

# GCE

## Research-based Essay Guide

(Section 1 - Initial Guidance section)

## Edexcel Advanced GCE in Chinese (9CN01)

First examination 2010 (Version 2)

Initial Guidance Section (Student work and related assessment available as PDF on website)



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# Section 1

## Introduction

This guide is intended to support teachers and students preparing the research-based essay section of Unit 3 of the Edexcel Advanced GCE in Chinese.

The guide should be used in conjunction with the appropriate Specification and the Sample Assessment Materials.

The guide provides information to inform the planning of teaching programmes and clarifies the requirements of this particular assessment task. It includes examples of student work with related assessment commentaries. The commentaries show how the marks have been applied across the different assessment grids and provide an indication of the standard of work expected.

## Rationale

The exploitation of target-language source materials for the research-based essay contributes to the language-learning process and to increased use of the target language in the classroom.

It encourages wide reading, individual research, and personal initiative. It provides the opportunity for students to acquire the skills of researching, selecting and organising material in a piece of work written in Chinese.

A choice of essay title linked to one of the prescribed topics or texts enables students to explore and write on a topic that interests them. It enables them to **express *their* ideas in their own words in the target language** and promotes greater knowledge and understanding of the target-language culture.

## Key requirements of the research-based essay

Candidates must:

- Do extensive reading in Chinese (and, potentially, in English)
- Choose a topic based on their personal interests and individual research
- Devise a clearly focused title
- Give their work an evaluative and analytical dimension
- Reflect seriously on the topic
- Express the ideas and knowledge developed during their research in their own words
- Ensure that the content of their essay is firmly rooted in the target-language culture

## Getting started

The research-based essay carries 30 out of the 80 marks available for unit 3. Students should prepare for this during their course so that they are able to produce an essay that is 250-500 characters long (excluding the title, bibliography and punctuation spaces).

The teacher should ensure that writing skills are sufficiently developed to allow candidates to perform at an appropriate level.

Students must be guided to produce a title which clearly shows that the essay is solidly based on Chinese-language society and culture. Candidates must focus on analysis and evaluation rather than straightforward description or narrative. Expressing the title in the form of a question can often help to identify an appropriate focus.

Essays related to the prescribed books in the section of Literary texts must focus on the text itself and not on the life or the general technique and writing style of the author.

Candidates from the same Centre may use the same essay titles and must not, under any circumstance, produce identical and/or ready-made essays. This would be regarded as plagiarism. Each student must produce their own response.

While teachers should teach the topics and texts, and give general guidance on essay writing, it is essential that candidates prepare an individual essay.

## Essay Plan

Candidates may take an essay plan in to the examination. This plan must be produced on the Edexcel Essay Plan form designed specifically for this unit. This form is available to download from the GCE Chinese section of the Edexcel website:

<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/gce/gce08/lang/chinese/Pages/default.aspx>

Candidates are not permitted to take any other materials into the examination room.

This plan should consist of **no more than 70 characters**, there is a small space for candidates to write down the title of key book(s), sources or websites that they need to put in their bibliography. There is also a similar space for candidates to write down their essay title. Candidates should use the designated spaces on the essay plan form. No additional sheets of paper are permitted. **Essay title and sources information is not included in the essay plan form character count.**

It is recommended that the essay plan is divided into content-related sections and includes an introduction and conclusion.

The essay plan must be collected by the invigilator at the end of the examination and be retained by the Centre until the results have been published. The plan must **not** be sent with the question papers.

## Sources

Work must show evidence of individual research. Candidates should do this by producing a very brief bibliography with the name(s) of the most important book(s), writer(s) or website(s) consulted at the end of the essay for *history*, *geography* and *society*. It may not be necessary to cite additional sources when writing about *literary texts* but if candidates have consulted sources in addition to the text studied, then these must be referenced at the end of the essay.

**The bibliography will not be included in the word count.** It is envisaged that candidates will either recall key sources in the exam or transfer this information from their essay plan form.

It is important that students read with *understanding* rather than engage in excessive reading and indiscriminate quoting.

## Plagiarism and use of resources

Any sources which are directly quoted must be acknowledged and referenced. Students should be selective and analytical in their use of sources, quoting from and citing these to support their own arguments. Any quotation used must appear inside quotation marks.

## Assessment Criteria

Mark	Quality of language (A03)
0	No rewardable language.
1	Very limited communication. Language often breaks down. Very inaccurate.
2	Some communication achieved on a basic level but often lacks comprehensibility. Limited linguistic range.
3	Satisfactory communication. Inaccurate language occasionally impedes comprehensibility. Fair range of appropriate lexis and structures.
4	Good communication. Errors rarely impede comprehensibility. Language mainly accurate and appropriate. Good range of lexis and structures.
5	Very good communication. Language almost always fluent, varied and appropriate. Wide range of lexis and structure. High level of accuracy.

Mark	Organisation and development of material (A02)
0	Poorly organised and lacking in coherence.
1-2	Very limited organisation and development. Material lacking in coherence. Limited ability to draw conclusions/respond convincingly.
3-4	Some organisation and development. May be rambling and/or repetitive. Evidence of argument but development of ideas impeded at times by lack of ability to organise material logically.
5-6	Satisfactory organisation and development of material with some effective sequencing of ideas. Development sometimes patchy but generally well constructed. Lacking in coherence in places.
7-8	Good organisation and development. Material well planned and sequenced with few lapses. Demonstrates good control with some evidence of independent thinking.
9-10	Excellent organisation and development. Material very effectively marshalled and developed within a carefully planned framework. Logical sequence of ideas. Skilfully controlled throughout.

Mark	Completion of task (A02)
0	Material presented completely irrelevant to title and subject.
1-3	A small amount of relevant material presented but often confused. Restricted ability in using evidence and source material.
4-6	Limited amount of relevant material presented showing little ability to analyse. Approach to subject mostly descriptive or narrative.
7-9	Modest ability to analyse and to use evidence and source material, but sometimes digressive with lack of clarity.
10-12	Demonstrates ability to analyse. Uses evidence and source materials well with some inconsistency. Independent judgement present.
13-15	Fully relevant. Shows ability to analyse in depth and convincing use of evidence and source material. Very good independent judgement.

- Inadmissible pieces will receive zero marks for that question.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Title

- **Should the title be in the form of a question?**

The title must clearly indicate the issue discussed in the essay. When the title is in the form of question this usually helps to identify an appropriate focus for the essay although it is *not compulsory* to adopt this approach.

- **Can candidates from the same Centre use the same title?**

Candidates may have a common essay title but this is not advised. Candidates must provide evidence of different ideas and produce their own structures in the essays. Candidates must produce an individual response.

## Essay Plan

- **How many characters are allowed for the essay plan?**

Candidates should produce no more than 70 characters, there is a separate space for the essay title and references and sources. Essay title and sources information is not included in the character count. All essay plans must be produced on the Edexcel essay plan form.

- **Do candidates hand in the essay plan at the end of the examination?**

Any essay plans should be collected by the invigilator at the end of the examination and these must be retained by the Centre until the examination results have been published. **The essay plans must not be sent off with the scripts.**

- **Is it compulsory for candidates to produce an essay plan before the examination?**

The essay plan is meant to be used during the process of preparing and writing the essay. It should help remind candidates of the structure and conceptual development of their proposed content. Taking the essay plan into the examination hall serves as a useful reminder for candidates. However, it is not compulsory and candidates may write their essay in the examination without referring to an essay plan. However, no other notes or forms are permitted in the examination.

## Modern History (1911-1976)

- **Should candidates choose a sub-topic from the prescribed list in the specification and give the cause, the events and the consequences in their essay?**

It is advisable to focus on **one** issue within the period or to **one** particular event and discuss its significance and, if appropriate, refer to any related controversies. Candidates are advised not to give a narration or chronology of an historical event following the structure of a textbook and would be unlikely to score high marks with such an approach.

- **Can candidates focus on just one historical character related to the sub-topic?**

Yes, but the focus must also be confined to the event or specific period suggested in the prescribed sub-topics. The essay must not simply narrate the life of a historical character.

- **Can candidates give their own opinions?**

Yes of course, but all opinions and arguments need to be supported by examples of linked individual research and historical evidence.

### Geography of China

- **Does the title and essay need to cover all the aspects - environment, economy and social issues?**

No, candidates must select **one area only**.

- **Are candidates allowed to compare two cities?**

No. Candidates must focus on one city.

- **Is it necessary to include the history of the city chosen in the essay?**

No, the focus of the essay must be on the **contemporary city**.

### Society

- **Can candidates choose to discuss other western festivals which are also quite popular in the Chinese community?**

No, all traditions, festivals or customs discussed have to be of Han nationality.

- **How many festivals can a title and essay cover?**

Candidates are strongly advised to select and focus on only one.

- **Is it enough for candidates to focus only on the stories and legends of the festival they have chosen?**

Candidates are expected to show some ability to distinguish between myths and facts after having done some research. Candidates are not expected to provide a descriptive account of the stories about the festival.

- **Women's issues (1911 to the present) - Do essays need to give an account of development from 1911 to present?**

This is acceptable if the candidate is especially interested in and really wants to research the whole of this period. However, like other topic areas or sub-topics, candidates are encouraged to select and focus on one key issue or aspect within this period that particularly interests them. Candidates should always be advised to choose a title that is not too wide or general.



## Literary text

- **Can candidates use the novel when choosing ‘Mist over Dream Lake’?**

Candidates may compare the film to the novel. They can also refer to or quote from the novel to illustrate key points and/or support their arguments. However, candidates must not replace study of the film with the novel. Candidates are not permitted to take the text in to the examination.

- **Do candidates need to refer to extra sources when they chose to write their essay on one of the literary texts?**

Candidates can focus on the text itself and use the plots and personalities from the story to support their arguments. Candidates do not have to refer to or quote additional source material.

- **Can candidates use ‘my view on the story’ (讀後感/读后感) as title?**

This type of title is best avoided as it can lead to discursive writing that often lacks focus and moves from one topic to another. Candidates should pinpoint an issue that they will focus on when setting their title.