

# Getting Started Guide



**A Level Chinese**

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**Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Advanced GCE in Chinese (9CN0)**

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# Getting Started Guide: GCE A Level Chinese 2017

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1 Introduction</b>                              | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2 What's changed?</b>                           | <b>4</b>  |
| 2.1 How has the A level changed?                   | 4         |
| Changes to A level qualifications                  | 4         |
| Changes to Assessment Objectives                   | 4         |
| 2.2 Changes to Pearson Edexcel GCE A level Chinese | 5         |
| Specification overview                             | 5         |
| Changes to specification content                   | 5         |
| <b>3 Planning</b>                                  | <b>7</b>  |
| 3.1 Planning and delivering linear A level courses | 7         |
| 3.2 Suggested resources                            | 8         |
| 3.3 Delivery models                                | 9         |
| <b>4 Content guidance</b>                          | <b>10</b> |
| 4.1 Themes and sub-themes                          | 10        |
| 4.2 Prescribed works                               | 12        |
| <b>5 Assessment guidance</b>                       | <b>14</b> |
| 5.1 Implications of linear assessment              | 14        |
| 5.2 Breakdown of Assessment Objectives             | 14        |
| 5.3 Assessment overview                            | 14        |
| 5.4 Further details on the speaking assessment     | 16        |

# 1 Introduction

The A level qualifications are designed to be appealing and engaging to students, while preparing them for future study and work. An inspiring and culturally relevant course has been developed, based on feedback from teachers, students, subject associations, academics and advisors.

The qualification has a clear structure, which will enable students to develop advanced-level, transferable language alongside a deeper cultural appreciation of Chinese and Chinese-speaking culture. There is an emphasis on promoting understanding of grammar in order to allow spontaneous, creative use of language to suit different purposes. The themes are engaging and relevant, combining familiar and new content. Popular texts and films have been chosen, both classical and contemporary.

This Getting Started guide provides an overview of the A level specification, to help you get to grips with the content and assessment, and to understand what these mean for you and your students.

We provide a package of support to help you plan and implement the specification.

- **Planning:** mapping documents to show how previous Chinese courses match the A level; an editable course planner; a student guide; and schemes of work which you can adapt to suit your department
- **Personal support:** Sheena Newland, Subject Advisor
- **Teaching and learning:** a range of guides containing practical approaches to areas such as analysing films and literature, conducting research and essay writing; film and literature PowerPoints to support you with teaching.

These support documents are available on the GCE A-Level Chinese pages on the Pearson website: <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/chinese-2017.html>

## 2 What's changed?

### 2.1 How has the A level changed?

#### Changes to A level qualifications

From September 2017, A level Chinese has been a fully linear qualification. This means that all examinations must be sat (and the speaking assessment conducted) at the end of the course. More information about the implications of the move to linear assessment is given on page 13.

For first assessment in 2026, Paper 1 reading and listening comprehension questions are presented in, and require answers in English.

In addition, for first assessment in 2026, Paper 2 response to set works questions are presented in both Chinese and English. Answers to Paper 2 continue to be required in Chinese. Two additional set works were added to the Specification, along with a choice of option (a) or (b) for each set work.

#### Changes to Assessment Objectives

The A level languages Assessment Objectives have been revised. There are two main changes to the Assessment Objectives:

- An AO4 was introduced. This requires knowledge, understanding and critical response – and at A level analytical response – to cultural and social issues relating to target-language communities.
- AO3 has a greater proportion of the marks than in the previous specification, and has a subtly changed emphasis – there is greater emphasis now on active application of grammar in generating new, independent language.

|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>AO1</b><br>20% | Understand and respond: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in speech to spoken language including face-to-face interaction</li> <li>• in writing to spoken language drawn from a variety of sources</li> </ul> |
| <b>AO2</b><br>30% | Understand and respond: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in speech to written language drawn from a variety of sources</li> <li>• in writing to written language drawn from a variety of sources</li> </ul>  |
| <b>AO3</b><br>30% | Manipulate the language accurately, in spoken and written forms, using a range of lexis and structures   |
| <b>AO4</b><br>20% | Show knowledge and understanding of, and respond critically and analytically to, different aspects of the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken                                  |

## 2.2 Changes to Pearson Edexcel GCE A level Chinese

### Specification overview

|         |   |   |  |     |
|---------|---|---|--|-----|
| Paper 1 | Listening, reading and translation                      | Themes 1, 2, 3 and 4                            | 2 hours  | 40% |
| Paper 2 | Written response to works and translation               | Literary work; film                             | 2 hours 40 minutes                                   | 30% |
| Paper 3 | Speaking (internally conducted and externally assessed) | Independent research, plus Themes 1, 2, 3 and 4 | 21–23 minutes, including 5 minutes' preparation time | 30% |

### Changes to specification content

Specification content is now based around social, political and cultural themes, relating to the Chinese language, culture and communities. This will enable students to gain a deeper understanding of the culture related to their language of study, and ensure smooth progression to further study. The themes and assessment model are also designed to promote the development of transferable skills.

These changes are in line with reports published by the A-Level Content Advisory Board (ALCAB), informed by academics, and the Department for Education (DfE), which consulted a range of stakeholders. These reports were both strongly in favour of language A levels which foster 'depth of knowledge, effective understanding and intercultural competence,' (DfE). The reports also identified a need for qualifications which develop transferable skills, especially research skills and 'the capacity for critical thinking on the basis of knowledge of the language, culture and society of the country or countries where the language is spoken' (ALCAB).

Students taking the A level will study four themes:

Theme 1: 當代華人社會的變遷

Theme 2: 中國文化

Theme 3: 演變中的華人社會

Theme 4: 1978 年改革開放對中國的影響

There are a number of sub-themes, which can be found below. The content of these themes is assessed in Paper 1 (listening, reading and translation) and Paper 3 (speaking).

Students at A level are required to study either two texts, or one text and one film, which will be assessed in Paper 2 (writing).

Moreover, at A level students will also be required to undertake an Independent Research Project, which will be assessed in the second part of the speaking exam. Further detail on this can be found in Section 5.4.

## Comparison of the 2017 specification to the legacy Edexcel specification

| Pearson Edexcel 2017 specification |   | Edexcel legacy specification   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| Theme 1                            | 當代華人社會的<br>變遷家庭<br>教育與工作  | Education and employment<br>Youth OR generation gap issues in modern China<br>The development of ... cities ... in terms of the ... social issues  |
| Theme 2                            | 中國<br>文化<br>傳統<br>文化活動  | Leisure, youth interests and Chinese festivals (New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Ching Ming (Qing Ming))<br>Han nationality traditions: ... the significance of the activities associated with festival or custom  |
| Theme 3                            | 演變中的華人<br>社會通訊與科<br>技<br>經濟與環境  | Environment (energy, pollution and environmental campaigns)<br>The development of ... cities ... in terms of the environment, economy ... issues   |
| Theme 4                            | 1978 年改革開放對中國的<br>影響變革<br>中英關係  | The development of ... cities ... in terms of the environment, economy or social issues<br>Transport, travel and tourism   |
| Literary works                     | Prescribed list of works <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterisation</li> <li>• Structure</li> <li>• Stylistic features</li> <li>• Concepts and issues</li> </ul> | Study of literary works not compulsory: students' research must relate to Chinese culture and/or society but may or may not relate to one of the prescribed books or films.  |
| Films                              | Prescribed list of films <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Characterisation</li> <li>• Structure</li> <li>• Contexts</li> <li>• Techniques</li> </ul>                    | Study of literary works not compulsory: students' research must relate to Chinese culture and/or society but may or may not relate to one of the prescribed books or films.  |
| Independent research               | Must be linked to the social and cultural context of the Chinese-speaking world   | Must link to Chinese culture and /or society   |
| N/A                                | No equivalent in the 2017 specification   | Units 1, 2 and 3: Food, diet and health<br>Unit 3 Research-based essay topic areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern history (20th Century) 1911–1976</li> <li>• Women's issues (1911 to the present)</li> <li>• Film: Nan Hai 13 (Mad Phoenix)</li> <li>• Film: Han Yan Cui (Mist Over Dream Lake)</li> <li>• Book: Ba Jin: Chun (Spring)</li> </ul> |

## 3 Planning

### 3.1 Planning and delivering linear A level courses

Naturally, the key difference of linear qualifications is that students need to retain all that they have learned for examination at the end of the course. In terms of language learning, this is a logical and positive development because students must retain and build on everything they learn in order to master a language effectively.

In terms of planning, teachers will need to consider the following:

- A level assessment is at the end of year 2
- retakes are only possible for the entire qualification, not for individual modules.

Course planning needs to cover:

- four themes
- either two texts, or a text and a film
- sufficient practice in listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation
- a broad range of grammar and opportunities to use this to generate language independently
- independent research
- development of critical and analytical thinking.

## 3.2 Suggested resources

The A level course is supported by a range of third party resources.

In addition, our free **online support** for teachers includes:

- approaches to teaching film and literature
- guides on how to analyse a text and how to develop research skills
- PowerPoints to support the teaching and learning of film and literature.

Other useful resources include:

### Grammar

Hung-nin Samuel Cheung in collaboration with Sze-yun Liu and Li-lin Shih – A Practical Chinese Grammar (Chinese University Press, 2002)

Yip Po-Ching and Rimmington D – Intermediate Chinese: A Grammar and Workbook (Routledge, 2009)

### Literature

There are some books about the authors on the A level specification, though this is by no means an exhaustive list:

錢理群、溫儒敏、吳福輝：《中國現代文學三十年》，北京：北京大學出版社，1998。

蒲葦：《中學生文學精讀·曹文軒》，香港：三聯書店，2016。

夏祖麗：《從城南走來：林海音傳》，台北：天下遠見，2000。

### Films

An internet search for your chosen film should generate plenty of resources. Some examples about the film directors include:

鄭保威：《許鞍華說許鞍華》，香港：至高圖書，1998。

程青松：《青年電影手冊》第七輯《青春電影手冊》，中國友誼出版公司，2017。

王小帥：《薄薄的故鄉》，重慶：重慶大學出版社，2015。

### Newspapers, television and radio

<http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/simp> (This is run by BBC in both traditional and simplified characters.)

<http://www.rthk.hk/> (Radio and television programmes mainly in Cantonese and some in Mandarin. A lot of their television programmes provide Chinese subtitles.)

<http://tv.cctv.com/>

You will also find several English sites with resources to support the films at [filmeducation.org](http://filmeducation.org).

### 3.3 Delivery models

Possible models for course planning include:

#### Model 1

|        |          |                    |                     |  |                      |
|--------|----------|--------------------|---------------------|--|----------------------|
| Year 1 | Theme 1  | Literary work/Film | Grammar revision    | Transferable listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, thinking skills | Independent research |
|        | Theme 2  |                    | Grammar development |  |                      |
| Year 2 | Theme 3  | Literary work/Film | Grammar revision    |  |                      |
|        | Theme 4  |                    | Grammar development |  |                      |
|        | Revision |                    |                     |  |                      |

#### Model 2

|        |                      |                        |   |
|--------|----------------------|------------------------|---|
| Year 1 | Theme 1              | Grammar                | Skills  |
|        | Theme 2              |                        |   |
|        | Literary work/Film   |                        |   |
| Year 2 | Theme 3              | Revision / Development | Transferable listening, speaking, reading, writing, translation, thinking |
|        | Theme 4              |                        |   |
|        | Independent research |                        |   |
|        | Literary work/Film   |                        |   |
|        | Revision             |                        |   |

Model 1 offers a more integrated learning experience, developing all skills together, whereas Model 2 presents a clearer order. Model 1 is potentially more complex to manage, but Model 2 could result in teachers and students running out of time on the second literary work/film and independent research.

More detailed Schemes of work and other useful planning documents are available as free resources on the Pearson website:

<https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-a-levels/chinese-2017.html>

## 4 Content guidance

The themes and sub-themes identified below are vehicles for the development of linguistic and cognitive skills, as well as cross-cultural awareness. Assessment is predominantly related to the ability to use the target language. Assessment will take place within the themes and sub-themes. Students will need to demonstrate knowledge, understanding and a critical and analytical response relating to the target language community and culture.

### 4.1 Themes and sub-themes

#### Theme 1 Changes in contemporary Chinese society

|         |           |       |  |
|---------|-----------|-------|--|
| Theme 1 | 當代華人社會的變遷 | 家庭    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 家庭結構</li> <li>● 代溝</li> <li>● 家庭計劃</li> <li>● 人口老齡化</li> </ul>      |
|         |           | 教育與工作 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 學校生活</li> <li>● 學生議題</li> <li>● 工作機會</li> <li>● 工作和生活的平衡</li> </ul> |

#### Theme 2 Chinese culture

|         |      |      |   |
|---------|------|------|---|
| Theme 2 | 中國文化 | 傳統   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 節日（春節；端午節；中秋節；清明節）</li> <li>● 習俗</li> </ul>                        |
|         |      | 文化活動 | （與中國文化有關的） <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 電影</li> <li>● 電視</li> <li>● 音樂</li> <li>● 閱讀</li> </ul> |

### Theme 3 Evolving Chinese society

|         |          |       |  |
|---------|----------|-------|--|
| Theme 3 | 演變中的華人社會 | 通訊與科技 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 互聯網</li> <li>• 社交媒體</li> </ul>  |
|         |          | 經濟與環境 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 經濟發展</li> <li>• 環境保護</li> </ul> |

### Theme 4 The impact of reform and opening up in 1978 on China

|         |                      |      |   |
|---------|----------------------|------|---|
| Theme 4 | 1978 年改革開放<br>對中國的影響 | 變革   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 貧富差距</li> <li>• 超級大都市</li> <li>• 城市移民</li> </ul> |
|         |                      | 中英關係 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 貿易</li> <li>• 文化交流</li> <li>• 教育交流</li> </ul>    |

Themes 1, 2 and 3 relate to the wider Chinese-speaking world. Theme 4 relates to China only. This means that in the listening, reading and translation papers, the content may be related to a country other than China, though only standard Chinese will be used. In the speaking test, students will not be asked to demonstrate specific knowledge about one particular country, but they must be able to justify their viewpoints in relation to a Chinese-speaking country they have studied. Note that the listening and speaking assessments will be available in Mandarin and Cantonese.

Teachers should refer to the guides and other resources available on the Pearson website for support on how to approach the themes.

## 4.2 Prescribed set works

### Literary texts

#### Traditional characters

- 《北京折疊》 (郝景芳), 2016 (novelette)
- 《一隻叫鳳的鴿子》 (作者 曹文軒), 2014 (short story)
- 《城南舊事》 〈惠安館〉, 〈爸爸的花兒落了〉  
(作者 林海音), 1960 (autobiographical novel)<sup>[1]</sup>
- 《故鄉》 (作者 魯迅), 1921 (novel)

#### Simplified characters

- 《北京折疊》 (郝景芳), 2016 (novelette)
- 《一只叫凤的鸽子》 (作者 曹文轩), 2014 (short story)
- 《城南旧事》 〈惠安馆〉, 〈爸爸的花儿落了〉  
(作者 林海音), 1960 (autobiographical novel)<sup>[1]</sup>
- 《故乡》 (作者 鲁迅), 1921 (novel)

#### English

- Folding Beijing (Hao Jingfang), 2016 (novelette)
- A Very Special Pigeon (Cao Wenxuan), 2014 (short story)
- Memories of Peking; "Hui'an Hostel" and "My Father's Flowers Have Fallen" (Lin Haiyin), 1960 (autobiographical novel)
- Hometown (Lu Xun), 1921 (novel)

For each of the prescribed literary works and films there is a teaching PowerPoint on the Pearson website. The teaching PowerPoint gives detailed information on:

- Author/director
- Relevant background
- Plot
- Main character(s)
- Themes
- Important quotations/dialogue and scenes
- Reference materials and extended reading

## Films

### Traditional characters

- 《一個都不能少》 (張藝謀), 1999
- 《請投我一票》 (導演 陳為軍), 2007
- 《十七歲的單車》 (導演 王小帥), 2001
- 《天水圍的日與夜》 (導演 許鞍華), 2008

### Simplified characters

- 《一个都不能少》 (张艺谋), 1999
- 《请投我一票》 (导演 陈为军), 2007
- 《十七岁的单车》 (导演 王小帅), 2001
- 《天水围的日与夜》 (导演 许鞍华), 2008

### English

- Not One Less (Zhang Yimou), 1999
- Please Vote for Me (Chen Weijun), 2007
- Beijing Bicycle (Wang Xiaoshuai), 2001
- The Way We Are (Ann Hui), 2008

For each of the prescribed literary works and films there is a teaching PowerPoint on the Pearson website. The teaching PowerPoint gives detailed information on:

- Author/director
- Relevant background
- Plot
- Main character(s)
- Themes
- Important quotations/dialogue and scenes
- Reference materials and extended reading

## 5 Assessment guidance

### 5.1 Implications of linear assessment

- Assessment is at the end of year 2.
- Retakes are only possible for the entire qualification, not for individual modules.

### 5.2 Breakdown of Assessment Objectives

The breakdown of Assessment Objectives by paper will be as follows:

| Paper                                       | A01       | A02       | A03       | A04       | Total       |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| 1 Listening, reading and translation        | 15        | 25        | -         | -         | 40%         |
| 2 Written response to works and translation | -         | -         | 20        | 10        | 30%         |
| 3 Speaking                                  | 5         | 5         | 10        | 10        | 30%         |
| <b>Total</b>                                | <b>20</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>100%</b> |

### 5.3 Assessment overview

#### Paper 1: Listening, reading and translation

*Written examination: 2 hours*

*40% of the qualification*

*80 marks*

**Section A** is a listening assessment based on a recording, featuring male and female Chinese speakers, covering Themes 1, 2, 3 and 4. Students will respond to comprehension questions, based on a variety of contexts and sources. Recordings of spoken Chinese will be available in Mandarin and Cantonese.

**Question formats** require multiple-choice and open responses.

Questions are set in English and responses in English are required, but students will not be marked on their quality of language. Questions do not require students to respond in full sentences. They can respond using single words or phrases.

This section is worth 30 marks.

Students will have control of the listening player and we recommend they spend no more than 50 minutes on this section.

**Section B** is a reading assessment based on a variety of text-types and genres.

**Question formats** require both multiple-choice and open response. Questions are set in English and responses in English are required, though students will not be marked on their quality of language. Questions do not require students to respond in full sentences. They can respond using single words or phrases.

Section B is worth 30 marks.

We recommend students spend no more than 50 minutes on this section.

**Section C** is a translation into English. This will be an unseen passage and is worth 20 marks.

We recommend students spend no more than 20 minutes on this section.

Note: students are not permitted access to a dictionary during the examination.

## Paper 2: Written response to works and translation

*Written examination: 2 hours and 40 minutes*

*30% of the qualification*

*120 marks*

**Section A** is a translation into Chinese and is worth 20 marks. The content of the passage is related to any of the four themes. We recommend students spend no more than 30 minutes on this section.

**Sections B and C** each require a written response in Chinese to one of the set works.

At A level, students are required to respond to two questions on two different works. For each question the maximum mark is 50, totaling 100 for this section. The works may comprise one book and one film, or two books. The works are listed in Appendix 2 of the specification:

*Prescribed literary texts and films.* The literary texts listed include novels and short stories. All of the films are feature-length.

In each of Sections B and C, students have a choice of three questions. Students must write two essays selected from Section B (literary texts) **or** one selected from Section B (literary texts) and one from Section C (films).

Note: students are not permitted access to a dictionary or any documentation relating to the works during the examination.

### Frequently-asked questions on the writing paper

*How much knowledge are students required to have beyond the works?*

We would expect that students acquire some background information in the teaching and learning of the works, including, but not limited to, the following:

- author
- the work's purpose
- the work's social context
- the work's style

There are also works for which this background is essential to the understanding of the plot. For example:

《十七歲的單車》(導演:王小帥)

分析電影如何呈現農民工在城市的社會地位。

In this example, it is clear that having some understanding of the social changes in China since the reform and opening up policies in 1978 (e.g. migrant workers in cities) would help students in their understanding of the film's plot. However, the question still relates to what they see in the film. It is essential that students use evidence from the works in order to answer the questions, and do not write a generic response that is based on their knowledge of, for example, the reform and opening up policies in 1978.

*Can students study more than two works? Do they declare all the works on the RP3 form?*

If there is time, students can certainly study as many of the set works as they wish, and this would then, of course, afford them a greater choice in the assessment. However, it is important that students have in-depth knowledge of the works studied, including the ability to use quotations. On the *RP3 form* they should list all the works from the set list that they have studied, and on which, therefore, they can possibly answer in the written examination, especially as the oral assessment will take place before the written assessment. Students should therefore be encouraged to conduct their independent research away from the set lists of works in order to ensure they can meet the criteria of both assessments.

*How many quotations do students need to use?*

There is no requirement for a specific number of quotations, although quotations are needed to provide a critical analysis with convincing interpretations. This is made clear in the mark scheme *Critical and analytical response (AO4)*:

Critical analysis of issues/themes/cultural or social contexts is frequently demonstrated, with some convincing interpretations and points of view, **predominantly justified with appropriately selected evidence from the work.**

### **Paper 3: Speaking**

The speaking assessment is conducted internally and is externally assessed. Students may also attend a regional Pearson office to be assessed by a Pearson Edexcel-appointed examiner. It is worth 72 marks and comprises 30% of the qualification.

Total assessment time: between 21 and 23 minutes, which includes 5 minutes' formal preparation time

**Task 1** requires students to choose one sub-theme from a choice of two (these can be any of the eight sub-themes from one of the four overall themes). They will then discuss a statement on their chosen stimulus card. Task 1 is worth 30 marks.

**Task 2** is the Independent Research Presentation and requires students to give a short summary of their chosen topic, followed by a discussion with the examiner on their research. Task 2 is worth 42 marks.

The assessment will be available in Mandarin and Cantonese.

Full details of the expectations of the speaking assessment can be found in the next section.

NB: All mark schemes can be found in the Sample Assessment Materials.

## 5.4 Further details on the speaking assessment

Paper 3 is the speaking assessment, which is technically considered a non-examination assessment. Either the teacher or a Pearson Edexcel-appointed examiner at a regional Pearson office will conduct the assessment and send the recordings for marking.

The total assessment time will be between 21 and 23 minutes, including five minutes' preparation time.

### Task 1

#### Before the assessment

The centre will inform Pearson of the date(s) on which it intends to conduct the speaking assessment. Three days before the centre's assessment window, the teacher-examiner will be able to download the secure material in order to ensure smooth running of the examination. The teacher must not share information about the material with anyone in advance of the assessment. Pearson will provide the centre with a grid detailing the different cards that each candidate will be allocated (an example can be found on page 125 of the Sample Assessment Materials). The teacher can use this grid to plan for the assessment, but must not share details with students.

#### On the day

**Part 1 (discussion on a Theme):** Students have approximately 6 to 7 minutes' discussion time for this task.

Content for this task will be based on any of the **8 sub-themes** from one of the four overall themes listed on pages 9–10 of the specification. For example, 家庭, 經濟與環境, 變革, etc.

The invigilator offers the student a choice of two cards just before the preparation time begins. The invigilator will ask the student, for example, whether he or she wants the card on *Traditions* or the card on *Communications and technology*. N.B. the student must **not** see the card until the choice has been made.

On each card is one statement.

The student is then given five minutes to prepare.

After the five minutes' preparation time, the assessment begins:

- The examiner will start by asking which card the student has chosen.
- The examiner will then ask the two compulsory questions relating to the statement.
- The examiner will then ask follow-up questions relating to the subject matter on the card.

For example, student 1 is given the choice of *Traditions* or *Communications and technology*. The student chooses *Traditions*. There is one statement on the card with prompts:

年輕人對中國傳統節日失去興趣。

你必須考慮下面兩點：

- 年輕人對中國傳統節日失去興趣的原因。
- 怎樣去改變這種情況？

The examiner will then ask the two questions on the card:

年輕人對中國傳統節日失去興趣。

- 1 為什麼年輕人對中國傳統節日失去興趣？
- 2 怎樣去改變這種情況？

The examiner will then follow up with additional questions relating to the statement on the stimulus card.

## Part 2

The examiner must then broaden the discussion to cover other aspects of the overall theme. In the example above, this would mean the examiner could ask questions on other aspects of traditions, customs or cultural activities.

The questions must enable the student to meet the assessment criteria, i.e. to elicit examples and information to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the cultural and social context, and to analyse aspects of the theme by developing and justifying arguments and forming conclusions. The examiner may use some of the generic questions as provided in the Sample Assessment Materials. For example: 你可以舉例說明.....嗎？

## Frequently-asked questions

*In Part 1 do students need to adopt a 'for/against' position on the statement?*

No, this is not necessary, as the statement might not necessarily allow them to do this. However, they must be able to justify their opinions.

*How much factual knowledge do students need to have?*

Teachers should consult the *Knowledge and understanding mark grid* in the specification or the Sample Assessment Materials, as this provides detail on how students are rewarded. There is no requirement for students to be able to list facts. However, they do need to provide examples and justify these examples.

Note also that Task 1 is marked as a whole, so it might be possible for students to provide fuller detail in the follow-up questions.

*In the speaking assessment, can the examiner change the formal question to the informal form, or is that considered to be rephrasing?*

Questions should be asked as they are written on the card.

*If a student says "Do you mean ...?" after the examiner asks the question, can you answer "Yes" or "No"?*

We would encourage the examiner to repeat the question as phrased on the card. However, if the student is struggling, then we would expect there to be some additional support, though this may affect the mark the student is ultimately awarded.

*Can you ask the invigilator which cards students have chosen, or do you have to wait until the students tell you?*

It is fine for the invigilator to tell you which card students have chosen.

## Task 2: Independent research project (IRP)

Students have approximately 10 to 11 minutes for this task.

### Prior to the exam

#### Choosing the project

The independent research project (IRP) allows students to conduct in-depth research into an aspect of Chinese-speaking culture or life in which they are particularly interested. Students should be encouraged to think carefully about what they want to research, as the subject must allow them not only to showcase what they have learned about the subject, but also to analyse the subject in some depth.

The IRP may be based on any of the four themes of study or on a subject of interest of the student's choosing, but must relate to the Chinese-speaking cultural and social context. Should students choose a subject relating to one of the specification themes, it is possible that the same theme could come up in Task 1. Students should therefore go beyond the specification sub-themes and should ensure they have conducted wider reading on their chosen subject.

The IRP must **not** be based on one of the literary works or films studied for Paper 2. Students will receive a mark of zero for Task 2 if their IRP focuses on a work studied for Paper 2. However, an IRP could focus on a wider exploration of the author or film-maker of those works studied. For example, if studying a novel by a particular author for Paper 2, the IRP must not focus on that novel, as this would be a duplication of content. However, the independent research could focus on the life of the author, or the aspects of society which motivated the author in the broader sense.

Once students have chosen the subject which they wish to research, they will need to decide upon a question or statement which they will then investigate individually. This might also help students to narrow down their choice of subject.

#### When to start the independent research project (IRP)

The IRP can be started at any point within the two-year course. However, the IRP form must be submitted to Pearson at least three weeks before the start of the assessment. This form requires students to note down key findings, as well as sources. This is to allow examiners the time to prepare their questions.

#### Sources

As part of the assessment, students must refer to at least two **written** Chinese-speaking sources and the student's declaration form provides space for up to four. These could, of course, be from newspaper articles, perhaps found on the internet. We advise students to keep a record of all the sources they have used, and teachers to give some support in how to use sources. There are many websites to which students can be directed, and it is also advisable that teachers help students locate resources.

#### The assessment

**Part 1:** Students give a presentation of a maximum of two minutes. This presentation must include:

- a summary of at least two of the written Chinese-speaking sources they have used as part of their research
- the authors' main points/ideas
- a personal response.

**Part 2:** Following on from the presentation, the examiner then moves on to a discussion of the student's research, including a wider exploration of the content of the student's presentation and of the research as a whole. The examiner should use the *RP3 form*, completed by the student, to identify questions in advance, in order to ensure that the discussion remains focused on the research.

In **both** tasks, students are expected to ask questions which elicit opinions as part of the natural discourse and to confirm that their own points of view have been understood. A list of suggested questions has been provided in the specification and should be shared with students.

Examiners should not give lengthy answers, but acknowledge the question and move on. If the student does not ask a question, this can be prompted by the examiner.

### Frequently-asked questions

*Can students make comparisons with the home country?*

There may, of course, be instances where it is necessary or interesting to bring in examples or comparisons with the home country. For example, this could be used to strengthen an argument. However, the assessment criteria for *Knowledge and understanding of society and culture* (AO4) clearly rewards students who focus on Chinese-speaking cultural and social contexts, so we would recommend that comparison with the home country is limited.

*Can students refer to their literary works/films as evidence to support their argument?*

Quotations from the literary works or close reference to the films may be applicable for use as evidence to support an argument. However, students must refer to two other written Chinese-speaking sources in order to access marks from the grid *Responding to written language in speech* (AO2)

*Can all my students cover the same topic?*

It is envisaged, especially in large centres, that some students might have similar interests and might therefore wish to cover the same topic. This is acceptable and encourages teamwork. However, the statement or question for each student's project **must** be different, as well as the angle from which they are approaching it.

*What can teachers help their students with?*

Below is a list of what teachers must and must not do. Further clarification can also be sought from the assessment team and the FAQs on Conducting the A level speaking exam.

*What sources should my students use?*

Teachers should help their students in identifying suitable sources, and also help them analyse sources. Students should be encouraged to use a variety of sources, including (but not limited to):

- newspaper articles
- videos from the period in time (such as news reports or speeches)
- academic articles
- critical reviews for books and films.

## Independent research – Advice for teachers in supporting students

Teachers **can**:

- give guidance on developing research skills (including methodology and analytical tools)
- give guidance on selecting a subject and question or statement for the student's IRP
- explain what independence means (see definition in *Guidance on the independent research project* in the specification)
- comment on the suitability of the area of research (availability of resources, time constraints)
- give guidance and advice on completing *Form RP3*
- advise on and direct students to the Assessment Objectives
- provide a selection of resources for student access.

Teachers **must**:

- confirm that the question or statement has the potential to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria, and offer general guidance on any necessary amendments
- ensure that the question or statement does **not** correspond with one of the literary works or films which the student has studied for Paper 2: teachers will be able to identify this from the information given on *Form RP3*; students will receive a mark of zero for Task 2 if their IRP focuses on a work studied for Paper 2
- review each student's *Form RP3*; teachers should ensure that the research can suitably fulfil the specification requirements and should give general guidance on the methodology and analytical tools which the student could use
- promote good practice, such as referencing and using a bibliography system
- sign the student's *Form RP3* before the examination to declare that the IRP is wholly the student's work
- monitor the different research projects being undertaken in a centre to ensure that independence is being maintained; if more than one student chooses to research the same topic, the teacher must ensure that each student has a different question or statement and, therefore, an independent focus.

Teachers **must not**:

- give students a choice of questions or statements from which they then choose, including a group question or statement for whole-class research
- give detailed feedback or guidance to individual students about how to improve their work to meet the requirements of the assessment criteria; the guidance provided should only enable students to take the initiative in making amendments, rather than detailing what amendments should be made; this could include:
  - suggesting additional sources to consult
  - broadening or narrowing their topic of research
- rehearse or provisionally assess the student's presentation
- provide access to, or rehearse, questions which will be used in the assessment of the student's independent research.

### **Examining technique checklist**

The following guidelines will be helpful for teacher-examiners in preparing to administer the speaking assessments.

- The examiner's opening should put the student at ease.
- The examiner should remain friendly and encouraging throughout.
- The examiner should keep input to a minimum.
- There should be a predominance of open questions and encouragement.
- The examiner should refrain from proffering anecdotes, opinions, advice or information.
- The conversation/discussion should flow naturally.
- The examiner should take the student beyond learned or prepared material.
- The examiner should interrupt any pre-rehearsed sections.
- The examiner's interventions should be sufficiently demanding.
- The examiner should take the student to his/her linguistic ceiling.
- The closing should be upbeat, but not effusive.
- The examiner should keep to time for all elements of the assessments.

