewhat subtle, hence candidates might have had difficulty answering questions 52 and 53.

The points above, though challenging, were a good way to differentiate candidate language proficiency levels.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Understanding of key messages from texts was an area where candidates seemed to be prepared well. It reflected in relatively good performance in True/False justification questions, choosing the correct descriptions or answers, paragraph summary, eg questions 1-6, 10, 21-24, 30-33, 34-36, 44 and 50-51.

The general proficiency in reading comprehension was very impressive, which means that candidates were generally well prepared to “read to comprehend key information.”

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Candidates were able to grasp key points in reading comprehension. Most candidates were well prepared and able to handle texts that were informational.

Candidates had more difficulty handling literary texts, such as Text 5, that conveys subtle emotion and messages. Even though candidates had good general understanding of the texts, they were less confident in dealing with four-word idioms or phrases with more nuances. Some candidates left multiple choice questions blank, rather than trying their best to figure out the answers. Some candidates did not follow the instructions carefully.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

- Apart from general comprehension of key messages from the texts, it is important to teach candidates how to interpret words and phrases by looking at character components and to figure out meaning or messages within context. It is also important to teach candidates to understand how sentences and paragraphs are connected with different cohesive devices. These are important strategies to enhance interpretive skills at a more advanced level in second language acquisition.
- Teachers should work to broaden the range of vocabulary used and challenge candidates with synonyms, antonyms and explain how each individual character contributes to the meaning of the word.
- During reading exercises, words should be identified with similar but subtle differences and help should be provided to differentiate them. This could potentially help candidates at all levels of performance.
- Candidates should be exposed to the more sophisticated idioms and expressions, literary conjunctions, paragraph connectors, *etc.*
- Candidates should be exposed to literary texts to familiarise themselves with the language subtlety and nuances.

Standard level paper one

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 5	6 - 11	12 - 14	15 - 20	21 - 27	28 - 33	34 - 45

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Some of the candidates simply gave up trying to answer the difficult questions of the written texts. It seems that candidates did not know how to deal with or make a reasonable guess at the questions with more difficult vocabulary that they had not learnt before.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Candidates were well-trained to answer different question types and most of the candidates could respond to the questions accurately.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Candidates were able to provide answers according to the instructions given.

Some candidates tended to write very long answers which did not show the understanding of the written texts but copied the whole paragraph of the text.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should show candidates how to find the overall meaning of a paragraph or sentence containing difficult vocabulary that the candidates have never learnt before.

Higher level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 6	7 - 13	14 - 20	21 - 26	27 - 32	33 - 38	39 - 45

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

The area of the programme, which proved very difficult for the candidates was Section B. May 2013 was the first session for the new syllabus, in which paper 2 consists of two sections, Section A and Section B. The format of Section A is very similar to the previous papers, thus candidates did not appear to have any difficulty in responding to it. However, the new format of Section B resulted in the majority of candidates not responding directly to the stimulus text provided. Although there was no prescribed answer to it, and it only assessed candidates' abilities to express their reflection logically and coherently, many candidates were easily side-tracked to write something that was not directly relevant or focused on the stimulus text. Because Section B gives candidates a free choice in choosing a text type, candidates took the liberty to respond on something related, but not necessarily directly to the stimulus text. Many candidates lost marks for this reason in Section B.

The areas of the programme, which proved difficult for candidates on Section A were questions 1 and 4. The topic in question 1 required not only the use of vocabulary that candidates are normally unfamiliar with, but also the understanding of globalization. Many candidates who chose this question could only touch the surface of the issue, and were not able to provide good or logical examples to support their statements. For question 4, many candidates either misread or misinterpreted the topic, thus wrote something off topic.

General areas of difficulty for the candidates were:

- not responding in a proper style or register
- not using the right tone of voice for the chosen task
- lacking general and solid knowledge to respond the question chosen, which was not always a language skill issue.

Criterion A: Language

Most candidates demonstrated a wide variety of levels of fluency and accuracy. Very few candidates were penalized for writing below the prescribed minimum number of characters. However, the vocabulary and grammar used by some candidates was relatively limited. Complex sentence structures were generally not used often, even though some candidates still wrote quite fluently with a wide range of sophisticated vocabulary. Typos or mixing up with homophones in character writing appeared to be a common phenomenon. Accurate character writing appeared to be a challenge for many candidates.

Criterion B: Message

The majority of candidates were able to express ideas clearly and coherently. However, a small portion of candidates were not able to develop and organize **their ideas into a logical structure**. Also, several candidates did not understand or misread the question chosen, and consequently wrote off the topic.

Criterion C: Format

Many candidates, but not all, appeared to produce the required text type to the audience appropriately. Some candidates needed to further develop their skills to use effective structural elements, which includes cohesive devices in order to produce more coherent paragraphs in their written production. Also, it should be emphasised that applying appropriate register and tone are equally important to the conventions of the text type.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

Most candidates demonstrated very high linguistic skills as well as maturity in their thoughts. In addition, they knew how to choose a topic suitable to their writing skills and knowledge. Thus, the outcome of the writing was quite satisfactory.

A good portion of candidates showed a very high level of fluency and accuracy in their language skills, an ability to present their ideas in an engaging and persuasive way, and wrote in an appropriate style and register. However, some candidates performed particularly well in this component which suggested that there was a placement issue here. Some candidates appeared to be near-native in their fluency and would perhaps have been better placed in higher level courses, such as Chinese: Literature / Chinese A: Language and Literature. They also demonstrated a good level of knowledge and understanding on the topics they chose to write. Most candidates were able to pick their question to write a structured essay on Section A.

Candidates seemed to prefer topics such as a letter to parents (question 3) or a blog on fashion style of young people in China (question 2). While certain text types need to be taught in more depth, many candidates had an adequate grasp of appropriate register and rhetorical devices.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1 was one of the most popular questions. Unfortunately, this topic required not only the vocabulary that candidates are normally unfamiliar with, but also the understanding of globalization. Many candidates who chose this question could only touch the surface of the topic, and were not able to provide good or logical examples to support their statements. This is a topic that may seem easy, but is hard to write well.

Question 2. A blog is a text type that has yet to be agreed upon on its conventions so candidates who chose this topic had the advantage of receiving good marks on Criterion C. Most of the candidates wrote well and were very creative in their writing. Some candidates were off topic though.

Question 3 was the most popular topic chosen. This was also a topic easier for candidates to relate to. The majority of candidates wrote fairly well on this topic. However, some candidates addressed the letter to grandma instead, thus, were considered off topic. Many candidates made a mistake by including their last name in the signature, and since this was a letter to parents, it was more appropriate to sign the first name only and not the full name.

Question 4. Many candidates who chose this topic either misread or misinterpreted the topic, thus wrote something off topic. Furthermore, very few candidates knew how to write a set of guidelines, and many wrote an essay instead. This is another topic that may seem easy, but not many candidates did well on it.

Question 5 required good knowledge on the topic, and only a handful of candidates chose it. This is a harder topic to write with in-depth content.

In general, while certain text types need to be taught in more depth, many candidates had an adequate grasp of appropriate conventions, register and tone. On the other hand, some candidates misread or misinterpreted the topic chosen and as a result, no matter how well the answer was written, marks awarded on Criterion B were lower.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers need to teach candidates how to respond to Section B stimulus text directly, and how to express their reflection on or personal response to the stimulus. As this is a new assessment format, teachers need to provide clear guidance and more practice opportunities for candidates. For Section A, teachers need to remind candidates to pay close attention to what the question is asking and answer it directly. Candidates should demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the content, as well as using appropriate style, register, tone and proper format when responding to the topic chosen.

The type of assistance and guidance the teachers should provide for future candidates is to support them in their selection of topics. First, candidates should learn to select the topic that they understand and can write well, including writing in the correct format, as well as using relevant ideas for the content. Second, candidates should be given many opportunities to develop their writing skills from vocabulary building, Chinese character writing, complex sentence structures expansion, to coherent paragraphs development. Third, candidates should be given an opportunity to explore a wider range of topics and text types within the IB guidelines.

Further comments

More communication and training on the assessment of the new programme with teachers and centres through IB workshops and the Online Curriculum Centre (OCC) is highly recommended.

The number of characters required on Section A has been limited to 480 characters, which might restrict candidates from expressing themselves in a more thorough manner. In other words, it is hard to write something in depth in under 480 characters in Chinese.

Standard level paper two

Component grade boundaries

Grade:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mark range:	0 - 2	3 - 5	6 - 8	9 - 12	13 - 17	18 - 21	22 - 25

The areas of the programme and examination which appeared difficult for the candidates

Cultural diversity, customs and traditions appeared to be most difficult topic. Most candidates did not have sufficient vocabulary to reflect and discuss their thoughts, so the development of ideas was not coherent.

It appeared that the candidates who chose questions one and two had difficulties fully understanding the tasks. Most of the candidates misunderstood question 1 and discussed the pressures regarding Chinese study. The same happened on Question 2, as some candidates misunderstood the question and thought that it was about the linguistic differences or the special characteristics of learning Chinese, which lead them to share their experiences in learning Chinese or just highlighted Chinese cultural differences. Candidates also failed to give examples of different ways of greeting in different languages and cultures. Regarding the format, the interview in question 4 appears to have been the most difficult one for candidates. Focusing on the main theme "how to be successful" was also a challenge for them. Asking them to format the response like an email also appeared difficult, since almost nobody used the "From, To, Subject" format.

The areas of the programme and examination in which candidates appeared well prepared

It appeared most of the candidates were well prepared for the topics of Health, Leisure and Science and technology. They demonstrated a satisfactory level of knowledge and understanding of the topics and generally met the format and length requirements.

Question 3 seemed easier for candidates to handle; most candidates could focus on the benefits of eating breakfast. Vocabulary required for this task also seemed more fundamental for candidates. In addition, candidates were able to focus on the issue of using information from the Internet for their research source in question 5. It appeared that these two questions were more familiar to candidates, and more related to their own experiences and daily life.

The majority of candidates were able to produce basic language and offer comprehensible messages, though not necessarily according to the task requirements.

With regards to the format, most candidates were well prepared in writing a diary and a speech.

The strengths and weaknesses of the candidates in the treatment of individual questions

Question 1: Most of the candidates who chose this task failed to provide the correct information to meet the requirements of the task; instead, they talked about their study pressure from school, parents or society. However the format and the register appeared easy to the candidates, as it was an informal tone. Conversely, focusing on the pressure upon teenagers about the common standards of "beauty" was a challenge. Some candidates addressed the diary as "Dear Diary" which was not a correct form for writing a diary entry in Chinese.

Question 2: Not many candidates were familiar with the formal email format, and they tended to write in a letter format. Very few candidates did well on this question since it required a good command of the language to explain and compare things in different cultures clearly.

Question 3: This was the most popular question. It seemed the easiest one for candidates and most of them could focus on the topic and gave reasons why it was important for candidates to eat breakfast. Candidates were able to use the formal tone for addressing the audience.

Question 4: The challenge was in writing an interesting dialogue as an interview. However, candidates who chose this question were usually able to handle it well.

Question 5: Candidates could focus on explaining the importance of using the Internet as a research source, as this is part of their study experience. Most of them could give sound reasons to persuade their principal to allow them to use the Internet as their research source. Candidates normally have no problem in using a letter format; the challenge was using a proper tone to the principal, especially when it came to the end, when a formal phrase is needed.

Recommendations for the teaching of future candidates

Teachers should emphasize the correct text types of diary, formal letter and email. They should try to provide a broader range of materials for candidates. For the theme of customs and traditions, the materials should not be limited to traditional customs, but should include contemporary customs as well. Some areas that need more focus include:

- The organization of Chinese essays by using conjunctions and paragraphing.
- The differences between spoken language and written language.
- The format of writing a letter in Chinese, including proper 稱呼, 祝詞。

Further comments

It is good practice to give candidates the opportunity to write on a regular basis. Using the questions that appeared in previous papers is one way that has proven very helpful in getting candidates to gain confidence in writing compositions. Candidates should also be very familiar with the assessment criteria detailed in the language B subject guide. Overall, candidates performed very well in this examination session.